

Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

Ordinary Meeting

Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District

10.00a.m, 05th September 2024, Duleek Civic Offices

Leas Cathaoirleach, **Councillor Wayne Harding** presided.

Councillors Present: Stephen McKee, Sharon Tolan, Geraldine Keogan, Carol Lennon, Maria White

Councillors Present via Zoom: Paddy Meade

Apologies/Absent:

Officials in Attendance:

Director of Service: Fiona Lawless

Executive Engineer: Eoin McNally

Meetings Administrator: Áine Bird

Assistant Staff Officer: Stephen Carey

Cathaoirleach Paddy Meade advised that he had to attend another meeting and therefore the Leas Cathaoirleach was chairing the meeting.

1.0 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2024 were confirmed on the proposal of **Councillor Sharon Tolan** and **Councillor Carol Lennon**.

2.0 Matters arising from the Minutes

Councillor McKee enquired if there was any update regarding a request for Uisce Eireann to attend a meeting.

Councillor White asked if there was any response to the letter issued to the Minister for Justice.

Officials responded that Uisce Eireann are due to meet with members prior to the next full council meeting and that no response had been received from the Ministers office. Cllr White asked for a copy of the letter to be circulated.

3.0 Expressions of Sympathy and Congratulations

- Sympathy was extended to the family of the late Joan Lowthe, Duleek

Congratulations were extended to:

- Cllr Sharon Tolan on her nomination as a general election candidate
- Shane Cassells on his retirement as Senator and his service as a local councillor.
- Cathal Doyle on his performance in the Paris Olympics.
- All students returning to school.

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4.0 Statutory Business

4.1 Transportation

4.1.1 To receive an update on the Default Speed Limit for Rural Local Roads.

Stephen Shortall, Engineer, Transportation presented an update on the implementation of the new Rural Local Roads Default Speed Limit as per legislation enacted in April 2024. He said that variations to the Default Speed Limits will be permitted by way of byelaws and the creation of Special Speed Limits in accordance with the guidelines. He said that existing Special Speed Limits will remain in place.

The members were advised that a phased rollout will commence with the new 60km/h default speed signage installed by the end of November 2024 and the review of the speed limit byelaws will commence in 2025 and be finalized in 2026.

The members welcomed the reduction to the speed limits. They enquired if traffic calming measures can still be put in place when the new speed limits are in place.

Stephen Shorthall, engineer responded and advised that traffic calming measures can still be implemented.

4.1.2 To receive a Progress Report on works undertaken/planned for Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District.

The report that circulated in advance was noted and the following raised:

- Overgrown hedges on approach road to Drogheda where Eir carried out works.
- Dog bins required along the new footpath in Donacarney and from Grangerath along the Dublin Road.
- Updating of road markings needed on the Duleek to Drogheda Road and Julianstown to Drogheda Road.
- Rumble strips needed on Abbey Road, Duleek.
- To include Duleek on the Safe Routes to School, scheme.
- To allow the overflow carpark in Laytown to remain open.
- Would like a visit to the new Library, Bettystown.

4.2 Environment

4.2.1 To provide an update on the Dune Management Plan

Larry Whelan, SEO, Environment provided an update on the plan which also addressed several motions in relation to the dunes.

The Council has been working in collaboration with National Parks & Wildlife (NPWS) for some time now on the preparation of a Visitor Access & Conservation Management Plan for the Mornington Dunes System. The dunes lands are almost exclusively in private ownership.

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The preparation of the plan arises from increasing damage being caused to the Dunes system by vehicular and pedestrian traffic, camping, team sports training, fires and trampling/sliding down dune faces. Such activities lead to the erosion of dunes vegetation and threatens wildlife.

Such activities have been the subject of complaints by members of the public and including complaints to the EU as the Mornington Dunes are part of a designated EU conservation area with SAC/SPA protection status -responsibility for such designations resting with the NPWS.

The main targets of the draft Visitor Access and Conservation Management Plan are to restore the Dune Habitats, increase vegetation cover, improve access and to regulate parking arrangements.

As part of the preparation of the draft plan a public consultation process was initiated and included an information day held in a local school in December 2023 which was well attended by residents and interested stakeholders.

The draft plan and the proposed measures therein are currently the subject of assessment by the Environmental Assessments Unit within the NPWS and prior to initiation of the planning application process which may be necessary for such works due to the protection status afforded to the dunes.

Notwithstanding the plan preparation process, the Council have been actively involved in various measures to protect these dunes and particularly measures that serve to prevent vehicular access over the fragile dune system. Boulders have or are being positioned on a temporary basis at the locations shown on the map. Other measures include:

- Enforcement of the Foreshore Bye Laws 2010 as amended and other restrictions pertinent to an SAC – under such regulations it is not permitted to linger, picnic, play sport, exercise, light fires, camp or undertake other potentially harmful activities in the dunes.
- The Beach Wardens and the Gardai have been asked to increase patrols in the area, particularly in relation to the use of the area for tents/camping, contrary to the Foreshore Byelaws and SAC protection measures.
- Improved signage including No Camping, No Lighting Fires, No BBQ signs.
- Keep off the Dunes signs, aimed at pedestrians and training groups.
- Writing to all local sporting clubs in Meath and Louth requesting that desist from training in the dunes and endeavoring
- to raise public awareness around the value of sand dunes, how dunes are formed and the potential damage that can be caused to dunes from human activity. While most clubs have complied with this request it has been necessary to issue reminder letters to a few.

5.0 Notice of Questions

5.1 Submitted by Councillor Stephen McKee

“Can Meath County Council please provide a detailed update on what actions have been taken since the flooding events in 2023 to protect homes and businesses in the East Meath area and furthermore, to outline what maintenance works are planned for the

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rest of this year to deal with potential flooding in addition to any news on flood relief projects for the general area?"

Response:

David Keyes, SEE Environment provided the following update:

Following on from the Flood events in Bettystown and Mornington in August and October 2023, the OPW engaged RPS Consultants to analyse and report on the events including the gathering of all relevant data on the events, to update the hydrology and modelling for the contributing catchments and streams in the area and to recommend measures to manage /alleviate such flooding events in the future.

RPS have completed stage one of the report which was the gathering of all relevant data. They are currently working on the Hydrology and Modelling of the contributing catchments and watercourses which will be completed in Q3 2024, this will be followed by the recommendations /options to complete the overall report. It is expected that the overall report will recommend several flood relief projects for the general area.

In the meantime, maintenance works were carried out on the Mornington, Northlands, Pilltown and Donaghacarne watercourses late last year as recommended in the initial reporting. Similar maintenance works will be carried out before the end of this year to minimise any flood impacts. Please note that the readiness to react to future flood events has been strengthened by the acquisition of new pumps and increased stores of sandbags. The Council has been in contact with the Management company of the most affected estate in relation to flood maintenance issues noted during site visits.

The response was noted.

5.2 Submitted by Councillor Carol Lennon

"Access is still available to cars onto special areas of conservation, Mornington, and I ask that this be restricted by way of the installation of a small number of low steel barriers thus prohibiting car access on a number of existing tracks."

Response:

The Council are collaborating with National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) who appointed Consultants to prepare an overall Management Plan for the dunes system in Mornington and designed to regenerate and protect these dunes from damage being caused by vehicular traffic and sporting clubs using this amenity for training purposes. The draft plan which was the subject of extensive public consultation is currently the subject of ecological assessment by the NPWS however pending the completion of this process the Council are putting in place measures which are designed to prevent vehicular access to the dune system.

The response was noted.

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6.0 Notice of Motions

6.1 Submitted by Councillor Stephen McKee

“That Meath County Council engages with the NTA and commits to the inclusion of the following local bus transport proposals to better serve the public transport needs of East Meath residents as part of the Local Transport Plan for Drogheda & East Meath.

- *An extra bus stop onto the D4 and/or D5 Drogheda Town-East Meath Bus Service to include Donacarney.*
- *An extension to the Drogheda 173S Town Service to serve the R108 road in County Meath and local housing estates such as Bryanstown Wood and Lagavooren Manor.*
- *A new regular D6 service to link in with the existing D4 and D5 service at Colpe serving Duleek, Donore and the Beamore Road.”*

Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded, and considered:

The responsibility for the provision of bus stop infrastructure is a matter for the relevant bus operators and the National Transport Authority (the Authority) in the first instance. Meath County Council provides assistance to the National Transport Authority in respect of the delivery of the sustainable infrastructure, such as the project management of the construction works relating to bus stops and those necessary to facilitate the erection of the bus shelters by the Authority’s bus shelter installation contractor. While Meath County Council periodically discusses representations received in relation to new stops and services with the NTA , we recommend that these matters are raised with the NTA directly as they manage all contracts for public transport services, operate the licence regime for commercial bus operators; have responsibility for Rural transport services that are provided through a network of Local Link businesses; and, plan new and enhanced services including “Connecting Ireland”. Given their statutory responsibilities in relation to public transport they are best placed to assess demand for enhanced and new bus services.

All requests for new bus stops at locations in County Meath should therefore be directed to the National Transport Authority. Public representatives can send queries via email to oireachtasliaison@nationaltransport.ie

Alternatively, written communications can be made to:

National Transport Authority

Dún Scéine

Harcourt Lane,

Dublin 2, D02 WT20

The notice and response were noted on the proposal of **Councillor Stephen McKee** and seconded by **Councillor Sharon Tolan**.

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The members were advised that the NTA have requested a meeting to discuss their plans and any issues they may have. A date has yet to be confirmed.

6.2 Submitted by Councillor Stephen McKee

“That Meath County Council urgently review the car parking situation in Bettystown and commit to providing additional beach and/or beachfront parking to help local businesses, increase visitors and footfall to the beach and improve beach access for the elderly and those with additional needs.”

Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded, and considered:

The removal of vehicular parking from Bettystown beach saw the retention of a small number of parking bays at the Seaview Terrace entrance to the amenity, these priority parking areas are for persons with additional needs and older persons, ‘Blue Badge’ and ‘Age Friendly’ signs are in place at this location. Most visitors are respectful of the priority parking needs; additional messaging can be targeted at beach users to reinforce this message.

Upon completion of the library building the existing parking spaces, including a ‘blue badge’ parking space will be made available again.

2024 saw the reinstatement of Bettystown beach as a Blue Flag beach. Blue flag criteria set out specific conditions around Environmental Education and Information Provision, Water Quality, Environmental Management and Safety and Services; criteria relating to access to the beach prohibits vehicle access except for emergency vehicles, safety vehicles or vehicles involved in cleaning, additionally, sustainable means of transportation should be promoted to the beach area, including public transport, car-sharing and active travel.

There are free and paid parking options available to visitors to Bettystown and Laytown beaches with various links to the foreshore from the R151. The R151, running along the coastline, and R150 (Eastham Road) is serviced by several bus routes, some of which provide access to Laytown Train Station.

The proposed public realm plans for Bettystown and Laytown are focussed on more people centric and accessible village centres with improved pedestrian movements including enhanced links to the beach area, these plans, subject to available funding, will also include more organised parking to reflect the enhanced pedestrian permeability.

The notice and response were noted on the proposal of **Councillor Stephen McKee** and seconded by **Councillor Carol Lennon**.

CLlr McKee introduced the motion and stated that accessibility by families, older persons

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and persons with disabilities needs to be addressed to increase footfall to the beach and

asked that some parking on the beach be looked at.

CLlr Lennon supported the motion saying that the beach is not accessible to all.

CLlr Tolan stated that she agreed to the banning of cars off the beach. She said that cars are being parked all day on the street and suggested on street short term parking.

CLlr White said that accessibility to the beach is an issue and suggested a shuttle bus for children with disabilities and short-term parking be considered.

Larry Whelan, Environment advised that the public realm plans for Laytown Bettystown will look at parking however he said that submissions received are in favour of the current situation on the beach.

6.3 Submitted by Councillor Maria White

“That the Council take immediate action to protect the Mornington SAC from further fire damage by installing boulders past the ‘car park’ at the Maiden’s tower to prevent vehicles from entering the SAC.”

Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded, and considered:

Meath County Council are currently proposing to have boulders installed at Mornington to prevent vehicles accessing the SAC. The Council are awaiting permission from the landowners to carry out this work.

The notice and response were noted on the proposal of **Councillor Maria White** and seconded by **Councillor Sharon Tolan**.

CLlr White introduced the motion and enquired why the barriers were not installed during the summer months to prevent further damage.

CLlr Tolan supported the motion and said that this has been an ongoing issue with some landowners not engaging to protect the dunes. She welcomed the temporary boulders but said a permanent solution is needed.

David Keys Engineer advised that the council were awaiting permission from the NPWS and the landowner to install the boulders which are a temporary measure and that efforts will continue to locate an overflow carpark for this area.

6.4 Submitted by Councillor Maria White

“We call on Meath County Council to consider the requirement for a retained fire service in the Laytown Bettystown MD.”

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Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded, and considered:

Meath County Council provide a Fire Service in the Laytown Bettystown area through a response from Drogheda Fire Station, supported by second and subsequent responses from other Meath County Council Fire Stations. This is a similar response as the rest of the county, with the first response being from the closest Fire Station and subsequent responses from other Meath County Council Fire Stations. The response times in the Laytown Bettystown area are in line with best practice and the Council has no plans to increase the numbers of Fire Stations in the county.

The notice and response were noted on the proposal of **Councillor Maria White** and seconded by **Councillor Carol Lennon**.

Cllr White introduced the motion and said with the population growth in the coastal region over the last number of years and with this area located between two county fire services that there is now a need to consider a fire station for the district.

Fiona Lawless, Director advised that the council has already increased the number of fire stations, staffing and wages in the County and has no plans to provide a station in the Laytown Bettystown MD. She said there are issues with the service or the response times.

6.5 Submitted by Councillor Carol Lennon and Geraldine Keogan

“We call on Meath County Council & National Parks and Wildlife Service to work collaboratively on the protection of the dunes along our coastline and undertake an ecology study on the access road to the east lighthouse area to ascertain if there is any reason to inhibit the development of suitable car parking along this area.”

Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded, and considered:

The Council are collaborating with National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) who appointed Consultants to prepare an overall Management Plan for the dunes system in Mornington and designed to regenerate and protect these dunes from damage being caused by vehicular traffic and sporting clubs using this amenity for raving purposes. The draft plan which was the subject of extensive public consultation is currently the subject of ecological assessment by the NPWS however pending the completion of this process the Council are putting in place measures which are designed to prevent vehicular access to the dune system.

The notice and response were noted on the proposal of **Councillor Carol Lennon** and

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seconded by **Councillor Geraldine Keogan**.

Cllr Lennon introduced the motion and stated that this is an ongoing issue for several years and said that a more permanent solution is now needed.

6.6 Submitted by Councillor Carol Lennon and Geraldine Keogan

“We call on Meath County Council & National Parks and Wildlife Service to carry out immediate repairs to the access road and parking area to the east lighthouse area due to health and safety issues that exist currently for motorists, and pedestrians.”

Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded, and considered:

The Council are collaborating with National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) who appointed Consultants to prepare an overall Management Plan for the dunes system in Mornington and designed to regenerate and protect these dunes from damage being caused by vehicular traffic and sporting clubs using this amenity for raining purposes. The draft plan which was the subject of extensive public consultation is currently the subject of ecological assessment by the NPWS however pending the completion of this process the Council are putting in place measures which are designed to prevent vehicular access to the dune system.

The notice and response were noted on the proposal of **Councillor Carol Lennon** and seconded by **Councillor Geraldine Keogan**.

Cllr Lennon introduced the motion and said that there is an ongoing problem with parking in the area and stated that a solution is needed.

David Keyes responded that with the temporary boulders being put in place, parking is now restricted. He said that as part of the overall plan the council is looking at putting in a dedicated turning area however permission is required from the landowner and the NPWS.

7.0 Correspondence

There was none.

8.0 Any Other Business

There were interventions from Councillors Stephen McKee and Carol Lennon.

Matters raised included the following:

- Enquired on an update from the Transportation SPC regarding extending the Gritting

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routes to Schools.

- Referred to the temporary walking verge on the Donacarnev to Colpe road.
- Asked that road safety signage be erected to alert motorists approaching the playground on the Navan Road to Duleek.
- Referred to overgrown hedges in Mornington.
- Sought an update to a one-way system at the Tribe Restaurant, Duleek.
- Enquired when the by-pass will commence for Julianstown.
- Referred to the cleaning of the public toilets in Bettystown & Laytown and enquired if a report was available.

The engineer advised that he would respond to the queries through the members rep's portal.

The meeting concluded at 12pm.

Signed:

Cathaoirleach