

4th April, 2006

TO : EACH MEMBER OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

A Special Meeting of Donegal County Council, requisitioned by the Mayor, will be held on *Monday 10th April, 2006* at 9.30am in the County House, Lifford, to consider the appended agenda.

You are hereby requested to attend.

J. Peoples
A/Meetings Administrator

AGENDA

1. To discuss Transport 21.

(Report circulated on the 22nd March 2006)

28th March, 2006

**TO: ALL MEMBERS OF DONEGAL COUNTY
COUNCIL**

**Re: Rescheduling of Special Meeting of Donegal
County Council – Transport 21.**

Dear Councillor,

I refer to the Special Meeting of Donegal County Council which was due to be held on the 28th March 2006 at 12. noon in the Council Chamber, County House, Lifford.

This has now been deferred to 9.30am on Monday 10th April, 2006 as a meeting of the Regional Health Forum West had also been scheduled for the same day.

It is also intended to hold a Waste Management Workshop at

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Anne Marie Crawford, S.O.
Corporate Services

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD
ON 10TH APRIL 2006

C/205/06

MEMBERS PRESENT

Clrs. D. Larkin, County Mayor, D. Alcorn, L. Blaney, Alice Bonner, E. Bonner, F. Conaghan, Pearse Doherty, R. Donaghey, J. Harte, J. Kennedy, T. McDaid, M. McDonald, I. McGarvey, P. McGowan, B. McGuinness, P. MacLochlainn, Padraig O'Dochartaigh, J.J. Reid and T. Slowey.

Apologies were received from Clrs. G. Crawford and B. O'Domhnaill

C/206/06

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Michael McLoone, County Manager, Mr. J. McLaughlin, Director of Roads and Transportation, Mr. Michael Heaney, Director Community & Enterprise, Mr. A. O'Doherty, Senior Engineer, NRDO, Mr. V. Lynn, Senior Engineer, Roads, Mr. Joe Peoples, A/Meetings Administrator and Ms. Kathleen Browne, Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

C/207/06

TRANSPORT 21

The County Mayor welcomed the members to the Special Meeting and outlined the format for same.

Mr. Aidan O'Doherty, Senior Engineer, NRDO, gave a presentation to the members. This presentation outlined the historical and current situation and the proposals to move forward and allow the Council to make a realistic proposal for inclusion and amendment of Transport 21. Mr. O'Doherty advised that this presentation had also been shown to ICBAN and a request that each of the 10 County participating in ICBAN would contribute €25,000 each in order to raise the €250,000 necessary to fund the work needed to draw up a realistic proposal to present to government was put forward. Donegal County Council were the only County to contribute the €25,000 requested.

Following Mr. O'Doherty's presentation Mr. John McLaughlin, Director of Roads and Transportation updated the members on what had happened at the last meeting in relation to Transport 21 in November. He reminded Councillors of the four steps they had agreed at same.

1. To work with ICBAN/NWRCBG Counties.
2. Delegation to meet with NRA to discuss Transport 21 and impact on Northwest.
3. Meet with Senior Politician to determine strategy for meeting government officials.
4. To make access to the Northwest a priority on agenda for Inter-Departmental Group on Donegal.

He confirmed that the €25,000 requested as contribution to formation of group with ICBAN members had been approved in the Council Budget and that the importance of Cross Party support had been agreed.

Clr. Francis Congahan thanked Mr. O'Doherty for his presentation. He queried why other Counties had not come on board with the €25,000 requested. He stated that he welcomed any suggestions on how we can get the Steering Group to push the revision of Transport 21 forward. He also stated that the members needed some concrete proposals in place in order to push this forward. He felt that the members needed to agree if a motorway to Donegal was the priority and if so, which route. He stated that the members needed to agree on strategic steps to move forward. He felt that since the Junior Minister for Transport was from the county that a deputation should be made to him before any more groundwork was done.

Clr. Pearse Doherty welcomed the debate on Transport 21 and recognised the importance of debate before meeting with the Minister. He stated that Transport 21 was a disgrace for the North-West. He went on to state that €4.4 million a day would be spent on development of public transport and none of this would be spent in Donegal. He felt that it was important to take a cross border approach. He suggested that the members meet

with Senior Politicians in the neighbouring border counties as he felt one of the ways to push forward is by expanding the areas of co-operation under the Good Friday Agreement. He also felt it was important to meet the Minister and Junior Minister for Transport. He urged the Councillors not to settle for dual carriageways and stressed the importance of the County getting the same as other counties. He also suggested that the possibility of a rail service for the North-West should be looked at. He stated that Donegal should be looking for their share of the money to be spent on public transport nationally over the next 10 years. He advised that Inter Trade Ireland and Innovation North-West were working on proposals for rail links in the North-West and he suggested that contact be made with these groups. He reiterated the importance of a cross border approach and suggested that the Council invite MLA/MPs from neighbouring counties to give their support to the proposals and urged all members to use their influence to ensure funding is made available.

Clr. P. McGowan advised the meeting that he supported all the proposals that had been made. He felt that it was important to continue to keep the neighbouring Northern Ireland Counties on board and stated that they had already expressed their willingness to be involved.

Clr. I. McGarvey complimented Mr. A. O'Doherty on his presentation and stated that it clearly showed the isolation of Donegal. He felt that only a united effort by politicians and Minister will result in Donegal getting what it is entitled to. He felt that all the plans were in place and all that was needed was funding. He agreed with other members that any development must be done on a cross border basis. He further stated that the development of tourism in the county depended on having the proper infrastructure in place.

Clr. P. MacLochlainn commended the presentation made to the members. He expressed his concern at the failure of the other ICBAN counties to put up the extra funding. He felt that the lack of co-operation was due to the lack of taking a focused all Ireland approach. He

stated that the Northern Ireland counties were very focussed on the need to upgrade the roads network. He also felt that the failure to provide the necessary funding may be due to a lack of communication between senior civil servants and politicians. He felt that the development of an all Ireland strategy for development of roads should be top of the political agenda and stated that if these issues were not addressed economic regeneration of the North West could not take place.

He suggested that a joint seminar for all Councillors, Ministers and Senior Officials in the North-West should be called and a presentation given to outline what plans are in place. He felt this was the only way forward.

Clr. Tony McDaid stated that he agreed with the sentiments of Clr. MacLochlainn and he welcomed Mr. O'Doherty's bluntness in the presentation. He stated that he was disappointed and surprised at the lack of funding for development of transport in the county as there had been so much talk about what needed to be done to attract investors to the North-West and Industry had confirmed that lack of proper road infrastructure was one of the reasons that they did not invest in the area. He stated that the Taoiseach and eight Ministers who had received a deputation from this County, led by the County Manager, had obviously not listened. The opportunity to remedy the North-West's infrastructural problems had existed in Transport 21 but it had not been taken.

Clr. Terence Slowey thanked Mr. O'Doherty for his presentation and stated that Transport 21 was a missed opportunity by the Government to address the roads issues for Donegal. He suggested that consideration be given to developing the route from Castleblaney to Lifford as this was the shortest route into the County. He also stated that the link between Letterkenny and Derry was a critical one for all of the County. He stated that the officials of the County had done a lot to push this agenda forward and he urged the members to take a unified approach to moving it further forward. He

advised the meeting that he would be raising the failure of other ICBAN counties to come forward with the funding requested at the next meeting of the North-West Cross Border Group. He stated that whilst a lot of the planning is outside of the Councils control the members should do what they could to move the plan forward.

Clr. Alice Bonner also thanked Mr. O'Doherty for his presentation and acknowledged the work of himself and his staff. She stated that as we now had both a Junior and Senior Minister in the county that everything that can be done should be done. She suggested that if €150,000 was needed to provide funding to draw up the necessary plans that this County should provide it ourselves rather than depend on others.

Clr. J. Harte stated that Transport 21 had nothing in it for Donegal. He stated if we looked at it locally the Lifford to Manorcunningham road had been on the agenda for many years and had still not moved forward. He felt that the County was no further forward than it was when he joined the Council in 1999. He stated that a large amount of money would be provided for roads in Northern Ireland over the next few years however he felt that if this county could not get funding for a single road like the Lifford-Manorcunningham one then Transport 21 was a waste of time.

Clr. Pdraig O'Dochartaigh stated that he supported everything the other Councillors had said. He felt that Transport 21 was a missed opportunity for Donegal. He stressed the importance of a motorway from Derry to Dublin. He felt that one of the reasons that other Counties were not joining in this campaign was because they had different ideas of how it should be handled. He felt that the Council shouldn't be looking to a link at Dundalk, rather it should be looking to Co. Meath. He felt that this Council should seek the full co-operation of all counties, especially the members of ICBAN.

Clr. Doherty also stated that he felt that the development of a rail link to the county was being

neglected in a big way. He felt that with the requirement for renewable energy and the shortage of fossil fuels the need for a proper rail structure for the county was great. He felt that as a county on the periphery it was important to move forward together.

Clr. J.J. Reid congratulated Mr. O'Doherty and Mr. McLaughlin on their presentation. However, he felt that an intercounty approach was overshadowing the main issue. He stated that this county had a lot of problems and it was important to look after ourselves rather than going out to other counties. He raised the issue of air travel and stated that the Airport Committee hadn't met. He advised members that by 2025 we would have double the number of cars on the road and that this would create enormous problems. He felt that it was important to look at alternatives. He queried the value of spending more money on preparing reports after the experience with the Ballybofey/Stranorlar bypass where €million was spent on preparing reports only to have it all shelved. He suggested that the Council needed to get a commitment from the Government and NRA that anything planned would be carried out before spending any more money on reports.

Clr. D. Alcorn thanked the officials for their presentation and stated that he was glad to see an all-party approach being taken. He stated that major improvements were needed to our roads structures and that as a member of Udaras with Clrs. Pearse Doherty and B. O'Domhnaill he would bring the issues raised by the Council to their attention also. He stated that he recognised the importance of air travel and that the two flights per day from Carrickfin had made a major difference as had the new bus link between the Airport and Letterkenny. He went on to thank the roads department for the work they had done to date. He also stated that he was sure that Minister Pat the Cope Gallagher was fully committed to improving Donegal.

Clr. R. Donaghey also thanked Mr. O'Doherty for his presentation and stated that it showed how far this County had been left behind. She felt that all the

promises of funding and equal status had been left behind. She felt that a lot of work needed to be done and that it was important that Donegal take a lead role in this.

Clr. D. Larkin, County Mayor, also thanked Mr. O' Doherty for his high quality presentation. He stated that this Council had been advised that it had been a mistake that it had not been included in the old National Development Plan. Transport 21 was an opportunity to put this right but it had not been done. He felt that the exclusion of the North-West in the plan was glaring. He stated that he felt that different departments were failing to communicate with each other.

He stated that Donegal was the last stop on the road and would be last to benefit from anything. He stated that following the meetings of the County Manager, Senior Roads Officials and Politicians it appears that it will be 2010, when the NRA priorities kick in to the plan, before Donegal can benefit from funding. He stated that he was at a loss as to what we should do next as every strategy put forward had been ignored and he felt we had exhausted every possibility. He queried whether it is possible to review Transport 21. He stated that the plan was to link the largest centres and after this work had been completed the government may then start to think about regional development.

Mr. M. McLoone, County Manager, thanked the members for their contributions and Messrs McLaughlin and O'Doherty for their presentation. He stated that there were three actions the Council needed to consider:-

1. Lobby to amend the agreed priorities of Transport 21 from five major inter urban routes to seven major inter urban routes, to include Dublin to Derry/Letterkenny and Belfast to Derry/Letterkenny. (Mr. McLoone felt that this needed to be done through the inter-departmental group, as it was important to bring this through the hierarchy of priorities.

2. Members agree to the continued funding of the NRA Office in Donegal Town to work with the NRDO nationally and the Northern Ireland Roads Office in development of plans and proposals for roads.
3. Decide whether we should go it alone or seek the support from other Authorities to lobby for the development of these routes.

Following further discussion between the members, on the proposal of Clr. Conaghan, seconded by Clr. E. Bonner, it was agreed to take the course of action proposed by the County Manager.

On the proposal of Clr. Pearse Doherty, seconded by Clr. P. MacLochlainn, it was further agreed that a cross party meeting be arranged with the Minister for Transport and the MLAs in Northern Ireland. It was further agreed that Officials from the Roads and Transportation Service would liase with party whips to set up a steering committee and arrange dates for the proposed meetings with the Minister and MLAs.

This concluded the business of the meeting.