

Report from SPC 3 meeting 2017-01-18

Reporting Representative Name: Mary T. Brennan

Committee: SPC3

Date: 18/01/2017 Time: 3 p.m. Venue: County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny

Were you in attendance at the last Committee meeting? Yes

Did you consult with your Linkage Group /Wider PPN prior to this meeting? Yes

Key Issues discussed at the meeting

1. Pride of place: Congratulations were expressed re the success of Stoneyford Development Association and Piltown Community Enterprise for winning prizes at the Pride of Place Awards in Belfast, November 2016. It is intended that four projects, one from each Municipal District will be submitted in 2017.
2. Solar Farms: Kilkenny County Council has received 10 applications for solar farms to-date, 6 have been granted permission, 2 refused and 2 are under consideration. These developments are being approved in the absence of any national policy, but the Council argue that they take into account the policy implemented in Northern Ireland and the UK when assessing applications. It is expected that a national policy will emerge later this year. Discussion centred on size of solar farms, the need to consider them in the context of an overall energy policy and the need to require biodiversity enhancement in planning conditions.
3. Forward Planning
 - (a) Urban design: The proposal to have a public consultation on the design of the Hebron Road and to develop a zoning policy that would encourage mixed use and an improved streetscape was welcomed.
 - (b) LIHAF: Kilkenny County Council have submitted two proposals for funding under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (i) 'Ferrybank park' and (ii) 'Western Environs enabling infrastructure'. If successful the latter project would activate large housing development in Kilkenny City. The results will be announced in March.
 - (c) Vacant Site Levy: The levy will be 3% of the market value of the vacant property, the aim is to incentivise the release of land. A preliminary survey has been carried out by the Council and 132 sites have been identified in the city and district towns. Owners will be notified in 2018 and the levy collected in 2019. It is not expected to yield much in Kilkenny.
4. Applications for funding:
 - (a) CLAR Programme: This provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in rural areas such as footpaths, lighting and pedestrian crossings. The budget of €223,000 is funding 9 projects in villages throughout the County.
 - (b) Town & Village Renewal: The fund aims to increase attractiveness of the streetscapes and enhance amenities in rural areas. A budget of €380,000 will fund four projects in Urlingford, Kells, Piltown and Ballyhale, during the coming year. Consultation is still underway with the communities to identify specific needs.
 - (c) Rural Economic Development Zone. There is one project per County and it aims to stimulate economic development in rural towns. In Kilkenny €200,000 is available to improve car parking and visitor facility in Inistioge and Woodstock.
5. Housing Developments: The Council has taken in charge 70 estates from Developers between 2010 and 2016, including 17 last year. There are currently 52 active files. A grant of €229,000 was received to complete small works on 9 estates. Work on others including improvements to roads, lighting and green spaces, is ongoing.

Where any decisions made at the meeting?

No, all projects presented are ongoing and progress will continue to be reported on.

Are there any actions to be taken as result of this meeting?

Engage with consultation on urban design for the Hebron Road.

Did you or another PPN rep make any contributions to this meeting?

I engaged in discussion of (a) solar farms and the need to enhance biodiversity, (b) the importance of good urban design on the Hebron Road and (c) expressed welcome for funding for rural development through the various initiatives.

Do you require feedback from the wider PPN/Linkage group on any issues raised? (Specify issue)

The Council attempts to spread funding for projects over the four municipal districts. If any organisation feel that their area is neglected then PPN reps could raise this issue.

Are there any issues/difficulties for you as a representative of the PPN arising from this meeting?

The notice of meetings is very short – about 6 days, it takes time to disseminate the agenda, I don't know if it reaches everyone with an interest in the topics and if they have time to contact a rep.

Date of Next Meeting: April 12th 2017

Mary T. Brennan (Environmental Pillar)