

**Minutes of Meeting of Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee  
held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023 via Zoom**

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Michael O'Meara (Chair)  
Cllr. Micheál Anglim  
Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald  
Cllr. Jim Ryan  
Cllr. Declan Burgess  
Cllr. Kevin O'Meara  
Cllr. Mark Fitzgerald  
Mr. Liam Browne, PPN  
Mr. Gerard Shanahan PPN  
Mr. Brian Pope, PPN  
Mr. Marcus O'Connor, Director of Services, Roads, Transportation  
and Infrastructure  
Mr. Liam Brett, Senior Engineer, Roads Operational  
Mr. John Nolan, Senior Engineer, Roads Capital  
Mr. James Murray, Senior Engineer, Roads Operational  
Mr. Paddy Crowley, A/Senior Engineer, Active Travel  
Ms. Michèle Maher, Administrative Officer, Roads  
Mr. James Hayes, Senior Staff Officer, Roads  
Ms. Mary Murphy, Assistant Staff Officer, Roads (Minutes)

**APOLOGIES:** There were no apologies.

**1. Minutes of Meeting held on 5 December 2022 and Matters Arising**

Cllr. Michael O'Meara welcomed everybody to the meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting of 5 December 2022 were proposed by Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald and seconded by Cllr. Jim Ryan. There were no matters arising.

**2. Allocations 2023:**

- Active Travel & Greenways
- Regional and Local Roads
- National Roads

Details of the allocations for the various schemes were circulated in advance of the meeting. Cllr. Jim Ryan noted his disappointment that there was no funding for the proposed greenway linking Thurles and Clonmel in spite of the recent positive report done on it.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara said that there was huge disappointment that the Active Travel funding was weighted towards bigger projects. He would have liked to see funding for Killeen to Riverstown cycle/walkway as a huge number of people are already using it. He would have liked to see the footpath continue past the school.

Mr. Paddy Crowley said that in relation to the Thurles to Clonmel greenway there are a lot of projects competing nationally and it is difficult to get land even where projects are community led. He said that the old railway was subsumed into private property and that Tipperary County Council wouldn't be pushing the scheme unless the landowners are on board. In relation to Cllr. O'Meara's comment, Mr. Crowley expressed his own disappointment that active travel funding was received for just four new schemes. The rest of the funding is to finish existing projects. He said that nationally funding is down from €389 million in 2022 to €332 million in 2023. He also said that a number of Tipperary schemes are at design stage and that Tipperary County Council would be fighting to secure additional funding throughout the year.

Mr. Brian Pope queried if there was a policy regarding existing greenways noting that the Nenagh River pathway is blocked off between the Meat Factory and Ballycommon. He was advised that this is a matter for Planning Enforcement.

Mr. Liam Brett gave an overview of funding for Regional and Local Roads. He noted that funding in this area is €33.53 million for 2023. He said that while this represents a 7% increase, inflation in this area will keep projects static.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara said that it is good to see an increase in funding but also disappointing that it will be subsumed by inflation, with no flexibility to do an extra road or two.

### **3. N24 Waterford to Limerick – Project update - John Nolan, Senior Engineer**

Mr. John Nolan gave a presentation on the N24 Waterford to Limerick project. He said that the N24 is the main transport link from Waterford to Limerick. It passes through 15 urban centres which have a population of 100,000 people. Only two urban centres have bypasses. This affects overall journey time and detracts from the development and growth of the region. The N24 is being planned in two stages: Waterford to Cahir 60km and Cahir to Limerick 35km.

Tipperary County Council is the lead authority on the Cahir to Limerick section and work is ongoing on design. Approximately €7 million has been spent on design since 2019. The project is currently at Stage 3 and the reduction of the width of the corridor from 300 metres to 100 metres releases a lot of land from sterilisation. It is expected that this stage will be finished in 2024, however funding has been curtailed. Three million euro was needed this year but only €1 million was allocated.

Kilkenny County Council is the lead authority on the section from Waterford to Cahir. Arup Consultants were appointed in August 2020. The contract was for €9 million and is approximately one third of the way through. Phase one was completed in 2021, phase two will be completed later in 2023. It would normally be opened for public consultation at that stage but funding may be cut and the project suspended. Environmental regulations change and if the project is suspended for a number of years, it would be necessary to go back to the start.

In summary, the focus nationally is on Active and Multi-Modal Travel. The funding stream for new infrastructure is lagging behind nationally. The members were advised that information is available for the public on the N24 website, including an interactive map.

Cllr. O'Meara thanked Mr. Nolan for his presentation and noted that a lot of work has gone into the project to date. The members noted that there is support for the project and are they anxious to see it proceed, without further delays or suspensions. Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald said that Mr. Nolan's report was anything but encouraging and that he was getting the same feeling on the ground even from Arup. He said that 60% of the old N24 is emerging as a possible route and that it is hard to see progress, that it may not be finished in the next 10 years.

Mr. Marcus O'Connor said that it is very concerning that the Waterford to Cahir section has been dropped completely. He said that Tipperary County Council has sought €2.5 million from TII for 2023, but that only €1 million had been allocated. He advised the group that Tipperary County Council doesn't have the necessary funding to complete such a scheme, that the Council is not the funding authority and could not fund such a project independently. He said that there is no lack of enthusiasm for the project in Arup, and they are disappointed with the 2023 allocation, just like the Council. It was noted that while the focus is on a bypass around Tipperary Town, this would be of limited benefit for the region as a whole.

Cllr. Micheál Anglim said that from listening to Mr. O'Connor it would seem like pressure needs to be brought to bear on the government. Mr. Brian Pope said that with Brexit, Rosslare could be a major transportation hub and that it would be important to have good roadways leading to and from the port, in the longer term it could be a major route for traffic. Mr. O'Connor replied that the case had been made that road freight could be doubled but the Minister for Transport would prefer to see it transfer to rail.

#### **4. Draft Inter-Agency Road Safety Strategy 2022-2030**

A presentation was given by Ms. Mary Murphy on the Tipperary Road Safety Strategy 2022-2030, an inter-agency strategy developed in conjunction with RSA, Transport

Infrastructure Ireland (TII), An Garda Síochána (AGS), HSE, National Ambulance Service (NAS) and Tipperary Fire and Rescue Service.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara thanked Ms. Murphy for her presentation. He acknowledged that a lot of work had gone into the document. He said that it is a hugely important document and urged people to go through it.

Mr. Brian Pope said that there are a few areas to highlight regarding the enforcement of speed limits particularly of traffic in 50 km/h zones. He said that something needs to be done. He also commented that if one car has advanced braking technology and stops and the car behind doesn't have it, it could lead to collisions. He said that regarding Safe and Healthy Modes of Travel, walking should not be discouraged. A breakdown of injury figures and in what speed zones would also be welcome, as would a "no blame, no cost" system, whereby drivers who are involved in a collision would be sent for re-education.

Mr. Liam Browne said that it is a comprehensive document but that it may be challenging to complete everything in it. He also said that vehicle manufacturers should be brought into this area, and that there should be intelligent road signs to slow cars down. Mr. Browne commented that there are too few signs reminding tourists to drive on the left. He also told the meeting that 11 deaths in a county with the population of Tipperary is excessive.

Mr. Gerard Shanahan said that there should be regulations in relation to e-scooters and enquired whether representations could be made to the government. He noted that Ireland's proposals were not aligned with other countries. He was advised that legislation to regulate this area is currently making its way through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Cllr. Jim Ryan wondered if funding is available to improve local roads as motorists get frustrated and overtake in dangerous places.

Mr. Liam Brett in replying to the issues which had been raised informed the meeting that there are statistics showing that old behaviours are still being carried out. For example, 30% of fatalities are caused by the non-wearing of seatbelts. He said that speeding and driving under the influence are also factors in fatalities. He said that the N24 issue needs to be resolved as it is currently working beyond capacity.

He commented that driving in excess of the speed limit is a cultural as well as an enforcement issue and that intelligent speed assistance will be mandatory in all new vehicles from 2025.

He said that Safe and Healthy Modes of Travel doesn't discourage walking and cycling, rather going forward they will be segregated from cars.

He commented that education is a huge factor and that the Council works with the RSA in this regard and that Ms. Murphy also goes out to schools to deliver Road Safety education.

Mr. Brett added that funding is available to the Council for Low Cost Safety Schemes and that work is currently being done on the R498 Nenagh to Thurles Road at Latteragh. He said that this can only form a small part of the solution as Tipperary has 6,000 kilometres of road.

## **5. AOB**

Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald raised the issue of hedge cutting. He was informed that all the Municipal Districts had sent letters out to landowners regarding hedge cutting. Cllr. Fitzgerald said that in the past the Council provided assistance to landowners to make it easier for them and asked if that could be done again. He was told that for a number of years the Council has not supported landowners in their obligation, that resources had to be protected. Cllr. Micheál Anglim said that the Council should help with traffic management, that one of his constituents paid in excess of €4,000 to cut back trees.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara said that he supported Cllr. Fitzgerald and said that the issue should be brought to the next full Council meeting for debate.

Mr. Marcus O'Connor supported Mr. Brett and informed the meeting that the Council has very little resources to repair potholes and open drains and money is not available to take on someone else's responsibility in this area.

## **6. To note date of next meeting**

Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023, at 10.00 am via Zoom.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:



**Cllr. Michael O'Meara**  
**Cathaoirleach**