

Reclaim Fingal Alliance (RFA)

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 30th April 2012

Present:

Brian Hosford (Chair) (Rush)	Brian Arnold (Lusk)
Helene Dooley (Secretary) (Ballyboughal)	Ernie Donnelly (Lusk)
Martin Tully (Ballyboughal)	Ruth Jenkinson (Lusk)
Sarah Stack (Rush)	Brian Dennehy (Rush)
Pat McNamara (Annsbrook/Ballyboughal)	Jacqui McCrum (Rush)
David Moore (Donabate)	Eddie Fleming (Saucerstown, Swords)
Charlie Weston (Donabate – Fairshare)	Damien O’Toole (Lusk)
Ken Jones (Loughshinny)	
Bob Lattimore (Loughshinny)	

Minutes of previous Meeting:

These minutes were agreed and passed. It was unanimously agreed that amendments to future Minutes would be made at the following meeting (rather than the current practice of circulating minutes for comment and updating prior to the next meeting).

Matters arising from these Minutes:

The action list was reported upon. All actions had been completed, with the exception of the following which are being followed up on:

Ref: (# of January)	Description	To be actioned by:
1/1	Co-ordination of public debate which will be aired on the net	Lorcan O’Toole
7/1	Costings from solicitors (adherence of first consultation process to relevant EU Directive	Berniann Conlon.
13/1	Arrange meeting with Council Leaders	Brian Dennehy
14/1	Representatives to approach respective community groups regarding fund-raising	Community Reps – on-going
15/1	Harvesting of resident’s email addresses for updating	ongoing

Update:

Brian Hosford updated the meeting on progress made since January.

Legal matters and meeting with O’Connell & Clarke:

The minutes of this meeting have already been circulated to the group. However Brian did comment that, while the meeting was quite worthwhile, the follow up was very disappointing as various approaches made to the company (together with a lot of background work on the part of the RFA) produced no output from the Solicitors.

He stated that the solicitors confirmed there was a case for a Judicial Review regarding the original Site Evaluation Assessment. Charlie Weston, who had been pushing for this through Fairshare, was in full agreement. Basically, residents who stand to be affected by the development of a WWT plant in the area were not consulted during the SEA’s PC period. In fact the SEA focussed on a totally different area.

Charlie Weston cited his experience during the ‘Fairshare’ fight. The group has utilised the services of a legal counsel when composing their correspondence to FCC. Although the individual concerned did not actually sign the letters, the Fairshare group found that it had the desired effect within Fingal County Council – and ultimately played an important part in stopping this project from going ahead in the Portrane/Donabate area.

Charlie recommended that the RFA take on the services of a legal person who would produce a letter stating that the original SEA was legally unsound. He stated that historically, if FCC thought they are acting outside of their authority, they tended to back down. This letter needs to be composed by a legal expert – this person need not necessarily sign it as even without this signature, it has proven to be effective in the past. This approach in relation to all correspondence to FCC and GDD would, in the short and longer term proved to be beneficial to the RFA campaign. He stressed that, from his prior experience of dealing with FCC, the Council will follow the path of least resistance and therefore the RFA cannot afford to relax on any issues in relation to this fight.

Action 1 of 4 (April):

Seek out local solicitor/barrister who would be prepared to draft letters (pro bono) for the RFA to sign	Each community group to see if there is someone in their locality who might do this	open
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Alternative Site Assessment Phase 1:

It was noted that the latest report from GDD (arising out of the non-statutory consultation process) did not address many of the issues raised in the objections lodged last year. Brian Hosford has issued a statement to the Fingal Independent to this effect. Brian Arnold said that there has been no feedback on what has or has not been taken on board. It was agreed that it will now be necessary to rummage through the report and identify these gaps.

Submissions relating to the designated shellfish waters were, it was felt, not adequately dealt with by GDD. Brian (H) commented that GDD have practically admitted that the north beach in Rush is unsuitable as an outlet as it already accommodates Eirgrid and other pipelines. Various possibilities were put forward regarding the outlet pipe: it might go further north (BH); it might possibly join up with the feed off Ringsend (currently too short) and go further out to sea (PMcN)

The whole process has been recognised by the RFA as purely being a box-ticking exercise (as opposed to dealing with and reacting to public concern). GDD just want to be in a position to confirm to whatever body they will be accountable to at some stage in the future (EPA/Bord Pleanala/Fisheries Board) that they have followed procedure correctly.

It was agreed that the RFA would request (under the FOI) details of the criteria which were used to assess the submissions received. (Contact name here: Heeney). Also GDD (through FCC) need to be questioned about research methodologies used to date – for example what was the rationale in opting for a big site when small sites are considered best practice on mainland Europe?

Action 2 of 4:

Submit a Freedom of Information request to Fingal County Council in relation to the latest report produced by GDD	Brian Hosford Eddie Fleming	End of May
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Regarding RFA's next steps:

- Everyone agreed that it was necessary to keep the issue of the WWTP to the front of individual residents' consciousness. People have to realise that the issue has not gone away. One way of ensuring this happens is for each community to update/erect signage in visible locations (on private lands so that they will not be taken down by the Council).

Action 3 of 4:

Update signage within communities to focus consciousness at a local level on the WWTP	Each community group	End of May
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- Charlie (W) felt, that, while locally based strategies, such as utilising local media (Fingal Indo etc) is, to some degree useful, for the campaign to really be effective it must reach the national media. In order for this to have any chance of happening the RFA must create a story and various ideas were put forward as to how this could be achieved. It was suggested that an economist be located – someone who would be in a position to stand over the facts which they publish. This could be quite a challenge as many economic experts contract to do local authority work and therefore to get someone who is prepared to stand over their work in the national media may require the use of an individual outside the country. There may however be an economist working within an Irish university who would be prepared to undertake this task.
The key issue here is that this whole project is a waste of tax-payers money and there is a need for the RFA to get this message out to the public arena during this quiet phase. David Moore reminded the group that this was the obvious Achilles heel at the meeting held with FCC in January – the Council admitted that they felt they had covered all the angles with the exception of the funding issue.
- Jacqui McCrum summarised the way forward in this respect. She felt that there were three strands which needed to be addressed:
 - The local community agenda;
 - The media campaign and its longer term goals;
 - The need to find an expert who would pull together the figures and highlight the flaws;

Action 4 of 4:

Attempt to seek out an economist who would be prepared to comment publically on the WWTP	Brian Hosford	End of May
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Action 5 of 4:

Feed stories/updates into local and, more importantly, national media	Sarah Stack, Charlie Weston	On-going
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Action 6 of 4:

Email local councillors highlighting continuing objection to the WWTP	Each community group	End of May
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- It was noted that Minister James Reilly, in spite of his commitment to set up a meeting between the RFA and the Minister for the Environment (Phil Hogan) had not followed through in this regard. This needed to be chased up. Additionally it was felt that the time had come for the local TD's to be held to account for the lack of action in allowing this project to proceed in their area. It appears that the voices of the electorate are not being listened to and with this in mind it was agreed that a closed meeting be set up between RFA representatives and the TD's. Minister Reilly would be approached seeking his availability (during May) and the other TD's would be advised of this date.

Action 7 of 4:

Bring pressure to bear on Min. James Reilly to follow through on his commitment to arrange meeting with Min. Phil Hogan	Brian Hosford	End of May
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Action 8 of 4:

Bring pressure to bear on local T.D.s by organising a closed meeting between them and representatives of RFA. Request that Min. Reilly suggest a date before the end of May (preferably a Monday) and invite other political representatives to attend.	Brian Hosford	Preferably end of May
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Presentation at Council Meeting:

Brian Dennehy suggested that Eoghan O'Brien be approached to submit a request for representatives from the Reclaim Fingal Alliance to make a presentation at the meeting of the full Council in June. This presentation should be used to highlight submissions which have not been dealt with within the GDD report. If FCC refuse, the RFA can highlight the further lack of democracy in this process. If this works our presentation could coincide with the final three site choices which may happen at the June meeting.

Action 9 of 4:

Approach Eoghan O'Brien with regard to a RFA presentation at the June (full) council meeting	Brian Dennehy	Early May
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Utilisation of social media to further the campaign:

Pat McNamara spoke about the importance of using the internet, to further this campaign. He spoke at length about a variety of strategies which could be used within Facebook and Twitter. The group has asked that he put together a plan in this regard which can be easily implemented and which he can manage going forward.

Action 10 of 4:

Organise and manage a strategy in relation to feeding into social media (Facebook, Twitter etc)	Pat McNamara	On-going
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Summary of Actions to be taken:

Ref: (# of April)	Topic	To be actioned by	Due date:
1/4	Seek out local solicitor/barrister who would be prepared to draft letters (pro bono) for the RFA to sign	Each community group to see if there is someone in their locality who might do this	open
2/4	Submit a Freedom of Information request to Fingal County Council in relation to the latest report produced by GDD	Brian Hosford Eddie Fleming	End of May
3/4	Update signage within communities to focus consciousness at a local level on the WWTP	Each community group	End of May
4/4	Attempt to seek out an economist who would be prepared to comment publically on the WWTP	Brian Hosford	End of May
5/4	Feed stories/updates into local and, more importantly, national media	Sarah Stack, Charlie Weston	On-going
6/4	Email local councillors highlighting continuing objection to the WWTP	Each community group	End of May
7/4	Bring pressure to bear on Min. James Reilly to follow through on his commitment to arrange meeting with Min. Phil Hogan	Brian Hosford	End of May
8/4	Bring pressure to bear on local T.D.s by organising a closed meeting between them and representatives of RFA. Request that Min. Reilly suggest a date before the end of May (preferably a Monday) and invite other political representatives to attend.	Brian Hosford	Preferably end of May
9/4	Approach Eoghan O'Brien with regard to a RFA presentation at the June (full) council meeting	Brian Dennehy	Early May
10/4	Organise and manage a strategy in relation to feeding into social media (Facebook, Twitter etc)	Pat McNamara	On-going