

September 11th 2021

To:- Cathaoirleach Pip Breen

Dear Pip,

Our committee would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment as Cathaoirleach of the Gorey-Kilmuckridge Municipal District and the Southern Regional Assembly.

As you know, the role of Courtown Community Council is to establish a framework of representation for all community organisations in the Courtown/Riverchapel area.

Last February, we highlighted a number of concerns in our community. We have attached a copy of these concerns sent 19th February 2021. Unfortunately, our request for regular and timely consultation by Wexford County Council (WCC) on key issues in Courtown/Riverchapel has sadly not been met.

Sale of Courtown Woods and Courtown Leisure Centre

We have a number of unanswered questions in relation to the sale of this hugely important community asset to a private commercial business. In May, we presented a list of questions to Tom Enright, CEO, WCC, regarding the circumstances that led up to the charity being liquidated in the first instance. The majority of these questions were not answered to our satisfaction.

In conjunction with the Protect the Woods Campaign, over 10,000 signatures were collected to keep Courtown Leisure Centre and Courtown Woods in public ownership to safeguard these vital amenities for the people of North Wexford. At the May meeting of the Gorey Kilmuckridge Municipal District, a motion "To maintain in public ownership, Forest Park Leisure Complex and the adjoining 53 acres of protected Woodland for the use and enjoyment of our local community and visitors to the area for the future" was carried. We are requesting an update on the progress WCC has made in honouring this motion.

Gorey Courtown Forest Park Ltd (a registered local charity) previously owned both Courtown Woods and Courtown Leisure Centre. Given that Courtown Community

Council are the only other local charity representing the community, we have requested a full financial breakdown surrounding the sale and winding up of this charity from WCC. Unfortunately, these requests have been refused on the basis that a 'Non-Disclosure Agreement' has been signed with the new owners Active Tribe. Liquidators Baker Tilly have confirmed that this non disclosure agreement does not extend to Wexford County Council and their role as creditors in the liquidation.

Over 30 years of community and voluntary effort went into this local charity and the local community received nothing from the sale of these substantial community assets.

Jet-Skis

At the June meeting of the Gorey Kilmuckridge Municipal District (GKMD), another motion was proposed to 'Ban Jet-Skis in Courtown' bringing us into line with every other coastal town and village in County Wexford in the proposed new beach byelaws. The majority of councillors voted NOT to carry this motion against the advise of local community groups in Courtown and neighbouring Cahore who have also experienced antisocial behaviour from Jet-Skis launched in the vicinity. Currently there are no resources allocated by WCC to adequately police jet-skis and there is no legislation in place for the gardaí to mitigate antisocial behaviour at sea. Numerous dangerous incidents witnessed by local residents have been reported to the Gardai and WCC.

We request that either Jet-Skis are banned in Courtown indefinitely or WCC allocates sufficient resources to police this activity effectively, especially at weekends. This is an urgent Health & Safety appeal which we recommend be addressed immediately.

Coastguard Station

Currently there are 25 locally trained volunteers based in the Courtown/Arklow Coastguard Unit. The training building at 'The Rocket House' is completely inadequate for a unit whos jurisdiction spans 40 kms of coastline from Mizen Head in Arklow to Cahore South Beach in Wexford. Up until recently, WCC offered the Irish Coastguard a site on which to build a suitable Coast Guard House behind the

Children's Playground at main car park, Courtown. This site has since been revoked by WCC without any explanation. To date the Courtown/Arklow crew have no indication of where or when a suitable site will be provided to them by Wexford County Council.

Courtown/Riverchapel to Gorey Footpath

While the residents of Courtown Riverchapel and Ardamine welcome the provision of new infrastructure, we believe the current proposed route of the Courtown/Riverchapel to Gorey Footpath is not at all suitable for local residents. The proposed route through Courtown Woods increases the journey time for pedestrians. It also presents personal safety and policing issues. We believe that local residents attempting the to walk the 6.5km to Gorey will continue to put themselves in danger by taking the more direct current route across the existing road bridge, rendering the proposed route and bridge completely useless as a piece of infrastructure.

This area of Courtown is rich in local heritage and home to an abundance of native wildlife and biodiversity including rare species of bats and birds. 150 yr old Oak and Sycamore trees planted by Lord Courtown grow along the roadside. Given the natural heritage status of Courtown Woods, we are requesting a full environmental impact survey from the top of Brickyard Hill. We are asking you to ensure that consultation with the local community takes place and that residents have their say. We strongly recommend this new footpath link directly into the existing footpath to Riverchapel and Courtown and that the focus is not in Courtown Woods. Both Ballinatray Bridge and the Gate Lodge are Protected Structures. The High Cross of Kilbride is a Registered National Monument. All three local heritage sites will be negatively impacted by the current proposed route.

In summary, our community of 6,500 residents have endured many losses. The loss of our blue flag beach. We've lost community ownership of our treasured 53 acres of Courtown Woods, sold to private investors for reasons still unclear. We've lost almost half our main street in Courtown to dereliction for the past 12 years due to the in-actions of a private developer. We've endured the wrath of public unrest due to the lack of transparency and public consultation from Wexford County Council on a range of critically important issues here in Courtown and Riverchapel.

We would therefore like to invite you to come and meet with us at your convenience to see for yourself the issues we are trying to highlight.

We look forward to working with you to ensure a brighter future for our growing community,

Kind regards,

Courtown Community Council

RCN 20043414

www.courtown.org