

**Minutes of the New Ross Municipal District Monthly Meeting  
held on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024 in the Tholsel, Quay St., New Ross**

**Presiding:** Councillor Anthony Connick

**In Attendance:** Councillor John Fleming  
Councillor Michael Sheehan  
Councillor Michael Whelan  
Councillor Pat Barden  
Councillor Bridin Murphy

**Officials Present:**

Alan Fitzhenry – District Manager  
Eamonn Hore - District Director  
Padraig Lyng – Senior Executive Engineer  
David Murphy - Acting Executive Engineer  
Martina Donoghue – AO Housing (Teams)  
Eadaoin Kavanagh – CO  
Fran Ronan – Sports Co-ordinator  
Georgina Gaule- Community Sports Development Officer  
Ian Plunkett- Executive Technician  
Niamh Lennon – Executive Planner (Teams)  
Special projects (Teams)

**Others Present:** David Looby New Ross Standard

**Apologies:** Melissa Goff – SSO Environment

Standing orders were suspended to allow presentations on New Ross Community Activity Hub 2024 and the National Septic Tank Inspection Programme.

This was proposed by Cllr Murphy and Cllr Whelan.

**Presentation on New Ross Community Activity Hub 2024**

A presentation was given by Georgina Gaul, Sports Active Section who then responded to questions from the members.

Cllr Whelan thanked Georgina for her presentation and welcomed her to New Ross. He questioned if the initiative is totally town based.

In relation to this initiative, it will be initially New Ross as this is the hub, but assured the district will be an extension of this.

Cllr Fleming invited Georgina to Clonroche and said she is always welcome to the area.

Cllr Barden thanked Georgina for the presentation. He enquired about what activities would be available in other areas. He also questioned what budget the hub had and asked if they supported individuals.

The hub has done and will continue to do needs analysis to determine the best route for each area. The hub is funded for 5 years, they are currently in year two of this 5-year plan. The main funding is for the coordinator which is key to the success of the programme. Its main function is to bring physical activities into communities in both the young and old.

Cllr Sheehan congratulated Georgina on her new role and questioned what age friendly strategy the hub has in place.

The current programmes rolled out are 'Families and young' and 'Chronic illness' groups. They have also made connections with Active Retirement and are hoping they can integrate added elements to enhance what is already in place. They will also be in discussions with the group to ask what needs they have that the hub can assist with.

Cllr Murphy stated that she is on the steering committee of Healthy Wexford and feels there is a definite need for the hub to move out into rural areas and the district.

Cllr Connick thanked Georgina and said they were all looking forward to working with her. He asked her to share her contact details with the councillors so they could keep in touch.

### **Presentation on the National Septic Tank Inspection Programme**

A presentation was given by Ian Plunkett, Executive Technician in Environment Section who then responded to questions from the members.

Cllr Whelan & Cllr Fleming congratulated Ian on the work to date and stated it was not an easy job. Cllr Fleming raised his concerns about areas where people hold discharge licences and water quality in the area could deteriorate as a result.

Cllr Murphy reiterated concerns from the public that they misunderstood the grant system, so she was delighted to see the flyer with clear, concise information.

Cllr Sheehan stated he felt the last grant was very unworkable, so he was glad to see the changes. He will be encouraging people to register their tanks and hopes this will solve many problems.

Cllr Barden said he was delighted to see an incredible increase in the grant. He did voice his concerns that the homeowner may find it difficult to pay for the works upfront and that the grant would be paid to them rather than the contractor.

## **Sympathies**

Sympathies were given by all the Members to Michelle Duffin, NRMD and her family on the death of her Dad Michael Duffin, Ballyfarnogue. They also extended their sympathies to Mick McCormack and his wife Kay on the death of kay's dad, John Furlong, Templenacroha.

Cllr Connick and Cllr Sheehan extended sympathies to the family of Dick Bennett, Donard, Anthony Griffin, Nunnery Lane, Michael Lawlor, Berkely and Marie Goss (nee Delaney) formerly of Ard na Greine, New Ross.

Cllr Whelan and Cllr Fleming extended sympathies to the family of Rev. Fr. P. Nolan, Duncannon.

## **Congratulations**

Cllr Connick congratulated Tullogher Rosbercon on their first ever All Ireland Junior Hurling Championship win with an eleven point lead over St. Catherines.

Cllr Connick also congratulated New Ross Boat Club on their 24-hour marathon in aid of The Grow mental health peer support group.

Cllr Connick also wished Sean Connick all the best in his new role as Chair of The New Ross Chamber of Commerce.

Cllr Barden congratulated Kai Butler of Duncannon on his amazing win in the U-16 World Championship for angling.

Cllr Barden also congratulated swimmer Evan Bailey on his several record-breaking wins recently.

Cllr Barden also congratulated New Ross Educate Together National School pupils on their recent show 'Rising Up' to a packed audience at St. Michaels Theatre.

All Councillors wished Tom Enright the best of luck for the future and congratulated Eddie Taffe on the proceeding interim position.

All councillors wanted to wish the best of luck to the district with the upcoming Lama awards in which The High Hill Norman Garden and the Emigrant Park have been shortlisted.

## **1.0 Confirmation of Minutes**

### **1.1 Monthly Meeting –**

The 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 Minutes were proposed as presented by Cllr Murphy and seconded by Cllr Sheehan.

## **Matters Arising**

N/A

## **2.0 Consideration of Reports and Recommendations.**

### **2.1 District Managers Report**

The District Manager delivered his report and responded to queries raised by the Members.

### **Arts & Amenities and Residents Association Grants 2024**

The 2024 Arts & Amenity and Residents Association Grants have been advertised in the newspapers and on the Council's website, since announcing them at the January Meeting.

Applications can be made online, or a form can be requested from the Tholsel reception. **Reminder that the closing date is this coming Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February at 5.00pm.**

The report with the allocations for both grants will be brought to the earliest possible meeting, for approval by the Members.

### **Civic Awards Evening 2024**

The Civic Awards Evening, where we recognise the outstanding achievement of individuals and groups within the district over the last number of years, will be held in mid/late April in the Brandon House Hotel.

This year as agreed, we are requesting three nominations per Councillor, of an individual or group of individuals. An individual will be seated at a table of 8 while a group can be accommodated with 2 tables of 8. All nominations by Councillors to be in by 8th March 2024.

It promises to be a special evening for the recipients and their families and is fitting that their achievements should be honoured by the New Ross Municipal District.

### **LAMA Awards**

Two New Ross District projects, the High Hill Norman Garden and the Emigrant Park, have been shortlisted for the 2024 All Ireland Community & Council Awards on behalf of LAMA. The ceremony takes place in Dublin this coming Saturday and we have our fingers crossed for a win!

## **EVENTS**

### **US Presidents Day 2024**

Originally established in 1885, US Presidents' Day was initially a celebration and recognition for the first president of the United States, George Washington. The holiday eventually became more encompassing to include and honour all United States presidents from the past to the present.

In honour of Presidents' Day, the White House Historical Association, a partner to the White House, has facilitated the laying of wreaths at presidential statues, monuments, and busts across the world, to celebrate American presidents and their connection to the world outside of the United States.

Following a visit to New Ross last year by the current President of the White House Historical Association, this is the first year that New Ross will hold an event and join others around the world to lay a wreath at the statue of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy in New Ross. The event is Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February at 11am at the JFK statue on the Quay and will feature the singing of national anthems, a speech by Cathaoirleach Anthony Connick and music by Mark Redmond and Brian McMahon.

### **New Ross St Patricks Day Parade**

The New Ross Town St Patrick's Day parade preparations are well advanced with thanks to the committee and volunteers. The parade will start in the Irishtown and take its traditional route through the Town before ending beyond the viewing platform on the Quay.

The theme of this year's parade is "Community Togetherness" which emphasises the importance of coming together as a community and supporting each other. Local businesses are also being encouraged to take part in the Shop Window Competition.

We would ask all participants and members of the public to follow guidance and instruction from stewards and An Garda Siochana on the day, and as always...fingers crossed for fine weather!

### **Brennan's Lane/Shambles**

Consultants Avanti Architects have now submitted the full Tender pack and this has been sent to the Procurement Unit of the Council for uploading to eTenders this week. Tendering companies will have c.4 weeks to submit. Following assessment, the plan is to have a successful tenderer by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2024, and for works to start promptly thereafter.

### **Duncannon Fort Works**

Engagement with the Planning Section is progressing and nearing completion. Works as outlined in previous reports are planned to begin in the Spring.

### **Advance Factory**

An update was provided by Director of Services Liz Hore last month on the potential investors identified and planned meetings. The Director has given an undertaking to come to New Ross and report when these investor appraisal discussions have completed. The Economic Development Section continue to work on this project.

### **Motorhome Park**

Work continues at pace to prepare the approved Motorhome Park for Part VIII. The plan is to bring this to the March meeting.

### **Pedestrianisation**

Funding for the pedestrianisation of Quay Street has now been sought under the Rural Regeneration & Development Fund Fifth Call. After a massive District team effort, the application was lodged with the Dept. for Rural & Community Development to meet the Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February deadline.

The Quay Street project was one of three projects selected to be put forward for application by the Council, all of them in New Ross. The other projects are the John Street Grain Store Rejuvenation and the proposed extension to the Dunbrody Visitor Centre. The three projects taken together are valued at just over €10 million. Our thanks to the Special Projects section for their work on these also. We hope for a successful outcome which will help us continue the excellent work to date on improving and regenerating historic New Ross.

### **Sensory Garden**

Carragh Paving & Landscapes continue works on site and are nearing completion of the hard surfaces and main structures. The project team are busily engaging on Sensory elements and items for the space. The plan is for the garden to be ready for opening in the late Spring after planting.

### **New Ross Skate Park**

The Council is progressing this project with Brady Shipman Martin and positive consultation was held recently with the New Ross Skate Initiative. The aim is to present concept plans to the March Meeting of the Municipal District for approval to advance to Part VIII. Funding will then need to be sought to realise the project.

### **OTHER ITEMS**

#### **Date of March Meeting**

Proposal to move March meeting forward to Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March, or another date based on Members availability.

#### **‘Small Things Like These’ Film Premiere**

We are delighted to see the film, shot largely on location in New Ross, is finally getting its first showing at the Berlin Film Festival tomorrow night. We wish all cast, crew and producers the very best and hope that it is warmly received by viewers and most importantly by film critics. This is the first stage in the process to engage a distribution deal to circulate the film worldwide. Once official release details are announced, we plan on having our own event in New Ross to mark the occasion.

## **THANK YOU**

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank, in the sincerest way, Ger Walsh, ahead of her imminent retirement. Ger is our Staff Officer for the District and has been an incredible servant, going above and beyond always to ensure the best outcomes.

Not only is Ger a fantastic worker and colleague, but she is a wonderful person too, whose kindness and thoughtfulness are legendary. I speak on behalf of all the team here when I say we will really miss Ger and we wish her all the happiness in her early retirement.

In true Ger fashion, she never looks for the limelight, so is not here today for her final meeting before retirement, but I promise to send her the minutes one last time so she can read our words of thanks. Thank you, Ger.

## **PROJECTS**

### **CCTV**

There is no change or update on the Phase 1 CCTV Scheme Pack, which is still with the Gardai.

Queries were taken from the Members.

Cllr Whelan questioned if works are ready to commence in Duncannon Fort if the Part 8 agreement is passed.

Cllr Sheehan asked for an update on the old Sweeney's Garden Centre site. He also wanted to note that 120k visitors went to Kilkenny to see the tapestry so it would be nice to see progress with the Murphy building. He also asked for a costing on the repairs to vandalism on the public toilets in Pearse Park and questioned if the cost is high should the just be closed.

Cllr Barden noted that Tom Enright was thanked for the works on the Advance Factory, but this project never materialised. It was also noted that the grain store is still only a plan, yet some councillors are announcing these projects. He is very disappointed with the lack of work and the pace or lack of it for some of the projects.

Cllr Murphy said she was delighted to hear that the Civic Awards will run this year. She was eager that an emergency meeting should be set up with the New Ross Chamber of Commerce about the closure of several businesses over the last few months. Cllr Murphy suggested that the meeting should be held prior to the next monthly meeting. She also was delighted that the sensory garden is progressing and hopes there will be a big launch. She also commented that there was an apparent lack of flowers given it's Valentines Day.

Following on from Cllr Murphys suggestion of the meeting, Cllr Sheehan made the point that when the new development plan was passed there was supposed to be a retail strategy, and this plan will now not be available for 12-18months which leaves us to rely on the County Plan.

All Councillors joined in with the echoes of good wishes to Ger Walsh who is due to retire at the end of the month. She was commended for diligence; kind nature and warm personality and it was noted that she will be a huge loss to New Ross Municipal District.

The District Manager confirmed that works will progress immediately once Planning confirm works requirements for Duncannon Fort.

He responded to Cllr Sheehan's query on Sweeny's Garden Centre, to say that it is still with solicitors now.

All project queries will be answered by Sean Myler in special projects.

The District Manager is happy to facilitate a meeting with The New Ross Chamber of Commerce. He is also happy to have a big launch of the sensory garden when works are completed.

Eamonn Hore, Director of Service, was a bit disappointed by Cllr Barden's comments on the lack of progress in New Ross. He commented that the council have done and are still doing amazing work naming out many projects that have been completed within the district. He commented that the perception outside of the New Ross District is that all the funding comes to New Ross. Eamonn said that we would get a figure on the vandalism of the toilets, but he felt that closing them was not helpful, as it's a great facility. He referred to Cllr Murphys comment on the lack of flowers and said the themed cupcakes were a replacement for flowers.

## **2.1a Special Projects Report**

The report was presented to the Members.

Cllr Fleming was hoping that the works to The Dunbody Famine Ship would be completed before the summer season. He would also like an update on the Red Bridge part of the Greenway.

Cllr Barden was looking for the timeframe on the grainstore.

Cllr Murphy said at previous meetings it was promised that the interpretive would be in for the Norman Centre at this stage and now it is now pushed out to Quarter 2. She also commented the Greenway timelines were ridiculous.



Cllr Sheehan commented we have the original interpretive design of The Norman Centre for nearly two years with no progress. He also questioned if the Part 8 and funding are passed on the skate park what the expiry on them is. There is also a sports capital grant that expires in 2025 and can the deadline on that be extended.

Cllr Connick said he was disappointed with the further delays on the Greenway and he feels that the town really needs this and it will drive everything on.

Sean answered Cllr Flemings queries and stated they have pulled out all the stops for The Dunbrody Visitor centre, they are going with the approval of management there. They will not start works if they cannot finish them before high season. He also commented that the Red Bridge is held up with the consultants.

Sean reverted to Cllr Barden's query on the Grain store and said it is completely dependent on funding. An RRDF application has been made, if this is successful it would be April-summer 2025 before works may commence.

Sean said the update on the Murphy Building is that 'Bright' are appointed and they are advancing with their designs. He is finalising the brief and has prioritised it this week to get it out to consultants, with a hopeful appointment in place to follow.

In regard to the Skatepark Part 8, that is timeless and an application can be made to extend the Sports Capital funding for two years.

Sean expressed his frustrations with the Greenway and said he would love to see it move on as much as everyone else. He explained it is complex and that when they went to tender in December, they got no submissions. He is hoping with the new targeted timelines they can stay on track.

Cllr Fleming thanks Sean Myler at the end and said they were grateful for all that Special Projects do; even though the impression they were giving is that they are not.

## **2.2. Roads Report**

The Roads Engineer delivered his report and responded to queries from the Members.

Cllr Sheehan asked for update on funding for estates.

Cllr Fleming asked for a contact in Kilaree Lighting as there is a streetlight out in Clonroche since March 2023.

Cllr Murphy thanked the Roads Engineer, the local shop and the Guards for meeting with her and addressing a dangerous corner, everyone is delighted with the results. Cllr Murphy also queried the recent unauthorised removal of bollards in Adamstown.

Cllr Whelan also agreed with Cllr Fleming that lighting is a huge problem everywhere. He also commented that there was nothing but compliments for the 'Low Cost Safety Scheme', but there was a sign moved in Poulfur and will it be replaced.

A discussion took place between all Councillors about the unauthorised removal of the bollards and chaos ensued.

The Roads Engineer commented "I want to confirm that these bollards were not removed by Wexford County Council or by any contractor on behalf of Wexford County Council. I would also like to point out that's these bollards were placed on a public road and not on any property associated with the property owner and that their removal was unauthorised. It is unfortunate and particularly disappointing given the level of engagement with the property owner that this has taken place. It was agreed with the shop owner that these bollards would be installed for a three-month period. A further meeting took place on December 21<sup>st</sup> with the shop owner and two elected members of New Ross Municipal District in what was a very positive meeting. A revised layout, designed by Wexford County Council was agreed with the shop owner on this date. The agreed layout includes the following: 6m wide entrances, revised parking layout, footpath layout, bollards, drainage, with entry and exits clearly defined and a loading bay. Following this meeting Active Travel team successfully applied for funding to complete a full footpath upgrade from the crossroads to the local Church and Graveyard, which will provide safe passage for all pedestrians throughout the village. At present there is no footpath for pedestrians and no clear entry or exit defined for vehicles. The footpath was highlighted and recommended by road design engineers from the NTA and Safe Routes to school team during a stage three safety audit. The audit identified that the 'footpath is disconnected and children have to walk behind parked cars. Significant funding was provided last year by the NTA under the safe routes to school programme, where a new pedestrian scheme- was provided along the school front, including two pedestrian crossings, drainage works, complete junction re-surfacing and line marking to alert road users of the school location and child safety. The works were commended by both the national and secondary schools upon completion. Wexford County Council have at all stages engaged with all property owners adjacent to the works. It also must be acknowledged that such consultation and agreement enabled Wexford County Council to apply for additional funding and expand the scheme to the success it is today. We remain committed to the completion of the scheme.

Director of Service, Eamonn Hore added, 'The criticism of Council Staff and the Area Engineer has been uncalled for. The NTA agree that a footpath should be provided, An Taisce agrees, Wexford County Council agrees. The really annoying thing is we said we would put the bollards up for three months and the three months was almost up, so there was no need to take these out. The path will be two meters wide and will run into the existing car park, past the graveyard and parochial house. It will line up with the crossroads and give the shop owner an extra metre for his car park. Instead of giving people a pat on the back we got a solicitor's letter, one I have answered, and I look forward to the response, but we will deal with the landowner and make sure everything is right

The roads engineer informed Cllr Sheehan that he had applied for various funding for Housing Estates but only a small portion of funding had come through.

The Roads Engineer said that he could discuss the lighting issue internally with Cllr Fleming and Cllr Whelan. He also said to Cllr Whelan that the sign will be reinstated when the weather improves.

### **2.3. Housing Report.**

The Housing report was delivered by the Administrative Officer, Housing who responded to queries from the Members.

She advised that the latest survey was just to indicate interest, it was not an application. However, the applications opened today and will close April 10<sup>th</sup>.

They have completed the consultation works at Marshmeadows, 4 have applied for the mobile home scheme, from bay 7 upwards.

Hewittsland is moving ahead to quarter 3, it will not be delivered this year. The AHB do have planning on the site, but she is unsure why it hasn't moved ahead.

There is no new update for the Bullawn, but she will get a figure for next month on the cost to date on getting the site ready.

Cllr Whelan questioned the 'Windows & Doors Scheme' as there appears to be none for the New Ross District and asked the criteria on the 'Door only Scheme'. The Housing officer thinks that the New Ross is with Wexford as they share a Clerk of Works and she will check the criteria for the 'Door Only Scheme' and have it for the next meeting.

Cllr Fleming made a suggestion of buying up larger properties in New Ross that are vacant and turning them into Affordable Housing Schemes.

Cllr Sheehan asked if applicants on the CBL Scheme could be informed if they were unsuccessful. However, it was pointed out that in the FAQ section it clearly states that you will only hear if you are successful. Cllr Sheehan also asked for an update on how many grants for the Elderly/Adaptation are waiting with the Clerk of Works.

Cllr Murphy asked for data on how many applicants have applied/ been approved and how many are actually paid out in the Vacant Properties Grant.

Cllr Connick questioned the Haughton Place site as works have stopped, He was informed that the contractor pulled out due to a funding issue. Cllr Connick said the wall and gate had been removed by said contractor and asked for it to be reinstated.

### **2.4 Planning Report**

The Executive Planner delivered her report and responded to queries from the Members.

Cllr Whelan & Cllr Fleming queried the hold up in having Stonebrook in Fethard taken in charge because of works due in Valleyview.

The Executive Engineer Pdraig Lyng responded to this query. Uisce Eireann have agreed funding for works at Valleyview, however there is currently no funding for

upgrade works in Stonebrook. They are hoping the DPI will provide funding and the works could run in conjunction with Valleyview.

Cllr Sheehan asked when the retail strategy for New Ross would be available, the Executive Planner responded that she didn't know of any retail strategy Plan being done outside of a local area plan. He also queried a couple of former retail units have been refused planning for change of use to residential on Flood Plain reasons and requiring an EIS. The Planner responded with there are policies on Flood Risk Assessments, there are situations where ground floor of retail units is not suitable for residential accommodation. We do support housing in town centre areas where its suitable.

## **2.5 Planning Grants**

The content of the report was noted by the Members.

## **2.6 Planning Refusals**

The content of the report was noted by the Members.

## **2.7 Libraries Archives & Arts Report**

The content of the report was noted by the Members.

## **2.8 Community Development Report**

The content of the report was noted by the Members.

## **2.9 Environment Report**

The content of the report was noted by the Members.

## **2.10 Fire Services Report**

The content of the report was noted by the Members.

## **2.11 Members Query System**

The content of the report was noted by the Members

## **3.0 Business prescribed by Statute, Standing Orders or Resolutions of the Municipal District Members**

Extension of meeting proposed by Cllr Fleming seconded by Cllr Sheehan

**4.0 Other Business**

N/A

**5.0 Notice of Motion/s –**

N/A

**6.0 Correspondence**

N/A

**7.0 AOB**

It was proposed that the monthly meeting should be held early to facilitate Cllr who are attending St Patricks Day Parades elsewhere. The suggestion of Wednesday 6th March was Proposed by Cllr Connick and seconded by Cllr Murphy  
There was an invitation to attend the St Patricks Day Festival in Hartford. It is proposed to send Cllr Sheehan and Cllr Barden. This motion was proposed by Cllr Whelan and Seconded by Cllr Connick.

Cllr Whelan also asked that a request is made to the C.E.O to fill Sharon Ryan’s position here in New Ross Municipal District. This motion was proposed by Cllr Wheland and seconded by Cllr Connick.

**THAT CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING**

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cathaoirleach**

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_