

**Minutes of Meeting of Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee
held on 29th May 2023 via Zoom**

PRESENT: Cllr. Michael O'Meara (Chair)
Cllr. Micheál Anglim
Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald
Cllr. Jim Ryan
Cllr. Declan Burgess
Cllr. Hughie McGrath
Cllr. David Dunne
Mr. Gerard Shanahan PPN
Mr. Brian Pope, PPN
Ms. Michelle Aylward, County Tipperary Chamber
Mr. Marcus O'Connor, Director of Services, Roads & Transportation
Mr. Liam Brett, Senior Engineer, Roads Operational
Mr. James Murray, Senior Engineer, Roads Operational
Ms. Michèle Maher, Administrative Officer, Roads
Mr. Michael Tierney, Executive Engineer, Roads
Mr. Pat Fitzgerald, Fleet Manager, Roads
Ms. Mary Murphy, Assistant Staff Officer, Roads (Minutes)

APOLOGIES: Cllr. Kevin O'Meara

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 6 March 2023 and Matters Arising

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

The Minutes of the meeting of 6 March 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Jim Ryan and seconded by Cllr. Hughie McGrath. There were no matters arising.

2. EV Charging Infrastructure: Progress to date and future proposals – Michael Tierney, Executive Engineer

Mr. Michael Tierney gave a presentation on EV charging Infrastructure. He noted that there are currently 72 car charging points at 26 locations in Tipperary. He outlined future plans for the installation of EV chargers and also the challenges and opportunities involved in the project.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara thanked Mr. Tierney for his presentation.

Mr. Liam Brett noted that EV chargers in Tipperary would increase to 98 by the end of the current year, and that Tipperary is well ahead of neighbouring counties in installing EV chargers. He noted that a number of chargers are in filling stations on the M7 and M8 and that 30 are in public car parks. He said that cost is an issue, that

they are a loss leader and that Tipperary County Council will need increased financing if the Council is to continue installing them.

Cllr. David Dunne expressed concern at the loss of parking spaces to EV charging points, and queried the loss of parking income. He said that due to the cost of installation, he doesn't see how the Council can continue to install them and noted that it doesn't install petrol pumps. He wondered whether the installation of EV chargers should be left to the private sector.

Cllr. Jim Ryan enquired how many charging points there are in Slievenamon Road car park in Thurles. He noted that the charging points in Parnell Street have not yet been commissioned and asked when this would happen? He wanted to know if anybody is overseeing the ESB as it can take more than a year for them to connect the charging points? He asked if people would be paying for charging their cars or if the cost would be borne by the Council? He welcomed the installation of the EV charging points and said that the Council needs to keep up with the times and climate action measures.

Mr. Brett replied that during the pandemic it was free to charge cars but that people now have to pay, and they have to pay for the parking space as well. He said that there are grants of 75% available for installing EV chargers from the Department of Transport and ZEV (Zero Emissions Vehicles Ireland). In relation to Slievenamon Road car park, he said that 70kw chargers will be installed which could charge two cars at a time. He also said that there is national conversation taking place with the ESB around the various issues.

Mr. Brian Pope asked that if a number of people want to charge their cars, is it first come first served? He noted that points should be linked to smart phones so that people could see what chargers are free in an area, also that people should be discouraged from leaving their car there charging all day. He enquired if Easy Go charging rates are the same as Council rates? Mr. Brett replied that all rates are closely in line as all the companies keep an eye on the market.

Mr. Gerard Shanahan recommended that cables should be retractable as they would be a footpath hazard if not.

Cllr. Micheál Anglim said that the priority areas for EV charging points should be tourist spots. Mr. Liam Brett said that ZEV end destination could be looked at, noting that this is a new government office within the Department of Transport, which is still developing its terms.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara wondered if there was a possibility of getting funding from the Just Transition Fund and felt that car charging points would be a suitable project. He also enquired if cars could be linked to the national grid overnight. Mr. Brett said that the technology is coming but isn't available in cars yet. He advised Cllr. O'Meara that sports clubs can apply for grants to install chargers.

3. Local Authority Fleet: Alternative Fuel Trials – Mr. Pat Fitzgerald, Fleet Manager

Mr. Pat Fitzgerald gave a presentation on an Alternative Fuel Trial within the Tipperary County Council fleet of vehicles – 10 vehicles were included.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara thanked Mr. Fitzgerald for his presentation, noting that this is an emerging priority area due to Climate Action and the need to reduce our carbon emissions.

Mr. James Murray said that there is a significant cost associated with the use of alternative fuels and that due to this the trial had to be suspended at one stage. He said that Tipperary County Council is very anxious to be in this space and we could go a long way as a country toward reducing carbon emissions by using alternative fuels, but that it would have an impact on budgets.

Mr. Brian Pope asked if there was any incentive to reduce cost via the European Circular Economy Fund? Cllr. Michael O'Meara said that this should be fed back up to the EU level. Mr. Murray said that it is necessary to think about this in a holistic way and consider the other costs associated with producing carbon.

Cllr. David Dunne said that he was amazed by the trial and asked if sunflower oil could be used instead of vegetable oil? He felt that as a country we will not have the power to sustain an electric fleet and it could lead to power cuts. He felt that the government should be paying a rebate for carbon not used.

Mr. Ger Shanahan asked if it was temperature resistant? Mr. Fitzgerald said that there are a lot of disadvantages to electric vehicles and that HVO fuel has advantages but costs a lot. He advised Mr. Shanahan that in cold weather it out-performed diesel. In relation to sunflower oil he said that there could be a land use issue, whereas HVO is a waste stream product.

Cllr. Jim Ryan felt that there should be a directive to private contractors to use HVO in vehicles as they would have an unfair advantage over Council vehicles. He felt that there should be a positive weighting towards greener contractors and that the message needed to be put out about what to expect in future tender processes.

Cllr. David Dunne noted that there is a 1.5ha solar farm in Rathcormac and that sunflowers could be grown around the solar panels. He said that fusion is the buzz word in environmental circles and there are big decisions to be made regarding value for money.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara enquired whether manufacturers gave any reasons for not supporting the use of biofuels, as outlined in the presentation. Mr. Fitzgerald said that moving away from a vehicle's specifications will always make manufacturers uneasy.

Mr. Ger Shanahan asked if the cost of HVO was based on use and whether the price would come down if it was used more widely? Mr. Fitzgerald said that he would expect the cost to come down in that instance but that it is currently 15% more expensive than diesel. Tipperary County Council is currently the only local authority trialling it, but An Post and other are also conducting trials.

Mr. Shanahan enquired again about a rebate. Mr. Marcus O'Connor said that ideally that would happen. He said that credit goes to Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Murray for the HVO trial and that will give a better idea of what can be achieved. He noted however that continuing to use HVO at current prices would mean less money for roads. In relation to the use of hydrogen, it requires new technology and could be 10 or more years away.

Mr. Brian Pope said that Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA) should be asked to lobby on behalf of the Council.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara asked what would happen next regarding the trial and what could local representatives do? He said that saving 100,000 tonnes of carbon should bring some reward.

Mr. James Murray said that local representatives could lobby for the scheme to be cost neutral. Tipperary County Council will continue with the trial but will not be in a position to expand it due to the additional cost.

5. AOB

Mr. Ger Shanahan said that EV chargers should be located in public car parks where they would not impact on pedestrians. He said that people might leave them on the ground, and they should be spring-loaded so as not to present a hazard. He also wondered if weather conditions would affect the safety of charge points on the ground.


6. To note date of next meeting

Monday, 4th September 2023, at 10.00 am via Zoom.

The date of the December meeting has been changed to Friday, 8th December 2023 at 11.00 a.m. and will be followed by lunch – Venue Horse & Jockey Hotel, Thurles.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:



Cllr. Michael O'Meara
Cathaoirleach