

Minutes of Meeting of the Physical Development Strategic Policy Committee held on Tuesday 7th September, 2021 at 3:30 pm in the Boardroom and via Teams, 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
Ms. A Wheeler
Mr. D. M. Wise

Staff of Clare County Council

Ms. C. Kirby, Director of Physical Development
Ms. L. O’Neill, SEO, Ennis MD
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. G Reddan, A/SEE, PMO

Apologies : Cllr. J Cooney, Mr. P Hayes, Mr. A Kelly

Item 1 – Confirmation of Minutes of the SPC Meeting of June 9th, 2021.

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

Item 2- Matters Arising

Following on from a request by Cllr Joe Cooney at the June SPC meeting, John Leahy gave an update to members in relation to road marking. John outlined that there is a road network of 4,412km in the County. The TII have responsibility for the Motorway network and the remaining road network is maintained by the Council. There is no specific budget for road lining however as overlays are carried out on national and regional roads, other works including new studs, road lining, drainage and signage are also completed. The only funding mechanism for lining of regional and local roads not included in the annual Schedule of Municipal District Works is through own resources and the level of funding available is very limited. If there are areas of concern where lines have become faded these lines can be replenished and contact should be made with the relevant Municipal District office.

Item 3- Update on Greenway Project

Sean Lenihan gave a comprehensive update on the Greenway project. The development of the Greenway is a significant project for County Clare and is being developed in accordance with national and local policies including the Clare County Development Plan, Clare Rural Development Strategy, Clare County Tourism Strategy, Smarter Travel Policy, National Cycle Policy Framework and the Climate Action Plan.

The Greenway which will incorporate approximately 85km along the route of the former West Clare Railway, will provide a sustainable and fully accessible Greenway and will connect communities and other destinations along the agreed route. The high level objectives for the project are the provision of sustainable transport, encouraging and enabling modal shift, support economic and population growth, promote tourism in Clare, assist in achieving environmental targets and improve safety for transport users.

A number of reports and studies have been carried out to date and consultants were appointed in June 2021 to further develop the project. Stakeholder engagement has commenced with landowners, elected members, Dept of Transport, Rural Affairs and Agriculture, NTA, Sport Ireland, Failte Ireland, representative groups, Clare County Council directorates, OPW, An Taisce, NPWS and Bird Watch Ireland.

The estimated cost of the project is €60m. An initial allocation of €255,000 has been allocated from the Carbon Tax Fund 2020. This has allowed for a project brief, project appraisal, desktop constraints study and strategic assessment report for the entire scheme to be developed. The initial priority section of approximately 20km between Kilrush and Kilkee will be progressed first. Funding sources such as the Greenway Specific Fund, Rural Regeneration Development Fund and Active Travel will have to be identified to further develop the project.

An initial public consultation will take place in September and October with a preferred emerging route to be identified in November. Following this a 2nd public consultation phase will take place. It is envisaged that a planning application for the Greenway will be submitted in September 2022.

The SPC members thanked Sean for his presentation. In response to a query from Cllr. Pat O’Gorman, Sean Lenihan outlined that where the Council put in a piece of infrastructure the Council will insure or provide an indemnity as required. Meetings will be held with the IFA and landowners in due course, and landowners from other Greenway projects in Mayo and Waterford will be asked to outline their experience.

Cllr. Crowe requested that a Greenway from Shannon to Bunratty and Sixmilebridge would be developed and requested that Sean Lenihan would attend a Shannon Municipal District meeting to brief the councillors.

Item 4- Determine the merits of undertaking a review of community/academic led air quality analysis in urban settings and the success of any actions arising from same.

On foot of a notice of motion submitted by Cllr Johnny Flynn to the June meeting of Ennis Municipal District, Cyril Feeney gave a detailed presentation on air quality. The presentation outlined the current EU and National legislation governing air quality, the role of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and future actions to be undertaken. The EPA are the competent authority in the area of air quality and monitor a number of atmospheric pollutants including particulate matter (PM10 and PN 2.5), sulphur dioxide (SD), nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and nitrogen oxides (NOX). The main sources of these pollutants are from solid fuel and

transportation. The EPA currently monitor PM10, PM2.5 and SD at the Ennis Monitoring Station which is located in Drumbiggle. Currently air quality in Ireland complies with standards set out by the EU.

Clare County Council enforce smoky coal regulations under the Air Pollution Act 2012 and visit fuel merchants and suppliers to ensure compliance as well as advising members of the public. The Government also announced changes in relation to new standards for solid fuel which will come into effect in 2022. A climate change adaptation strategy has been adopted by Clare County Council and in accordance with national climate change policies, adaptation and mitigation measures will have to be adopted which will improve air quality. These measures will include smarter travel initiatives, increased use of electric vehicles and retrofitting of housing.

Cllr Pat O’Gorman expressed concerns in relation to fuel poverty and outlined that funding needs to be provided for retrofitting properties.

Damon Matthew Wise Au noted that the lack of a safe, clean electricity supply and outlined issues that people with disabilities encounter in getting tradesmen to repair heating systems.

Carmel Kirby noted that in relation to the original motion submitted on the subject, that air quality in Ennis currently does not exceed the thresholds set and that new standards in relation to solid fuels will come into place in 2022. In relation to the suggestion of bringing in outside expertise there may not be a need at this stage.

Cyril Feeney outlined that the EPA are tasked with monitoring air quality and while solid fuel burning is the primary issue, thresholds are not exceeded. Climate plans are being put in place which will be co-ordinated on a regional basis by CARO in conjunction with academic expertise from the likes of UCC.

Cllr Claire Colleran Molloy thanked Cyril for his presentation and noted that it was positive that air quality standards were being met.

Cllr. Johnny Flynn told the meeting that he submitted the motion out of public health concerns outlined by the HSE and the Royal College of Surgeons and expressed disappointment that a review of air quality in Ennis would not be taking place.

Item 5 - Date of next meeting : Tuesday November 16th, 2021

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Cllr. John Crowe

Chairperson

Signed: _____

Liam O'Connor

Administrative Officer

Date: _____