

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Locha Riach Municipal District of LOUGHREA

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Council Chamber, Loughrea on 9th June 2025

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. P. Killilea

Baill:

Cllr's. M. Maher, G. Finnerty, G. Donohue,
D. Kelly, M. Kinane, I. Canning, J. McClearn, L. Harney, M.
Regan

Remote:

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services

Oifigigh:

Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. P. Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. D. O'Loughlin, Executive Engineer
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer
Ms. C. Kennedy, Clerical Officer

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Municipal District of
Loughrea held on Monday 12th May 2025**

LMD2428

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 12th May 2025 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Regan and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher.

Cllr. Maher sought an update regarding improvements to the sequencing of traffic lights at the Westbridge. Mr. Haugh responded that the Area Office is very aware of any issues regarding the lights at the Westbridge and stated that all Councillors were aware that damaged in-ground detection loops had caused serious issues in the recent past. He stated, when the system is operating correctly it is generally effective but there are still times when the system becomes overloaded. This is primarily as a result of traffic volumes but also, on occasion, as a result of driver behaviour and other external factors. There are limited options for any further improvements due to the layout of the junction. He stated, Systra's review is on-going but will be completed and hopefully they can attend a future MD meeting to provide an update in relation to any proposed improvements. He added, the current issue is intermittent and most likely due to the volume of traffic at peak times, but that the junction is under constant review and any repairs/alterations that will help alleviate the situation will be considered and implemented as required. He also suggested that a focus on the Loughrea relief road, in line with the Loughrea Local Transport Plan, would be beneficial in order to progress this option and alleviate the traffic volumes currently passing through Loughrea. Cllr.

Maher **PROPOSED** a pilot scheme to turn off the traffic lights for one or two months and to install several pedestrian crossings further away from the junction. **Cl**lr. **Re**gan **SECONDED** the proposal. **Cl**lr. **Ma**her subsequently requested the following be added to his proposal, to locate cameras at various locations.

Mr. **Haugh** responded, he had clarified on several previous occasions that turning off the traffic lights will create a safety hazard for vulnerable road users. **Mr.** **Haugh** informed **Cl**lr. **Ma**her that national policy since 2019, as per the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, has been to prioritise vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclist above vehicles in urban areas.

He clarified that timings are not set to predefined settings at this controlled junction, but rather, this is a Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Actuated (MOVA) system that responds to traffic loading at any given time on each arm of the junction. He outlined that, as an example, at low traffic volumes, all approaches show red, to deter traffic from accelerating through Loughrea to “catch” a green light. He stated, the system worked well 98% of the time, but acknowledged that there are occasions when, due to driver behaviour, damaged infrastructure or other factors the system caused unacceptable delays but again suggested that a focus on reducing traffic volumes via the relief road is the best solution.

Cllr. **Ma**her stated, he wants a response at the July MD meeting of when the removal of the current traffic lights will be completed to allow pilot testing for several months stating, there will be time afterwards to put safety measures in place at the junction.

Mr. **Haugh** advised, that he could respond immediately, and the area office will not be implementing these suggested changes for the reasons already outlined. He further stated, Galway County Council does not have the financial resources to implement the changes to the pedestrian crossings suggested and emphasised that pedestrian safety is prioritised and cannot be actively jeopardised.

Cllr. **Ma**her requested a costing for the proposed changes. **Mr.** **Haugh** again stated, the safety of vulnerable road users is a priority, and the issue was not one of cost. He reiterated that, from the perspective of vulnerable road users, the crossing system cannot be intentionally disabled.

Cllr **Ma**her claimed that a visually impaired person had sought for improvements to be made at this location previously and the area office had ignored her concerns.

In response to **Cl**lr. **Ma**her’s comment, **Mr.** **Haugh** stated that this was not correct, and, in fact, he had requested both area engineers to extend crossing times at all pedestrian crossings in the Municipal District, as maintenance works were carried out, beyond that which is recommended to enable a safe crossing opportunity.

Cllr. **Ma**her expressed his gratitude to **Brent Mostert**, Architect regarding progress works on the Town Hall, Loughrea and requested **Mr.** **Mostert** to provide a progress report on the long point facility, Loughrea.

Cllr. **Ma**her raised concerns regarding the speed at which vehicles travel in Loughrea stating, someone will be eventually knocked down, he referred specifically to the Gort Road and Abbey Street. **Cl**lr. **Donohue** agreed, adding serious concerns have been raised by residents of the

Waterfront on the R380. She stated a speed review is necessary and enquired if An Garda Síochána have been briefed on the speed review carried out recently on the Woodford Road, Loughrea.

Cllr. Donohue referred to Clara Blodau's deputation, at the May MD Meeting, on the development of cycle infrastructure in the Gort and surrounding areas, she stated a response and definitive steer is necessary. Mr. Haugh responded, all surveys that indicate a significant issue with traffic speeds are forwarded to An Garda Síochána for review and committed to undertaking a traffic volume and vehicle speed survey on the Gort Rd., Loughrea. He also confirmed that he had engaged with Ms Blodau and requested her to bring to his attention any such scheme that had been progressed nationally. He stated guidelines do not currently allow for a cycle lane to be included in a 2m-3m wide hard shoulder and that the requirement is in the region of 5m.

Cllr. Harney enquire if a cycle lane along the hard shoulder from Ardahan to Labane will be provided, and he referred to previous discussions that were held with P.J. Murphy. He stated the cycleway could continue to Kinvara and Kilcolgan. Mr. Haugh responded, the hard shoulder between Labane and Ardahan does not facilitate a cycleway, and added, a commitment was not given in this regard. He stated, a scheme is being progressed by the NRPO Active Travel team that will complete the cycle lane, and includes a pedestrian crossing, to Ballinderreen village.

Cllr. Finnerty stated works are ongoing to lift manhole covers, he asked if this can be extended to Gort town, particularly at Crowe Street and Church Street. Mr. Haugh responded, the manhole covers being reseated are likely those that are being addressed under the current Roads Programme, but Mr. O'Loughlin can liaise directly with him on this issue. He clarified, utility companies, such as Uisce Éireann, have responsibility for maintaining any chamber covers associated with that utility provision and that applies to the vast majority of such covers in our towns and villages.

In response to Cllr. Finnerty's comments on a cycle lane provided in Cahir, Tipperary Mr. Haugh stated that he believed this was a legacy scheme and the Department of Transport and Transport Infrastructure Ireland's current standards must be considered.

Cllr. Kinane stated discussions took place regarding a cycleway between Clarinbridge and Oranmore commenced before the Greenway, adding the cycleway between Kilcolgan and Clarinbridge were paused at the moment because of the Greenway. Cllr. Kinnane stated that it makes sense that the route should be continued on the main road from Kilcolgan to Clarinbridge and from Clarinbridge to Oranmore. She stated the Greenway traverses a Special Area of Conservation and this is a major blockage. She said it would be a safer option to cycle between Clarinbridge and Oranmore.

Cllr. Kinane referred to the deputation made to the Members by Katie Joyce who requested provision of audio equipment at pedestrian crossings in Loughrea, she stated, she brought this matter to the Plenary meeting.

Mr. Haugh advised Cllr. Kinane, the pedestrian crossing audit will be actioned and shared in due course, but it is necessary to capture all information and have sight of the specifications and TII guidance.

Cllr. Kinane referred to her Motion to bring Renville Walkway into the Council's ownership, she said the first step is the Taking in Charge Order, she added funding is a further issue for consideration. Mr. Haugh responded, this matter is now with the Director of Services.

Cllr. Regan expressed his concern regarding the speed of traffic from the east side of town and at the GAA field, he stated appropriate signage and traffic calming measures should be installed to slow traffic down adding that thousands of people use these areas for walking daily. He stated signage is not visible and this should be addressed. Mr. Haugh stated, he is aware of the issue regarding visibility of signage and will discuss this with the Supervisors. Cllr. Regan said this is a safety matter and needs to be dealt with. Mr. Haugh stated, Ms Higgins may be able to update in relation to this specific area during her presentation.

Cllr. Kelly stated, there appears to be a speeding epidemic in Loughrea, Portumna and Ballinasloe. He stated lights and ramps are part of the solution and referred to traffic systems installed in Nenagh which appears to be working very well. He stated, speed cameras should be located on the Gort/Lake Road as people only respond when they are hit in the pocket. He stated, he is in favour of locating cameras at various locations and enquired of the cost. Mr. Haugh responded, speed cameras fall under the remit of An Garda Síochána.

Cllr. McClearn requested Ms. Ruane to provide a response regarding the extension to the Campervan Park in Portumna. He asked if a portion of funding generated from the Campervan Park can be utilized to facilitate an extension. He requested the actual figure of funding generated from the park.

Cllr. McClearn stated pedestrian access to the Marina and campervan park is very dangerous from the gatehouse to the designated walkway. He stated, with the increase in the use of electric cars which are extremely quiet, people do not hear traffic approaching. He asked if funding can be sourced for a footpath/walkway. Mr. Haugh stated, access to the campervan has been raised previously, he referred to emails dating 2019 with the OPW who were supportive in this regard, cautioning there may be concerns due to the proximity of several National Monuments. However, it could be a possible project for consideration under each local Councillor's additional Local Property Tax related capital allocation.

Cllr. McClearn requested an update on repairs to the N65 at Heathlawn, Killimor, he stated people are very frustrated with the lengthy delay in repairing the road and bridge. Mr. Haugh advised, an update was sought from the NRPO and clarification has been sought on whether the project will be progressed by either the pavement or safety section of TII. It now appears it's more likely to be progressed as a pavement scheme.

In response to hedge cutting concerns raised by Cllr. Regan, Mr. Haugh stated hedge cutting remains the responsibility of landowners.

In response to Cllr. Harney, Mr. Haugh responded minor queries such as potholes can be reported to the Area Office for follow up.

In reply to Cllr. Canning, Ms. Ruane stated the complement of retained fire service station personnel is generally 12. She stated, at present, there are vacancies in Portumna however sufficient

applications have been received by the HR Department to bring the number up to what is required. He requested an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Haugh advised Cllr. Canning, that a tracker of all items raised at MD meetings is maintained and items are not closed until they are followed up and a response issued.

Flooding Update

LMD2429

Regarding the ongoing consultations with NPWS, Mr Gallagher confirmed that all information requested by NPWS (scheme and turlough habitat shapefiles, hydrological report and ecological survey methodologies) were provided a fortnight ago. NPWS have confirmed they expect to issue feedback during the week of 23rd June. If positive feedback is received, the environmental consultant will progress the outstanding works on the EIAR.

Following receipt of the feedback, the project team proposes to engage with the SGFRC and arrange an update meeting. Additional bird and bat surveys are scheduled to be undertaken in the next two months.

Mr Gallagher informed the meeting that he would provide a progress report on the Oranmore to Kinvara flood study (Storm Debi) at the next meeting.

Works have commenced on the road raising plans at Grannagh. The works are being undertaken by the Area Office and it is anticipated that the majority of the works will be completed in the next month.

In response to queries from Cllr Kinnane, Mr Gallagher confirmed that the report on Storm Debi will confirm details of properties that would benefit from protection works if a similar storm event occurred, and also confirm if it is unfeasible to try to protect certain properties. The report will form the basis for a subsequent funding submission to the OPW. The consultants have been asked to prioritise recommendations for the remedial works to the walls on the Maree Road and the Coast Road in Oranmore, so the Area Office can progress works at these locations.

Cllrs Maher and Donoghue queried when maintenance works will be undertaken on Drainage Districts in Loughrea. Mr Gallagher highlighted the increased environmental constraints that must now be considered when undertaking these works and the difficulty encountered in trying to undertake effective maintenance while adhering to ecological requirements. Mr Haugh highlighted that a significant number of landowners do not wish to have the excavated material from the drains spread on the banks of their lands and this is causing an issue in identifying work areas. Mr Haugh asked the councillors to revert to him if they knew of landowners that would accommodate the maintenance works on the Dunkellin DD, or sites where there are isolated build-ups of plastic debris, that are impeding flows.

Cllr Finnerty raised the issue of a blocked drain that is causing damage to the local astro turf facility at Gort Community School and Circular Road. Mr Gallagher is to contact Cllr Finnerty directly for further details.

Update on The Community Transport Study for Kinvara – Paula Higgins

LMD2430

Ms. Higgins made a presentation to the Members on the Kinvara Community Transport Study. She stated, Kinvara is identified as a Small Growth Village in the Galway County Development Plan with a reported population of 721 in 2022 census. She informed the members, the overall mode for walking to school is 51% which well exceeds the national average at 23%. She stated the CTS identifies 4 key themes for Kinvara, 1) school access, 2) tourism, 3) village centre and 4) wider connectivity and she highlighted the opportunities and challenges for each theme. She informed the members of the engagement from various stakeholders, options assessments and identified measures which include cycling links, school zones, permeability links, enhanced community space, potential 1-way system, wider footpaths, improved landscaping, facilitate outdoor dining and new cycle parking. Ms. Higgins also discussed the Bus Stop Enhancement Programme (BSEP), traffic management, and the various funding streams available.

The Cathaoirleach and Members thanked Ms. Higgins for her informative presentation.

In response to Cllr. Donohue, Ms. Higgins advised that schools must make an application under the Safe Routes to School Scheme which would have been notified to schools. Cllr. Donohue stated she will contact An Taisce to enquire if a change can be made to enable applications to be submitted at any time. She stated, she will also enquire if the colour of tactile pavement could be changed. She stated, she would like an update on a car park as she understood a landowner had agreed to make land available to facilitate this.

Cllr. Maher stated in 2020/2021 he requested a walkway be provided from the Loughrea Hotel as pedestrians are currently walking on the road but there is ample room for a walkway or cycleway, he requested an update for the July meeting.

Cllr. Finnerty stated all schools should be treated equally and should be given appropriate signage to make schools safe.

Cathaoirleach Business

LMD2431

The members had a brief discussion regarding the dates of the Loughrea MD meetings and it was agreed to hold the MD meetings on the second Monday of every month, from 11.00 am for two hours. It was agreed, a meeting will not be held in August.

AOB

LMD2432

Cllr. McClearn requested Mr. Haugh to contact electric skyline, he stated he reported a light which has not been working for a number of months and has not received a reply, he added, he understood an acknowledgement should issue from them within two weeks in line with the terms of contract. Mr. Haugh asked Cllr. McClearn to contact him directly regarding this complaint adding he understood there was a direct line for Councillors to report a fault.

Cllr. Maher enquired, having regard to additional housing estates for Loughrea, if the sewage system capacity had been increased to facilitate the estates.

Cllr. Harney stated the Civil Defence provides a valuable essential service, especially during events like Storm Eowyn, he enquired what support is given to them and if the Council can encourage people to become members. Mr. Haugh stated that Galway County Council's Civil Defence Officer is Brendan Qualter and he could be requested to attend a meeting.

Cllr. Harney raised concerns regarding ash dieback along public roads and the promise of severe storms, he enquired if measures can be taken to encourage landowners to remove trees that may cause a danger. Mr. Haugh clarified, the responsibility of landowners in this regard is notified to the public via newspapers notices annually. Cllr. Donohue stated following communication with the Minister the 1993 Roads Act will not be revoked in this regard.

Cllrs. Maher and McClearn raised concerns where trees could potentially fall on Council properties and enquired where the responsibility lies.

Cllr. Maher stated a Council tenant who expressed an interest in purchasing their council house was hit with a €10,000 arrears bill due to increases in welfare payments over the years. He stated, it is not satisfactory that they only became aware of this when requested to purchase their council house. Cllr. McClearn stated, this possibly relates to increases in salary over years given the additional rent due. Cllr. Maher stated, an annual reminder would be more acceptable.

Cllr. Donohue stated she raised this matter at the March Plenary meeting asking that all tenants be sent a gentle reminder to update the council on an annual basis of any increase or decrease in household income etc so that they are not hit with an arrears bill of anything from €10,000 which is deeply unfair, as she said many tenancy agreements are so old that many properties are just passed on etc and no agreement is found. She stated, she understands that the City Council send a reminder to all tenants. A response issued to Cllr. Donohue stating that the obligation to inform the Council of any subsequent change in the income of the Tenant or any of his/her family, is the obligation of the tenant.

Cllr. Harney **PROPOSED** speed cameras be utilised in any area where speeding is an issue, Cllr. Regan **SECONDED** the proposal. Cllr. McClearn stated, engagement with An Garda Siochana should be sought under the existing Road Traffic Acts. Cllr. Maher stated, this matter would previously have been raised at the Joint Policing Committee.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN



CLLR PAUL KILLILEA

14th July 2025

