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**Minutes of Donegal Local Community Development Committee**

**Held in Council Chamber, County House, Lifford and by web conference 10.45 am on**

**14th December 2022**

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| **Members** | James O Donnell, Shauna McClenaghan, Charlene Logue, Aengus Kennedy, Joe Boland and Andrew McNulty and remote attendance by Clr Niamh Kennedy (Chair), Padraic Fingleton, Maire Ui Mhaolain, Michael MacGiolla Easbuig and Liam McElhinney |
| **Apologies** | Clr Maire Therese Gallagher, Paul Hannigan and Anne McHugh, |
| **Chief Officer** | Paddy Doherty |
| **Attending** | Liam Ward, Seamus Canning, Claire McCallan, Adrienne Kelly, Charlene Gillespie and Kathleen Browne |

Welcome

Clr Niamh Kennedy welcomed everyone and thanked the members present for participating in the meeting.

1. Draft minutes of the LCDC meeting of 15th November 2022

The minutes of the previous LCDC Meeting, as circulated with the agenda, were considered. On the proposal of Maire Ui Mhaolain, seconded by Charlene Logue, the minutes of LCDC Meeting of 15th November 2022 were adopted with no issues arising.

1. Outdoor Recreation Strategy

Liam Ward advised members that as they were aware work had been taking place on the preparation of the Donegal Outdoor Recreation Strategy. He confirmed that the draft Strategy was now completed and had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. He welcomed Caro-Lynne Ferris, Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland, to the meeting and advised members that they had worked with the LCDC, LDCs to prepare the Strategy. He invited Caro-Lynne to make a presentation to members setting out the main elements of the strategy and detail where Donegal is at with regards to the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy which was recently launched.

Caro-Lynne made a detailed and informative presentation to Members setting out in detail the context of the Donegal Strategy against the National Strategy. She advised that the Strategic Objectives of the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy were as follows:-

* Leadership
* Awareness
* Expertise
* Opportunities
* Access
* Environment

She confirmed that DRCD will be the lead government departmentin the delivery of many of the actions and that Sport Ireland will assume a co-leadership role, with the Department, with increased responsibilities and resources

Caro-Lynne confirmed that DRCD will develop a detailed Action Plan and that a strategy Implementation and Oversight Group, chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development, will be formed and will be made up of members from Comhairle na Tuaithe, who will have an active involvmenet in the guidance and delivery of strategy actions. She also advised that DRCD had confirmed that they will hold regular Inter-Departmental Group meetings to ensure cross-Departmental collaboration and delivery

Caro-Lynne went on to detail the actions from the National Plan at County level. She confirmed that the County Outdoor Recreation Committeewill be made up of the primary decision-makers and stakeholders in the county and that a Stakeholder Forumwill enable all stakeholders in the county to have their say. Members were advised that the Department would provide guidance and resource the development of a County Outdoor Recreation Plan. She informed members that in order to support the new structure and coordinate the delivery of the County Outdoor Recreation Plan, a new County positionwill be created and that the Department would develop a funding model to resource the new county outdoor recreation position, which would be hosted in Local Sports Partnerships.

Caro-Lynne went on to detail the Draft Donegal Outdoor Recreation Strategy. She confirmed that a Strategy Steering Group had been formed within Donegal County Council to develop the Strategy in conjunction with input from a Stakeholder Group made up of representatives from the following:-

* Donegal Sports Partnership
* 3 x Local Development Companies
* Donegal County Council
* Public landowners – Coillte, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Loughs Agency, NPWS, OPW
* Stage agencies – Failte Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta
* Irish Farmers Association
* Irish Natura and Hill Farming Association
* Representatives from: Education, Training, Disability, Inclusion, Health and Youth

Caro-Lynne advised members of the various consultations that took place in drafting the strategy.

Members were advised that the Vision for the strategy was ‘Donegal – a diverse, natural, authentic outdoors for all” and the Mission Statement for the Strategy was “to provide an authentic outdoor, recreation experience for all to enjoy while protecting our unique and

diverse landscapes and waterscapes, developed and nurtured in respectful partnership and working together to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits for our local communities and visitors “.

Caro-Lynn then outlined and provided detail on the six themes included in the Strategy as follows:-

1. Collaboration
2. Environmental Integrity
3. Facilities and Visitor Servicing
4. Inclusivity
5. Training and Education
6. Awareness and Participation

Caro-Lynne set out to members what was required for successful delivery of the Strategy including:-

* On-going commitment from all stakeholders
* Genuine willingness to work together for the greater good of outdoor recreation
* Ability to secure long-term funding for the Coordinator post
* Ability to secure long-term capital funding
* Ability to secure funding for on-going maintenance
* Private landowners agreeing to access on their land
* Good community and industry buy-in for outdoor recreation

Clr Niamh Kennedy, on behalf of the LCDC, thanked Caro-Lynne for her comprehensive, detailed and inspiring presentation. She confirmed that Councillors in Donegal MD had committed funding for Trails Plan for Donegal MD and expressed the hope that other Municipal Districts would follow suit.

Shauna McClenaghan thanked Caro-Lynne for her presentation and advised that IDP looked forward to collaborating on the delivery of the Outdoor Strategy through the various programmes IDP already have recently launched eg Blue Skies and Digi Tourism.

Liam Ward advised members that Donegal was very well placed in the context of the National Strategy in that they were one of four Counties with an Outdoor Recreation Strategy in place.

He outlined the next steps to members which included the appointment of an Outdoor Recreation Co-Ordinator through Donegal Sports Partnerships, whose role would be to work with the various Stakeholders to deliver the Strategy.

He confirmed that the Strategy would be presented to the Community Social and Cultural SPC at their next meeting tomorrow and, should they recommend the Strategy, to the Corporate Policy Group in January and to the full Council Meeting at the end of January for approval by the members. It was hoped that a formal launch of the Strategy should take place towards the end of February 2023.

Liam acknowledged the work of CaroLynne and her team at Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland, DLDC for bringing the project forward and the team within Community Section, Donegal County Council for their work on the Strategy.

1. Community Support Fund

Seamus Canning advised members thatthe Community Support Fund, with a national fund of €10m, was provided by the Government to support a wide and diverse range of local community groups with energy bills and running costs.

He confirmed that this fund was launched by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Joe O’Brien TD

Seamus outlined that the **Community Support Fund** will support groups, particularly in disadvantaged areas

* With their non-pay running costs for example energy costs (electricity costs, refuse charges, heating charges) or other non-pay operating costs for example rental/lease costs, insurance bills.
* Groups will also be able to use the funding to carry out necessary repairs and improvements to their facilities, purchase equipment such as tables and chairs, tools and signage, laptops and printers, lawnmowers, canopies and training equipment etc.

He advised that this funding will help communities, community groups and committees, allowing them to continue to provide valuable services to the people in their area, and in the process strengthen the bonds that tie communities together.

It has been devised to support groups with energy costs who may not have been deemed eligible under previous Government Schemes (Pobal Community & Voluntary Energy Support Scheme/Revenue Temporary Business Energy Scheme/Sports Ireland Energy Support Scheme/Arts Council Energy Scheme & Department of Health Section 38 or 39 organisations scheme)

Donegal LCDC have been allocated awarded €374,061 for award under the Scheme. This total amount comprises:-

* €183,290 Current funding (Non-Pay) for use towards energy running/operating costs
* €187,030 Capital funding for use towards carrying out necessary repairs and improvements to facilities, energy efficiency type projects, purchase of equipment etc.
* €3,741 ring-fenced for Women’s sheds.
* €18,703 maximum administration fee (5%) allowed based on total allocation.

Seamus informed members that the Department had released details of the scheme as follows:-

* The LCDC are the decision makers on the successful applications for funding.
* 30% of the funding should be directed towards small scale grants towards re-opening of €1,000 or less.
* The closing date for receipt of applications must be set at no later than 31st March 20232 and all monies must be expended by 31st August 2023.
* Operating/Running Costs from 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022 are eligible for funding under this scheme.
* Grants will also be available to community and voluntary groups to carry out small upgrade works and to purchase equipment.
* A portion of the funding should be ring fenced for award to Women’s Sheds for use towards running costs.
* In order to allow flexibility, the Department is not setting a national closing date, but will allow each LCDC to set its own, to best suit its area. The Department will require that all closing dates are no later than 31st March 2023.

He confirmed that the Department have indicated that the LCDC can make minor changes to the scheme as long as they are in keeping with the ethos of the Programme and meet any audit, monitoring or evaluation requirement.

Members were requested to consider the approval of the following amendments/actions for the Programme recommendations:-

1. To Amend Regulations

That the LCDC amend the guidelines where necessary to adhere to the payment guidelines set down by Donegal County Council and that, due to the high volume of applications expected, that only groups based in Co Donegal are eligible to apply for funding from the Community Activities Fund.

1. Closing date

That the LCDC agree to set the deadline for receipt of applications to the Community Activities Fund for 3.30pm on Thursday, 9th March 2023.

1. Dates for Eligible Costs

That the LCDC agree to set the eligible dates for costs claimed for under this scheme as follows:-

1st July 2022 – 30th June 2023

1. LCDC to decide on how the funds should be expended

That the LCDC agree to make two different levels of grant available for award –

* Small Grants in the sum of €500-€1,000 (Operating/Running Costs and Purchase of equipment/maintenance or upgrade works)
* Large grants in the sum of €5,000 to €10,000 (Capital costs only)

That the LCDC agree to amend the amounts recommended by the Department slightly to round off the amounts available for award as follows:-

* €180,000 Small Grant
* €175,000 Large Grant
* €5,000 Ring Fenced for Women’s Shed (Current funding only)\*

*\*Any underspend on this amount will be awarded as small grants to general applicant groups*

* €14,061.00 administration fee (3.75%)

That the LCDC agree that monies be divided between equally between each of the 5 MDs It is proposed Previous similar funding streams were divided equally between each MD with €72,000 being available for award in each MD as follows:-

* Women’s Sheds €1,000 per MD
* Small Grants for operating/running costs €36,000 per MD
* Large Capital Grants €35,000 per MD

On the proposal of Joe Boland, seconded by Charlene Logue, members of the LCDC approved the amendments to the regulations for the Community Support Fund as set out above.

1. LEADER EOI

Paddy Doherty advised members that following on from their decision at the last meeting to submit an Expression of Interest to be the Local Action Group for County Donegal for the new LEADER programme 2023-2027 at the last meeting, a draft EOI had been prepared and circulated to members in advance of the meeting for their information and endorsement in advance of the deadline for submission of EOI’s, which was 16th December 2022.

Members considered the EOI as circulated and two minor amendments were proposed.

* Section 5 - Donegal Scouts be amended to Scouting Ireland – Donegal members
* Section 6 – phrasing on Donegal Islands be amened from ‘systemic problems’ to ‘systemic challenges’

Liam Ward acknowledged the work of the LAG, Implementing Partners and Donegal County Council Administrative Team on not only the transitional programme but the Leader and REDS also. He commented on the strong working relationships between the LAG, Administrative Team and Implementing Partners and their record over the last Programme would ensure that a strong EOI was being submitted. Padraic Fingleton, on behalf of DLDC, concurred with Liam’s comments.

Clr Niamh Kennedy, on behalf of the LCDC, acknowledge the work of all and their success in the delivery of the Programme.

On the proposal of Joe Boland, seconded by Andrew McNulty, the LCDC approved and endorsed the Leader Expression of Interest subject to amendments set out above.

1. LECP Update

Paddy Doherty introduced Claire McCallan to the members advising that she would lead out on the update of the LECP.

Claire informed members that the specific purpose of the LECP was to set out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support economic and community development within and across the County over the next six-year period, and is one of the primary mechanisms – at local level – to bring forward relevant actions arising from national and regional strategies and policies that have a local remit.

She confirmed that an Advisory Group was established and endorsed by the LCDC early in 2022 with reps from both LCDC and SPC.

Members were informed that National government had issued a set of Guidelines informing the process to deliver the LECP. These Guidelines set out a 6 Stage process. Stage 1 of the process is the preparatory process.

Claire advised that the first step of this stage would include a review of the current LECP. Building on the review process evidence will then be gatherer which would form the detail of the LECP developing a socio economic analysis of the area. This data will in turn inform the Socio economic Statement and High Level Goals which provides the foundation and strategic focus from which the LECP will derive.

Members were informed that the process to secure the services of a consultant to prepare a Socio Economic Analysis of the County had formally commenced.

Claire advised members that the learning from the development of the Donegal Ooutdoor Recreation Strategy, specifically in relation to the value of meaningful and sustained collaboration would be built on to ensure that the LECP will provide an enabling framework that supports and facilitates collaborative working both in the structures that support the LECP and in the interventions that the LECP seek to support.

Claire confirmed that formal engagement with the Members of the Advisory Group would commence in the New Year and continue to progress the development of the LECP with a view to formally launching in Q1/2024.

Clr Niamh Kennedy queried when Stakeholder engagement on the LECP would take place. Claire confirmed that these timelines had not been confirmed but likely to be in Q3 2022.

1. Peace Plus Update

Paddy Doherty advised members that as per report circulated with the Agenda, Donegal County Council will facilitate a series of local community co-design workshops that will collectively span across each Municipal Districts in early 2023 to enable local representatives/stakeholders from each local MD to engage in the formulation of a list of project /concepts ideas for inclusion within Donegal’s Local Co-designed PEACEPLUS Action Plan. He confirmed that the PEACEPLUS format is very different from previous Programmes as it is based on a localised and co- design approach and consultation process. He confirmed to members that this was a practice which enables groups which represent different communities of interest from defined areas to collaboratively design projects tailored to meet local challenges and opportunities.

Members were advised that Donegal’s PEACEPLUS Partnership Committee would provide oversight regarding final project selection and delivery of areas / themes to be included in Donegal’s the co-design PEACEPLUS Action Plan.

The timeline for the Action Plan was detailed to members as follows:-

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| PEACEPLUS Partnership | Complete PEACEPLUS Partnership establishment Finalise governance arrangements and host initial meetings Sept –Nov 2022. |
| PEACEPLUS Partnership- Consultant | Appoint Consultant –   * Second tender documents published on E-Tenders on the 20th September 2022 * Closing date 10th October 2022 * Tender Submission Received & Evaluation held on the 26th October 2022 * Appoint Successful Tenderer December /Jan 2023 |
| Local Area Co-design Workshops | Commence co-design process meetings / workshops Stage 1 -3 etc Jan –April 2023 |
| Selection Co Designed Workshops | Agree Selection of Priority Projects to be included within DCC PEACEPLUS Action Plan Feb April –May 2023 |
| Submission of Plan to SEUPB | Action Plan June 2023 –Submit to SEUPB (Dependent on issue date of Call Document)    First Projects – Late 2023/early 2024 following assessment process by SEUPB (normally takes 6 months) |

1. AOB

Joe Boland thanked all the staff on behalf of the Community Groups for their support throughout the year.

Town & Village Renewal

Liam Ward advised that Town & Village Renewal Project Awards had been announced with funding awarded to four projects in the following towns in the County:

Carndonagh €121,000

Convoy €435,000

Dungloe €122,000

Manorcunningham €145,000

He also confirmed that funding for Streetscape Enhancement Scheme for Lifford, in the sum of €100,000 and an Award of €50,000 for procurement of Landscape Architect Design led integrate design team to develop concept designs (as outlined in feasibility study) and secure requisite and statutory approvals for potential nature based play space and the Drumboe bowl multifunctional outdoor space had also been confirmed.

1. Next Meeting

Members were informed that the next meeting of Donegal LCDC would be held on 15th February 2023 at 10.00 am where the schedule of meetings for the remainder of 2023 would be agreed..

This concluded the business of the meeting.