

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

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DC 223

21st February 2011

233.15 Roads A26

*Agreed to write to Mr
Connor Murphy, DRD
Minister*

233.16 Giants Causeway Visitor Centre

*Write to National Trust re
car parking*

BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of Development Meeting No 223, held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Monday 21st February 2011 at 2.45 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Councillor Finlay

PRESENT:

Aldermen
F Campbell
J Simpson

Councillors
R Halliday
B Kennedy, Mayor
M McCamphill
T McKeown
E Robinson
I Stevenson, Vice

APOLOGIES:

Aldermen
H Connolly

Councillors
A Cavlan
A Patterson
M Storey, MLA

IN ATTENDANCE: Professor Barnett, University of Ulster
Professor Hutchinson, University of Ulster
Chief Executive
Head of Corporate & Development Services
Committee Clerk

223.1 PRESENTATION – UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

The Chairman welcomed Professors Barnett and Hutchinson, University of Ulster. Professor Barnett made a presentation to members on University's key highlights on research, student satisfaction and courses, outlining key areas of teaching provision at the Coleraine Campus, professional body relationships, student numbers, infrastructural development and support for businesses etc on emerging from the recession, and with Professor Hutchinson responded to members questions. Included in matters raised were: local and international tuition fees and proposed increases; bursaries; accommodation costs; limits on number of local students to be admitted; development of the Riverside Theatre; closure of the Science Park; research and related business spin-offs; and on-line learning. The review of further

and higher education also engaged member's attention, and it was suggested that Council may wish to consider and respond to the review.

The presentation ended at 4.20pm with the Chair thanking the speakers for their presentation and for the manner in which they dealt with issues raised by members.

- * - **Councillor Kennedy entered the meeting during the presentation at 3.48, departing at 3.49pm, re-entering at 3.50 and departed at 3.55pm**
- * - **Councillor McKeown left the meeting at 4.22pm**

223.2 MINUTES – MEETING NO 222 – 17th January 2011

It was proposed by Councillor McCamphill, seconded by Alderman Simpson and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of Meeting No 222 – 17th January 2011, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

223.3 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council has agreed that the committee meetings be held on the second Monday of each month at 4 pm for pilot period of three months. This arrangement will commence in March 2011.

223.4 CONSULTATION – TOURISM STRATEGY - PPS16

The consultation document on the draft planning policy statement PPS16 – Tourism – was tabled at a previous meeting. The consultation considers the proposed planning policies to govern future tourism development in NI. Comments are invited by 25th March.

NILGA have developed a response, attached as appendix B, in liaison with its Planning Working Group and Economic Development Working Group, SOLACE and NI Tourist Board.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Halliday and it was **AGREED:**

to recommend that the draft NILGA response to PPS16 be endorsed by council.

223.5 DRAFT DETI BUDGET 2011-2015

Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Partnership (CCGRTP) have, in response to a request from NITB for the industry to adopt a collective approach in their responses to the Department, have at a recent meeting asked that DETI, before finalizing their budget allocations for tourism, to consider the following points highlighted by the NITB.

- To enable the industry to fully understand and exploit the overall sums allocated to Tourism across government departments and non departmental bodies, there is a need for clarification of the total budget allocated by relevant government Departments to Tourism.
- Given the completion of a range of Signature Projects in 2012-13, such as the Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre, Titanic Signature Building, and the Built

Heritage Programme and City Lighting schemes in the Walled City, it will be vitally important that realistic revenue resources are allocated to enable the industry to maximize the opportunities presented by these projects

- It will also be important that the final agreed budget for tourism will provide the necessary resources to continue investment to improve NI tourism's product offering.
- In addition, the CCGTRP Board very strongly urge DETI to allocate sufficient resources to ensure efficient, effective regional delivery of the DETI Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020.

Members commented on the need for sufficient funding to be made available for regional tourism delivery, particularly with the attention and opportunities the new Causeway Centre would bring.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Halliday and **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council endorse the comments by Causeway Coast & Glens Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland.

223.6 TOURISM – REVIEW OF REGIONAL TOURISM DELIVERY

All the council consultations, private sector surveys and queries with the current regional tourism organizations have been completed and analysed by the consultations. The report is expected by the end of this month.

There has been ongoing discussions with DETI and NITB on progress on the draft Tourism Strategy and annual budgets etc. Arrangements for DETI to meet the project steering group have been deferred whilst awaiting further information.

223.7 CAUSEWAY CLUSTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATION STRATEGY

Council contributed towards the development of an economic development strategy 2011/12 for the proposed new Causeway Council Region and consultants were commissioned to take this project, led by Coleraine Borough Council, forward. As RPA did not go forward the strategy has been developed as a collaboration strategy, representing a commitment on behalf of the four councils to work together to develop a stronger regional economy. Working together on projects will reduce duplication and take advantage of economies of scale. The Strategy process identified key themes and an action plan based on these has been developed and costed. A copy of the key issues, strategic themes and action plan has been circulated and a full strategy is available on request.

This is presented to members for comment. It should be noted that we have no budget available to support the strategy. However there are opportunities for collaborative working on European programmes and this is already happening. The collaborative strategy will serve to support project proposals to existing programmes.

It is **recommended** that committee endorse the collaborative strategy, adding comments if required.

It was **AGREED:**

that the draft collaborative strategy be deferred to committee's next meeting.

223.8 JOBS PLAN

The NI Chamber of Commerce on 2nd February launched a Jobs Plan setting out an economic framework and including a comprehensive agenda, for real change in the local economy, one in which the private sector will take the lead in providing jobs and investment. This is the first ever joint policy document by eight of NI's leading business organizations, allowing the business community to speak with one voice on the big economic challenges. It is hoped that the jobs plan stimulates debate and focuses policy on the future of the NI economy.

In summary the top actions to create more jobs are:

- Decisive political leadership to create stability and confidence;
- Create a more competitive tax base to help support an ambitious export-led economic recovery, while reducing barriers to growth and job creation;
- Deliver a sustained investment strategy through the increased use of alternative sources of finance;
- Ensure skills provision is re-aligned to meet the future needs of the economy;
- Reform and re-engineer how public services are delivered to enhance productivity and outcomes.

The document has been welcomed by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. A copy of the document, on which comments and feedback are invited, is available from the Office of the Chief Executive.

Members entered into discussion regarding means of attracting new retailers, particularly franchises to the High Street; support for existing retailers, some of whom are struggling in the current economic conditions; businesses relocating outside the main retail core of the town for reduced rental; leakage to Ballymena and Coleraine; protection of the retail core; activity of traffic wardens; rating of vacant property; need for further enhancement of the streetscape in some areas of the town centre. The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised that the outcome of the DSD retail study, which was due to be available in the next couple of months, would identify the opportunities where Ballymoney might go forward with regards to the future development of the town centre. No specific comments were offered on the jobs plan.

It was **AGREED:**

that a meeting be sought with DRD to consider issues regarding traffic wardens and traffic management in the town centre.

* Councillor Stevenson entered the meeting during discussions at 4.34pm.

223.9 EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT EVENT

The Department of Employment and Learning in association with the Chamber of Commerce and Council's Development Unit are hosting a free networking and information seminar for local businesses to communicate information on its free

initiatives and funded schemes. The event is on 4th March at Ballybrakes Business Park. Invites have been sent out to local businesses.

223.10 EU COMPETITIVENESS PROGRAMME

Members received at the last meeting information on the DETI working group considering Council/INI collaboration regarding participation in the competitiveness programme. There is an expectation that Councils will take full advantage of the DETI/Invest NI offer to access the remaining £22m from the competitiveness programme budget. Letters of offer must be in place by 31/12/2013 and spend achieved by 31/12/2015. Invest NI are pledging up to £11m in match funding for projects, with Councils contributing the same amount.

Councils are being asked to commit to the match-funding in estimates to 2015. In order to provide reassurance on the match funding issue, a template report has been issued to Councils by DETI to capture the information required which will inform DETI's mid-term evaluation of the programme. This financial profiling exercise requesting indicative budgets for the next four financial years and brief detail on potential projects Council could submit for funding under the measure, is currently under consideration and to be completed by 18th February. Similar information was also being collated by NILGA/SOLACE.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services presented draft project proposals and indicative costs for projects under the competitiveness programme, assuming the same budget commitment by Council for European programmes to 2015, and on the basis that eligible projects would be funded 50% DETI, 25% INI and 25% Council, a total Council contribution of £38,750 with the worst case scenario being a nil budget. Members were advised that the previous DETI "BSP" programme had operated on the basis of a five year programme, with funding committed by Council for the period of the programme. The proposed programmes, totaling £155,000, were: –

1. Innovation Development Initiative (pilot), potential partners: INI and LEA - £35,000 total programme cost.
2. Engineering 4 Growth pilot programme, potential partners: INI, LEA and Engineering Sector - £50,000 total programme cost.
3. Green Energy Pilot programme, potential partners: INI, LEA and Agricultural Association - £35,000 total programme cost
4. One Step Further, export pilot programme, potential partners: INI & LEA - £35,000 total programme cost

Members indicated that they were content with the draft proposals submitted for the financial profiling exercise, further details will be presented at committee when programmes are developed.

***- Councillor Stevenson left the meeting at 4.38pm returning at 4.41pm**

223. 11 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

[a] - Village Renewal Programme.

Applications have been received from the following Community Associations for match funding towards village plans approved under the village renewal measure of the Rural Development Programme:

1. Ballybogey & District Community Association
2. Dervock & District Community Association
3. Stranocum & District Development Association
4. Dunloy Development Association

Applicants had been successful in securing a grant (75%) from the Rural Development Programme and had committed some funding from their own resources or other bodies. Budget provision has been made by Council in 2011/12 to provide a contribution towards village action plans. The applications are being examined and a further report will be brought to Council at its March meeting.

[b] - Village Projects

Cloughmills Community Action Team has been successful under the Phase II village implementation plan for an environmental improvement project which they are match-funding. It has advised of its intention to submit a further application in September 2011 to the value of £70,000 for which it is seeking match funding of £17,500.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services was arranging, with the Director of Borough Services, to meet with the Cloughmills Community Action Team to discuss the possibility of Council leading on delivery of the phase I project and to discuss the proposed phase II application. A further report would be made to committee.

***- Councillor Halliday left the meeting at 4.48pm**

223.12 NORTH ANTRIM BUSINESS AWARDS

An application has been received for sponsorship for a North Antrim Business Awards event planned for 25th March. No budget provision is available.

It was **AGREED:**

that the application be noted.

223.13 NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

Information has been received after publication of the agenda in respect of the Northern Regional College and this is tabled for members consideration.

- [a] Report from Colleges NI which addresses the possible impact of public expenditure cuts on the Further Education Sector. The Director and Chief Executive of the Northern Regional College has intimated his willingness to meet with committee to discuss the particular impact of reduced public funding on the Northern Regional College
- [b] Copy of answer to question by Councillor Mervyn Storey, MLA, to the Minister at the Department of Employment and Learning, Mr Danny Kennedy MLA on the future of the Ballymoney Campus of the Northern Regional College

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED:**

that committee take up the offer from the Director and Chief Executive to meet with committee to discuss.

233. 14 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY Shaping Our Future – Ten Year Review.

The consultation on the 10 Year review of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2005 had been launched, with responses invited by 31st March. The purpose of the RDS is to provide an overarching spatial framework to influence the future distribution of activities throughout the region to 2035. The document examines the factors which are impacting on us and driving change. It sets out aims for the region and provides guidance on how the aims can be achieved. The full document is available on www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture. NILGA was holding a consultation event on 1st March to which members had been appointed.

It was **AGREED:**

that the matter be tabled for the committee's next meeting.

223.15 ROADS – A26

It was proposed by Councillor Stevenson, seconded by Alderman Campbell and **AGREED:**

that Mr Connor Murphy, Minister for Regional Development be contacted regarding an update on the A26 dualling (Glarryford – Ballycastle) and to request review, as a matter of urgency, access arrangements from the A26 to Kirk and Knock Roads.

223.16 GIANTS CAUSEWAY VISITOR CENTRE

Concern was expressed regarding the adequacy of parking facilities at the new Causeway Visitors Centre, understood to have a dedicated number of 96 spaces, which, it was asserted, may adversely impact on the Causeway Hotel and visitors to the hotel and the centre.

It was **AGREED:**

to write to the National Trust to obtain further information about the car parking arrangements for the facility and also that Causeway Coast & Glens RTP be asked to put this matter on the agenda.

This being all the business, the meeting closed at 5.03pm



University of Ulster
presentation 210211



Draft NILGA Response to PPS16

The following is the NILGA response to the consultation document published by the Department in November 2010 and requiring response by 25th March 2011. This paper has been drafted in liaison with NILGA Planning Working Group, the NILGA Economic Development Working Group, SOLACE and the NI Tourist Board following a NILGA meeting held in Ballymena on 28th January 2011.

Further to the NILGA Planning Working group meeting on 1st February, this draft will be forwarded to councils for consideration and any necessary additions and amendments made, prior to consideration by the NILGA Executive on 11th March 2011. It will then be submitted to the Department

This consultation considers the proposed planning policies to govern future tourism development in Northern Ireland, and PPS16 is a document for which local government has been pressing for a number of years. NILGA is keen to ensure that the final version of PPS16 is fit for purpose.

For further information or to discuss any of the issues highlighted, please contact Karen Smyth at the NILGA Offices:

Email: k.smyth@nilga.org

Tel: 028 9079 8972

INTRODUCTION

NILGA, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, is the representative body for district councils in Northern Ireland. NILGA represents and promotes the interests of local authorities and is supported by all the main political parties. Planning is a key issue for local government due to the huge impact it has on the shaping of local communities, the economy and sustainability. NILGA is pleased to be able to have an opportunity to comment on PPS16 and we trust that our comments will be taken into account when developing the final legislation. This response was developed in liaison with the NILGA Planning Working Group, the NILGA Economic Development Working Group, SOLACE and the NI Tourist Board.

NILGA is pleased that the draft PPS 16 has been produced, as this has been awaited for some time. We have a number of concerns with the draft document however, and have set these out below, in line with the structure of the consultation document.

KEY ISSUES

1.0 Introduction and 2.0 Policy Context

The purpose of PPS 16 is to underpin the Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland, and a 'Purpose' paragraph to this effect prior to the introduction would be helpful. An overall vision for tourism should be incorporated within this document. At the very least, a stronger tie in is

needed between the two documents, as well as acknowledgement that it is impossible to formulate a 'one size fits all' document. It is vital to link regional strategies and local policies. NILGA is concerned that a number of the strategies and policies referred to in Section 2: Policy Context, are undergoing change and that the PPS16 document may therefore be out of date before it is even published. This is particularly the case with regard to the Programme for Government and Regional Development Strategy which are either undergoing change currently, or about to, following the 2011 elections. In addition, there is no mention made of the Economic Strategy which is currently out for consultation, or the changing context of planning with the forthcoming transfer of functions to councils. NILGA would also value some indication of progress on the replacement to the Rural Design Guide for Northern Ireland, to ensure future development is of good quality and design.

3.0 Policy Objectives

This section should be linked to the 'Purpose' of the document as stated above. In addition, given that economic growth is the top strategic priority of the NI Executive, it is proposed that a clear statement to this effect is made in this section, perhaps with some reference to the draft PPS 23 and PPS24. Use of 'enabling' language rather than preventative language would be helpful. NILGA views it as important to achieve a balanced approach to all three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, but would refer to paragraph 59 of PPS1, which states that:

*"The Department's guiding principle in determining planning applications is that development **should be permitted**, having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations, unless the proposed development will cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance..."*

NILGA is therefore keen to ensure that PPS16 provides a supportive framework for the Tourism Industry, who are keenly aware of the need to protect the environment as an asset. There is a need for more integration between DETI and DOE policy.

4.0 The Role of Development Plans

NILGA has particular concerns regarding this section of the document. We are aware that the development planning system in Northern Ireland is badly behind schedule, with many plans out of date or held up by process issues. This is a key obstacle to the delivery of the Tourism Strategy. In the short term, this issue is likely to be exacerbated during the transfer of the development planning system to councils. We are aware that the planning team is currently severely stretched and under-resourced, and that it will be virtually impossible for a system of new development plans to be created simultaneously. How a new system will be developed is one of the many unanswered questions arising from the Planning Bill.

In the longer term, partnerships working on tourism and economic development at local level will develop local plans and strategies linked to the wider tourism strategy, but it is difficult to establish how this work can be carried forward in the shorter term. If economic development is the top Executive priority, perhaps it might be useful to develop a short term clearing house system to support tourism development, in addition to diverting resources to the development plan team.

Paragraph 4.3 has a list of bullet points. NILGA would alter the first bullet point: "how future tourism demand is best accommodated" to read "how future tourism demand is best accommodated **and stimulated**".

The fifth bullet point, relating to 'the contribution of tourism to economic development...' should be assigned greater priority and should top the list.

NILGA would welcome the acknowledgement that the extent to which tourism development features in a development plan "is largely a matter for local determination".

5.0 Consultation

For this policy to have a reasonable lifespan, it will be necessary to 'futureproof' this section, particularly in regard to the statements on consultation with councils. This 'futureproofing' activity should be carried out for the entire document.

6.0 Planning Policies

NILGA would again refer to the need to futureproof the document, and would suggest that a paragraph on the anticipated transfer of the planning function to local authority control should be added to the introductory paragraph of this section.

TSM1 – Safeguarding of Tourism Assets

It is most disappointing that this policy is so negatively worded. Given the focus of the Executive on economic development and the intention of this document to underpin the Tourism Strategy, it is difficult to see why the first policy is a presumption against development, rather than a presumption for development. This policy in particular, could be used to ‘put the brakes’ on development, and it could almost be read as the Department viewing the tourism industry as irresponsible, and unaware of the need to protect the environment.

A much better balance is required within this document with regard to the three pillars of sustainable development, as at present, the environmental considerations seem to have been given much more weight.

A strategic overview of applications needs to be made, of what is the net impact of the development through the viewfinder of economic, social and environmental considerations

TSM2 – Tourism Development in Settlements

The guidance in this section is very non-specific and will rely heavily on the provision of appropriate design criteria.

TSM 3 – Tourism Development in the Countryside

NILGA would again note the need for more clarity on the definitions of terms used throughout the document, including for example, “functional need”, “exceptional circumstances”.

It would also be useful to have clarity on who makes the decision that circumstances are exceptional.

NILGA is of the view that the statement made in paragraph 6.9 on page 14 that “In most cases, a new tourism development located on the fringes of a settlement will be preferable to one in the open countryside remote from a settlement, as this is likely to be a more sustainable option” may not be accurate, and in fact could present the worst of both worlds. This statement is also in clear conflict with TSM 5 (paragraph 6.19).

TSM 4 – Tourist Amenities in the Countryside

NILGA would welcome the acknowledgement implicit within TSM 4 that planning permission will be granted for tourist amenities in the countryside in certain circumstances.

We believe that this section of the document should refer to the added social benefits to rural areas that job creation and access to better local amenities would bring.

We acknowledge that there are particular issues surrounding development of accommodation in the countryside, particularly Bed and breakfast accommodation, and would encourage the Department to liaise with NITB on this issue.

NILGA would disagree with paragraph 6.11 in the document, in that we do not believe that it is important to focus new amenities in settlements to promote sustainable tourism development and to secure optimum levels of tourist spend, and we would query the relationship between the draft PPS16 and the DARD farm diversification policies.

It is the NILGA view that this paragraph would pose particular issues for diversification and other projects going forward within the NI Rural Development programme, and would encourage Department of Environment to liaise with Department of Agriculture and rural Development on this issue.

NILGA would also encourage the Department to liaise with NITB to assess if adequate resources are available to deal with referrals on a timely basis.

TSM 5 – Hotels in the Countryside

NILGA is of the view that the proposals for hotel development in the draft PPS16 are inadequate. Issues such as land ownership, contract law and the potential for resort style developments have not been considered. We would question the economic business case behind the policies on hotels within this document and would recommend that the Department liaise closely with the NI Tourist Board and the hotel industry, to ensure that

development can take place as required within the NI Executive's Tourism Strategy. It is our view that the policies with regard to hotels needs to be completely rethought, as the restrictive nature of the draft is unlikely to enable the development of any economically viable hotel developments outside cities.

Paragraph 6.19 of the amplification of TSM 5 seems to be in conflict with paragraph 6.9 under TSM 3

TSM 6 – Self Catering Accommodation

NILGA would again refer the Department to DARD Rural Development Policy and Programmes, and suggest that the two Departments liaise closely to ensure this policy does not conflict with other policies and strategies agreed by the NI Executive, and attracting EU funding.

TSM 7 – Static Holiday Parks and Touring Caravan Sites

NILGA notes with interest that camping is included within the definition of a holiday park, and would suggest that it requires a different policy statement. It will also be necessary for the Department to consider facilities using alternative and semi-permanent structures such as yurts, tee pees, camping pods, log cabins bunkhouses and budget hostels, for which there is currently no policy. Also, public art may require a separate policy.

General

NILGA would note the need for more clarity on the definitions of terms used throughout the document, including for example, "functional need", "exceptional circumstances". We would however be keen to maintain flexibility in the use of this document and are aware that overly defining terms can remove this flexibility. We are keen that a planning culture be developed to work with the industry in view of its economic importance, rather than a culture of prevention. We believe that to achieve this, good communication from the top down is required. NILGA is concerned that the currently weak enforcement system is potentially being used as a reason to turn down developments, and that the threat of Judicial review has led to a risk-averse planning culture.

The tourism industry is largely responsible and we would therefore encourage the Department to redraft this document to acknowledge this, and to encourage development that can enhance both the economy and the environment.

NILGA would particularly note that the opportunities for hotel development are very limited by this document, and may not be appropriate to take tourism forward within the context of the aims of the Tourism Strategy. NILGA would therefore advise the Department to liaise closely with the NI Tourist Board and the hotel industry on issues of concern.

We would encourage the Department to note the permissive and enabling language used in the sister document produced in England and Wales, and to note that that tourism is an economic product. Although pieces of the English policy have been used in this document, adapted to a Northern Ireland situation, the general overarching principles of the English policy have not been used, and it is difficult to understand why.

We would also note the difficulties posed by the limitations to the existing transport networks in Northern Ireland, and the potential for enhancing economic development through an improved transport network.