

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2015**

**CHOMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE**

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT THE RAHEEN WOODS HOTEL, ATHENRY, CO. GALWAY, ON MONDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH, 2015 AT 3.00 pm**

**CATHAOIRLEACH:**

Cllr. M. Hoade  
Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway

**I LATHAIR FREISIN:**

**Baill:**

Cllrs. T. Broderick, D. Burke, J. Byrne, N. Byrne, S. Canney, J. Charity, D. Connolly, M. Connolly, G. Cronnelly, Comh. S. Ó Cualáin, Cllrs. J. Cuddy, S. Cunniffe, Comh. T. Ó Curraoin, Cllrs. S. Donnellan, M. Fahy, P. Feeney, G. Finnerty, M. Finnerty, T. Healy, P. Hynes, D. Joyce, F. Kearney, P. Keaveney, D. Killilea, M. Kinane, M. Maher, E. Mannion, J. McClearn, K. McHugh, T. McHugh, A. Rabbitte, P. Roche, N. Thomas, Comh S. Ó Tuairisg, Cllrs. S. Walsh, T. Welby.

**Oifigigh:**

Mr. K. Kelly, Chief Executive (Interim); Messrs. J. Cullen, L. Gavin, P. Gavican, Directors of Services; Mr. Michael Timmins, S.E. Mr. Fintan O'Meara, S.E.E., Mr. M. Owens, County Secretary & Meetings Administrator; An tUas. P. O'Neachtain Oifigeach Gaeilge; Ms. I. Martyn, Staff Officer, Ms. A Whelan, Assistant Staff Officer, Ms. Geraldine Healy, Staff Officer.

Thosnaigh an cruinniú leis an paidir.

**To Receive a Presentation on the N6 Galway City Transport Project**

**2006**

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Ms. E. McCarthy and Mr. M. Evans from Arup Consultants.

Ms. McCarthy, addressed the members and proceeded to present a Power Point Presentation of the Project.

Arup Consultants were employed to select the Galway City Bypass and they proceeded on the basis of the N.R.A. guidelines and the Department of Finance Project appraisal to provide a traffic solution for Galway City. They obtained a Traffic Model from the National Transport Authority which indicated that there were 80,000 people crossing the river daily. A route along the coast was considered but this did not provide connectivity and it would have a massive impact on Galway Bay. Secondly the option of a Northern Viaduct was considered but this route would not solve the traffic congestion as it was too far out and there would be long river crossings through the S.A.C. areas. Thirdly a tunnel was investigated but it would not have sufficient connectivity to existing routes. They reviewed all the data available which included the old Galway City Outer Bypass which remained an option up to November 2014, but less damaging alternatives existed and the old route would not get planning permission.

Cllr. Feeney told the members that this is one of the most important recommendations it would ever make as a Council and any threat to this is a cause of concern. He made an impassioned case for the need for a new bypass as the traffic situation is in crisis and public interest is overwhelming. He said that carparks are full, roads are full and there is a social element to this where parents are experiencing long delays in traffic and are unable to collect their children in crèches. He stated that Galway is the regional capital and is capable of generating jobs in the west but without an adequate transport system business and corporations will turn to places with good connectivity and transport links like Dublin, Limerick and Cork. He advised that there is already a situation where a retail outlet has moved to Athlone and he predicts that the Connemara Area is facing a doomsday situation without a traffic solution.

Comh. Ó Tuairisg, was not opposed to the Bypass but he believed that there were alternative routes to what was being proposed. He stressed that to demolish a person's home would have a huge negative effect on the person concerned and he advised that the Section 85 Agreement was signed to construct a Bypass of the City to the better effect of peoples lives and businesses. He suggested that the Council should return to Europe to seek clarification regarding the Habitats and the progression of the old route.

Comh. Ó Curraoin was adamant that houses should not be demolished and he said it was wrong that habitats were put ahead of people's lives. He said that the person who got the old route stopped should be in attendance to answer questions and he expressed his concern that the elected members did not have a role in the route selection process.

## MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2015

Cllr. Healy thanked Arup Consultants for the presentation and he supported any solution to the traffic issues. He advised that an Economic Impact Study of Galway Racecourse should be carried out and the Bus Eireann service needed to be improved.

Cllr. G. Finnerty thanked Arup Consultants for the presentation and he advised that he would prefer if the project was moved further out rather than travelling through the city and he would support a bypass. He stated that it was alarming the number of people travelling from south Galway to Limerick to avoid the traffic congestion in the City and he suggested that the old route be considered.

Cllr. Cuddy voiced his opposition to the project and he stressed that it is not a City Bypass and habitats were put ahead of humans and communities. He enquired if a light rail option had been considered and he advised that Light Rail was a transport solution in 24 cities in Europe with a smaller population than Galway City. He enquired regarding the number of houses being demolished and if there was alternative accommodation available for people being displaced from their homes and he figured that the compensation payments would fall far short of the value of these homes.

Cllr. Mannion requested a workable traffic management solution that would not demolish 50 to 100 houses. She figured that none of these routes would proceed in the process but acknowledged the need for a bypass. She stated that what happened in Galway City had an impact on Connemara and she stressed that the traffic congestion in Galway City was putting people off travelling to Connemara.

Cllr. M. Connolly expressed his concern that this project was not a solution to the problem. He requested that the old route be re-visited and that the M.E.Ps should be brought on board to deal with the 6(4) application and the Habitat Directive.

Cllr. Charity said the decision of the previous European Court Of Justice was handed down in relation to the Habitats Directive 6(3). There was no specific reference to the merits of the project, which meant that the European Court of Justice effectively invited the local authority to make another application under Habitats Directive 6(4). That allowed a development to negatively impact on a protected landscape if all the alternatives had been explored and the authorities can prove Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI). He added that he could not imagine anything of more overriding public interest than the demolition of up to 130 people's homes. He suggested that alternative options like the decentralisation of schools and a light rail system should be considered and he advised that following the selection of a route the elected council could make representations to the Minister under Section 22.3 of the Roads Act 1993.

Cllr. Roche expressed his concern regarding the serious traffic issues and a traffic solution was necessary. He said the project was not a Galway City Bypass but a severance of the City.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

**2007**

It was proposed by Cllr. Maher, seconded by Comh. Ó Tuairisg and agreed, that the Standing Orders be suspended to allow the Meeting continue after 5 p.m.

He suggested that the old route should be revisited and an application be made under 6(4) as it was more acceptable by the public.

Cllr. Rabbitte advised that her main concern was that Galway City should work with Galway County to provide a solution to the traffic issues. She agreed that a bypass was necessary and the future economic growth of the city needed to be considered.

Cllr. McClearn stated that a Galway City Bypass is necessary with a solution to the traffic problems. He expressed his concern regarding the routes being too close to the city and he indicated that a city bypass in the U.K. was built too close to the city and it did not provide a solution to the traffic problems. He advised that the Habitats were a European Directive and it was pointless to campaign against it.

Cllr. Fahy recommended that the bypass should go ahead and he advised that Galway is dependant on foreign investment and without the multi-national companies, the city would not enjoy the wealth and prosperity that these jobs provide. He said that if the bypass does not go ahead thousands of jobs will be lost and the elected members must take responsibility and be prepared to take criticism. It is a patriotic decision to leave your home and the people involved should be respected and compensated adequately and he added that he would allow his house be demolished if it was necessary.

Cllr. Thomas said a new road was vital for the future development of the city but the demolition of houses was a huge concern and he hoped that the number would be greatly reduced when a route is selected.

Comh. O’Cualáin informed the meeting that an Outer Bypass of the City going from East to West was necessary and not another route going through the City. He advised that the racecourse is of national importance and should not be affected.

Cllr. Kinane stated that Galway City needs a Bypass and she requested that the old route be re-visited and clarification sought immediately. She advised that other member states have been successful in their applications under 6(4) and she expressed her concern regarding the demolition of houses and affecting families and communities.

Cllr. Welby thanked the consultants for their presentation. He outlined to the meeting that it was the planning in the city that had caused the transport issues and he said the impact from the proposed routes was catastrophic. He advised that the N.H.A. was

## MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2015

causing as much difficulties as the S.A.C.s and he requested that a transport committee was necessary to link the City and the County.

Cllr. J. Byrne agreed with the process and advised that this project should go ahead. He enquired about funding and if the costings for the routes had been carried out.

Cllr. Killilea identified the importance of the racecourse to Galway City and County and the requirement to take into consideration the future expansion of the city including the future development of the NUIG Campus.

Cllr. Maher stated he was confident that Galway County Council and Arup Consultants would have investigated the routes thoroughly. He advised that the N6 process was a similar project, it effected people's lives and homes but with consultation it worked and it is a huge success for the City and County.

Cllr. Cunniffe agreed that a traffic solution was necessary and he advised that only 5% of the traffic was actually bypass traffic. He requested that before the final design is proposed that the members have an input into same and he questioned the involvement of the City Councillors.

The Cathaoirleach replied stating that the City Councillors were involved.

The Chief Executive confirmed that Galway County Council was the lead authority and Galway City Council would be discussing it also.

Cllr. T. McHugh advised that this infrastructure is necessary as it provides great connectivity between the City and the County. He added that the Connemara area relied totally on tourism and this was greatly constrained with the traffic congestion in the City and he advised that tourists would travel south when emerging from the M6 Motorway in preference to visiting the congested City. He expressed his concern about the removal of houses and he requested that the Valuers should be on board to advice people on compensation payments.

Cllr. Hynes stated that the Galway City Bypass is necessary. He advised of the importance of consultation and he looked forward to the construction for the greater benefit.

Cllr. Canney agreed that a bypass was necessary as a solution to the traffic problems in Galway City. He advised that the Council should return to Europe to consider an application under 6(4) and he enquired about the costings of the routes.

Cllr. K. McHugh agreed that a solution to the traffic in Galway City was important but priority must be given to people's homes, communities and the racecourse. She enquired about the numbers of houses being demolished and the number of businesses being affected by the routes.

## MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2015

Cllr. N. Byrne confirmed that she was in agreement with the process and she hoped that on the selection of the preferred route the number of people affected would be lessened. She reaffirmed to the council that there would be no prospects for any development in Connemara without a route being built.

Cllr. Donnellan expressed his wishes that the Galway City Bypass should be built as it is necessary for the development of the City and the County.

The Cathaoirleach referenced the travel times to the city, identifying the need for infrastructure, and indicated the joint role of the City and County Councillors noting Galway County Council's role as lead authority.

Ms. McCarthy replied to the issues raised. She advised the members that the routes were designed to bypass the City and she stated that if the Bypass was built further out it would not generate enough traffic to warrant its construction. She indicated that there were 20,000 people travelling into the city everyday and the majority of the trips were to access jobs in the City. Ms. McCarthy confirmed that the racecourse can be avoided and she would make every effort to avoid houses and communities. She advised that Smarter Travel is part of the plan and the N.T.A. and City Council are involved in the process. She informed the members of the costs of the routes and she advised that 300 letters had been sent to people on the routes inviting them to attend the public consultations. Ms. McCarthy outlined the breakdown for calculating the compensation and she advised that a Light Rail study carried out in 2010 ruled out Light Rail as an option. She informed the members that the 6(4) process can only be used in the absence of alternative routes but there are alternative routes so it is not possible to use the 6(4) application process for the old G.C.O.B. route. She advised that there was a massive level of engagement with the public, with 300 individual meetings with residents and the issuing of 500 maps. She concluded by advising that the preferred route would be available in mid-April and the lands on the other routes would then be released.

Mr. Timmins advised the members that Galway County Council was the lead authority in this project and he confirmed that the Section 85 had been used successfully to deliver the M17, N18 and M6 road schemes.

Mr. Kelly informed the elected members that in relation to the reserved functions there was no decision making regarding the route selection.

Cllr. Cuddy advised that councillors are entitled to put forward proposals and have them voted on. He told the meeting that the proposed routes were not a Galway City Bypass and he suggested that the routes should be further out.

Ms. McCarthy replied that all the routes were a bypass of the City and she advised that it would not be possible to get planning for a route further out as it would not generate enough traffic to warrant its construction.

## MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2015

On the proposal of the Cathaoirleach, seconded by Cllr. Feeney it was agreed that a delegation go to Brussels in 2 – 3 weeks made up of Councillors, TDs, Officials Consultants and Community Representatives to meet with four MEPS and the Commission in parallel with the current process with a view to getting clarification regarding the possible application of the Section 6.4 process to the original G.C.O.B. route.

On the proposal of Cllr. Charity, seconded by Cllr. Cunniffe it was agreed that in the event of a preferred route from the six route alignments currently being considered for the N6 Galway City Transport Project being chosen by the N.R.A. or the prescribed bodies, this Council resolves to place a motion on the Agenda for the next plenary meeting of Galway County Council thereafter allowing for the consideration of the elected members making representations under Section 22(3) of the Roads Act 1993, as amended.

On the proposal of Cllr. Cuddy, seconded by Cllr. Ó Curraóin, it was proposed that a complete halt be put to the progression of the proposed N6 Galway City By-Pass based on the proposed six routes that are presently on display and that the Consultants should go back to the drawing board and look at other more practicable and acceptable alternatives for dealing with the traffic in Galway City and its suburbs.

Cllr. Cuddy declined a request from Cllr. Byrne to withdraw his motion.

The Cathaoirleach called a vote and the result of the vote was as follows:

<b>FOR</b>	Cllrs. Charity, Ó Cualáin, Cuddy, Ó Curraoin	(4)
<b>AGAINST</b>	Cllrs. Burke, J. Byrne, N. Byrne, Canney, D. Connolly, M. Connolly, Cronnelly, Cunniffe, Donnellan, Fahy, Feeney, G. Finnerty, D. Joyce, Healy, Hoade, Hynes, Killilea, Maher, Mannion, McClearn, T. McHugh, Rabbitte, Thomas, Comh. Ó Tuairisg, Cllr. Welby.	(25)
<b>ABSTAINED</b>	Cllr. K McHugh,	(1)

The Cathaoirleach declared the Motion defeated.

**CHRIOCHNAIGH AN CRUINNIÚ ANSIN**