

SPECIAL NOTICESWICKLOW
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WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**NOTICE PURSUANT TO: SECTION 177AE(4) OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)
AND THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS 2001 (AS AMENDED)****Development of a Greenway in Blessington, Co. Wicklow
Notice of Planning Application to An Bord Pleanála for Approval**

Notice is hereby given that Wicklow County Council intends to seek the approval of An Bord Pleanála under Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) to carry out a proposed development encompassing the Blessington Lake/Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA that will pass through the following townlands in the Counties of Wicklow and Kildare – Blessington, Haylands, Knockieran Lower, Knockieran Upper, Carrig, Sroughan, Lacken, Ballynastockan, Ballyknockan, Carrigacurra, Annacarney, Valleymount, Monamuck, Humphrystown, Baltyboys Upper, Baltyboys Lower, Burgage Moyle, Russellstown, Russborough, Rathballylong, Tulfarris, Glebe East, and Burgage More and passing adjacent to the villages of Valleymount, Ballyknockan and Lacken before returning to Blessington at Knockieran Bridge.

The Proposed Development is proposed to provide a predominately off-road shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists. The Proposed Development will cover approximately 33 km and involve the provision and upgrading of a greenway mostly through forest and woodlands adjacent to the shoreline of the Blessington Lake/Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA.

Traffic lights are proposed at three existing bridge crossings (Knockieran Bridge, Baltyboys Bridge and Valleymount Bridge) to manage a new shuttle system for vehicular traffic. This will create space within the existing bridge cross section for the provision of a shared use path to accommodate users of the Greenway.

The greenway surface construction is proposed to consist of a machine laid, bound pavement. A 20 mm surface course is proposed to be laid on a 40 mm to 55 mm base course on 150 mm Clause 804 subbase on a geotextile layer as required. Construction works will require shallow excavation (maximum depth of 200 mm – 300 mm), tree removal and replacement, placement of culverts, single span bridges over larger streams, fencing and minor landscaping.

The Proposed Development is divided into six sections and is proposed to comprise of the following.

- Blessington** – The Blessington section of the Proposed Development extends from the Wicklow County Council boundary at Russellstown to Blessington. The section comprises 9.2 km in length. This section is proposed to consist of new greenway and the upgrade of existing sections along the route with a connection to Russborough House via an existing underpass of the N81. It is proposed to extend the capacity of the Russellstown car park with an additional 50 car spaces. Works to both the Russellstown car park and the Blessington Greenway Hub and car park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating areas, drinking water stations and CCTV. There is 1 no. new watercourse crossing included in this section while several existing crossings are to be retained.
- Baltyboys** – The Baltyboys section of the Proposed Development extends from the Blessington section to the Valleymount section. This section comprises 5.3 km in length. Works to the Valleymount West car park and Baltyboys car park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bike parking, bins, seating, drinking water stations and CCTV. Precast box culverts and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section to construct the Proposed Development. There are approximately 5 no. small watercourses/ditches crossings along this section.
- Tulfarris** – The Tulfarris section of the Proposed Development connects the Baltyboys section to Tulfarris via the R758. This section comprises 3.7 km in length. This section is proposed to consist of new greenway and share the existing road to connect with the Tulfarris Hotel & Golf Resort. There are approximately 2 no. new small watercourse/ditch crossings along its length.
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A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared as part of the application for approval in respect of the proposed development.

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MICHAEL NICHOLSON, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES,
COMMUNITY, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL.

12th JANUARY, 2022



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The greenway surface construction is proposed to consist of a machine laid, bound pavement. A 20 mm surface course is proposed to be laid on a 40 mm to 55 mm base course on 150 mm Clause 804 subbase on a geotextile layer as required. Construction works will require shallow excavation (maximum depth of 200 mm – 300 mm), tree removal and replacement, placement of culverts, single span bridges over larger streams, fencing and minor landscaping.

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MICHAEL NICHOLSON, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES,
COMMUNITY, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL.

person.
What else has Nphet advised?
It has said that the HSE should develop clear messaging on the different type of masks.
What has led to this new advice?
Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly asked the chief medical officer Dr. Tony Holohan over Christmas to look again at the official advice on face masks and whether the public should be told to wear something more protective than a cloth mask in light of the spread of the Omicron variant.

What have other countries done?
In Germany, FFP2 respirators are mandatory on public transport and in shops, while they are mandatory in workplaces in Austria.
In Italy, people were ordered just before Christmas to wear them on public transport and in public places such as theatres, cinemas and at sports events.

Why hasn't Nphet gone further?
This is not clear, but the advice to the Minister emphasises that respirator and medical grade masks should be prioritised for healthcare workers and those in healthcare settings so guarantees around supply may be a factor in not recommending them for wider public use.

What do experts say?
Aoife McLysaght, a professor in genetics at Trinity College Dublin, said that clear messaging on the differences in the various types of face masks and their effectiveness is a good start.
"Even if people were given that information and if that information was made really clear, that would be a huge step forward," she said.
She believes FFP2 masks should be worn in confined indoor spaces such as on public transport.
"The quality of filtering in the FFP2 is much, much better and they tend to be a better shape and on average fit people better," she said.
"On public transport, you are in an enclosed space and you have a bit less choice about who you are sharing the air with."
"If I was a bus driver, I would like all the passengers wearing that quality of mask. I would feel a lot more comfortable in my workplace."

How effective are the basic cloth masks?
Fabric masks or face coverings such as homemade varieties do not protect you but may protect others if you are infected. They are not classed as official personal protective equipment.

What has Nphet told Government?
The advice is nuanced and discretionary for the most part. It says that all types of masks, including cloth masks, can reduce community transmission of Covid-19 if properly made, well-fitted and appropriately worn but that medical and respirator masks offer greater protection.

So is Nphet telling us we should be wearing higher quality masks?
Not really. It has stopped short

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Coronavirus crisis

Department defends €90m deal for antiviral drugs

Cost of deal three times budget usually in place for new drugs in Republic annually

Donnelly said new drugs could be a 'game-changer' in fight against virus

sure they are safe and effective," the department said, responding to criticism of the deal from the State's adviser on the cost-effectiveness of new drugs.

Prof Michael Barry said there was "a real question" about the value and safety of the deal, agreed by Cabinet last week.

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly has said the new drugs could be a "game-changer" in the fight against the virus, but Prof Barry described this description as "a bit premature".

He warned some of the drugs

being acquired under the deal had side-effects that were serious they could be fatal. While not suggesting they do not work, he criticised the lack of peer-reviewed clinical trial data for one of the main drugs being purchased.

Approval

The cost of the deal is three times the €30 million budget usually in place for new drugs in the Republic annually. The drugs can be used in Ireland in advance of any Europe-wide authorisation, under the approval given by Cabinet.

The department said the European Commission was currently progressing a joint procurement agreement for antivirals, which includes MSD's Lagevrio (molnupiravir) and Pfizer's Paxlovid. Ireland has formally indicated its intention to participate in this arrangement and is already participating in a separate agreement to purchase the GSK's Xevudy (sotrovimab).

"These are ongoing procurement processes, therefore the department cannot comment on cost at this time," a spokeswoman said.

"These discussions are also subject to European Medicines Agency marketing authorisation. Licensed medicines undergo thorough testing in multiple phases of trials before they are approved for use."

Prof Barry, head of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics, said his organisation had not been asked to assess the new deal. The contract would be legally binding and even if better products came available later, the State would be obliged to pay for the €90 million deal announced last week, he claimed.

"Our issue is, are we getting value for that? Because we didn't assess it, it's very difficult to say," he told RTE's Claire Byrne Live on Monday.

Cost

He explained it would cost about €650 to €700 for every patient who undergoes a five-day treatment. This was "a lot of money" considering the number of patients who would likely require the drugs.

"I do have an issue with the safety profiles of some of [the drugs], and particularly the one

we are spending the most money on and that's Paxlovid," Prof Barry said.

His organisation planned to write to GPs to highlight what he said were the potential hazards associated with the new drugs for some patients, due to interactions with other medications.

Many people who would be treated with Covid-19 antiviral drugs would be older and on a range of "common medications" used to treat conditions that older people regularly suffer from, Prof Barry explained.

Which masks offer best protection and what do Nphet advise?



Simon Carswell
Q&A

Advisers say high-grade masks are better but people should only wear them if they want to

of saying that people should wear them, leaving them up to the individual to decide.

It has advised that if people want to wear them, they should but only if the mask they choose fits well and is worn properly.

For medically vulnerable and older people (aged 60 and over), Nphet has gone a little further.

These people are already advised to wear medical masks in crowded outdoor spaces or confined indoor spaces, but the public health team now says that these people may prefer to wear a respirator mask because they may offer a higher level of protection against inhaling particles of the virus that may help people who are at higher risk.

Are higher-grade masks suggested for other groups? Yes, Nphet has advised that ideally a respirator or medical mask rather than a cloth mask should be worn by anyone who is a confirmed Covid-19 while infectious, who has symptoms, who is a household contact of a case or who is visiting a health-care setting or a vulnerable

The State's National Public Health Emergency Team has sent new advice to the Government on face masks and which varieties better protect people against Covid-19. The recommendations have not gone as far as other countries where people are advised



Regular blood donor Chris McDonald from Dundrum, Co Dublin giving blood at the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) at O'lier Street, supervised by Bonnie Chiu. PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN BETSON

Blood supplies may soon be imported as donations drop

SARAH BURNS

A drop in blood donations since Christmas may mean supplies will soon need to be imported into the State.

This is just one of the issues the pandemic has raised for the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS). Its national donor services manager Stephen Cousins said the Covid-19 pandemic has been "very challenging".

The IBTS has said while current supplies are sufficient there has been a drop in donations in recent weeks. Mr Cousins said unless figures improve it may be faced with having to import blood from the UK again.

Over 400 units of blood were imported into Ireland on the week of Christmas in response to a shortage in supply. It marked the second time in 2021 that the IBTS imported blood from the UK's NHS Blood and Transplant.

"Before Christmas the problem was that you could see

week on week the hospitals were taking that bit more than we were able to collect and the supplies were dropping each week. No matter what we did we couldn't catch up," Mr Cousins said.

"Supplies are reasonably okay at the moment. However, we are seeing them beginning to drop again since Christmas. Unless collection figures are really good over the next weeks we could find ourselves short again in a few weeks' time."

Younger donors

He said one of the areas where the organisation was particularly struggling was securing younger donors. "We used to have a lot of college clinics prior to Covid, and that's where we got an awful lot of new donors. If you don't get people in when they're young, it's much harder to get them when they're in their 30s and become regular donors," he said.

Ruth Noble, originally from Co Wicklow, was among those

donating blood at the IBTS's offices on D'Olier Street in Dublin yesterday morning.

"I would have donated when I was a student... and then I lived in England for a year and up North for years... when I came back South I couldn't donate. I've been donating since they allowed us back again, which is great," she said.

She said her mother used to give blood and it was a "big social occasion". "It's just a good thing to do, and it doesn't cost anything," she said.

"I really like when they text you to say your blood has been given at such and such a hospital, it makes it very real."

Also donating blood was regular donor Chris MacDonald. "I'm from Scotland so I was previously excluded from giving blood until they changed the rules," he said.

"My mum always gave blood so it was just always kind of ingrained in me. The main thing is to try and build it into your routine."

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