

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER -
ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ON MONDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 2019 AT 4.30PM.**

PRESENT: Councillor Ivan Connaughton **PRESIDED**

MEMBERS: Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr L. Callaghan, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr R. Doherty, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr P. Kilduff, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr T. Ward.

OFFICIALS: Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
Michelle Carney, Asst. Staff Officer

Apologies: Cllr D. Connolly, Cllr M. Creaton and Cllr N. Dineen.

26.19 PLANNING DECISION FOR BATTERY STORAGE FACILITY, BALLAGHADERREEN

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the members to the Special Meeting requested by Cllr. Mulligan in accordance with Standing Orders procedure. He welcomed the residents of Ballaghaderreen in the public gallery to this special meeting.

The meeting is requested to discuss the Planning Decision made by Roscommon County Council to grant Planning Permission for a Storage Battery Facility at Ballyoughter, Ballaghaderreen despite the concerns of the Fire Officer, local residents and the fact that Longford County Council had previously refused permission for a similar facility.

Cllr. Mulligan thanked the Cathaoirleach and the members who supported his request to have the meeting to discuss this matter. He spoke on the issue as follows:

- The local residents are very concerned about the decision made by Roscommon County Council to grant planning permission. The proposed site in Ballaghaderreen is adjacent to a large housing estate.
- In the USA there is an eleven-mile exclusion zone for these battery storage facilities and they currently being built in Alaska. In Brazil they are built in a forest and there are three in the UK built in very isolated areas.
- The Fire Officer in his report mentions fires and explosions. There was a fire in such a facility in Belgium in 2017 and one million people had to be evacuated and four million asked to stay indoors.
- There is concern about the stability of the of the proposed facility in Ballaghaderreen which contains 10 containers with coolers and fans to keep the facility hot and cold as required.
- Residents are upset as they put in a substantial objection and no answers were forthcoming regarding the Fire Officers report that he was not satisfied that the minimum requirements were met by the company. The same company submitted an appeal in Longford and the application was rejected. Residents cannot understand why a similar proposal from the same company in Longford would be refused and one in Roscommon granted.
- There have been numerous meetings of the residents of the Kilcolman Estate and they are very concerned about fire and danger to their health and the risk is too great to contemplate.
- Unfortunate that the executive is not here to answer any questions and amend their decision.

The Cathaoirleach explained that the Executive or Planning Officials would not be attending the meeting as this is a statutory process and ongoing in the event of a Judicial Review.

The members spoke on the matter as follows:

- Acknowledge the worry and concern of the residents who live close by to the proposed site and who have legitimate concerns
- Planning permission has been granted and as the statutory period for making an appeal has passed it is unlikely that anything further can be done.
- In the absence of any explanation, cannot understand how planning was granted for such a facility close to a built up area.
- In the absence of any planning officials or the executive to provide an explanation there is little more that can be added
- There is a difference in positions taken by two adjacent authorities and in the absence of guidelines what can be done.
- The only option available to the people concerned is a Judicial Review of the decision. This is an expensive route and risky. It would be important if considering this option to get the best advice possible, perhaps from a Counsel with experience in this area such as Michael O'Donnell from Roscommon.
- This matter should be immediately put on the Agenda of the Environment SPC for discussion.
- There is a deficit in Planning regulations regarding this type of development and we are dealing with this in a vacuum. An Bord Pleanála should be dealing with this in the same way at TII and Roads are dealt with.
- There is a need for a National Policy on Battery Storage Facilities by Government.
- Can the land owners be approached not to sell it for this development?
- There must be a push for regulation in this matter – fracking was an issue and policy was formulated
- The residents could consider referring this matter to the Ombudsman

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Kilduff

SECONDED by Cllr. Ward

It was **AGREED** to include the matter on the agenda of the next Environment SPC with a view to developing policy in relation to planning applications where the Chief Fire Officer has concerns.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connaughton

SECONDED by Cllr. Mulligan

It was **AGREED** to include the matter on the agenda of the next Planning SPC with a view to discussing this decision and its consequences.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Leyden

SECONDED by Cllr. Mulligan

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister of Housing, Planning and Local Government to initiate a full review of all planning decisions in relation to battery storage facilities in Ireland in light of the fact that there is no national Policy or guidelines available.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Doherty

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

It was **AGREED** to discuss the matter at the SPC of planning decisions being granted so close to the Christmas break and the consequences for potential objections.

This concluded the business of the Special Meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are Confirmed and Signed:


Meetings Administrator

Cathaoirleach

Countersigned