

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

**MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT LOUGHREA REGIONAL OFFICES ON
THURSDAY, 30TH OCTOBER 2008**

LLATHAIR

Baill:

Cllr. B. Willers, Chairperson
Cllr. M. Regan
Cllr. P. Feeney
Cllr. M. Fahy
Cllr. P. Hynes
Cllr. M. Maher

Cllr. G. Burke, Mayor of Loughrea Town Council

Oifigigh:

Mr. M. Dolly, S.E., Roads & Transportation Unit
Mr. M. Lavelle, S.E., Roads & Transportation Unit
Mr. M. Sheil, S.E.E., Loughrea Electoral Area
Mr. J. Costello, E.E., Gort Engineering Area
Mr. A. Raftery, E.E., Loughrea Engineering Area
Ms. O. Finnerty, A/E.E., Portumna Engineering Area
Ms. A. Power, S.S.O., Loughrea Regional Offices

**MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
ON 19TH SEPTEMBER 2008**

Matters Arising

Oxgrove Bridge

Cllr. Hynes queried whether they had secured the funding for the proposed works at Oxgrove Bridge and when was it proposed to carry out these works. Mr. Dolly advised that the design and widening of the bridge were subject to funding being made available under the Scheme of Grants for Specific Improvement Works on Non-National Roads. He advised that the €105,000 funding they had secured would be used for rebuilding the parapet walls, improving sight distance and they hoped to complete these works in 2008. He stated that they had placed an order with Banagher concrete for units to widen the bridge.

Transfer of Workforce in Gort

Cllr. Willers asked for an update on the transfer of workers from Gort Engineering Area to Portumna. Mr. Sheil advised that it had not gone ahead as yet. Mr. Dolly advised that they got a lot of resistance from both the Councillors and the workforce regarding this proposal. He stated that they were trying to secure funding for the completion of works at Shanbally Junction and to continue the works near the school which commenced two years ago and if they could not get enough funding he advised that they would not be able to retain the workforce. He stated that they needed €70,000 to complete the works and he asked that the Members to consider using some of their Notice of Motion Monies towards this project.

Cllr. Hynes asked what the position was with regard to the embargo on recruitment of staff of local authorities. He stated that some staff were due to retire and queried if they were being replaced. Mr. Dolly advised that presently the Electoral Boundary changes were taking place. He stated that they were also carrying out a review of the staff structure within the organisation and were currently preparing details for discussion with the Unions with regard to staff replacement and grading of staff. With regard to staff replacement, he stated that they could only employ what they could afford to. He stated that there was simply more work out there than they could get to do and they had to be mindful of the budget in place. He stated that all this would be considered under the review of the Electoral Boundaries. Mr. Lavelle advised that the Road Design Contract Staff had been let go and they were down by five staff in that Section. He advised that the 3% cut-back on staff would affect both the outdoor and administrative staff. Cllr. Regan stated that there seemed to be a lot of administrative staff in the system and it seemed to be top-heavy on the administrative end. He stated that outdoor staff was not being replaced and queried if this could be addressed. Mr. Lavelle stated that the situation was quite the opposite in that there was not enough administrative/technical staff. He stated that their programme of works was huge, there were crews working on queries on planning applications; contract documents; tender documents. He explained that all Fixed Price Contracts requires numerous drawings to be prepared and there now much more work involved.

Fixed Price Contracts

Mr. Lavelle advised that since the last meeting, two of the schemes that were approved for funding under the transfer allocation from Fixed Price Contracts had been withdrawn and the two schemes going ahead were N65 – Ballydavid Bridge and N66 – Cuscarrick.

Pay & Display Athenry

Cllr. Feeney asked for an update/timeframe on the proposed car-park at Backlawn in Athenry. Mr. Lavelle advised that they would be proceeding with those works when there was staffing available to carry them out. He advised that the works at Ballydavid Bridge and Cuscarrick had to be completed by the end of November and they were concentrating on those two projects.

Loughrea Area Meeting held on 30th October 2008

In relation to the issuing of Parking Permits, Cllr. Feeney stated that more latitude was required in relation to the granting of permits in certain circumstances. Mr. Lavelle stated that parking bye-laws had been adopted and permits were granted on the basis of them complying with these criteria. Cllr. Feeney referred particularly to applicants who were refused permits for small commercial vehicles and asked that this issue be addressed. He also queried if the Council would consider issuing Visitors Permits for family members of people residing within Pay & Display areas. He stated that they needed to facilitate the public and asked that they consider amending the bye-laws. Mr. Lavelle suggested that these requests be made to the S.E.O. in Roads & Transportation Unit where they can be considered.

Deputation from Gort

Cllr. Fahy asked if there was any update on the issues raised by the Deputation that was received from Gort as they had received no response since the last meeting. He stated that three minor accidents had taken place at Maloney's turn and claims may be taken against the Council. He said that the condition of the roadway was deplorable and needed to be done as a matter of urgency. Mr. Sheil advised that it has never been the practice to issue written responses to Deputations following their attendance at Area Meeting. It has always been the case that the Councillor who brings in the Deputation would update them on what was discussed by the Members/Officials after they left the meeting. In relation to issues raised by the Deputation, he stated that it was explained to them in detail what was involved and the reasons for delay in these requested works in being carried out (awaiting approval for the laying of a water main from D.O.E). Cllr. Feeney queried if minor maintenance could be carried out on the particularly bad areas outside the Lady Gregory Hotel without N.R.A. approval. Mr. Sheil explained that the difficulty was that the pot-holes held a lot of water and the material would not hold in these conditions. Mr. Dolly explained that the budget in the Gort Area for National Primary Maintenance was €121,000 and this was already overspent by €6,000 and they did not have monies to carry out improvements at this location. If approval to laying the water main was received, then the N.R.A. may consider allocating monies towards resurfacing the road. Cllr. Feeney queried if some emergency measures could be carried out on that stretch. Mr. Lavelle advised that there were no monies available to carry out the requested works. Cllr. Willers stated that this would be included on the Agenda for the Meeting with the N.R.A. Mr. Costello agreed that the Ennis Road was in a bad state. However, he stated that it would be unfair to select a certain part of the road for maintenance and then not carry out improvements to the other areas that are equally as bad. Mr. Dolly stated that if it was a dangerous situation, the N.R.A. would be informed. He stated that they would have to try and maintain the road with the allocations they had.

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Maher, seconded by Cllr. Fahy, the Minutes of the Loughrea Area Committee Meeting held on 19th September 2008 were confirmed.

TUROE STONE

Mr. Sheil advised that correspondence had been received from the Assistant Principal Officer in the National Monuments Section regarding the proposed relocation of Turoe Stone. Mr. Ridge, Director of Services sent a proposal to the National Monuments Section outlining the following suggested locations for relocation of the Stone:

1. Dartfield Equestrian Museum, Kilrickle, Loughrea
2. Ecclesiastical Museum, St. Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea
3. Galway County Library, Piggott Street, Loughrea
4. Aughrim Interpretative Centre, Ballinasloe
5. Athenry Castle
6. OPW Regional Depot, Raheen, Athenry

Mr. Sheil advised that the National Monuments Office corresponded back and stated that none of those locations were suitable. It was stated in the correspondence that they were interested in permanently housing the stone and providing it with the fullest protection and appropriate presentation possible.

Cllr. Regan proposed that the Stone be left where it is. This was seconded by Cllr. Maher and agreed by the Members. It was stated that over 6,000 signatures had been sent to Minister J. Gormerly requesting that the stone be retained where it is. Cllr. Maher suggested that Mr. Ridge be written to informing him of the opposition of the Members to moving the Stone and that it be retained where it is and suggested that a structure be built around it. This was agreed by the Members.

LOUGHREA TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mr. Sheil stated that he was unable to prepare maps in advance of the Meeting as they had a huge workload to complete before the end of November. However, he invited the Members to raise any issues they would like to be considered for inclusion when the Plan was being reviewed.

Cllr. Regan stated that he was disappointed that it was taking so long for the review process to be carried out. He stated that they were aware where the problem spots were and suggested that it was only a matter of pointing these out on a map and taking the process from there. Mr. Dolly stated that he had given a commitment that they would initiate a review of the Traffic Management Plan which would be sent on to Road Design for final processing. He said that it was on the Programme of Works but there were other grant jobs to be completed by the end of November and they would get precedence. In relation to Station Road Car-Park, Cllr. Regan stated that the car-parking spaces set aside for the Road Safety Authority personnel at the back of the car-park were not being used and they were using the ones nearer the front of the car-park. He requested that the Road Safety Authority be written to advising them of same.

Loughrea Area Meeting held on 30th October 2008

It was agreed that the following issues be included in the Review of the Traffic Management Plan for Loughrea:

Moll's Boreen – To consider provision of Pay & Display on this roadway and making it one-way

Gort Road - Consider extending Traffic Management Plan out the Gort Road out as far as Coy's Boreen

Athenry Road – Consider extending Pay & Display parking out to Ward's Filling Station or No Parking during Business Hours

Mount Carmel Crescent – Consider putting in a weight restriction. To consider making it one-way from Cosmona upward and extension of paid parking outside houses.

Dolphin Road – consider making it one-way towards Abbey Street.

Mount Carmel Road – Consider provision of double Yellow Lines from Abbey Car-Park to Mount Carmel Crescent.

Church Street – consider making it one-way from Barrack Street to Main Street

Piggott Street – consider making it one-way Main Street to Barrack Street

Moore Street – consider making it one-way from Bride Street to Cross Street

Bride Street – consider provision of parking outside and opposite O'Dea's Hotel. Consider extending Pay & Display on Bride Street out to Danefort Road and further up the hill.

Station Road – extending Pay & Display to take in roadway acquired from the Mart and consider putting a loading bay on Station Road.

Garybreeda – consider making it one-way downhill and installing single yellow line.

Loading Bays – consider changing all Loading Bay times to 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Monday to Saturday

Bus Stop – Station Road car-park. Cllr. G. Burke stated that there would be great difficulty for buses turning at this location and queried if this would be looked at.

Weight restrictions – Consideration of a weight restriction to be placed on Main Street. It was queried if signs could be erected at Roundabouts for "No Through Traffic for HGV's".

Fitzy's Corner – Mr. Sheil advised that this building would be demolished shortly and they would probably be bringing back the lines to improve visibility at this location.

Woodford Road – consider changing Stop Sign to Woodford Road instead of Tynagh Road.

Barrack Street – eliminate "pinch-point" outside Regan's Monument Works.

Mitchell's Shop – to consider including this area for Pay & Display parking

It was agreed that the above submissions would be considered for inclusion in the Review of the Loughrea Traffic Management Plan. These would then be sent on to Road Design Section to take it to the next stage of the process.

ISSUES IN RELATION TO GORT TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

Cllr. Willers asked that elements of the Gort Traffic Management Plan be reviewed immediately. She stated that the recently implemented traffic flow system was causing major problems for motorists and pedestrians and it was requested that the Gort's traffic flow be reviewed as a matter of urgency. She explained that since the introduction of the one-way system it was almost impossible for motorists to take a right-hand turn onto the N18 from The Square as traffic flow was coming through the town is travelling too quickly. This resulted in traffic coming from the Square being unable to exit safely or quickly out the N18 and causing a major build up of traffic back to Church Street. She stated that visibility of traffic coming from the Ennis Road side was severely restricted. Mr. Lavelle took note of the concerns raised and stated that a traffic audit would be carried out.

KINVARA FARMERS MARKET ISSUES

Cllr. Willers stated that four of the Councillors present had attended a meeting of the Community Council in Kinvara where they heard that the group involved in furthering the farmers market in Kinvara were adamant that they wanted the market in The Square. They were not happy with locating the market on the Quay area despite being advised by the Roads Personnel of Galway County Council that this was a more suitable location. They were told that the Quay site was suggested in the interest of Health and Safety. Cllrs. Feeney and Maher had sought legal opinion from the Law agent regarding the liability of Councillors going against the advice of the Area Engineer and the Director of Services for Roads. Cllr. Willers stated that the Bye Laws were on the SPC agenda for the following Monday and requested that the Bye Laws in respect of Kinvara be deferred until clarification came from the Law Agent on this issue. This was agreed.

In relation to the proposed Casual Trading area for Loughrea, Mr. Raftery advised that they were proposing to increase the number of casual trading bays in Loughrea from nine to twelve. When it was stated that there were going to be a large number of applications for these casual trading licenses, Mr. Lavelle suggested that the number of market days could be increased to two days. It was agreed to consider this option.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Traffic Lights at Westbridge

Cllr. G. Burke queried when the Traffic Lights would be provided at this location. Mr. Lavelle was unable to confirm if funding was available for this project and suggested that the Mayor would address the issue with the Director of Services for Roads & Transportation.

Loughrea Area Meeting held on 30th October 2008

In reply to a query about the provision of a pedestrian crossing on Barrack Street, Mr. Sheil advised that this was being provided outside Catherine's Kitchen and that it was being provided from Disability Funding.

Contract Signing for N18 Gort Crusheen

Cllr. Feeney advised that the signing of the N18 Gort/Crusheen contract would be taking place on Tuesday, 4th November at 10.30 a.m. in the Council Chamber and that all were welcome to attend.

Departure

Cllr. Willers advised the Members that this was Mr. Sheil's last Area Meeting as he was transferring to Housing Section and wished him well in his new position and looked forward to meeting his replacement. The other Members wished to be associated with these comments. They wished him well, thanked him for his help and courtesy at all times and stated that his knowledge of the Electoral Area would be greatly missed. Mr. Dolly stated that he would like to be associated with these comments. He complimented his immense knowledge of the area and commented on his attention to detail. He too wished him well in this new position.

Mr. Sheil advised that his departure date had changed to the end of November. He thanked the Members for their comments and stated that he enjoyed his time in the Loughrea Electoral Area. He thanked the Members for their co-operation and looked forward to working with them in his new role in the Housing Section.

Main Street

Cllr. Maher queried when the unfinished grouting from the footpath to the buildings on Main Street was going to be completed. Mr. Lavelle stated they would be leaving it until after Christmas and would include it with the others issues on the Snag List. Cllr. Willers stated that an area at the pedestrian crossing beside the Health Centre was prone to flooding and to include it on the Snag List. This was agreed.

Shanbally Junction, Craughwell

Mr. Dolly advised the Members that the Shanbally Junction at Craughwell School remained in an unfinished state. He advised that there was no funding in the current year and that there is no more grant-aid available for this location. He said that some of the Members had allocated some Notice of Motion monies and asked those that had not allocated monies to consider doing so.

Roxboro Road, Kilchreest

Cllr. Willers queried if funding would be forthcoming for this road. Mr. Sheil explained that this was one of the haul roads and he suggested that they bring the matter up with their meeting with the N.R.A.

Raford Bridge

Cllr. Maher stated that the bridge was bordering both the Loughrea and Ballinasloe Electoral Areas and that the parapet walls on the Ballinasloe side were repaired but they were not done on the Loughrea side. Mr. Sheil stated that the matter would be examined.

Pedestrian Crossing, Athenry

Cllr. Feeney referred to approval that was received for a pedestrian crossing on the Tuam Road in Athenry and stated he was advised that it was not a suitable location. He queried if a pedestrian crossing could be provided on the town side of the church on Church Street. Mr. Lavelle stated that he would check this matter.

Chríochnaigh an Cruinniú ansin