

To: Directors of Services for Roads/Transport/Infrastructure for each City and County Council;

CC: Chief Executives, City and County Councils
Senior Engineers, City and County Councils
Director of Transport Planning and Investment, National Transport Authority

Circular Letter: AT01/2021

26 April 2021

Announcement of Additional Outdoor Infrastructure Fund

Dear Director,

You will be aware of ongoing Government requirements in respect of managing the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this circular is to encourage each Local Authority to provide for further short-term measures which can be quickly implemented to help create safe urban public spaces where people can walk, cycle and gather outdoors this Summer as society opens up in line with the expected easing of COVID-19 restrictions. This is also in the context of Government requirements to continue with social distancing requirements and to provide areas for people to gather in a safe way as we enter the Summer months.

It is noted that Local Authorities have put in place appropriate operating procedures to comply with COVID-19 public health guidance. It is also noted that there is ongoing provision for certain essential services to continue and this includes “the repair, maintenance and construction of critical transport and utility infrastructure”. In this context it is appropriate that essential road maintenance and improvement programmes should be progressed including the Restoration Maintenance and Restoration Improvement programmes given their critical role in maintaining the road network, thus supporting all aspects of the economy. In addition, as recently communicated, Greenway and Active Travel projects should now be treated as critical given their role in promoting improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and in facilitating social distancing for the public when engaging in outdoor activity as restrictions ease.

As you will also be aware, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media through the auspices of Failte Ireland has recently announced a new €17 million Outdoor Dining Enhancement Investment Scheme. The Scheme comprises two parts:

- Outdoor Seating & Accessories for Tourism & Hospitality Businesses. This is to be run by the individual Local Authorities and is to provide a level of financial support to tourism and hospitality businesses, in town centres, to purchase or upgrade equipment to provide additional outdoor seating and, therefore, increase their outdoor dining capacity for the summer of 2021.
- Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Enhancement Scheme. This will provide capital funding to local authorities for direct investment in weatherproofing and enhancement of public outdoor dining infrastructure.

In addition, the Department of Rural and Community Development recently launched a €14 million Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Fund which focuses on rural areas, i.e. on areas outside of our cities and towns/villages. That Department will also shortly launch the 2021 Town & Village Renewal Scheme which will support enhancements of the public realm and greater vibrancy in our town centres in a manner which complements the funding noted above.

The Department of Transport is seeking to complement these and other initiatives with the establishment of a further €15 million under an *Additional Outdoor Infrastructure Fund*, which is designed to support Local Authorities in quickly implementing traffic management and roads and streets public realm improvements in urban areas which enhance the ability of people to walk, cycle and meet each other outdoors in a safe way as COVID-19 restrictions ease. This is with a view to these measures being implemented by this Summer.

Examples of measures under this Fund could include (on a temporary or initial basis) *inter alia*:

- Street pedestrianisation measures;
- Road/Street space reallocation, using bollards, parklets, etc.;
- Traffic management arrangements; and
- Other minor improvements.

Local Authorities, when re-examining the design of streets and spaces, should consider the longer-term alignment with the principles, approaches and measures contained with the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* and related planning and urban design policies. This is with a view to enhancing the attractiveness of city, town and village centres as places in which to live, work and spend time, as well as ensuring the safety of all road users.


Applications may complement project proposals being submitted to the Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Department of Rural and

Community Development or they may also be stand-alone projects which improve the public realm and enhance outdoor activity as we move into the next phase of our COVID-19 response.

The *Additional Outdoor Infrastructure Fund* will be administered by the National Transport Authority (NTA) as part of its overall national funding programme. Local authorities that wish to submit proposals should contact the NTA at activetravel@nationaltransport.ie, quoting "Outdoor Infrastructure" in the subject line, for details on the application process. The application deadline is **Friday 14th May 2021**, and allocations will issue from the NTA as soon as possible after applications are received, reviewed and clarified with the local authority.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleague Sarah Taylor (sarahtaylor@transport.gov.ie).

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Ebrill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew Ebrill
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National Roads, Greenways and Active Travel Division
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