

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

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**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of Development Meeting No 230, held in the McKinley Room, Riada House, Ballymoney on Monday 21st December 2011 at 7.00 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Councillor J Finlay

PRESENT: **Aldermen**
F Campbell
C Cousley, MBE
B Kennedy

Councillors
J Atkinson
R Halliday
R McAfee
C McLaughlin
E Robinson
I Stevenson

APOLOGIES: **Alderman**
H Connolly
Councillors
P McGuigan

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Corporate & Development Services
Committee Clerk

230.1 MINUTES – MEETING NO 228 – 29th NOVEMBER 2011

It was proposed by Councillor Atkinson, seconded by Alderman Cousley and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of Meeting No 228 – 29th November 2011, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

Matters Arising:

1.1 A26 Dualling (229.16)

In response to a question by Councillor Stevenson the Officer advised that Council had lent its support to a joint lobby, led by Coleraine Borough Council, on

behalf of the Cluster Councils to the DRD and DFP Ministers. Preparations for the lobby were being advanced by the lead Council.

1.2 **Social Investment Fund (229.21)**

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised members that a response to the consultation document had been agreed at the Consultation Committee meeting on 21st December 2011.

230.2 RIVERS PROJECT (IVA)

The first project board meeting was held on 7th December with SEUPB and CPD, under the auspices of NEP. The letter of offer and proposed partnership agreement was discussed and agreed. It is **recommended** that the Partnership Agreement, tabled, be signed.

It was proposed by Councillor Atkinson, seconded by Councillor Cavlan and **AGREED:**

to recommend that the Partnership Agreement be signed.

230.3 INLAND WATERWAYS – WATER RECREATION GRANT PROGRAMME 2012/13

DCAL have given notice that its water recreation grant programme, having been unavailable during 2011/12, will be available with effect from 1st April 2012. The grant programme's primary purpose is to assist provision of water related access, for example riverside paths, canoe steps or other similar facilities on publicly owned land which is free for the public to access and use. Successful applications will be expected to have a strong strategic partnership emphasis, eg improving community access and creating community links, with emphasis on access for people with disabilities. Targeting social need and projects supporting social inclusion will also be taken into account when assessing applications. Applicants must demonstrate that they will have sufficient resources of their own plus partnership funding to be able to deliver the project before the end of the financial year in which the grant is available. Expressions of interest must be lodged by 13th January.

Potential projects which fit the "community access links" are being explored. It is **recommended** that an expression of interest be submitted in respect of pathway links at Ballymoney Riverside Park and Drumaheglis/Balnamore.

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

to recommend that expressions of interest be submitted.

230.4 EXPANSION OF ECAR PROJECT

The ECar project is a pilot project designed to promote, encourage and research the use of electric vehicles in order to inform the future roll-out of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. The project, which is jointly led by DRD and DOE is partly funded by grants from the Office of Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) matched with funding from a consortium which includes NIE, Power NI, INTEL, SAP, Donnelly Motor Group, Armagh City and District Council, Belfast City Council, Fermanagh District Council, Larne Borough Council and Newry & Mourne District Council.

With limited resources the original scope of the pilot project was to concentrate charging infrastructure in six locations. These were chosen because of their roles as gateways to the Region and hubs of cross border trade. With additional funding there is the potential to install more charging posts throughout the region to further explore future requirements while also facilitating longer journeys and reducing range anxiety. Additional grant funding is potentially available to allow the project to expand, providing the means to extend the project further and offer additional councils the opportunity to join. Expressions of interest are sought by the end of December Committee. It is **recommended** that committee give consideration to participation in the extended project. The minimum contribution which all Councils have been asked to provide towards the overall project is £10,000.

It was **AGREED**, following on from discussion on the merits of the project and present budgetary limitations, that no expression of interest be submitted on this occasion.

230.5 TOURIST DRIVES PROJECT (RDP)

The feasibility study into the potential for tourist drive(s) in the borough has been completed. Recommendations with regard to enhancement of the CCR within the borough and new trail development are recommended. Information will be presented to committee. It is **recommended**:

- a) that committee approve the concept of enhancement of the Causeway Coastal Route and development of themed trails
- b) that application for funding be progressed with RDP and NITB
- c) that the trails be further developed with a further report to committee.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services gave an overview of the strategic approach, conclusions and recommendations of the study into the potential of the tourist drive(s)/trails in the borough. She outlined the proposed enhancements to existing links and new themed trails based on the unique features of the area and explained the further steps necessary to advance the projects, including discussions with NITB and CCGRTP, preparation of estimated costs, consideration of visitor servicing issues, interpretation, review of market segments, design of marketing media.

As part of the study a mapping exercise has been undertaken looking at places of interest and linkages with the Causeway Coastal Route and links to existing loops off the route. Key places of interest in the borough included The Dark Hedges, Orra Scenic drive at Slieveanorra, Altnarichard View Point/Picnic Site and village attractions.

At the request of Alderman Campbell, the Officer highlighted the tourism and economic benefits of enhancing and developing the tourism product through increased development opportunities, visitors and spend.

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

- a) ***that committee approve the concepts for enhancement of the Causeway Coastal Route and enhancement and development of themed trails***
- b) ***that applications for funding be progressed with RDP and NITB***
- c) ***that content for the recommended trails be worked up for consideration by committee.***

* **Councillor Stevenson left the meeting at 7.20 pm.**

230.6 TOURISM AREA PLAN

Causeway Coast and Glens Regional Tourist Partnership has agreed Terms of Reference for the development of a Tourism Area Plan for the region and tenders will be invited.

230.7 EVENTS

7.1 World Short Mat Bowling Championships 2012

The Irish Indoor Bowling Association will host the World Short Mat Indoor Bowling Championships in March 2012 in the Provincial Towns Indoor Bowling Stadium at Ballybrakes, Ballymoney. Teams of twenty players from Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Holland, England, Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man and Ireland will be participating in the Championships in Singles, Pairs, Triples and Fours disciplines. India, Norway and Italy will also be taking part. Council is invited to make a contribution towards this prestigious event. It is **recommended** that committee give consideration to the application for a contribution of £1,500.

A discussion ensued on the tourism and economic benefits to the borough in hosting this international event with increased visitor numbers utilising local services. A contribution would also provide for marketing the area in the event programme. Councillor Robinson reiterated the need for hotel accommodation within the Borough to strengthen tourism.

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

to recommend that a contribution of £1,500 is made to the Irish Indoor Bowling Association for their World Short Mat Indoor Bowling Championships in March 2012, budget provision to be included in the 2012/13 rate estimate.

7.2 2012 Torch Relay NI

The Head of Corporate & Development Services provided members with an update on the arrangements for the event following a briefing from the London Organising Committee to nominated communication officers for host communities. She advised on the work required to be undertaken by host communities on a range of event planning, organisation and communication issues. Guidance had been published by the organising committee to assist host communities and branding material developed. The additional resource provided by Council will allow arrangements to be further advanced.

It was **AGREED:** that the event plans be developed by the working group.

7.3 Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations 2012

The Head of Corporate & Development Services updated members on the County Antrim plans to mark the Diamond Jubilee and outlined the draft programme of events, opportunities for community participation by schools, local communities and groups. Branding material developed was acknowledged. Comments put forward by members on programme content and activities to mark this historic occasion were noted.

It was **AGREED:** that the event plans be developed by the working group.

230.8 BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT – ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS (DETI)

Mr Paul Frew, MLA, has forwarded copy of assembly questions to the Minister of Trade & Investment. Copy circulated.

230.9 VILLAGE RENEWAL PROGRAMME (RDP)

An evaluation of the Village Renewal Facilitation Programme was completed and published in November 2011. A copy of the conclusions and recommendations were circulated. Council has agreed to the extension of the programme.

230.10 RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (DARD)

The DARD Minister has written to advise of a new focus for Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme as the task of getting funds quickly to the rural community by way of the programme has not been realised in the manner the Department would wish.

The Minister recognises the valuable work Councils have played in the programme through Councillors sitting on both the Joint Committee and the LAG. She has instructed officials to initiate a process that will involve working in partnership with councils and the JCC/LAGs and with organisations such as NITB and other bodies with an interest in rural development to bring forward larger projects of a more strategic or signature nature in an effort to increase spend. Officials will report back to the Minister before the end of January with a list of possible projects which could allow early commitment and spend. The Minister is also keen to invest more funds within rural broadband. NEP senior officers' group will meet to consider potential projects. A further report will be brought back to Committee.

230.11 RATING OF COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES; SMALL BUSINESSES, LARGE RETAIL PROPERTIES AND EMPTY RETAIL PREMISES

The Rating Division of Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP) has written to advise that the Minister and Executive has agreed on the way forward following consideration of the response to the consultation. An overview of the way forward is set out in the attached letter. Further detail on the decisions taken can be found in the Way Forward Report which is available at <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/rating-review>. The agreed changes will be effective from 1st April 2012, subject to Assembly approval of the necessary primary and subordinate legislation. The Chair drew attention to an initiative by Craigavon Borough Council to assist with rate support and it was agreed that this be further considered at the next meeting.

230.12 DEVOLVING AIR PASSENGER DUTY – HELPING ECONOMIC TAKEOFF

PriceWaterhouseCoopers have forwarded the latest edition in their *NI Futures* series, "Helping economic take off". This series of articles comments on the public policy issues that are central to Northern Ireland's future prosperity.

The issue of Air Passenger Duty (APD) has been a hot topic for several years now, with the viability of the region's only NI-USA air route potentially in jeopardy. Given the impact of APD on the competitiveness and growth prospects of the Northern Ireland economy, this debate is of vital significance and should be treated as equally important to our economic future as the current debate on devolving Corporation Tax.

They pose the questions, with the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 29 November

confirming a substantial rise in APD in 2012, what is the future for our leisure and business travel

A copy is available on request from the Office of The Chief Executive.

230.13 TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

A number of members paid tribute to the work of Council staff and local traders in the marketing and events programme for Christmas.

Committee noted expression of interest by Ballymoney Regeneration Company in hosting a new multiple perspective exhibition on the conflict in Northern Ireland to be hosted in empty shops. The exhibition would display everyday objects transformed by the conflict.

230.14 DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

OFCOM has launched digital communications coverage maps, including outdoor mobile coverage and mobile broadband availability using data supplied by communications providers. The map for NI is broken down by each of the 26 council areas and is available at <http://maps.ofcom.org.uk/>. The maps are part of Ofcom's first report on the UK's communications infrastructure which is now required to submit to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport every three years. Ofcom's report also refers to the coverage and capacity of the UK's landline network, digital radio and TV.

230.15 THE HEDGES TREES

The selection of a photograph of the Dark Hedges trees by a local photographer for the UTV Corporate Calendar, promoted by Lesser Spotted Ulster programme, further recognising and highlighting this iconic image, was noted.

Meeting closed at 8.10 pm.