



Coláiste Naomh Bricin
St. Bricin's College

Save Our Schools Committee

Retort to the recent report furnished by CMETB

We feel it necessary to provide a retort to the Document produced and provided by John Kearny in-lieu of a Proper Official Feasibility Study as promised into the development and potential of St Brican's College, Belturbet. Despite many calls for consultation by all quarters, Dept Education, Ministers of Education, Communities, Parents Associations etc, Mr Kearny has refused all invitations. A claim made of arrangement in December 2018 with Belturbet Committee can only be considered spurious as committee was only formed in February 2019. Mr Kearney has refused to provide name of contact he claims to have communicated with. We the committee absolutely attest that we do not individually or collectively have any knowledge of any such communication other than the refusal of Mr Kearney or the board of the CMETB to meet or engage with our committees or communities, having provided open invitations to do so.

It is very difficult to understand how any decision could be made by any board of any education body in the future of any school without a credible feasibility and impact report. No details have been provided by Mr Kearney or the board members of relevant factual material to back up decision taken. Indeed, the speed and nature of the decision process by a very compliant board can only lead to suspicion of motive. No site, no plan and no idea for the new school just a ballpark figure of €15m pulled from thin air.

This document provided by John Kearny is not as promised or even as required, it is also incredible, inaccurate and without merit. Costings, impact of school closing, future potential or considerable funding already invested are never mentioned. Without any impact or costing's real or envisaged, it is impossible to consider any viability from the document. The statistics outlined are from 1996-2011, are out of date and bear no relevance to current situation. Our community has grown and has far greater diversity. The student population is now much more multi-national and multi-cultural. The further provision's much needed and energy upgrade for the school have been known to the CMETB from as far back as at least 2012 from reports produced and these have been deliberately side-lined and postponed.

These issues alone have had major impact on current and potential enrolment. In addition the retention of excellent teaching staff with the most recent loss of the Vice principal, who has resigned in the last week.

An Asd/Snu unit is existing and being used in the school although this has been missed in the document and a new unit is proposed. There is no costing provided in the document of any kind and no feasibility can be addressed or discussed. No author has signed off the document and after reading the document it could be supposed that no one actually visited the school and maybe an office junior has typed something up in a back office from spurious information provided. Some comments especially in building appraisal are worryingly inaccurate. Main Boiler room and toilet block missing totally and there is no mention of the purpose-built water reservoir in document either.

It must be recognised from the outset that this college over the last number of years has been deliberately underfunded and poorly maintained. It is also a fact that the more recent additions and extensions from 2010 onwards were poorly constructed without good oversight, poor compliance and some never completely finished. Some of the lab equipment cannot be used (Fume Cupboard, etc) as the extraction

Access & Set Down

The road network in this area is not on any route to anywhere except the immediate schools, local residential housing and the railway amenities. Congestion here in morning and afternoon of usually 15-20min duration, mainly caused by the two national schools and little different to 90% of school areas in the country. Most students arriving to St Brigan's are on foot or by bus. A new bus Stop is installed on Fairgreen. Current car parking within the site is a current issue and needs to be dealt with by Health & Safety officer within the CMETB. There is scope for this.

Parking

As is the case currently in most urban centres, sufficient parking is challenging. However, this is not insurmountable. Also, there is a site to northeast, on corner of Martins Row & Widows row which may become available to purchase for parking and miscellaneous purposes.

Outdoor Playing Facilities

There is currently no Sports hall on the site, despite many promises. Planning was approved and funding allocated for this recourse. But this was never provided by the CMETB.

The site cannot incorporate a full-size Gaelic football pitch, but neither can a lot of schools. There are great GAA facilities within 100m of the site and a footpath exclusively from the school to these.

There is tar McAdam surfaced, playing /recreational area.

Building Appraisal

There is some narrow corridor, but these are minimal with most being very accommodating. There is good access for abled and disabled.

Further planning approved for classroom extension in order to remove the prefabricated units and also provide greater convenience but again this has been withheld by the CMETB.

(B1) The original block has good roof, is structurally sound and in good condition but will need some new windows and some renovating, upgrade work has been carried out over the years. Some remedial work maybe required at the roof light.

(B2) These are extensions. These were completed some years apart. Although some of the works carried out on the second part (Art Room) had poor oversight and have some compliance issues as a result, these can be remediated and, on the whole require redecoration. A non-compliant 26Kw boiler installation is fitted in a small boiler room at the rear serving the art room only.

(B3) This large extension was built in 2010 with a good specification and quality construction. The structure is of twin leaf cavity wall with blown insulation. The Apex roof is supported by 3 exposed wooden trusses as a wonderful feature. This extension is well used by all. Part canteen and Part study area, it is in need of redecoration.

(B4) This block was constructed in the mid 70's. Originally when constructed it had one concrete stairwell against the original building which adorns the main entrance / reception. The concrete stairs at the other end of the building was only added in 2012 along with the lift shaft and comms room. There is extensive glazing on the south west aspect, all of which has been replaced in 2011 approx at considerable cost. The poor-quality construction and oversight on the 2012 extension have left issues such as leaking roofs. Some appliances in the Science room cannot be used since the start of that work.

(B5) This block houses the Boy's cloak room and toilet on the ground level, Girls cloak room, toilets and the principal's office on the second floor. The water storage tank is atop on roof in a purpose block-built room.

(B6) This single storey block with flat roof consists of the Metal work room and associated store. The main boiler house and oil store is also in this block. Although the flat roof on this block is still mostly impermeable it is at the end of expected life as per design.

ASD/SNU

This unit is Existing and in use

Temporary Accommodation

With appropriate resources provided and diligent management of this site there would be no need for any of the temporary structures.

Mechanical, Electrical & Fire Safety

Fire

All fire safety systems are in place but in need of service and maintenance.

Mechanical

The main boiler a 25year+ old 300Kw Hogford Cast Sectional oil Boiler is in extremely poor condition due to poor or non-existent maintenance over prolonged period of years. This boiler was fitted in early 1990's as replacement for solid fuel boiler fitted in 1977. This boiler was subject of a mechanical report in 2010 & 2012 in which immediate replacement of boiler and controls was recommended. Further reports by independent mechanical engineers and energy auditors also recommended replacement in years subsequent. None of these reports were acted on by CMETB.

Radiators and some or all system pipework will also require replacement or complete system replacement. Main's water supply is from Belturbet main supply and is fed to storage tank / reservoir at roof level with gravity supply thereafter. Tank is manufactured from Fiberglass is adequate but requires insulation and lid. Storm and sewer are piped to local main system and working well.

Electrical

All or most of the electrical systems in the school have been upgraded in recent years by various contractors.

Current & Future Development potential of College and Site

The school requires immediate construction of the planned and approved structures. A good creative design team, a competent architect and engineer need to be tasked with providing a sustainable solution to requirements and capacity alongside an amenity area.

A farmyard immediately to the south of the site may be coming to the market and purchase of this would be beneficial to school site in any event. The possible purchase of the plot of ground to the north east of the site at the corner of Martins Row and Widows Row should also be seriously considered.

St Brigan's College in Belturbet has served the town, its hinterland and surrounding local villages / towns well for 82 years and we see no logical or rational reason to change this for the better. The school also has great strategic importance going forward. As Cavan town grows, capacity in Cavan town's schools are filled. St Brigan's is perfectly placed to absorb students from areas around Redhill's, Ballyhaise and Butlersbridge. The CMETB and local management of the school need to promote the school and the glowing achievement attained by students and dedicated teachers despite the deliberate underfunding and starved resources.