

**Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development & Enterprise Support meeting
on Wednesday 26th November 2025 at 4pm in the
Council Chamber, MTeK 1, Armagh Rd, Knockaconny, Monaghan.**

In attendance:

Cllr. Sean Gilliland (Chairperson)	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Pat Treanor	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Peter Conlon	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Niamh McCooey	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Colm Carthy	Monaghan County Council
Mr. Peter McMahan	Business/Commercial
Mrs. Eileen Collery	Business/Commercial
Mr. Ciaran McEntee	PPN - Environment Electoral College
Mr. Tom Treanor	Agri/Farming
Mr. Cathal Flynn	DoS Planning, Economic Dev., Capital Projects, & Regen.
Mr. Nial O'Connor	A/DOS, Transportation, Environment & Climate Action
Mr. Adrian Hughes	Senior Planner, Planning Section
Ms. Pamela Kerr	Head of Enterprise, LEO
Mr. Paul Connolly	Senior Executive Engineer, Capital Projects
Ms. Sharon Finnegan	Senior Staff Officer, Planning Section
Ms. Denise O'Neill	Assistant Staff Officer, Planning Section

Apologies:

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon	Monaghan County Council
Fergal Duffy	CIF
Peadar Black	PPN-Community & Vol. or Social Inclusion Electoral College

1. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2025 were proposed by Cllr. Niamh McCooey and seconded by Cllr. Pat Treanor.

2. Matters Arising

Mr. Cathal Flynn advised that Kevin West, Acting Senior Engineer (Roads) would attend the next meeting to give an update on plans to address traffic congestion in Monaghan town on the Clones Road (N54).

3. Anaerobic Digester

Acting Director of Service Nial O'Connor provided detailed information on Anaerobic Digestors saying the investment required to set up digestors ranged from approximately €50 million to €150 million. He updated members on the local authority's journey so far in relation to digestors including the work of former Director of Services Nuala Woods who had commissioned a report on the facilities. Mr. O'Connor said Ms Woods had contacted industry and gas networks to explore the possibility of bringing a gas network to Monaghan town however the conclusion was that it was not feasible.

Members were also informed that a company is currently interested in establishing an anaerobic digester plant in County Monaghan. The company, who had been consulting with the poultry industry, recently made a presentation to Ballybay-Clones Municipal District (M.D.) and hopes to lodge a planning application in the New Year.

Cllr. Pat Treanor queried if the company had consulted with the local farming community as they had given a commitment to do so. Mr. O'Connor said he believed the company had made contact with people in the Drum region. Chairperson Sean Gilliland said that consultation, emphasised at the M.D. meeting, was key as it would rule out misinformation. Senior Planner Adrian Hughes echoed these sentiments saying that although the local authority could not make the company engage with the community, the applicant had been encouraged to do so.

Chairperson Gilliland recommended the committee conduct a survey in relation to a gas pipeline to investigate the interest in bringing a gas network to Monaghan town. He suggested the infrastructure would attract business. Responding, Director of Service Cathal Flynn advised that cost estimates of extending the gas network to Monaghan had been explored previously and therefore, it would be a case of updating the cost benefit analysis, considering a potential new source in Cootehill. Mr. O'Connor agreed that an economic appraisal would be required. Chairperson Sean Gilliland requested that Mr. O'Connor attend the February meeting of the SPC with an update.

Mr. O'Connor said that whilst present he could also address the issue of traffic congestion on the N54 road in Monaghan town. He advised that a number of link roads have been proposed for Monaghan town in the County Development Plan adding that an application had been made this year to the Department of Transport for funding.

He advised that there will be a focus over the next 12 to 15 months to advance plans and receive funding, and to activate lands for development as well. In response to a question from Ms. Eileen Collery regarding the time frame for completion of a link road, Mr. O'Connor said it could be 2030 depending on elements such as the design, Part 8, funding, procurement and Compulsory Purchase Order (C.P.O.) processes. He suggested that small measures in the Monaghan Transport Plan would help the flow of traffic in the interim.

4. Local Economic Plan 2026

Ms. Pamela Kerr, Head of Enterprise Local Enterprise Office (LEO) advised that the Local Economic Plan would be shared with the committee next year when completed at the end of the first quarter. Chairperson Sean Gilliland proposed that an action plan be formulated to implement the delivery of the Plan. Mr. Cathal Flynn, DOS stated that it was important the committee contributed to the Plan to see actions delivered. He added that the responsibilities of the Local Economic Community Plan, Enterprise Officers and the Local Economic Plan should be aligned with clearly defined actions.

4. Economic Forum update

Ms. Kerr also gave an update on the Economic Forum. She advised that the Strategic Policy Committee (S.P.C.) is to act as the new Economic Forum, and a separate industry advisory group will be established to provide feedback to the S.P.C. She proposed that the industry advisory group meet twice a year relaying information back to the S.P.C. members for consideration. Ms. Kerr also recommended that group members should be identified from renewable, manufacturing and agri-tech sectors.

Concerns were expressed by some members of the committee in relation to the governance aspect of the new advisory group and the potential for blocking development by creating siloes.

Chairperson Sean Gilliland proposed that minutes of the group meetings are taken and brought before the S.P.C. for consideration. He said it was important to encourage feedback but suggested that the Terms of Reference and governance of the Forum be retained with the S.P.C. He requested that Ms Kerr work to source one representative from each sector for inclusion in the group.

Mr Cathal Flynn, DOS reassured members that the government structure of the group would reflect the fact that the S.P.C. would remain in charge ensuring that the integrity of decisions taken at S.P.C. level are not undermined by a separate body.

Cllr. Colm Carthy proposed that a public advertisement be placed to gain as much interest from interested industries as possible. Mr. Cathal Flynn, DOS agreed that an open call, particularly through the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), would be beneficial as there were a significant cohort of businesses that have no engagement and were not in receipt of government supports. Chairperson Gilliland concurred with Mr. Flynn and requested the item on the agenda again for the February meeting.

5. Annahagh Industrial Lands update

Mr. Paul Connolly, Senior Executive Engineer (Capital Projects) gave an up-to-date briefing on costs regarding the Annahagh Industrial Lands project. He advised that there was a total estimate of €3.2 million euro for the works including €2.8 million euro for roads and infrastructure and €0.4 million for earthworks. He added that the total figure would not be known until it went to market with tender; if costs came back above the estimates, those costs would have to be passed onto customers. Mr Connolly also outlined potential rates for the local authority as approximately €120,000 per year. As regards the stage of the project, he said a preliminary design report had been uploaded to the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (T.I.I.) portal and a Part 8 planning application is to be advertised next week.

Mr. Cathal Flynn, DOS highlighted to the members that the cost of the local authority owned land used for the project was not factored into the sale of the sites. He said he had addressed the issue with the Department many times pointing out a need for a scheme to assist local authorities with economic growth. Responding to a query from Ms. Eileen Collery, Mr. Flynn noted that the price of the land may be out of reach for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) if the value of the land was included in the sale costs.

During a discussion that followed, committee members commended the project referring to the potential employment it could create however, they expressed concern that the costs per acre would outstrip any potential customers.

Chairperson Sean Gilliland raised the issue of a link road being developed at Roosky in Monaghan town. Responding, Mr. Cathal Flynn stated that the access road was currently being developed to activate approximately 12 acres of lands to facilitate development. He added that there was the potential, in the longer term, to create a relief road between Roosky and Annahagh. Members

queried if the access road was to connect to the Mid Town link voicing concerns about possible objections.

Mr. Cathal Flynn, DOS reassured the committee that the Annahagh project would go before the full Plenary Council before a contract was awarded.

6. Suggested Dates for 2026 SPC Meetings

The following meeting dates for 2026 were approved:

- Wednesday 25th February 2026.
- Wednesday 29th April 2026.
- Wednesday 30th September 2026.
- Wednesday 25th November 2026.

Chairperson Sean Gilliland advised that there may also be an extra meeting next year in addition to the four dates proposed. Senior Staff Officer Sharon Finnegan said the dates would be added to the calendars of committee members the following day and representatives would be notified.

7. AOB

It was agreed that Mr. Kevin McNally and the Regeneration Team be invited to the next meeting of the committee following a recommendation by Mr. Cathal Flynn, DOS. In a discussion that followed, committee members congratulated local authority staff on the rollout of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant and requested that the Planning team address any barriers that might exist regarding Section 5 Exempted Development applications.

Responding, Mr. Adrian Hughes said the Planning Authority were supporting the grant and tended to take a relaxed approach in relation to exempted development. However, he noted that in recent times, the Authority had seen applications where it was difficult to define some developments as houses.