



Coláiste Naomh Bricin
St. Bricin's College



Coláiste Naomh Maodhóg
St. Mogue's College

Save Our Schools Committee

Minister Joe McHugh
Department of Education and Skills,
Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1.
D01 RC96

Date 22.07.2019

RE: St Bricins and St Mogue's - West Cavan School Amalgamation

Dear Minister McHugh,

We write to you on behalf of the communities of Belturbet and Bawnboy, Co Cavan in relation to the retention of St Bricins College and St Mogue's College and our concerns around the proposal by CMETB in relation to amalgamation of schools to another separate town, Ballyconnell.

While we very much welcome the announcement of investment of €15 million euro to the upgrade the provision of education in West Cavan, as confirmed by the CE CMETB in November 2018 to the Anglo Celt newspaper, we have significant concerns about the approach and decision making process being applied by CMETB with regard to this proposal.

In November 2018 the CMETB put a motion to their board to amalgamate two schools in two separate communities, 20 km apart, and build a new school in Ballyconnell. A proposal that was being presented for the first time and yet a decision was sought at that very meeting. This proposal would result in the closure of two schools and remove any second level education facility in those communities.

This would seem to be a project of significance and yet when this was put to the board of the ETB and later that day to the board of management of schools, there was no feasibility study, no robust research into other options for the provision of second level education in West Cavan. By other options we refer to retention of existing schools and building on the excellent services being provided and connectivity with the local communities. This all occurring, despite lack of approved funds being received in recent years, specifically St Bricins College, a school which has been purposefully starved of funds as highlighted in the attached article.

Failure to expand schools laid bare

A LITANY of failed attempts to add to facilities at St Bricin's and St Mogue's are detailed in a series of documents obtained from Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB).

It follows an application made by this newspaper under Freedom of Information.

The documents obtained cover a period of five years, and a detailed analysis of minutes of meetings shows where repeated attempts to add to

the two schools sites have failed to materialise.

In September 11, 2013, four new classrooms were sanctioned for St Bricin's; while at the same time an architect was brought in to St Mogue's to sketch out plans for additional accommodation.

By January 2014, the St Bricin's plans were developed but St Mogue's learned proposed works 'presented a number of design challenges', primarily due to 'limitations of the site'.

It wasn't until late 2015 that, following a 'change of brief', the Department sanctioned the additional accommodation project for Belturbet. There is no mention of additional classrooms at St Mogue's, however funding is obtained in the interim to ensure fire and safety regulations are complied with and the science room is refurbished.

In January 2015, the Department agrees to a further 'change of brief' to proposed

works at St Bricin's and a new Design Team is required.

There is note of further changes being made to the brief in May and July 2016, while additional 'temporary accommodation' is approved and installed on site.

It's not until January 2017, three years and several brief changes later, that a design team is finally appointed and tenders for the work carried out.

Two site meetings take place in May 2017 and Stage 1 Pre-

liminary Design reports are under review at the Department.

In September of that same year, the ETB is instructed by the Department to reduce the scope of the proposed project 'in line with the level of accommodation approved and available funding'. A revised submission is sent back to the Department in October.

A Design Team meeting for works at St Bricin's, scheduled with the Department for

December, is cancelled.

That meeting, the Celt understands, is still awaited.

There is no mention of the additional accommodation at St Mogue's, save for an approved extension to bathroom facilities.

In October, Director of Schools at CMETB Paddy Flood concludes a report titled 'Demographic Considerations for Single CMETB school in West Cavan', the details of which are ratified at a Board meeting in November

Governance questions need to be asked and answered regarding the progression of a project by CMETB with such serious consequences for two rural, border communities. In particular, the lack of a full and detailed feasibility study, robust and inclusive stakeholder engagement, and confirmation of funding to the amount of 15 million from DES. How can a board make a well informed decision to close two schools, which are long embedded in the community, St Bricins has been in place for 80 years, without this type of information? This is a public service and those making decisions are accountable for the operations and allocation of resources to the communities they serve. The total lack of engagement with the community on this proposal is shocking and indeed put the people in those areas into shock when it was announced last November, 2018.

In a recent Dail debate TD Mary Mitchell O'Connor represented on your behalf and responded to queries presented by TD Brendan Smith in relation to the schools proposal by CMETB. In reference to the level of engagement that should occur, TD O'Connor advised that

Any such proposal to amalgamate schools must involve consultation with all the relevant stakeholders and follow decisions taken at local level. If I can just comment on that, stakeholders have to buy into an amalgamation for it to be a successful one. In that regard, any proposed changes must be well planned and managed in a manner that accommodates the interests of parents, teachers and local communities and contributes to an inclusive education system. If I may add, students' views must also be taken into account. Any proposals are then subject to the approval of the Department of Education and Skills.

In addition went on to advise that CMETB have recently

advised the Department that a series of meetings with stakeholders has taken place and further consultation meetings are planned. The object of the consultations was to provide additional information on the proposed amalgamation of both schools and to ensure that any concerns raised are heard and taken into account.

This we can assure you is not the case. The announcement was made in November 2018, with zero consultation or local engagement. In January 2019 an invitation was extended to the CE CMETB to attend a Public meeting in Belturbet Civic Centre as an opportunity to engage with the community and below is the response:

On Fri, 4 Jan 2019, 12:10 CMETB Info <info@cmetb.ie> wrote:

Dear Elaine

This is to acknowledge your email and invitation to attend the forthcoming meeting in Belturbet. The CE is not in a position to attend this meeting, however I can confirm that in the coming weeks CMETB will be commencing a period of intensive consultation and engagement with stakeholders. This will include a series of individual parental consultations beginning with parent/guardians of current first year students in both schools. We would be grateful if you would confirm to the meeting our intention to commence consultations shortly.

regards

Fiona Nugent
Head of Compliance
Cavan and Monaghan ETB
Administration Centre
Market Street
Monaghan
H18 W449

This was January 2019 and despite the assurance of “intensive consultation and engagement with stakeholders” this did not occur. For clarity, in this regard community stakeholders are taken to be:

St Bricins students

St Bricins Parents Association

St Bricins Save Our Schools Committee representing the community

St Mogues students

St Mogues Parents Association

St Mogues Save Our Schools Committee representing the community

Students and parents/guardians of primary schools in catchment areas

GAA Clubs

Youth Services supporting students in their communities

The CMETB and Board of Management of both schools are under the remit of CMETB and it would be a given there is some engagement; however this is not intensive by our understanding. The lack of engagement has been previously highlighted in the Anglo Celt newspaper:

Article PRINTED IN CELT

If you want an item included in this section
please contact Linda on 049 4379712 or email linda@anglocelt.ie

In the mail

All letters to the editor intended for publication must be accompanied by the writer's name and address and daytime telephone number in order that letters can be authenticated. The use of non de plumes will only be tolerated in exceptional circumstances. Letters by email: linda@anglocelt.ie (must include telephone number). Emailed letters receive preference.

Listen to the parents!

Editor,

We write on behalf of a committee working to keep St Mogue's College Bawnboy open. The committee is comprised of parents of current and prospective students of St Mogue's and concerned residents of Corlough, Swanlinbar, Glangevlin, Currin Ballyconnell, and Bawnboy areas.

We would like to highlight the complete lack of consultation leading up to the CMETB's decision to build a new school in Ballyconnell and close St Mogue's and St Bricin's. This is in stark contrast to the approach taken in Clones where the two schools amalgamated were in the same town and not 20km apart, as is the case with St Bricin's and St Mogue's. Consultations took place with parents of feeder school children and parents of pupils already attending the Clones schools. A further example is the threatened closure of a school in Bagenalstown, Co Carlow. The ETB instigated a public meeting to which ALL interested parties were invited on announcement of their plan.

The fact that the St Mogue's Parents Association had to actively pursue a meeting with the CMETB - which has not yet taken place - portrays what we feel is a complete disregard towards St Mogue's stakeholders, particularly parents.

In the CMETB press release of November 2018, it was stated that subject choice will improve. We question the evidence to support this assertion.

St Mogue's already offers 24 subjects, which equals or betters many larger institutions. A larger school may lead to greater restriction of subject choice due to timetabling constraints and is also likely to lead to a cut in teaching resources as a result of the proposed amalgamation, as inferred by the article in *The Anglo-Celt* of February 7, 2019. It is clear from statistics on the Department of Education's website that there are many schools throughout the country with under 200 pupils, which continue to flourish and appear not to be threatened with closure. In addition, the excellent results (both academically and sporting) achieved by pupils by St Mogue's to date fail to be recognised.

On their website the CMETB state that their 'Second Level schools form an essential part of the communities in which they are located'. Has St Mogue's suddenly become superfluous in an already disadvantaged rural community?

Work on St Mogue's College was completed this September including a new science laboratory, suite of toilets, widening of corridors, an extension to the canteen and a complete rewiring. Is this further evidence of taxpayers' money being wasted? In terms of the development

of facilities at St Mogue's, there was an offer made to the CMETB to collaborate on indoor sporting facilities with Templeport St Aidan's GAA club in Bawnboy. However, this proposal was not accepted by the CMETB. This type of cross-community cooperation is actively encouraged by the Department of Education and would save a lot of money.

Enrolments at St Mogue's have doubled since the new principal took over in 2006. There may be scope for St Bricin's to increase should some of the monies be used to attract new enrolments. Belturbet's population has increased and is expected to continue to grow with further new houses planned.

The choice of parents to send children to single sex or denominational schools should be respected. It has been acknowledged by the CMETB that children on the periphery will be ineligible for free travel due to catchment area restrictions and this may increase the pressure on already overwhelmed schools in Cavan. How can this proposal be entertained as practical?

The Department of Education's action plan 2016-2019 states that they will "revise protocols to ensure no small school closes against the wishes of parents". The Minister must have the last word on this.

Yours sincerely,

The Save St Mogue's College
Committee

Scanned by CamScanner

To date the engagement with the community groups named above has been non-existent. Because of the lack of contact we had to reach out to the CE of CMETB and seek engagement. We initially did this in April, 2019 and also sought a public meeting for the ETB to engage the communities. To date the ETB have declined this public meeting engagement and in fact have indicated they will only meet with a small delegation of reps when the occasion comes. The CE CMETB met with the St Mogue's Parents Association in March at their request and they specifically asked that it not be noted as engagement but a clarification meeting on the announcement by the ETB. However the CE has referenced this as engagement despite the request by the parents on the type of meeting it was. On 12th March in an article in the local paper CMETB stated they had made contact with the Chair of St Mogue's Save Our School Committee, when in fact they only received a letter on the 18th March, a week later.

Communication April 2019:

From: belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday 6 April 2019 20:29
To: CMETB Info <info@cmetb.ie>
Cc: Minister@education.gov.ie; savestmoguescollege@gmail.com
Subject: CMETB Proposed closure of St Bricins and St Mogue's

Dear John Kearney, CE CMETB,

The Save Our Schools committees of St. Bricin's, Belturbet and St. Mogue's, Bawnboy would like to formally invite you to an engagement process in the form of a meeting with the committees and also representatives from the Parents Association of both schools.

In addition to that we request an open public meeting in both communities, which we will support the facilitation of, in collaboration with your office.

Regards

The Save Our Schools St. Bricin's & St. Mogue's Committees

On Mon, Apr 8, 2019 at 10:45 PM John Kearney <JohnKearney@cmetb.ie> wrote:

Hi Elaine,

Good to hear from you and acknowledging receipt of your email.

Confirming that I am currently progressing a number of consultation meetings with various stakeholders concerning the development of education and training facilities within the West Cavan and Belturbet region, with all meetings adding informative insight and guidance to the much needed development of facilities for the region.

I equally welcome a meeting with a delegation from your group and propose we meet after the Easter Break. I will revert to you in due course with proposed dates for this meeting.

Regards,

John

John Kearney,
Chief Executive,
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board,

In response to the announcement in the local newspaper that CMETB would commission an independent feasibility study we wrote to the CE CMETB seeking participation as stakeholders in that process and to support co-design of the brief for such a study.

Communication on this request:

On 14 Apr 2019, at 16:52, belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear John

Glad to hear you are progressing stakeholder engagement on this important issue. A meeting with CMETB will be welcome. In addition we feel as representatives of the Community it would be beneficial, regarding transparency, to include SOS Committee and Parents Association representatives in the selection/tender process for the Consultancy who will undertake the feasibility study to be commissioned by CMETB. Given the concerns of parents and the local community as stakeholders affected by this proposal, we feel this is important to demonstrate a transparent, objective and inclusive process.

Regards

Elaine Birkett

Save Our Schools Committee Belturbet

On Sun, Apr 14, 2019 at 6:35 PM John Kearney <JohnKearney@cmetyb.ie> wrote:

Elaine,

Acknowledging receipt of this correspondence and confirming that all CMETB Procurement and ETB National Procurement Procedures have been followed in progressing the preparation of the feasibility report.

This feasibility report was requested by various stakeholders last month and is being prepared by technical professionals who are external to CMETB, with the recommendations of the feasibility report being communicated to you and other stakeholders in due course.

Regards,

John

John Kearney,
Chief Executive,

On 14 Apr 2019, at 19:40, belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear John,

Can you forward a list of the stakeholders referenced in your email please and a copy of the ETB National Procurement Procedures for the Committee's information and transparency.

Regards

Elaine Birkett

Save Our Schools Committee Belturbet

From: John Kearney
Sent: Sunday 14 April 2019 19:21:23
To: belturbet community
Cc: savestmoguescollege@gmail.com; Minister@education.gov.ie
Subject: Re: CMETB Proposed closure of St Bricin's and St Mogue's - contact person

Hi again Elaine,

Unfortunately not in the office this Sunday evening, and will forward the relevant procedures to you tomorrow.

Stakeholders include the following:

Management and Staff of St Mogue's College
Management and Staff of St Bricin's College
St Mogue's College Parents Association
St Bricin's College Parents Association
Community Groups, including your Committee
St Mogue's Board of Management
St Bricin's Board of Management
CMETB Board
Department of Education and Skills

Regards,

John

John Kearney,
Chief Executive,
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board,
Market Street,
Monaghan.

From: belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday 16 April 2019 19:28:21
To: John Kearney
Cc: savestmoguescollege@gmail.com; Minister@education.gov.ie
Subject: Re: CMETB Proposed closure of St Bricin's and St Mogue's - contact person

Dear John,

Thank you for forwarding the procurement procedures. I would like to follow up with you in relation to the stakeholder engagement you have referenced. In the last number of days the committee has followed up with the community groups and parents and their feedback would appear to be at odds with your clarification on the engagement activity up to these recent emails. I have below provided the details of the feedback.

- St Mogue's College Parents Association - *meeting (first and only) held on the 11th March at the request and invite of the Parents Association, not initiated by CMETB*
- St Bricin's College Parents Association - *have not been met or consulted with to date by CMETB*
- Community Groups, including your Committee - *neither the Save Our Schools St Bricins Belturbet Committee or St Mogue's Bawnboy committee have been met or consulted with*

For clarity and to ensure the lines of communication are accurate, please provide details of the formal engagement referenced in relation to the above community and parent representatives. In addition you may wish, as part of the extensive stakeholder engagement planned by CMETB, to include the local youth services and GAA clubs in the affected communities.

I have also attached a copy of recent correspondence issued by CMETB to St Mogue's, the content would seem to suggest that the feasibility study has only just been formally communicated. Certainly the first news of this for the community and parent groups was the article in the Anglo Celt Newspaper on the 3rd April.

The CMETB proposal is of huge concern to the people living in these rural communities and so far their voice has yet to be heard in a meaningful or engaged manner.

Regards
Elaine Birkett
PRO
Save Our Schools Committee Belturbet

On Mon, Apr 15, 2019 at 5:59 PM John Kearney <JohnKearney@cmeth.ie> wrote:

Elaine,

Enclosed Procurement Procedures.

On 16 Apr 2019, at 21:36, belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear John,

Happy to look at the details of your engagement with names of groups if you would provide those details to ensure all parties are clear on what has or has not occurred to date.

What the Committee's and Parents Association's are seeking is involvement from the outset of the feasibility study as affected stakeholders, not on the conclusion of the study. It seems like something a state funded agency would naturally do as part of any significant change initiative. Particularly so given this proposal could impact on two separate communities. To achieve this we would suggest a representative from each of the Parents Association and each of the Save Our Schools Committee be invited to participate at this early stage of the study.

Regards
Elaine Birkett
PRO
Save Our Schools Committee Belturbet

On Tue, Apr 16, 2019 at 9:02 PM John Kearney <JohnKearney@cmetb.ie> wrote:

Elaine,

Acknowledging receipt of this correspondence and indicating that the provided feedback is incorrect.

In due course as previously confirmed to you, I will be communicating the findings of the requested feasibility report upon completion to stakeholders of St Mogue's College and St Bricin's College.

Regards,

John

It is clear from this communication that CMETB despite being asked for information of who they had agreement with to start engagement from the SOS St Bricins Committee; they will not disclose this information. A request that was made once again, demonstrated below in email correspondence. It is curious to be told by CMETB that we are inaccurate when we say there was no engagement from CMETB, claiming they did have this agreement with a committee member when the committee was only formed in January 2019 and was not in place to have an agreement with anyone. Even more curious we can't be provided with a name to our own alleged committee member or correspondence regarding same.

belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>

to John, savestmoguescollege, Minister ▾

Hi John

Please forward a copy of the communication requesting a meeting on December 17th as referenced.

Kind Regards
Elaine Birkett
On behalf of
Save Our Schools Committee for St Bricins and St Mogues

Jun 24, 2019, 7:26 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

John Kearney

to me, savestmoguescollege@gmail.com, Minister@education.gov.ie ▾

Hi again Elaine,

This was a verbal agreement with members of your committee prior to the CMETB Board Meeting in December which for one reason or another did not take place.

I am sure we will disagree on the reasons why this meeting did not take place but trust we can agree on the importance of rescheduling our proposed meeting for this week given the issuing of the Architectural Assessment Report for St Mogue's College and St Bricin's College.

I duly trust that you will revert with a revised meeting date as a matter of priority.

Jun 24, 2019, 7:53 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
to John, savestmoguescollege, Minister ▾

Jun 24, 2019, 9:38 PM ☆ ↩

John,

Not to Labour on this point but I did ask previously for the name(s) of the committee members you reference. Can you please provide the details of who this verbal agreement was with in relation to our committee and a meeting.

John Kearney
to me, savestmoguescollege@gmail.com, Minister@education.gov.ie ▾

Jun 24, 2019, 10:30 PM ☆ ↩

Hi again Elaine,

I prefer not to give any further details at this stage on the meeting agreement for a variety of reasons, apart from confirming the verbal agreement was made to enable the commencement of the December 19th CMETB Board Meeting.

Again, I trust you will revert as a matter of priority with a revised meeting time for our postponed meeting concerning the Architectural Assessment of St Mogue's College and St Bricin's College.

Regards,

John

John Kearney,
Chief Executive,
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board,
Market Street,
Monaghan.

Following on from this dialogue at the end of April and disappointingly not being permitted to be involved in the feasibility study process, we had to again reach out to CMETB a month later. No contact from the end of April.

CMETB proposed closure of St.Bricin's and of St.Mogue's 📧 **Inbox x**

⌵ 🖨 📧

belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
to John, Minister, savestmoguescollege ▾

Mon, May 27, 3:12 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

Dear John,

I am following up on the agreement you made to meet with the Save Our Schools Community Committees for St Bricins and St Mogues. You had previously indicated this would happen after Easter. That was some time ago and regrettably we have not received an invitation to meet. Can you please advise on this matter and an update as to the progress of the sustainability report being conducted at present.

Yours sincerely
Elaine Birkett
Save Our Schools Committee Belturbet

John Kearney <JohnKearney@cmetb.ie>
to me, Minister@education.gov.ie, savestmoguescollege@gmail.com ▾

Mon, May 27, 3:35 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

Hi Elaine,

I expect the that the Report will be completed later this week, and will revert to you upon completion of this Report to arrange a meeting with you within the next four-night.

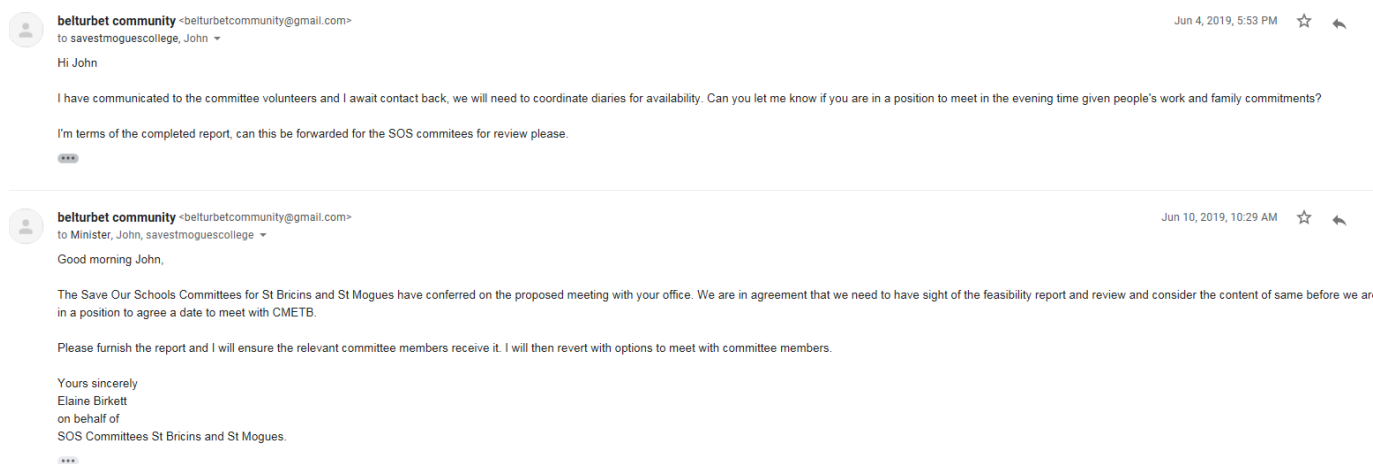
Thanks.

Regards,

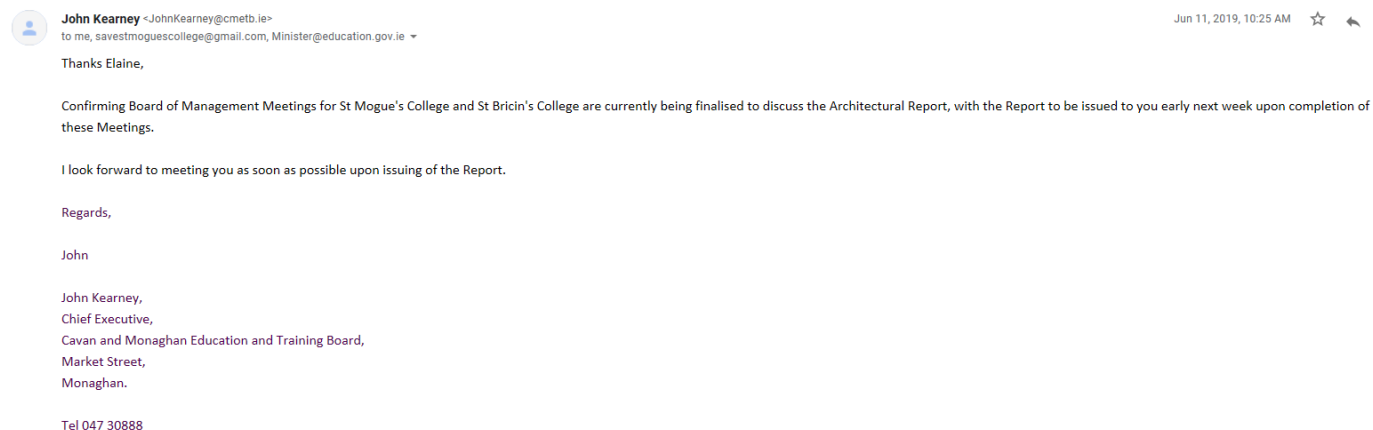
John

John Kearney,
Chief Executive,
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board,
Market Street

Finally over seven months after the shock announcement by CMETB to close two schools in two separate communities we begin to look at face to face engagement and sight of a feasibility study which is intended to look at various options for how €15 million in funding might best be allocated and meet all the stakeholder needs. The committees sought a copy of the report on the 4th of June and again on the 10th June.



At this point we were advised it was not ready for circulation to us. We also note the feasibility report is now being referred to as an “Architectural Report”, not a feasibility study.



June 17th, 2019 we finally receive sight of the “Architectural Report”, and are given a date by CE CMETB to attend a meeting with a limit set on how many delegates can attend. No consultation on a neutral venue, central location, date or time. Indeed when we sought the meeting in a neutral venue this was denied.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: John Kearney <JohnKearney@cmetb.ie>

Date: Mon, 17 Jun 2019, 08:35

Subject: Architectural Assessment of St.Bricin's and of St.Mogue's

To: belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>

Cc: savestmoguescollege@gmail.com <savestmoguescollege@gmail.com>, Minister@education.gov.ie <Minister@education.gov.ie>

Good morning Elaine,

Enclosing the Architectural Assessment Report prepared for St Mogue's College and St Bricin's College.

I welcome discussion on the findings of the Report and have arranged a meeting with 3/4 members of your committee to discuss same at 8.30 on Thursday June 27th in the Cavan ETB Offices.

Regards,

John

John Kearney,
Chief Executive,
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board,
Market Street,
Monaghan.

Tel 047 30888

From: belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday 17 June 2019 09:58:48

To: John Kearney

Cc: savestmoguescollege@gmail.com; Minister@education.gov.ie

Subject: Re: Architectural Assessment of St.Bricin's and of St.Mogue's

Thank you John for the enclosed.

I will bring this to the attention of both committees. Can you confirm the time suggested on the 27th is am/pm? Naturally we have a number of diaries to coordinate so I will come back to you on the proposed date and time.

Kind Regards
Elaine Birkett
PRO
On behalf of
SOS Committee St Bricins and St Mogues

belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
to John, savestmoguescollege, Minister ▾ Jun 24, 2019, 4:46 PM ↗

Dear John

We have been coordinating diaries with reps from both committees. As suspected a number of people are on holidays so this week isn't suitable to meet with you unfortunately.

We are looking at a joint date for the week starting the 8th July and I will confirm what evening that week in the coming days with you.

Yours sincerely
Elaine Birkett
On behalf of
Save Our Schools Committees St Bricens and St Mogues

John Kearney
to me, savestmoguescollege@gmail.com, Minister@education.gov.ie ▾ Jun 24, 2019, 5:22 PM ↗

Hi Elaine,

Acknowledging receipt of this correspondence.

Disappointed that the proposed meeting is being postponed and wondering if the meeting, with a delegation of 3/4 members, can take place next week.

Regards,

John

John Kearney,

belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
to John, savestmoguescollege, Minister ▾ Jun 24, 2019, 5:39 PM ↗

Hi John

Various people are on holidays last week, this week and the following week. It's that time of year. It's important for this first meeting the relevant nominees are present.

I will come back with a date for the week starting the 8th July in due course.

Yours sincerely
Elaine Birkett

John Kearney
to me, savestmoguescollege@gmail.com, Minister@education.gov.ie ▾ Jun 24, 2019, 6:32 PM ↗

Elaine,

This is a most disappointing response as it is important that our proposed meeting takes place as soon as possible as Management and Staff have raised many pressing concerns arising from the Report.

Nevertheless I will continue with the other consultation meetings that have been arranged and trust there will be no further delays to our consultation meeting.

Regards,

John

John Kearney,
Chief Executive,
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board,
Market Street,
Monaghan.

In this correspondence dated 24th June, 2019 the CE CMETB states his “disappointment” and hopes for no further delays in meeting. This response is poorly placed given it took CMETB seven months to produce a document of any sort let alone a proper, robust feasibility study which looks at all options for the spend of significant funding and the threat of school closures. This was raised with the CE who makes claims of having an agreement in December 17th 2018, with a committee member to meet with the St Bricens Committee. Something which was impossible at the time as no committee was formed until January 2019. The CE will not provide the name of the person he engaged with, and of note did not follow up in the months that followed, somewhat incongruent with the stated desire to engage.

belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
to John, savestmoguescollege, Minister ▾

Jun 24, 2019, 6:55 PM ▾

John,

The CMETB made their announcement last November, 2018.

It has taken communication from the Committees to have correspondence from you in the first instance.

Your expression of disappointment at not being able to meet on the date you have set is unreasonable given it is over 6 months since the proposal was announced by the ETB.

We are making ourselves available the week of the 8th of July and as previously advised I will confirm the date in due course.

Yours sincerely
Elaine Birkett
On behalf of the Save Our Schools Committee St Bricins and St Mogues

John Kearney

to me, savestmoguescollege@gmail.com, Minister@education.gov.ie ▾

Jun 24, 2019, 7:19 PM ▾

Elaine,

Acknowledging your response, noting the detailed inaccuracies as it is necessary to highlight that I initiated a meeting request with your Committees on December 17th last.

I trust that you will revert with a revised meeting date as a matter of priority.

belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
to John, savestmoguescollege, Minister ▾

Jun 24, 2019, 9:38 PM ☆ ↩

John,

Not to Labour on this point but I did ask previously for the name(s) of the committee members you reference. Can you please provide the details of who this verbal agreement was with in relation to our committee and a meeting.

John Kearney

to me, savestmoguescollege@gmail.com, Minister@education.gov.ie ▾

Jun 24, 2019, 10:30 PM ☆ ↩

Hi again Elaine,

I prefer not to give any further details at this stage on the meeting agreement for a variety of reasons, apart from confirming the verbal agreement was made to enable the commencement of the December 19th CMETB Board Meeting.

Again, I trust you will revert as a matter of priority with a revised meeting time for our postponed meeting concerning the Architectural Assessment of St Mogue's College and St Bricin's College.

Regards,

John

John Kearney,
Chief Executive,
Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board,
Market Street,
Monaghan.

On June 27th as agreed the Committees along with representatives from the Parents Associations in both communities agreed to meet with CMETB and proposed the 11th July in a central location and community building. The date and time were accepted by CE CMETB but the location was not and insistence that it be the ETB office. To progress engagement the Committees agreed they would attend in the ETB offices.

belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
to John, savestmoguescollege, Minister ▾

Jun 27, 2019, 4:14 PM ☆ ↩

Dear John,

I can now confirm representatives from the St Brics and St Mogues Save Our Schools Committees can meet with you on **Thursday 11th July at 8.30pm** in the Civic Centre Belturbet as a central location.

John Kearney
to me, savestmoguescollege@gmail.com, Minister@education.gov.ie ▾

Jun 27, 2019, 4:41 PM ☆ ↩

Hi Elaine,

Acknowledging receipt of this correspondence and duly confirming that CMETB will meet with 3/4 representatives of your Committee on July 11th at 8.30 in the CMETB offices, the listed venue for our meeting in correspondence forwarded to you on June 17th.

Thanks.

belturbet community <belturbetcommunity@gmail.com>
to John, savestmoguescollege, Minister ▾

Jun 28, 2019, 3:36 PM ☆ ↩

Dear John

I can confirm the representatives will be at the CMETB venue.

Disappointingly the long anticipated feasibility report turned out to be an architectural report (appendix 1) and is without an author. The report itself is of a poor standard with outdated information from 2011 and various elements of the building missing. It is remarkable to think this being presented by CMETB as a feasibility report which would be completed with *“the assistance of an external and professional design team of engineers and quantity surveyors”* as stated by the CE of CMETB in the attached newspaper article. He goes on to say this would include a cost analysis, there are no costings identified in the architectural report, not surprisingly as it is a shambles of a report using a copy and paste of old information from 2011, 8 years ago. Of note both schools have confirmed no person(s) attended at the sites to inform the content of this report.

Based on the poor quality of the report, and clear lack of interest in a robust, well scoped brief, the Committees and Parents Associations have been forced to postpone the agreed meeting scheduled for the 11th July with the CE of CMETB. We are unable to engage in a meaningful way when this is the standard of the approach been taken.

Consultant to examine feasibility of school extensions

INDEPENDENT Requirements for St Mogue's and St Bricin's to be assessed

SEAN MCMAHON

CMETB is to engage an independent consultant to examine the feasibility of the existing St Mogue's and St Bricin's school sites to accommodate required extensions.

It follows heightened pressure placed on the educational and training board to explore all options beyond their announced proposal to shut the two west Cavan schools in favour of building a new €15 million facility in neighbouring Ballyconnell.

The revelation that an outside party had been called in emerged after a recent CMETB meeting in Virginia College, and against a backdrop where CMETB has thus far received no formal response from the Department of Education in relation to the replacement school plans.

Following the meeting, Mr Kearney informed *The Anglo-Celt* that consultations were ongoing at local level with various stakeholders, "particularly with the parents' association of St Mogue's at present,

with a view to examining if the school was to remain, what investment would be required to support it".

In relation to St Bricin's, Mr Kearney explained: "I am due to meet with more parties there in relation to that school. I have also met with Ballyconnell Development Association, very strong support being voiced there for the new school."

Any feasibility study would be drafted with the assistance of a external and professional design team of engineers and quantity surveyors, and would focus on the type of extensions that would be required at both schools, including PE facilities. "It will be scoped out from a cost analysis," explained Mr Kearney.

Facilities needed

Both schools have been advocating the need for PE facilities for the last 30 to 40 years, Mr Kearney accepted. "In terms of special needs requirements - specialist areas - modern facilities in terms of staff rooms, meeting rooms, parent meeting rooms. The whole motivation of the CMETB Board is to ensure that the quality of facilities in West Cavan and Belturbet should be on a par with their counter parts right across the rest of the Cavan region and the Monaghan region," he added.

Nine out of the 11 schools in the CMETB area have seen their enrolments jump significantly in recent times.

While the enrolment numbers at St Bricin's was "slightly down" on last year looking toward September 2019, St Mogue's new pupil numbers have remained steady.

"When parents see the range of facilities on offer at schools in Cavan town, it does lure students away to attending those schooling facilities in Cavan Town. Notwithstanding the fact that there is excellent teaching and learning taking place in St Mogue's and St Bricin's."

He congratulated St Mogue's on collecting a brilliant Ulster title on the football front, and St Bricin's which last week won a national award in the realm of Physical Education under the tutelage of the Deputy Principal, James Sherry.

The Chief Executive said the significant enrolments overall at all CMETB schools was a "tremendous endorsement" of the teaching and learning that is taking place throughout the Cavan and Monaghan region.



John Kearney, CMETB Chief Executive.

In our communication to CMETB regarding the postponement of what was meant to be our first meeting, we included a copy of retort to the architectural report from both communities. They are attached as appendix 2 and 3 for information.

This matter is very serious, for the young students present and future, the families and people of both communities, and yet little regard is being shown to us, we are tax payers and voters and more is expected of our public service. In addition the damage that is being done to both schools is a serious risk factor, undermining the profile of both schools, with the recent example being the resignation of

the Vice Principal of St Bricins, a well-regarded professional, and a huge loss to the school, who has left to take up a position in education services outside of the ETB remit.

The lack of clarity about the schools future, the poor management of the process is inexcusable and we ask that this proposal by CMETB be stood down and real engagement begin in terms of how this funding can be best allocated to the two existing schools which are at the heart of their communities for some time, achieving excellent results because of the type and size of schools they are. They have been delivering outstanding educational and personal development outcomes for the young people who journey through those halls. We have already submitted 1000's of petitions signatures and letters from the community saying clearly they do not want the new school, but want St Bricins and St Mogues to be retained, refurbished and sustained for the future of school services that match the need of students in rural Ireland today.

It is clear that the level of engagement indicated by CMETB to your department is being misrepresented.

Minster on a final note, we have sought a meeting with you to talk through our concerns and explore our ideas on options for both schools and to hear your thoughts on the CMETB proposal; we would welcome a date for this meeting. We would also welcome acknowledgement from you personally on this significant matter and our earlier detailed file submissions on St Bricins and St Mogues. We ask that this does not linger as it is damaging to the schools and all those involved. These rural communities needs support not withdrawal of services.

Yours sincerely

**Save Our Schools Committee St Bricins
& St Bricins Parents Association**

**Save Our Schools Committee St Mogues
& St Mogues Parents Association**

E: Belturbetcommunity@gmail.com