

Laois Public Participation Network

Minutes of Meeting of PPN Secretariat
Monday, 17th February 2020, 8.00pm
PPN Office, Lyster Square, Portlaoise.

Present: Mr. Michael Cobbe - Chair
Mr. Paddy Buggy
Mr. John Oxley
Mr. Vincent Booth
Mr. Donal O' Shea
Mr. Bolaji Adeyanju

Apologies: Ms. Ann Fleming
Mr. Patrick Blake

In Attendance: Ms. Suzanne O'Connor, PPN Coordinator.
Ms. Ailish Keane, PPN Support Worker.
Mr. Dan Bergin, PPN Resource Worker

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th January, 2020 were proposed by John Oxley, seconded by Vincent Booth, confirmed and signed.

Introduction to New Resource Worker

Suzanne introduced Dan Bergin, the new Resource Worker for Laois PPN. Dan was welcomed by Michael Cobbe as Chair and the Secretariat.

Presentation by Laois County Council – County Development Plan

Angela McEvoy – Senior Planner for Laois County Council gave a brief presentation about the County Development Plan.

The County Development Plan is an overall strategy for the future development of County Laois over the next 6 years. The last plan was adopted in 2017.

The public consultation phase of the County Development Plan is coming to a close. These consultations took place in Abbeyleix, Clonaslee and Killeshin during the month of January. The final two consultations will take place in Portarlinton Library on the 24th February from 2.30pm – 3.30pm and Rathdowney Library on the 25th February from 2.30pm – 3.30pm .

There are many headings that are considered in the development of the plan. Below are just some of the issues that Angela spoke about.

❖ **Developing a Growth and Settlement Strategy**

- Where should the increase in population within the county be directed to achieve balanced growth?
- How do we make areas more sustainable?
- Make the most of brown field sites

❖ **Developing an Economic Strategy**

- Can you identify suitable locations for strategic employment development?
- Renewal / Regeneration – for example old factories.
- Are there any areas that have the potential to be developed for tourism and recreational purposes?

❖ **Infrastructure and Movement**

- Is new or improved transport infrastructure required in the county and where?
- How can we create successful streets that easily facilitate the needs of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians in our towns and residential areas?
- What measures can be taken to improve water quality?

❖ **Tackling Climate Change**

- How can the Council achieve a balance between the growth of the County and the protection of the environment?
- What additional measures should be taken to protect the environment?

❖ **Protecting our Heritage**

- How can natural heritage and biodiversity be enhanced?

❖ **Sustainable Communities**

- What policies or objectives need to be put in place to meet the needs of our rapidly growing and diverse population?

When the first phase of the process is completed, a report will be prepared on the submissions and given to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive report on the consultation will then be presented to the elected members. From here a draft plan will be prepared.

Secretariat / Rep Training

Suzanne has been trying to make contact with Social Justice Ireland in regards to training for our Secretariat and Reps. To date, she has not received a response. Dan is going to follow this up and contact Collette Bennet of Social Justice Ireland and ask that Laois be a priority county.

Laois Tourism – Representative / Executive Membership

Our friend and colleague Michael Dowling was the PPN Representative on the Laois Tourism Board until his untimely death. That seat now needs to be filled. Vincent Booth and John Oxley both expressed an interest in filling the seat. It was proposed by Paddy Buggy that it be a rotating seat and they could both get a chance to sit on the board. This was seconded by Michael Cobbe.

The Laois Tourism Board would like Laois PPN to become an executive member. The Secretariat agreed to this and it will be ratified at the 1st Plenary on the 26th February.

Membership – Alliance for Insurance Reform

Peter Boland from the Alliance for Insurance Reform will be speaking at our Plenary on February 26th. He has asked that Laois PPN become an executive member of their group. There is no fee to join. Their ethos is that insurance is too high and are working towards getting insurance costs reduced. This was agreeable to the Secretariat and they recommended that it be ratified at the 1st Plenary on the 26th February.

Update of Meeting with Gerry Finn, Midlands & Western Regional Authority re: Bord na Mona re “Just Transition”

Dan attended a meeting with members of the Midlands & Western Regional Authority on Wednesday 12th February. Laois, Offaly, Kilkenny, Kildare, Longford, Westmeath and Roscommon PPN's were in attendance. Bord Na Mona is ending peat harvesting in Ireland. Bord na Mona own 80,000 hectares of peat land and employ 2100 people. 600 of these are taking redundancy. The “Just Transition Fund” will support retraining and reskilling of workers and peat land rehabilitation. There are 4 x ½ day workshops for community consultation across the region over the coming months. The dates and locations of these workshops will be advertised using the Public Participation Networks.

Any Other Business:

- **DSIG (Disability Special Interest Group)** – Donal O’ Shea informed the Secretariat that a meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday 4th March 2020, with the DFI. Venue and time to be confirmed.
- **Laois Partnership** – Michael Cobbe asked that we get the list of groups from Doonane / Crettyard / The Swan and forward to Catherine Cowap in Laois Partnership as discussed at the last meeting.
- **PPN Handbook** – Through the Chair, Suzanne explained the changes she thought could be made to the PPN Handbook and with the permission of the Secretariat; this

would be submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development on our behalf.

- **Re-Registration with PPN**

The Secretariat was advised the all member groups with Laois PPN had to re-register each year. There are 140 groups re-registered to date. The link to re-registration is to be sent to the Secretariat.

- **Mick Dowling Memorial Fund**

The Mick Dowling Memorial Fund is in memory of our friend and colleague Mick Dowling. Member groups who re-register with Laois PPN before the deadline of 30th April are eligible to apply for the €1000 fund for each municipal district. There has been 1 application received to date.

- **New Chairperson**

The Secretariat had to choose a new chairperson for the next three meetings. Paddy Buggy proposed Vincent Booth and this was seconded by Michael Cobbe.

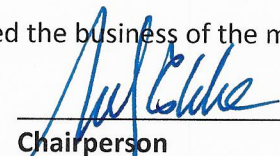
- **Thank You**

Paddy Buggy congratulated Suzanne on her promotion and wished her the best of luck. The Secretariat thanked her for everything she has done for Laois PPN and the Secretariat.

Suzanne then thanked the Secretariat for all their help and support during her time as Laois PPN Resource Worker.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:



Chairperson

Date:

08 / 04 / 2020