Minutes of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held in Áras Contae an Chláir on Monday, 7th December 2020 at 11.00am

**Present:** Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson

 Cllr Michael Begley

 Cllr P.J. Ryan

 Cllr P.J. Kelly Cllr Gabriel Keating

 Cllr Pat Daly

 Cllr Johnny Flynn (remotely)

 Mr Pat Keogh

 Mr Pat Morris

Ms Emma Karran (remotely)

Ms Elaine D’Alton, (remotely)

 Liam Conneally, Director of Service

 Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise (remotely)

 Jason Murphy, Senior Executive Officer

 Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner

 Candace Ingram, A/Senior Executive Planner

 Cyril Feeney, Senior Engineer

Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

1. **Minutes of Economic Development SPC meeting 28th September 2020.**

The minutes of the Economic Development SPC meeting held on 28th September 2020 were proposed by Cllr P.J. Ryan, seconded by Cllr Gabriel Keating and agreed.

1. **Climate Change and Biodiversity – Climate Change Advisory Council Annual Review 2020**

Using a PowerPoint presentation Helen Quinn introduced the Climate Change Advisory Council’s fourth Annual Report. This organisation was established in 2016 and has membership from the EPA, the ESRI and Teagasc.

Cllr P.J. Ryan requested that communities be engaged and consulted at an earlier stage in the planning process when it comes to the proposed development of Wind Farms in an effort to reduce the information gap and the number of submissions to these developments. Cllr Michael Begley agreed that information should be advanced to communities in a clear and timely manner.

Cllr Pat Daly enquired if there were any plans to repurpose the Moneypoint facility.

Emma Karran enquired if Clare County Council has proposed any publically owned lands for the planting of native woodland, if an application has been made for grant funding and if CARO have commenced training Council staff.

Cllr P.J. Kelly stated that there are questions around the visual impact of Wind Farms with turbines of 150m high when residential houses can be refused planning permission on visual impact grounds for a building of much lower height.

Helen Quinn responded that the Department is finalising new Wind Energy Guidelines which will most likely be issued under s.28 Guidelines. The County Development Plan will incorporate these guidelines and the public will be consulted as part of that process. These guidelines will offer clarity around the issue of residential impact including potential visual impact. Helen outlined that there are areas already identified in the Clare County Development Plan as preferred areas for the development of wind energy and all application sites are then assessed on individual merits.

Helen stated that the Council is and will continue to engage with the ESB regarding any future plans for Moneypoint.

Helen advised that she was not aware of any native woodland grant application being made by Clare County Council to CARO and confirmed that training has been provided by CARO to staff.

Pat Keogh enquired if any discussion had taken place with a view to utilising Moneypoint for off shore energy generation.

Liam Conneally responded that off shore wind energy is the next stage in wind energy development and is being introduced on the east coast of Ireland first. Clare County Council is working closely with the ESB and the Shannon Foynes Port Company and will keep the Economic Development SPC informed of any significant off shore wind farm developments.

Elaine D’Alton stated that the PPN held workshops on the County Development Plan Review and following these a submission was lodged from the PPN Environmental and Social Inclusion Pillars. She queried how electricity for the proposed Ennis Data Centre will be generated and in what way local people will benefit from the residual heat from this development. Elaine also queried if Clare County Council have been consulted by the Government regarding the sourcing of the future Dublin water supply from Lough Derg and the effect that will have on the local environment.

Cllr P.J. Ryan suggested changing the wind turbine colour to green, in keeping with the background, might help alleviate the potential visual impact of the turbines.

Cllr P.J. Kelly stated that he was not convinced that offshore energy is viable or will yield economic benefit to Clare and that Moneypoint would be better utilised as a transshipment port.

Liam Conneally stated that he has requested the property section to identify lands in the ownership of Clare County Council which may be suitable for planting native woodland. He stated that the Ennis Data Centre will be a ‘low carbon’ energy development and the planning application will specify the use for the heat residual from the operation of the Data Centre. With regard to the extraction of water from Lough Derg Liam advised that the EPA will be leading on this proposal in conjunction with Irish Water and that Clare County Council is a major stakeholder in the project and should be consulted at planning stage.

1. **LEO:**

 **- Brexit – key messages**

Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise, provided an update on the supports provided to businesses in order to prepare themselves for Brexit.

Cllr Johnny Flynn advised that businesses in Clare feel supported now in a way that didn’t happen in the 2008 recession and asked if there was an uptake of smaller businesses trading online supports.

Cllr Pat Daly added that publicans face a huge amount of uncertainty and are disappointed not to be able to trade at this time.

Elaine D’Alton asked if any social inclusion analysis was carried out on how people on the ground were affected by Covid 19.

Padraic responded that a lot of smaller businesses had taken up trading on line but were struggling with fulfilling the orders and managing stock. Clare LEO is running a number of workshops to assist with this. Padraic added that social inclusion is not an aspect that the LEO is involved in.

 **4. Planning:**

- **County Development Plan Review update**

* Using a PowerPoint presentation Candace Ingram gave an update on the County Development Plan review and advised that the first stage of the review is complete after extensive consultation at national, regional and local levels.

Cllr Johnny Flynn enquired about the jurisdiction of the draft plan and Candace advised that the current plan remains in place until the new one is adopted by the members.

Cllr Pat Daly referred to a previous query on the zoning of land as councillors are being questioned on this issue and he asked when this aspect would be decided upon. Candace advised that it would be September 2022 before any revised zonings would come into effect.

* **- Development Contribution Scheme**
* Helen advised that there is a reduction in development contributions to Clare County Council in 2020 with €3.1m received in 2019 and €1.75m received to date this year.
* Cllr P.J. Kelly enquired how many applicants from areas of population decline have benefitted from the 50% reduction in development contributions.
* Helen responded that so far around 100 applicants had benefitted from the 25% reduction.
* Cllr Kelly highlighted that the elected members had unanimously agreed to introduce a 50% discount for applications in areas of population decline and asked if the planning department were not applying what was agreed at a public meeting.
* Helen responded that the 50% reduction was a request made under a Notice of Motion but the statutory scheme currently in operation is for a 25% reduction.

**5. Wastewater Treatment**

* Using a PowerPoint presentation Cyril Feeney, Senior Engineer provided an update on water services infrastructure in County Clare.
* Cllr Gabriel Keating highlighted the case of Carrigaholt which had been promised a sewerage scheme but which remains undelivered. He highlighted that 20,000 people pass through Carrigaholt each summer and asked if Carrigaholt could be selected for a pilot scheme similar to the one announced for East Clare.
* Cllr P.J. Ryan asked how many group water schemes Irish Water have taken over and how many remain to be taken over. He said that Castlelake was suitable for about one third of the population that it is now serving and added that he considers it better that regional/provincial boards manage the water services infrastructure in place of Irish Water.

Pat Keogh outlined that water services infrastructure is a huge point of discussion with the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) and added that it takes four months to get a connection with Irish Water. He asked if there is any capacity available in Clare Abbey reservoir.

Cllr Johnny Flynn stated that he is very concerned with the waste water treatment capacity in Ennis.

Emma Karran queried if it is possible for Clare County Council to pressurise Irish Water to provide waste water treatment facilities for the five villages currently disposing of untreated waste straight into the sea.

Cyril Feeney responded that Castle Lake has the capacity to supply an increase in demand from the Shannon and Sixmilebridge area and there is scope to extend the Clare Abbey scheme. He added that there is particular focus on eliminating leakage and this will result in an increased capacity. Ten group schemes have been taken in charge by Irish Water in 2020 and the five coastal sewerage schemes will be built but this process takes time to complete the relevant environmental studies etc some of which can take 18 months.

**6. Agree 2021 Schedule of Meetings**

The proposed schedule of meeting for the Economic Development SPC in 2021 was proposed by Cllr P.J. Ryan, seconded by Cllr Michael Begley and agreed.

The meetings will be held at 11.00am on:

* Monday, 1st March 2021
* Monday, 7th June 2021
* Monday, 20th September 2021
* Monday, 6th December 2021

**7. A.O.B.:**

Cllr Pat McMahon, Chair, acknowledge that Covid 19 restrictions had limited the SPC meeting time availability and thanked everybody for their attendance and contribution to the meeting and wished everyone a happy Christmas 2020.

The meeting then concluded.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 **Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson**

 **Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 **Liam Conneally,**

 **Director of Economic Development.**