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***MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL ROADS MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ARAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON MONDAY,
4TH MARCH, 2013.***

***MIONTUAIRISCÍ AN CHRUINNITHE SPEISIALTA BÓITHRE DE CHOMHAIRLE
CONTAE CHIARRAÍ A TIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN
CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, AR AN LUAN, 4 MÁRTA 2013.***

PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR

COUNCILLORS/COMHAIRLEOIRÍ

R. Beasley	J. Brassil	T. Buckley
M. Cahill	P. Connor-Scarteen	B. Cronin
P.J. Donovan	T. Ferris	J. Finucane
S. Fitzgerald	N. Foley	M. Gleeson
M. Griffin	P. Leahy	P. McCarthy
A. McEllistrim	B. O'Connell	P. O'Donoghue
M. O'Shea	L. Purtill	J. Sheahan
G. Wharton Slattery	T. O'Brien	

APOLOGY/LEITHSCÉAL

B. Moynihan-Cronin

IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager
Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Services, Roads, Transportation & Safety
Mr. J. Flynn, Director of Corporate Affairs
Mr. M. McMahon, Director of Planning
Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing & Community and Enterprise
Mr. G. MacNamara, S.E., Roads, Transportation & Safety
Mr. F. Hartnett, S.E.E., Roads, Transportation & Safety
Mr. P. Teahan, A/S.E.E., Roads, Transportation & Safety
Mr. G. O'Brien, Meetings Administrator
Mr. P. Corkery, Communications Relations Officer
Ms. M. West, A.O., Roads, Transportation & Safety
Ms. K. Doody, S.O., Roads, Transportation & Safety
Ms. G. Collins, A.S.O., Roads, Transportation & Safety
Ms. K. Condon, C.O., Roads, Transportation & Safety

The meeting commenced at 11.10 a.m.

Mayor T. O'Brien took the Chair.

13.03.04.01

Authorise attendance of Councillors at a Conference

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. M. Gleeson, SECONDED by Cllr. P. O'Donoghue it was agreed to authorise the attendance of Cllrs. Sheahan and Beasley at the ACCC Annual Conference 2013 to be held in the Tower Hotel, Waterford City on the 7th & 8th March, 2013.

Approval for the opening of Tenders

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. M. Gleeson, SECONDED by Cllr. J. Finucane it was agreed to approve the opening of tenders for the Lough Leane Loop Trail Project.

Magdalene Laundry, Tralee

Cllr. T. Ferris PROPOSED that a Committee be set up to examine the issue of exhuming the bodies of the women who worked in the Magdalene Laundry in Tralee from the grave in Balloonagh, and to arrange for the bodies to be removed and interred in a public graveyard.

Cllr. Robert Beasley SECONDED this proposal.

13.03.04.02 Consideration of the Road Works Programme 2013

Mr. Charlie O'Sullivan, Director of Services, outlined the Programme of Works for National Primary Routes, National Secondary Routes and for the Non-National Road Network as set out in the Roads Programme 2013, which was circulated to members. He pointed out that overall, funding has decreased 15% from 2012. Investment of €12.755m for Tralee Bypass is welcome. Funding for pavement and minor improvement works has decreased since last year, with 3 schemes being funded in Kerry, out of 12 schemes nationally.

Funding for Non-National roads has reduced by €2.6m, which is a 13% reduction on 2012. Local Improvement Schemes have been reinstated; however, there is no separate allocation for this scheme. Local Authorities are permitted to use up to 7% of the Discretionary Grant for Local Improvement Schemes.

€60,000 has been provided from County Councillors Allocations for an Emergency Hardship Scheme, and there is now a provision of €723,000 for County Councillors Allocations (€26,778 per Member). Mr. O'Sullivan asked Members to give preference to drainage works when considering any allocations under the CCA programme, in recognition of the allocation of funding to the LIS scheme, at the expense of local road drainage.

The Specific Improvement Grant is at the lowest ever since the grant started in 1995, which is very disappointing.

Mr. O'Sullivan wished to remind Members that details for Community Involvement Schemes are to be submitted to the Department by mid-April, therefore all applications should be returned to the Roads Department by mid-March.

The Members discussed the programme at length. The Members thanked Mr. Tom Curran, County Manager, Mr. Charlie O'Sullivan, Director, Roads, Transportation & Safety, Mr. Ger MacNamara, Senior Engineer and all the Roads, Transportation & Safety Department's staff for the preparation of the Roads Programme for 2013. Members wished to acknowledge and compliment the works carried out by the Area Engineers, Outdoor Staff and the Area Offices.

The following specific issues were raised by the Members:

- All Members agreed that the reduction in the level of funding was disappointing and Members feared that the road conditions would return to that of 15 years ago. Cllr. Michael Gleeson felt that the roads in the County were transformed in this period of time and should not be allowed to revert to the state that they were once in. Cllr. Paul O'Donoghue acknowledged that we are now living in more difficult times, and that upkeep of the roads must be prioritised. The roads that were done in the last 15 years need to be maintained. Cllr. John Brassil also felt that we are now close to getting back to the level where the road network is simply not good enough. The big issue in 1999 was the poor conditions of roads, especially regional and local roads, and this issue needs to be highlighted to the Minister again to keep roads at a reasonable standard. Cllr. Anne McEllistrim expressed concern that local roads will suffer as a result in the 15% reduction in funding. Cllr. Jim Finucane felt that if the battle to maintain local roads continues to be lost, then significant money will be needed to repair them. Cllr. Finucane asked if PPE funding for maintaining roads that need constant attention would be an option. Cllr. Tim Buckley also felt that road maintenance would be the main challenge with regards to funding.
- Members welcomed the reopening of the Local Improvement Scheme, but felt that it was unfair of the Minister not to have a separate allocation for the scheme, and to ask Local Authorities to fund the scheme from own resources/grants. Cllr. John Brassil asked that a letter be sent to Minister Varadkar requesting separate funding for Local Improvement Schemes. Cllr Anne McEllistrim supported Cllr. Brassil's suggestion. Cllr John Sheahan was disappointed that there was not more funding available to make the scheme viable as it is a very worthwhile scheme. Cllr. Pat McCarthy stated that the use of own resources/funding for Local Improvement Schemes was not acceptable, but the fact that the scheme was reintroduced was a positive step. Cllr Norma Foley stated that the case against cutting the Discretionary Grant to fund Local Improvement Schemes could not be argued strongly enough, and felt that effectively the Council had received nothing with regards to L.I.S. Cllr. Brendan Cronin felt that it was disgraceful that only 3 roads would be completed in 2013 with the current funding, and that it would essentially take 50 years to get through the current list at this rate.

- Members commented on the low level of funding available for the Specific Improvement Grant – the lowest level since the grant was introduced in 1995. Cllr. John Brassil felt that it was a drastic reduction, and that the Council needs to get more vocal in highlighting this problem. Cllr. Michael Cahill also felt that this reduction was disappointing.
- Members highlighted the importance of the maintenance and upkeep of bridges. Cllr. Michael Cahill expressed concern in relation to smaller bridges as there is no funding in any programme for bridges such as Spiddogue Bridge. Cllr. John Sheahan also felt that the lack of funding was disappointing. Cllr. Sheahan wished to note that the bridge at Ballydeegan, between Barradubh and Rathmore needed to be resurfaced and there was a number of bad bends on both approaches to the bridge, and he hoped funding would be available for this work. Cllr. Norma Foley stated that a huge amount of funding would be required in Kerry for upkeep and repair of bridges. Cllr. Gillian Wharton-Slattery also agreed that funding is needed for bridges in the County. Cllr. P.J. Donovan asked if anything could be done to allow people to walk across the bridge in Caherciveen in a safe manner. Works have been carried out on either side of the bridge and traffic calming measures put in place, which has narrowed the road. A concrete base was put down and people have to walk on the road. He enquired if this situation could be rectified for people's safety. Cllr. Donovan also enquired if the opening the span of Valentia Bridge was a possibility.
- The issue of signage was raised by Members, notably the NRA signage programme. Cllr. Michael Cahill noted that a lot of signs, which had been in excellent condition had been removed, and poles have been erected with no signage. Cllr. Norma Foley asked if there is any opportunity where the NRA can be compelled to negotiate with the Local Authority before signage can be erected as poles/signs are being erected in inappropriate places. Cllr. Gillian Wharton-Slattery agreed with Cllr. Foley regarding the NRA consulting Local Authorities before erecting signage, and felt that a lot of work had gone into roundabouts in the County, and that the NRA then put up poles/signs blocking such roundabouts. Cllr. Wharton-Slattery also noted that some signage around the County is quite dirty and would need to be cleaned up. Cllr. Michael Gleeson stated that reasonable road infrastructure and good signage is crucial for tourism in the County. Cllr. Toireasa Ferris asked Charlie O'Sullivan if signage could be erected for Ardfert from Tralee as signage is very poor for Ardfert. Cllr. P.J. Donovan also noted that signs are removed and the poles then left behind, which can be unsightly. Cllr. Patrick Connor-Scarteen noted that there were signage issues around the Ring of Kerry. Cllr. Seamus Fitzgerald welcomed the funding for road signage.

- Members highlighted the issue of Public Lighting. Members felt that the period of time between lights being erected and turned on was unsatisfactory. Cllr. Michael Gleeson informed the meeting that public lighting had been erected in Barradubh over 2 years ago, but the lights were not yet turned on, as well as the light erected adjacent to the church at Glenflesk. Cllr. Michael O'Shea asked that the lights at Lispolle be finished off, as the poles have been erected but not the lights. Cllr. O'Shea also asked that lighting be extended to the graveyard on the N70. Cllr. P.J. Donovan asked if the lights in Castlecove village can be turned on.
- Members referred to the N86 Camp to Dingle Road Improvement Scheme. Cllr. Michael O'Shea asked that a submission be made to secure funding for the scheme and cycle lane. Cllr. O'Shea felt that people living in the area need to make the submission with regards to the cycle lane and permission for this. Cllr. Seamus Fitzgerald wished to concur with Cllr. O'Shea in relation to this. Cllr. Fitzgerald also felt that submissions should be made in order to get the planning issue rectified.
- The issue of road maintenance was discussed by the Members. Cllr. Michael Gleeson wished to note that the road surface on the N22 from the Park Road roundabout to the Lissivigeen roundabout is starting to unravel. Cllr. John Brassil felt that own resources would need to be used to take water off the roads. Staff could open water courses to allow roads to be maintained to some level. Cllr. Brassil felt that the method by which potholes are repaired could be improved. If the practice of not repairing the potholes properly is continued, he felt this was a waste of money. Cllr. Brassil felt that a policy should be adopted to repair the potholes properly each time, rather than patching them. Cllr. Robert Beasley agreed that water on roads causes a problem and that ditches need to be opened and water drained off the roads to alleviate potholes. In particular, Cllr. Beasley mentioned the poor condition of the roads into Ballybunion, the R551 from Doon Cross to Tarbert and from Black Wood to Lisselton. Parts of the road from Lisselton to Listowel are quite bad also. Cllr. Seamus Fitzgerald noted that the area around Marian Park in Dingle is in bad repair, as well as the High Road into Milltown. Cllr. John Sheahan agreed with Cllr. Brassil that the repair of potholes needs to be addressed as the current method of repair is not effective. Cllr. Pat Leahy felt that the lack of funding was the reason for using the patching method when repairing potholes, and wished to state that he felt Kerry was a special case with regards to road maintenance, especially North Kerry, where there are some roads that are completely potholed. Cllr. Pat McCarthy also agreed with the other Councillors in relation to pothole repair, and felt it was the nature of the land/roads that potholes are inevitable. He asked that the Council look at what machinery or method of repair is used in other countries. Cllr. Tim Buckley asked that funding be put into pothole repair and that this job be prioritised in the coming weeks. Cllr. Gillian Wharton-Slattery also agreed that pothole repairs need to be done correctly.
- Cllr. John Brassil welcomed funding for the Community Involvement Scheme (Retro) programme, and asked that 3 roads in the Listowel Electoral Area be considered for this programme, namely Castleshannon, Meenogahane and Cloghaneleish.

- Cllr. Anne McEllistrim welcomed the new Community Involvement Scheme, but wished to know what qualifications people would need in order to carry out the works themselves under the new scheme. Cllr. Norma Foley was interested to know if this was legally viable, and how would Kerry County Council be indemnified.
- Members welcomed funding received for the Roads Programme. Cllr. Jim Finucane welcomed the funding for the Tralee By-Pass stated that this was a significant piece of infrastructure. Cllr. Michael O'Shea welcomed the funding for the provision of a pedestrian crossing in Milltown Village. Cllr. Patrick Connor-Scarteen wished to express thanks to the NRA for funding received for the N71 at Bonane. Cllr. Connor-Scarteen hoped that some of the funding received would be used for road widening rather than just surface dressing.
- Members also expressed disappointment at the lack of funding for certain projects. Cllr. Paul O'Donoghue noted that allocations for major projects were for projects in North Kerry. Cllr. O'Donoghue felt that alternative methods of funding need to be examined, such as funding from Europe. Cllr. John Brassil stated that funding for the R551 Ballinclogher to Abbeydorney Road is badly needed as this part of the "Dale Road" needs to be improved, and once works are started here, they need to be completed. Cllr. Robert Beasley concurred with Cllr. Brassil, and stated that this road is the main artery into Ballyduff, Ballybunion and Asdee and needs to be completed by 2014/2015. Cllr. Seamus Fitzgerald thanked the Council for the works carried out on the first 2 phases of the Dingle Relief Road, but expressed disappointment at the lack of funding for Phase 3. He felt that the full benefits of the Relief Road are not being reaped without the completion of Phase 3. Cllr. Michael Cahill was disappointed that again no funding was provided for the Ring of Kerry. Cllr. Cahill feels that this main tourist route should be treated separately and that separate funding should be provided for it. Cllr. Patrick Connor-Scarteen agreed.
- In relation to hedgecutting, Members felt that this was another issue being dealt with efficiently by Council staff. Cllr. Pat McCarthy wished to compliment Seán Barry, Roads Enforcement Officer on the work he carries out in relation to this. Cllr. Tim Buckley stated that most landowners have complied with the hedgecutting notices, and the issue of the danger of overgrown hedges on narrow roads needs to be highlighted. Cllr. Norma Foley agreed that great work is being done in relation to hedgecutting and wished to compliment the landowners that are compliant. Cllr. Foley also asked if figures on prosecutions for non-compliance were available.

- Members requested updates on the Macroom By-Pass, Ballyvourney to Macroom Road Improvement Scheme and the Adare By-Pass. Cllr. Norma Foley felt that in relation to the Macroom By-Pass, all Local Authorities involved should be supported by this Council. Cllr. Gillian Wharton-Slattery agreed. Cllr. Robert Beasley felt that Kerry County Council will have to work with Cork County Council in order to get the Ballyvourney to Macroom road completed. Cllr. Toireasa Ferris and Cllr. Robert Beasley wished to support the call to proceed with the Adare By-Pass. Cllr. Patrick Connor-Scarteen stated that these projects are important in relation to Kerry as they are the access routes to the County.
- In relation to street and beach cleaning, the Members hoped that this will be continued and funding provided for this. Cllr. Robert Beasley paid tribute to the Tidy Towns Committees on the work they do. Cllr. Toireasa Ferris agreed that Tidy Towns Committees and other local groups should be encouraged to continue with their good work, especially in light of events taking place through The Gathering. Cllr. Seamus Fitzgerald enquired if there was a "Litter Week" coming up to encourage people to collect litter along the roads and streets. Cllr. Gillian Wharton-Slattery mentioned that the marathon will be taking place in Tralee shortly and the rubbish dumped along the roadsides was unsightly to visitors and needs to be cleared. She mentioned that a clean-up of the route will be taking place on the 11th March. Cllr. Wharton-Slattery felt that the high cost of refuse collection was resulting in rubbish being dumped illegally along the roadsides.
- Cllr. Jim Finucane raised the issue of local roads and how important they are to our tourist industry. He stated that a lot of tourists now like to go off the beaten track and will end up travelling our local roads. We must now attach real economic importance to the maintenance of local roads, as it is difficult enough to attract tourism/industry to the area.
- Cllr. Anne McEllistrim asked if more roads could have been gritted during the recent spell of cold weather. She felt that gritting had been limited to major roads, and that more roads could have been gritted.
- Cllr. Michael Cahill enquired if costs could be reduced in relation to health and safety. He understood the position management were in with regards to health and safety, but the cost implications are huge.
- Cllr. Patrick Connor-Scarteen enquired about the situation with the appeal of planning permissions granted by Kerry County Council to An Bord Pleanála.
- Cllr. Toireasa Ferris wished to know how much money has been generated through development levies.
- Cllr. Paul O'Donoghue mentioned the Wild Atlantic Way project, and funding for this project. Costs have not been done yet and Cllr. O'Donoghue asked that they be done and submitted for funding.
- Cllr. Michael Cahill mentioned that the road from J.P. O'Sullivan Park in Killorglin to the roundabout is in very poor state of repair and needs to be addressed

- Cllr. Pat McCarthy asked that a letter be issued to all outdoor staff thanking them for the work they have been carrying out in these difficult times, especially during the bad weather.

Mr. Charlie O'Sullivan, Director of Services, replied to the key issues raised and acknowledged the appreciation from the Mayor and Members.

In relation to Community Involvement Schemes Mr. O'Sullivan stated that anyone carrying out works will need public indemnity insurance, and will need to comply with all statutory requirements in relation to health and safety, machinery used etc. The details of the scheme have yet to be finalised.

With regards to funding, the maintenance and upkeep of local and regional roads cannot be done by PPE, as this would involve borrowing of monies. There are very strict conditions and any loans taken out for works would have to be approved by the Department. The issue of funding is challenging. One source of funding is paid parking, and this will have to be given serious consideration, in the future.

Mr. O'Sullivan informed the Members that in relation to the Ballyvourney to Macroom road project, An Bord Pleanála ruled against the objectors, but they have been allowed time to submit an appeal, to the Supreme Court. In relation to the Adare By-Pass, the decision by An Bord Pleanála to reject the proposal is final.

Members were informed that the annual spring clean normally takes place in April.

The issue of signage, on the roundabouts, in Tralee is being reviewed by the NRA, but safety considerations and compliance with the Design standards have precedence over any aesthetic merits.

It is unlikely that the Council will be able to recruit seasonal workers, to the same level as heretofore, for the delivery of the roads programme, given the level of funding allocated.

In relation to pothole repairs, Mr. O'Sullivan informed Members that the repairs are temporary repairs. The most optimal solution, where roads are in a poor state of repair, is to repair them under the restoration improvement programme, or overlay the damaged areas. However, the level of funding for surface dressing will only allow approximately 2% of roads to be completed. With the funding available, the Roads Department is not in a position to maintain all roads. Mr. O'Sullivan stated that the methodology for pothole repair will be examined, but funding remains the main factor when deciding which method of repair to use.

Mr. O'Sullivan did not have figures in relation to monies received through the Development Contribution Scheme to hand but this information is available in financial reports to Council.

In relation to hedgecutting, Mr. O'Sullivan informed Members that 166 follow-up notices were issued, where overgrown hedges were considered to be a danger to road users, and all landowners complied with the notices, therefore there was no need to follow through with prosecutions.

The replies were noted.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. Jim Finucane, and SECONDED by Cllr. Brendan Cronin, it was agreed to adopt the 2013 Roads Programme as presented. All Members agreed.

13.06.04.03 Any Other Business

Cllr. John Brassil expressed his concern in relation to the reduction in the 2013 Housing Grant Allocation announced earlier today. He added that this is a very good scheme and is of huge benefit to people, in particular older people and people with a disability.

It was agreed that this matter would go forward to the full Council Meeting next Monday as an agenda item.

The meeting concluded at 1.20 p.m.

Gerard O'Brien
Meetings Administrator

Mayor of Kerry