

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE**

**MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT LOUGHREA REGIONAL OFFICES ON  
MONDAY, 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2010**

**LLATHAIR**

**Baill:**

Cllr. M. Maher, Chairperson  
Cllr. J. McClearn  
Cllr. P. Feeney  
Cllr. M. Fahy  
Cllr. P. Hynes  
Cllr. B. Willers  
Cllr. G. Finnerty

**Oifigigh:**

Mr. J. Cullen, D.O.S., Environment & Water Services Unit  
Mr. M. Lavelle, S.E., Roads & Transportation Unit  
Ms. M. NíChionna, S.E., Environment & Water Services Unit  
Mr. S. Breathnach, S.E.E., Loughrea Electoral Area  
Mr. M. Owens, S.E.O., Roads & Transportation Unit  
Mr. A. Raftery, E.E., Loughrea Engineering Area  
Mr. C. Mitchell, E.E., Portumna Engineering Area  
Mr. J. Costello, E.E., Gort Engineering Area  
Ms. A. Power, S.S.O., Loughrea Regional Offices

Mr. P. Kavanagh, Project Manager, Western RBD Project

It was agreed that the Presentation on the Western River Basin District Plan be taken before Confirmation of Minutes.

**PRESENTATION ON WESTERN RIVER BASIN DISTRICT PLAN**

Ms. NíChionna, S.E., Environment & Water Services Unit introduced herself and Mr. Kavanagh, Project Manager of the Western RBD Project. She made a power-point presentation on the Draft Western River Basin District Management Plan. She explained the background to the Plan and that it would be presented with reference to specific water management unit action plans of which she gave examples.

Mr. Cullen advised that this was a plan that has to be prepared and would have significant implications for the future. He advised that a number of water bodies have been determined to be at risk from agricultural activities and measures would have to be applied to address this, such as the Good Agricultural Practices Regulations investigations and enforcement. He said another contributory factor to pollution of water bodies was septic

## Loughrea Area Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010

tanks and advised that to address this it may become a possibility that in future inspections may have to be carried out of existing systems and followed by enforced percolation upgrades where inspection establishes need.

Cllr. McClearn stated that effectively Councillors had no say as the plan would become an executive function if not adopted by the Council. He said the issue here was for the wider public as to how to do our business in terms of planning and whether they are sustainable going forward and this was a crucial issue. He said that it had to be asked if the Council can sustain the type of planning regimes they had throughout the years. He said that on the other hand the quality of drinking water had to be a priority. He acknowledged that there was going to have to be a huge change in how the county is planned going forward and what was done in the past was unsustainable. He queried how this was going to impact in the future and asked if these works would impede on flooding relief. Mr. Cullen stated that this was certainly a big issue. Mr. Kavanagh stated the in the plan when a major change is made to the river, a lot of the time the management of the drainage systems is very important. Referring to the presentation, Cllr. Feeney referred to the statistic of 70% of phosphorus being agriculture related and said that increasingly European Directives on water quality failed to strike a balance between the need for food production and water quality. Mr. Kavanagh stated that the difficulties arise where there are SAC's on drinking water supplies. Mr. Cullen stated that the statistics show that there approx. 8638 septic tanks in the Clarin/Kilcolgan area of which there was probably 30% of these malfunctioning.

Cllr. Maher thanked Ms. NiChionna and Mr. Kavanagh for the presentation.

## **MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA MEETING HELD ON 12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2009**

On the proposal of Cllr. Finnerty, seconded by Cllr. McClearn, the Minutes of the Loughrea Area Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009 were confirmed.

### **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

#### Deputation from Kinvara Residents

Cllr. Fahy asked if there was any update on the parking of campervans at the Quay in Kinvara which was raised at a previous meeting. Mr. Breathnach advised that he would contact Cllr. Fahy directly on this issue.

#### Traffic Lights - Westbridge

Cllr. Willers asked for the update on the provision of traffic lights at Westbridge, Loughrea. Mr. Breathnach stated that they had hoped to commence works on this in January but owing to severe weather conditions, it had been put on hold but it was hoped to commence these works shortly. He advised that the works were being done by direct labour.

**Loughrea Area Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010**

Loughrea Mart Issues

Cllr. McClearn asked if there was any up-date on Loughrea Mart issues. Cllr. Maher stated that Mr. Cullen was to arrange a meeting shortly with the Mart Committee.

Athenry Waste Water Treatment Plant

In response to Cllr. Feeney, Mr. Cullen stated that the Athenry Waste Water Treatment Plant was not fully commissioned yet but they would have an official opening of the Athenry Waste Water Treatment Plant shortly.

**MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA MEETING HELD ON 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2009**

On the proposal of Cllr. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. Willers, the Minutes of the Loughrea Area Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009 were confirmed.

**Matters Arising from Minutes**

Proposals for Restoration Improvement Grants for Regional & Local Roads for 2010

Mr. Raftery referred to Page 2 of the Minutes and requested that the following amendment be made:

<b>Road No.</b>	<b>Townland Name</b>	<b>Works Type</b>	<b>Length of work (m)</b>	<b>Estimated cost of work</b>
L41921	Creggaun, Craughwell	RR	850m	€40,800

Flooding

Referring to the serious flooding of November 2009, Cllr. Willers praised the efforts of the Council Staff, particularly those in the Loughrea Electoral Area, but felt that the response by the Gardai was significantly less than it should have been. She said that Council workers were left to deal with traffic management when in fact it is something that the Gardai should have been involved in to a far greater extent. She referred to the flooding experienced at her own house and other neighbouring houses and commended the self-help approach and community support by locals in the area. She said the emergency plan response should be reviewed so that for future events there is an even greater level of co-ordination between all of the agencies involved. Cllr. McClearn agreed and said it was important to learn from the experiences of the recent flooding and extreme cold which left many without water supplies in late December and early January. The Councillors acknowledged the work of the Council Staff in responding to both of these weather related emergencies.

Mr. Cullen acknowledged that it must have been traumatic for Cllr. Willers and others who had experienced, first hand, flooding of their houses. He said that while the Council had managed to help hundreds of families there were others who through self help and neighbourly support had dealt with their own situations. He agreed with the Councillors that it would of course be appropriate to review the overall response to the emergencies so that issues like inter-agency co-operation are reviewed and updated.

## **REVISION OF ROAD RESTORATION GRANTS 2010**

Mr. Lavelle explained to the Meeting that Restoration Improvement Programme and Early Starts Programme were prepared in November 2009 based on the priorities that existed at that time. However, subsequent to that and as a result of the severe weather, the regional and local road network had experienced significant and widespread deterioration. He advised that as no additional funding was made available to address this, it was necessary to review the 2010 Restoration Improvement Programme, in order to ensure that available funding was used to best effect to address the priority requirements for remedial works. He advised that any revision to the existing Restoration Improvement Programme would be placed before the Electoral Area Committees and Council for approval and it would also require the approval of the Department of Transport/National Roads Authority. In response to a query raised, Mr. Owens referred to Circular RLR03 2010 which allows the Council to spend up to 25% of the 2009 grants (which is €2.8m) pending the allocation of 2010 grants, under the headings: Restoration Improvement Grants; Discretionary Maintenance Grants and Discretionary Improvement Grants. Mr. Lavelle said that the expenditure would be subject to the normal criteria applied to grants, including a minimum average length of 1,000m of restoration improvement works. He stated that the criteria applied to grants could be reviewed by the Roads & Transportation SPC with a view to making a submission to the Department to review same. This would allow more discretion and flexibility in spending funding allocated. Mr. Lavelle suggested that they have another Area Meeting following on from the SPC Meeting which was being held the following day.

Mr. Finnerty stated that some of the roads were impassable and it was never more difficult to travel in rural Ireland. He said they needed to get some guidelines/direction from the Council on this. Mr. Lavelle stated that they would be looking at the worst effected roads with the budgets available and would be reallocating the finances for the emergency situation on the ground. Cllr. Willers queried if there was any possibility of any extra monies coming from Europe arising out of damage caused to the roads during the recent spell of severe weather conditions. Mr. Lavelle stated that there was no indication of any extra funding being made available. Cllr. Feeney asked that if there were any changes to the proposals agreed at the last meeting that they would get a chance to discuss it in a meaningful way. Mr. Lavelle stated that the estimated damage to roads in the east of the county was €11m. Cllr. Fahy said that the condition of roads in County Galway was one of the worst throughout the country and the combination of flooding and frost has made the matter worse. He suggested that they should seek a deputation with the Minister to

seek extra funding for road repairs in County Galway. He also stated that they should seek funding from the OPW to put into the roads arising out of the flooding as this had made the situation worse. Mr. Breathnach said that the OPW have agreed to provide funding for small drainage works and in cases replacement of culverts.

## **SMARTER TRAVEL AND LOUGHREA SMARTER TRAVEL FORUM**

Mr. Owens circulated to the Meeting report outlining the background to the National Competition for Smarter Travel Areas. He said that the Stage 1 Bid for Loughrea Smarter Travel Town provided for the development of a range of infrastructural and promotional measures to achieve model shift and behavioural change in the Loughrea Urban ED. He said the key element of the bid was the development of a new sustainable transportation corridor with design emphasis on segregated high premium cycling and walking facilities, providing direct, safe and high quality access to Loughrea's educational sector. Outlined in the report were the measures contained in Stage 1. He stated that Loughrea Town was short-listed to Stage II of the competition and outlined the intended timeframe for the Stage II Bid. He explained that the preparation of Stage II Bid would involve an extensive public information and consultation process to ensure the bid benefits from and reflects the input of all the relevant stakeholders. In this regard and to facilitate the local community and stakeholders in actively participating in the preparation of the Stage II Bid, he said it was proposed to establish the Loughrea Smarter Travel Forum. He said it was intended the membership of the Forum would include representatives of all the key stakeholders including Electoral Members from the Loughrea Electoral Area and Loughrea Town Council. He also advised that it was proposed that an Elected Member from the Loughrea Electoral Area would serve as Chair of the Forum. He informed the Members that the Stage II Bid must be submitted by the end of April and funding for the successful bids would be from July 2010 to 2015. He asked the Members to come back to him with two nominations from the Electoral Area Committee after their next meeting. In response to Cllr. McClearn, Mr. Owens stated that, if successful, the overall budget for the five successful bids is €50m. The Loughrea Bid, if successful, would mean funding of €5m and matching contribution of €1m. He said that the Department were providing funding of €50,000 for appointment of Consultants who will assist the Council in preparation of the bid. Cllr. Feeney said this was a great opportunity for Loughrea and they had to look at its strengths and would give an opportunity to the town to reinvent itself. He said that Loughrea was the smallest of the towns short-listed and everything should be put into getting this bid. In reply to Cllr. Willers, Mr. Owens stated the proposed membership of the forum will consist of members from Loughrea Town Council, Loughrea Electoral Area Committee, Roads & Transportation SPC, Loughrea Chamber of Commerce, Loughrea Community Forum, local employers, Educational Sector, Sports Clubs, An Garda Síochána. The Members thanked Mr. Owens for the detailed presentation and it was agreed that the item would be raised at the next meeting.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### Flooding on Bride Street

Cllr. Maher referred to representations that had been made to all the Members by Mr. Green regarding flooding on Bride Street. Mr. Raftery stated that this was included in the submission made to the Roads & Transportation Unit for submission to the OPW. Mr. Lavelle that the OPW were looking at funding minor works that could help relieve flooding on a small scale.

### Speed Limit

Referring to the reclassification of the old N6 from a National Primary to a Regional route, Cllr. Maher requested that the speed limit on the old N6 should remain at 100km and not be reduced to 80km. Mr. Lavelle advised that in order to leave the speed limit at 100km, a bye-law would have to be made to keep it as is. On the proposal of Cllr. Feeney, seconded by Cllr. Fahy, it was agreed that the speed limit should remain at 100km on the old N6.

### Traffic Management Plan for Athenry

Cllr. Feeney requested that double yellow lines be put in place near the railway station in Athenry and the area around the VEC. He also queried when work would commence on Backlawn car-park. Mr. Lavelle stated that initially it was intended that this work would be carried out by direct labour but it was now intended to let it out to contract.

### Public Car-Park Gort

Cllr. Willers queried if there was any update in relation to securing a public car-park for Gort Town. Mr. Lavelle stated that no suitable location had become available in Gort town and advised when the M18 was open, they would re- evaluate the car-park situation at that stage.

### Traffic Lights – Gort Town

In response to Cllr. Willers, Mr. Lavelle stated that it was hoped that work would commence on these works before the end of 2010.

### Water Main – Gort Town

Mr. Cullen advised that the laying of water main for Gort Town was at tender stage. He said that he would be resisting the allocation for resurfacing of Main Street until the water-main was laid.

## **Chrochnaigh an Cruinniú ansin**