

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 10th February 2025

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. M. Kinane

Baill:

Cllr's. M. Maher, G. Finnerty, G. Donohue,
D. Kelly, P. Killilea, I. Canning

Remote:

Cllr. J. McClearn

Oifigigh:

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services
Mr. M. Owens, Director of Services
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. E. Murphy, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. A. Dolan, Senior Executive Scientist
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. D. O'Loughlin, Executive Engineer
Mr. A. Brogan, Executive Engineer
Ms. A. Galligan, Assistant Engineer
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer
Ms. D. Feeney, Administrative Officer
Mr. M. Molloy, Assistant Environmental Awareness
Officer
Ms. Linda Lydon, Executive Technician
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer
Ms. C. Kennedy, Clerical Officer

Apologies:

Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer

Deputation – Kinvara Community Council

The Kinvara Community Development Council made a presentation to the Elected Members on a Pop-Up Swimming Pool Project for Ballinderreen and they requested financial support for the project from the Council.

Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Council Chamber, Galway County Council on 13th January 2025 **LMD2406**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District (MD) of Loughrea held on 13th January 2025 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Maher, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Finnerty and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Maher requested an update on safety measures on the Lake Road, Loughrea.

Cllr. Maher requested an update on the Cycleway stating he was not satisfied with the update given to the Members at the January 2025 Loughrea Municipal District (MD) meeting. Cllr. Donohue enquired if the Cycleway is progressing in its current format, clarifying that she hoped not. She added it is included in the Programme for Government and requested an update. She stressed the importance of listening to landowners. The Cathaoirleach responded she had contacted Mr. Uinsinn Finn, Director of Services regarding an update. She added, she is aware that a significant volume of work was required following Storm Éowyn. As a result, Mr. Finn was not available to attend the MD meeting. She clarified the response provided previously; she stated it was a reply to a specific query related to Maree. The Cathaoirleach added, Mr. Finn will provide an update on progress to the Members, and he will meet with them.

Cllr. Maher stated he is delighted to see the progress with the Town Hall Loughrea.

Cllrs. Finnerty and Donohue extended good wishes to Cllrs. Curley and Murphy on their election to the Senate.

Cllr. Finnerty stated, there is a serious shortage of outdoor staff in Galway County Council which was evident during the recent atrocity of Storm Éowyn. Cllr. Donohue added a case should be made for additional staffing in the MD. Cllr. Finnerty stated the Council's outdoor staff was the first port of call for help, adding the staff cleared miles of road enabling the public and emergency service access to routes. Mr. Haugh acknowledged the excellent work done by outdoor staff and highlighted the scale of the damage. He stated repair and clean up works are continuing and will likely continue for several weeks. Cllr. Canning echoed his appreciation to the staff who went above and beyond their duty in dealing with the aftermath of Storm Éowyn, he added, the issue of seeking additional staff is discussed at every MD meeting but without any progress. Ms. Ruane thanked the outdoor and communications staff for their valued work during and following Storm Éowyn. She stated, 10 General Operatives are currently going through the recruitment process in Galway County Council and appointments should be made shortly.

In response to Cllr. Finnerty's request for an update on Gort Water Supply, Ms. Flynn stated she had sent a communication to Uisce Eireann (UE) and will follow up again today with UE.

Cllr. Finnerty sought an update on upgrading the existing public lighting in Gort. Mr. Haugh responded that he had previously requested Cllr. Finnerty to provide the specific areas he is referring to, agreed to review these specific areas but added, provision of any broader review or additional public lights is subject to budgetary constraints.

In response to Cllr. Donohue's comment on new speed limits, Mr. Haugh responded that the new vehicle speed limits have been enacted since the previous Friday.

Cllr. Donohue acknowledged the great work done by the Community Response Team following Storm Éowyn. She complemented the outdoor staff and officials in Galway County Council for their trojan work. She stated a lot of infrastructure would not have been damaged if trees were not located near power lines. She added the ESB must play their part in addressing this issue as there are ESB poles 'pencil thin' which snapped in half and stated many poles are laden down with ivy. She stated they should be working in collaboration with the Council. In response Ms. Ruane stated the Council works in partnership with the Local Community. Cllr. Canning stated, people experienced hardship due to power and water outages. He highlighted the difficulties encountered when reporting these outages. He stated, it is not good enough and again commended the outdoor staff on their work. He enquired if it is possible to request the ESB to provide the cost of repair to the ESB network and have it compared to the cost of cutting every tree and ditch on the roadside in Galway. The Cathaoirleach invited Cllr. Canning to put forward a motion in this regard. Cllr. Kelly enquired if measures could have been pre-empted, adding that the storm force was 183k per hour in Mace Head in comparison with speeds of 185kph in 1939. Cllr. Kelly acknowledged the good work done by Council staff.

Cllr. McClearn thanked the outdoor staff for their work. He stated in 2020 he contacted UE and requested them to make generators available for use in water treatment plants during emergency situations, he stated this didn't happen. He said it is scandalous and unacceptable that a utility company has no back-up solutions in place. He added, utility companies should have a responsibility for maintaining trees located close to overhead lines considering the damage caused by storms in the past.

The Cathaoirleach joined her colleagues in acknowledging the work done by outdoor staff, she agreed that the ESB and UE can be difficult to deal with. She stated, UE and ESB staff have a difficult and dangerous job, and she acknowledged their work. She extended her thanks to volunteers who assisted in setting up hubs.

In response to Cllr. Canning's request for an update on a speed survey to be carried out in Woodpark Mr. Haugh responded that he will follow up.

Cllr. Kelly requested an update on a speed survey in Abbey Street stating that residents are afraid to egress from their houses due to safety concerns. Mr. Haugh stated, he is not aware of a commitment to carry out a speed survey in the area as he does not believe speed is the issue in the area. Cllr. Maher stated, it is one of the most dangerous streets and a traffic survey should be carried and ramps provided as there is only one footpath along the street. Mr. Haugh responded that concerns were primarily related to the layout of the street. He stated that cars travelling at 25km/hr or even 15km/hr would be perceived as travelling too quickly by anyone stepping directly out on the road but highlighted that these speeds are well within the existing speed limits. To include footpaths at this area would require changes to parking etc. and these changes could be proposed by the members when the Traffic Management Plan for Loughrea was being adopted.

Ms. Galligan provided an information briefing to the Members on the extension of Rinville Burial Ground (BG). She advised that Rinville BG has approximately a 3-year capacity remaining, and the processing of planning, tendering and construction will take approximately 2 years. Ms. Galligan added the subject site is in the ownership of Galway County Council and is located to the rear of the BG advising that there is a ringfort to the immediate boundary of the existing BG. She clarified that consultation has taken place with the National Monument Services (NMS) and predevelopment test trenches were excavated under supervision of an Archaeologist and nothing of archaeological significance was found. Ms. Galligan presented the Members with a drawing of the site adding that approval has been agreed by the NMS and the HSE for the extension.

Ms. Galligan advised that a pre-planning consultation has been completed. The proposal is to cater for 1734 grave plots and 68 urns plots which it is expected will provide a capacity for 35 years based on the current internment rate at Rinville.

The Cathaoirleach and members thanked Ms. Galligan for her presentation. In response to Cllr. Donohue's query Ms. Galligan confirmed that the urn plots will be located on the ground. She stated she will enquire if consultation with the public will take place. She clarified that the briefing is for information purposes at this point.

The Cathaoirleach added, the plan looks like a very feasible plan. She enquired if it is the vision for Renville BG to be a Municipal District BG because of the demand in County Galway.

Ms. Galligan responded that she will follow up on the Cathaoirleach's queries and revert.

The Cathaoirleach acknowledged the valued work of Mr. Michael Qualter (R.I.P.) during his time of caretaker of Renville Burial Ground. She read aloud a letter from the Cllrs. expressing their sympathy at the passing of the caretaker Michael Qualter to this family.

Cllr Maher requested Ms. Galligan to provide an update to him on proposals to extend Kilconeiron and Mount Pleasant Burial Grounds. Ms. Galligan stated she would follow up.

Part 8 Cosmona Social Housing Development Loughrea **Alan Brogan, Executive Engineer**

LMD2409

Mr. Brogan made a presentation to the Members on the proposed Part 8 Residential Development at Cosmona, Loughrea (Reference LA 09/23). He advised that the proposed development is located 600m North of Loughrea Town Centre containing 44 housing units and 12 apartments. Mr. Brogan provided statistical information to the Members on local authority housing needs in Loughrea, he advised that 9 submissions/observations (1 duplicate) were received all of which were acknowledged and considered. He provided

details of the proposed layout of the development. Mr. Brogan advised that a design team was appointed in March 2024, the Part 8 Application was prepared in March 2025, it is estimated that a contractor will be appointed in Quarter 2, and it is envisaged that the project will be completed in Quarter 4 of 2026.

The Cathaoirleach and Members thanked Mr. Brogan for his presentation.

A discussion took place following the presentation. Cllrs. Maher and Kelly stated they attended a meeting with the residents of the Hazelwood Estate, and they would support the development on condition that a vehicular or pedestrian entrance for the new development was not provided via the Hazelwood Estate and the existing height of the existing boundary wall would be retained. In response to a query raised by Cllr. Donohue regarding responsibility for the maintenance of the estate, Mr. Brogan confirmed that Galway County Council would be responsible for the estate and open/green spaces estate would be Taken in Charge. Cllr. Donohue added, she supported Cllrs. Maher and Kelly regarding the entrance. Mr. Brogan confirmed that access would be revisited with a view to removing any entrance via the Hazelwood Estate for the proposed development, he added the wall would be retained at the existing height.

Cllr. McClearn stated that every estate on that road (R350) in Loughrea should stand alone as there is a need to avoid rat-runs. Cllr. McClearn stated he is opposed to an entrance via Hazelwood and following the meeting with the residents of Hazelwood, it is clear they do not favour the proposal for a vehicular or pedestrian connectivity/entrance between the estates. Cllr. McClearn stated he would support the development on condition the proposed entrance via Hazelwood is removed.

The Cathaoirleach acknowledged the views of the Councillors and positivity of the project. She agreed with the views of the Members in relation to the entrance and supported the proposed amendment in this regard. She stated the proposal should commit to retaining the height of the existing boundary wall.

Members of the Loughrea M.D. approved the Part 8 proposal subject to (a) the proposed pedestrian connectivity between the proposed development and the existing Hazelwood estate being removed and, (b) the boundary wall between the two estates will remain in-situ at its current height (and will not be replaced with a new lower boundary wall).

It was agreed that a revised drawing will be issued, to the members of the Loughrea M.D. and the planning Department, which illustrates the Part 8 with amendments, as adopted.

Subject to the two conditions, Cllr. Maher **PROPOSED** the development and Cllr. Kelly **SECONDED** the proposal. Cllr. McClearn expressed his agreement to the Part 8 having regard to the two conditions.

Cllr. Donohue enquired if affordable houses would be included in the next phase, Mr. Brogan responded, this is not the position at present however he would welcome suggestions and proposals. The Cathaoirleach agreed that affordable homes be made available and referred to the affordable housing scheme in Claregalway as a good example of what can be done.

Mr. Owens thanked the MD for their support of the project advising drawings would be provided to reflect the removal of the entrance via Hazelwood and the retention of the boundary wall at the existing height.

Cllr. Canning stated, going forward, affordable housing units should be included adding, it is proven that a mix of houses is better. He stated young people need assistance in acquiring their own homes and this has been an oversight on the Council's behalf. He stated the Council needs to be more inclusive for young people who cannot purchase a house.

In response to Cllr. Kelly's query, Mr. Owens confirmed it is expected that properties will be completed at the end of 2026, on the basis of commencement on site in Quarter 2 of this year. He clarified; it was not viable to provide affordable housing in the proposed Part 8 development due to costings, as it was not possible to achieve the minimum 15% reduction on market value required to access funding from the Affordable Housing Fund. Mr. Owens stated, in response to The Cathaoirleach, that this matter was made known to the Department. He added, the Council is aware of the need for affordable housing units, and this is considered when developments are being prepared and affordable housing will be provided, with mixed tenure developments preferable, where it is possible to meet the current criteria as set by the Department.

Flooding Update

LMD2408

A meeting was held in mid-January between the NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Services) and the flood relief project team. It had been two years since the NPWS were last updated on the project and there had been significant personnel changes within NPWS in that time.

The project team presented a project overview, highlighting the unique characteristics of the project, outlined environmental issues that have been considered by the team and outlined the options assessments that had been undertaken. Discussions were held on several of the topics discussed.

The project team presented the flow control options that have been investigated over the last number of months, highlighting the pros and cons of a passive system versus a system requiring manual intervention (opening of sluice gates). The NPWS had their hydrologist present at the meeting and the project team have been asked to prepare a Summary Report of the flow control options and time series data for depth durations, pre and post scheme. NPWS indicated a preferred option for the format of the report.

The report is currently being finalised and a follow-up meeting is scheduled with NPWS for the end of February.

Cllr Kinane queried the progress on the Storm Debbie report for areas between Oranmore and Kinvarra. Recent storm events have had another significant impact on businesses in Clarinbridge, with power and intranet outages for significant periods. Mr Gallagher explained that there was no way to expediate the final report from the study. A reasonable

length of time was required by the consultants to collate information, undertake surveys, analyse findings and the events, before identifying suitable measures for the future protection of properties. The tender for the study had been awarded in September 2024 and there was a 12-month programme in place for the Final Report. Mr Gallagher highlighted that the findings of the report would allow Galway County Council to prepare a funding submission to the OPW for feasible flood protection measures.

Update Litter Management Plan 2023 – 2025

LMD2410

Mr. Molloy presented an update to the Members on Galway County Council's Litter Management Plan 2023-2025 advising that, the objectives of the plan are for the prevention and management of litter, and the means to achieve them. He added, the Plan recognises the need for a multi-dimensional approach to preventing litter and stated, the objectives of the plan are to promote educational and awareness matters, partnership and community support, Local Authority Litter Prevention and Control Measures, and Enforcement and Regulations Matters. The members thanked Mr. Molloy and Ms. Dolan for their work. A discussion followed in which the Members raised concerns.

Cllr. Donohue enquired when the Civic Amenity Site will be available in Gort, Ms. Flynn responded she will follow up on this and revert. She enquired, of the 174 fines issued, how many have been paid. Cllr. Donohue stated, a lot of houses have not engaged the services of a licenced waste disposal company. She stated she is aware people are engaging different service providers for a few months, not paying their fees and then changing providers giving the impression they are compliant, but they are not. Ms. Dolan responded bye-law inspections are carried out. It there is a suspicion that there is non-compliance with legislation, clarification is sought with service providers.

Cllr. Finnerty acknowledged the work done by the Environment staff, he stated he is aware that a lot of clean ups have been done in Gort. He raised concerns regarding the volume of wrapping used by deli shops and take aways adding food wrappings are often discarded in public places. He stated that public bins are not large enough and people cannot put large food containers into bins and dispose of it on the roadside. He asked how much has been paid on fines. The Cathaoirleach enquired if communication has issued to take aways to make them aware of the littering issue and request them to review measures to reduce their use of packaging. Mr. Molloy stated that the responsibility for the correct disposal of waste generated from take aways rests with the consumer. He stated business owners are aware that they have a responsibility to keep the area outside of their premises litter free. Mr. Molloy continued, that Galway County Council have a roadside litter campaign in place. He advised, discussions have taken place with deli shops and take aways regarding the reduction of packaging and he added, he doesn't think anyone in the County does not know they should not litter.

Cllr. Finnerty stated, brown food bins are very small and take only a small amount of food waste, he stated that large trucks are required to go down small roads to collect waste from these bins, he stated alternative measures should be looked at.

Cllr. Canning stated that 15 Community Wardens in Galway County Council is not enough adding that the work of Tidy Towns is invaluable in keeping towns and villages tidy. He stated,

Portumna Tidy Towns collects 10/15 bags of rubbish every week. He stated, people do not generally walk dogs between 9am to 5pm but before and after these hours. He stated Community Wardens should be put on flexi time, even on a trial basis for a couple of weeks, to tackle dog fouling on streets. He stated, only one fine has been successful for dog fouling and this needs to improve. Cllr. Canning stated, all 39 Councillors should be issued with litter pickers and bags to be provided to community groups as, at present, groups need to register to receive these items. He added, he and others have purchased litter pickers themselves from their own finances. He stated that the Community Wardens are doing great work and those who do not comply with waste and litter regulations should be hit in the pocket, otherwise nothing will change. Ms. Flynn stated she will liaise with Ms. Rachel Lowe, Senior Engineer regarding the possibility of extending flexi-hours to Community Wardens. Ms. Dolan advised that the Environment Team have engaged in out of hours work when required. Mr. Molloy advised that the Environment Section have engaged with schools and have put in place a litter picker programme.

Cllr. Maher stated, Community Centres are not aware that if they do not have services of a licenced waste disposal service engaged, they will be fined €100, he requested they be contacted and made aware of this. He agreed, the issue of dog fouling needs to be addressed.

Cllr. Maher stated that CCTV cameras are not yet in use despite legislation being passed, Ms. Dolan responded, work is on-going to allow for the use of CCTV footage, adding that a DPIA and oversight committee is being set up, she stated, the initial focus will be on bottle banks.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2411

Cllr. Canning **PROPOSED** Galway County Council request from the ESB, Uisce Eireann and Galway County Council the total costings for the repair of power lines and all other works associated with the clean up after Storm Éowyn. The Proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr. Finnerty.

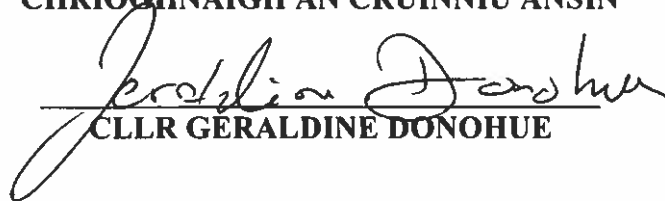
Cllr. Killilea requested an update on the Kinvara Community Transportation Study (CTS), he stated he received a commitment it will be done in due course adding the timelines continue to elongate. He stressed it is imperative this CTS be completed and stated he wants it to remain on the agenda until it's finished. He stated, Ms. Lowe advised it was imminent. Ms. Flynn stated, she will arrange for an update to be provided.

Cllr. Finnerty raised concerns regarding two people who have been injured during a clean-up following Storm Éowyn. He stated, he wants a safety message to go out to people and community groups on the safe removal of trees and who should cut trees. He stated, trees won't be cleaned up overnight adding there are very large/heavy trees down around the County.

Cllr. Maher requested the MD be proactive in removal of roadside vegetation stating a plan needs to be implemented to take all vegetation from roadsides. He suggested a plan should be put in place at the Plenary Meeting to deal with vegetation on roadsides and for the removal of trees. He **PROPOSED** his colleagues bring this to the plenary meeting. Cllr. Canning **SECONDED** this proposal.

The Cathaoirleach and Members thanked Ms. Maria Flynn, Administrative Officer for her dedicated work and diligence during her time as Meetings Administration in the Loughrea Area. They wished her well on her imminent retirement. Ms. Flynn thanked the staff of the Loughrea MD and the Elected Members for their dedication and work during her time as Meeting's Administrator.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN


CLLR GERALDINE DONOHUE

10-03-2025.

DATE

