

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

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249.9	A26 Frosses Road	<i>Scheme on list if funding available</i>
249.10	Broadband (Rural Areas)	<i>Pilot survey work agreed</i>
249.11	Carrier Bag Bill	<i>Oppose bill</i>
249.12	Strategic Action Plan in Support of the NI Agri-Food Industry	<i>Plan published.</i>

**Ballymoney Borough Council
Development Committee**

Minutes of Development Meeting No 249, held in the Council Chamber on Wednesday 19th June 2013 at 7.00 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Alderman B Kennedy

PRESENT: **Alderman**
C Cousley, MBE

Councillors

J Atkinson
W Blair
A Cavlan
J Finlay
R Halliday
R McAfee
E Robinson, MBE, Mayor

APOLOGIES : **Alderman**
F Campbell
H Connolly

Councillors:
T McKeown
M Storey

IN ATTENDANCE: Head Corporate and Development Services
Business Support Officer

249.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

249.2 MINUTES

2.1 Meeting No 247 – 15th May 2013

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

to recommend that meeting number 247 on 15th May 2013, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

2.2 Meeting No 248 – 13th June 2013

It was proposed by Councillor Blair, seconded by Councillor Finlay and
AGREED

to recommend that meeting number 248 on 13th June 2013, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

* **Councillor McAfee joined the meeting at 7.05 pm.**

249.3 SOCIAL ENTERPRISE WORKSHOP

As part of Social Enterprise NI's work programme for DETI it has to engage with Local Councils (staff and Councillors), Government Departments and MLAs. One of the ways it intends to do this is to run a workshop on Thursday 1st August in Invest NI Offices on an Introduction to Social Enterprise [between 10 am - 12 noon.] Details have been circulated to members and any member interested in attending please contact the Office of the Chief Executive to register interest.

It was **AGREED:**

that members be appointed to attend.

249.4 TOURISM MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Heart of the Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS)

The Heart of the Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme Stage II application has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The application will now be assessed and CCGHT should be informed of the outcome before September of this year. During this gap phase the Trust will continue to build momentum and prepare for the implementation phase.

4.2 Causeway Coast & Glens Food Network

DARD have approved Action Plan and funding schedule. There is also potential to link with other NITB tourism and DETI initiatives and Heritage Trust Landscape Partnership Scheme. NITB also see it as an integral part of the Experiential Tourism product for the CCG destination. Invest NI are

interested in the progress of the group as part of the wider Agri food development theme.

The project steering group has now been established and has met to sign off Action Plan and discuss Causeway Food Network membership criteria, Brand logo design brief, Launch, Funder Information Seminar and additional funding.

4.3 Drumaheglis Marina (RIVERS Project)

A communications and marketing plan for the partners in the RIVERS project is being developed.

4.4 Causeway Coast & Glens Tourism Partnership

Progress Report, May 2013, on the Tourism Area Plan has been produced and presented to the Board.

The 2nd phase of the Rural Development campaign began in April and has generated 856 bookings which equates to 9844 bed nights and £462,000 of revenue for the region. As a consequence, the original target of £200,000 for this campaign has now been exceeded. It is anticipated that this phase will run for 3 months to allow for the best uptake in the run up to summer.

A range of positive publicity in international media, facebook and internet sites has been achieved, including the popular Game of Thrones which was filmed at the Dark Hedges and other key attractions in the region. The April edition of Tourism Ireland's USA (Ezine) highlighted the Game of Thrones itinerary to their US database of approximately 250,000 consumers. It has also been highlighted on the Visit Britain facebook where it has also received substantial consumer interaction and the Causeway Coast & Glens website is attracting substantial visitors with Game of Thrones itinerary the most popular page visited. CCAG have applied to the Rural Development Fund for £30,000 to market the Game of Thrones Itinerary in the GB market. The marketing plan will incorporate online marketing in partnership with a Sea Carrier. If successful it is anticipated that the campaign will start in Spring 2014.

CCAG are supporting the Tourism Ireland promotion of Car and Bike Touring along the Causeway Coastal Route. The promotion will consist of packages being developed by Nutt Travel highlighting Car and Bike Touring in the Region and featuring the Causeway Coastal Route and a full range of accommodation and will be promoted at 20 motorsport events in the GB market.

CCAG was represented at NITB 'Meet the Buyer' event in Derry-Londonderry and had meetings with the international trade from 8 markets including GB,

ROI, USA, France, Germany and Canada. Following on from the event and follow up three operators have confirmed they will be developing a programme to incorporate CCAG region.

CCG Tourism have partnered with Tourism Ireland to ensure that Causeway Coastal Route branding will feature on Colin Turkington's BMW in the British Touring Car Series and also on local motor bike rider Marty Nutt's Ducati in the British Superbike events. Throughout 2013 it is estimated that more than one million television viewers will see the Causeway Coastal Route branding. It is also estimated that over 25,000 spectators will attend each event.

4.5 Tourism Statistics User Consultation

NISRA is currently carrying out a user consultation exercise regarding methodology on tourism statistics on which views are invited. This has been discussed by tourism officers on Causeway Coast & Glens Partnership Operational Executive and a response is being prepared. Account has been taken of input from NITB and issues raised during the TAP review process. The closing date is 21st June.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services outlined the inadequacy of the current statistical process, industry needs and the thrust of the response. A full report will be appended to the minutes.

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

to recommend that Council endorse the response prepared by Causeway Coast & Glens Partnership.

4.6 Call for Proposals supporting enhancement and promotion of sustainable transnational thematic tourism products.

NEP Interreg Partnership have advised of a call from DFP for proposals on Supporting the enhancement and promotion of sustainable transnational thematic tourism products. The closing date is 3rd July. The opportunity is being examined by Causeway Coast & Glens Partnership in association with Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust.

The overall objectives of the present call for proposals are :

- to support the enhancement and promotion of sustainable transnational thematic tourism products contributing to the development and promotion of sustainable tourism in Europe by improving their visibility and market uptake.

- to contribute to the creation of an environment favourable to transnational co-operation among tourism-related stakeholders with a particular emphasis on the SMEs.

It aims at:

1. Strengthening trans-national cooperation, with regard to sustainable tourism;
2. Encouraging a higher involvement of small and micro enterprises and local authorities;
3. Stimulating competitiveness of the tourism industry by means of an enhanced focus on the diversification of sustainable tourism thematic products.

The consortium must gather a minimum of five applicants and has to cover/be developed in at least 4 countries. Maximum budget allocated for EU financing under this call is 1.000.000,00€. Indicative number of projects is up to 5 projects. Under the condition of sufficient budget the EU financing may be increased up to 1.500.000,00 € and the number of projects may be increased up to 7 projects. Maximum EU financing rate of eligible costs: 75%. Maximum EU financing amount per project: 250.000 €

4.7 Tourism Situation & Outlook Analysis Report (Tourism Ireland)

The summary headlines from Tourism Ireland's Situation & Outlook Analysis are:

- Official data indicates that overseas visitors to the Republic of Ireland grew by +7% in the first quarter of 2013 when compared to the same period in 2012. The British market returned to growth (+1%) and North America had its strongest first quarter since 2004, delivering almost 169,000 visitors in the first three months (+17%) of 2013. Mainland Europe also performed very strongly (+13%), whilst Australia and Developing markets had its best ever first quarter.
- Accordingly to the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA), almost 3.9 million passengers (inbound and outbound) travelled through Dublin Airport in the first three months of this year, a +4% increase on the same period in 2012.
- Air traffic estimates between GB and Northern Ireland for the first three months of the year increased by +1% YOY, according to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).
- Total available air seat capacity for peak summer 2013 is scheduled to be +3% higher than the same time last year. It is expected that sea access capacity will remain largely unchanged.

- The overall sentiment for travel to the island of Ireland in 2013 is largely positive, based on industry and trade feedback.
- This year Tourism Ireland mounted its biggest ever St Patrick's promotion with over 70 iconic landmarks across the world turning green to mark St Patrick's Day. Tourism Ireland continue to roll out a busy programme for 2013 with the major focus on The Gathering Ireland 2013 and Derry~Londonderry city of Culture 2013, which provides fresh and compelling reasons to visit the island of Ireland.

4.8 Campaigning For Tourism Initiative (NITB)

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has launched the third year of its "Campaigning for Tourism" Initiative and seeks Council support. 2012 saw the successful "Our Time Our Place" campaign, the opening of world-class visitor attractions and the major events programme. 2013 will showcase Northern Ireland to a global audience through events such as Derry-Londonderry UK City of Culture, the World Police and Fire Games and the G8 summit in Fermanagh.

It is accepted that tourism will be an important driver of the local economy over the remainder of this decade and it is important to secure Northern Ireland as a destination of choice and to ensure a world-class visitor experience for domestic and overseas markets. Having listened to visitors, researched their expectations NITB has identified six priority areas outlined in the "Campaigning For Tourism" document, circulated.

The five "valuing tourism principles" to realize tourism's potential and enhance civic pride are:

- 1 apply a "tourism lens" to all activity
- 2 work collaboratively to grow NI's tourism potential
- 3 make decisions on investment and funding with due regard to tourism
- 4 ensure that services for the visitor are continuously improved
- 5 take action that will address the weaknesses in at least one of the six priority areas.

Councils are invited to back these principles and apply them to all their activities and to make a renewed call to value tourism this year as NITB believe such a commitment will be a significant demonstration of support that will help to reap economic benefits. NITB will make contact in the coming weeks with the lead director with a view to setting up a meeting. In the interim the matter will be discussed with relevant personnel within Council. A further report will be brought to committee.

Committee noted that any enhancement of activities eg additional cleansing operations, environmental improvements, training etc, aimed at making the areas more welcoming as a tourism destination, could only be achieved at additional cost.

Councillor Finlay expressed the view that anything that could be done to enhance the town should be done and indicated that he planned to meet with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss areas of mutual interest. He commended the work of the officer on current town centre planning and development issues and welcomed the environment enhancement work on Linenhall Street/Charles Street properties and streetscape improvements which when complete would enhance the appearance of the town and were already attracting favorable comments. Councillor Robinson reminded members of the forthcoming "Ulster in Bloom" competition and urged residents to join in by including hanging baskets and window boxes and enhancing gardens by flower containers/beds.

249.5 TOWN DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Town Masterplan

The draft masterplan has now been finalized and was submitted to a special meeting of committee on 13th June for members comments. Representatives from the Consultants and Department of Social Development responded to members questions and the draft plan was welcomed. The exhibition boards are now being prepared for the launch of the consultation exercise on the draft masterplan proposals by the Social Development Minister, Nelson McCausland on Thursday 20th June. The consultation period will run for 12 weeks.

Councillor Finlay commended the work done by the consultants and the project group in bringing the town plan to this stage. He said he was impressed with the work to date and the engagement by stakeholders in community and business sectors.

5.2 Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

Ballymoney Regeneration is making preparations for the launch of the Ballymoney THI Initiative which had now been settled for 27th June.

5.3 Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) in NI – Consultation

The Department of Social Development has been developing legislation to allow for the establishment of statutory Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in NI. The primary legislation received Royal Assent in March, and DSD are

currently working on drafting the Regulations. These will be subjected to a full public consultation exercise later on. However, to assist the Department in framing the Regulations and deciding what they should cover, it has decided to take the views of key interests before embarking on a full consultation. To this end it will engage in some pre-consultation work with a selection of Councils (6) and nominations had been invited with three positions filled at the time of publication of this report.

249.6 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

6.1 NE Rural Development Partnership

The value of letters of offer issued to date in Ballymoney is £2,211,948.40, spend £937,346.18. Targets from NER Strategy (figures in brackets indicate outputs to date, job targets are estimates).

- 92 diversification businesses supported (89)
- 85 new and existing businesses supported (62)
- 20 tourism initiatives supported (56)
- 20 improved community facilities/services (22)
- 10 village plans/20 village projects (16/31)
- 8 heritage initiatives (8)
- 108 jobs created (155) based on LOOs

Ballymoney is performing well within the region.

Councillor Stevenson welcomed the level of uptake of grants in the region in the borough and stated that more is now being done to encourage applications for funding for the various rural development measures and the village renewal programme. He was pleased to note how many projects have been supported to date. Councillor Finlay and Councillor Atkinson concurred with these views.

6.2 Draft Rural Action Plan - (NIHE)

A new Rural Action Plan, 2013-2015, was launched by Social Development Minister, Nelson McCausland at Balmoral Show.

The new plan aims to build on the success of the previous plan and demonstrates a continued commitment to ensure that an equitable share of available resources is channeled towards rural areas. Particular emphasis will be placed on examining new ways of increasing the social housing supply in rural areas and of improving the fabric and energy efficiency of existing housing.

There is also focus on the support of vulnerable people in rural areas and the promotion of community involvement in aid of rural regeneration. A summary of the issues highlighted through the consultation exercise on the draft Rural Action Plan and how the Executive have set out to address these in the final version of the plan is included. An extract about the Action Plan was circulated.

249.7 EVENTS PLAN

The Head of Corporate & Development Services presented an update on forthcoming events to mark the Coronation, Gathering Ireland to celebrate Ballymoney's motorcycling and literary history, US Independence Day/Independents (retail) promotion and events to animate the town centre. Proposals for a Halloween event, deferred from the last meeting, were further discussed. She reported on initial advices with regard to fireworks licence, location, resource, health & safety requirements, with costs dependent on the level of activity and extent of show proposed. A further report will be presented.

In the ensuing discussion on fireworks at Halloween or Guy Fawkes night Councillor McAfee suggested, as an alternative, events for children and young people, such as fancy dress, party/disco, storytelling in the town.

It was proposed by Councillor McAfee, seconded by Councillor Cavlan

to recommend that Council arrange a programme of childrens activities, including fancy dress part/disco in the Town at Halloween.

A vote was taken with two members voting in favour and six members voting against and the motion was lost.

The Chair advised that the further report will be tabled.

249.8 EUROPEAN FUNDING 2014-20

The Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP) has responded to the Council's endorsement of the Northern Ireland Local Government position paper on local delivery of European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds for the 2014-2020 period.

DFP are disappointed not to have received more concrete proposals of potential projects eligible for funding to which the Managing authorities could give early consideration. Absence of specific investment projects at this stage will only cause delays in programme development. The four questions they asked to be addressed were:

1. *What activities do you think should be delivered through Local Government within the 2014-20 ERDF, ESF, EAFRD & ETC Programmes and why?*
2. *What do you consider would be the most efficient and effective management, delivery and accountability arrangements for Local Government involvement which ensure VFM is maximised?*
3. *How will your proposal for Local Government involvement contribute to the Commission's policy priorities as set out in Europe 2020 and comply with the draft regulations?*
4. *How would you propose to ensure consistency in the support available across Northern Ireland?*

The local government position, while including much interesting material is focused on specific organisational models, DFP do not believe are the most constructive or speediest path towards arrangements which will suit both local government actors and the accountable departments and intended Managing Authorities.

The Minister for the Environment recently announced the initial functions to be transferred from departments to reformed councils. There are no plans to transfer the general administration of European Structural and Investment Fund programmes. Therefore the accountability and responsibility for the delivery of EU funded projects remains the responsibility of designated Managing Authorities. It is not possible to appoint a single Managing Authority for all EU Funding Programmes in Northern Ireland:

- i. SEUPB will be Managing Authority for cross-border programmes and this flows directly from the provisions of the Good Friday agreement.
- ii. The draft regulations do not allow the Rural Development Programme to be merged into a single programme with other ESI programmes. The nature and constituency of this programme and its close association with the Common Agricultural Policy makes DARD best-placed to manage the programme.
- iii. It would be possible however to consider having a single Growth and Jobs Programme and therefore a single Managing Authority for the ERDF and ESF funds but the functions of approving department expenditure on projects would still have to be duplicated by the spending departments under current Government Accounting arrangements.

Following receipt of the local authority position papers, DFP is in discussion with the departments and bodies responsible for planning the future programmes, with the intention of seeing how it could best coordinate arrangements between the funds for allocation to good local projects where they are best placed to further

the strategic priorities of the programmes. There is interest in exploring the possibility of developing a coordinated approach involving local plans under:

- the provisions of the Rural Development Programme (LEADER axis),
- PEACE IV local provisions and
- the Investment for Growth and Jobs Programmes.

Such an approach would depend on the submission of robust plans from councils and could allow for delegation of project selection within agreed limits.

While it is too early to lay down the procedures or indicative allocations under such a mechanism, the programming authorities wish to engage in discussions on the basis of partnership with local government representatives to establish the feasibility and accountability of this approach.

The nature of projects within the INTERREG Programme, which have to be proposed on a cross-jurisdiction basis (bi-lateral or tripartite), makes their inclusion in such a mechanism problematic, and a different approach will be required for these projects.

DFP will be establishing structures to ensure strategic coordination between all the programmes and in this context will facilitate establishment of a Local Government practitioner's forum for communication, networking and best practice.

Directors/Heads of Service from Economic Development Units in the NEP Interreg and Rural Development Partnership Council areas have met with partnership officers to consider potential project areas, in accordance with the themes identified, and also taking account of other operating programmes in this cluster area and strategic themes identified in our Cluster Council strategies we have submitted a template to NILGA of potential projects seeking funding under the European Structural Funds 2014-2020 under

- The DETI Competitiveness Programme
- Peace IV SEUPB
- Interreg V SEUPB
- DARD
- DEL

A copy of NILGA EU Support Bulletin outlining the above programme, priorities etc was circulated.

249.9 A26 FROSSES ROAD

Ian Paisley, MP, has forwarded copy of correspondence from the Roads Minister, Danny Kennedy, MLA, in response to his representations following the decision to

stop funding the A5 to see if that money could be put into funding the A26 development.

The Minister advises that his Department is currently advancing a scheme for the section of the A26 between Glarryford and A44 Drones Road. A Public Inquiry for the scheme took place from 5-7 November 2012 and his Department subsequently received the Inspector's Report at the end of April 2013. That report is currently being assessed to determine if any additional work or changes may be necessary to advance the project. He anticipates being in a position to issue a Departmental Statement indicating the way forward later this year.

The Court ruling on the A5 scheme will add a significant delay to the project and will require adjustments to the capital budget, to be brought forward by the Finance Minister. In addressing the financial implications of this situation, the Roads Minister has set out spending proposals that his Department can deliver quickly and provided options to the Finance Minister for other major road schemes which could commence in 2014/15 financial year. The A26 dual carriageway is one of these schemes. Meantime DRD continues to develop the A26 scheme to a procurement-ready position. However it cannot progress beyond this position without a commitment of funding.

Members welcomed the positive response from the DRD Minister and that the development of the A26 scheme was being progressed to procurement stage and expressed the hope that the necessary funding would be provided to enable the much-needed upgrading of the road infrastructure to be implemented.

249.10 BROADBAND [RURAL AREAS]

Following the announcement by the Agriculture Minister, considered at the last meeting, on a £5m investment in broadband for rural areas in Northern Ireland, targeting areas of deprivation and focusing on those areas that currently cannot connect to fixed wire broadband some further consideration has been given to this. Ballymoney area is included in the list of postcodes that DETI recognizes has limited broadband connectivity. With regard to mobile coverage in comparison to Moyle and those areas west of the River Bann, Ballymoney is quite well covered with only pockets (such as Dervock) where availability is limited.

To enable specific representations to be made to mobile companies we are seeking the support of local community groups in affected areas to assist in carrying out a pilot survey.

Members suggested that the pilot survey include Dervock, Ballybogey, Stranocum, Dunaghy and Loughgiel.

249.11 CARRIER BAG BILL

The Committee for the Environment has commenced Committee Stage of the Carrier Bags Bill and welcomes views on the proposed Bill and requests written evidence. Written submissions should be structured to address specific clauses of the Bill. Information regarding the Bill can be obtained from the Assembly's website at the following link - <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Environment/Bills/Carrier-Bags-Bill/>

The Committee will accept written submissions up to 5pm on **Thursday 15 August 2013** but would be grateful for responses before this date wherever possible.

The Bill proposes a 10p charge for all single-use carrier bags and will allow for the charge to be applied to the cheaper version of reusable bags as well. These proposals represent the second phase of the Department of the Environment's charging arrangements for carrier bags. The first phase of charging arrangements came into effect on 8 April 2013, with a 5p charge for single-use carrier bags.

Over the coming months, the Environment Committee will be considering how the Bill might affect customers and retailers, and how the Bill will work in practice. Issues that the Committee will want to learn more about include: the impact on people's shopping habits; the effect on retailers, particularly smaller retailers; exemptions; the proposed review; the administration and use of the levy; and proposals for interest charges for late payments.

Members voiced opposition to the proposed increase in the bag tax levy and agreed it was very shortsighted to impose the charge on paper bags, something which was not happening in our regions. It was noted that representations had been received via the Chamber of Commerce opposing the proposals and they would be responding to the proposals.

It was **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council oppose the proposed increase in the bag tax levy, its extension to cheaper re-usable bags and its application to paper bags and that a detailed response be prepared, having considered the views put forward by the Chamber of Commerce.

249.12 A STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN IN SUPPORT OF THE NI AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

The Agri-Food Strategy Board has published “Going For Growth”, a strategic action plan in support of the NI Agri-Food Industry, following on appointment by DETI and DARD Ministers to develop a Strategic Action Plan to grow the NI Agri-Food industry.

The action plan outlines challenging growth targets for the industry and has over 100 recommendations to enable the industry to deliver on these. Some of the recommendations apply to the entire industry, whilst others are designed to address the specific needs of individual sectors.

The Agri-Food Strategy Board believes that there is only one supply chain, and it can only prosper when each individual element is sustainable and profitable. The recommendations made in the action plan support this outlook and the Board believe this joined-up approach should be adopted by the industry and government to deliver on the agreed Vision: “*Growing a sustainable, profitable and integrated Agri-Food supply chain, focused on delivering the needs of the market.*”

A copy of the Executive summary was circulated.

* **The meeting concluded at 8.10 pm.**