Westmeath County Council

Transportation and Planning SPC Meeting

24th February 2016

Local Improvement Scheme

Introduction:

The Local Improvements scheme (LIS) is a scheme under which a Road Authority can provide assistance towards the construction or improvement of non-public roads in its functional area. The statutory basis for the LIS is contained in Section 81 of the Local Government Act, 2001.

Up to recent years the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport (DTTAS) allocated specific funding to the LIS but this was not continued after 2011. In 2011 the allocation received by Westmeath County Council was €36,000.

Notwithstanding the fact that the DTTAS has not allocated specific funding, provision for LIS remains in place. In the current year, Westmeath County Council allocated €100,000 from the Revenue Budget for expenditure specifically on cul-de-sac public roads and LIS projects.

General Guidelines:

The DTTAS conditions relating to the LIS are set out in a related Memorandum dated February 2002. The main criteria of this Memorandum are as follows;

A) Eligible projects under Local Improvements Scheme

Eligible projects include those determined as most requiring attention, subject to the following:

- projects which provide access to parcels of land of which at least two are owned or occupied by different persons engaged in separate agricultural activities, or
- provides access for harvesting purposes (including turf or seaweed) for two or more persons, or
- shall in the opinion of the county council be used by the public

The following projects do not comply with the conditions of the Scheme:-
- roads serving only houses or buildings occupied or used by persons not engaged in agriculture.
- roads serving only Council cottages, i.e. non-vested cottages.
- roads or drains on bogs being developed commercially for large scale turf production for sale.
- drainage only works

B) **Selection of Projects**

In determining priority regard should be had to:-

(a) The number of parcels of land served/occupied houses served with those serving most to receive consideration for value for money reasons.
(b) The number of beneficiaries.
(c) The length of the scheme and extent of work required
(d) Whether there is a need to consider special circumstances in some cases, i.e. hardship, elderly or disabled occupants, etc.
(e) The condition of the non-public road.

C) **Type and Standard of Work**

Road projects may provide for the construction, improvement or reconstruction of roads or bridges. The works should not be ordinary maintenance of a kind which the applicants could reasonably be expected to do themselves, but should provide for essential works of a more substantial kind such as strengthening weak sections, rut filling, resurfacing and opening water channels.

Projects undertaken should aim to provide a soundly constructed and well drained road which is capable of being easily maintained by the users. In addition the quality of the work should be such as to last for several years.

An overriding issue in considering the standard to which work should be carried out is to ensure that value for money is obtained from the monies expended and that the public and local contributions are used efficiently and wisely.

D) **Local Contribution**

The local contribution is an integral part of the LIS, so much so that if it is not forthcoming the County Council shall not in any circumstances proceed with the particular project.

The local contribution must be paid before commencement of works on the project—the amounts to be paid by the individual beneficiaries is a matter to be decided
between the beneficiaries with the single sum handed over by the contact person for the scheme to the County Council in advance of the commencement of the works.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Local Improvement Scheme in Westmeath should proceed in the current year on the following basis;

1. The general arrangements and condition shall be in accordance with the DTTAS criteria including the guidance outlined above.

2. The County Council’s allocation to be €50,000 i.e. 50% of the Council’s allocation of €100,000 from Rates funding for expenditure specifically on cul-de-sac public roads and LIS projects. (The remaining €50,000 to be expended specifically on cul-de-sac public roads).

3. As decided by the Members when adopting the Budget for 2016, there is potential for a further €200,000 for cul-de-sac roads, should sufficient additional income, over and above that budgeted for arise from the NPPR charge. If this money does materialise and there is sufficient local interest, a proposal to increase the funding for LIS schemes will be brought before a future meeting of this SPC.

4. A local contribution meeting at least 40% of the cost of each project shall be paid by the contact person on behalf of the individual beneficiaries prior to commencement of works on any project.

5. It is proposed that the scheme be advertised and that expressions of interest from the users of private roads would be sought and evaluated against the criteria set out above.

Michael Connolly
Senior Engineer
Transportation