

**Minutes of Meeting of the Physical Development Strategic Policy Committee held on
Tuesday 16th November, 2021 at 3:30 pm in the Council Chambers,
Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.**

Present:

SPC Members

Cllr. J. Crowe, Chair
Cllr. P. O’Gorman
Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy
Cllr. I. Lynch
Cllr. A. O’Callaghan
Cllr L Grant
Mr. D. M. Wise
Ms. A Wheeler
Mr. P Hayes

Staff of Clare County Council

Ms. C. Kirby, Director of Physical Development
Mr. A Kelly, Chief Fire Officer
Mr. J Leahy, SE, Transportation
Mr. S Lenihan, SE, PMO
Mr. C Feeney, SE, Environment
Mr. L O’Connor, AO, Transportation
Mr. B Flynn, SEE, Environment
Ms. Maura McNulty, Executive Scientist

Apologies : Cllr. J Cooney, Ms. L O’Neill

Item 1 – Confirmation of Minutes of the SPC Meeting of 7th September, 2021.

The Minutes were proposed by Damon Mathew Wise and seconded by Cllr. Pat O’Gorman.

Item 2- Matters Arising

Cllr John Crowe, Cllr Colleran Molloy, Cllr O’Gorman and Cllr I Lynch congratulated Ennis Tidy Towns Committee on winning the Tidiest Town in Ireland. They thanked the volunteers, gardening section, outdoor staff, staff of Ennis MD and the support of Carmel Kirby, Director of Services, Physical Development on the huge volume of work undertaken to achieve Ireland’s Tidiest Town.

Carmel Kirby particularly thanked the volunteers and the community who worked together to achieve this goal. A cross directorate meeting of the Council staff was held with the Tidy Towns Committee 2 years ago to identify and deliver on particular projects. She said the approach to biodiversity reaped rewards this summer and she congratulated Ennis Tidy Towns on their achievement.

Cllr John Crowe welcomed Cllr Liam Grant and Theresa O’Donoghue to the Physical Development SPC.

Cllr L Lynch asked for an update on the West Clare Railway Greenway

Sean Lenihan responded by saying that the next period of public consultation will be held in early December and will include the public display of the 4 proposed routes and the suggested preferred route.

Sean also advised that all comments and suggestions from members of the public and all affected landowners would be welcomed at the next round of consultation in order to move towards developing a preferred route to take to the Statutory Consent stage.

Item 3 – Ruairí Ó Conchúir, LAWPRO Community Water Officer gave a presentation of the Overview of Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027.

The members thanked Ruairí for his presentation and a discussion ensued.

Cllr A O’Callaghan asked about the felling of forestry, the effect on fisheries and the 10 zones mentioned in his presentation and in particular Broadford and if Irish Water have a role to play here.

A Wheeler asked if Clare County Council and Irish Water could come up with a plan in relation to the 5 Clare towns mentioned in a recent EPA report regarding raw sewage.

Cllr J Crowe asked about a particular green plant growing near a river in Sixmilebridge.

Cllr C Colleran Molloy thanked Ruairí for the excellent presentation and wanted to make one point about the lack of progress in relation to wastewater going into rivers, lakes and sea. Is it time for a different approach in relation to funding of Irish Water, and should charges for water be considered as funding is the biggest obstacle?

Ruairí responded by saying

- The felling of forestry causes significant pressure as it leads to an increase in silt.
- Land drainage has a huge impact on fisheries.
- The EPA has identified a serious need for long term multi annual investment in wastewater.
- The green plant mentioned by Cllr J Crowe can be natural along a river walk.

C Kirby thanked Ruairí and complimented him and LAWPRO on all the hard work they have done in relation to the River Basin Management Plan. Clare County Council will respond at a local level to work with the EPA to rectify issues with water bodies. Water is our most precious resource and it needs to be protected. Carmel agreed that there is a need for greater investment in wastewater infrastructure.

C Feeney said that unsewered towns and villages pose a challenge for the Local Authority and the next County Development Plan. There is a need for more funding and when Irish Water do secure funding they deliver on projects and have made significant investments in County Clare water services infrastructure.

Item 4- Maura McNulty, Executive Scientist, Environment gave a presentation on the 2021 Code of Practice for Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems.

The members thanked Maura for a very comprehensive presentation and a discussion took place.

Maura confirmed that the main changes in the 2021 Code of Practice:-

- Allow for additional options now being acceptable for low permeability soils (percolation value 90 to 120) which include drip dispersal after mechanical aeration. This is a pressurised system that releases effluent through a network of pipes just beneath the surface. These specialised systems require expert design and installation and increased maintenance.
- Low-pressure pipe distribution – pressurised system that releases wastewater through pipes in shallow trenches beneath the surface in low permeability soils with percolation value of 75 to 90.
- Willow Bed Evapotranspiration systems followed by soil polisher filter.

I Lynch asked if more planning applications could now fall into a category and if a quick explanatory guide could be made available for people when applying for planning permission.

L Grant asked if it was used much in this county and maybe this was the solution we needed.

Maura responded that it's important to remember that every site is different and a site assessor is required. There is a link that exists already on the Clare County Council planning website ie: <https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/planning/applications/apply/before-you-apply/site-suitability-assessment/> where the required information can be found and this will be updated.

Item 5: Adrian Kelly, Chief Fire Officer gave a presentation on the Review of Fire & Emergency Operations Plan.

The members thanked Adrian for his very informative presentation and complimented him and his team all the hard work done by the Fire Service.

Cllr A O'Callaghan asked if the Fire Service would consider setting up apprenticeship courses for mechanics in the new workshop considering the vast knowledge and expertise the 2 current mechanics have. Also, the question of the conditions of fire hydrants around the county was raised by Cllr O Callaghan, are they accessible and in good condition for fire safety crews?

Cllr. L Grant asked if a Fire and Emergency Operations Plan is statutory? Have we adopted a new plan yet?

Cllr C Colleran Molloy mentioned about the danger derelict buildings posed, the fact that these buildings could be used to house people, however, fire regulations may be impeding the

development of these buildings. What can be done to address the major obstacles to bring these buildings out of dereliction? Also, are fire standards higher in Ireland than in Europe?

A Kelly responded by saying:

- Adrian confirmed that he has had discussions with the machinery yard in relation to apprenticeships.
- In relation to the conditions of fire hydrants, the Fire Service are currently piloting an app in North Clare which will eventually be rolled out across the county. When a fire hydrant is inspected, details are uploaded on the app and forwarded to Irish Water.
- The adoption of a Fire and Rescue Operations Plan is a reserved function. The current plan which was adopted in 2014 is still in place. Adrian gave a presentation in 2018 advising that there were no major policy changes and we are awaiting the outcome of 2 national matters.
- Fire and Safety Standards are designed to keep people and buildings safe.

C Kirby acknowledged the huge efforts made by retained fire fighters, turning out within 5 minutes of pagers going off. In relation to old buildings, Carmel spoke about a pilot study by Limerick City and County Council on Georgian Buildings. There are fire prevention systems that can be introduced into old buildings, they are complex systems and expensive but there are options available to bring old buildings back into use.

It was agreed that the current Fire & Emergency Operating Plan would be reviewed between now and next SPC meeting. If there are no significant changes at national level a subcommittee, as proposed by Cllr. Grant, may not be required.

Item 6. AOB's – C Kirby advised all participants that items under AOB have to be on agenda.

Cllr O'Callaghan – Update of CCTV footage been allowed to be used for identifying illegal dumping.

- **C Feeney** replied saying that the Circular Economy Bill is now at pre-legislative scrutiny stage before the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action. The Committee are working towards early enactment of the Bill to potentially allow local authorities to use CCTV, body cameras and other technologies that may come on stream to support them in their enforcement functions.

Cllr O'Callaghan – Where land has been given to Clare County Council by farmers or landowners to improve site lines at junctions, improve dangerous bends etc, is there a proper title taken out on these pieces of land?

- **L O'Connor** replied stating that most of the time its small scale works on parcels of land and it requires a land dedication agreement signed by the relevant landowner and the Council. The parcel of land remains in the ownership of the landowner. The dedication agreements have a public use of the land built into them. The Transportation Department are currently reviewing agreements.

Cllr L Grant – The provision of lifeguards at Clare’s “Big Beaches” full time in June for 2022 and into the future. This was the case for 2021 and it proved to be a busy and needed service during the month of June.

- **C Feeney** replied saying that the CE gave an undertaking to look at resources for 2022, no decision made as yet to provide lifeguards at Clare’s bigger beaches full time in June 2022.

Cllr I Lynch asked a further 4 further questions:

- 1. Kilrush Tidy Towns have asked for an update on the water pump for Kilrush?**

C Feeney responded by saying that this was a matter for the West Clare MD as the connection is in place.

- 2. Is the Kilrush Wastewater Treatment plant on track to start?**

C Feeney responded: Construction of the Kilrush Wastewater Treatment Plant project will commence during December 2021 with the setup of the site compound adjacent to the tidal tank location.

- 3. Will there be a filter lane on the N68?**

J Leahy responded by saying that this junction needed to be tightened up and that there will not be a filter lane.

- 4. In relation to the Active Travel Programme, is there any update on whether the funding will roll over to 2022?**

J Leahy responded by saying that the programme of work is huge, all areas are extremely busy however it is hoped to complete as many projects as possible by the deadline of 8th December, 2021. The funding will roll over to 2022.

Cllr John Crowe, Chair, offered his condolences on behalf of the Physical Development SPC to the Chief Executive, Pat Dowling on the death of his brother Sean.

Item 7 - Date of next meeting : Tuesday February, 15th 2022 at 3.30pm

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Cllr. John Crowe

Chairperson

Signed: _____

Liam O'Connor

Administrative Officer

Date: _____