

**Minutes of the April Monthly Meeting of Athlone Town Council, which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 6.00 p.m. on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2008**

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**Attendance:**

Mayor: Cllr. P. Hogan

Members: Cllrs. A. Berry, J. Butler, M. Cooney, R. Lennon, K. Molloy, E. Moran, K. Moran and M. O'Connell

Officers: Mr. Barry Kehoe, Director of Services  
Mr. John Walsh, Town Clerk  
Mr. Alan Kelly, Town Engineer  
Ms. Anne McNamara, Assistant Staff Officer

**Minutes:**

It was proposed by Cllr. Cooney,

Seconded by Cllr. O'Connell and resolved,

“That we hereby adopt the Minutes of the March Monthly Meeting which was held on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008”.

**Congratulations:**

The Mayor commended the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee for the great weekend of entertainment provided for the town, including the Parade itself and in particular, congratulated Cllr. K. Moran on his tremendous input to the event. All the Members joined in the congratulations and Cllr. K. Moran thanked them in turn for their support and their funding. He also thanked the Town Engineer and his staff, the Army, the shopkeepers, the committee members and all who helped and supported the activities.

The Members joined with Cllr. E. Moran who congratulated the Buccaneers on winning their Division and wished them well in their future matches.

**Vote of Sympathy:**

All the Members wished to be associated with Cllr. Molloy's vote of sympathy to Mary Farrell and her sons on the recent death of Edward. He said he was a tremendous character and had brought great enjoyment to the town.

## **Matters Arising from the Minutes:**

### **Mooreview:**

The Town Engineer informed Cllr. Cooney that he had not heard back from the Area Engineer yet regarding the sign at Mooreview.

### **Reinstatement works at Strand:**

The Town Engineer informed Cllr. Cooney that the ESB have further works to carry out in the area and a sub-station to construct, so final re-instatement would not be done yet.

### **Back lane at St. Francis Terrace:**

Cllr. K. Moran was informed by the Town Engineer that the back lane works would cost €50,000.00

### **Yellow boxes:**

The Director told Cllr. O'Connell that Kelly's are coming back to do the rest of the yellow boxes needed.

### **Main Drainage:**

The Director informed Cllr. O'Connell that there is no change in the status of the Main Drainage and the EIS is progressing.

### **Footpaths in Baylough:**

The Director informed Cllrs. O'Connell and Lennon that he would follow up on the footpaths in Baylough and in answer to their question on Connaught Street pedestrian crossings, the Town Engineer stated that surveys would be carried out soon and he would report back to the next meeting.

### **Westside Enhancement:**

In answer to Cllr. Molloy's query, the Town Engineer stated that the Block Grant had been spent last year on materials for the proposed works.

### **The Plume:**

The Town Engineer informed Cllr. O'Connell that the water levels in the Shannon are still too high for divers to remove the Plume.

### **Disposal of Land:**

It was proposed by Cllr. Molloy,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

“Pursuant to the provision of the Local Government Act 2001, the Housing Act 1966, Section 90 of the Housing Act 1966 and the Landlord and Tenant (Ground Rents) No.2 Act 1978, we hereby approve of the disposal of the fee simple interest in the properties as set out in the schedule hereunder:

#### **Schedule:**

<b><u>Description of Property</u></b>	<b><u>Name of Purchaser</u></b>	<b><u>Purchase Price</u></b>
13 St. Joseph’s Villas	Mary Kelly	€45.40
26 St. Anne’s Terrace	John Berrigan	€45.40

### **Educate Together:**

It was proposed by Cllr. K. Moran,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

“That a Deputation from Educate Together be accepted at the May Monthly Meeting”.

### **Athlone eCom:**

The Town Clerk advised the Members that a representative was needed to take over from Cllr. E. Moran on the Board of Directors for Athlone eCom.

It was proposed by Cllr. Butler,

Seconded by Cllr. Molloy and resolved,

“That we hereby elect Cllr. P. Hogan as Director on the Board of Athlone eCom”.

### **Westmeath Heritage Forum:**

The Town Clerk informed the Members that a Town Council representative on the Heritage Forum was needed to replace Cllr. Hogan.

It was proposed by Cllr. Cooney,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

“That we hereby elect Cllr. M. O’Connell as the Town Council representative on the Westmeath Heritage Forum”.

### **Town Centre Streetscape Upgrade Scheme:**

The Town Clerk advised the Members that the Scheme had been advertised and on public display, with the closing date for submissions being January 24<sup>th</sup> 2008. Two submissions

had been received and were outlined in detail in the Report of the County Manager, as set out hereunder:

### **Report of County Manager:**

The proposed development to upgrade the Town Centre Streetscape was advertised in the press on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 and the plans and particulars were placed on public display pursuant to Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended. The closing date for submissions/observations was January 24<sup>th</sup> 2008.

I have conformed with the statutory requirements and I now place this Report before you and any resolution to vary or modify it or to decide not to proceed with the development must be passed by you not later than 6 weeks from the receipt of this Report.

#### **1) Nature, Extent & Principle Features of the Development:**

The site consists of Gleeson Street, Mardyke Street, Sean Costello Street, Dublingate Street, The Bawn, Rectory Road, Church Street, Bridge Street, Custume Place and the Civic Square at the Civic Centre which are either public roads or public places in the centre of Athlone.

The development will cover a distance of approximately 1000 metres and an area of approximately 13,200m<sup>2</sup> between Gleeson Street and Custume Place and will include the following:

- The upgrading and enhancement of the whole streetscape and Civic Square including the roads, footpaths and open spaces with high quality materials.
- The new surfaces will consist of materials such as granite, limestone, and yorkstone with bitmac road surfaces.
- Soft landscaping with pleached trees and semi-mature feature trees and shrubs.
- Public lighting, bench seating, bollards, litter bins, bike racks and signage.
- Loading bays, set down areas, taxi rank and other associated works.
- The development will also include the pedestrianisation of the western section of Sean Costello Street and The Bawn and the provision of a one way westbound traffic system at Mardyke Street, Dublingate Street, Church Street and Custume Place (part)

#### **2) Planning Evaluation:**

The proposed works are consistent with the Town Development Plan 2008-2014 and in particular the following objectives:

- (a) R12 – Town Centre improvements – To undertake environmental works and upgrade Custume Place, Church Street, The Bawn, Mardyke Street, Irishtown and St. Mary’s Square with paving, lighting, seating, bollards, and landscaping.
- (b) R13 – Irishtown, Mardyke Street, Church Street – To pedestrianise upper Irishtown and create a one-way street westwards at Mardyke Street and Church Street.

The site is also within the historic core of the town and the zone of archaeological interest which is protected by the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2006, the Town Development Plan 2008-2014 and the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004.

### **3) Submissions:**

#### **(a) Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government:**

##### **Issues:**

- (i) The site is within the historic core of Athlone, Recorded Place WM029-042 and is protected under the National Monuments Acts. Given the scale, extent and location of the works ground disturbance could encounter sub-surface archaeological remains.
- (ii) The Council must undertake an archaeological assessment of the site by an Archaeologist who should also be present when sub-surface work is undertaken.
- (iii) The Archaeologist should prepare a written report for submission to the Council and the Department.

##### **Response:**

The Council will conform with the requirements of the Department and engage on Archaeologist for the purposes of assessment and the preparation of an Archaeological Report.

#### **(b) Mr. Brendan Boyle, Rindoon Park, Athlone**

##### **Issues:**

- (i) The site notice was inadequate, was obscured and concealed on a hoarding beside the Civic Square and appeared to be relevant to the Church and was not in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001.

- (ii) The plans and particulars of the proposed development were not available in accordance with the Regulations and the Council was unreasonable and unlawful in dealing with his request for information and therefore have no jurisdiction to decide on the Part 8 process.
- (iii) This part of the submission is a lengthy assessment of the streetscape, footpaths and the built form in the town centre which are considered to give an impression of a town with poor legibility, not attractive and safe, has a poor atmosphere or sense of well being, is hostile to children, the elderly and people with disabilities, does not offer a good quality of place and quality of life and is unattractive to inward investors all of which make Athlone Town Centre a place that is not sustainable.
- (iv) The proposals for Custume Place and Bridge Street are welcomed but the avenue of 5no. pleached trees to the rear of the Irish Life building towards the Olive Grove Restaurant are not appropriate for the location and should be replaced with 5 columnar beech trees which would offer height and structure without bulk.

The replacement of a decaying tree at Custume Place is supported but the removal of 4no. existing trees to the front of the National Irish Bank is strongly opposed.

- (v) The works at Church Street, the Bawn and Mardyke Street are commended. However it is recommended that the needs of cyclists be facilitated on a reconfigured design and that the Bawn Gable of the Office Shop be landscaped by the owners.

The pleached trees at Mardyke Street are supported.

- (vi) The Council to work with the property owners to eliminate the dereliction facing Sean Costello Street and to retain the mountain ash tree to the front of Dunnes Stores.

Information was not available to make a submission on the one-way street proposal.

- (vii) The Civic Square is deficient in terms of its surface, diversity of use and facilities, suffers from poor enclosure and containment and lacks the supervision of any adjoining residential development. The trees to the west are of good quality.

The planting of trees and shrubs along the Church boundary will lead to overshadowing and will provide cover for anti social behaviour and should not be proceeded with and it is recommended that the trees including a copper

beech should be placed inside the Church boundary with their consent. Railings along the Church boundary are suggested and the use of mixed materials for the square is commended. The steps/seating to the front of the Civic Centre should be reviewed as they would attract anti-social elements at night.

- (viii) The wall along the eastern boundary of the Church should either be replaced or repaired.
- (ix) The Council should explore partnership opportunities to enhance the sense of place and place function for the Civic Square.
- (x) The debris and rubble from the works should be reused rather than be disposed of in the landfill site.
- (xi) The proposals go some way to re-imagining Athlone by creating a quality public domain and a sustainable environment for the people that will function more effectively.

The Members, Executive and Staff are commended for their vision and work.

**Response:**

- (i) Site notices were erected at Church Street, Mardyke Street and the Civic Square and in this context the Council did conform with the Planning Regulations.
- (ii) The document describing the nature and extent of the development, the public notice and the site location map and drawing which described the proposed development were on public display on the Notice Board in the Reception Area of the Civic Centre.

The drawings gave a very clear description of the works proposed in terms of the visual images and the written details. Normally Part 8 developments require drawings of a scale of 1:500 but in the case of road works the minimum scale required is 1:2500. In this instance the Council drawings were to a scale of 1:500 which far exceed the 1:2500 required. The Council conformed with the Planning Regulations.

Copies of the drawings were supplied to Mr. Boyle which enabled him to make the extensive submission received.

- (iii) Mr. Boyles assessment of the current state of the Town Centre is noted.

- (iv) The pleached trees proposed adjacent to the Olive Grove Restaurant/Irish Life building will have pruned crowns and will reduce shading to the minimum while providing green foliage.

The 5no. columnar beech trees requested would be too large for this area where light and space are at a premium.

The removal of the trees at the National Irish Bank is necessary to adjust the gradients and levels to rationalise the area to maximise the available space. Replacement trees will include at least one semi-mature tree.

- (v) The introduction of the one-way-traffic system in Church Street/Mardyke Street and the reduction of the road width to a single carriageway will render the street safer for cyclists.

Landscaping of the gable of the Office Centre does not come within the remit of these works but the owners can be contacted and encouraged.

- (vi) The facades of properties facing Sean Costello Street do not come within the remit of these works but the owners can be contacted and encouraged.

The 2no. semi-mature mountain ash trees at Dunnes Stores are not particularly good specimens and their streetscape value is questionable. This prominent location will become one of the main entrance points to the pedestrianised zone and more suitable street tree species will be provided that will thrive in the urban environment and contribute to the importance of the location.

The one-way-traffic system and pedestrianisation of western Sean Costello Street have previously been approved by the Council in the context of the Traffic Management Plan.

The Civic Square requires upgrading and the Council wishes to utilise the area to greater effect and markets, events, concerts and displays will be considered and its use as a passive recreation will also be encouraged. The works proposed will create the form and environment for such activities and for that reason are included in these proposals.

Railings are proposed along the northern boundary of the Church and the semi-mature trees along this boundary will link up with the large mature trees along the western boundary of the Square.

The improved lighting and greater use of the Square will insure greater surveillance of the area as will the adjoining buildings and all will discourage anti-social behaviour.

- (vii) The wall along the eastern boundary of the Church is part of the Athone Town Wall and as such is a national monument that cannot be interfered with. Maintenance work has previously been undertaken on the wall on the advice and guidance of a Conservation Architect.
- (viii) The Council will be encouraging greater public usage of the Civic Square as outlined at (vii) above and will liaise with interested parties.
- (ix) Waste materials from the works will be processed in accordance with current best practice for construction and demolition waste.
- (x) These comments and commendation are noted and welcomed.

**Recommendation:**

I will proceed with the works as advertised and as set out on Drawing No.3672-P.8-L-101 and I will conform with the requirements of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in regard to archaeological assessment and reporting.

**End:**

The Town Clerk advised that the Council wishes to proceed with the works as advertised but with an Archaeological Assessment Report and he recommended the Members approval.

The Members welcomed the proposed Scheme in general and asked about the timeframe. The Director informed them that the Council were in the process of appointing consultants and hopefully this would be done by the first week in June. They are waiting too for an announcement from the Department about the Gateway Innovation Fund and hope to get 80% funding from it. The project will cost approx. €6m he said and should take 12-18 months. Cllr. E. Moran asked that the disruption to business be kept to a minimum, with the suspension of work before Christmas. The Director said he could not comment on details yet, but it was hoped to maintain business at all times.

Cllr. Lennon enquired about the status of the Westside scheme and the Director advised that he would be meeting with the Consultants on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April. Materials have been purchased and he confirmed they would be going on site in the immediate future.

It was proposed by Cllr. Butler,

Seconded by Cllr. Molloy and resolved,

“Pursuant to the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006, the Planning & Development Regulations 2001-2007 and in particular, Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 and Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, we hereby approve of the Scheme for the Town Centre Streetscape Upgrade”.

### **Representational Payment:**

It was proposed by Cllr. K. Moran,

Seconded by Cllr. Butler and resolved,

“Pursuant to the Local Government Act 2001, we hereby approve of the revised annual representational payment to the Members as set out in the Department of the Environment Circular Letter LG 04/08 with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008”.

### **One-way traffic system:**

The Director informed the Members that as the Council is no closer to getting the land from C.I.E. for the Railway Field Road, it proposes to go ahead with the introduction of the one way west bound traffic system at Mardyke Street, Dublingate Street, Church Street and Custume Place and the pedestrianisation of Sean Costello Street (western section). He hoped to now commence a consultation process with the traders, C.I.E., Bus Eireann, emergency services etc. to make them aware of the commencement and timeframe. He added that the one-way system has to be in place for the enhancement scheme to work.

The Members expressed some concerns over the system and problems it might cause on Station Road and at the Hospital without the 4-lane railway field road being in operation. They agreed that the one-way system be proceeded with.

### **Managers Orders:**

The Members noted the summary of Managers Orders as circulated.

### **Questions:**

Question 1 Cllr. K. Molloy:

“Can this Council write to Manager HSE Mr. Joe Ruane and request an update on Health Infrastructure proposal for Athlone?”

**Answer:** Yes.

Question 2 Cllr. K. Molloy:

“Can this Council give an estimate of Development Levies collected and where they may be spent?”

**Answer:** Levies collected amount to €4.77m and will be expended on the following projects:

- 1) Railway Field Road
- 2) Church Street Streetscape Project
- 3) Westside Streetscape Project
- 4) O'Connell Street Project
- 5) Parks and opens spaces
- 6) Athlone Castle
- 7) Art Gallery and other projects that may arise.

Question 3     Cllr. P. Hogan:  
 “Will Athlone Town Council make efforts to correct traffic light sensors at the Crescent Junction?”

**Answer:**     **All approaches to the junction operate in sequence with a minimum green time and thereafter the sensors monitor congestion and adjust the green times accordingly. The traffic light detectors are in full working order at present and any concerns should be notified to the Town Engineer for resolution.**

Question 4     Cllr. P. Hogan:  
 “Can this Council or Westmeath County Council provide a drain under railway bridge at Roslevin Lawns in an effort to alleviate flooding problem?”

**Answer:**     **The matter is being investigated by Westmeath County Council with a view to resolving the issue.**

Question 5     Cllr. E. Moran:  
 “What progress has been made on the start up of the Garrycastle Bridge?”

**Answer:**     **The Compulsory Purchase of the Land for this project has been confirmed and the Council has an allocation of €455,000 for the scheme for 2008. The Council is currently procuring a Consulting Engineer to prepare a detailed design for the project. It is expected that this process will be completed by June 2008 and the design will then proceed.**

Question 6     Cllr. E. Moran:  
 “When is the Bonavalley/Loughandonning Action plan coming before the Council?”

**Answer:**     **A first draft of the Plan is awaited and it is expected that the Draft Plan will be presented to the June Meeting.**

Question 7. Cllr. M. O'Connell:  
"Who is responsible for litter on the Athlone Bypass and what is the schedule for cleaning?"

**Answer:** **Westmeath County Council are responsible and it is cleaned as required and as budgets permit.**

Question 8. Cllr. M. O'Connell:  
"Is there any reason why the sewage being pumped into the Shannon South of the Lock cannot be connected to the pipe that goes under the Shannon to the Waste Treatment Plant?"

**Answer:** **The syphon under the river and the pumping station at the Lock do not have the capacity to cope with all the effluent at times and on such occasions the excess flows to the river. This will be resolved by the new scheme.**

Question 9. Cllr. A. Berry:  
"What action has Athlone Town Council taken to prevent the continuous flooding of the pathway between the Green Olive Pub and the Ballymahon Road".

**Answer:** **This matter has been included in the Block Grant expenditure proposals as approved by the Council last month.**

### **H.S.E./Pharmacists Dispute:**

The Town Clerk informed the Members that a very lengthy reply had been received from Office of the Minister for Health and Children regarding alternative arrangements being made and he circulated the letter to them.

### **C.C.T.V. System:**

The Members noted a letter from the Office of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and a response to a parliamentary question submitted by Senator McFadden stating that the contract for the installation of the system in Athlone had been signed in January and it is hoped to be completed later this year subject to planning permission, wayleaves and any civil works required.

### **Drainage Scheme:**

The Town Clerk circulated a letter sent to Senator McFadden from Tony Killeen TD outlining the position of the proposed Scheme.

Cllr. O'Connell asked when there would be a presentation on the Water Services to the Town Council and it was agreed to request a presentation now and to have one every 6 months thereafter.

### **Barriers for Connolly Street:**

In answer to Cllr. Molloy's motion, the Town Clerk stated the provision of new bollards will be costed by the Town Engineer and brought back to the Members for consideration. Cllr. Molloy welcomed this.

### **Safety Restraints in Military vehicles:**

Cllr. Hogan requested that the appropriate Minister be written to requesting that all military vehicles be fitted with safety restraints, in light of recent accidents that have taken place. The Members supported this and it was agreed to write to the Minister for the Environment and to the Minister for Transport.

### **Cut backs in the Fire Service:**

In response to Cllr. Hogan's motion, the Town Clerk stated that current operational procedures provide that the Fire Service does not attend all incidents. He said that a caller to the Emergency Services is asked if there is anyone trapped or if a vehicle is on fire and if the answer is yes or they are not sure, then the Fire Service will attend. The Ambulance Service can also call out the Fire Service at anytime during the incident, if the situation changes. Cllr. Hogan said he had a document signed by the Chief Fire Officers of the region outlining cutbacks across the board. The Members accepted the more efficient use of the Fire Service but were not happy that protocol had changed without them being informed. Because Cllr. Hogan had a signed document on cutbacks, they felt it necessary for the C.F.O. Mr. Dave Stuart to attend a meeting to answer their questions.

It was proposed by Cllr. Butler,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

“That we agree to invite Mr. Dave Stuart, C.F.O. to the May Monthly Meeting to give a presentation on the changes made to the Fire Service”.

### **Playground at Baylough:**

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Hogan that the Council has no current proposals for a playground for the Baylough area and has no land for such a purpose. He said a

playground was provided for the Westside at College Park and playgrounds are also available at the Town Park, Regional Sports Centre, Wansboro Park and Parnell Square is currently in train.

Cllr. Hogan asked if an area of suitable land could be identified would the matter be re-examined and he was told it would.

### **Staff for Motor Tax:**

Cllr. E. Moran was pleased to hear that a third member of staff had been assigned to the Customer Service area and that this would facilitate the opening of the second motor tax point as required.

### **Emptying of Bins:**

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. E. Moran that the bins for which Athlone Town Council are responsible are emptied weekly on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and also on Sundays in the town centre during the Summer months, while the bins on the approach roads to the town are the responsibility of Westmeath County Council, who empty them weekly. He added that the bins are also monitored and emptied when overflowing.

Cllr. Moran felt the approach roads to the town and especially at the A.I.T. are being neglected by the County Council but the Director assured him that this was not the case, that the County Council budget for street cleaning and bin collection in the Athlone area is €90,000. He said that it was impossible to keep bins empty and streets clean all the time because of littering by the public and the misuse of the bins.

### **Security at Portlick:**

Cllr. Butler stated that scrambler bikes and horses were using walkways through the forest and some trees were also cut down and he felt Westmeath County Council should take action to prevent this vandalism. It was agreed that the Area Engineer would meet with him on site to inspect the area and to determine what responses are needed.

### **Funding for Disabled Persons Grants:**

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Butler that Westmeath County Council has allocated provisional budgets to the four administrative areas including the Athlone Area to cover the Disabled Persons and Essential Repairs Grant Schemes and the three new Housing Grant Schemes introduced by the DEHLG in November 2007. He said the Members provided €10,000 in the 2008 Budget and the Council has sought funding of €1,590,000 from the Department, which would provide a total of €2.1m to cover all 5 schemes and it is hoped to know our allocation before the end of April. Following this the position will be reviewed and existing commitments will be taken into consideration, when allocations

are being formulated. The Director said the allocation could be on the May Agenda and the Members welcomed this.

### **Water meters:**

In response to Cllr. Butler's motion the Town Clerk stated that all non-domestic premises including community and voluntary organisations will be metered in accordance with the Government's water pricing policy, not that of Westmeath County Council. He said that non domestic water charges will consist of a standing charge and volumetric charge, the standing charge to be in the region of €75 p.a. and the water charge will therefore be relative to the water consumed on each premises.

The Director confirmed that the Council cannot use its discretion as it is bound by Government policy.

### **Improvement Works at Baylough:**

Cllr. O'Connell requested that Westmeath County Council be asked to carry out improvement works in Baylough for traffic calming purposes and pedestrian safety and the Town Clerk stated that the Council would examine the area together with the finance available. He added that Westmeath County Council is contributing financially to the project ongoing in the area at the moment.

### **Footpath at Strand Street:**

In response to Cllr. O'Connell's motion the Town Clerk stated that this footpath had been temporarily reinstated following the provision of stopcocks and water control units, by the Water Services Section and they will be contacted to carry out permanent reinstatement works.

### **Standing Orders:**

It was proposed by Cllr. K. Moran,

Seconded by Cllr. Butler and resolved,

“That we hereby suspend Standing Orders to deal with the remainder of the items on the Agenda”.

### **Car-parking at the Tax Office:**

It was agreed to write to the Revenue Commissioners to request them to consider opening up their car park to the public at weekends and busy evenings during the Drama Festival as requested by Cllr. O'Connell's motion.

### **E.S.B. Mast at Clonbrusk:**

Cllr. K. Moran requested that the Council write to the ESB and ask them to relocate their mast at Clonbrusk to a site outside the McCormack Park estate and it was agreed to do so.

### **Traffic Lights at Cloghanboy junction:**

The Town Clerk stated in response to Cllr. K. Moran's motion that the proposal to signalise this junction is still under consideration by the NRA who are considering traffic management at the Garrycastle and Ballymahon junctions in the context of the imminent opening of the N6 dual carriageway from Dublin. He added that a further letter requesting approval to proceed with the Cloghanboy junction improvements as a separate scheme, is being issued.

### **L plate drivers:**

All the Members supported Cllr. Berry's motion to write to the Minister for Transport requesting him to postpone his decision that L plate drivers have a fully qualified driver with them at all times until they pass their test and it was agreed to write.

### **Crash barrier at the Shannon:**

In response to Cllr. Berry's requested the Town Clerk stated that a gap of approximately 3m wide exists at the Strand, within the pedestrian barrier which was installed in recent years. This was left to allow access to the steps at this location. He said the area will be re-examined to investigate whether or not the gap can be decreased to less than a car width, while also maintaining access to the riverside steps.

### **Drain at Tormey Villas/Ashdale:**

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Berry that this drain carries water from the rear of Assumption Road, around the boundary of the football pitch to the surface water system in Ashdale and eventually to the Shannon. He said this is an open drain and is similar to many other drains in urban areas and the cost of piping it would be in the order of €35,000 and as such is considered to be prohibitive.

Cllr. Berry accepted it was costly but said that 2 children had fallen into this drain within 8 days of each other and you could not put a cost on a child's life. He asked the Town

Engineer to re-consider and was supported by Cllr. Butler who suggested paying for the piping from development levies.

The Director said the Council had not been aware of any incidents and in light of these, the matter will be re-examined.

**This concluded the business of the meeting.**