

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 Loughrea MD on 8th July 2024

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. M. Kinane

Baill:

Cllr's. S. Curley, D. Kelly, PJ Murphy, M. Maher, G. Finnerty, M. Kinane, I. Canning, G. Donohue

Remote

Cllr's. J. McClearn, P. Killilea

Oifigigh:

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services
Ms. R. Lowe, 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

Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 13th May 2024

LMD2371

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District (MD) of Loughrea held on 13th May 2024 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Finnerty, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Murphy and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Donohue requested an update on Speed Limits located at schools within the Municipal District and requested more clarification on the setting of speed limits. Cllr. Finnerty stated this matter should be added to the agenda for the next Municipal District meeting.

The Cathaoirleach **PROPOSED** the matter should appear on the agenda for discussion at the September MD Meeting, Cllr. Finnerty **SECONDED** the proposal.

Cllr. Curley requested a progress update on the Town Hall in Loughrea, Ms. Flynn responded she will request an update. Cllr. Curley asked if tenders have been finalised yet. He also enquired regarding a follow up meeting on the Loughrea Local Area Plan.

The Cathaoirleach also raised concerns regarding speed limits and public transport within the Municipal District area. She requested that these items appear on the Agenda for the September meeting. She asked that the Director of Services with responsibility for Physical Development, a representative from the Department of Transport and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) attend the meeting. She stated this is one of the main issues that was raised with Elected Members when they were canvassing. Ms. Lowe stated that a national speed limit review has taken place and implementation is beginning in November 2024 in respect of local roads. The default position is that they will go to 60kph, except in circumstances where roads are of appropriate standard that the 80kph should be retained. Ms Lowe advised that the speed limits team attend a Loughrea MD meeting to present on the matter. Cllr. Donohue stated safety of children and parents is paramount and asked if this discussion can be teased out further, she asked if the Loughrea MD can follow the precedent set by Wicklow County Council.

Cllr. Finnerty raised concerns regarding sightlines due to overgrown hedges, particularly at school locations. Cllr. Murphy expressed his concerns relating to reducing the speed limit on all local roads and asked for clarification on the guidelines for retaining the 80kph speed limit on certain roads.

Ms. Lowe stated, while the default speed limit will be set to 60kph, the Council will be required to make specific byelaws to retain the 80kph speed limit. She stated that any proposal to retain the 80kph limit will require an engineering assessment. She stated this will be a specific piece, assessing road geometry which includes regard to the number of accesses and houses in the area. She added, any roads for which it is proposed to retain the 80kph speed limit, will go before the Councillors for consideration. She stated in advance of speed limit changes a large body of work must be completed, for example, erection of poles for road signage.

Cllr. Curley sought confirmation on a previous proposal of a motion to reduce speed limits, he stated he was advised by two Senators that the Elected Members can reduce speed limits within the MD.

Cllr. Curley stated transport route 763 and 630 have ceased, he requested a copy of all correspondence issued to Transport Ireland.

Confirmation of Minutes of Annual Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 27th June 2024

LMD2372

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 13th May 2024 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Maher, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kelly and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Confirmation of a decision to rescind a Declaration of a Road to be a Public Road at Kiltullagh, Loughrea (Publication Date 17.05.2024). The road in question is the road commencing at junction with L-71822 (557378;725349) in the townland of Kiltullagh and extending East for a distance of 400 metres in the townland of Kiltullagh and finishing at Junction with the R348/I-3115 (557712;725576) in the townland of Kiltullagh. **LMD2373**

Cllr. Maher stated he rescinded his proposal to declare a Road to be a Public Road at Kiltullagh, Loughrea. The road commences at junction with L-71822 (557378;725349) in the townland of Kiltullagh and extends East for a distance of 400 metres in the townland of Kiltullagh and finishes at Junction with the R348/I-3115 (557712;725576) in the townland of Kiltullagh.

He clarified he followed the correct process on foot of a request by residents who wished to join the village by two local roads and added, the only way for him to do this was by putting it on the agenda. He stated a public meeting was then held at which he was asked to rescind his proposal. He clarified the purpose of the proposal to make the road a public road was to create a housing opportunity for families moving to Kiltullagh.

Cllr. Kelly **PROPOSED** sending correspondence to the Heritage Officer to place a Preservation Order on the road. Cllr. Murphy stated if Cllr. Kelly wished to defer his proposal for a month he would drive out to the road to view it and may then second it. Cllr. Curley stated he wished to **SECOND** the proposal as there is a significant amount of history in the area.

Ms. Lowe acknowledged that the proposal was **RESCINDED** and will not be Taken In Charge by Galway County Council.

Cllr. Maher asked what restrictions would apply should a preservation order be placed over the road and who will be responsible for maintaining the road.

Cllr. Finnerty enquired regarding conditions which a preservation order would place over a road and the effects they would have on farmers in the area. Ms. Lowe responded that the Executive would seek clarification on the possibility of placing a preservation order over a road and what restrictions would attach and it would likely be the Planning Section (includes Heritage) that would reply on this.

The Cathaoirleach stated the members will wait for the opinion. Cllr. Kelly agreed pending further information from the Planning Department.

Flooding Update

LMD2374

Mr Gallagher updated the meeting as follows:

The engineering consultants are currently preparing details of the proposed disposal sites for excess excavated material on the scheme. They are also providing clarifications to environmental queries.

The environmental consultant is undertaking additional bat and bird surveys at present. They are also preparing for ecological assessments of potential disposal sites. Archaeologists are due on site this week to examine proposed gauge sites in turloughs. These sites will be required for the operational phase of the project. Geophysics surveys will commence once the required licence has been approved by National Monuments Services, the application is with them at present.

Mr. Gallagher outlined the environmental Appropriate Assessment (AA) process and Natura Impact Assessment (NIA) that is required for European sites (SACs and NHAs). For turloughs, the Qualifying Interests under Habitats Directive are the turlough habitats.

Less than two weeks ago the environmental consultants informed the project team that the scheme may have a negative impact on these Annex 1 (highest priority) habitats. These concerns were raised following very localised habitat surveys, the classification of the habitats, inputs into GIS and the assessment of direct and in-direct impacts. Similar concerns had been raised in August of 2023 and had been allayed following further investigation.

Unfortunately, due to the current holiday season, it will be late August before the issues being raised have been bottomed out. The Council, Office of Public Works (OPW) and Trinity College Dublin are currently awaiting the details of the areas of concern.

Mr Gallagher then outlined the alternative permission route that could be availed of if the NIS did not provide a positive finding. The IROPI (Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest) route would be a last resort.

The tenders for the study of the effects of Storm Debie on the coastal area between Oranmore and Kinvara are due to be submitted tomorrow afternoon. It will take approximately 6 weeks to assess the tenders and appoint the winning tenderer.

Further to Cllr Kinane's request at the previous MD meeting, the OPW was contacted to investigate the provision of Individual Property protection (IPP) for two houses on the Maree Road, in advance of the findings from the study that is being commissioned. Mr Gallagher reported that the OPW queried the level of protection to be provided, given the current lack of technical information available. They also queried how IPP had been identified as the appropriate measures to be taken at these two locations and how these two premises were selected for advance works ahead of the other householders and businesses that flooded during the event. Given the significant overlap between the study being commissioned and the houses in question, no funding for advance works would be provided until the final report from the study was produced. It was noted that the households in question had never flooded before and there was minimal risk of a reoccurrence in advance of the final report being available. Mr Gallagher is to provide Cllr Kinane with written confirmation of these discussions with the OPW.

Mr Gallagher confirmed to Cllr Finnerty that the reduced pollution, from septic tanks and slurry pits, if the scheme was in place, has been considered by the environmental

consultants. He also confirmed that he would inform the South Galway Flood Relief Committee of the latest developments.

It was confirmed to Cllr Murphy that the IROPI process involved a submission to the EU, where permission is sought for a scheme to proceed, despite the scheme having an impact on a European site.

Following a request from Cllr Canning, 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.

Cllr. Maher enquired if cleaning of rivers in Loughrea would continue to Kilreekil. Mr. Haugh responded that the Dunkellin Drainage District Maintenance Scheme would again run in 2024 subject to the restrictions previously advised to all members.

Introduction to Anti-Litter Ambassador Programme

LMD2375

Ms. Flynn addressed the members and referred to the Litter Management Plan adopted by Galway County Council in 2023. She outlined that the new Anti-Litter Ambassador Programme' is being put in place to help the fight against litter and stated that she is looking for the support of the Elected Members together with support of businesses in the area.

Cllr. Finnerty complimented Ms. Flynn on her presentation adding there is a need for all to be more productive in the fight against litter. He acknowledged the help of the tidy towns and Ukranian Community in fighting litter.

Cllr. Maher welcomed and supported the programme. He raised concerns regarding the failure of dog walkers to pick up dog fouling from the streets in Loughrea.

Cllr. Murphy expressed his support for the programme, he complimented the Environment Team on their timing of radio advertising over the weekend during the match interval, Ms. Flynn stated she will pass his comments to Mr. Mark Molloy, Assistant Environmental Awareness Officer. He expressed concern regarding polythene being discarded on roadsides by farmers, he also commented on car parts not being removed from roads following accidents. He added in certain areas reflective cones, road signs and loose chippings are not tidied up and the Local Authority need to do their part also.

Cllr. Curley stated he fully supports the programme, and in response to his query Ms. Flynn stated children from local schools will be involved in the programme.

In response to Cllr. Canning's concerns regarding the availability of bags, gloves, and litter pickers for members of Tidy Towns, Ms. Flynn stated she will source items required. Cllr. Canning stated he would like to see the schools in Portumna involved in the programme and complimented the work of the Environment Team.

Cllr. Donohue stated she fully supports the programme adding that Gort Town will require additional bins.

The Cathaoirleach stated she is in full support of the programme and acknowledged work done by the Tidy Towns and Voluntary Groups. She stated in some areas bins that were provided by coffee shops and take aways are now removed, she enquired if contact could be made with businesses to return bins and if one businessperson in town could be an ambassador for this.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2376

Ms. Ruane advised the Members that Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner has sent confirmation that the Strategic Infrastructure Development for the reserve gas fired power station and the switch gear electricity substation at Coolpowra were withdrawn and have been resubmitted to An Bord Pleanala with a public display period beginning on the 12th of July and ending on 30th August at 5.30 p.m. Ms. Loughnane stated all submissions to be made to An Bord Pleanala and added, Elected Members can contact her for further clarification on the issue.

Cllr. Kelly asked if road markings can be reviewed on the Gurtymadden to Mullagh road, Mr. Haugh stated he would review the width of the road which will determine if lining can be considered in conjunction with the Traffic Signs Manual.

Cllr. Kelly stated the Members need to hold a discussion on the Gas Plant at the next MD Meeting as it is causing concern in Portumna.

Cllr. Finnerty raised concerns regarding replacement of an outdoor General Operative in the Gort Area and asked why there was a delay in filling this vacancy. He proposed a meeting should be held with HR on 22nd July to discuss staff in the Gort/Kinvara Local Electoral Area. Ms. Ruane clarified that staffing matters are exclusively an executive role advising that individual contracts cannot be discussed.

Cllr. Finnerty stated NOM funding should increase from €18,000 to €25,000, which was seconded by Cllr. Donohue.

Cllr. Maher sought an update on the project at the lake.

Cllr. Maher sought an update on traffic flow improvements at traffic lights at the Westbridge Loughrea. He proposed installing a mini-roundabout and requested an update at the September MD Meeting. Mr. Haugh responded that works carried out by Uisce Eireann (UE) in recent weeks have contributed once again to added delays. Repair works to the detection loop on the Athenry Road cannot be completed until the existing UE works are fully complete and stated that would be six to eight weeks at a minimum. He clarified that the traffic lights typically work on a delay minimising mode and switch to a capacity maximising mode when significant traffic is detected by these in-ground loops. He stated he will provide an update to Cllr. Maher at the next MD meeting but clarified a mini roundabout is not a temporary option. Ms. Lowe added, the Local Authority is still in discussion with a design consultant regarding the junction.

In response to Cllr. Curley's query, Ms. Flynn stated she will seek an update on progress with the Town Hall. Ms. Lowe stated that tenders were returned on 4th July and a tender review meeting was scheduled by the team.

Cllr. Curley enquired regarding the installation of CCTV cameras at Station Road Car Park highlighting a major dumping problem at the location. Ms. Flynn stated that the Council is progressing through the process regarding implementing CCTV in the administrative area and advised she will provide a further update.

Cllr. Canning highlighted issues at the bridge in Ballyshrulue at which there were 2 crashes at the weekend adding the bridge is too narrow. Mr. Haugh agreed to review the concerns raised.

Cllr. Canning enquired regarding installation of bases and new benches at the swim area in Portumna. Mr. Haugh stated that the majority of public seating in Loughrea has been standardised and replaced in recent years as part of a planned approach. Once completed, focus would then shift to Portumna to complete a full upgrade there over the coming years.

Cllr. Donohue requested clarification on progress on Local Improvement Schemes where not all persons agree. Ms. Lowe responded by encouraging locals to submit their LIS application forms, if forms are received then they can be assessed and considered, and it would be better to submit the form even where doubt exists on qualification, rather than not submitting anything. Mr. Haugh stated that Galway County Council will consider applications where not all affected parties are involved but will not progress applications where affected private landowners are objecting to proposed schemes.

Cllr. Murphy referred to the appearance of the traffic island at Labane Village, stating the island installed has not been maintained. He stated kerbs are not painted which can cause problems for people not familiar with the area. He added, some components at the traffic island are damaged and asked for it to be improved and maintained on a six-monthly basis. Mr. Haugh advised it is difficult to source a contractor, but improvements may be possible and NOM funding will be sought in this regard. Cllr. Finnerty expressed his support of Cllr. Murphy's concerns regarding the traffic island and stated he would like to put forward NOM funding for works. The Cathaoirleach confirmed she would be happy to contribute NOM also. Cllr. Finnerty requested works be carried out before race week. Ms. Lowe stated the winning tender to provide bus shelters across the county is below the cost estimate. Cllr. Finnerty stated he understood there would be no cost to the Council as insurance would cover this cost. Ms. Lowe confirmed that insurance would cover Labane but in the other cases the NTA is funding the work.

Cllr. Curley stated, if the Climate Action Plan aims to reduce emissions it is not working and requested this be stated in correspondence between the Chief Executive and Department of Transport to enhance transport to and from Loughrea.

The Cathaoirleach enquired if it would be possible to request the Local Link to attend the Loughrea MD meeting to respond to that point.

Cllr. Finnerty requested an update be provided in relation to Kilmeen Cross on the N65 at the September MD meeting.

Cllr. Canning stated the pedestrian lights at the nursing home are not working and requested a solution to the problem.

Cllr. Donohue referred to the deputation by Fr. Paddy Callanan and Michael O'Grady regarding the Loughrea Road Junction in Gort, adding that a conclusion is needed. She stated the situation is worse at the junction since the lights were installed. She advised that fencing to corral people to a safe crossing zone has not happened. Mr. Haugh advised that the installation of railings was discussed previously however it is not an option as there is a possibility that a pedestrian could inadvertently get caught on the wrong side of the railings. He added a parking solution or consideration to having a single lane at the junction could be progressed if agreement were in place. Mr. Haugh added, a Low Cost Safety Improvement funding application will be made next year to remove the right turn from the Ennis approach. He also advised that a significant planning application was currently being considered which will potentially see significant alterations to the current junction.

Cllr. Murphy suggested installing bollards outside Hennelly's Pub as part of the problem came from parking outside the pub. Cllr. Finnerty disagreed and added the Gardai stated there is a low rate of incidents and accidents.

Cllr. Maher stated the junction is dangerous and suggested consideration be given to the installation of lights or a pedestrian crossing.

Cllr. Murphy stated that he reluctantly agreed to the Part 8 Planning Application for Social Housing in Ardahan but did so on condition that a walkway/cycleway would be provided between Ardahan and Labane. He stated the buildings are up to wall plate level now, he stressed he wants a timeline for the walkway/cycle way to enable people in Ardahan to travel safely to services in Laban.

Cllr. Curley requested a meeting to discuss the Fire Station.

The Cathaoirleach stated a meeting is scheduled to discuss the Local Area Plan at 10 am on Monday next and enquired if a meeting to discuss the Fire Station could be held on that day.

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Martina Kinane

CLLR MARTINA KINANE

9/9/2024

DATE