

MINUTES OF WICKLOW MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING

HELD IN THE DISTRICT CHAMBER, TOWN HALL

MONDAY 24th APRIL 2023 @ 15.00p.m.

Present: Cathaoirleach Paul O'Brien, Councillors Irene Winters,
John Snell, Shay Cullen, Mary Kavanagh, Gail Dunne

In Attendance: District Manager Brian Gleeson
District Engineer Kevin Scanlon
Pat Clarke, Senior Executive Engineer
District Administrator Joan Sinnott
Wicklow People Myles Buchanan

Cathaoirleach Paul O'Brien opened the meeting at 3.00p.m.

Cathaoirleach Paul O'Brien, on behalf of the elected members welcomed Pat Clarke, Senior Executive Engineer who will replace Kevin Scanlon as District Engineer in the coming weeks and wished him well.

Members thanked Kevin for all his work and wished him well in his new position.

They also expressed thanks to Jason Smith, Assistant Staff Officer, who has transferred to the County Council.

ITEM 1

Confirmation of the Minutes from the Wicklow Municipal District Meeting held on the 27th March 2023

It was proposed by Cllr Gail Dunne, seconded by Cllr Shay Cullen and unanimously agreed to confirm and sign the minutes of the Wicklow Municipal District Monthly Meeting held on 27th March 2023.

ITEM 2

Presentation & Update by Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer on Brittas Bay

Cathaoirleach Paul O'Brien welcomed Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer, to the meeting.

Deirdre gave an update on the five year Conservation and Biodiversity Enhancement project as follows.

- The area is part of a complex of coastal habitats with well developed plant communities.
- 35 hectares are in Council ownership including 2 car parks.
- Blue Flag beach and key coastal amenity in County Wicklow with highest visitor numbers.

Wicklow County Council's County Biodiversity Action Plan/Heritage Plan and Climate Action commitments -

Encourage and facilitate **targeted management** or study projects for important species, habitats and ecosystems where appropriate. Priority should be placed on facilitating studies relating to **coastal biodiversity and to species, habitats and ecosystems most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.**

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS 2022

- Conservation Management actions were carried out in 2022 in line with recommended actions planned within "Conservation Management Options & Recommended Prescriptions for Brittas Dunes" produced in 2018 and the reports on previous conservation actions in 2019, 2020 and 2021.
- Botanical monitoring of the trial mowing plot carried out in June 2022.
- Bracken control on trial mowing plot November 2022.
- Fencing on the trial grazing plot installed in January 2021. Grazing cattle on site from March to May and again in October 2022.
- Botanical monitoring extended to include grazing plot in June 2022.
- Management recommendations for the mowing plot for future years are provided.
- Mapping of decalcified dune heath was carried out in May/June 2022.
- Management of invasive Sea Buckthorn set to continue from actions already taken in 2020/2021.
- Dune erosion sites identified and mapped for further action in 2023.
- Monitoring of the butterfly transect, established in 2020, continued in 2022 with 4 site visits completed.
- Presence/absence surveys focused on Small Blue and Grayling carried out in June and July/August 2022.
- Bird recording encompassed the assessment of breeding status of all breeding birds on site.
- Programme of community events held throughout the year.

BEHIND THE BEACH PROGRAMME 2022 - 2023

- Butterfly workshop 3rd July
- Butterfly Identification – a guide to butterfly monitoring techniques, equipment and identification Wednesday 31st August
- Migrant Birds – field outing and workshop Sunday 25th September.
- Dune Clean up – volunteers – Saturday, 1st October.

- Nature Discovery Day – walk and talk – Thursday 13th October
- Dynamic Dunes Workshop – Thursday 27th October
- Sea Buckthorn removal volunteer day – Saturday 5th November
- Sea Buckthorn removal volunteer day – 11th February 2023.

CONSERVATION GRAZING AT BRITTAS BAY

Wicklow County Council is piloting grazing of cattle in selected areas. Grazing by livestock plays a key role in maintaining species-rich dune habitats by controlling the growth of bracken and scrub and promoting the growth of grasses and flora.

Deirdre showed the members the new logo which has been designed for Brittas Bay and will feature on new signage to be erected in the area. She advised that the signs will tie in with the “leave no trace” principle. Currently the dunes are being undermined by people walking on them. She said that certain materials will be installed to restrict and mark out areas where people can walk. It is hoped that the new branding and signage will create a sense that when you arrive in Brittas Bay, you are somewhere different.

ACTIONS PROPOSED IN 2023

- ✓ Continue biodiversity surveying, recording, monitoring actions
- ✓ Continue public awareness events programme
- ✓ Interpretation & Branding: partnership with Wicklow MD, WCC Environment Section and WCC CCSD.

SIX BIGGEST ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

1. Footfall and recreational activity eroding pathways and broad bare sand recreational areas wither within the dune system or at the dune front/beach interface which may then lead to further sea or wind erosion risk.
2. Long-term, low level effects on vegetation from recreational detritus including; dog, horse and human faecal matter and urine causing soil enrichment.
3. Food waste.
4. Compaction pressure from unauthorised day or overnight camping.
5. Use of stoves, barbeques and fires damaging vegetation cover.
6. Littering/dumping and introduction of garden waste from nearby properties.

WHAT BEHAVIOUR NEEDS TO CHANGE?

1. Do not wander all over the dune system. Keep to designated pathways.
2. Clean up after your dog/horse.
3. Use the public toilet facilities.
4. Bring all waste home (Leave no Trace).
5. No camping.
6. Do not light stoves, barbeques or fires.
7. Do not litter or dump waste.
8. Dispose of garden waste in your green bin.

RE-BRANDING/ NEW LOGO

Re-branding Brittas has implications for the physical environment which people encounter.

Every point of contact and interaction becomes important. An untidy or tired looking public domain will not engender the feeling that the environment is cared for.

USING A BRAND TO MOVE PUBLIC PERCEPTION

It should reposition Brittas as an important natural environment which needs to be treated with respect but, it must retain its appeal as somewhere nice to bring the family for the day.

So a new brand must introduce the Dunes habitat as an SAC while retaining the fact that it is a beach and place of recreation.

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MEMBERS OBSERVATIONS

- The alarming rate of erosion due to storms, end of south beach now almost completely stone.
- New branding greatly welcomed – too many signs at present.
- Access for people with disabilities/buggies – District Engineer advised this was being considered.
- Promotion of Brittas Bay as a plastic free beach – more educational material required.
- Query as to when work will commence on new footpath – District Engineer advised it will depend on completion of footpath in Roundwood.
- Heritage Officer, Deirdre Burns, was commended on the huge amount of work she does.
- Problem of litter – need to send out message that people shouldn't be leaving rubbish behind.
- Would be great to have toilets open all year round – huge cost involved.
- Problems caused with overnight camping.
- Possibility of installing CCTV in carpark to monitor littering etc.
- Traffic congestion – develop traffic management plan for busy times.
- Brittas Bay is a magnificent amenity in the district, currently not being promoted sufficiently.

ITEM 3

District Engineers Report

Updates provided by District Engineer Kevin Scanlon

Housing

- Relets/Prelets; 2 completed. 4 on site. 4 new relets received. 3 CPO house commenced.
- DPG; 2 completed. 2 ready to commence works.

Roads

- Winter Gritting (Regional Roads) since March 23rd; 4 out of 27 nights, 0 doubles.

- Tenders for RI Overlay projects being done this week. Planned projects are as follows:

L1099 Ashtown Lane
L1102 Raheenmore
L1096 Ballinalea to Glenealy
R115 Cloghoge
L5659 Kilbride
R765 Monalin Kilmurray
L6586 Claramore
L1037 Church Hill Newtown
L5121 5122 Rathnew Old Village
R750 Market Street Wicklow Town
R750 Abbey Street Wicklow Town
L6088 Glenwood to Moneystown Hill
L1039-38 Carrigower Quarry (completed in March)

- RM Surface Dressing details being finalised next week. Locations will issue in separate email.

CCSD

- Tender finalised and contract award being prepared for consultant for Coral grant funding for works from Large Scale Sport Infrastructure.

Public Liability

- 3 personal injury. 1 material damage.

Projects

WCC

- Roundwood footpath; Works continuing on Roundwood Road at L5061. Approx. 50% complete. Kerbing due to start early in May.
- Brittas Bay footpath and 2nd Roundwood footpath currently being planned.

NTA

- Ballinahinch, Ashford footpath; wall facing completed. Works continuing behind wall backfilling. Accommodation works and footpath to be completed.
- Station Rd, R750, Marlton Rd and Rocky Rd footpath and cycling lanes; survey completed and Feasibility Report being finalised.
- 2 bus shelters planned for Ashford to be installed in May. Awaiting contractor confirmation.
- Ballyguilemor Footpath. Discussions ongoing with landowners.
- Wicklow Train Station Pedestrian Bridge to Port Access Rd. Detailed design ongoing and discussions with landowner prior to statutory planning.
- Wicklow Train Station Park & Ride. WCC reviewing the Needs Assessment fee proposal.
- Wicklow/Rathnew Local Transport Plan. Project to commence when resources available.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Brittas Bay Blueway funding for accessibility works. Consultant has issued report. Final tender docs for toilet building improvements and other works can now be finalised and issued this week. Results by start of May.
- Glenturn Cliff Walk tender is currently being prepared. Access through golf course to be confirmed ahead of tender being issued.

DOE
Town & Village Renewal

- Umbrella installation at Fitzwilliam Square is now complete.
- Wicklow Town – South Quay connections to Main St. Tender evaluation for provision of murals at five locations currently in progress.

Fáilte Ireland

- Abbey Grounds; Redesign and procurement of separate items continuing with Architect. Additional archaeology dig completed on Thursday 20th. Report due soon.

The Cathaoirleach, on behalf of the members, thanked District Engineer, Kevin Scanlon, for all his work and wished him well in his new role.

MEMBERS OBSERVATIONS

- Update requested on Ball Alley funding – District Engineer advised that an application to the Historic Structure Fund was not successful on this occasion. Disappointment was expressed – it was pointed out that this is a historic part of town which badly requires upgrade. Costs to be examined and alternative funding to be examined.
- Abbey Grounds – will be a great asset to the town, public are waiting on it.
- Update request regarding commissioning of lights at Leg of Mutton. District Engineer to ask public lighting section to follow up.
- Road damaged from Tennis Club to Grand Hotel – District Engineer advised that this section has been included for repair.
- Road caving in outside The Mariner, Main Street – District Engineer advised that this was caused by a collapsed surface water drain and that it would be necessary to dig up half the road to repair and this would possibly be done at night time to minimise disruption.
- Footpaths in estates in poor condition, Glebemount, Rathnew, Ashford.
- Line marking in district has deteriorated, really needs to be re-done, Beehive to Wicklow Town needs to be done - District Engineer advised that a tender was ready for approx. 8/9 locations.
- Part of Port Road needs to be cleared of moss, slippery for cyclists – District Engineer advised the green machine is repaired and could be used.
- Replacement of fence near pedestrian bridge over river with small gate.
- Closure of Ashford Park – no progress made with land owner, no other choice but to move on and seek alternative site, approx. ½ acre required. Benches etc. should be taken back.
- Replenishment of sand at Murrough playpark – to be ordered.
- Problems arising with roads re-tarred by utility companies – bonds in place, utility companies should be required to rectify – we should not be held accountable for others works.

- Update on Main Street one-way system – contractor due in next few days.
- Problem of graffiti around district– out of control, particularly Rathnew and Wicklow Town. Lot of road signs and junction boxes interfered with. Tidy Towns have done huge amount of work removing it – speak to GSS regarding cleaning signs.
- Thank outdoor staff for work on bridge.
- Concrete road at Black Castle/Castlefield breaking up. District Engineer advised that it wasn't in this year's programme, possibly next year, could be patched in meantime.
- Residents of Abbeyfield having difficulty exiting onto main road. Possibility of installing yellow box? District Engineer advised that the junction is included in a new NTA project.
- Stones washed away at Wicklow Harbour leaving gap between new steps and beach.
- Possibility of providing bins in Black Castle, RNLI, Sailing Club, South Quay area.

ITEM 4

Correspondence

Councillor Shay Cullen advised that he was approached by the Newtown Tidy Towns to request funding for a 1798 Remembrance Festival to be held from 26th to 28th May to mark the 225th anniversary of the 1798 battle. The amount requested was €7,500. It was anticipated that this will be a massive event, with in the region of 8,000 to 10,000 attending. It will be a community based event involving a re-enactment of the 1798 battle, a series of lectures, culture night and ecumenical service. The total cost would be in the region of €30,000 to €35,000. There were substantial insurance costs, cost for Wexford Pikemen, road closures etc. The members agreed that this was a worthwhile project and were happy to support the once-off historical event.

It was suggested that groups requesting funding should give a breakdown of their costs as it was taxpayers money involved.

Councillor Gail Dunne advised that the Taste of Wicklow were also seeking funding of €5,000 this year on a once-off basis. This festival attracts in the region of 4,000 visitors per day to the town.

Cathaoirleach Paul O'Brien advised that it was proposed to hold a Pride Festival in the town this year which would be a first and the organisers were seeking funding of €1,000 towards costs involved. He was of the opinion that this event should be supported for diversity and inclusion on a once-off basis.

District Manager, Brian Gleeson, advised that funding would come out of the Discretionary Fund which stood at €300,000 but lots of projects were already committed.

It was proposed by Councillor Shay Cullen, seconded by Councillor Irene Winters and unanimously agreed that €5,000 be allocated to the Newtown 1798 Remembrance Festival.

It was proposed by Councillor Gail Dunne, seconded by Councillor Paul O'Brien and unanimously agreed that €5,000 to allocated to the Taste of Wicklow Festival.

It was proposed by Councillor Paul O'Brien, seconded by Councillor Gail Dunne and unanimously agreed that €1,000 be allocated to the Pride Festival.

It was suggested that requests for funding should be formalised in future and details circulated in advance.

It was proposed by Councillor Paul O'Brien, seconded by Councillor John Snell and unanimously agreed that the sum of €11,000 should be allocated to Tidy Towns groups in the district.

ITEM 5

Any Other Business

Cathaoirleach Paul O'Brien advised that he had been approached by the Chamber of Commerce to ask if the Cathaoirleach and Leas Cathaoirleach of the MD would sit on the Chamber of Commerce.

Members suggested that the Town Team and Chamber should be aligned, concern was expressed about involvement unless they are aligned. It was agreed there was a need to work closer with all the groups but not be a part of the Chamber. It was suggested that a combined or separate meetings could be held quarterly with the Chamber and Town Team and a representative of the Twinning Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Paul O'Brien, seconded by Councillor Shay Cullen that a sum of €14,000 be allocated for defibrillators. Three quotes to be obtained.

Funding for a new raft in Wicklow harbour has been obtained. It was proposed that it should be renamed, involving the younger generation, possibly through the schools.

An event is scheduled to take place on 10th June in Montigny to celebrate the 30th anniversary of twinning with Wicklow. Anyone interested in travelling to contact the District Administrator.

Councillor Gail Dunne advised that unfortunately he couldn't attend the meeting on the one-way system in Main Street and wished to express that he was currently unhappy with the way it has been left.

Councillor Shay Cullen advised that the Engineers are solving the issues and that there was no point in jumping the gun. The planters are to be planted and the NTA are coming down to do a survey.

Councillor Irene Winters proposed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the family of John Whelan RIP, recently deceased in his 93rd year, who was a kind and friendly man.

CATHAOIRLEACH PAUL O'BRIEN CONCLUDED THE MEETING AT 17.00 P.M.

Signed: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed _____
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Date: _____