

3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2015

TO ALL MEMBERS OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL
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The Adjourned January Meeting of Donegal County Council, will be held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2015 at 2.30pm, in the County House, Lifford to consider the unfinished business listed at Items below:-

14 - 72.

Please ensure that you bring the agenda previously distributed to the meeting.

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Meetings Administrator

MINUTES OF ADJOURNED JANUARY MEETING OF DONEGAL  
COUNTY COUNCIL, HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON 9<sup>TH</sup>  
FEBRUARY 2015

C/44/15      MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs J Campbell (Cathaoirleach), L Blaney, E Bonner, C Brogan, P Canning, T Conaghan, G Crawford, N Crossan, A Doherty, G Doherty, L Doherty, R Donaghey, M Farren, M T Gallagher, M Harley, N Jordan, J Kavanagh, N Kennedy, M C Mac Giolla Easbuig, M Mc Bride, J P Mc Daid, M McDermott, S McEniff, I Mc Garvey, P McGowan, B McGuinness, G McMonagle, J Murray, S O'Domhnaill, J O' Donnell, J S O'Fearraigh, M Quinn, J Ryan, T Slowey.

C/45/15      OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Mr Liam Ward, Director of Housing, Corporate & Planning Control/ Meetings Administrator, Mr Garry Martin, Head of Finance & Director of Information Systems & Emergency Services, Mr Joe Peoples, A/Director of Water & Environment, Mr John McLaughlin, Director of Roads and Transportation, Mr Michael Heaney, Director of Community Culture & Planning, Mr Stephen Flynn, A/Director Roads & Transportation, Ms Anne Marie Conlon, Communications Officer, Ms Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

C/46/15      APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr McBrearty who was unable to attend the meeting.

C/47/15      SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Members unanimously agreed to suspend Standing Orders and take Item No 29 – Cathaoirleach's Business as the first item on the agenda.

C/48/15      ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

On the proposal of Cllr Canning, seconded by, Cllr Mc Guinness it was resolved to adjourn the meeting until 3pm as a mark of respect to the late Denis Mc Gonagle, former Cathaoirleach and Elected Member of Donegal County Council.

C/49/15      CATHAOIRLEACH'S BUSINESS

*Vote of Sympathy – Former Cllr Denis Mc Gonagle*

It was resolved that the Party Whips would speak on behalf of their respective groupings. Sympathy was extended to his wife Mary-Jo, son, and daughters together with his extended family circle.

Members alluded to the many years of dedicated service given by the late Mr Mc Gonagle to the people of Inishowen. His capacity to reach out to all his constituents was applauded and many acknowledged the sincere and affable manner with which he had carried out these duties over the years.

Cllr Mc Gonagle , they advised, had left a lasting legacy in the Inishowen area and his passing was a great loss to the people of the peninsula.

Mr Seamus Neely, Chief Executive extended sympathy on behalf of the Management and Staff of Donegal County Council.

#### *Votes of Sympathy*

Sympathy was extended to the following:-

- Christine Lynch, Debtors Management on the death of her mother, Maime Gallen.
- Rose Scott, Community & Enterprise, on the death of her father Neil Scott.
- The family of the late Martin Hannigan, formerly Roads, Inishowen Municipal District.
- Sean Canning, Machinery Yard, on the death of his father, Charlie Canning.
- Martina Mc Collum, Corporate, Letterkenny on the death of her sister, Anne Marie Bradley.
- Mary Mc Menamin formerly of the Planning Section on the death of her mother, Elizabeth Kerlin.
- Seamus Mc Devitt, Roads, Stranorlar on the death of his father, Seamus.
- Hugh Fox, Planning on the death of his mother, Mary Fox.
- Pearl Duffy, formerly of the Roads Section, Lifford on the death of her mother Christine (Tene) Duffy.
- Anthony Porter, Water & Environment on the death of his brother Charles Porter

C/50/15

COUNCIL ENDORSEMENT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES REPORT

On the proposal of Cllr O’Fearraigh, seconded by, Cllr Gallagher , the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council endorse the recommendations within the Joint Committee on Fisheries Report "Report on Promoting Sustainable Rural Coastal and Island communities", that this Council fully incorporate recommendations within this report within the review of the County Development Plan, and that this Council would include this report for discussion on the agenda of the next full Council Meeting of Donegal County Council."

Members were informed that:-

“Donegal County Council is leading on the preparation of a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for Co. Donegal. This plan will cover all aspects of economic and community activity in the county with emerging goals including development of the county’s natural resources and promoting sustainable communities. In this context the “Report on Promoting Sustainable Rural Coastal and Island Communities” will be reviewed and relevant aspects incorporated in the LECP.

Coastal and Island communities are an integral and important part of the overall Donegal Community and Donegal County Council has ongoing contact with community groups in these areas. There is also ongoing engagement with organisations such as Comhar na nOileán as well as with relevant agencies and departments in advancing a range of areas of work in these areas.

Donegal County Council will continue to work with these communities through the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) which will be the Local Action Group (LAG) for the next LEADER/Rural Development Programme and also through the BIM led FLAG (Fisheries Local Action Group).

Tá Plean Eacnamúil agus Pobal á ullmhú í lathair na nuair agus beidh seo ag clúdach gach ghné de chursáí eacnamúil agus pobail ins an chontae. Beidh aidhmeanna sa phlean seo a chluoidh neithe mar forbairt acmhainní nádúrtha agus togáil pobail inmharthanacha. Tá na pobail cósta agus oileáin mar chuid

thabhactach de pobal iomlán an chontae ins an chothéacs seo. Chuige seo deanfar scrudú ar an phaipeár seo agus deanfar aon moltaí abharacha a thabhairt ar bord í bPlean Eacnamúil agus Pobail an Chontae. Leanfar ar aghaidh leis an pháirtneireacht agus gníomháiocht atá ar siúl le na pobail seo. i gcotheacs na claracha eagsula airgidis ata ag teacht chun cinn”

It was acknowledged that something needed to be done urgently to halt rural degeneration within the County and that any such effort needed to come at least initially from within the County. It was suggested that Donegal County Council initially establish a working committee to look at rural rejuvenation. The need for ongoing discussion was highlighted.

Members also highlighted the need to examine issues such as the role and needs of inshore fishing.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Mr Michael Heaney, Director Community, Culture & Planning Development alluded to his reply and advised that the issue could be incorporated into the Local Economic and Community Plan for County Donegal.

Cllr O’ Fearraigh asked that the matter be brought back to the next appropriate meeting of Council.

C/51/15 REINTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS PUBLIC LIGHTING FUNDING

On the proposal of Cllr Bonner, seconded by, Cllr Mc Dermott, the following motion was adopted:-

That Donegal County Council re-introduce Members Public Lighting Funding."

Members were informed that:-

“A number of years ago, the Council Budget provided an annual amount of just over €90,000 specifically for a Scheme of Members Public Lighting. The Scheme had a particular application, approval and installation process. In the last few years, it has not been possible to fund such a particular Scheme.

Separately but related, there has been no particular budget for the installation of new or improvement to the general public lighting network. All monies have gone towards maintenance of the existing lights and the energy costs which have risen dramatically.

In the last few years, we have added to the public lighting stock mainly through the take over of public lighting in housing estates and this is ongoing.

However, it is still possible to erect new lights by allocating other discretionary monies for this purpose and in the understanding that the money will not then be available for something else. It is expected that this will form part of discussion on the Schedule of Municipal Works over the next two months.

If it is decided to re-introduce a particular Scheme for Members Lighting, this will require the identification of the associated funding and possibly an amendment to the Adopted Budget 2015.”

Cllr Bonner said that the old public lighting scheme had not really delivered in terms of single lighting and that the only real beneficiary had been some of the more built up areas in the County. It would, he said, be possible to withdraw the motion if an assurance could be given that funding would be provided for the replacement of lights in cases of genuine need.

He was, he said, not looking for funding for a similar type of scheme but rather seeking to replace and upgrade lights that had been out of operation for some considerable period of time.

Cllr Mc Dermott highlighted the need for upgrading at specific locations such as Children’s Crossings etc.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Mr John Mc Laughlin, Director Roads & Transportation said that the motion as written would not provide Members with a Lighting Programme.

He noted that there had been no provision in either the 2014 or the 2015 Budgets for new lights and that there was only a limited budget for the renewal of existing lights. There was nothing, he said, preventing Members in their Municipal District Schedule of

Works from providing a limited budget for the renewal of lights. Over the years, he noted there had been a separate fund for lighting improvement, but that was no longer in existence, and all monies (in the region of €2 million) were spent on day to day running and basic maintenance costs.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Cllr Bonner said that a common sense approach was needed and that he was looking forward to co-operating with the Executive and the Engineers concerned to improve the situation.

C/52/15

CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE A  
COMMERCIAL RATES STRUCTURE BASED ON PROFITS  
RATHER THAN AREA

On the proposal of Cllr O'Domhnaill, seconded by, Cllr Canning, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council call on the Government to introduce a Commercial Rates Structure which is based on profits rather than area required to run a business in light of the difficulties which businesses are experiencing across our County."

Members were informed that:-

In accordance with Section 48 of the Valuation Act, 2001, the method of determining a property's value for the purpose of levying commercial rates is "the value of a relevant property shall be determined under this Act by estimating the net annual value of the property and the amount so estimated to be the net annual value of the property shall, accordingly, be its value".

The Valuation Office is responsible for assessing the Net Annual Value (rental value) of a property and the most common method used is direct comparison with annual rental values of similar properties in the area.

At present in the County there is quite a variance in the Net Annual Value of properties due to the fact that properties were valued at different times over the years and the rental value at the time of valuation is what is applicable. However, the Valuation Office has commenced the process of carrying out a National Revaluation Project.

The Revaluation Project is the carrying out of a new valuation of every relevant property within a Local Authority area, by reference to property rental values at a specified valuation date and produces an up-to-date Valuation List on non-domestic property, for commercial rates purposes.

The Revaluation Project is progressing and new Valuation Lists have been published for the Dublin, Waterford, Wexford and Limerick Local Authorities. Donegal County Council has written to the Department in 2014 seeking support that Donegal County Council would be included in the Revaluation Project as early as possible. When completed, it is intended that this will address the imbalance that currently exists and will produce a fair and equitable up-to-date Valuation List.

In 2012, the Government published a Valuation Act (Amendment) Bill and this is progressing through the Houses of the Oireachtas and is now referred to as the Valuation Act (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill. The Bill proposes to amend existing valuation legislation in a number of areas and is designed to accelerate the revaluation of all rateable property in the Country and to facilitate the adoption of new approaches to valuation including self-assessment.

Donegal County Council is conscious of the challenges that businesses in the County have been and continue to experience since the downturn in economic activity. Despite these difficulties, customers have been engaging proactively with the Council in relation to the payment of commercial rates and this is very much appreciated and acknowledged.

In view of this and as adopted by the Members as part of the 2015 Revenue budget, the Council has introduced a Small Business Grant Scheme in 2015 which will help small and medium sized enterprises. A reduction of 5% of the annual 2015 rates bill, subject to a maximum of €250, will be applied to an account if there are no arrears on the account at the end of 2015. It is intended that this measure, in conjunction with the targeted revaluation of the County, when completed, will assist the trading position of the majority of the businesses in the County.

Cllr O' Domhnaill said that many businesses were struggling to make ends meet yet strived continually to meet their rate and other



statutory liabilities. He called on the Government to sort out the many irregularities that existed. Some businesses, he advised, had a massive turnover yet required very little operating room. These, it was acknowledged were paying lesser rates but operated on a significant profit margins.

He called on the Government to amend the relevant legislation in a fair and equitable manner. It was imperative also, he added, that a representative from the Valuation Office addressed Members in relation to the processes involved, the type of engagement needed, and outline clearly when they were coming to Donegal to start the review process.

Cllr Canning seconded this proposal.

It was acknowledged that there were anomalies also in terms of businesses which operated on a seasonal basis.

Cllr Canning said that there was a need also to recognise the diverse range of business activity and the sharp rise in online business.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Mr Garry Martin, Head of Finance, Director of Information and Emergency Services said that he had no difficulty working with Members to deal with these and other challenges. A Representative from the Valuation Office, had he noted, addressed Members back in 2009/2010. Another invitation, was, he added, timely and he agreed to facilitate same.

Cllr O'Domhnaill welcomed the positive outlook from the Finance Section and applauded the fact that the Council had engaged positively with the business community. The Valuation Office, he said needed to address the issues highlighted. The Council it was acknowledged had not increased rates over the past six years but that this was something that would have to be looked at into the future.

C/53/15

REQUEST THAT THE COUNCIL MEET WITH EHOS

On the proposal of Cllr Canning, seconded by, Cllr O' Domhnaill, the following motion was adopted:-

"As a matter of urgency and in keeping with our economic policy to support our SME's, I would ask that this Council meets with the Environmental Health Officers to seek clarification from them as to why they are using a different set of enforcement rules to that of the rest of the country insofar as their reading of the regulation within Section 47 of the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002 as amended by Section 16 of the Public Health (Tobacco) (Amendment) Act 2004."

Members were informed that:-

"It is suggested that the most appropriate mechanism to have this matter progressed is through the Regional Health Forum on which Donegal Co. Council is represented."

Cllr Canning said that he had submitted the motion in order to highlight a situation which, he contended, amounted to bullying by the Environmental Health Office in Donegal. Businesses, he said, were being run into the ground through unfair enforcement of the 2004 Tobacco Act. Publicans had, he said, some success in challenging decisions at District Court level, but this was often thwarted by the HSE who were in a much better position to engage in the appeal process.

He asked the Council to seek clarification as to why the EHO Office was causing such hardship for small business enterprises, and asked that the DCC Representatives on the Regional Health Forum West raise the matter at regional level. It was intended also, he confirmed, to raise the matter at parliamentary level.

Cllr O' Domhnaill said it was unfair of the HSE to target the publicans in question, and then pay extortionate costs to bring these cases to court. The whole situation, he advised, was unfair and anti-business. The Council, he suggested, should meet with the EHO Office to ascertain the reasons behind this type of behaviour.

Cllr Quinn expressed concern that the motion was clearly identifying HSE Staff and called on Cllr Canning to amend the motion so that it included only general reference to the HSE.

Cllr Canning declined, contending that many of the publicans concerned had been fully compliant with the 2004 Act, yet the Courts had ruled in favour of the HSE. It was imperative, he

said, that the legislation was tightened up to avoid any such anomalies. The Council, he contended, needed to stand up for the commercial ratepayers concerned.

There was no opposition to the motion.

C/54/15 REINSTATEMENT OF THE 'DEDICATED DRUGS UNIT'  
Cllr Donaghey advised that she wished to amend the motion and have it also referred to the Minister for Justice.

On the proposal of Cllr Donaghey , seconded by, Cllr Brogan , the following motion was adopted:-

"To ask the Minister for Health and the Minister for Justice to reinstate the 'Dedicated Drugs Unit' back to the various areas in Donegal to help combat the scourge of drug use in our communities."

Cllr Donaghey noted that there had been an excellent drug detection rate in Donegal but that questions needed to be asked as to why the unit concerned had been disbanded. This, she said, aligned with the closure of rural Garda Stations and the concentration of services in Letterkenny had greatly exacerbated the drugs problem in the County. She said that there was an onus also on parents to be vigilant in relation to the situation. Other aspects such as the use of suspended sentences etc, she advised, needed to be reviewed and a common sense approach taken.

She advised of the need to meet with the Chief Superintendent and asked that correspondence be forwarded to the Ministers for Health and Justice, outlining clearly the difficulties being faced by local communities in Donegal.

Cllr Brogan outlined his support for the motion and said a proactive approach was needed together with greater engagement at primary and secondary school level in relation to the dangers of drug abuse.

There was no opposition to the motion.

C/55/15 ORTHODONTICS WAITING LIST

On the proposal of Cllr McDermott, seconded by, Cllr Brogan, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council within the next 4 weeks organize a meeting with the HSE and the Department of Health to try and find some solution to the serious situation with the waiting list in our orthodontics department where children have to wait for over 2 years to be seen by a orthodontics dentist."

Members were informed that:-

"It is suggested that the most appropriate mechanism to have this matter progressed is through the Regional Health Forum on which Donegal Co. Council is represented."

Cllr Mc Dermott outlined the severity of the situation and the fact that there were 899 children currently on the waiting list in Donegal, with 120 of these waiting more than 2 years for an appointment.

The situation was further compounded, he said, by the fact that there was no x-ray facility in the Orthodontics Department in Letterkenny General Hospital and that patients had to go through Out-Patients to access this service.

He asked that the DCC Representatives on the Regional Health Forum to actively pursue the matter.

Cllr Brogan said that it would be possible to raise the matter with the Regional Health Forum but noted that there were considerable resource issues involved also.

C/56/15 BID FOR FUNDING AT COUNCIL OWNED PORTS AND HARBOURS

On the proposal of Cllr A. Doherty, seconded by, Cllr Murray, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council submit an immediate priority list to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine seeking funding for projects at council owned ports and harbours to (re) commence. This would enhance employment opportunities for workers in the fishing industries, increase safety and berthing facilities for boats

and serve to promote the tourism industry potential that the Marine offers to the county's local economy."

Members were informed that:-

“The Council would be happy to develop such a priority list and obtain the agreement of the elected members on the priorities and the extent of funding being sought beforehand. The Council have about 150 piers and harbours around the county and some are in quite poor condition and some would benefit from extensions and expansion to meet modern day needs.

Generally, state grants for pier and harbour projects require match funding from the Council of 25% and it would be important to have an understanding that co-funding could be provided for any Department programme. It has been difficult for the Council to provide any significant co-funding this past number of years. For example, match funds of €500,000 to re-commence the Greencastle Breakwater Project were sought in developing the budget 2015 but ultimately there was no provision made.

The Council did carry out a €40 million pier programme from roughly 2000 to 2008 and borrowed €10 million to co-fund stage grants which was and continues to be a significant annual cost.

The development of the priority list and obtaining Council approval accords with the previous agreement of Council to have a priority infrastructure plan for the county across all types of infrastructure which would include piers and harbours.”

Cllr Doherty outlined the need for follow-up in relation to projects such as those at Leenan Pier, Greencastle Harbour and the Greencastle Breakwater Project. He called on the Council to compile a dedicated priority listing for such projects and pursue as appropriate all complimentary funding sources.

He alluded also to the fact that works of this nature would not only enhance safety at the aforementioned locations, but would in the long-term assist the fishing and tourism sectors and aid job creation in the County.

Cllr Murray concurred with these sentiments and said that every effort should be made to take advantage of the County's extensive coastline.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Mr John Mc Laughlin, Director Roads & Transportation advised that it would be possible to follow-up in relation to the compilation of a priority listing but that the main challenge here would be the issue of co-funding.

Cllr Doherty concluding the debate asked that further meetings take place with the Greencastle Harbour Users Group.

C/57/15

COUNCIL ENDORSEMENT OF THE DONEGAL "PRO SOCIAL DRIVERS" PROGRAMME

On the proposal of Cllr Kavanagh, seconded by, Cllr Harley, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council endorses the work of the Donegal "Pro Social Drivers" programme."

Members were informed that:-

"The Council is aware that the Pro Social Drivers Programme have had a presentation to Letterkenny Town Council and the Council if the Council wish it can be arranged to have a meeting with this group to discuss Road Safety matters."

Cllr Kavanagh said that this programme was an excellent means of promoting road safety and complimented the work of groups such as ACEART. It had, he noted, considerable success with over 90 participants completing the course to date with no incidences of re-offending. It was presently being run on a voluntary basis, he advised, but required additional support if it was to be rolled out in other Counties.

He called on the Council to recognise and endorse the programme so that this expansion could take place.

Cllr Harley also endorsed the programme and said that the programme would fit in well with other initiatives being developed in the County.

There was no opposition to the motion.

C/58/15 COUNCIL INVESTMENT IN THE GREENWAY INITIATIVES

On the proposal of Cllr McMonagle, seconded by, Cllr G Doherty, the following motion was adopted:-

That this Council as part of its tourist strategy this year invests money and resources into delivering on the Greenway Initiatives identified around the County to enhance and grow our tourist potential and to help create jobs in the tourist industry."

Members were informed that:-

"It is recognised that the development of walking trails and cycleways is important for this county in the context of our overall tourism resource. Substantial works have been carried out by the Council over recent years in this regards. The Council will continue to work with local communities with regard to the development of greenways in the County. Particular progress is being made in the west of the County through an interagency approach, working with local communities and with funding from Council sources. It is proposed to place a particular emphasis on this work throughout the County during 2015. Towards this end the Council will put resources in place and ensure that the emerging Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) and the next LEADER/Rural Development Programme will reflect the importance of this resource and provide a framework and financial resources to advance projects."

Cllr Mc Monagle welcomed the response but said that more clarification was needed. He noted that a similar type initiative in Mayo had benefitted considerably business and tourism interests in the area. Donegal County if it was to be serious about the project would, he said, have to look at upgrading a range of infrastructure and services

He called for Cycle Greenways to be developed and use made of the old disused rail network.

He also outlined the need to explore other funding sources and the use of the Council's own resources to develop an initiative such as

this. The query was raised as to how close the Council was to developing a professional Greenway.

Cllr Doherty said the initiative had great potential, and noted that there was the possibility of receiving some form of EU funding in the not so distant future.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Mr Michael Heaney, Director Community, Culture and Planning Development drew Members attention to the considerable work done in this field to date. The engagement with local communities as outlined in his reply, was, he advised a good working model and that partnerships established would work towards putting the relevant permissions in place. All opportunities for funding, would, he confirmed, be explored. Considerable work it was acknowledged had gone into rejuvenating many of the old railway tracks in Donegal , but that this work needed to be carried out in manageable chunks. Donegal, he confirmed, was well placed to take advantage of Greenway Projects. He agreed to keep Members informed and said that it was intended to bring the Local & Economic Community Plan back to Members by the end of April.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Cllr Mc Monagle said that the Council needed to look beyond their own resources and that it would be necessary to pitch such initiatives at a competent and professional level.

He said it was imperative that one project of this nature was finished to a sufficiently high standard so that any potential benefits could be further analysed.

C/59/15 CALL FOR THE COUNCIL TO DISCUSS URGENT NEED FOR A RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Cllr McDaid proposed, seconded by, Cllr O' Domhnaill, the following motion be adopted:-

"That this Council discusses the urgent need for a Rural Affairs Committee in Donegal to include, farming, essential services and communications, as the lack of an official voice politically on rural affairs has added to the lack of debate and is also leading to population decline."



Members were informed that:-

“The Council are leading on the development of a Local, Economic and Community Plan (LECP) which will be focussing on all areas of need and opportunity in the County including local development, connectivity and promoting sustainable communities. The Council led Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) will be preparing a Donegal County submission for the next LEADER / Rural Development Programme which will provide an opportunity to deal with issues and opportunities identified in the LECP.

The LCDC is a Council Committee involving all sectors which will be the Local Action Group (LAG) for the purposes of LEADER, SICAP, PEACE IV, and potentially other programmes which will support rural development. Further economic development work relating the LECP is being carried out by the DCC Economic Development Committee. This Committee comprises of the members of the CPG, the CE, the Director of Community, Culture & Planning and representatives of the Economic Development Agencies and relevant sectoral representatives.”

Cllr Mc Daid, said that rural Ireland had been badly affected by the economic downturn and that something needed to be done to stem the tide of emigration. The demise of rural Post Offices, the closure of Garda Stations etc had he noted contributed to the overall decline. Lack of funding for Specific Instance Housing and Rural Housing Schemes were also identified as being part of the problem. These communities, he said, needed to be adequately represented with a dedicated focus on ensuring that these rural parishes became vibrant working communities. The way forward, he acknowledged, was to establish a Rural Affairs Committee with representation from all of the Municipal District Committees together with an input from local businesses and community organisations.

Cllr O’ Domhnaill noted that the peripheral location of the County had been a drawback in terms of attracting inward investment. Donegal County Council, had, he said, an obligation to ensure that such matters were discussed and addressed.

Cllr A Doherty said that Minister of State, Ann Phelan, T.D. had specific responsibility for Rural Affairs and suggested that the motion be directed to her office for attention.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Cllr Mc Daid agreed to amend the motion as follows:-

"That this Council discusses the urgent need for a Rural Affairs Committee in Donegal to include, farming, essential services and communications, as the lack of an official voice politically on rural affairs has added to the lack of debate and is also leading to population decline, and that Ms Ann Phelan, Minister of State with responsibility for Rural Economic Development be informed of the situation in Donegal and invited to come to the County to see at first hand the effects of rural decline in the region"

Mr Michael Heaney, Director Community, Culture & Planning Development advised that the farming sector were represented on the Local Community Development Committee. Alluding to his response said that the Local Economic and Community Plan would go some way to addressing many of the problems associated with rural degeneration. This, he added, would be further complimented with a submission to the next Leader Programme.

He informed Members that the Plan also provided for a "Digital Strategy" with a key focus on broadband provision. The priority going forward, he added, was to build and maintain sustainable rural communities.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Cllr Mc Daid asked that the committee be established prior to the next AGM and that it have access to meetings with the relevant Minister on a regular basis.

He requested also that it be forwarded to all other Local Authorities for consideration.

Cllr Crossan took the chair for a brief period in the absence of the Cathaoirleach.

C/60/15

POSSIBLE INTRODUCTION NATIONALLY OF A ROAD DRAINAGE GRANT

On the proposal of Cllr McBride, seconded by, Cllr MacGiolla Easbuig, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal County Council write to the Department of the Environment asking them in co-junction with the Department of Agriculture to consider the introduction of a drainage grant along roads to be rolled out nationally."

Members were informed that:-

The Council is happy to write to both Departments mentioned when this motion is adopted.

"It is noted that funding for road drainage is already provided by Government through the annual Regional & Local Roads Allocations to Local Authorities from the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport.

Usually this funding is confirmed at end January/ early February. This funding includes a separate heading for Discretionary Maintenance and the Council has some discretion in the manner in which this funding can be expended.

Typically 40% - 50% of the MD Discretionary Maintenance funding is expected to be spent on road drainage maintenance. It is acknowledged that the current amount of monies do not stretch to cover the extent of maintenance and in particular drainage works required to fully prevent flooding and drainage runoff onto roads."

Cllr Mc Bride said that the monies provided for drainage in Budget 2015 were totally insufficient. It was imperative, he added, that everything was done to protect road surfaces, instead of piecemeal patching and the filling of potholes on a needs only basis.

It was acknowledged that there was already an excellent system in place for the payment of farm reps, and that a similar type scheme could be utilised to assist with road drainage.

He called on members to support the initiative which, he contended, needed to operate for a five year period at least.

Mr John Mc Laughlin, Director Roads & Transportation agreed to follow up the matter with the Department.

There was no opposition to the motion.

C/61/15

REVIEW OF THE ROADS GRITTING PLAN

On the proposal of Cllr O'Donnell, seconded by, Cllr Canning, the following motion was adopted:-

"That the Council hold a meeting where we look at the road gritting plan as I have a number of roads that need to be addressed."

Members were informed that:-

“The following advice is provided to members to assist in their deliberation of this motion:

The current policy of Donegal County Council is “to endeavour within the limited resources available to maintain traffic routes in a passable condition in the interest of maintaining road communication.”

“In practical terms this generally means the gritting and snow ploughing of priority routes, which are clearly identified in advance of each winter.

The primary responsibility for road safety remains at all times with drivers of vehicles and while the council will endeavour to maintain the major routes in a passable condition, each driver must exercise sufficient caution to take account of the prevailing road conditions.”

In addition the Council has taken a proactive view to working with communities to service rural areas, estates and maintain access for funerals, fodder deliveries etc. in poor conditions.

This policy has been endorsed by members over many years most recently in 2012 with minor amendments in 2013.

Winter Service has been funded over many years from a combination of State Grants and the Council's own resources. The National Roads Authority have fully funded winter service on

national roads in accordance with their objective to minimise the impact of frost or snow on the travelling public.

In addition they have provided considerable funding to the Council over many years for the development of salt barns, plant and equipment which directly supports our winter service capacity on non national roads.

Winter service is provided on a countywide basis; with routes covering a number of Municipal District, so as to provide treated routes consistently between the centres of population.

Donegal routinely treats around 1,000kms of Priority One and Two Routes which is close to 20% of the network. In addition, Priority Three can be treated after the other two are done. Donegal already provide one of the highest level of service for winter gritting in the country.

It is acknowledged that this is needed due to Donegal's dispersed nature, however, there is a cost that must be borne.

A number of factors that influence the lengths of non-national road treated. These include.

- The rural nature of the county with a lack of large population centre(s)
- One of the highest lengths of road per capita in the country.
- The peripheral location of the population in the county with significant numbers of people located along the border and coast.
- The most northern location in the country.

Based on these factors it is the case that Donegal have more roads included on the winter service programme and these are treated more often than most other parts of the country. The Council has also pioneered and developed significant communication resources for members of the public travelling on the road

The Council currently have budgeted over €1.1M for winter maintenance in 2015 of which over €850,000 is provided from funds that are diverted from other maintenance activities. This provides for up to 25 vehicles salting over 980km as required between September and April.

The provision of winter service is closely controlled by policy and procedure so as to ensure the service is carried consistently maintaining the best quality service.

Routes have been prepared to minimise costs and maximise efficiency. While some flexibility has been possible for short distances significant increases in route length will directly impact on the cost of providing the service where additional vehicles are required.

The Council had previously agreed that minor changes to the programme could be made at local level subject to them not requiring extra lorries/gritters or the provision of additional staff.”

Cllr O’ Donnell advised of the need to add additional routes to the programme, particularly in instances where there was clear evidence of ongoing road usage. He proceeded to identify a number of locations that warranted inclusion on the programme. These included,

- Main Kilmacrennan to Trentagh Road.
- Number of routes in Ramelton Town not included.
- Churchill to Gartan (3 mile radius)
- Shankey-Glenvar Road

It was important, he added, to maintain a positive outlook , but that this, needed to be backed up with additional Government Funding.

At this juncture Cllr Campbell returned to the Chair.

Cllr Canning reiterated the call for the review of the programme citing the need to familiarise new Members with the finer details of the plan. There was a need also, he added, to include many of the routes serviced by the School Transport Scheme.

Mr John Laughlin, Director Roads & Transportation advised that the prioritisation of routes and the funding aspect remained the key issuers. He agreed to facilitate the relevant discussions. The Cathaoirleach advocated that this place in workshop format.

Cllr Brogan queried the status of the Kilmacrennan to Temple Douglas Road and expressed concern that it had not been included in the Plan. He was informed that this was a category

three road and only gritted after those at priority 1 and 2 had been attended to.

Cllr Quinn was in agreement with the views expressed by Cllr Brogan and said it had been the clear intention of the Letterkenny Electoral Area Members in the past to have the road included on the Gritting Programme.

There was no opposition to the Motion.

Cllr O' Donnell thanked Members for their support. He was, he said, concerned that two thirds of the monies generated from Road Tax currently went to Irish Water. It was imperative, he added, that this income was channelled back into the roads network.

C/62/15 REVIEW OF ALL SPEED LIMITS WITHIN BUILT HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

On the proposal of Cllr Brogan, seconded by, Cllr Canning , the following motion was adopted:-

"I propose that this Council carry out a review of all speed limits within built housing developments with a view to reducing speed and providing proper traffic calming measures in line with national proposals and clarify what role if any we have in private estates."

Members were informed that:-

“The Department has proposed a system for reducing speed limits within housing estates to 30 km/hr in conjunction with a new sign at the entrance to indicate the presence of children playing.

In all, there would be four new signs at the entrance to estates. They have asked all Councils to review all estates under their care.

In Donegal, we have made an application for funding under the 2015 low cost accident programme for an estimated €500,000 for signage.

The Department has advised that further interaction with local authorities will be required to determine the best way forward to progress the review of speed limits at council owned housing estates which is understood to include all Council Housing Estates

and Private Estates either taken over by the Council or are being maintained by the Council over a long number of years.

At the moment, it is estimated that this will include about 400 estates.

The review process will involve interaction with the residents to establish if there are speeding issues and concerns, public consultation and ultimately the making of bye-laws by the elected Council which is expected to include input from the Gardai.

It is expected that this work will be advanced in the second half of 2015.

Separately, it is conceivable that if the proposed signage and speed limit signs become the norm for housing estates, then it is expected that the provision of the signage would be part of the developers planning permission for construction of new estates and would also be required to be in place before the estates would be taken over.

At this stage, there is no particular direction on private unfinished estates or private estates that are not in the care of the Council.

In addition, there is consideration being given to other traffic calming measures depending on the particular speeding issues involved.”

Cllr Brogan advised that the role of the Council needed to be clarified and that consideration needed to be given to the adoption of specific byelaws.

He called on the Chief Executive and the Director of Service to explore all available options.

There was no opposition to the Motion.

Responding to issues raised by Cllr Canning, the Director of Roads & Transportation said that he was happy to explore ways of dealing with the issues raised in the Motion.

C/63/15

SEEKING OF FUNDING FOR THE REPAIR OR  
REPLACEMENT OF BRIDGES IN DONEGAL LISTED AS  
HIGH PRIORITY



On the proposal of Cllr McGarvey, seconded by, Cllr O' Donnell, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal County Council vigorously seek (at all levels) the necessary funding for repair or replacement of all Bridges that are listed by our Engineers of high Priority in County Donegal for work."

Members were informed that:-

“A full inspection of all regional road bridges is now completed and priorities identified per Municipal District, which are being submitted to Municipal District Meetings for approval prior to sign off at full Council meeting.

The adopted Budget Book 2015 provides for a Regional Road Bridge Grant for 2015 in the sum of €200,000 along with an additional €250,000 from Discretionary Maintenance for bridge strengthening projects throughout the county during 2015.

An equivalent sum was spent on bridge strengthening contracts in 2014.

With the volume of bridges in the county, the current funding levels would take several years to address all bridges, however, progress is being made on an annual basis on the worst ones, with between 15 and 25 bridges per annum being treated (subject to tendered prices, works required, restrictions by statutory bodies, etc.

The previous Specific Improvement Grant afforded the opportunity for the Council to apply for specific projects such as bridges and that particular grant has been suspended this past few years.

The Council staff is happy to prepare any supporting background information, plans and projections that would assist the Council in any special efforts in following up this motion when it is adopted.”

Cllr Mc Garvey said he was concerned at the lack of progress to date and noted that many of the County's roads and bridges were in a pitiful state. He expressed concern that many of the projects highlighted had been the subject of debate for years with as yet no obvious improvement in sight.

Cllr O' Donnell concurred with these sentiments. He raised the issue of Bunlin Bridge, and said that a long-term solution was warranted at this juncture.

There was no opposition to the Motion.

The Director of Service alluded to the response provided and said that the overlying factor at this stage was the acquisition of a viable funding stream.

C/64/15

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR THE I.N.M.O  
IN RESOLVING THE CRISIS IN THE A&E DEPARTMENTS

On the proposal of Cllr Quinn, seconded by, Cllr Mc Monagle , the following motion was adopted:-

"That the Elected of Donegal County Council unequivocally support the I.N.M.O. in it's campaign to have the crisis in all A and E Hospital Departments resolved."

Cllr Quinn said that those who worked 24/7 on the frontline were acutely aware of what was happening in our Accident & Emergency Departments. It was unacceptable, he said, that patients had in some cases to lie on hospital trolleys for days at a time, something which afforded no privacy and little or no dignity.

The main reason, he noted, was the lack of functioning primary and hospital care services. He asked all Members to support the Motion and to stand up for the people of Donegal who were suffering as a result of the ongoing crisis.

Cllr Mc Monagle supporting the Motion lauded the members of the INMO who worked in such overcrowded conditions. The problem, he said, would not go away and was putting peoples lives at risk.

He asked Members to support the I.N.M.O and requested that the Taoiseach's Office and the Minister for Health be informed of these concerns.

There was no opposition to the Motion.

It was further agreed to circulate the Motion to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and the Irish Nurses Medical Organisation.

A copy to be circulated also to all Local Authorities.

C/65/15

CHIEF EXECUTIVES MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

Members considered the report circulated with the agenda together with addendum circulated during the meeting.

Members raised a number of queries in relation to the 2015 Non – National Road Grant Allocations. These included:-

- The difference if any in the allocations for 2014 and 2015 arising from the demise of the Town Councils.
- Whether the Town of Buncrana had received a similar allocation in 2015.
- The plans if any to continue with the Community Involvement Scheme.
- Clarity requested in relation to the Bridge Rehab Programme and the status of the €603,000 included in the 2014 Budget for Letterkenny.
- Highlighted the necessity of getting the LIS Scheme restored.
- Urgent need to obtain funding for works at Woodlands as up to 10,000 road users are currently using this road.
- Outlined the necessity for a delegation from Donegal County Council to meet with the Minister for Transport to address various roads issues and funding deficits in the County.
- Clarification required in relation to funding for the N56.

Mr John Mc Laughlin, Director Roads & Transportation said the top line was that grants were down by €836,000 in 2015 but that if the reduction of €600,000 in respect of the Town Councils was taken into consideration then the allocation was the same as last year. There were, he said, no specific monies for LIS or CIS Schemes.

The Bridge Rehabilitation Allocation was, he confirmed, as outlined on the documentation circulated.

Works at Woodlands would have to be considered in tandem with other projects and requests. The €4m NRA allocation for the N56 Boyghter to Kilkenny would he said be utilised for the mid-section of the project. He informed Members that the €3.3m

required to purchase land at Dungloe and Glenties would not be coming out of this allocation. €6 million in total, he advised was available in 2015 to progress works on the N56.

He would, he said, arrange to have a map printed showing the relevant expenditure and the townlands affected.

Mr Mc Laughlin said that the decision to send a delegation to meet with the Minister for Transport was a matter for the Council itself, but that he was agreeable to facilitate any such request.

**Members noted the following questions:-**

C/66/15 BREAKDOWN OF THE UNFINISHED ESTATES IN THE COUNTY

The following question was submitted by Clr Jordan:-

"Can this Council provide a breakdown of every Unfinished Estate in the County setting out the status of the development and identifying which body is responsible for its completion?"

Clr Jordan was informed that:-

"Arrangements will be made to present the schedule of Unfinished Housing Estates per Municipal District to each of the Municipal District meetings in February 2015."

C/67/15 BREAKDOWN OF THE SPEND ON HOUSING MAINTENANCE IN EACH MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

The following question was submitted by Clr Gary Doherty:-

"Can I have a breakdown of the spend on housing maintenance across each of the five Municipal Districts in 2014?"

Clr Gary Doherty was informed that:-

"The table below sets out details of the total expenditure on maintenance in 2014. This figure includes both routine maintenance and repair of casual vacancies.

Municipal District Expenditure in 2014	
Inishowen	€374,833.53
Donegal	€248,326.79

Glenties	€465,003.93
Letterkenny	€650,753.16
Stranorlar	€516,700.51
Headquarters	€336,330.00
Total	€2,591,947.92”

C/68/15      2014 SPEND ON THE EMPTYING OF SEWERAGE HOLDING TANKS IN UNFINISHED/PROBLEMATIC HOUSING ESTATES

The following question was submitted by Clr Gary Doherty:-

"How much was spent by this Council on the emptying of sewerage holding tanks in unfinished/problematic estates in 2014?"

Clr Gary Doherty was informed that:-

“During 2014, the Council spent €25,700 to abate potential incidents of environmental pollution/public health arising from discharge of effluent from residential developments at various locations throughout the County.”

C/69/15      PROGRESS ON ATTENDANCE OF IRISH WATER STAFF AT MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETINGS IN RELATION TO WATER PROBLEMS

The following question was submitted by Clr Crawford:-

"Has any progress been made in relation to Irish Water Staff attending MD meetings in relation to ongoing water problems?"

Clr Crawford was informed that:-

“Irish Water are planning to hold clinics in the County House for elected representatives to provide the members with an opportunity to raise any queries they may have in relation to the delivery of water services. The first clinic has been arranged for the 26th January 2015.

It is expected that Irish Water will advise members at this clinic about future arrangements.”

C/70/15      IRISH WATER PERMISSION TO CARRYING OUT METER INSTALLATIONS IN ESTATES THAT ARE NOT TAKEN OVER

The following question was submitted by Clr Liam Doherty:-

“In a development which has not been taken over by the Council, is it necessary for Irish Water to obtain permission not only from the Donegal-domain County Council but also from the Residents Management Company before carrying out meter installations?”

Clr Liam Doherty was informed that:-

“The Council has no role in relation to developments that it has not taken in charge and consequently approvals/authorisations by the Council do not arise in the case of the installation of water meters by Irish Water in such developments. The approach being taken by Irish Water can be clarified with them.”

C/71/15 SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS IN DONEGAL TO BE UPGRADED BY IRISH WATER IN 2015

The following question was submitted by Clr Liam Doherty:-

"Does Donegal County Council have any idea what main Sewerage Treatment Plants Irish Water will be upgrading in 2015 and when these works will commence?"

Clr Liam Doherty was informed that:-

“Irish Water is planning to hold a clinic for the elected members on the 26th January 2015 in the County House to allow the members to raise any queries they may have in relation to the provision of water services. It is expected that details of the planned capital investment programme in Donegal will be provided at the clinic.”

C/72/15 COUNCIL INPUT WITH THE NRA IN RELATION TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF ACCIDENTS BLACK SPOTS

The following question was submitted by Clr Crawford:-

"What input does this Council have in relation to the NRA identifying, accident-black spots county-wide?"

Clr Crawford was informed that:-

“The NRA in line with an EU Directive on Road Infrastructure Safety Management carry out an annual Network Safety Ranking

on all National Routes in accordance with an NRA Standard entitled HD15.

HD15 Network Safety Ranking is the process of using collision data to rank the safety of the national road network and to identify high collision locations.

The NRA Safety Section (nationally) carry out an initial assessment on any sites identified under this process and these are forwarded to each relevant Local Authority for further investigation and identification of Safety Remedial works if any are appropriate.

Should other potential Road Safety issues be identified within the County these are also investigated by the Council's Road Design team and can be submitted to the NRA Safety Section for assessment in line with the HD15 process.

Donegal Co Council received a list and initial report on the 2014/15 HD15 High Collision Locations within the county on 10th December 2014 and the Council's Road Safety Engineer is currently carrying out the subsequent investigations with a view to returning a report, and if appropriate a funding application to the NRA next month.

Assistance is being given by the National Roads Office in Donegal Town on some of these locations.”

C/73/15

CLARIFICATION ON REQUESTS TO THE NRA AND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT IN RELATION TO STANDARDISED SAFETY MEASURES SUCH AS SPECIAL SPEED LIMITS AT SCHOOLS ETC.

The following question was submitted by Clr McGowan:-

"Has the Council requested the NRA and the Department of Transport to consider bringing in standardised safety measures such as a special speed limits for outside all schools in the Country and can I have copies of all relevant correspondences and responses to date?"

Clr McGowan was informed that:-

“Trials of the application for special speed limits have been undertaken by the NRA at various locations around the country and in general are not deemed to have generated any particular positive impact around the schools. Therefore no countywide consent, to apply special speed limits at school site locations in lieu of a default speed limits, has been requested from The National Roads Authority (NRA) or Department of Transport.

It is noted, however, that two particular schools on the N15 and N56 around Letterkenny may be permitted for consideration for such special speed limits due to their particular locations, site specific difficulties and in light of various other measures already introduced.

A proposal for Donegal's 203 schools is being prepared for approval, in relation to the Donegal County Council school flashing lights programme, and the updating/maintenance/replacement of said lights and is expected to be on the Roads SPC Agenda for the February meeting. The introduction of school warning road markings is also being considered for approval.”

C/74/15 CALL ON COUNCIL TO TOP SLICE ROADS FUNDING FOR BRIDGE REPAIR

The following question was submitted by Clr McGowan:-

"Can the Council top slice all roads funding in the County for a county-wide bridge upgrade/replacement programme, considering the urgent needs of Logues Bridge Ballybofey, Mullantyboyle Bridge Glenties, Castlefin Bridge, Cockhill Bridge Buncrana etc. while continuing to seek funding from the Department?"

Clr McGowan was informed that:-

“The Council do not have the authority to top slice all roads funding to create a bridge fund. For example, State Road Grants for Surface Dressing are required to be spent on Surface Dressing or National Road Grants for particular jobs are expected to be spent on the jobs for which the allocation is made.

However, the Council do have the authority to allocate funds that are discretionary in nature or funds that are provided from its own resources.



Historically, the Council has generally allocated roads funds based on road mileage and over the years when suggestions were made to alter this allocation method, the Council has always come back to the system based on road mileage.

It is understood that any changes to this policy would require discussion and approval of the full Council.

Individual Municipal Districts have the authority to determine the spread of the discretionary funds they are allocated. There are several tasks that while discretionary in title are practically non-discretionary in that they are required to be done such as pothole filling, drainage, street cleaning, winter maintenance, etc. and in practice, this leaves the true discretionary monies quite small.

It is recognised that there is a strong need for bridge replacements and improvements and there is no particular funding programme for this work.

The previous Specific Improvement Grant has been suspended by the Department and would have allowed the Council to prioritise and apply for funding of such bridges.

The Council through its Road Design Section has a number of such capital bridge works ready for tender and is in a position to seek tenders as soon as funding is approved.”

C/75/15 NUMBER OF CALLS TO THE EMERGENCY CALL CENTRE  
OVER CHRISTMAS NEWYEAR PERIOD

The following question was submitted by Clr Crawford:-

"How many calls were made to the emergency call centre for DCC aid over the Christmas-New Year period?"

Clr Crawford was informed that:-

“In the period from 23rd December, 2014 to 5th January, 2015, a total of 154 calls were made to the Emergency Numbers provided by Donegal Co. Council. These calls were related to the following areas:

Roads

42

Water / Environment	100
Housing	12
Total	152”

C/76/15 SUPPLYING OF DETAILS OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL RENTAL PROPERTIES

The following question was submitted by Clr Slowey:-

"Regarding the registration of householders with Irish Water, have Donegal County Council been requested by Irish Water to supply details of their rental properties, and if so have the Council provided this information to Irish Water to date?"

Clr Slowey was informed that:-

“Irish Water have written to all Local Authorities asking them to prepare a listing of all domestic properties in their ownership with current tenant occupiers (names only).

Irish Water confirmed that it requires this information under section 26(1)(a) and section 26(5)(a) of the Water Services Act 2013, which empowers Irish Water to request Local Authorities to provide such information as Irish Water may reasonably require to enable it to perform its functions under the Act. Section 26(3) of the Act obliges Local Authorities to comply with a request made pursuant to section 26.

Irish Water have also confirmed that they will provide the Local Authorities with details of a secure file transfer mechanism for submitting tenant names to them. The specific details and timing of the process have not as of yet been finalised.

In light of previous motions discussed at plenary Council level, the Chief Executive has undertaken to keep the Council briefed in relation to developments in this area. The Chief Executive has included an update in his Management Report to Council on this topic.”

C/77/15 JUDICIAL REVIEW OF THE CURRENT DONEGAL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The following question was submitted by Clr Slowey:-

"Have Donegal County Council made any commitment to support the Cathaoirleach's High Court Judicial Review against the Minister for the Environment, regarding the current Donegal County Development Plan?"

Clr Slowey was informed that:-

“Donegal County Council have not made any commitment nor is the making of a commitment under any consideration.”

C/78/15 RETURNS TO DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL FROM THE USE OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM OF WORK PROJECT

The following question was submitted by Clr Slowey:-

"How much of the €3.5 to €4+ million spent by former County Manager Michael McLoone on the Whole System of Work project has been recovered to date from its use by other State Agencies or other bodies?"

Clr Slowey was informed that:-

“The Council is not in receipt of any monies from State Agencies or other bodies in this regard.”

C/79/15 NUMBERS OF STAFF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL WILL BE PERMITTED TO EMPLOY IN 2015

The following question was submitted by Clr O’Domhnaill:-

"Has this Council been given any indication from Government regarding how many people they will be permitted to employ during 2015 and in what positions do this Council require extra staff to be employed?"

Clr O’Domhnaill:-

“Donegal Co. Council made a submission to the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government in December, 2014 in relation to office based management and staffing structures. Work is ongoing in relation to outdoor staffing structures. Engagement is ongoing with DoECLG officials in this

regard, however formal approval to the Council's submission is not available as of yet.

Notwithstanding the above, the Budget adopted by Donegal Co. Council provided for the recruitment of 15 to 20 additional employees during 2015. These employees will be employed to support front line services and to support the anticipated increase in capital programmes, particularly in Housing.

The Council also expect to receive sanction to employ seasonal staff in the Roads area to assist in the delivery of the Road Works programme. The number of seasonal employees will be dependant on the level of grant funding available.”

C/80/15

ESTABLISHMENT OF A FISHING COMMITTEE

The following question was submitted by Clr M.T. Gallagher:-

"Will this Council establish a fishing committee, to ensure this industries needs are met, and to further enhance the development of inshore fishermen?"

Clr M.T. Gallagher was informed that:-

“At present the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is being prepared and the development of natural resources is a key emerging goal in the context of the plan.

Input is being sought from all sectors including those involved in Fishing. Any proposals in relation to the sector and in particular any relating to inshore fishermen can be taken on board in this plan.

Any proposals that can be advanced to enhance the viability of this sector will be welcome. Donegal County Council continues to work with the BIM led Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) with regard to development of coastal and fishing communities.”

C/81/15

INVESTMENT EARMARKED FOR DOE CASTLE

The following question was submitted by Clr O’Fearraigh:-

"Do Donegal County Council in conjunction with the Heritage Society have any future investment earmarked for Doe Castle, as a

potential tourist attraction in Donegal, which is located in Cresslough and is in route of the Wild Atlantic Way?"

Clr O'Fearriagh was informed that:-

"Doe Castle is owned and managed by the Office of Public Works. Donegal County Council has no ownership or involvement in relation to the Castle.

The Council has however invested in development works around Doe Castle (through the DFI). These works included carpark surfacing, provision of picnic benches and fencing. It is recognised that Doe Castle is an important tourism attraction and amenity for Donegal and especially in the context of the Wild Atlantic Way. The Council will be happy to collaborate with the OPW in any ways possible to ensure that full use is made of this resource for the benefit of the County.

Beidh an Comhairle Chontae sasta dul i bpairtneireacht le Bord na nOibreacha Poibli chun an tachmhainn a chur chun cinn ar aon bealaigh gur feidir. Ta infheistiocht deanta ag Chomhairle in aiseanna ag an Chaislean cheanna fein."

C/82/15

#### FUNDING FOR COASTAL EROSION

The following question was submitted by Clr M.T. Gallagher:-

"Will this Council apply for funding to deal with Coastal Erosion, on a longterm basis, and would it be possible to apply for an annual budget from funding agencies to deal with this serious issue?"

Clr M.T. Gallagher was informed that:-

"There is no doubt that the matter of coastal erosion around the county is becoming a bigger concern as extreme weather events become more common. Last winter had seen some of the worst coastal erosion in years along the west coast of Ireland including Donegal. After last winter's first major storm, the Council secured special funding for repairs from the Department of Environment, Department of Transport, Department of Marine and Office of Public Works.

All these funds were for repairs/clean-up and not for future flood improved defences arising from the first major storm. It is

understood that funding from the second major storm has not yet been released.

Some years ago, the Department of Marine had a small coastal protection programme which saw the completion of a couple of schemes each year. That programme was discontinued when the country was hit with the financial and economic crisis a few years ago.

Currently, there is no particular programme for Coastal Erosion for the Council to make applications. However, the Council can make requests for funds to tackle specific projects.

In addition, the Council would support an annual budget for Coastal Erosion from state agencies and this would allow for a meaningful and structured programme that could be planned and delivered on a multi-annual basis.”

C/83/15 SEEKING OF FUNDING FOR THE REPAIR OF TWO BRIDGES WITHIN THE STRATEGIC REGIONAL ROAD BETWEEN FINTOWN AND NEWMILLS

The following question was submitted by Clr Bonner:-

"Can funding be sought from the Department of the Environment or Transport to improve and repair two bridges that are in dangerous state on the Strategic Regional Road between Fintown and New Mills as that road goes through two Municipal District Area?"

Clr Bonner was informed that:-

“A full inspection of all regional road bridges is now completed and priorities identified per Municipal District, which are being submitted to Municipal District Meetings for approval prior to sign off at full Council meeting.

The adopted Budget Book 2015 provides for a Regional Road Bridge Grant for 2015 in the sum of €200,000 along with an additional €250,000 from Discretionary Maintenance for bridge strengthening projects throughout the county during 2015. An equivalent sum was spent on bridge strengthening contracts in 2014.

With the volume of bridges in the county, the current funding levels would take several years to address all bridges, however, progress is being made on an annual basis on the worst ones, with between 15 and 25 bridges per annum being treated (subject to tendered prices, works required, restrictions by statutory bodies, etc.

The previous Specific Improvement Grant afforded the opportunity for the Council to apply for specific projects such as bridges and that particular grant has been suspended this past few years.

The Council can seek special funding from the Department if it is agreed as a special case. However, if the requirement is for parapet repairs or cosmetic repairs, it should be possible to undertake these under Municipal District maintenance budget.”

C/84/15      REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT OF PUBLIC LIGHTING  
WITHIN SPEED LIMITS

The following question was submitted by Clr Bonner:-

"Can public lighting inside speed limits (including council housing estates) be repaired or more modern bulbs installed from Council funding?"

Clr Bonner was informed that:-

“The Council's Contractor, Airtricity Utility Solutions provide maintenance services for public lighting. This includes for replacing bulbs, fittings and minor repairs.

We have had several proposals for enhancement of the lighting stock mainly through the replacement of existing high energy consumption lights with more modern energy efficient lights.

Such an enhancement requires significant capital investment which has not been provided for in Budget 2015. During development of Budget 2015, consideration was given to a 5 year plan that would have required further direct investment coupled with reinvestment of savings on energy use and maintenance.

The 5 year plan would have dealt with about 2,500 of the least energy efficient lights. Ultimately, the proposal was not funded.

Airtricity have a system in place for patrolling lights, receiving and logging complaints and responding.

It is understood that there may be some lights that are actually working but are particularly dim, and it should be possible to have a small number of the worst of these replaced within the existing overall budget.”

C/85/15

EROSION PROBLEMS IN DONEGAL

The following question was submitted by Clr O’Domhnaill:-

"Can this Council put together a Team to address the massive erosion problems which this County is facing as a matter of urgency and bring about a system where the Public are informed and asked to work with the Local Authority to reduce the negative effects of this problem?"

Clr O’Domhnaill was informed that:-

“There is no doubt that the matter of coastal erosion around the county is becoming a bigger concern as extreme weather events become more common.

Last winter had seen some of the worst coastal erosion in years along the west coast of Ireland including Donegal. After last winter’s first major storm, the Council secured special funding for repairs from the Department of Environment, Department of Transport, Department of Marine and Office of Public Works.

All these funds were for repairs/clean-up and not for future flood improved defences arising from the first major storm. It is understood that funding from the second major storm has not yet been released.

Some years ago, the Department of Marine had a small coastal protection programme which saw the completion of a couple of schemes each year. That programme was discontinued when the country was hit with the financial and economic crisis a few years ago.

Currently, there is no particular programme for Coastal Erosion. However, the Council can make requests for funds to tackle



specific projects. It would be ideal to have a multi-annual funding stream.

The Council can assemble a team to tackle the issue in the manner set out in the Question, however, we would need to understand the type of funding stream that could be provided or attracted on a steady basis in order to set the size of the team.

It should be noted that not all solutions to Coastal Erosion require expenditure on hard structural defences and often softer solutions are recommended. Any such team would need to have links to best international practice and understand the suitability of various options. In the past, the Council had links with universities in this regard.

In the absence of a particular stream, the Council could look at perhaps an educational/seminar programme to inform the public in line with the request in this Question and this would need further discussion with the Council.”

C/86/15

PERFORMANCE OF THE COUNCIL PER MUNICIPAL AREA

The following question was submitted by Clr Canning:-

Does this Council have a record of their performance per Municipal Area?"

Clr Canning was informed that:-

“The establishment of Municipal Districts was provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and held their first meetings in June 2014.

These structures are still in the very early stages and it is too early as of yet to identify performance patterns per municipal district.

The establishment and approval of Schedules of Municipal District Works with associated annual service plans will provide a mechanism to review the performance of Municipal Districts against agreed work programmes and plans.

This item is listed for discussion on the agenda for the meeting today and will be brought to each Municipal District during February, 2015.”

C/87/15      CLARIFICATION OF THE NUMBER OF FULL TIME  
MAINTENANCE MEN WORKING WITHIN THE HOUSING  
DEPARTMENT IN EACH MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

The following question was submitted by Clr Canning:-

"How many full time maintenance men does this Council have working 35hrs per week within the Housing Department in each Municipal Area?"

Clr Canning was informed that:-

“There is one Maintenance staff member in each municipal district. In addition to this, the 2015 budget provides for an additional 3 maintenance employees arising from the integration of the former Town Council housing services with Donegal Co. Council.

The additional resource will most likely be assigned in Letterkenny area where the former Town Council had a significant housing stock.

The Council also engages external contractors for certain maintenance type works but more particularly for any improvement works including repair of vacant stock.”

C/88/15      CURRENT STAGE OF THE MUSCOVITE MICA  
INVESTIGATION BY DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL INTO  
ITS COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK

The following question was submitted by Clr Albert Doherty:-

"How advanced is the Donegal County Council investigation into the Muscovite Mica assessment of its Council Housing Stock? Are the long term leasing council housing included and when will the Council present it's findings to all Members?"

Clr Albert Doherty was informed that:-

“The Council are presently in the process of having tests carried out on a number of properties to establish the presence or otherwise of muscovite mica.

The results of these tests will guide the Council in terms of what action may be required in relation to the properties in question and in relation to it's wider social housing stock generally.

In the meantime, in line with existing practice, any suspected case of the occurrence of muscovite mica that may arise in either owned or leased properties will be fully investigated.”

C/89/15

SCHEMES AVAILABLE THROUGH DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL TO THE ELDERLY FOR HOUSING INSULATION, HEAT RETENTION, WINDOW REPLACEMENT

The following question was submitted by Cllr Albert Doherty:-

What County Council housing insulation, heat retention schemes, windows replacement assistance is available to elderly council tenants, and to private tenants in Donegal?"

Cllr Albert Doherty was informed that:-

“In line with funding available from the Department, the existing Energy Retrofit Programme is concentrated on a Fabric Improvement Policy directed towards a “comfortable living” baseline of 300mm roof insulation, wall insulation, and draught proofing. Over the past two years a total of 747 units have had these works carried out and indicators are that funding will continue to be available this year with a further 500 units being targeted for improvement.

Under the SEAI Better Energy Communities Area based programme, a deeper retrofit was carried out to 42 no of units in 2014 and again, it is hoped a similar programme may be available this year. Under this programme, in addition to the comfortable living baseline works, other works such as the provision of high condensing boiler / heat controls and solar panels can be carried out.

In relation to private properties, funds are available under the Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme for the carrying out of various elements of work, including the repair / replacement of windows and doors and the provision of dry lining.

Under the SEAI Better Energy Homes Scheme, which is available to all private home owners, grants are available for the provision of

both cavity and wall insulation, boiler and heating control upgrades and solar panels.

As grant assistance is already available under this scheme for cavity and wall insulation, these works are not eligible under the Councils own grant scheme.”

C/90/15 UPGRADE OF BACK LANES OF COUNCIL HOUSING ESTATES

The following question was submitted by Clr McDermott:-

"To ask the Council to make money available to upgrade back lanes of council housing estates and what department is responsible for the upgrades e.g. housing or roads?"

Clr McDermott was informed that:-

“The total provision for Housing Maintenance for the County in 2015 is €2,825,768. Of this the Revenue provision is €877,268 with the balance of €1,948,500 coming from the Internal Capital Receipts Account.

There was no specific funding set aside for carrying out remedial works to back lanes of Council housing estates.

The maintenance funds provided on an annual basis are prioritised to cover routine maintenance works to the actual housing stock, the repair of vacant stock together with the payment of property tax as opposed to carrying out remedial works to roads or lanes servicing such estates.

The carrying out of road works in Council housing estates has not to date been considered by the Roads Directorate in the context of the Annual Road Works Programme.”

C/91/15 NOTIFICATION BY IRISH WATER TO EACH INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLD FOR THE INSTALLATION OF WATER METERS

The following question was submitted by Clr Murray:-

“Is Irish Water legally obliged to give each individual household prior notice stating that they intend to install a water meter at that

home, and if so, how much time must they give and how is this notice to be delivered?"

Clr Murray was informed that:-

"Irish Water are planning to hold a clinic for the elected members in the County House on the 26th January 2015. This will provide members with an opportunity to raise their issues directly with Irish Water. The position in relation to the legal obligations on Irish Water in relation to engagement with individual households on the metering programme can be clarified with representatives of Irish Water at the clinic."

C/92/15

PROCEDURE AND THE FREQUENCY OF GRANTING  
DIGGING PERMITS TO IRISH WATER FOR THE  
INSTALLATION OF WATER METERS

The following question was submitted by Clr Murray:-

"What is the procedure for granting permits to dig to Irish Water and how often is the utility obliged to apply to Donegal County Council for a permit to dig during the ongoing installation of water meters, what stipulations apply to these permits and which areas are covered by their current applications?"

Clr Murray was informed that:-

"The Water Services Act 2013 provides Irish Water with the relevant powers of a water services authority in order to carry out the water metering programme. For the purposes of Section 41 of the Water Services Act 2007, Irish Water, as a metering authority, is granted equivalent status to a water services authority operating within its own jurisdiction and accordingly, is not required to obtain the consent of the road authority in advance of any road opening for the purposes of the installation of water meters/boundary boxes.

A national road opening protocol has been agreed between the local government sector and Irish Water in relation to advanced notification of planned works and associated arrangements. The Council has no role in relation to Irish Water or their agents/contractors working arrangements with regard to compliance with statutory obligations."

C/93/15 REINSTATEMENT OF THE BUNCRANA TO RATHMULLAN FERRY FOR THE SUMMER OF 2015

The following question was submitted by Clr Donaghey:-

"What efforts are being made to reinstate the Buncrana to Rathmullan ferry for this summer, 2015?"

Clr Donaghey was informed that:-

"Tenders can be requested for a 2015 service should the necessary resources be allocated towards this end."

C/94/15 PROVISIONS AVAILABLE TO FIT LIGHTS AT DANGEROUS JUNCTIONS

The following question was submitted by Clr McDermott:-

"To ask the Council what provisions are available for fitting lights at dangerous junctions?"

Clr McDermott was informed that:-

"In general public lighting is not provided on the rural road network outside of built up areas.

Safety issues are normally addressed in a systematic manner. Issues in the first instance are referred to the Council's road design department for assessment.

Arising from this assessment mitigation measures may be identified which would address the safety issue. The installation of public lighting is rarely included as a mitigation measure but it would form part of the consideration of what is the appropriate solution."

C/95/15 SPECIFIC PLANS BY DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL TO DEAL WITH RECURRING FLOOD PROBLEMS IN DONEGAL

The following question was submitted by Clr Kavanagh:-

"What specific plans have the Council to deal with recurring flooding problems around the County?"

Clr Kavanagh was informed that:-

“This question is also the subject of motion FC 2015 03042 by Cllr Mc Gowan. The executive's response to that motion and the consideration of the members of the motion will determine any future plans and the reply is as follows:

The following advice is provided to members to assist in their deliberation of the underlying theme of the motion and is broken down into the following three areas:

- 1) Local Drainage along Roads (by Council)
- 2) Minor Flooding Works by OPW (less that €500,000)
- 3) Large Scale Regional Flooding (by OPW)

The Council budget provides resources for maintenance associated with drainage on roads.

For 2015 the Council's adopted budget provides for over €10.6m worth of general maintenance works on local and regional roads along with over €0.7m for national roads assuming grant levels are maintained.

In practical terms when disbursed at Municipal District level this equates to between €1.5M and €2.5M for road maintenance per Municipal District. In previous years Members of the Council have resolved to spend a proportion of the roads maintenance monies on different activities including Drainage Works on Roads, Road Surface Repairs, Verge Maintenance, Sign Maintenance, Bridge Inspections, and Emergency RTC and Flooding response.

This figure has been set at between 40% and 50% for drainage over the last number of years. It is strongly recommended that this is maintained and implemented at Municipal District level.

Members have also adopted a policy including proportionate incremental actions to be taken against landowners who allow water to discharge onto roads. These include:

- 1) Advertising re need for drainage twice a year.
- 2) Initiating local verbal contact in relation to particular issues with land or property owners.
- 3) Where matters are not dealt with verbally issuing follow up letters.
- 4) Following up with landowner in relation the issues raised.
- 5) If required formal legal notice to issue.

6) Legal action to be taken as required.

It is again strongly recommended that at a Municipal District level members agree with the executive locally locations where issues are arising that either relate to the policy or to general roads maintenance issues.

It is recommended that this be tracked in the same way as the remainder of the road works programme where solutions lie within in the capacity of the available budgets.

Beyond this there are a significant number of areas where flooding occurs due to inundation of the existing drainage network whether natural or man made. These issues are generally beyond the scope and capacity of the Council's revenue budget.

The OPW as the lead authority for flooding have provided funding for non coastal minor flooding works to address localised river and groundwater related flood problems where works cost less than €0.5million. The proposed schemes are required to achieve a cost benefit ratio based on properties where risk is mitigated by the works.

It is recommended that in the process of agreeing with the executive locations that are arising, that where these locations could be addressed under the OPW scheme that these be highlighted and funding be sought.

Finally considerable work is ongoing at a regional level by the OPW who are completing a Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study, in line with the European Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks The study includes three principal milestones

- 1) Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (Completed 2011)
- 2) Preparation of Flood Maps (2013 - 2014)
- 3) Preparation of Flood Risk Management Plans (2015)

For Donegal public consultation has been ongoing over 2014 in various areas. The next public consultation day is scheduled for Carndonagh PSC on the 5th February for the Carndonagh, Malin, Moville, Clonmany areas. These Flood Maps will in turn inform future planning and development for areas within the framework of the County Development Plan.



It might be worthwhile inviting OPW into a Roads SPC meeting to discuss the approach to the CFRAMS and how the Council fit into the overall process.”

C/96/15 DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL’S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH ANY WEATHER EVENTUALITY THIS WINTER

The following question was submitted by Clr Quinn:-

"Is Donegal County Council confident that it has sufficient ability to cope with any weather eventuality this Winter?"

Clr Quinn was informed that:-

“The Council routinely deal with extreme weather events every year and have in place procedures and practices built up from many years experience. Typical extreme weather usually takes the form of snow/ ice, strong winds and flooding arising from extreme rainfall events and while it is not possible to say for sure that we could cope with any event it can be said that the Council would cope adequately with all but the most extreme events.

In the case of snow/ice the Council routinely grits 21 separate key priority routes throughout the county. It is possible to mount snow ploughs on all of the Council’s gritting fleet in the event of heavy snow falls.

Every effort is made to keep these routes passable in line with the Council’s gritting policy. The Council have a full team of trained operators. The supply of salt is controlled nationally through the NRA. In addition, it is possible to involve the community sector and private contractors if required.

In the case of strong winds the main impact for the Council tends to be from falling trees and other debris on the road network. The Council’s road maintenance staff in each Municipal District regularly clear such blockages to ensure that disruption to traffic is minimised.

In the case of extreme flooding the Council include the clearance of drainage cuttings in its maintenance programme along the road network to prevent in so far as it is possible excessive water ponding on our roads. The matter of regional drainage and flooding

such as rivers bursting its banks is beyond the remit of the Council. In addition, severe coastal erosion can occur from tidal floods and bridges can be undermined or washed away and these outcomes are beyond what the Council can fund from its normal budgets.

The Council also operate an emergency out of hours call out system to ensure that appropriate staff are contactable and can be deployed where necessary.

Major Emergency protocols are also in place in the event that a combined response with other emergency services would be warranted in extreme cases.”

C/97/15 NEED FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDING TO ASSIST IN  
BRIDGE REMEDIAL WORKS IN DONEGAL

The following question was submitted by Clr O’Donnell:-

"Can the Council call on the Government to give much needed funding to the Council in order to address the large number of Bridges which are falling under categories 3, 4, and 5 in need of urgent remedial work?"

Clr O’Donnell was informed that:-

“A full inspection of all regional road bridges is now completed and priorities identified per Municipal District, which are being submitted to Municipal District Meetings for approval prior to sign off at full Council meeting.

The adopted Budget Book 2015 provides for a Regional Road Bridge Grant for 2015 in the sum of €200,000 along with an additional €250,000 from Discretionary Maintenance for bridge strengthening projects throughout the county during 2015. An equivalent sum was spent on bridge strengthening contracts in 2014.

With the volume of bridges in the county, the current funding levels would take several years to address all bridges, however, progress is being made on an annual basis on the worst ones, with between 15 and 25 bridges per annum being treated (subject to tendered prices, works required, restrictions by statutory bodies, etc.

The previous Specific Improvement Grant afforded the opportunity for the Council to apply for specific projects such as bridges and that particular grant has been suspended this past few years.

There is a similar motion before the Council at this meeting and when adopted, the Council staff will issue the appropriate correspondence to Government Departments.”

C/98/15 STATUS OF THE LETTERKENNY TO LIFFORD/A5 ROAD PROJECT AND UPDATE ON THE RESPONSE FROM AN TAOISEACH’S OFFICE TO MEET

The following question was submitted by Clr Brogan:-

"Would this council confirm the current status of the Letterkenny to Lifford Strabane Road/A5 and if any money was allocated to this project or if we had any response from this councils request to meet with the Taoiseach?"

Clr Brogan was informed that:-

“The Letterkenny to Lifford Strabane Road/A5 project is divided into two parts namely:

- 1) N14 Manorcunningham Roundabout to Lifford; and,
- 2) the N14/N15 Junction at Lifford to the A5WTC in Strabane.

The present status of the N14 Manorcunningham Roundabout to Lifford project is that the Route Selection phase has been completed and elements of the Statutory Process phase were undertaken circa 2007/2008.

In effect work on this project has been suspended in recent years due to the impact of the financial crisis. There is no specific allocation for this project in 2015.

The N14/N15 Jn at Lifford to A5WTC in Strabane project has almost completed the Statutory Process phase but this phase cannot be fully completed until the Statutory Process for the A5WTC in Northern Ireland has been completed.

There is an allocation of €30,000 on this project in 2015 for completion of the Statutory Process phase should the corresponding process in NI be completed in 2015.

There is however an allocation provided in 2015 of €500,000 towards route improvement on the TEN-T Network in Donegal. The Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) are a planned set of transport networks across Europe.

The TEN-T regulation targets a gradual development of the transport network with the core network a priority (by 2030) followed by the remainder of the comprehensive network (by 2050).

In Ireland, the core network currently consists of the route from Northern Ireland via Dublin to both Cork/Ringaskiddy and Limerick/Foynes.

The TEN-T regulation defines the objective of increasing the benefits for road users by ensuring safe, secure and high-quality standards for road users and freight transport.

In County Donegal the Ten – T road network runs from the Leitrim County Boundary in the South of the County on the outskirts of Bundoran to the County Border with Derry in the Northeast of the County at Bridgend on the outskirts of Derry City with an overall length of approx 100 km and involves sections of the N13, N14 and N15.

The initial phase of works under this allocation involves the procurement of a 'Corridor Needs Study' on the TEN-T network from Cappry, West of Ballybofey Stranorlar to the N13 Junction at Kilross and the N13 from Kilross to the border at Bridgend and the N14 from Letterkenny to the border at Lifford.

The objective of the study will be to provide a rationale for the improvement of these routes to the required standards and the creation of a priority list of improvement schemes to address identified deficiencies. Based on this list a programme for the development and resourcing of improvement projects will be established.

Separately, in response to the meeting with the Taoiseach, there has been no recent correspondence and the Council plan on sending a follow-up to our previous request.”

C/99/15 ESTIMATES FROM THE SAVINGS IN HAVING PAPERLESS MEETINGS

The following question was submitted by Clr Kavanagh:-

"Can the Council estimate the potential savings from having "Paperless " Meetings?"

Clr Kavanagh was informed that:-

“It is estimated that the potential saving from having 'Paperless Meetings' is approximately 500 euro per meeting.”

C/100/15 POSSIBLE FULL TIME PROVISION OF FULL TIME CONTRACTS TO PART TIME COUNCIL WORKERS

The following question was submitted by Clr O'Donnell:-

"Can the Council look into giving part-time council workers who have worked for many years for the council full time contracts?"

Clr O'Donnell was informed that:-

“In relation to Workforce Planning, Donegal Co. Council made a submission to the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government in December, 2014 in relation to office based management and staffing structures.

Work is ongoing in relation to outdoor staffing structures. It is acknowledged that overall the number of employees in the Council had reduced significantly over the past number of years and this reduction has also applied to outdoor staffing levels.

The Council expects to receive sanction to employ seasonal staff in the Roads area to assist in the delivery of the Road Works programme in 2015. The number of seasonal employees will be dependant on the level of grant funding available.

Notwithstanding the above, the Workforce Planning exercise for outdoor staffing will identify the required number of employees per municipal district and will take account of budgets available and also the integration of the former Town Council teams into the Municipal District structures.

It is likely that this exercise will identify a number of areas where the core staffing levels are below what is required to provide the basic front line services.

In such circumstances, the Council propose to include the requirement for the additional numbers in our Workforce Planning submission to the DoECLG for outdoor staffing. Subject to approval from the DoECLG, arrangements will be made to fill such vacancies through the normal recruitment process.”

C/101/15 CLARITY ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ROLE OF ELECTED COUNCILLORS

The following question was submitted by Clr McGarvey:-

"Is the Local Government Reform an attempt to restrict the role of Elected Councillors in carrying out their obligations to their Constituents?"

Clr McGarvey was informed that:-

“The provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 had their origins in the Action Plan for Effective Local Government ' Putting People First' as launched by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government in October 2012.

The vision set out in this Action Plan includes the following:

Local Government will lead economic, social and community development locally. It will be the main vehicle of governance and public services at local level, deliver efficient and good value services, and represent citizens and communities, as effectively and accountably as possible.

Separate structures of public service will not therefore be established outside of local government unless clearly necessitated in exceptional circumstances.”

C/102/15 SAFETY CHECKS BY WINDMILL OPERATORS ON WINDMILLS IN DONEGAL

The following question was submitted by Clr McMonagle:-

"Has this Council requested any safety checks to be carried out by the operators of the many wind turbines we have across the County in the aftermath of the latest collapse of one in Tyrone?"

Clr McMonagle was informed that:-

“In the context of the extent of any authority that can be exercised by the Council, no requests of this nature have been made.

Developments such as Wind Turbines are required to be designed and constructed so as to be fit for purposes.

In the first instance it is the responsibility of the project proposers and operators to ensure that they are fit for purpose.”

C/103/15 PROGRESS ON ARRANGING A DISCUSSION ABOUT ACCESS AND OTHER RIGHTS AT ADHADAHOR CARRIGART

The following question was submitted by Clr McGarvey:-

"What is the update on my motion submitted to our last Council meeting where I agreed a deferment to reach a solution by discussion to replace access and other Rights that had been removed by the development at Aghadahor, Carrigart to the detriment of residents and Others?"

Clr McGarvey was informed that:-

“This matter has been discussed at meetings of Donegal Co. Council on a number of occasions in the past few months.

Arising from these discussions, the Council resolved at a meeting on 2nd December, 2014, that Cllr. Michael McBride, as Mayor of the Letterkenny Municipal District, would seek to bring the relevant parties together to see if any options or possibilities could be explored to find an agreed solution to the issues at hand.

Donegal Co. Council also agreed that other than offering this assistance, that the Council had no other role in the matter.

Arrangements were made to contact all the relevant parties in December, 2014 to outline the decision arrived at by the Council

and to invite all parties into a process to explore options to resolve the issues.

From the limited replies received, none of the parties who replied were willing to engage in such a process and therefore the meetings envisaged did not take place. In keeping with the resolution of the Council, this matter is now closed.”

C/104/15 SEEKING OF A PRESENTATION FROM DONEGAL TOURISM

The following question was submitted by Clr McMonagle:-

"Can we get a presentation from Donegal Tourism in relation to their strategy for promoting Tourism in Donegal?"

Clr McMonagle was informed that:-

“Donegal County Council is taking a lead role with regard to tourism promotion and marketing of the County. Donegal Tourism Limited is a partnership organisation involving all relevant stakeholders to ensure a coordinated and joined-up approach to the marketing of the County and the application of resources towards this end.

Donegal Tourism Limited is chaired by the DCC Chief Executive at this time and serviced through the Community and Enterprise Division of Donegal County Council.

Work to date has included marketing programmes including TV ads and billboards e.g. in Belfast, Dublin and during the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

The Go Visit Donegal website has been developed as a marketing tool for the County. A new Donegal promotional brochure and a Tourism App will be launched in March.

A presentation will be arranged for Council which will update on the significant activity undertaken over the past 2 years and the plans for marketing and promotion during 2015.”

C/105/15 SEEKING OF CLARIFICATION FROM DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL ON THE COMMUNICATION AND



MANAGEMENT BY IRISH WATER OF WORKS  
PROGRAMME TO THE PUBLIC IN DONEGAL

The following question was submitted by Clr Quinn:-

"As Donegal County Council granted permission for Irish Water works, how are we ensuring that they are communicating with the affected public in a timely manner prior to commencing with the works and ensuring that work is managed in a safe and appropriate manner?"

Clr Quinn was informed that:-

“The Water Services Act 2013 provides Irish Water with the relevant powers of a water services authority in order to carry out the water metering programme.

For the purposes of Section 41 of the Water Services Act 2007, Irish Water, as a metering authority, is granted equivalent status to a water services authority operating within its own jurisdiction and accordingly is not required to obtain the consent of the road authority in advance of any road opening for the purpose of the installation of water meters/boundary boxes.

The Council has no role in relation to Irish Water or their agents/contractors working arrangements with regard to compliance with statutory obligations.”

C/106/15

CLARIFICATION ON THE TIMEFRAME AND DEADLINE  
FOR THE FINALISATION OF THE DONEGAL PLAN

The following question was submitted by Clr Brogan:-

"When will this Council have our Donegal Plan finalised so that 1)our main infrastructure is prioritised, 2) meetings are held with all of our Oireachtas Members and 3) the plan sent Government to be included in any future stimulus package that may be happening?"

Clr Brogan was informed that:-

“Work is at an advanced stage in the preparation of the Local Economic and Community Plan for Donegal.

This plan which is framed around seven priority goals will set out key infrastructural and other needs for the County and provide a framework within which these can be prioritised and met. It is intended to have the infrastructural plan available for review by the Council at a date to be agreed in early February.

This will then inform the engagement with the Oireachtas Members and funding Agencies as agreed by Council previously.”

C/107/15 MOTIONS FROM OTHER COUNCILS/BODIES

The following motions from other councils were noted:-

KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL

“That we the members of Killarney Municipal District support The Carers Association in their call to the Minister for Social *Protection* to amend the Social Welfare Bill to make provision for the restoration of the Respite Care Grant.”

CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

“That Carlow County Council calls on the Minister for Justice and Equality to bring forward much needed legislation in order to regulate shops that give Cash for Gold.”

TIPPERARY COUNTY COUNCIL

“That Tipperary County Council support the upcoming Referendum on marriage equality to be held in the Spring of 2015.”

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL

“That this Council calls on the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Minister Alan Kelly, to act in accordance with Article 9.4 of the EU Water Framework Directive which provides a specific exemption to Ireland from domestic water charging and which is embedded in Ireland’s 208 river Basin Management Plan. This plan is due for its 7 year renewal on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 and we are calling on the Minister, as is within his power and responsibility, to retain the exemption when he submits Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan and strategy. Further, we ask that the contents of this motion be forwarded to the Minister as a matter of urgency and that it be copied to all other county and city councils.”

This concluded the business of the meeting.

