

# COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILIMHE GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE CONAMARA ELECTORAL AREA MEETING HELD ON 19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2008, IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE

### ILÁTHAIR:-

**Baill:** Comh. S. Ó Tuairisg, Cathaoirleach  
Cllr. S. Kyne  
Cllr. T. Welby  
Cllr. J. Conneely  
Comh. S. Ó Cuaig

**Oifigigh:** Ms. C. McConnell, Senior Planner, Planning & Sustainable Development Unit  
Ms. G. Kavanagh, Executive Planner Planning & Sustainable Development Unit  
Mr. P. Clarke, Executive Engineer, An Cheathrú Rua  
Mr. D. Hurney, A/Administrative Officer, Roads & Transportation Unit  
Ms. M. McGrath, Senior Staff Officer, Planning & Sustainable Development Unit  
Ms. B. Wright, Planning & Sustainable Development Unit

### **1. Minutes of Meeting of 18th July 2008 & Minutes of Meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2008**

On the proposal of Cllr. Kyne, seconded by Cllr. Conneely, the Minutes of Meetings held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2008 and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009 were adopted.

### Matters Arising:

Cllr. Kyne sought an up-to-date Report on the Tonabrocky Water Scheme.

### **2. To consider the Manager's Report on the submissions received on the Draft Galway County Development Plan 2009-2015 under Section 12(5)(a) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended**

Comh. Ó Tuairisg invited Ms. McConnell to present the Manager's report to the Members. Ms. McConnell stated that Galway County Council must refer to the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government on or before the 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2009, to outline their situation regarding Ardaun. She stated that agreement has been secured from Iarnród Éireann to locate a railway station at Garraun. She explained that the development of Garraun has to occur first before Ardaun can develop. She added that Garraun should be developed as a transportation hub with adequate carparking available. Ardaun on its own cannot solve any of the current transport problems. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is prioritising the development of Ardaun together with the gateways and hubs.

Ms. Mc Connell explained that because nationally Ardaun is considered critical to the future development of the County it is imperative that Galway County Council remain in negotiations in relation to it, so that the development of Garraun can also occur.

Ms. McConnell advised that Galway County Council should indicate, in principle, its willingness to go ahead with the Framework for Ardaun but with conditions attached.

Mr. Ridge stated that Ardaun and Garraun were integral to the Spatial Planning and Settlement Strategy of the Galway County Development Plan. He explained that the National Spatial Strategy introduced the concept of balanced regional development through the development of gateways and hubs. The Galway Metropolitan Area is described as the area around the city. Mr. Ridge stated that this definition of Galway City as a gateway was too narrow, investment will need to spread out to surrounding areas. He stated that critical mass was necessary to attract industry and services into the area

Mr. Ridge presented maps to the meeting indicating the following

- Persons working in city by ED, 2006
- % of local labour force working in Galway by DED, 2006
- Average journey time (mins) to Galway City by ED, 2006
- Origin & Destination lines - working in Galway City

Mr. Ridge stated that there were 40,000 jobs in Galway City of which 20,000 are employees from Galway city with the balance being from the County or outside the County. 8,000 people travel from west of the city to east of the city everyday while 3,000 people travel from east of the city to west of the city.

Mr. Ridge stated that people from the County are as much a part of the economy of the City as people from the city and should be afforded the same level of infrastructure and services. He added that the development of Ardaun and Garraun would actually reduce the amount of traffic from the east side of Galway City. He also stated that Galway city alone cannot be designated as a Gateway.

Mr Ridge stated that the Members will be asked to vote on the concept of Ardaun.

Comh. Ó Tuairisg stated that the issues outlined earlier in relation to Ardaun would not make much difference to the situation for Conamara.

Cllr. Welby also stated that the outcome of the Ardaun situation would have no bearing on attracting funding for roads and footpaths for Conamara. He also enquired as to what level of contact the officials had with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Cllr. Kyne stated that he supported much of the Ardaun/ Garraun concept. He added that a huge level of co-operation with Galway City Council was required as Galway city was expanding rapidly. He expressed concerns regarding funding as many important roads in Conamara were being neglected.

Cllr. Conneely also stated that he would support Ardaun. He stated that Galway City was expanding and that the County Council would benefit from the rates, he added that the main activity of the County occurs within 15-20 miles of Galway city and that a good transport system would make things easier. Areas with shrinking populations are serviced by roads to get people into and out of the Galway City as quickly as possible. He added that if Galway County Council does not support the Ardaun concept, the area would be pulled inside the Galway city boundary and Galway County Council would therefore not benefit from it.

Mr Ridge stated that it was not definite that if Galway County Council did not support the development of Ardaun that the area would be pulled inside the City Boundary. He also stated that Galway County Council officials met with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government officials early in December 2008. The Department expressed a preference for a joint approach with the City Council. He added also that the Department of Transport would only support the project if it was a joint approach between the two local authorities. Mr Ridge stated that movement of people is inevitable but with the development of Ardaun accessibility would be quicker, accessibility to Galway City is critical.

Comh. Ó Cuaig enquired if other areas in the County would loose out on services and funding due to the development of Ardaun and Garraun. Mr. Ridge stated that monies were ringfenced for the development of Ardaun and Garraun. Areas aligned with the National Spatial Strategy will get funding and that the general economic benefit would spread out to the County and Conamara.

Cllr. Welby stated that a medium counter balance should be put in place for the rest of the county especially in relation to the creation of employment in areas such as Conamara. Mr. Ridge stated that the Council can provide assistance to people on what to develop and where services can be provided so as to create employment.

Comh. Ó Tuairisg enquired if the community gain aspect of the Bearna Local Area Plan could be incorporated into the County Development Plan. Ms. Mc Connell stated that it can be incorporated into Local Area Plans similar to the Bearna Local Area Plan but it would not be possible to incorporate it into the County Development Plan as sites cannot be specified. Mr. Ridge stated that there is no provision in Planning Law to allow the County Council to extract community gain, it has to be offered.

Ms. Mc Connell stated that 112 submissions were received on the Draft County Development Plan during the public display period. She explained that the submissions were compiled together as they related to the various sections in the County Development Plan. She explained that in the Manager's Report there was a synopsis and response to the issues arising in each of the submissions received together with the Manager's Recommendations. She stated that there were not many changes made and that most changes related to the Settlement Strategy.

Ms McConnell commenced at Section 1 Introduction.

Cllr. Kyne proposed to remove the word '*preserving*' from the definition of Sustainable Development in Point 6 of the Recommendation on page 4 of the Manager's Report. It was agreed that a more appropriate word would be used.

Comh. Ó Tuairisg referred to the suitability of the coastline for windfarms and queried the omission of reference to this in the Draft County Development Plan. Ms. McConnell referred to MAP SP4 in the Draft County Development Plan which outlines the areas suitable for windfarms. She added that environmentally sensitive areas should be avoided. She stated that care needs to be taken until such time as a wind potential map is brought forward but added that strong commitment would be given to these areas when identified. Cllr. Welby referred to new technology in relation to windfarms allowing them to be less obtrusive on the landscape with structures being smaller and with minimal bird kills. He added that the areas best able to provide wind energy are those areas that are currently restricted.

Ms. McConnell referred to the recommendation on page 15 of the Manager's Report and stated that a lot of submissions received indicated that Galway County Council should be more pro-active in relation to the Galway Metropolitan Area and Ardaun. In reply to Comh. Ó Tuairisg's query in relation to Moycullen, Ms. McConnell stated that requests had been made through some submissions to omit Moycullen from the Galway Metropolitan Gateway but added that there was no proposal by the Planning Authority to omit it. She stated that the critical mass should include the towns that can access Galway city within a certain time.

Comh. Ó Tuairisg referred to page 21 of the Manager's Report and Map SP4 and stated that Ros an Mhíl and Oughterard were not included on the Strategic Economic Corridor. Ms McConnell stated that Strategic Economic Corridor must be a realistic location for industries and businesses.

Ms. McConnell also stated that reference to the Framework Plan was omitted as it was being misinterpreted by An Bord Pleanála.

In relation to the Settlement Strategy, Ms. McConnell outlined some issues that arose such as a request to have a specific settlement pattern for the islands, and it was also recommended to clarify that the islands were not included in the house construction allocation in the Draft Plan.

Ms. Mc Connell stated that there was a lot of small settlement centres listed where no development had occurred and that there appeared to be very little demand or interest. She added that in Submission 94 the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government outlined their dissatisfaction with the Settlement Strategy as presented in the Draft County Development Plan.

Cllr. Welby stated that development cannot occur if there are no treatment plants in these areas. Comh. Ó Tuairisg stated that the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs totally contradicts the issues raised by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in its submission.

Cllr. Welby referred to the proposed House Construction allocation of 2,500 between 2009 and 2015 for the Garraun/Ardaun area and enquired as to how realistic this figure was in the current economic climate. Ms. McConnell stated that evidence must be shown in the County Development Plan of Galway County Council's commitment in bringing forward a joint development strategy with the City and the County. It will be necessary to ensure that development would not be restricted due to inadequate housing allocation figures. Also in conformity with the National Settlement Strategy it will be necessary to bring up the critical mass.

Comh. Ó Cuaig enquired if they, as Councillors should support the Department of the Environment's continuous promotion of moving towards Galway city when he believes that the Dept of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has different policies on this issue. Ms. McConnell stated that the Council's policies must be aligned with National Policy but added that the Council would also be committed to the smaller town and village, she explained that there were policies on rural enterprise in the Draft County Plan which should make it a lot easier for people to work and live in areas that they are from.

Comh. Ó Cuaig stated that it was difficult to get rural enterprise to locate in areas further out than An Spidéal. Ms. McConnell stated that planning alone cannot make enterprise come to a particular area but it must be ensured that obstacles are not created that would hinder this. Cllr. Kyne agreed that there was nothing in the Draft County Development Plan that would prevent, for example, a factory from locating in Carna.

Cllr. Welby stated that Galway County Council was bound too much by the National Parks and Wildlife Services and that the designations were causing serious problems. Ms. McConnell stated that under the Planning Acts, the Council is obliged to have regard to the European Designations as per the EU Habitats Directive. Cllr. Welby suggested that if the Council contact the NPWS in relation to a particular planning application and if there is no response from them, it should then be assumed that the application complies.

Comh. Ó Tuairisg stated that a lot of work was done on the Irish Language issue for the Gaeltacht Local Area Plan and asked if this has been incorporated into the Draft County Development Plan. Ms McConnell referred to point 3 on Page 152 and point 6 on Page 153 of the Manager's Report in response to Comh. Ó Tuairisg's query.

It was agreed to adjourn the meeting and to reconvene on Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

### **3. Aon Ghnó Eile**

#### **(a) Roads Programme 2009 – ‘Early Starts’ Restoration Improvement Programme**

Mr. Clarke circulated a document outlining the proposed Early Starts for 2009 at the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr. Conneely and seconded by Cllr. Welby and agreed.

#### **(b) Leitir Mealláin Crossroads**

Cllr. Kyne referred to unapproved works being carried out on Leitir Mealláin Crossroads and enquired if permission had issued for same and Mr. Clarke agreed to investigate the matter.

*Chríochnaigh an cruinniú ansin.*