

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, Galway on 9th September 2024

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. M. Kinane

Bail:

Cllr's. S. Curley, D. Kelly, PJ Murphy, M. Maher, I. Canning, P. Killilea, M. McClearn

Remote

Cllr. G. Donohue

Oifigigh:

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services
Mr. T. Prendergast, Senior Engineer
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. L. Flynn, Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer
Ms. C. Kennedy, Clerical Officer

Apologies

Cllr. G. Finnerty

Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 8th July 2024

LMD2377

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District (MD) of Loughrea held on 8th July 2024 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Maher, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kelly and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Kelly requested an update on works at the Long Point, Loughrea. He stated he works with people who have physical impairments, and they are requesting a ramp be installed at the sandy area of the lake to enable them to access the water. He stated a suitable anti-corroding beach wheelchair is also required together with suitable changing and shower facilities. Cllr. Maher supported Cllr. Kelly adding, he had raised this matter previously following a visit to the location at which he highlighted how residents in St. Brendan's Nursing Home could benefit from making the area more accessible. Mr. Haugh responded that the matter of the unsuitability of a beach wheelchair for the Long Point in Loughrea had been clarified to Cllr. Maher previously. The broader issue of accessibility would be one that could

be addressed by the regeneration team when giving an update on proposals for the Long Point. Cllr. Maher stated that an update on progress at the Long Point should be included as an item on the agenda for the next MD meeting.

Cllr. Kelly referred to a recent road traffic accident on the N65 at Heathlawn, between Killimor and Portumna, Mr. Haugh responded that the Council has contacted TII regarding the accident. He said, it is hoped that funding will be made available to allow for the design and implementation of suitable repair works. Cllr. McClearn stated he had made numerous representations to get a barrier installed at the location.

Cllr. Kelly requested an update on proposed works at Kilmeen Cross. He stated that he would personally write to TII.

In response to Cllr. Donohue's query, Mr. Haugh explained hedge cutting works are continuing along National, Regional, Local Primary, and Local Secondary routes. He added that hedge cutting along certain sections of local roads have been completed and these works will continue over the coming months.

Cllr. Maher stated that the traffic lights at the Westbridge Junction in Loughrea had been out of order at the weekend and the traffic had flowed very well. He requested the lights be left off temporarily. He stated a zebra crossing should be installed at the location to assist pedestrians. He added the traffic lights system has not worked effectively over the previous few months. Mr. Haugh responded that a contractor is due on site later this afternoon to carry out the necessary repairs. He stated that Galway County Council did not have a fixed view on proposals for improvements at this location and a review of traffic flow etc. will be carried out shortly to determine potential improvements that could be considered. These improvements might include revised road markings, altered signal phasing and cycle patterns or alternative vehicle control options. Mr. Haugh explained the absence of a traffic control system would put vulnerable people at risk adding it is not safe to leave it as it is, and the repairs must be carried out.

Cllr. Murphy thanked Mr. Haugh for his response to concerns raised at the previous MD Meeting in relation Labane. Cllr. Murphy stated he is happy to fund the project in full when agreement has been reached with the Tidy Towns and the design completed. Mr. Haugh requested written confirmation regarding allocation of funding from the two Councillors who made a commitment to the project.

Cllr. McClearn stated on 11th January 2024 the Elected Members received notification of "early start" roads to be completed under the 2024 roads programme and which included the L8753 at Lurgan. He stated works at on the road did not start until 14th August 2024. Mr. Haugh clarified that roads listed in that communication were clearly identified as "potential" early start roads however Lurgan didn't make it as an early start when they were shortlisting.

In response to Cllr. Curley's request for an update on the use of CCTV, Ms. Flynn advised that, a communication issued on this matter to the Members, she stated that the Council is working with consultants to prepare a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) which is crucial in assessing all potential risks. She added that a privacy statement has been completed to

include all CCTV in the Council's administrative area. She further added, an oversight committee is being established to include representatives from each Council Department. She added the DPIA will take some time to complete but it is hoped that it will be completed in the next quarter of 2024.

Cllr. Curley asked if there is funding available in the 2024/2025 budget for repair/redesign of footpaths in Loughrea town. He stated some footpaths are inaccessible for certain types of wheelchairs and referred specifically to water run off drains. Mr. Haugh responded there is no specific funding allocation in this regard, however limited works can be undertaken with funding provided via NOM, Local Road Discretionary and Towns and Village Maintenance. He was aware of this issue and replacement rainwater chutes had been ordered and will be installed as resources allow. He added, the Senior Engineer met with the Department Inspector to highlight the need for a dedicated funding allocation for footpath repair works.

Cllr. Curley requested Galway County Council's executive to contact the NTA and Minister Eamon Ryan's Department regarding the lack of bus transport in Loughrea. He stated it is posing a significant problem for commuters including college students in Loughrea and students with disabilities who cannot drive to college. Ms. Flynn stated she will make representations to the DOT (Department of Transport) and NTA (National Transport Authority).

Cllr. Canning requested Mr. Haugh to include the issue of signage at the Green Door when liaising with the TII regarding the N65. He added, the landowner has agreed to give land to the Council to straighten the road at the location. Mr. Haugh stated that the Council is waiting on a response from the TII in relation to the required repairs on the N65 and will raise the matter with the TII.

In response to Cllr. Canning's enquiry, Mr. Haugh stated he understands the pedestrian lights in Portumna have been repaired and will confirm this.

Cllr. Canning stated he allocated funding to repair footpaths in Portumna at St. Dymphna's. He said he is not satisfied with the length of roadway currently being completed and that the works would extend to the swimming area. Mr. Haugh stated, works at the location were completed as per the budget approved under the 2024 Roads Programme.

In response to Cllr. Canning's request for traffic calming measures on the same road, Mr. Haugh advised the Council has looked at areas that had potential for traffic calming measures to be installed and that this would be revisited later this year.

Cllr. Donohue referred to a delegation made in July by Fr. P. Callanan and Mr. Michael O'Grady. She asked if the safety measures that are in place at St. Ita's Primary School Loughrea could be implemented at the Loughrea/Gort Junction. Mr. Haugh stated that he would arrange an onsite meeting with the Councillors who have raised this matter to discuss potential short term safety measures.

Cllr. Maher requested an update at the next MD meeting on progress with the Town Hall, Loughrea.

Cllr. Kelly stated, under Cathaoirleach's Business, he raised an issue regarding a development in Portumna but was informed he cannot raise it in circumstances where the planning application is live. Ms. Ruane advised Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner, will attend the meeting to provide information to the Members on a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) to be put before the plenary council.

In response to Cllr. Murphy's query regarding works to take place on the Ballylara road, Mr. Haugh advised it could be at least two weeks before the required contractor was available to attend the location.

Cllr. Murphy requested an update on the provision of a footpath/cycle path from Labane to Ardahan. He stated he agreed to the Part VIII subject to works to provide the footpath/cycle path being commenced in tandem with housing construction. He stated this hasn't happened and requested an update at the next MD meeting. Mr. Haugh stated that Ms. Lowe addressed the cycleway, but he was not aware of any project or plan in this regard.

The Cathaoirleach advised the Members that Ms. Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner would speak to the members regarding the proposed Coolpowra Development.

Strategic infrastructure Development (SID): Application by Coolpowra Flexgen Limited for Planning Permission for a Proposed Reserve Gas-Fired Generator at Coolpowra, Cooldorragha, Ballynaheskeragh, Gortlusky and Sheeaunrush, County Galway. Ref ABP319905-24

Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner briefed the meeting about 2 Strategic Infrastructure Developments which have been submitted to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) by Coolpowra Flexgen Limited. She explained that the applications were made under different sections of the Planning legislation.

Firstly, an application for a Gas-fired generator under Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act (as amended). In this case, the Planning Authority is required to prepare a report to ABP setting out the views of the authority on the effects of the proposed development on the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the authority. The legislation requires that the report shall be submitted to the members of the authority and their views sought of the proposed development. This report will be presented at the plenary meeting on the 23rd of September 2024. The members may decide to make recommendations, which shall be attached to the report submitted to ABP.

The 2nd SID application is for a substation adjacent to the proposed Generator, and it is not required to be presented to the members, but had been open for public submissions to ABP.

Ms Loughnane noted that a 3rd application made directly to the Planning Authority for battery storage has been decided upon and is within the appeal period so no discussion could be held on that.

She noted that submissions to ABP in respect of the SID applications closed on the 30th of August 2024 and that the report from the Planning Authority must be submitted by the 2nd October.

She said that the purpose of her briefing today was to give the members of the Municipal District (MD) an overview of the process. The minutes of this meeting and the plenary meeting would also be appended to the report to ABP.

Cllr McClearn stated that the members will need time to consider the report after it is presented to the Plenary meeting and asked if they could have until the 30th September to agree the submission from the MD members. Ms. Loughnane said it could be accepted by lunchtime on the 30th September. He also asked why the members could not comment on the substation application and Ms Loughnane explained that it is a piece of infrastructure in conjunction with the main generator which will probably be operated by a public utility provider. The generator itself is being proposed by a private company and thus comes under the legislation which requires elected members be consulted.

Cllr Donoghue asked whether a deputation of local people could attend the Plenary meeting, but Ms Loughane stated that the public already had their opportunity to make their submissions to ABP within the statutory timeframe.

Cllr Canning queried whether members who made submissions directly to ABP would have to comment again. Ms Loughnane said it was not mandatory and they could decide to comment or not.

Cllr Kinane asked if the MD could comment jointly and outlined how strongly she felt that this was the wrong location, and that people were entitled to live in a healthy environment.

Ms Loughnane stressed that the process must be adhered to, and that the obligation was to present the report to the Plenary and comments to be made either at the meeting or directly to the Planning Department under an agreed procedure.

Cllr McClearn said that this development could have profound implications for the area and that as the Plenary agenda is already jam-packed that members needed time afterwards to consider the report.

After some discussion the members agreed to hold a special meeting of the MD Committee on the 30th September to finalize their response to the report.

**Confirmation of Minutes regarding Local Area Plan 2024-2030
on 15th July 2024**

LMD2378

The Minutes of the Meeting regarding the Local Area Plan 2024-2030 on 15th July 2024 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Kelly, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Donohue expressed her dissatisfaction at a reply she received from the Minister and added, she is not accepting it. She stated the community of Loughrea, and hinterlands, are not happy with people in Dublin telling us what we need.

Cllr. Curley stated the Members and public were dismayed when they received the Minister's directive. He stated that in a town with 7000 people, and zero pitches available, the Minister's directive is not good enough, Loughrea Town is being left behind. He added, the hockey team must travel 8 kilometres (KM) by car for training.

Taking in Charge An Gairdín Cuil Estate, Loughrea

LMD2379

The taking in charge of the road at An Gairdín Cuil Estate, Loughrea was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Maher and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kelly.

Point A-B on TIC Map. Road commencing at its junction with L-8199-0 in the townland of Cosmona and extending North for 89m to Point B and ending at house No. 12.

Flooding Update

LMD2380

Mr Gallagher updated the meeting as follows:

In the last two months the environmental consultant has completed ecological studies of proposed disposal sites and geophysics surveys of sites of potential archaeological interest. The visual and landscape chapter of the EIAR is also nearing completion.

The engineering consultants have been examining potential IROPI issues raised by the environmental consultant and preparing for a site visit to review the specific concerns. The site visit is scheduled for the next week with the findings from the visit being available before the next MD meeting.

RPS have been appointed as the successful tenderer for the Coastal Flood Study from Oranmore to Kinvara. They were appointed a week ago. The programme for delivery of the final report and recommendations is twelve months from the date of contract signing.

The Area Office recently completed the removal of the vegetation blockage at Killeenaran, at the end of the Kiltiernan to Ballinderreen flood channel. It is not anticipated that the blockage will be an issue in the future.

At the last MD meeting in July, Cllr Canning requested that the OPW will be asked to provide an updated timeline for proposed CFRAM works in Portumna, which is in Tranche 2 of the

national schemes. Mr Gallagher gave a summary of the response from the OPW to the meeting, where the OPW outlined works completed on the CFRAM schemes to date, highlighted the limited resources available nationally to progress Tranche 2 schemes and highlighted efforts within the OPW to improve on timelines for delivery of schemes. The OPW did not provide a timeline for the Portumna FRS. A copy of the correspondence from the OPW is being forwarded to the members.

Mr Gallagher confirmed to Cllr Murphy that the overlay works recently completed adjacent to Termon Lough would not be affected by works proposed under the flood relief scheme. Improved access to the house cut-off in a flood event is proposed from the County Clare side (Attyslany).

Mr Gallagher confirmed to Cllr Murphy that any outstanding IROPI issues that remain following the upcoming site visit by the consultants would be further reviewed before a decision to progress the project through IROPI. An update is to be provided at the next MD meeting.

National Speed Limits Review – Local Roads

LMD2381

Mr. Tom Prendergast made a presentation to the Members on the National Speed Limits Review on Local Roads. He explained a working group was established to examine and review the framework for the setting of speed limits on Irish roads. The resulting report “Speed Limit Review”, with recommendations, arising from this review was published in September 2023.

He explained, the report contained principal recommendations relating to three different road categories: 1). Recommendation that a default speed limit of 30km/h for built up and urban areas be introduced. 2). Recommendation that the default Speed Limit on National Secondary Roads be reduced from 100 km/h to 80 km/h to align with the Safe System principles and to reduce the severity of head on collisions. 3). The default Speed Limit on Local Roads be reduced from 80 km/h to 60 km/h to align with the use of the network and the Safe System principles.

He explained the priority actions are being progressed through legislation and supporting Statutory Guidelines. He added, the DOT have indicated an intention to implement the changes commencing at the end of November 2024 with the Implementation of 60km/h for Rural Local Roads and, in the First half of 2025 to implement for National Secondary Roads 80km/h and Urban Speed Limits 30km/h.

He advised that Galway County Council developed a plan to ensure all required changes can be made to meet the projected timelines as set out. The first step involves an assessment of all local roads (total length 5,315km) that will default to 60kph, to ascertain if there are sections where retention of the existing 80kph speed limit might be more appropriate. Such changes would be made by way of Special Speed Limit Bye Law, in accordance with the Road Traffic Act, where the change was consistent with the “Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland.”

He added, a high-level desktop assessment of the local roads has shown that there may be up to 235km to 400km of local roads that may be suitable for an 80kph speed limit, based on criteria set down by the DOT. He continued, this was also considered at the Transport SPC meeting on 26th April, and members having been asked to consider the matter agreed that should roads meet the criteria (having a road width of greater than 5.5m and centre road markings) they should be considered and assessed under the Guidelines for Managing Speed Limits to determine if they are appropriate for a Special Speed Limit of 80kph.

He continued; the roads identified under Stage 1 Assessment have undergone a Stage 2 assessment in accordance with DOT Guidance. The stage 2 assessment includes consideration of matters such as horizontal and vertical alignment, number of junctions and access to properties and the type and numbers of vehicles and other road users. The results of the Stage 2 assessment have identified the roads that meet the criteria for a Special Speed Limit of 80 km/h.

Mr. Prendergast explained, these recommendations are now presented to each Municipal District for agreement before proceeding with statutory byelaws. The next step will then be the preparation of draft Bye Laws proposing special speed limits to retain at 80kph those roads identified in Appendix 2. Following a statutory public consultation final draft Bye Laws will be brought to the plenary meeting of Galway County Council for adoption. It is not proposed to retain an 80kph speed limit on any local roads in the Loughrea MD area.

It is also the intention to bring forward supplementary draft byelaws to implement periodic speed limits for a number of schools on former National Roads which have been reclassified as Regional Roads. At the same time the list of housing estates to benefit from a 30kph special speed limit will also be updated. The prescribed statutory steps, including public consultation and engagement with An Gardaí Siochana will be followed and these supplementary Bye Laws will come before full plenary for council for consideration.

Mr. Prendergast also explained that the county wide review, which has been paused in order to affect these nationally mandated changes to the speed limit regime, will recommence in the second half of 2025 once all the default changes have been implemented and the statutory guidelines have been updated.

Mr. Enda Gallagher concluded by making a presentation to the Members on the methodology used in deciding which roads could retain the 80 km/h speed limit and listed the roads which may be suitable to retain an 80km/h speed limit within the Loughrea MD.

A discussion took place regarding types of roads which could be considered to retain an 80km/h speed limit and the role of the Elected Members regarding the setting of speed limit byelaws. Mr. Prendergast confirmed that the retention of 80kph on a stretch of local road would require a special speed limit Bye Law to that effect. The approval of any such bye law is a reserved function requiring the approval of the Members. Based on the assessment carried out in accordance with the revised guidelines issued by the Department of Transport, there are no local roads within the Loughrea MD area where the retention of an 80kph speed limit is being proposed.

A number of queries were raised relating to speed limits at schools. Mr. Prendergast clarified that 50kph periodic speed limits are being proposed for 3 schools in the Loughrea MD (Kilchreest N.S, Peterswell N.S., Lough Cutra N.S.) on former National Roads which have been reclassified as Regional Roads. Schools on local roads will benefit from the reduction in the default speed limit from 80kph to 60kph. He also confirmed that a supporting recommendation in the national "Speed Limit Review" report was that periodic speed limits be provided at all schools – 30kph in an urban setting and 50 kph in a rural. It is the expectation that these recommendations will be translated to updated guidelines which will be the trigger for any implementation.

Mr. Gallagher advised the Members that he would arrange for the presentation to be circulated to them.

Kilmeen Cross and N65

LMD2382

This item was postponed to October 2024 Municipal District Meeting.

Revised Standing Orders – Hybrid Meetings section to be approved

LMD2383

The Cathaoirleach proposed item Number 7 on the agenda, '**Revise Standing Orders – Hybrid Meetings section to be approved**' be suspended to the October MD meeting, it was **PROPOSED** by Councillor McClearn and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kelly.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2384

Cllr. McClearn stated there is a big call in the Loughrea area for a publicly owned and run swimming pool, he **PROPOSED** that the members should support this concept. Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** the proposal and Cllr. Kelly expressed his support for a pool also.

Cllr. Curley stated, it is interesting that the OPR rejected the proposal for a Sports Centre in Loughrea but did not acknowledge that people of Loughrea must travel 30 kilometres to use a swimming pool.

It was agreed to hold a Special Meeting in the Loughrea MD to discuss the Coolpowra SID on Monday 30th September 2024 at 11.00 a.m.

The meeting concluded at 1:25 pm.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN

Martina Kinane

CLLR MARTINA KINANE

14 October 2024

DATE