

Ballymahon Municipal District PPN Plenary Meeting Minutes

Date: 09.11.16

Venue: Ballymahon Library

Welcome and Introduction

Siobhán Cronogue (PPN Development Officer) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and acknowledging the great turnout. She then outlined the meeting schedule.

Recap on PPN's

The PPN Development Officer gave a quick recap on how PPN's came about and what their aim and functions were. She stated that in Sept 2013 the Department set up a working group to investigate how to get greater citizen engagement at Local Government Level. Fr. Seán Healy, Social Justice Ireland chaired this group. At the end of the allocated time period they produced a report that recommended the establishment of PPN's in every County. It became part of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. There is now a legal requirement on Local Authorities to have community representatives on all of their committees and these representatives must be sourced through the PPN. She explained the main aim of the PPN is to act as the link between Community, Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental Interest groups and the Local Authority. The three main functions of the PPN are:

- Participation and Representation
- Capacity Building
- Information Sharing

Following this she introduced the elected PPN representative for the Ballymahon Municipal District Brendan Quigley.

Ballymahon Municipal District PPN Representative

Brendan Quigley thanked everyone for attending and gave a brief background on how he was elected on to the PPN Secretariat and his work to date with the Co. Longford PPN. He outlined the makeup of the Secretariat stating that it consisted of two Community & Voluntary, two Social Inclusion and one community representative from each of the three MD's. He stated that based on feedback from the Municipal District he had chosen two topics to cover at the first Ballymahon MD meeting of the PPN:

- Tourism
- Regeneration Plan

Guest Speakers

Brendan then welcomed all three speakers and introduced Donal Mac An Beatha to discuss the Tourism Plan for South Longford.

Tourism Plan for South Longford

Donal Mac An Beatha spoke about Co. Longford's community and sustainable tourism. His presentation covered Ireland Waterways and Lough Ree Mid-Shannon. He spoke about Fáilte Irelands Tourism Development Strategy 2016 – 2022 which is:

- 1) To facilitate communities to play an enhanced role in developing tourism in their locality, thereby strengthening and enriching local communities.
- 2) To recognise, value, and enhance Ireland's natural environment as the cornerstone of Irish tourism.

He outlined Fáilte Ireland's domestic market segments which are:

- Connected Families: Families with young children whose core motivation is to spend quality time together.
- Footloose Socialisers: Groups of friends for whom holidays are about shared experiences.
- Indulgent Romantics: Couples looking for a romantic getaway where they can reconnect in wonderful surroundings.

He followed this by stating the distinct consumer segments in the overseas markets were:

- The Culturally Curious: Travellers in the over-45 age group taking a holiday with their partner. They are out to broaden their minds and expand their experience by exploring new landscapes, history and culture.
- Great Escapers: These tend to be younger and are specifically interested in rural holidays. Great Escapers are on holiday to take time out, and experience nature at close range.
- Social Energisers: Younger visitors who like to holiday in groups or as couples, friends or colleagues looking for an exciting trip to a new and vibrant destination.

He visually captured everyone's attention by presenting maps of The Rebel Trail, Edgeworthstown Literary Trail, Mid Shannon Trail, Royal Canal Greenway, The Shannon Greenway, Dublin to Westport Greenway "The Mighty Shannon", Mid Shannon potential, Corlea Trackway and South Longford Cycle way. He also touched on Centre Parcs and the economic development it would bring to Ballymahon and the County. He highlighted the need for accommodation for workers who will begin construction of the Forest Park in March 2017 and then of course the tourists once the project is complete. Ballymahon Traders spoke of the need for the community to come together and spread the word to anyone interested in opening a B&B or renting out a room/house. They previously held a very successful meeting to discuss how best to meet the accommodation needs not only for Centre Parcs but also for the Leinster Fleadh and planned a follow up meeting for November 21st.





Brendan Quigley thanked Donal Mac An Beatha for such an insightful and interesting presentation and after some questions from the floor introduced the second speaker of the night Lorraine O' Connor , Regeneration Team, Longford County Council.

Regeneration Plan

Lorraine explained that the Regeneration initiative had 3 pillars

- Economic
- Social
- Physical

She said that a wide range of research was carried out in the initial set-up and scoping out of the project and that a fully resourced team was now in place with expertise in planning, engineering, technical and administrative support. While explaining the current work being carried out she listed and gave information on the following projects:

- Connolly Barracks/Longford Northern Quarter
- EU URBACT MAPS Project
- Stalled Spaces Initiative
- Ardnacassa / Palace Crescent
- Unfinished Estates / Taking in Charge
- Upgrade of Industrial Estates
- Review of Longford Town Plan
- Supporting key Tourism Initiatives
- Town & Village Renewal Scheme
- Pedestrian Bridge over River Camlin

She visually presented work completed to date with before and after pictures of the community space in Great Water Street and Palace Crescent:

Pic A: Community Garden Before....



Pic B. Community Garden After



Pic A: Palace Crescent Before:



Pic B: Palace Crescent After:



Lorraine then informed all in attendance that the Longford Town plan was now formally adopted with eight specific sites identified within the plan with a particular focus as being regeneration catalysts

- Connolly Barracks/Northern Quarter
- Market Square
- Ballymahon Street
- Shopping Centre (Tesco)
- Little Water Street
- Ballyminion Neighbourhood Centre
- Athlone Road/Industrial /Commercial Areas
- Mall / Camlin Village

In summary she said that Regeneration was a long-term project which was critical for the future of the town and county. Their work would include identifying funding streams which were key to its success, pooling limited resources and maximising their potential while building on and creating greater inter-departmental and agency co-operation at local & national level.

Lorraine closed her presentation by saying how important it was for community groups to have a say in what work was being carried out and that the Regeneration team could be contacted anytime.

Brendan Quigley thanked Lorraine for informing everyone on the great work that has been done to date and also the development work that is planned for the County. After some questions and answers from the floor Brendan introduced the final speaker Matt Farrell.

Edgeworthstown Literary Trail

Matt Farrell kicked off his presentation by telling all in attendance the background of the Edgeworthstown Literary Trail. He said Edgeworthstown Development Association had been forefront of the project and with the town having such a rich literary and cultural heritage, it was with this in mind that the group took a lease on St John's Rectory and developed the Edgeworth Literary Trail.

He said Edgeworthstown has the potential to become a major literary and cultural centre over the next number of years and with the development on the main street will become a community space as well as a beautiful place to welcome visitors to the town.

He spoke about Longford County Council and their work to date with Edgeworthstown Development Committee to provide a new Community Library in Edgeworthstown.

He made comparisons to Centres like Dove Cottage home of William Woolworth in Cumbria, England and Bronte Centre, Haworth West, Yorkshire. He spoke about the development of a guided walk from St. Mary's to St. John's & Beyond and how they are marketing it as only an hour away from Dublin. See visual slide Matt presented below.

Guided Walk From
St. Mary's to St. John's & Beyond
Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford
Just an hour from Dublin

Follow in the footsteps of
Maria Edgeworth, Sir Walter Scott, William Wordsworth,
Oscar Wilde, Oliver Goldsmith, Charlotte Brooke and many more
18th & 19th Century historical figures

Visit the Edgeworth ancestral home and walled gardens, St. Johns Rectory birth place of "The Abbe Edgeworth" St. Johns Church and Graveyard burial grounds of Isola Wilde & the Edgeworth Family- See 18th & 19th century school houses. Immerse yourself in the period and hear all their extraordinary stories.

Walks & Talks can be tailored to suit individual groups
Morning and Afternoon Tea available locally.
Contact details from Edgeworth Society.

Ph./Fax: 00 353 43 6671801 • email:edgeworthsociety@eircom.net • www.edgeworthstown.org
Fee €5 per person - Minimum group charge €100

BOOKING ESSENTIAL
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Brendan thanked Matt Farrell for his presentation and noted how inspiring it was to see what a community group could achieve. He opened the floor for questions.



Pic A: Tess Murphy



Pic B: Donal Mac An Beatha



Pic C: Lorraine O' Connor



Pic D. Matt Farrell

Siobhan Cronogue thanked all the guest speakers and introduced the next item on the agenda.

Round Table Discussions

Please see below the two community questions asked of community groups and a list of their answers. This will be reviewed by the PPN Secretariat and will feed into the Ballymahon MD PPN Health & Well-being statement and also the PPN workplan 2017.

Question 1: What do you like about your community?

Summary of answers:

- Lots of volunteers
- Friendly community
- Area kept clean and tidy
- Lanesborough – Waterways, untapped reserves, unspoilt
- The potential for fishing
- Keenagh – Clock Tower, Mosstowngates, Bog, river and forest
- Royal Canal Greenway
- Forest walks
- The way businesses work together
- Tidy Towns and co-operation
- Keenagh – quiet lifestyle, easy to travel, lots of attractions, promising future, good community spirit
- Abbeyshrule and Taghshinny – Community are all willing to work together
- The fantastic work done by Tidy Towns
- Lanesborough - Neighbours

Question 2: What could be improved?

Summary of answers:

- More visibility of Garda presence. Older people feel vulnerable (active age feedback)
- Our national airways puts Longford in a derogative image
- Lanesborough – signage, public facilities
- Kenagh – amenities, walkways, cycleways, electric underground in particular at heritage sites, website, promotion and integration most of all
- Refurbish derelict buildings in Ballymahon (in particular town itself, old store at Brannigan Harbour etc)
- Encourage more use of canal for boating – possibly revise fees for locals and all users who have modest boats.
- Improve road surface in town itself and at Athlone Road Junction
- Increase linkage with funding bodies
- Kenagh – Better signage well in advance of attractions
- Need to get more young people involved through pride of place initiatives or similar
- More information signs needed in Kenagh
- Problems with drainage in certain areas e.g. Derraghan
- Canal Harbour in Kenagh needs more development and a slip way

- Abbeyshrule and Taghshinny – Meet area engineer on a regular basis to discuss what community would like done.
- Ballymahon – potholes outside convent gates into town
- Concerns around Longford County Councils re-housing
- Lanesborough – Funding focussed on town area. Need to build capacity of rural groups
- Towns Teams Project like Roscommon

Siobhan Cronogue invited Agnes Rowan from Ballymahon Library to draw the tickets for the raffle and the winners were announced.

Winners were: 1st prize €200 – Co. Longford Show & Country Fair, 2nd prize €150 – Convent House Day Care Centre, 3rd prize €50 – Ballymahon Royal Canal Group

Siobhán Cronogue thanked Mary Reynolds for the use of the library meeting room, Mairead and Agnes for all their help setting up and Roisin for the catering.

Brendan Quigley thanked everyone for attending and said he looked forward to continuing to represent the interest of the Ballymahon MD PPN groups on the PPN Secretariat. He then invited everyone to enjoy the refreshments provided and have an opportunity to network with each other.

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