**Minutes of Special Meeting held on 8th February, 2015 at 3.45p.m.**

**Chair:** Cllr. M. H. Cavanagh

**Cllrs:** M. Shortall, P. Dunphy, M. Doyle, J. Brennan, D. Kennedy, P. Millea, M. Doran, A. McGuinness, M. McCarthy, P. Fitzpatrick, P. Cleere, M. Noonan, F. Doherty, J. Malone, K. Funchion.

**Officials:** C. Byrne, S. Walton, M. Melia, M. Mulholland, D. Cantwell K. Hanley, M. Delahunty and A.M Walsh

**Apologies:** Cllrs. G. Frisby, B. Gardner, E. Aylward, T. Breathnach, P. O’ Neill and M. Prendiville.

**1(a) – Schemes with the OPW and the CFRAMS Programme.**

Cllr. M. H. Cavanagh opened the meeting and welcomed Mr. Gerry Gallagher and Mr. Cyril McCarthy from the OPW who will update the members on the various projects with the OPW for flood relief schemes.

Mr. S. Walton gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Members. He circulated a number of documents for the information of the members as follows:

* Circular Letter dated 20th January, 2016 – Flooding Winter 2015/2016
* Circular RW3/2016 – dated 28th January, 2016 – Severe Weather allocations
* Copy of claim submitted by Kilkenny County Council to Department for storm damage sustained from November 2015- January, 2016

In Mr. Walton’s presentation, the members were given an overview on the severe weather/events during the period December 2015 to January, 2016. Main points as follows:-

* Emergency response costs amounted to €407,500, submission has been sent to Department
* Submission on road repairs/preventative works amount to €5.13m sent to Department on 5th February, 2016, national allocation is €106 million. Second submission to be made by 29th April, 2016.
* Thomastown and Graiguenamanagh Pilot Flood Resilience Schemes – Provision of flood defences , warning system for communities

This project has been advertised for tenders and tenders are being currently evaluated, consultants will be appointed during February, 2016 for the assessment of properties and the design of the schemes.

* OPW Minor Works Programme

3 applications proposed for 2016

* CFRAMS – Draft Flood Risk Management Options will be on public display during February/March 2016, members will have opportunity to discuss the options with the OPW on the Public Consultation dates at specified times.
* Flood Risk Management Plans for Freshford and Inistioge

Cllr. M. H. Cavanagh thanked the Mr. Walton for his detailed presentation.

Contributions were received from Cllr. M. Noonan, P. Fitzpatrick, F. Doherty, M. Doyle, P. Dunphy, P. Cleere, M. Shortall, D. Kennedy, P. Millea and J. Brennan.

Main issues raised by members are as follows:-

* Concerns re dredging rivers, damage to fish stock
* Ring fence funds for Community led projects
* Upstream storage, catchment management projects
* Need for public engagement during the consultation on CFRAMS
* Small tributaries not covered, any proposals
* Issues arising from tidal waters e.g. Inistioge
* Concerns re special area of conservation, need to protect people as well as environment, people/families should be prioritised ahead of flora/fauna.
* Blockages in streams/rivers
* Need to clear small rivers/dykes annually to drain the water, need to give grant aid to landowners to do this work, explore funding from Department of Agriculture
* Issues with the catchment area of the River Suir – 4 small rivers going into the River Suir in South Kilkenny.
* OPW Schemes – Concerns re timelines to complete projects, who will fund the cost of works following the investigation of the pilot schemes in Thomastown and Graiguenamanagh.
* Large number of mills on the rivers, weirs used to divert water,
* Permission required to re-align the flow of water
* Need to have co-operation of Fisheries Board and other state agencies
* Who is responsible for the small tributaries, flooding is result of neglect on cleaning rivers
* Flooding at Bleach Road and Bretts Sawmills, need to find solutions
* Requested further information on submissions on road repairs, timeframe to receive grant allocation, bridges to be included in 2nd submission to the Department.
* Additional workforce required on the roads

Cllr. P. Dunphy proposed that Kilkenny County Council write to OPW requesting that landowners be grant aided to enable them to clear rivers/tributaries. This was seconded by Cllr. D. Kennedy and agreed.

Mr. Walton responded to the queries raised by members. He advised members to review the submission made to Department and to liaise with the Area Engineer in relation to roads not included. He advised that a survey of bridges will be undertaken.

A number of meetings have taken place with affected landowners in various locations to find solutions to prevent flooding of properties and land. Engagement of the communities will be required in finding solutions too many of the issues.

He advised that Kilkenny County Council is willing to help out in relation to removing blockages in land however; the landowner has the responsibility to ensure that maintenance work is carried out.

Mr. Walton suggested that a scheme similar to the Community Involvement Scheme might be considered at National level to co-fund maintenance works on water courses. He further stated that works need to be designed not to impact on special areas of conservation.

Mr. Gallagher and Mr. McCarthy advised that the OPW are willing to work with the Local Authorities and other agencies and Leader to pool funds for small flood relief schemes and catchment areas.

The OPW similar to other bodies are required to comply with the legislation and directives on special areas of conservation in designing schemes. Their policy is to provide defences back from the rivers. They acknowledged that people come first. Both urged the members and the communities to engage in the CFRAMS public consultation. OPW need to hear the views of the communities. It was acknowledged that environmental issues are complex and sensitive, they have to be mitigated and the best solutions have to be found.

Cllr. M. Shortall, J. Brennan and F. Doherty on behalf of all Councillors thanked the officials from the OPW for attending the meeting, and requested that they would come back in a few months to update the members on the projects.

**Meeting then concluded.**

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