

BLESSINGTON AND DISTRICT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting Held in St Mary's National School, Blessington on Monday 10 September 2018 at 7.30 p.m.

Present: List of members as per the attached
Apologies: List of apologies as per the attached

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 14 May 2018 and 11 June 2018 having been circulated by email were reviewed and proposed by Carmel Cashin and Michael Duggan and seconded by Brian Kane and Patsy Phibbs.

The meeting followed a prepared agenda and dealt with the following matters.

Correspondence

- A letter from a former Forum member Seamus Balfe asked the Forum to consider the possibility of an airport coach picking up at a point in Blessington Main Street, the route commencing in Enniscorthy and travelling along the N81 and linking with the M50. The correspondence will be circulated to members and discussed at the next meeting.
- A handout from Blessington Community College giving preliminary details of a Christmas Tractor Run proposal to support "Habitat Volunteering." This volunteering project allows individuals from different schools join an annual Easter build in Zambia or Romania and this would be a fundraising effort towards that project. Members were advised that representatives of the Community College may attend the next Forum meeting in October seeking support.
- An email from a local resident advising of the new Dublin Bus services plans for linking to Tallaght and from Tallaght to the City. Charlie Brophy advised in relation to this project that it should give a much improved service although Joe Hanly advised that travel time in the link from Tallaght to the City maybe greater than anticipated. Again members will revert at the next meeting with their views.
- An email from Avon Rí advising of a branded bicycle repair station to be situated at Avon Rí and possibly at two other locations in the town. This would allow cyclists to be assisted where they have bicycle punctures.
- A local resident has emailed regarding the ESB clearing forestry between Blessington and Russborough and members were advised of a reply received on behalf of the resident from Deputy Pat Casey. The Forum awaits a copy of the felling licence which will be circulated to members as soon as received. The ESB have advised that the works taking place are preliminary ground works to facilitate the removal of commercial forestry at the location and a number of other locations around the reservoir over the next couple of months.

CCTV

- Members were advised that a schedule of outstanding tasks to be completed by An Garda Síochána, Wicklow County Council and the Forum has now been drafted with a view to having the CCTV project "shovel ready" for presentation to the Department of Justice for funding in November. Members were advised that letters of support will be sought from local TD's and Councillors and from businesses.

- Carmel Cashin raised the question of the type of camera to be installed in the vicinity of Glending, it was agreed that the Chairman will ask the CCTV Consultant to clarify by email the type of camera envisaged (fixed v 360°) and this reply will be circulated to members.
- Members requested that in the event of a camera being located close to a housing estate that residents should be advised of what is planned.

Greenway.

- Members were advised that the National Strategy on Greenways has been published and WCC will now make an application for funding by 30 November 2018. Members were advised that WCC have set up a sub-committee of which John Horan is a member. Members were pleased to learn that the County Manager Frank Curran has taken over as Chair of Wicklow Tourism which should be a major boost to tourism projects in the County.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

- Members were advised of the amounts spent on the following.
Tourism, signage, website, interpretative panels, QR codes.
Seating, Biodiversity and planting schemes
Sli na Slainte route
Outdoor gym equipment
Health Check, Building Maintenance, Paint Schemes
- Liam Fay advised of the necessity to have content on the website and that members should endeavour to forward information particularly on the heritage trails so they can be uploaded onto the website.
- Charlie Brophy advised in relation to Sli na Slainte route that finalisation of the brochure and the erection of the signposting remain to be completed.
- Liam Fay reminded members that there will be a monthly cost for the website which must be borne in mind going forward.

Local Area Plan.

- The Chairman reported that approximately 50 people had attended the public meeting on 3 September at the Coimin Centre and thanks were expressed to Charlie Brophy, Liam Fay, Michael Doyle and John Horan for their time expended in preparing for the meeting and advising the public on what was in the 2013-2019 Plan. Members were advised that Jason Mulhall is presently collating the views from the meeting and these will be brought to the next Forum meeting with a further public meeting then envisaged.

Cogs.

- Members were thanked for their support of the Cogs and noted that Jason Mulhall has already indicated that it was pleasing to have so much support from Forum and Tidy Towns members.

Old Library Building

- Members were reminded that Blessington & District Forum Old Library Limited is the landlord of the Old Library building where problems have recently been encountered with the sewerage system and exterior wall. It was noted that the sewerage problem is being dealt with by Irish Water while in relation to the wall problem this had been directed by WCC to the area engineer.

Tidy Towns.

- The following Forum members indicated their continuing availability for the Main Street Sunday morning rota.

Eamon Kelly, Noreen Keegan Kavanagh, Michael Duggan, Noel Murphy, Catriona Cullen, Noel Nolan, Michael Doyle, Charlie Brophy, Pat Conlon, Michael Sargent and Eileen Shirran.

- Noel Nolan asked that other Forum members consider helping out also as we should have more than eleven Forum members involved.

Twinning.

- The Chairman advised of an email received from WCC Municipal District on 27 June 2018 requesting the views of Blessington & District Forum in relation to Blessington Twinning Committee's proposed twinning project between Blessington and O'Neill City, Nebraska, USA. The Chairman advised that a reply had issued to the Municipal District to the effect that the Forum would not have a meeting until 10 September 2018 but that in the meantime it would be helpful for discussions at the September meeting if members could be furnished with more details such as –

History and demographics of O'Neill City
Relationship to Blessington/Wicklow/Ireland
Benefits to Blessington and O'Neill City – Tourism, business exchange programmes
Costs involved and who will fund the programme.

- Michael Duggan advised that this referral by the Municipal District to the Forum should in fact have been to the Town Team
- Michael Duggan explained that approximately 12 months ago a local group of six people (independent of the Forum) had come together and set up a committee with a view to twinning with O'Neill, Nebraska. This committee had met the Municipal District and agreed funding of €1000 together with further funding of €1000 from Heritage Ireland. The committee are launching the twinning on 9 November in the Coimin Centre and in the meantime a leaflet will be distributed to every household.
- Members agreed that this was not a Forum initiative and it was agreed that WCC Municipal District would be advised accordingly.

Christmas Lights.

- Members were advised that the annual community estates collection will be circa 20 October 2018.
- Members were advised that WCC are not in a position to deal with the ESB source at the monument at the moment and the Forum will deal directly with the ESB instead.

Theatre.

- With only two directors at the theatre at present Michael Sargent and Pat Winters, members will consider requesting more persons to act as directors.
- Members were advised that Michael McLoughlin has resigned from the Tramway Theatre Management Committee.

Forum Secretary.

- Liam Fay asked if the agreement with local FAS office in relation to a secretary could be reactivated.

Town Team.

- The Chairman advised that the Town Team will be following up on the CCTV application and the Town Health Check. The question of allotments will be mentioned at the next meeting of the Town Team.

Burgage Castle.

- Madge Tyrrell advised members of a research completed by Tristan Geoghan some years back in relation to Burgage Castle and that efforts should be made to preserve what remains of the historic building. Madge Tyrrell is liaising with WCC Heritage Department and it was agreed that the Chairman would liaise with CWP in regard to a feasibility study.

Disability, Age Friendly, Healthy Blessington.

- Andra Coogan Johnston advised members of the upcoming Make Way Day on 26 September 2018 when KARE will be taking part in this initiative around Main Street.
- Andra also agreed to liaise with Pieta House on behalf of the Forum in relation to an out service in Blessington for mental awareness.

Delegation

Community Campaign for pool for West Wicklow.

- Jane Nolan, Marie McNally, Sue Rossiter and Deirdre McCormack joined the meeting to advise details of the campaign presently underway. Members were very supportive of the campaign and in particular that the pool should be located in Blessington.
- Members were advised that the village of Clara has a similar community pool to what is envisaged for Blessington.
- Members were advised that a feasibility study is key to the project and finding funds to support the project are being researched from the Rural Regeneration Fund, a Sports Council Grant and other available grant sources.
- The committee carried out a pool usage survey in August 2018 and have noted that 97% of the respondents said they would use a community swimming pool if there was one in West Wicklow. The committee have also noted the support of TD's particularly Simon Harris who advised that funding would be available. The Forum will be assisting through its submissions on the Local Area Plan.

AOB.

- Pat Conlon proposed a vote of sympathy supported by all members for Frank O'Neill, Santry Hill who died recently and who made valuable contributions to the community and in particular the Theatre.
- Michael Doyle advised that a report at the next meeting would be available on the Dame Ninette de Valois project and Michael thanked everybody for their great assistance with the Festival event.
- Pat Conlon was congratulated on his efforts for Heritage Night in Hollywood recently.
- Carmel Cashin advised that there is presently an online petition in respect of the N81, members were advised that the N81 Committee had met Shane Ross but it appears this project is not a current priority with the Minister.
- Michael Duggan requested that members set up a Finance Committee at the next meeting to help fund our ongoing activities.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Proposed: Noel O'Leary
Seconded: Anita Moroney