

# County Wicklow Public Participation Network

## Representative Report

Please complete and return to [countywicklowppn@gmail.com](mailto:countywicklowppn@gmail.com) within one week after each meeting.

**Name of Committee:** Transportation, Water & Emergency Services SPC

**Name of Representative:** Tim Morgan

**Date of Meeting Attended:** 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021 (via Zoom)

**Most important actions or issues to emerge from a County Wicklow PPN perspective:**

The Agenda for the meeting was as follows:

1. To note minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021
2. NTA Schemes Update
  - NTA Projects Update (Note 1)
  - Connecting Ireland - National Transport Authority (Note 2)
  - GDA Cycle Network Plan - (Note 3)
  - Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme (Note 4)
3. GDA Transport Strategy Review - Update from Cllr Mitchell as representative on steering/advisory Group. DART+ and further rail proposals (Note 5)
4. Update TII Funded Projects (Note 6)
  - N11 Parallel Service Road at Kilmacanogue
  - M11/N11 Junction 4 to 14 Improvement Scheme
  - M11/N11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme
  - N81 Knockroe Bend Realignment
  - N81 "Four Studies" Irishtown West, Whitestown Lower, Hangmans Bend, Tuckmill Lower
  - N81 Pavement Capital and Maintenance works planned for 2021
  - Brief overview of traffic volumes on the N11 and N81 for 2019/2020/2021
5. Fire Services Policy Update
6. Water Services Policy Update
7. To note TWES Annual Service Delivery Plan
8. AOB
  - To note - Code of Conduct for Councillors- Return required – all Councillor and non-Councillor members on committees of local authorities
9. Next Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021 @ 9.30am/2.30pm TBC

### 1. Minutes of previous meeting

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Derek Mitchell. The minutes of the previous SPC meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> of January were taken as read.

### 2. NTA Schemes Update

#### (1) NTA Projects Update

It was noted that the NTA were visiting all the Municipal Districts in the County at this time. A copy of a presentation made on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 to WCC Management Team was attached to the agenda for the members of the SPC. A brief summary of the presentation is given here.

The team structure was shown as being led by the Director of Services Colm Lavery and Senior Engineer Mike Flynn. The Implementation Team and Design Projects Team consist of 6 members each and each team headed up by a Council Engineer (the NTA coordinates with the Design Projects Team).

Note 1 to the agenda stated ‘Sanction received from NTA to fund 12 staff working on NTA projects for a period of 5 years. Appointment of 5 new staff members going to Department for approval (4 engineers & 1 Communications/Admin)’. It also states that a 5-Year Sustainable Transport Plan agreed with NTA will form the basis of funding over next 5 years. The number of schemes to be funded by the NTA under various categories are shown in the table below.

<u>Funding provided for 2021 Projects</u>	
Existing Schemes	18
New Design Schemes	20
2020 Covid Programme – Contractual Liability	13
2020 Stimulus Programme – Contractual Liability	10
Cycle Parking Provisions in Wicklow	1
Safe to Schools Programme	2
Active Travel	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>

For comparison the total funding allocations for the past 3 years are as follows: 2019 = €2.4m, 2020 = €2.7m and 2021 = €7.6m. So the funding for 2021 is nearly 3 times that for 2020.

The presentation listed all of the projects (mainly pedestrian and cycling infrastructure) including location, brief description and amount allocated. The projects and allocations were also listed in an article in the Wicklow People of the 17<sup>th</sup> of February last under the title of ‘€7.6m for transport projects in county’. It noted that the largest grants included €1.5m for the Strand Road cycle route in Bray and €1.51m for Active Travel measures in the county.

## (2) Connecting Ireland - National Transport Authority

Note 2 to the agenda gave the following information: *Connecting Ireland - National Transport Authority Rural Mobility Plan currently being prepared by the NTA with input from a range of stakeholders including WCC.*

*The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for securing sustainable, accessible public transport across Ireland. Recently, we have focused on improving public transport services in major urban areas of highest demand to change travel patterns from car dependency to increased use of public transport and cycling. Our objective has always been to meet sustainability goals and to make public transport available to as many passengers as possible, and we now wish to focus on improving the level of service beyond urban areas.*

*Connecting Ireland is the Authority’s public transport initiative that will increase connectivity between cities and towns, and their surrounding villages and rural areas. Our framework is underpinned by several supporting programmes, including the National Development Plan, the Climate Action Plan, and the Programme for Government, all of which outline the importance of sustainable, accessible transport in Ireland.*

*Not only will Connecting Ireland provide better links between regional centres and major cities and their rural surroundings, it will also incorporate non-traditional modes of public transport through the expansion of the Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) network, Local Area Hackney schemes, and Community Car Schemes. In order to better understand the transport needs of those living and working outside urban areas in your county, we would like to work in partnership with your Local Authorities and other stakeholders. We plan to hold a series of workshops to discuss relevant issues to gain these insights.*

*The Connecting Ireland team together with Wicklow County Council Chief Executive and Roads staff participated in an online workshop in February designed to introduce us to the Connecting Ireland project and to establish the specifics required to expand Wicklow's public transport network.*

A copy of the presentation from the workshop was attached to the agenda for members of the SPC together with a NTA Connecting Ireland brochure. In the workshop they considered destinations such as Glendalough.

### (3) GDA Cycle Network Plan

Note 3 to the agenda gave the following information: *The GDA Cycle Network Plan is under review. The existing plan dates back to 2013 and requires considerable updating.*

*Cycling has seen a surge in users in recent years as well as the development of many novel and ground-breaking facilities across the region. To reflect the need for, and aspirations of, continued sustainable growth in cycling, the GDA Cycle Network Plan will be revised in early 2021. The GDA Cycle Network Plan update seeks to build on the many positive aspects of the previous iteration (completed in 2013), with updated data and insight gained in the interim.*

*Furthermore, the NTA seeks to deliver a revised plan that focuses on cycling needs and expectations for a broader range of cycling abilities of GDA residents – catering for more short-to-medium trip distances and a wider range of everyday travel purposes. Community connectivity, directness of travel, consideration of trips to schools and colleges, and interchange with other modes will be key areas NTA would like to explore in greater detail for the 2021 update.*

*Wicklow County Council Roads management and staff attended a stakeholder workshop relating to the update of the GDA Cycle Network Plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.*

A copy of the presentation from the Wicklow workshop was attached to the agenda for members of the SPC. The cycle plans for the county aim to connect the towns. It was stated that there was no guidance on how it is to be delivered. Apparently the cycle design manual is also under review.

### (4) Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme

Note 4 to the agenda gave the following information: *The NTA are pleased to announce the launch of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme, which is open to all schools in Ireland for active travel funding and delivery.*

*What is the Safe Routes to School Programme?*

*The Safe Routes to School Programme is designed to encourage as many pupils and students as possible in primary and post-primary schools to walk and cycle. It has three aims:*

- 1. To accelerate the delivery of walking/scooting and cycling infrastructure on key identified access routes to schools;*
- 2. To provide "front of school" treatments which will emphasise the importance of the school-going children accessing the school; and*
- 3. To expand the amount of bike parking available at schools.*

*How will the Local Authorities be involved in the Programme?*

*Local Authority partnership is vital to the success of the programme. Local Authorities will be involved from selection stage right through to implementation of initiatives on the ground.*

A copy of the presentation under this topic was also attached to the agenda for the SPC members. The drive behind this SRTS programme is the chaos that ensues outside schools around opening and closing times. In this regard Cllr Fitzgerald said there is a problem outside certain schools in Arklow.

It was said that €600k has already been allocated to Blessington and Manor Kilbride schools and that more funding is to come. Cllr Blake stated that rural roads in the county are suffering at the expense of funding to other schemes.

Cllr Mitchell felt that cycling to school should be encouraged in order to reduce traffic volume. He also felt that Dublin was getting priority and the effect could be to block buses from Wicklow.

Cllr Fitzgerald felt that the deadline for submission of applications under the SRTS programme was too tight as schools had been closed up until recently. This would be looked at. It was noted that An Taisce Green Schools have been involved.

### 3. GDA Transport Strategy Review - Update from Cllr Mitchell as representative on steering/advisory Group. DART+ and further rail proposals

The NTA has commenced a review of the 2016 – 2035 Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area. This review will assess how the current plan is being implemented and will help guide a strategy update that will set out a transport infrastructure and service investment framework for Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow until 2042.

Note 5 to the agenda gave the following link and information:

<https://www.nationaltransport.ie/consultations/greater-dublin-area-transport-strategy/>

*Issues Paper covering GDA transport strategy review and also Rail issues.*

*GDA Transport Strategy Review - due for completion early 2022. Submission made and ongoing engagement. Bus Connects – Bray to City Centre corridor infrastructure and associated bus services improvements*

*Rail – Consultants appointed for Dart+ to Greystones. Also proposal to extend DART to Wicklow town using battery electric carriages - needs to be prioritised.*

A copy of the 7-page submission made by the Council in January past was included with the agenda. The GDA Transport Strategy divides County Wicklow into two corridors separated by the Wicklow Mountains (Corridor E follows the N81 route while Corridor F goes along the route of the N11/M11).

The submission sets out the Strategic Transport priorities for Wicklow by mode of transport as follows: heavy rail, light rail, bus, cycling & walking. Under heavy rail infrastructure the proposed improvements include protection of East Coast rail line from coastal erosion, optimising the use of the existing single track line and DART+ Coastal South improvements to Greystones. Under light rail it discusses details of the proposed Luas to Bray and feasibility of Luas to Blessington.

The submission also discusses BusConnects (in particular the Bray to City centre core bus corridor), the N11/M11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme (part of the N11/M11 J4 to J14 Improvement Scheme) and bus services generally. It also discusses cycling infrastructure, greenways and walking routes.

Cllr Mitchell said that although the review is important it is not progressing at the moment. The rail proposal didn't discuss Wicklow or Arklow.

Mike Flynn Engineer said the consultants are at an early stage on the Wexford route. Proposals include modification to Bray Station, track realignment, closure of two level crossings at Greystones, increased capacity to Greystones, double tracking, electrification of track to Greystones, battery electric multiple units (don't know how many are coming to the Wicklow line).

Cllr Mitchell said the question is how trains get to Dublin from Wicklow and not how they are to be powered.

Mike Flynn said the existing service will be maintained and the shuttle service is in its infancy.

The minister for transport is considering a high speed train between Dublin and Belfast. Maybe the Wexford line should be considered too!

#### *Blessington Relief Road Update:*

*Consultant has been appointed for design, Part 8 and Compulsory Purchase Order of the new relief road. All going well this should take 16 to 18 months to complete, if no oral hearing required for the CPO. WCC are currently carrying out landowner search in order for consent to be given to carry out the topographical surveys.*

*Section 85 Agreement (between WCC and Kildare CC) is currently with the Law Dept and once agreed will be signed by both parties.*

#### 4. Update on TII Funded Projects

Council Engineer John Bowes gave the following updates (Note 6 to the agenda) summarised below:

##### (1) N11 Parallel Service Road at Kilmacanogue

Construction has continued through Covid restrictions. Delays have occurred due to additional & unforeseen works (e.g., diversion of foul sewer and gas distribution main). The road is due to be completed in July 2021.

Clr Behan said that 5 residences have been affected by traffic noise from the diversion on the slip road for the works and also by speeding. He also said a footpath is needed to link Kilmacanogue with Bray as the construction of the proposed greenway is too far off.

##### (2) M11/N11 Jct 4 to Jct 14 Improvement Scheme

Environmental surveys have recommenced including bat, barn owl, hydro, and breeding birds. The project website has been updated. Arup continue to progress the assessment of the emerging preferred corridor. There is ongoing consultation with the NPWS regarding the Glen of the Downs SAC.

The latest bulletin provides further details of the narrowed (previously 200m wide) route corridors. The May bulletin will provide an update on the Transport Scenarios being considered (do Minimum, do GDA Strategy, Rail Upgrades, Bus Service Enhancements and Road Improvements). The project team are continuing to meet virtually with the public and any interested groups.

##### (3) M11/N11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme

The Feasibility Stage (PMG Phase 1) has been completed following approval received from TII on 01 April 2021 to progress the scheme to Phase 2 (Option Selection) and Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation). The scheme is now a TII project managed under the Kildare National Roads Office.

##### (4) N81 Knockroe Bend Realignment

It was reported that substantial completion was certified on 22nd December 2020. The Final Account has been agreed with the contractor and is within the budget allocated by TII. As the safety works have been carried out the default speed limit of 100km/h now applies along this section of the N81. Also funding is available for a 'Per Cent for Art Commission' for the scheme.

##### (5) N81 "Four Studies" Irishtown West, Whitestown Lower, Hangman's Bend, Tuckmill Lower

The Feasibility Report (Phase 1) has been submitted to TII on 04 February 2021 along with a request for approval to progress the 'N81 Four Studies' project (as named above) from Phase 1 Feasibility Report to Phase 2 Options Selection in accordance with Phases 1 to 4 of the TII Project Management Guidelines (PMG). The corridor under consideration for the purpose of the feasibility study extends approximately 12.8km from north of Baltinglass to north of Irishtown West.

##### (6) N81 Pavement Capital and Maintenance works planned for 2021

It was reported that TII have allocated €1m funding for 2021 for the N81 to resurface circa 4km from Blessington south to Russborough House. The capital works on the road are to go to tender.

It was also reported that a 2021 allocation from TII has been provided for resurfacing works at Ballinacrow Upper to Saundersgrove Hill (€170k) and at Hollywood Lower (€196k).

(7) Brief overview of traffic volumes on the N11 and N81 for 2019/2020/2021

John Bowes also presented graphs of traffic volumes on the N81 and N11/M11 (J5-6 & J8-9). They showed a significant reduction in a 24-hour volume when January 2020 was compared to January 2021.

Tomas Peare said that working from home had led to a 30% reduction in traffic on the N11/M11.

In response to a comment from the rep it was said that the impact of Covid on traffic volume would not have any effect on the design of the N11/M11 J4-14 Improvement scheme.

Cllr Mitchell was concerned if trucks coming from estates in Kilcoole were included in the design of the N11 scheme (specifically at Ballyronan roundabout).

Cllr Blake acknowledged the improvements on the N81 but wondered if there was any progress on the Blessington bypass (ring road). Colm Lavery responded by saying a consultant has been appointed to the new relief road.

#### 5. Fire Services Policy Update

Aidan Dempsey, CFO, gave a strategic overview using the following 5 points as a basis:

- Capital Funding
- To note review of Incident Pre Determined Attendances (PDAs) has commenced
- Review of Townland Pre Determined Attendances to commence later in 2021
- Fire Service to achieve ISO 45001 Standard for Occupational Health & Safety Management in 2021
- Community Fire Safety Smoke Alarm Scheme to be launched in 2021

He again listed the following capital projects giving a total budget of nearly €3m in next 2 years.

Project	Year	Amount
New Baltinglass Fire Station	2022/3	€ 1,000,000
New Dunlavin Fire Station	2023	€ 1,000,000
New Fire Engine	2022/3	€ 450,000
2 x New Water Tankers	2022/3	€ 250,000

He expected additional funding requirements over the next 3 years. He said that costs have increased with number of incidences.

He said the Incident PDA determines who gets sent out and the Townland PDA determines what (equipment) gets sent. Initially it was an inter-county issue now it's a county issue (controversial).

He also said ISO 45001 Standard for Occupational Health & Safety Management is to be achieved this year. People living alone are to be given smoke alarms, fire blankets, etc. and will be visited when restrictions are lifted. He suggested the PPN could help find partner organisations to work with.

He said that Building Control is now part of the fire service. This was relevant for public buildings like schools. Cllr Mitchell asked if Building Control only deal with new buildings. The reply was that it deals with parts A to L of the Building Control Act, and that 90% of the work would be new builds and some planning work.

Cllr Behan said that in relation to a full time fire service for North Wicklow he didn't think the review had started. Some council officials have concerns about the person appointed to carry out the review.

#### 6. Water Services Policy Update

The note to the agenda stated *The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien T.D. has published (23rd February 2021) the Government's Policy Paper on Water Sector Transformation, entitled Irish Water – Towards a National, Publicly-Owned, Regulated, Water Services Utility.*

*The paper and accompanying press release are available at [www.gov.ie/housing](http://www.gov.ie/housing) (homepage under the Publications heading).*

*As expected, the paper sets out the Government's approach to water sector transformation including addressing Irish Water as the Single Public Utility. The local authority sector will work to implement Government policy in regard to water, in collaboration with the Department of Housing, colleagues, unions and Irish Water.*

In response to Cllr Mitchell's question it is not clear yet if council staff will have to transfer to Irish Water. Cllr Behan said he was happy with the present set up.

#### 7. To note TWES Annual Service Delivery Plan

*The Annual Service Delivery plan (ASDP) for whole of Wicklow Co Co is due to be presented to all elected members on 12th April 2021.*

A document inserted in the agenda showed the TWES element of the Annual Service Delivery Plan under various general headings such as roads, public lighting, water & wastewater services, and fire & emergency management. For each goal heading 2021 target outputs and timeframes are given.

#### 8. AOB

To note - Code of Conduct for Councillors. Return required for all Councillor and non-Councillor members on committees of local authorities

#### 9. Next Meeting

6th July 2021 @ 9.30am/2.30pm TBC (via Zoom).