

Signed
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BLESSINGTON AND DISTRICT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting held at St. Mary's National School, Blessington on Monday, 10 September 2012 at 8.00 p.m.

Present: List of members as per attached

Apologies: List of apologies as per attached

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 July 2012 were proposed by David Egar, seconded by Noel Nolan and signed by the Chairman.

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

1. Tractor Run

Forum members erected the barriers at 7am on Sunday morning last and then stewarded the town square area for the morning. Thanks were expressed to John Coogan 7am, Joe Hanly 8am, Gilmer Hamilton 9am, Fintan Gilheany 10am and David Egar 11am, for their having stewarded the area. Thanks were expressed also to Forum member Michael Doyle for having co-ordinated arrangements at the Education Centre for the parade. Michael Doyle advised that it had been difficult at the Education Centre to arrange matters as the Education Centre was not open and this added to difficulties. Michael Doyle also advised that the previous practice of throwing sweets from the tractors has thankfully discontinued and was not in evidence at all this year. Forum members agreed to each contribute €5 at the next meeting to the Hillbilly Tractor Run 2012 charity in aid of Crumlin Children's Hospital.

2. Services Sub-committee

The Services Sub-committee is continuing discussions with Wicklow County Council in relation to the old library and members were advised details of the last correspondence of 22 June 2012 of Lorcan MacMahon, Chairman of the Services group, with Wicklow County Council. The Council has been advised of the local groups who have expressed a definite interest in use of the building. It is expected there will be further news at the next Forum meeting in October.

3. Culture and Heritage Sub-group

Seamus Balfe advised that the group is working on highlighting of the points of interest and that Aidan Cruce will be attending with him at the next Forum meeting to advise on matters.

4. Roundabout at Naas Road / Deerpark junction

Pat Pidgeon advised that work was expected to recommence at the roundabout last Monday. Pat Pidgeon has been in contact with HSA and advised members that he will again check with the HSA as to what is transpiring. Gerry O'Neill advised that he believes the matter will be rectified and that the local Engineer's office is endeavouring to get this work completed as soon as possible.

5. Theatre

Members were advised that matters discussed at the last Forum meeting in relation to the Theatre/School have been resolved amicably and the Theatre signs will be lighting on the occasion of events. The next event at the Theatre will be Culture Night on 21 September. Gerry O'Neill raised the question of the signage and what costs had been involved. It was explained that the accounts of the Theatre will be discussed by the directors and that subsequently any information in relation to costs incurred can be tabled.

6. Local Area Plan

The members were advised that submissions on the Local Area Plan must be with the Council by 6pm on Monday 1 October. It was agreed to convene a public meeting at the Community College on Wednesday 19 September at 8pm and to invite local Councillors and Council officials to attend should they wish. The meeting agreed that a sub-group comprising Liam Fay, Pat Pidgeon, Noel Nolan, Killian McGreal, John Coogan, Gerry O'Neill and Nuala Haughian would then endeavour to collate the views of the public meeting and report to the Forum members on Monday 24 September at 8pm in the GP Room of the National School. It was agreed to advise the public by the Parish Newsletter and by the erection of notices. The public will be advised that this is a large document and the notices will also advise as to how the document can be inspected.

7. Lake Walk

The Chairman read to members an update from John Horan advising of the delay in approval emanating from the Department of the Environment. John Horan advised as follows:

"On my last visit to the Forum on 9 July the position then was that County Wicklow Partnership had emailed us on 30 May as follows:

"Delighted to say that the Board approved your project to a max of €176,250 at last night's meeting, the procedure now is the Department 10 day check, once that has passed we will be in a position to provide a letter of offer".

Despite repeated calls to CWP and from CWP to the Department of the Environment no response was received until 30 July - a full two months later. They raised six separate queries including the seeking of written approval from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. This was in respect of the ringfort and ecological matters which had been fully cleared in the various Impact Assessments carried out in the springtime. On 17 August that Department wrote as follows:

"AS PREVIOUSLY INDICATED, the Department is satisfied with the documentation submitted addressing the issues of archaeology and nature conservation in the context of the

proposed project". They could not understand why the Department of the Environment was "putting us through this extra hoop".

Despite direct and indirect approaches to the Department of the Environment, CWP has confirmed that there are a number of projects awaiting the Minister's sign-off. I met with Minister Deenihan from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and his advisors on their recent National Heritage Week visit to Russborough and continue to work through them to get this matter moved on. I have also spoken to Deputy Timmins on a number of occasions and he is actively pursuing it also.

While all this is going on our selected Contractor is waiting anxiously to get on with the work and I will continue to keep the pressure on to break down this bureaucratic logjam.

As you know Michael we have submitted all the necessary documentation for the final element of our feasibility study grant claim to CWP and are awaiting receipt of these funds.

On the broader tourism front there is growing interest in the possibilities for walking and cycling tours in the Blessington Lakes area and I will continue to keep the interested parties informed on progress."

The Chairman advised in response to queries that John Horan had been fully confident that matters would have progressed by now, however the unexpected delay in having the matter dealt with by the Department of the Environment was not anticipated. John Horan is continuing efforts to have this cleared as quickly as possible.

8. Men's Shed

Frank Hanlon advised that a "Shed" location has been found in Troopersfield for the Blessington Men's Shed. Tools etc have been donated and the idea of manufacturing street and park furniture is being considered. More members are encouraged to attend.

9. Environmental Sub-committee

Jason Mulhall, Chairman of the Environmental Sub-committee, advised that 13 estates entered the Tidy Estates competition and that winners will be announced shortly. A voucher for places 1, 2 and 3 at a garden centre will be made available and an annual trophy. The meeting discussed an awards night and it was agreed that a sub-committee would come up with proposals for the Forum in this regard. Members Nuala Cashin, Ariadne Laurens-Conlon, Frank Hanlon and Michael Doyle agreed to consider the matter and report to the Forum on Monday 8 October with the intention being to have an awards night in Avon Rí or West Wicklow or some other venue on the weekend of 19/20 October.

Jason Mulhall also advised that the group hopes to meet shortly again with Declan Geraghty and to consider some action points around the town. The group is also hoping to have CWP funding in respect of a three year plan which would be collated by an external consultant.

Work at St. Patrick's Well needs to get under way as soon as possible as the end of September is the deadline re CWP funding. David Egar advised of successful discussions with the land owner bordering St. Patrick's Well and that work on the land owner's part

should be completed next week. The group is, at this juncture, awaiting clearance from insurers in order that Wicklow County Council are indemnified.

Jason Mulhall advised that the Tidy Towns results were out today and that Blessington scored 218 out of 400. This was the first entry since 2008 and was only prepared within the last three to four months. There are lots of items to improve and for the Thursday night helpers and the Sunday morning street helpers there will be an appreciation night in Kenny's Café on Thursday 20 September. Many thanks have been expressed to Denis Twomey for his efforts on the street and also to the CE Scheme workers, Christopher Reid, John Keogh and Paul McGuire.

10. A.O.B.

- Nuala Cashin and Gerry O'Neill advised the meeting of the sad passing of Christine O'Donnell, who had been kernel in setting up a suicide awareness group locally. Thankfully this work is being continued by Geraldine Cleary. Noreen Keegan-Kavanagh reminded everybody that this is Suicide Awareness Week.
- Liam Fay advised of correspondence received from Nessa Childers in regard to town twinning and Liam Fay agreed to represent the Forum at a meeting in the city this Friday. Nuala Haughian and Michael Doyle expressed an interest in accompanying Liam Fay to the meeting.
- Members discussed the "Gathering" plan for next year and members agreed to consider what ideas could be put forward for Blessington and district, such as a Blessington and District At Home Week. The matter will be on the agenda for upcoming meetings.
- Congratulations were passed to organisers of the 10km run held last week.
- Gerry O'Neill advised that the bus shelter should be in place on the street before Christmas.
- Noel Nolan advised of the need for a business directory.

This completed the business of the meeting.

Proposed by Schuyppa

Seconded Nuala Cashin

M. O. Doyle

Chairman 8 October 2012