

Dorrins & Cummeen Strand Conservation Group

Newsletter - December 2008

To all Members and Friends of Dorrins & Cummeen Strand Group (DCCG)

Dear Member or Friend

In this the week before Christmas and shortly before we go into 2009 it is timely to send you a short update about our activities.

Firstly I would like to say a huge thank you to all who have helped us over the last two years.

- We would especially like to thank the musicians who played at our very successful music night in Kelly's Bar, Strandhill on 22 February 2008. It was a most enjoyable night with great community involvement and the funds raised helped greatly towards our expenses.
- We would like to thank all those (300 people) who came on the walk to Coney Island on 25 November 2007. It was another great community involvement project and in walking across the "short strand" from Strandhill to Coney Island we retraced the footsteps of previous generations. We also asserted our right to this important public right of way.
- We would like to thank those members who took on various tasks during the year. Like all organisations we have secretarial, administration, fundraising, project management, public relations, and research tasks to do, to ensure we function effectively. A very gallant group of our membership took on these tasks and helped us greatly over the last two years in lots of ways.
- We are currently holding our bi-weekly meetings in Kelly's Bar, Strandhill. Many thanks to Padraig for giving us the use of his room at the back of the bar.
- We also held some of our meetings in Strandhill National School and we would like to thank Manus Shields for giving us the facilities.

As we go into 2009 the issue of the extension of the runway onto Dorrins Strand is still very much undecided.

Dorrins Strand still needs your help.

After two years the proposal to build a runway platform onto Dorrins Strand is still very much a threat to our community, to our wildlife habitat and to our environment.

Having originally applied for planning permission in January 2007, the airport spent 18 months trying to provide responses to requests for further information by County Council Planners. This was unsuccessful so The Airport Company withdrew their original planning application and submitted a new one in August 2008

The Planning Application Mark II hasn't been that much more successful so far. Yet again the County Council Planners have written a letter requesting substantial further information. The Airport has not responded to that letter as yet. And that is where the process stands. They have to reply by end of March 2009 at the latest.

It is interesting to note that while 70 people objected to the first Planning Application, 225 people objected to the second. Given that it takes time to sit down and write a letter and deliver it to the County Council offices together with a fee of €20.00 it is amazing how many people actually objected. DCCG took great heart from those objections because it proved that we were on the right track.

DCCG would like to state clearly that we are very much in favour of development and we very much want Sligo and Strandhill have access to top class infrastructure. We are not anti development as some would try to "paint" us.

We just believe that the Airport's current plans as outlined in their planning application is not in the best interest of Sligo or Strandhill. It is just not sustainable either environmentally or economically and there are better alternatives.

Our ardent wish as we go into Christmas and the New Year is that our local elected representatives would stand up and ask for a public debate on this very subject.

The Airport is subsidised by approx €3.0 million per year through Public Service Grants (PSO) and miscellaneous other subsidies from the public purse.

In these difficult economic times we ask, "Is it wise or correct to now spend a further €10.0 million to build a large concrete platform out on Dorrins Strand?" We have a health services and educational services crying out for investment. Even if we want to keep the funding earmarked for transport infrastructure wouldn't it be better spent it on upgrading the roads and rail services where the effects would be far more beneficial to a greater number of people?

There is a public debate to be had here. It is the job of our political leaders to show **political LEADERSHIP** and get that debate started. In 2009 local and European elections will take place. We would ask everyone to use every opportunity to express your concerns about this project to all those seeking election.

During the year we also objected to the Airport's planning applications to build a car park and hangar. We believe this is piecemeal development to avoid dealing with the environmental issues. The County Council granted planning permission for the construction of the hangar and a large asphalt area. We have logged our objection to this with An Bord Pleanala because we believe there are serious environmental issues and laws that have not been addressed. Some of the issues have a direct impact on the environment of Dorrins Strand. We await the Board's view on this.

We are always interested in seeing more people getting actively involved in our group. If you can come along to some of our meetings we would love to see you. Contact us on the numbers or email addresses listed below so we can let you know time and dates of meetings.

I conclude by once again thanking you for your help and support over the last two years. I wish you and your families a happy and safe Christmas holiday and a great 2009.

Thanks

John MacDermott
Chairperson
Dorrins and Cummeen Strand Conservation Group (DCCG)

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