

**Minutes of the Rural Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) held on  
Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024 at 11.00 am in Ennis Digital Hub**

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**In attendance:**

Cllr. Pat Hayes  
Cllr. Shane Talty  
Cllr. Cillian Murphy  
Cllr. Rita McInerney  
Cllr. Joe Killeen  
Mr. Denis Tuohy  
Ms. Anne Haugh  
Ms. Bernadette Haugh  
Ms. Helen Walsh  
Ms. Deirdre O'Shea  
Mr. Urban McMahon  
Mr. Stephen Hanley  
Mr. Donnacha Lynch  
Ms. Geraldine Enright  
Ms. Helen Moloney  
Ms. Kathy Lordan

**Organisation:**

Chair  
Elected Member  
Elected Member  
Elected Member  
Elected Member  
Agriculture/Farming  
Director of Rural & Community Development  
Senior Executive Officer  
County Librarian  
Head of Tourism  
Head of Broadband & Digital  
General Manager Clare Tourism Development East  
Head of Commercial & Shared Services  
General Manager, Cliffs of Moher Experience  
Assistant Staff Officer  
Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies:**

Cllr. Mary Howard; Cllr. Pat Burke; Ms. Jean Tierney O'Keeffe; Ms. Niamh O'Callaghan;  
Ms. Mary Ann Kearns.

At the outset, the members expressed condolences to Helen Walsh on her recent family bereavement.

**1) Minutes of Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 were proposed by Cllr. Murphy, seconded by Cllr. McInerney and agreed.

**2) Matters arising**

Cllr. McInerney re. dangerous footpaths in towns and villages - more LIS funding required.

Cllr. Hayes queried contradictory nature over who is making decisions on Active Travel funding; Department say it is at the discretion of the local authority.

Anne Haugh advised CCC has been consistent in submitting applications for rural areas around the county – have not been successful; Council can submit and prioritise but Department decide. Cllr. Killeen & Cllr. Murphy requested clarity be established as to who is responsible for allocation of Active Travel funding.

Bernadette Haugh advised the focus of CLAR 2024 is the development of community facilities; limited to 15 applications.

### 3) Tourism Directorate Update

The following updates were provided to the members:

- Clare Tourism Strategy - Deirdre O'Shea
- Cliffs of Moher Strategy - Geraldine Enright
- Clare Tourism East - Stephen Hanley
- Tourism Commercial & Shared Services - Donnacha Lynch
- Digital & Broadband - Urban McMahon

Cllr. Hayes thanked all for their presentations.

Cllr. Murphy advised motorhome/campervan community spaces need to be looked at from parking bye-laws perspective and ICT system should be able to take bookings; could local bursaries be used for students going in to hospitality or event management; delighted at coach capacity at Cliffs; Walk management model should provide a model for other Walks; was ducting done from Loop Head lighthouse back to entrance.

Cllr McNerney re. motorhome parking – public element, private element and community element involved; generate tagline for the county; coach industry not very well supported during Covid; sunsets at Cliffs amazing – promotion important; is the SLA with the Council standardised; is there funding in the Budget for all ICT work; is the office in Clare Business Park Council owned; compliment the hubs – vital for tourism sector.

Denis Tuohy – thanks to Leonard Cleary and wish him well in new role; can accommodation audit on campervans be shared; Government's green public procurement regarding food requires 10% organic target – does Clare have such a target; Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Slieve Bloom – could strategy be prepared for Slieve Aghley.

Cllr. Talty – integration across all sites will be critical; figures on coaches and visitors to Cliffs and indications for 2024/2025 numbers being down will be a challenge; festivals outside of peak season are massive; negativity around condition of COM coastal walk unhelpful – important to get management plan in place.

Cllr. Killeen – presentation very impressive; a lot of changes in past 5 years; Bunratty has all the ingredients to be a world class tourist destination; marketing is really good and publicising what is available in Clare; interactive elements very important; will there be packages for school tours; key areas traffic and transport - funding not available to improve roads; shuttle bus to Burren National Park – the system is uncontrolled – needs to be co-ordinated.

Cllr. Hayes – Ennis needs to be the driver to move tourists around the county; opening of the bridge crossing in Killaloe hugely important; need to make sure the vision for next 5 years is to increase accommodation base and bed nights; having IT across the county is hugely beneficial; queried Shannon Group personnel changes.

Deirdre O’Shea – echo sentiments re. Leonard Cleary who provided great leadership for the Tourism Directorate.

- Will share motorhome/campervan review report with the SPC Committee.
- Local bursaries and event management a great idea and goes on at Cliffs.
- When the management walk model is available it will be used across the county.
- Loop Head ducting would be a planning challenge but will get there.
- Tagline – mission statement of the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 encapsulates the 4 pillars of the Clare tourism strategy; over 100,000 new customers to Visit Clare website.
- Cliffs do sunsets; will look at doing in Loop Head also.
- Bus routes – TFI local link are on Tourism Advisory Forum and have provided positive inputs and are open to new opportunities.
- Ennis called out as being the centre of the county at all times.

Donnacha Lynch advised SLA in place and reviewed annually; Gort Road office is leased – no capacity in Aras Contae an Chlair; comply with Green Procurement legislation – tender processes for retail and catering underway with benchmarks for new operators to meet for products produced in Co. Clare – 14% benchmark for retail product; Shannon Heritage staff terms and conditions fully protected and will transfer from current employer to new employer.

Urban McMahon – Government funding was provided for merger project.

#### 4) Rural Development Directorate Update

Bernadette Haugh briefed the members as follows:

During the lifetime of the current Council, the Rural Development SPC has met on 22 occasions to address many rural policy related issues. This period was marked by many significant challenges locally, nationally and internationally which required local government to adapt and react to an ever-changing environment including the Covid-19 pandemic and Ukrainian Crisis.

Below is a list of the key items that came before the Rural SPC for consideration, input and action since June 2019:

<b>Agenda Items 2019 to 2024</b>
Overview of Rural Development Directorate
Role of Rural Development SPC
Draft Corporate Plan
Climate Change Adaptation Strategy & Biodiversity
Presentation on LIT Outreach Programme
Age Friendly Parking
Clare Comhairle nan Oig Update
Draft Clare Tourism Strategy 2030
Terms of reference for Review of Burial Ground Policy

Community Group Funding & Post Covid Recovery
Community Support Scheme
Review of the Rural Development Strategy
Review of the Rural Investment Programme
Rural & Community Covid-19 Community Response Form, Helpline & Statistics
DigiClare and National Broadband Rollout
Implementation of the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030
Presentation by SEAI on Climate Change
Presentation on Burial Ground Review Process
County Development Plan
Town Centre First Programme
Clare PPN Presentation on “Rights of Nature”
Presentation on Music Generation Programme in Clare
Update on Ukrainian Crisis
Presentation on Columbarium Walls
Review of Burial Ground Bye-Laws
Update on Shannon Heritage Sites
Presentation on Renewed Clare Rural Development Strategy 2030
Presentation on development of Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)
Presentation on Climate Action by Climate Action Coordinator
Rural Transport and County Initiatives (Local Link)
Presentation by Project Mgt Office on Greenway Projects
Update on Clare Tourism Strategy 2030
Draft Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040
LECP and Rural Funding Opportunities
Overview of the Library & Cultural Services
Shared Island Initiative

From a Rural Development perspective, the Renewed Clare Rural Development Strategy 2030 together with the Local Economic and Community Plan are two key policy areas that have been developed by the Clare Rural Development Forum and Local Community Development Committee respectively, in conjunction with the support of the Rural Development SPC. These policy documents will be the catalyst for Rural & Community Development over the next 5 years and will inform and align with the Rural Development SPC’s work programme.

Cllr. Hayes - we have covered a huge amount of topics; one of the biggest challenges is not enough community sector involvement; Denis has given a huge focus on farming.

Cllr. Murphy – important to see SPC involvement in all items on the list.

Cllr. Killeen – a lot of debates at SPC have informed motions to Council meeting.

## 5) Climate Change and Biodiversity

Update from the Climate Action Team in Clare County Council was circulated to the members

**6) Any Other Business**

Cllr. Killeen referred to the stress on farmers because of adverse weather conditions; support needs to be provided where possible and thanks to all who have helped.

Cllr. Hayes wished Helen Walsh well in new Library project; thanked all the members and wished everyone well in the coming weeks; best wishes also to Leonard Cleary in new role.

Cllr. Killeen thanked Cllr. Hayes as Chair of the Rural Development Strategic Policy Committee.

The meeting then concluded.

**Signed:**

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**Cllr. Pat Hayes,  
Chair.**

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**Ann Reynolds,  
A/Director of Service.**

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **26<sup>th</sup> November 2024** \_\_\_\_\_