



**Minutes of Naas Municipal District Special Meeting
held at 11:00am on Wednesday 24 July 2024**

Members Present: Councillor F Brett (Mayor), A Breen, B Clear, G Dunne, C Kelly, S Moore and E Sammon

Officials Present: Ms C Barrett (A/District Manager), Mr D Hodgins (Senior Executive Engineer), Mr Y Khan (A/District Engineer), Ms M Richardson (Meetings Administrator) Ms A Noone (Meetings Secretary).

NS01/0724

Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations from the members of pecuniary or beneficial interests under Section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended.

Councillor F Brett welcomed everyone to the Special Meeting of the Naas Municipal District and advised that Ms C Barrett had an update for the members regarding the Part 8 closure of ramp in Sallins.

Ms C Barrett advised that the team would not be proceeding with the Section 38 Proposed Sallins Grand Canal Greenway Link closure of the ramp towards Kerdiffstown. They had listened to the members concerns and were looking at alternative options. Traffic management issues needed to be addressed and a further traffic study was needed. They were looking at measures to help Sallins and would possibly come back in the future with an updated plan.

Councillor C Kelly sought clarification on the matter, were they closing the ramp or resolving the issues addressed.



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Councillor G Dunne questioned if the Section 38 was being pulled indefinitely or would it be reintroduced at a later stage.

Ms C Barrett clarified that they were not proceeding with the current plan to close the ramp and were allowing time to look at alternative measures. They may come back with a different Section 38 in the future and were aware of issues around the closure of the ramp.

The members thanked Ms C Barrett for acknowledging their concerns and decision not to close the ramp.

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Naas to Sallins Greenway – Abbey Bridge to Osberstown Bridge Scheme

The members considered the Section 38 of the road Traffic Act 1994 - Naas to Sallins Greenway – Abbey Bridge to Osberstown Bridge Scheme

A report had been circulated to the members in advance of the meeting.

Ms C Barrett advised that this proposed scheme would be a high quality, segregated walking and cycling facility which would link Naas and Sallins. She advised that due to the ongoing Climate Emergency targets which needed to be met, the process of road re-allocation needed to start and hard decisions would need to be made in the future. Closing this route would promote active travel and be a step in the right direction to provide pedestrians and cyclists with a safe route. She noted there was a considerable number of submissions. More people needed to be encouraged to use Active Travel measures.

Councillor F Brett advised that he understood the rationale for the plan but it was a fair stretch of road which never had any major incidents, the outcome of this might lead to traffic congestion and create more issues but agreed that safety and accessibility for children was needed. Better communication regarding these matters



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was needed from Kildare County Council. He then advised that he would take questions and comments from the members

Councillor A Breen thanked the team for the meeting and advised that residents were not happy, the members were there to represent the constituents and she would not be supporting the closure of the road.

Councillor B Clear was grateful that this project was going ahead, the Sunday car free day had been such a success, and this project would be transformative. He had been promoting this for many years. It would be helpful to school children accessing the different schools in Naas and Sallins. He understood that it would be difficult for commuters and there would be an adjustment. This road was currently being used as a rat run. It would be the first of its kind in the County, a linear park linking one town to another and the project would have a good impact on the local community.

Councillor E Sammon asked would it be a trial period or was it a permanent closure. How did the team envisage the feedback on the outcome of the project, was there a dedicated email that people/members could email any feedback? She also asked how it would be policed. She noted that it could never truly be a car free road as there were many residents there. She suggested that the roads would be chaotic in August when the schools returned. She had an issue with the members having no power on the outcome of these decisions. She queried whether there had been a consultation with An Garda Síochána on the use of the back entrance of St Marys as this entrance now appeared to be defunct.

Councillor C Kelly advised that she heard what the team were saying and agreed in the long term it was the right thing to do but felt as though things were not coming in the right order. The lack of communication put out to the public was an issue. Many people hadn't heard about the plan, going forward Kildare County Council needed to address how they communicated to the community. Could drawings/maps/plans be put up in the Library as well as the Áras. The information needed to be more



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accessible. This road closure would have a knock on effect, moving all the traffic to the Sallins Road would be a huge issue. People would not stop using cars overnight and the Sallins Road needed to be made safer if the canal was to be closed. This should not be done in isolation without an increase in public transport and school bus places. Would it be a trial period for six months or would it be permanent. There had been 173 submissions, which she felt were being ignored. How would people have a way of giving feedback. How would it affect access to the De Burgh gardens, if there was no disability access would those with disabilities be allowed local access.

Councillor F Brett clarified that it would not be a trial that it was a permanent closure, the members could look for a report in January to see how it was working.

Councillor S Moore said that in the big picture he was all for the project but raised a few issues. Communication from Kildare County Council, not everyone had access to the website or read the local newspapers. Communication system was not good enough. Section 38 gave road design team free reign to do whatever they wanted and he wanted assurance that something would be done to make Sallins Road safer. Misinformation had spread regarding closure of Abbey Street/Basin Street junction, members of the public were not aware of that closure. Why was this junction falling under this particular Section 38. Trust was beginning to slip and communication was poor. Lights would be needed on the Osberstown-Sallins junction. The removal of traffic on the road would lead to estates being used as car parks. Could signage be installed to deter that and encourage people to use proper car parks. He also mentioned that people who lived along the canal would get abuse from intolerant pedestrians/cyclists, what could be done? When the Greenway and road meet at Osberstown bridge, pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles would meet at a narrow bridge. No safety at that bridge. There was no pathway from Acorn Creche and he sought commitment that this would be looked at and suggested could a boardwalk be put at the junction.



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Councillor G Dunne reiterated Councillors S Moore's sentiments and said that the members having no power regarding the S38 was an issue. The Sunday Road closure had been a great success but weekdays would be very different. He didn't see how it would promote the town. Thinks it would discourage people from using Naas for their business. He queried did the people who made submissions get a report back.

With regard to the concern that the powers of elected members were being circumvented, Mr D Hodgins advised that the Section 38 process fell within the policy framework as voted and agreed upon by the members. The Executive must bring forward projects that were consistent with the policy framework which the councillors had voted on previously. He confirmed that using the canal route as a segregated active travel spine was cost effective and would have a significantly less environmental impact than an alternative segregated route along the Sallins Road which would impact on heritage, archaeology and the receiving environment. The project linked the Millenium Park area directly to Naas town and provided an active travel alternative for residents and road users to the use of motorised vehicles. This was in line with modal shift, reallocation of road space and climate action policies. He acknowledged that it would be an inconvenience to some road users but there were alternative regional routes for motorised traffic (the Sallins and Caragh roads). However, in the context of the declared climate crisis, behaviour change was required from the public to help reach the climate action emission reduction targets.

With regard to road safety at schools on the Sallins Road, Mr D Hodgins reaffirmed that this project would improve safer access to schools by providing an alternative for active travel modes along the canal. With regard to concerns that this decision would increase traffic congestion on the Sallins Road, Mr D Hodgins outlined that congestion was directly related to individual decisions made by motorists to drive at a time when the road network was at or above capacity. The decision to drive at school opening and closing times, was not linked to the Section 38 initiative and a



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decision on it could not be blamed for traffic congestion, as the active travel scheme would provide the public with an alternative to use as a segregated separate space.

Regarding the requests for signage, this was acknowledged and the matter would be considered to alert users that local access would continue to be permitted. Mr D Hodgins confirmed that this initiative was permanent and not a trial, however, like all projects it would be monitored and if there were future concerns these would be examined.

Regarding communication, the opinion that the Executive did not consult properly or widely enough with the public was not accepted. The scheme was adequately advertised and this was reflected in the volume of submissions made. Furthermore, leaflets were dropped to premises that were directly impacted by the scheme and site meetings held when requested. It was stated that it was impossible to liaise directly with the 30,000 people resident in the Naas environs, however, all available communication channels were used. It was noted that the elected members were briefed about the scheme in advance of public consultation and now again, prior to a decision being made by the Executive. Finally, it was confirmed that it was not possible to write personally back to individuals who made a submission, however, the Section 38 report was a public document which addressed all observations made and the reports could be viewed online.

The report was noted.

The meeting concluded.