

BLESSINGTON AND DISTRICT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting held at St. Mary's National School, Blessington on Monday, 12 March 2012 at 8.00 p.m.

Present: List of attendees as per attached

Apologies: List of apologies as per attached

Guests: Noel Foster (Chairman) and Ben Dalton (Secretary), Hillbilly Tractor Run

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 February 2012 were proposed by Pat McGrath and seconded by Ruth Fitzsimons and signed by the Chairman. The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting.

The meeting followed a prepared agenda and dealt with the following issues -

1. Lake Walk

The Chairman briefed members on progress to date. Members were advised that the ESB had assisted by clearing certain hedgerows before 29 February. Members were also advised that the bird survey/habitat survey/archaeological fieldwork have now been completed and together with the designs will shortly be submitted to Wicklow County Council.

Thanks were expressed to the directors for assisting with the bank funding and members were also advised that a formal meeting of the directors of the trails company had been held last week. Members were further advised that the next steps are to secure the agreement of Wicklow County Council and a licence from ESB and then go to tender.

2. Meeting with Aldi

Pat Pidgeon has had discussions with Aldi who, through architects Barry Kelly of Carew Kelly Architects, has responded on behalf of Aldi. The issues raised concern both the St. Kevin's Trustees and the residents of Oak Drive as well as the Council and Aldi. It was agreed in the first instance that Forum member Ruth Fitzsimons, also Chairperson of Oak Drive Residents, would meet with Gilmer Hamilton (Forum member and member of St. Kevin's Trustees), to agree the joint issues and then, together with Councillor Ruttle, meet with the Council and then proceed to meet with Aldi. Gerry O'Neill raised issues which the Boxing Club is having with Aldi, particularly in relation to a retainer wall. The Boxing Club is not happy with the situation and is unable to use the new toilets. An engineer's report is due. The Boxing Club has received a grant of €25,000 from the Sports Council to help renovate the facility. David Irwin suggested that the meeting with Aldi should deal with both

the Boxing Club issue and the right of way issue and any other issues that come to hand, rather than have a continuous series of meetings with Aldi.

3. Crooksling Hospital

As advised at the last meeting, Gerry O'Neill stated that referrals are now being made from West Wicklow for day care and respite. A consultation process is in place at the moment and many letters of support have been received in respect of the long term facility. It was noted that the facility at Crooksling comprises 26 acres.

4. Christmas Lights

The Chairman advised that 30 businesses had responded to the Christmas lights appeal and contributions were received from Harvest Fare, AIB, Carmel Balfé, Sakura, R&H Lenses, Ulster Bank, Credit Union, JP & M Doyle, Brendan Hughes, Church of Ireland, Doyle Fox Solicitors, Anne Reid, John Cremin, Seamus Breen, Michael Sargent, Dr. Brendan O'Brien, Murphy Real Estate, Macari, Topaz, St. Joseph's Hall, Hennessy's Pub, Hennessy's Hardware, Blessington Bookstore, Cullinane's Opticians, Martin Craul, Lake's Pub, Maxol, Full Bloom Florists, Blessington Pharmacy and Grangecon Café. An amount of €3,000 was raised.

5. Theatre

Pat Winters reported on continuing plans to have concerts at the Theatre for the rest of the year. Brendan Grace will appear next, followed by Sinead O'Brien and the in April BYMDS has a production of "The King and I". There is no further news on the outstanding grant claim.

6. Issues raised with Councillor Ruttle

Thanks were expressed to Councillor Ruttle for responding today to matters raised in relation to road safety, lights at Crosschapel, Blessington Local Area Plan, Tidy Towns, new bridge at Lacken, Manor Kilbride graveyard extension, extension to water at Hempstown and extension of water to remaining areas of Oldcourt and this response is appended. It was agreed to revert to Councillor Ruttle for further information on the Safety Study presently being undertaken, while the Forum will make direct contact with the NRA in relation to lights at Crosschapel. The good news is the new bridge at Lacken will be commenced on 20 March, while it is noted that the CPO process for the Kilbride graveyard extension is in hand. In response to Noel Nolan, Gerry O'Neill stated that the Council have erected significant signs at the existing bridge at Lacken. Members thanked Wicklow County Council for the expeditious manner with which they had dealt with the situation in Lacken, as the Council did move quickly to endeavour to resolve matters following the severe flooding.

7. Dog fouling

Correspondence was before the meeting from a local resident complaining about the continuing issue of dog fouling. The resident had raised the issue of the street lights from the roundabout at Downshire Park and also the dog fouling problem. The question of the lights from Downshire Park to Dunnes Stores will be taken up with the management company,

while it was agreed, in relation to the dog fouling, that the Council would be asked if they could supply appropriate signage. A notice will also be included in the Parish Newsletter.

8. Community Directory

Members were thanked for their contributions to updating the new community directory. It was noted that approximately 100 people are required to assist in distributing the directory when it becomes available and volunteers should attend a meeting at the Church on Thursday 22 March with regard to volunteering to assist and knock on doors to hand out the directory.

9. Tree planting

Seamus Balfé reminded members that the Forum should arrange a tree-planting ceremony for Tree Week. An 8 foot beech tree has been arranged and it was suggested that this be planted at the Community College. The Community College Board will be asked at their meeting on 25 March if this can be arranged and the Forum will then be advised of a date and time. The residents of Deerpark were commended on their having planted, in recent years, 140 trees and 7 apple trees.

10. Cookehill

The meeting noted the appointment of a receiver to the company Cookehill. Members expressed their commiserations and thanks to Bill Mulrooney and Brendan Fitzsimons for their cordial and decent dealings with the community over the years since 1999. The question of the Heritage Park was raised and it will now be necessary for the Forum to communicate with the receiver to establish where matters stand. There was also a discussion on the question of town centre jobs and the need to check particularly on the Enterprise units and how they might be made available to encourage employment.

11. St. Patrick's Well

Arrangements are being made for the Community College to clean the area around St. Patrick's Well, however the question of the opposite wall was raised, which it is felt is in a dangerous condition. Members feel that the wall should really be taken down, and while this land is not the property of Wicklow County Council or the ESB, the owners will be advised of the position. The chairman pointed out that he had already raised this with the relevant owners last year.

12. Bus Shelter

Members were pleased to note that a bus shelter is expected to be in place around the end of May.

13. Environmental sub-committee

Jason Mulhall reported on progress since the last meeting. The Community College has commenced work on Dempsey's Lane clean-up and the question of lighting in this area will be taken up with Forum member, David Egar. A CE application for Tidy Towns has been submitted and news is awaited. The availability of potential grants from Wicklow County

Council is also being explored. The group is working on an outline plan for the next year and then the following year and so on. The group confirmed that the town will re-enter the Tidy Towns competition this year. There is a clean-up on Thursday afternoon from 3pm – 5pm where people can volunteer to assist in a quick tidy up.

14. Services Sub-committee

Lorcan McMahon advised on the group having met with Lorraine Gallagher of Wicklow County Council at the old library. The Council are happy to lease for a period of 4.99 years with renewable options. A set of keys is being made available to Lorcan's group and a proposal on renovation will be drafted for the Council. Clean up of the area around the building is being arranged initially.

15. Culture and Heritage Sub-group

The Culture and Heritage sub-group has met and has arranged 2.30pm on Saturday 14 April as the day for volunteers to meet for a walkabout and training for a panel to assist tourists around the town.

Seamus Balfe will be checking on the availability of funding from the Heritage Council for the erection of heritage signs at the various items of interest around the town.

16. Visit of 2012 Hillbilly Run representatives

Noel Foster and Ben Dalton of Hillbilly Run committee attended the meeting to advise of this year's plans. Points where help is needed are listed on the attached and were distributed at the meeting. The committee will look at a plan for the square for the day of the 24th and may also decide, if businesses agree, to close off the square from 6pm the previous evening. The Run is expected to arrive in the village as usual at 2pm. Ben Dalton confirmed that cyclists would be welcome to be on the run.

17. A.O.B.

- Gerry O'Neill asked if the matter of Glending could be included on the next meeting agenda.
- Gerry O'Neill also advised that the residents at Lake View, by agreement with the County Council, will shortly be able to have their back gardens extended and so deal with the issue of anti-social behaviour which has been prevalent in that area for a long time.

It was agreed by members that the next meeting would be held on 16 April 2012, being the third Monday, as the second Monday is a bank holiday.

This concluded the business of the meeting.