

Minutes of the Carlingford Marine Tourism Focus Group

Loughs Agency Offices, Carlingford

Thursday 16th July 2015 at 11am

Present

Harry McCarthy
Brian Larkin
Brendan McSherry
James Byrne

In attendance

Kevin Wilson (Director of Development)
Andy Sides (Development Officer)
Willie Burke (Development Officer)
Laura McCready (Minutes)

1. Apologies

Geoff Quinn
Oliver McGauley
Lionel Knobbs (Angling Development Officer)

2. Loughs Agency Update

Kevin Wilson thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He advised that there had not been a meeting in quite some time as he had intended to make alterations to the structure of the group whereby he would split the group into 3 sections, Marine Tourism, Angling Development and Education. He added that it was also his intention to co-opt other members and organisation representatives onto the newly formed Focus Group.

Willie Burke gave a comprehensive presentation to the group on the current marine tourism development projects in the Foyle and Carlingford areas. This was based around the Sustainable Development Fund, core development and delivery, funding applications, collation of research for draft strategy and networking for joint delivery of future capital schemes.

Brian Larkin thanked Willie for his presentation and praised the great work the Agency had completed and were currently involved in. Brian did however raise an issue with the lack of meetings and involvement of the Carlingford Marine Tourism Focus Group. He stated that in many ways

he felt let down by the Agency. He did however recognise the work of Willie Burke and the Development Team and again praised it but stated that there was no point coming to meetings if there was nothing was going to be done after them. Kevin Wilson stated that he understood Brian's frustration but again reiterated that the reason that these meetings hadn't been taken place was due to the intended restructuring of the group that was yet to take place.

Brian suggested that the group meet once per month. Andy Sides disagreed stating that he did not think there would be enough activity in four weeks to warrant a meeting per month. Kevin agreed. He advised that the next Focus Group meeting was scheduled to take place in September with the full Advisory Forum meeting scheduled for October. He suggested that the Focus Group meeting again then in November.

Harry McCarthy raised the issue of there being no Harbour Master in Carlingford. James Byrne agreed stating that it was in dire need to development.

3. Audit of infrastructure / facilities in Carlingford Lough and assessment of same - adequacy and condition

Harry McCarthy raised the issue of part of a wall in Carlingford being knocked into the sea and also there being no public toilet facility in Greenore. Brenda McSherry advised that he had scheduled a meeting with Coillte the following week in relation to recreation and amenities in the Louth County Council area.

James Byrne asked if the Agency had been involved with the Greenway Project. Andy Sides advised that the Agency funded the final piece of the project between Omeath and Carlingford. James stated that it was a fantastic project and had been a huge success in the area.

4. Identification of remedial work and updating of facilities required (Harry McCarthy)

Harry stated that this item could be further investigated at future meetings.

5. What projects has the Loughs Agency prioritised for implementation in Carlingford Lough? (Harry McCarthy)

Harry stated that he was content that this had been covered as part of Willie Burke's presentation.

6. Give details of proposed funding applications by Loughs Agency for Carlingford Lough projects (Harry McCarthy)

Harry stated that he was content that this had been covered as part of Willie Burke's presentation.

7. Is the Loughs Agency in discussion with Louth Local Authority regarding project work? (Harry McCarthy)

Kevin Wilson stated that as was alluded to earlier in the meeting the Agency were involved with the local authority in Louth.

8. Greenway extension - Omeath to Newry (Harry McCarthy)

This was discussed under agenda item 3.

9. Facilities at Greenore (Harry McCarthy)

Brian Larkin advised that there was a great facility at Greenore slipway but during turbulent weather there was a problem with stones being pushed off the slipway. He added that he had drawn up plans some time ago and asked if he should send a copy to the Agency. Kevin stated that yes he should send him on a copy.

Brian advised that some years back there would have been hundreds of mackerel at Greenore and now there are none. He asked if there was water quality results records for the area over the years. Kevin advised that he would need to ask Conservation and Protection staff about this.

10. Support for local festivals (Harry McCarthy)

Harry stated that he was content that this had been covered as part of Willie Burke's presentation.

11. Update on aquaculture activities in Carlingford Lough from the point of view of promoting local seafood?

Andy Sides advised that the Agency have been involved in the Carlingford Oyster Festival for a number of years. He added that the Development Directorate with the support of the Aquaculture and Shellfisheries Directorate had attended a hotel conference where they had a taster stand to showcase the local oyster.

12. Update on the Five Year Development Plan for Marine Tourism and Leisure on Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough. The objective of Development Plan will be to identify and prioritise feasible projects.

This was discussed under agenda item 2.

13. Next Steps

Kevin advised that he would set dates for the next 3 meetings over the next 6 months and advise the group at their next meeting. He also advised that he had hoped that the strategic plan would be finalised by the end of September 2015.

14. A.O.B

Brian Larkin stated that there had been a promotional video filmed of Carlingford Lough and asked if he could get a copy of this. Kevin advised that he would forward him a copy.

Brendan McSherry suggested that the Agency approach the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding.

15. Date and Venue of Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 17th September 2015 at 7pm in Loughs Agency Offices, Carlingford.