

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
OF OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY 25TH JANUARY 2021 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. C. Claffey (R), J. Clendennen (R), N. Cribbin (R), E. Dooley (R), N. Feighery (R), E. Fitzpatrick (R), J. Foley (R), M. Hackett (R), D. Harvey (R), J. Leahy (R), T. McCormack (R), R. McDermott (R), F. Moran (R), S. O'Brien (R), P. Ormond (R), D. Owens (R), L. Quinn (R) and K. Smollen (R).</p>
IN ATTENDANCE:	<p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. (R); Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. (R); Mr. M. Connolly, H.O.F. (R); Ms. A. Dillon, A/D.O.S. (R); Mr. K. Mulvey, Just Transition Commissioner (R); Mr. M. Goodwin, Just Transition (R); Ms. S. Morgan, Just Transition (R); Mr. E. Fennell, S.E.O; Mr. G. Bruton, A/ Meetings Administrator (R); Mr. R. Bell, H.I.S. and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O. (R)</p>
JUST TRANSITION	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach welcomed the Just Transition team, Mr. Kieran Mulvey, Mr. Michael Goodwin and Ms. Sarah Morgan to the meeting to discuss the drawdown of funding, the consequences of the loss of peat production and the rehabilitation of bogs.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney informed the members that Offaly County Council are preparing a submission on the bog restoration, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) on Just Transition applications have been posted on the Department website last week and some applicants have arranged meetings with the Department to discuss their funding allocation.</p> <p>Mr. K. Mulvey thanked the members for the invitation to address the meeting. He advised the members that funding is a Departmental matter and his role on the oversight group is to assist in approving the final projects. He acknowledged the State Aid Rule is complex and that he conveyed this to the Department noting that assistance would be required by the applicants. He welcomed the clarity the recently published FAQs, had given and noting that it affects 25 applicants, noting his concern that some of these applicants are non-profit organisations.</p> <p>He informed the members that Webinars to assist the Just Transition applicants have since been provided and the Department are receiving a large volume of queries and he</p>

acknowledged that more engagement is needed with applicants to maximise their applications.

He advised the members that he has been engaging with Bord na Mona with regard to the cessation of harvesting of peat for horticulture. He highlighted the issue is complicated due to the Planning Regulations, Court decisions and need for harmony between the licensing authorities. He advised the members that new legislation is being drawn up, however the working group has not yet been set up as it is falling between two Government Departments. He informed the members that Bord na Mona have decided to move out of this business but they have guaranteed the supply of peat to horticulture in 2021 with the phasing out of briquettes by 2024.

Mr. K. Mulvey informed the members that in his engagement with the ESB on the future use of Shannonbridge Site, they have stated that further energy use for the power station is not feasible. Further discussions are on-going as to what community gain could be achieved with ESB funding around the Shannonbridge hinterlands. He reiterated that the Just Transition team have sustained engagement with all the relevant parties and he acknowledged the difficulties in relation to the interpretation of law, planning and licencing.

Cllr. J. Carroll thanked Mr. K. Mulvey for his update and invited the members to put forward their queries.

Cllr. E. Dooley recognised the role of the Commissioner is restricted and voiced his concerns that the funding needs to be linked to job losses in areas of greatest need, with Offaly suffering more severely than other counties.

In agreeing with Cllr. E. Dooley the members voiced their concerns that the funding was not targeted for Offaly where the majority of job losses have been and will continue to be incurred. With regard to the Retro Fitting they noted that Offaly received only approximately one sixth of funding and they questioned if future funding will be allocated in the same way. They queried if the responsibility for bog land will fall to the Local Authority and if so will relevant funding be provided.

They voiced their disappointment with the rules for State Aid Funding applied to community projects that do not have the resources for match funding. They queried how importation of peat is beneficial for de-carbonisation. They requested a report on the shortfall for the projects that have been approved and that more ESB community gains funding is required. They voiced their concerns with the engagement of ESB and Bord na Mona with the local communities, lack of job creation, the complexity of the Supplementary Application forms issued to Applicants over the Christmas period and asked if private bogs will continue to operate.

In response Mr. K. Mulvey informed the members that he has specific terms of reference as commissioner and has had as much engagement as possible. He highlighted that the Just Transition

	<p>Team had issued two reports with a third one to be published by the end of this month outlining his comprehensive recommendations. He highlighted that the MRTT through the 4 working groups have endeavoured to get maximum impact for funding for midlands, rural regeneration, bog rehabilitation, and job schemes. He confirmed that he has been advised that Briquettes will continue to be produced until 2024. He advised that the law preventing peat harvesting is making things difficult.</p> <p>He agreed the €5m ESB Community Gain funding is insufficient and he is engaging with the ESB to seek further funding He advised the members that the ESB are under planning obligations to demolish the plants and that reports have shown that the plants cannot be converted for alternative uses.</p> <p>He praised the Just Transition applications that have been submitted noting there are some great ideas and he acknowledged the issues to get match funding and he advised the applicants to get creative and explore more funding mechanisms. He agreed that the Department should continue to provide assistance to the Just Transition applicants. He advised the members that he has raised the issue of Offaly County Council rate losses and possible obligations with bog maintenance with the Department, resulting in €3.3m funding this year for rates but more work will be required on this going forward.</p> <p>He noted that the burning of peat is not in his remit and highlighted that the policy decisions with regard to burning peat have not been finalised by national government.</p> <p>The members further voiced their concerns of the county's dependence on fossil fuel, their disappointment that the IDA have not included Offaly in their plans to provide Advance Factories that would help to attract business into the county and the potential impact of bog rehabilitation on land owners adjacent to bogs.</p> <p>In response Mr. K Mulvey agreed the re wetting is a big issue and bogs will naturally flood.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney noted that work is on-going by the planning section in preparing submission on bog rehabilitation and that it is open to community to make submissions on bog rehabilitation.</p>
<p>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT</p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney drew the member's attention to the monthly management report. She advised the members of the current Covid-19 level restrictions and that most services are available online and she called on the public to adhere to the recommended health and safety guidelines. She noted environmental complaints are a significant issue, advising the use of mobile CCTV for litter black spots is helpful and she thanked community for assistance in clean ups. She advised the members that the flood relief works are complete on the Bog Road in Portarlinton. She informed the members that the Tullamore Living River Project is due to commence in Spring 2021 and the Rural Water Annual Programme is ongoing. She advised the members of the proposed extension to Kilcoursey burial ground due to go to tender in 2021. She congratulated the NWCPO, Leo Duffy and his team on their success in the National Procurement Awards. She informed the</p>

	<p>members that the 2021 Roads Programme will be presented to them in March.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney thanked Housing for their report and acknowledged their hard work. She acknowledged the significant initiatives delivered by the Library Services and the Community & Culture support for the Community Response Forum with 12 calls to date in 2021.</p> <p>She advised the members that the LCDC meeting had approved projects under the Leader programme, age friendly, SICAP and the Public Participation Network. She noted that the Arts services are being provided online and LEO are working through lockdown providing much needed services to business including brexit issues.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney welcomed the result for Tullamore in the Irish Business Against Litter Award, coming 4th out of 37 towns / cities surveyed- placing it among only 4 towns in the country to achieve 'Cleaner than European Norms' status. She thanked Tullamore Tidy Towns and the Municipal District for their hard work.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney invited the members to make submissions with regard to Decade commemorations to the Heritage officer, who is developing a Programme in conjunction with Offaly History.</p> <p>The members thanked the Chief Executive for her comprehensive report and joined with her in congratulating the Tidy Towns Committee and Municipal District in Tullamore.</p> <p>Cllr. D. Harvey requested an update on DPGs for the next monthly meeting.</p> <p>Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick complemented the age friendly strategy on their provision of 4,000 copies of the Connecting the Faithful Newsletter Christmas Edition noting that there was good feedback from various groups. The members noted issues with the quality of the roads and the on-going littering problem across the county.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney noted that the Housing presentation had provided an update for this meeting but she would provide a further update at the next meeting. She highlighted the popularity of the Age Friendly AF radio programme and acknowledged issue with roads and agreed to continue to focus on the litter issue.</p>
<p>CORPORATE POLICY GROUP</p>	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll informed the members that the Corporate Policy Group met on Friday 15th January and discussed the January meeting agenda items including the Part 8 in Moneygall, standing orders, casual vacancies, protocol for hosting ministerial visits, books of condolences and member's further education. They agreed to allow the motion by Cllr. P. Ormond for February Monthly meeting and members can make submission to the Meetings Administrator.</p>
<p>NOTICE OF MOTION</p>	<p>Cllr. R. McDermott advised the members of the benefits for development of re-classification / upgrade of the existing R402 and a section of the R420, namely from the Cloncollig</p>

	<p>Roundabout to Ballina Cross, to a National Road under The Roads Act 1993 Part 10.</p> <p>Mr. T Shanahan agreed to engage with the Department as it is a Ministerial decision to re-classify roads. He also noted that funding is coming from Exchequer and re-classification may not attract more funding but advised that additional funding could be requested.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. Robert McDermott, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick the members resolved that through its Chief Executive, Ms. Anna Marie Delaney and Director of Services including roads, Mr. Tom Shanahan, to contact the Minister at the Department of Transport immediately in order to seek a meeting for the purposes of reclassify / upgrade the existing R402 and a section of the R420, namely from the Cloncollig Roundabout to Ballina Cross, to a National Road under The Roads Act 1993 Part 10."</p>
CORRESPONDENCE	The correspondence was noted
AOB	None

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH **RUNAÍ**

15th February 2021