

Minutes of meeting

County Longford Tourism CLG

Date: **Wednesday 14th October 2020**

Location: **Via Microsoft Teams**

In attendance:

Matt Farrell, Michael Nevin, Uruemu Adejinmi, Michéal Carrigy, Dympna Reilly, Tara Cunningham, Bartle D'Arcy, Darragh Feighery, Martin Smyth, Donal Mac An Bheatha, Sarah McCarthy, Christine Collins, Mona Considine, Garry Murtagh, Noel Carberry.

Apologies:

Camilla Kelly, Sarah Mulligan, Sheila Mullen, Frances McPartland, Margaret Walsh, Jude Flynn, Patricia Cumiskey, Seadna Ryan, Gerard Farrell, Sylvia Smith.

Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were circulated, proposed by Michéal Carrigy and seconded by Michael Nevin.

Update from Failte Ireland

Sarah McCarthy advised the following:

One of the main points to come out of yesterday's Budget 2020 for hospitality businesses is the VAT reduction to be reduced to 9%, this should be a good help going forward to restaurants etc.

Covid Safety Charter – very few Longford businesses have signed up for same.

Adaptation Fund – 3 applications received and 2 approved so far from Longford businesses. The deadline has now been extended from the 8th October to the 31st October to apply for it.

Failte Ireland are re-starting the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Network Programme. Training invites going out in the next week to attractions/activity providers, Failte Ireland will liase with Tourism Officers in each county with regard to this. The focus will be on the individual business and awareness of what is around them (i.e. competition/peers).

Michéal Carrigy said it is important to promote all of the above supports etc on our social media so people are aware of same.

Potential Caravan / Camping Parks

Michael Nevin said Dympna and Tara had done some research on what surrounding counties have to offer in terms of camp sites. Longford has no serviced pitches at all at present.

Longford CoCo met with Waterways Ireland in Clondra last week to look at potential site near school car park with space for approx. 6/8 campervans. Planning permission will need to be approved for this. Approximate cost to complete would be in the region of €50-70k. Showers and Toilets are already in Clondra in separate block. Donal Mac An Bheatha said the carpark was intended for parking but does not seem to be utilised much. Michael said they would probably lose about 2 car spaces if site goes ahead.

Michael said next place to consider for camp site if all goes well could be possibly Abbeyshrule.

Garry Murtagh said at the last Granard municipal meeting the North Longford area was brought up again with regard to potential camping areas, one suggestion was Dring car park.

Bartle D'Arcy said Granard could be considered as a destination town for campervans and could be looked at as well. Martin Smyth said overall plan for Granard site would be to include a roll out of campervan site.

Winter Video

Dympna Reilly said the completed Winter Video had been circulated to everyone on Tourism Committee, looking at launching it at the end of October. Suggestions were asked for ideas to launch it – social media, photo shoot, Longford Leader? Bartle said he thought the video was very good.

Audio Tour

Dympna advised the Audio Tour is now completed in English, German and French (Irish version last one to complete). There is an existing brochure to go with the audio player. Looking at launching this in November and there will be a video made to promote the tour featuring historic photos of Longford Town, Inhand Guides who are doing the Audio Tour will also produce the video. Michéal said an old historic site or area in Longford that is included in the tour would be an ideal place to launch it.

Website

Tara Cunningham advised that www.longford.ie is being reviewed. The current website visitlongford.ie will be unused once the reviewed website is launched. The domain www.visitlongford.ie however can still be used as it is to be redirected to www.longford.ie

The four sections are “Visit” “Live” “invest” and “YourCouncil”. The content for the “Visit” section, which is the tourism section, has been sent to ptools and some content will be migrated from the existing visitlongford.ie website. Ptools is due to deliver training next week on updating the website, if anyone had any good promotional photos / content they were asked to send it in to us.

The existing Visitlongford website is currently being edited to remove or add any relevant content as a large portion of this information is being migrated to the new Longford.ie website.

Matt asked could they get a link sent to them in Edgeworthstown so they can see the layout/content so they know what is expected of them to promote their business. Christine Collins said we can share a screen shot or the UAT with them. Bartle also said he would like to have a look at the content too. Mona Considine said she would get Backstage to link up with Dympna and Tara also.

Uruemu Adejinmi said she will reach out to any local businesses she feels may want to be included on the website. Christine said overall the main thing is to heavily promote the website once it is complete (e.g. paid advert on social media channels).

Martin said we should try and include other tourist attractions within say 50km radius of Longford. Dympna said we will link in with Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and also Ireland's Ancient East. Michéal said we should also link in with Lalin Swaris, a local man who travels heavily throughout the county and takes photos on his journeys.

Royal Canal Greenway

Dympna advised that Longford Tourism are working with Waterways Ireland, Meath, Kildare and Westmeath County Councils on a marketing plan to launch and promote the Royal Canal Greenway. Directional signage has recently been erected on the Greenway with Storyboards currently being designed. Each County is designing their own storyboards and they should be finalized, printed and erected by the end of November. We are currently considering a launch of the Royal Canal Greenway in early spring.

There will be bike hire in Clondra in Spring also. National Famine Way will also be featured on the Storyboards (integrated products?). Martin asked could the Queen Maeve Táin Trail be linked in with the greenway trail?

Donal said signage, mapping and promotion needs to be done as soon as possible. Waterways Ireland have been very slow to do this. It was suggested by Michéal to invite a representative from W.I. to the next tourism meeting.

Stay & Spend Scheme

Michéal Carrigy said we need to promote same – Longford has had a very low take up from hospitality providers in the county signing up to it. Companies must register themselves on the Revenue website. Uruemu said why do companies have to sign up to Revenue? Michéal said they have to be fully tax compliant. Darragh Feighery said Center Parcs have registered for Stay & Spend scheme and asked Michéal is there a possibility he could raise the point at a meeting could the timeframe be pushed out a bit due to current closures from Covid restrictions.

Budget Summary

Michael Nevin said tourism budget for the year was €70k, all accounts are fine and if people wanted a more in depth look the financial summary can be emailed to them.

AOB

Michéal Carrigy asked Mona Considine how things are with Backstage Theatre since Covid restrictions. Mona said a decent amount of funding for the Arts sector has been allocated from yesterdays Budget 2020 and its good to have the supports there. The challenge for theatres going forward is the 2 metre distance and this really impacts on amount of audience in theatre. Initially it will be small scale shows and this can be built up over time.

Bartle said that Knights & Conquests are going ahead with three Halloween Spook Walks in Granard on the 28th, 29th & 30th October.

Martin Smyth said a new improved version of plans of the Norman village in Granard has been submitted for planning permission.

Michael Nevin said if there was any cultural events in the next few months to talk to Mary Reynolds or Martin Morris and to promote them. Clonfin re-enactment is looking like a February date hopefully.

Donal said the Lanesborough to Ballinakill path/walkway is complete. He said Corlea Bog phase 2 is nearly complete. Donal also mentioned Newcastle Woods is being very heavily used with lots of cyclists and also people riding horses through it which they shouldn't be doing. Perhaps we need to identify a site for cycling/horse riding. will open from September.

Uruemu said about trying to link municipal district with cycling routes – Donal said there will be more urban greenways in the next few years.

Martin said the Midir & Etain trail needs some more signage – Michéal said he would meet with Martin to discuss this in more detail.

Michéal said we need to decide on a date for our next meeting, some time in the next 4/5 weeks, date will be emailed out to committee.

Michéal Carrigy
Chairperson of County Longford Tourism CLG