TO: - Mr. P. Hynes, Chief Executive
FROM: - Mr. P. Mahon, Director of Services
RE: - NOTICE OF MOTION - Cllr. R. Conway Walsh

"Calling on Mayo County Council to request a joint presentation from the OPW and the Fisheries Board to discuss their action plan to carry out works to alleviate flooding from rivers and lakes throughout Mayo."

Cllr. R. Conway Walsh

Mayo County Council submitted a request for funding to upgrade the R312 Castlebar to Belmullet Road in 2015. I attach a copy of the submission together with copy of reply from the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport dated 16th July, 2015.

With regard to the Office of Public Works and the Fisheries Board, Mayo County Council notes the request and would be happy to make contact with these agencies with a view to making a presentation to the members at a suitable date in the future.

P. Mahon
Director of Services
Mr. Paddy Mahon
Director of Services
Mayo County Council
Castlebar,
Co. Mayo

Dear Paddy,

Re: Strategic non-national road grants R312 Castlebar-Belmullet Road

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the R312 scheme and your application in respect of the Strategic Grants programme is noted.

Unfortunately, the Department is not in a position to progress any new Strategic Schemes of this scale at present.

Yours sincerely

Dominic Mullaney
Principal Adviser
Roads Division
30th June, 2015.

Mr. Dominic Mullaney,
Principal Adviser,
Roads Inspectorate,
Dept of Transport, Tourism & Sport,
44, Kildare Street,
DUBLIN 2.

RE: - Strategic Non National Road Grants (SNNR)
R312 - Castlebar - Belmullet Road.

Dear Mr. Mullaney,

I refer to previous correspondence concerning the above mentioned subject. I now wish to resubmit this application and progress the scheme to detailed design and land acquisition stage.

Yours sincerely,

P. Mahon
Director of Services
R312 Strategic Non National Route

Introduction
The R312 links the Erris Area of County Mayo with Castlebar which is the commercial and administrative centre of the county. It is the main access to an area which has population of 11,000 people and relies on tourism, forestry, fishing, agricultural and commercial enterprises for employment. The Erris Area is also the location of Ireland's first onshore Gas Processing Terminal and spinoff industries in the gas powered electricity production area are anticipated in the region. The Erris region is predominantly a Gaeltacht area and was also a recognised Clar area.

The R312 link forms 37km of the 80km journey from Belmullet in the Erris Area of Mayo with the County Town of Castlebar. The road links the townlands of Derrycoosh near Castlebar on the southern end with Bellacorrick at the northern end. The remainder of the journey consists of 7 km on the R311 from Denycoosh to Castlebar, 18km on the N59 from Bellacorrick to Bangor Erris and 18km on the R313 from Bangor Erris to Belmullet.

The R311, N59 and R313 provide adequate levels of service in terms of road condition and alignment. However the R312 is quite deficient in road condition and alignment at various locations along its 37km route. A pavement condition survey carried out in 2001 for the R312 gave an average Pavement Condition Index (PCI) of 76.5. A similar survey carried out in 2004 showed a dramatic drop in average PCI to 46.5. With regard to alignment, while a considerable length of the road is 7.0m or greater in length, significant sections are less than 7.0m in width. The road width does reduce to 4.5m in locations where the road winds around lakes and rivers.

The attached maps outline the location of the road.

Mayo County Council's County Development Plan
Mayo County Council's County Development Plan 2014-2020 outlines in Table 3 priority infrastructural Projects for County Mayo and the R312 Castlebar - Bellacorrick Road at Glenisland is listed as a priority.

Table 8 Appendix 3 lists infrastructure projects completed and the R312 Castlebar - Bellacorrick Road at Glenisland is listed as a scheme with a Part 8 Planning approved.
Description of the Scheme
The scheme involves the realignment of 8 km of the R312, the construction of 4 new bridges and the widening and strengthening of 29 km of the road. The scheme is at the Preliminary Design stage.

Strategic Justification
Industrial
Access to existing industry in the Erris Region and future industries, particularly those related to the Gas Industry will be compromised by the low level of service offered by the R312 in its current condition. The creation of an economic hub in Belmullet, as identified in the County Development Plan is reliant on adequate access to the town. The upgrading of the R312 is essential in providing an adequate level of access.

Tourism
The Erris region relies heavily on tourism for employment. Erris is the home of some of the world's best angling and golfing facilities. It is also the home of the Ballycroy National Park, several blue flag beaches, a sculpture trail, international festivals and is the place where thousands of emigrants return to every year from throughout the world. The provision of an adequate access to the region is critical to the growth of tourism in the Erris region.

Strategic Road Link
The R312 is a strategic road linking the Erris Region with the county town of Castlebar and beyond. It is 37 km in length and with the exception of a few villages, passes through an uninhabited countryside for most of its length.

Social and Cultural
Access to a Gaeltacht area is seen as critical in the challenge to foster and nurture the Irish language. Erris is predominately a Gaeltacht area and the upgrading of the R312 is an important link in the chain which maintains and promotes the Erris Gaeltacht.
The Erris Area was also a designated Clar area. This means it had suffered from depopulation since the foundation of the state. The upgrading of the R312 is would contribute to the reversal in population decline in the En-is Area.

**Contribution towards the National Spatial Strategy**

**The National Spatial Strategy**
The National Spatial Strategy (NSS), published in 2002, is a "twenty year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between the regions." The NSS sets out how all areas of the country will have the opportunity to develop to their potential.

The upgrading of the R312 is essential if the Erris Area is to achieve the social, economic, physical development and population growth identified in the NSS and would make a significant contribution to the NSS in the West Region.

**Successful Regional Development**
The NSS recognises that regions have an economic potential that can be substantially developed. For this development to be realised it requires the establishment of urban-rural partnerships which recognise that urban and rural areas are dependent on each other. The development of infrastructural links such as the upgrading of the R312 between the rural En-is Area of County Mayo and the hub town of Castlebar would contribute significantly to the development of such an urban-rural partnership in the West Region.

**Achieving competitiveness**
Achieving competitiveness is central to balanced regional development in an open and globally integrated economy such as Ireland's according to the NSS. In order to achieve this competitiveness the availability of a critical mass of labour coupled with high quality infrastructure is critical. In the context of Ireland's West Region, increased economic activity and regional competitiveness requires strong towns working in partnership with strong rural areas. The link between the En-is Area (a potentially strong Rural Area) and Castlebar (a Hub Town), if strengthened by the upgrading of the R312, would contribute to improving the competitiveness of the West Region.
Rural Areas - European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)

According to the NSS, international evidence demonstrates that rural areas, such as the Erris area, have a vital contribution to make to the achievement of balanced regional development. This involves utilising the rural area's economic resources such as agriculture, tourism, marine etc. while at the same time drawing strength from neighbouring urban areas. This is in line with the approach taken in the ESDP.

Smaller towns and villages have potential that can be capitalised on. This requires adequate levels of physical connections such as roads, communications etc. Some rural areas, which are particularly remote such as the Erris Area, require strategic target measures to support rural population growth, which is a prerequisite for balanced regional development. The upgrading of the R312 is a strategic measure, which will support the population growth of the Erris Area and contribute significantly to the NSS.

NSS Spatial Policies for Rural Areas

Rural areas with particular cultural identities, such as the Gaeltacht, can act as magnets for certain types of investment. These cultural identities can make a significant contribution to underpinning the rural economy and promoting rural population growth. The NSS recognises the need to strengthen infrastructure and promote enterprise for Gaeltacht areas. The future development of the Erris Gaeltacht will require adequate access to that Gaeltacht and the upgrading of the R312 is an essential element of the infrastructural strengthening mentioned in the NSS.

Box 3.1 of the NSS describes five broad rural area types and suggests a range of policies for each area which would be further developed by local agencies. Areas which are culturally distinct are identified as requiring enhanced accessibility. Figure 3.1 in the NSS identifies the Erris area of Mayo as being one of six areas nationally as being culturally distinctive. Mayo County Council as a local agency are therefore obliged to liaise with local and national agencies in order to enhance access to the Erris Gaeltacht. The upgrading of the R312 is an inherent part of the access to the Erris Gaeltacht and would contribute significantly towards the Policies for Rural Areas section of the NSS.

West Region Participation in the NSS - Belmullet's Contribution

Map 10 of the NSS identifies Belmullet as a remote town which has a vital role in delivering services and supporting employment in a peripheral area. This role requires support from local and regional agencies through improvement in accessibility. The upgrading of the
R312 is a critical element in supporting Belmullet’s contribution to the NSS.

Section 4 of the NSS concludes with the following reference to Mayo and the Erris area in particular.
"Parts of west and north Mayo . . . have significant natural and cultural heritage attractions such as landscape . . . . and historical artefacts." Priorities for development include improving regional road access. The R312 Regional Road is the access to the Erris Area from the hub town, and county town, of Castlebar. Its upgrading is identified as a priority by this section of the NSS.

The development of the access to the Erris Area by the upgrading of the R312 will allow the Erris Area to benefit from the strength brought to the West Region by the hub town of Castlebar.

Cost
The estimated cost of the scheme is €30 million. This is made up of €20 million for 8 km of realignment and the construction of 4 bridges and €10 million for the widening and strengthening of 29 km of carriageway. The scheme may attract investment from the Strategic Non national Road Scheme fund.

M. Lyons
Senior Executive Engineer
Box 3.1 describes five broad rural area types and suggests a range of policy responses to be developed in more detail at regional and local levels. See also Figure 3.1 which illustrates indicatively the location of the five area types.

Policy responses for rural areas in relation to housing, economic development and the environment are set out in Section 5.

The State’s response to the process of economic restructuring in rural areas is multi-faceted, it embraces investment programmes such as the NDP, as well as specific, targeted mechanisms to promote development or encourage investment, such as the CLAR programme and the Upper Shannon Renewal Scheme.

Given the multi-faceted nature of the State’s response to rural restructuring, local authorities and local development agencies need to develop spatial frameworks for rural areas, which allow for targeting to ensure that the range of development programmes available are co-ordinated to maximise benefits. Examples of these programmes include urban and village renewal schemes, water services infrastructure programmes and measures to strengthen the tourism sector. Focusing and co-ordinating these different programmes will increase the resulting benefits.

### Box 3.1 Rural Area Types and Policy Responses

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Area Type and Description</th>
<th>Rural Area Policy Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Areas that are Strong:</td>
<td>• Support agriculture by maintaining the integrity of viable farming areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mostly in the South and East where agriculture will remain viable, but where pressure for development is high and some rural settlements are under stress.</td>
<td>• Strengthen rural villages and small towns by making them attractive to residential and employment-related development.</td>
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<td>(2) Areas that are Changing:</td>
<td>• Reduce urban sprawl through a renewed emphasis on appropriate in-fill development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extending into many parts of the Midlands, the Border, the South and West where population and agricultural employment have started to decline and where replacement employment is required.</td>
<td>• Support communities where the viability of agriculture is under stress through promoting diversification in enterprise, local services and tourism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Areas that are Weak:</td>
<td>• Build up rural communities through selectively targeted and integrated measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including more extensive parts of the Midlands, certain parts of the Border and rural inland areas in the West where population decline has been significant.</td>
<td>• Develop new rural tourism resources such as inland waterways.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(4) Areas that are Remote:</td>
<td>• Promote marine, and natural resource based development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including parts of the west north and the islands.</td>
<td>• Overcome distance barriers with the support of technology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5) Areas that are Culturally Distinct:</td>
<td>• Enhance accessibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Included parts of the west coast and the Gaeltacht areas with a distinctive cultural heritage.</td>
<td>• Strengthen existing settlements.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Conserve cultural identity.</td>
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Figure 3.1 Rural Area Types

1. Areas that are Strong
2. Areas that are Changing
3. Areas that are Weak
4. Areas that are Remote
5. Areas that are Culturally Distinctive