

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL
HELD AT CORRANDULLA SPORTS HALL, COR AN DOLA, CO. GALWAY
MONDAY 4TH JANUARY 2021 at 11.00am

CATHAOIRLEACH:

Cllr. James Charity,
Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway

I LATHAIR FREISIN:

Baill:

Leas Chathaoirleach Peter Roche

Cllr. Tim Broderick

Cllr. Dermot Connolly

Cllr. Michael Connolly

Cllr. Declan Geraghty

Cllr. Peter Keaveney

Cllr. Evelyn Francis Parsons

Cllr. Liam Carroll

Cllr. David Collins

Cllr. Gabriel Cronnelly

Cllr. Jim Cuddy

Cllr. Albert Dolan

Cllr. Shelly Herterich-Quinn

An Comh. Dáithí Ó'Cualáin

An Comh. Tomás Ó Curraoin

An Comh. Padraig Mac an Iomaire

Cllr Gerry King

Cllr. Eileen Mannion

Cllr. Joe Sheridan

Cllr. Andrew Reddington

Cllr. Alastair McKinstry

Cllr. Noel Thomas

Cllr. Seamus Walsh

Cllr. Thomas Welby

Cllr. Joe Byrne

Cllr Ivan Canning

Cllr. Shane Curley

Cllr. Geraldine Donohue

Cllr. Gerry Finnerty

Cllr Pat Hynes

Cllr. Martina Kinane

Cllr. Michael Maher

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn

Cllr. PJ Murphy.

Cllr. Mary Hoade

Cllr. Colm Keaveney

Cllr. Donagh Mark Killidea

Cllr. Karey McHugh

Oifigh:

Mr. Kevin Kelly, Chief Executive (Interim),

Ms. Eileen Ruane, Director of Services,

Mr. Alan Farrell, Director of Services,

Ms. Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner

Mr. Michael Owens, County Secretary/Meetings Administrator

Mr. Brendan Dunne, Executive Planner

Ms. Davina Kelly, Clerical Officer

Thosnaigh an cruinniú leis an paidir.

ITEM: CONSIDERATION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT ON THE PRE-DRAFT SUBMISSIONS ON THE GALWAY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022 – 2028. 3719

Eileen Ruane commenced the meeting by giving an overview of the County Development Plan process and that since the adoption of the 2015 County Plan there has been a number of strategies that have been published that will need to be considered namely the National Planning Framework(NPF) and the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy(RSES). The Elected Members were reminded that this is the preliminary stage of the Development Plan process and there will be further opportunities for the members of the public and Elected Members to have input into the plan making process.

Valerie Loughnane commenced her presentation to the Members by advising that the Pre-Draft Public Consultation Stage took place from the 18th June 2020 to the 10th September 2020 to include the additional four-week period that was considered necessary during COVID19 restrictions. She outlined that formal notice of the preparation of a new Galway County Development Plan was advertised in the Connacht Tribune on 18th June 2020 and on Galway Bay FM. The Planning Authority also issued notifications via Galway County Council's social media accounts. At this stage, the Council published an Issues Paper and a series of video clips to encourage public participation. She explained that the Issues Paper was an opportunity for the local community to demonstrate what they consider to be the most prevalent issues facing the County, the main themes of which were:

- Core Strategy and Housing
- Urban Living and Placemaking
- Rural Place Making and the Countryside
- Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Retail Development
- Infrastructure and Transport
- Environment, Renewable Energies and Communications
- Architectural and Archaeological Heritage
- Social, Community and Cultural Development
- The Galway Gaeltacht
- Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure
- Agriculture, Fishing Marine and Forestry

All submissions received were summarised and further categorised based on the topic that were included in the Issues Paper. At this stage, Valerie Loughnane noted that the submissions received by The Office of the Planning Regulator were categorised separately in accordance with legalisation and in addition the NWRA submission was also categorised in this manner. Both detailed submissions were then summarised. The members were informed that the draft plan will comply with the objectives of the NPF & the RSES, in addition to the provisions of the Planning & Development Act 2000 [as amended] and any ministerial guidelines in relation to Housing Need Demand Assessment for example. In its submission- the NWRA recommended the review of the following policy objectives, namely- rural housing, rural placemaking, rural development, urban place making, regeneration, economic

enterprises, green infrastructure and tourism developments and the incoming draft plan will reflect these strategic recommendations.

Members were advised that the preparation of the Core Strategy- the purpose of which is to articulate a strategy for the spatial growth of the County - is a compulsory statutory requirement and as such is a fundamental facet of the incoming draft plan. The Core Strategy will be prepared in line with NPF & RSES recommendations. Valerie Loughnane further explained that compact growth is one of the ten National Strategic Outcome arising of the National Planning Framework and will form a key part of the draft going forward. The Draft County Development Plan will contain a specific chapter entitled *"Urban Placemaking, Regeneration & Urban Housing"* in light of the key part that Urban Regeneration will play in the preparation of same.

Members were further informed that the review of the Ballinasloe LAP will commence in Quarter 2/3 of 2021 and a Local Transport Plan will form part of this LAP. It is expected that the review of the Tuam Local Area Plan and associated Local Transport Plan will commence in Quarter 4 of 2021. Both Local Area Plans will be in accordance with the Core Strategy of the new County Development Plan. It is hoped that the Strategic Economic Corridor will be supported by policies and objectives of the draft with designated chapters – *"Economic, Enterprise and Retail"* underpinning objectives contained within the RSES & the NPF. The emergence of commuter towns such as Bearna, Maigh Cuuillin & Oranmore will give rise to policies and objectives in their individual plans with lands zoned that will provide an opportunity for increased employment-based industry.

A specific chapter entitled *"Transport, Sustainable Mobility and Accessibility"* will reference objectives to ensure the protection of the national road network and the route corridor for the N6 Galway City Ring Road, N59 Moycullen bypass and N59 (Oughterard-Maam Cross-Clifden).

Engagement with Irish Water will continue as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan. In line with this, the identification of lands zoned for residential development will be in accordance with the Core Strategy and Housing Need Demand Assessment and lands will be identified for development based on availability of public infrastructure. The identification and progression of the East Galway Main Drainage Scheme is critical to the development of the area east of Galway City.

In acknowledging the challenges facing the smaller towns, villages and rural areas, the draft plan will include a chapter entitled *"Rural Placemaking and Rural Housing in the Countryside"* along with an *"Economic, Enterprise and Retail Chapter"* that will contain policies and objectives to encourage sustainable and appropriate development in the rural area. The villages that will be listed in the *"Growth Village"* category will contain policies, objectives and land use zoning in accordance with NPO 18(a) and 18(b) of the NPF.

The Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES) will be prepared as part of the Draft County Development Plan process and will note the transition to a low carbon economy and the overall reduction in carbon emissions as a central constraint in planning policy overall.

Members were informed that the Pre-Draft Development Plan will be available in mid-March when they will have eight weeks to consider.

At this point, Brendan Dunne was asked to make his presentation to the members. He indicated that due to the level of submissions received a high-level summary had been conducted using the topics of the Issues Paper as a guide.

Core Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy

41 submissions were received in relation to the topic.

It was acknowledged that submissions received on the above topic centred around settlements with adequate water & wastewater capacity with population increase being directed towards existing towns & villages.

Submissions made in relation to the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan reflected the hope that an adequate demographic populace would be in situ to demonstrate their position within the settlement hierarchy. It was also articulated that factors such as an aging population require the accommodation of 'granny flats' and other such means to facilitate this demographic. Reference was also made to the provision of housing for certain groups- i.e. Irish Teachers in Galway West.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

To this end, the Core Strategy will take note of these prevailing issues and provide a basis for the determination of objectives which will include population targets, settlement strategy, density considerations, the amount of zoned land requirements and the approach to economic development, whilst ensuring that compact growth is a central part of the County Development Plan.

It is envisaged that the draft plan will continue to safeguard the progress, operational efficiency, safety and investment made in national roads.

Urban Living /Placemaking and Rural Placemaking and Rural Housing

*53 submissions were received which identified the topic of Urban living/placemaking
32 submissions were received which referenced rural placemaking and rural housing.*

Urban Living: The enhancement of the urban living experience was cited in various submissions received under this heading. To this end, collaboration with all interested groups will be a key factor in terms of progression of existing and new urban areas in the County. Submissions received articulated the need for more variants in housing styles in order to offer an alternative to rural housing. This would facilitate those who wish to 'downsize' whilst living close to amenities.

The development of brownfield sites was also a factor of submissions received. Commentators expressed a hope that vacant commercial sites would be revitalised under the incoming plan. It was felt by many that the reinvigoration of these sites would have a beneficial impact on the revitalisation of hubs and villages across the county.

Rural Housing: Submissions received highlight the balance to be struck between sustaining rural areas and preventing further decline. Clarification was sought on the definition of terms used in *Chapter 3- Urban and Rural Housing* in addition to assessment process of rural housing applications.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

The draft plan will review current policy in place and will support the NPF objective for compact growth and effective density in towns and villages; and the RSES objective to deliver increased residential densities. It is expected this will be achieved through the identification of infill sites and reduction in vacancy and re use of underutilised lands and vacant buildings within urban areas. It is intended that the Draft County Development Plan will review the overall policies and objectives for Rural villages to accord with the provisions of the NPF and RSES and Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005). In addition, the definitions and objectives relating to rural housing will also be examined. Clustering of houses within these villages will be examined and appropriate policies and objectives will be developed.

Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Retail Development

51 Submissions were received in relation to Economic and Enterprise

34 submissions were received in relation to Tourism

24 Submissions were received in relation to Retail

Several submissions refer to the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) area of County Galway and the settlements therein (Oranmore, Bearna and Baile Chláir). It is considered that these areas including the existing Parkmore Industrial Estate and Briarhill should grow and provide much needed employment and residential units in the county administrative area.

Mr. Dunne outlined that there should be a greater emphasis on the Strategic Economic Corridor and the Atlantic Economic Corridor which are strategic locations within County Galway.

It is requested that the town of Oughterard be designated as a Technological Incubation Development Hub and that the Draft County Development Plan encourage further employment development in other towns and villages across the County in close collaboration with the IDA. Ballinasloe is cited as a town that has particular strategic locational advantages from an economic development perspective.

A number of submissions call for a focus on employment development in rural County Galway in areas such as rural development, farm diversification, making use of existing farm buildings and promoting for example the sale of local foods at markets. It is requested that local enterprise development should encourage local employment and enterprises into towns and villages.

A number of submissions request more resources to promote tourism agritourism, the development of sustainable tourism attractions in new unexplored locations and for the Draft County Development Plan to contain a robust tourism chapter to allow an extensive and wide-

ranging approach to be taken to the multi-faceted and distinct tourism products offered in County Galway.

Several submissions highlight the importance of providing a wide range of tourism facilities such as accommodation, parking, foot/cycle paths in the towns and villages as well as adequate tourism facilities at beaches along with greater tourism resources.

A number of submissions received recognise the importance of the contribution of the retail sector in County Galway to the vitality and viability of towns and villages and how this sector acts as an economic anchor, creating employment and indirect economic and social activity in settlements.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

The Draft County Development Plan is being prepared at a time of great economic uncertainty, whilst the plan is an overall document for the proper planning and development of the county, it is not an economic plan. It is essential that the Draft County Development Plan sets out a framework which will allow the county to create a sustainable resilient economy.

A key strategic goal of the Draft County Development Plan is to maximise the continued and sustainable economic and enterprise development of the county and will include the supporting strategies to achieve this goal which is to promote economic activity.

The Draft County Development Plan will acknowledge the importance of a resilient local economy both in the short and long term within the county, that is diverse and well positioned to compete with other areas. The Local Authority will continue to work with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta and other agencies and the business community to ensure that all areas of job creation in the county are explored.

The social, community and economic benefits from improving tourism opportunities within the County are recognised and acknowledged and it is considered that the Tourism element in the forthcoming Draft County Development Plan will form a key part of a chapter. The tourism policies and objectives will be prepared to take account of the geographical spread of Galway with reference to several tourism initiatives and branding currently been promoted by Fáilte Ireland and relevant agencies.

The Draft County Development Plan will identify "Opportunity Sites" in each centre for regeneration purposes. Such opportunity sites will be considered suitable for the redevelopment for a range of different reasons but in the main are considered suitable to contribute to the enhancement of the vitality and vibrancy of particular town or village centres and may provide for future retailing commercial or residential development.

Infrastructure and Transport

79 submissions were received in relation to this topic.

Mr Dunne informed the Members that several submissions have requested the integration of both land use and transport planning to support the consolidation of urban generated development within existing urban areas.

It is requested that the Galway Transportation Planning Study (GTPS) is reviewed as part of the review of the County Development Plan process. Several submissions make reference to the Local Transport Plans for Ballinasloe and Tuam which are identified as key towns in the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES).

With respect to National Roads several submissions have recommended that the review of the existing County Development Plan would ensure the protection of the safety, carrying capacity and efficiency of the existing and future national roads. It is a key requirement that the network is maintained with future National Road Schemes provided for and schemes safeguarded

There have been numerous requests for either the upgrade or replacement of several Regional Roads in the County (i.e. R336, R340, R366, R374 and R377). Several submissions have highlighted the need for a larger budget to be provided for maintenance and upgrade of roads. There have also been suggestions for ring roads/inner relief roads to be provided around some settlements in the county and for some roads within renewable energy developments to be connected to the existing road network.

Numerous submissions have requested enhanced bus service provision in both urban and rural areas including upgraded bus stops with shelters. It is suggested that Smarter Travel be incorporated as a concept in the County Development Plan. There have also been requests for reduced parking standards in urban areas for various types of developments including residential and schools where public transport is available and that developments should be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport with large scale trip intensive developments located in central locations in urban areas.

Several submissions highlight the need for wastewater infrastructure to be provided. It has been suggested that there are limited options within settlements due to lack of wastewater infrastructure. The provision of new wastewater treatment plants under the control of Irish Water have been suggested where possible. In instances where Irish Water infrastructure is not available or is unlikely to be provided there have been numerous requests to facilitate private shared wastewater treatment plants for residential development in settlements.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

It is the intention that the provisions of the Draft County Development Plan will ensure that the carrying capacity, operational efficiency, safety and investment made in national roads in Galway continue to be safeguarded and that the relevant policies/objectives included in the County Development Plan will reflect this; this includes provisions relating to developments on or near national road junctions. The Development Management Standards will be examined as part of the Draft County Development Plan. The Draft County Development Plan will also include policies and objectives with regard to enhancing existing and proposed railway infrastructure.

It is considered that the County Development Plan will continue to support the strategic importance of Ros an Mhíl Harbour and its development as a deep-water port. The delivery of repair and enhancement works to existing piers, quays and slipways across the county will be supported as resources permit. The development of Ros an Mhíl Harbour as a centre of

excellence for the servicing and development of marine based renewables is noted and it is considered that such a development should be supported in accordance with the proper planning and development of the area.

The Council is acutely aware of the infrastructure deficits with regard to both water and wastewater infrastructure within numerous settlements throughout the county. The Council will continue to liaise with Irish Water to ensure that additional infrastructure improvements are included within their future projects to assist in the future development of many of the county's settlements. In the interim period it is noted that there have been several submissions which request that private shared wastewater treatment plants for residential development be facilitated. Having regard to the problematic nature of many of these existing systems in the County, this approach requires further examination. As an alternative it is considered that cluster type developments will be examined with individual wastewater treatments systems serving each residential unit.

Environment, Climate Action, Environment, Renewable Energies and Communication

37 submissions were received in relation to this topic.

A number of submissions identified the relationship of climate change and flooding has also been raised and the need to clearly consider climate change in the preparation of flood risk mapping. It has also been requested to examine all flood mapping prepared in the last number of years and to ensure that the flood mapping is robust and that the sequential approach to flood mapping would occur. Bearna and the existing flood mapping has been identified and there is a specific request that the Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 would be complied with in this instance. Chapter 3 of the Flood Risk Guidelines have been referenced and that attention should be made to this in the preparation of the Draft County Development Plan and subsequent zonings.

Renewable Energy has been raised in a number of submissions. Wind Energy has been the most frequently discussed element of renewable energy. The review of the existing Wind Energy Strategy and the preparation of a new Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES) has been welcomed.

A number of detailed submissions were received from agencies and companies involved in renewable energy.

A detailed submission was submitted in relation to the existing peatlands and cut away bogs and the potential of these for renewable energy developments such as wind farms and solar farms and other large-scale energy dependent industrial development. It is requested that the potential of these areas would be included in the plan.

In a specific submission received in relation to Ceantar na nOileán and renewable technology projects, it is requested that due to the special beauty of the area, renewable proposals (through the RESS Scheme/Community Schemes) should be considered on an individual basis in certain areas, such as onshore and offshore wave technologies, underwater marine turbines and solar PV projects

In relation to the broadband infrastructure it is requested that the Draft County Development Plan would include policies and objectives that would facilitate high speed broadband which is needed to reflect the change in work practices, people from working from home and reduce car dependency and commuting.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

The Draft County Development Plan will be informed by and comply with national, EU and International guidance including environmental directives, and consideration of flood risk and flood risk management plans, climate change mitigation and adaption. All of the existing settlement plans that will be included in the Draft County Development Plan will have their Stage 2 Flood Risk Assessments reviewed and new plans prepared in full adherence to the national guidance documents and circulars. The implementation and progression of Flood Relief schemes will be considered favourably in the Draft County Development Plan.

The Draft County Development Plan will include a Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES) which will include a review of the existing Wind Energy Strategy and the preparation of a new strategy for wind energy, solar energy infrastructure in the county, including Solar PV, solar thermal and seasonal storage technologies

The Draft County Development Plan will contain specific policies and objectives that will support a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity throughout the county, subject to normal planning and environmental considerations and the development of grid reinforcements including grid connections will also be addressed in the plan.

The Draft County Development Plan will support the growth in the use of Electric Vehicles, prioritising parking for electric vehicles in central locations in settlements and in new developments in accordance with relevant car parking standards which will be contained in the Development Management section of the Plan. It is acknowledged that the provision of a high-quality broadband is essential for the economic success of the county.

Architectural and Archaeological Heritage

16 Submissions were received which directly related to the topic of Architectural and Archaeological Heritage.

A detailed submission received suggests that the built heritage should be considered as an integral part of the wider built environment and dealt with in a holistic manner throughout the development plan. It recommends the inclusion of a number of policy documents pertaining to architectural heritage and archaeology be included in the Draft County Development Plan as follows: Heritage Ireland 2030, the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for the Built and Archaeological Heritage and the National Policy on Architecture.

Several submissions make specific reference to the revitalisation of Historic Town Centres Villages. Several policies, funding proposals and programmes have been proposed to aid this revitalisation including the development of a National Policy on Architecture (NPA),

Collaborative Town Health Check Programme (CTHCP), Town Centre First Approach and the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

It is stated in several submissions that there is a clear relationship between the themes of heritage/ regeneration and town centre uses. It is requested that a greater degree of policy co-ordination is required as these are all mutually supportive and an integral part of Placemaking in County Galway.

Several submissions indicate that incentives are required to activate town centre regeneration and avoid dereliction within historic town cores. In addition, it is considered that in relation to vernacular buildings that where feasible that best conservation practices are required in terms of building methods and materials.

The importance of the historic built and natural environment to placemaking and attracting tourism to our towns, villages and rural areas is highlighted in several submissions. It is suggested that the protection of vernacular settlements could be achieved by means of Architectural Conservation Area designation in the Draft County Development Plan.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

As part of the Draft County Development Plan, there will be a review of the existing policies and objectives pertaining to Architectural and Archaeological heritage and an update of these as per recommendations submitted where it is considered appropriate. It is also recognised that placemaking and regeneration in the towns and villages will play a significant part in the redevelopment of these areas and this will be reflected in the chapter on Urban Placemaking.

Social, Community and Cultural Development

There were 50 submissions received in relation to this topic.

A number of submissions have made reference to education in particular with respect to existing and potential school facilities. It has been requested that the Draft County Development Plan would provide policies and objectives to support the provision of school accommodation, including the development of new schools and the expansion or alteration of existing ones. It has been requested that there would be flexibility with regard to land use zoning with regard to the provision of educational facilities.

Several submissions have made suggestions with respect to Healthcare. It has been highlighted that there is a lack of hospital provision/healthcare facilities in the existing County Development Plan and that the Draft County Development Plan needs to address the location of healthcare facilities in towns and villages. With respect to mental health a submission has stated that the St Brigid's facility in Ballinasloe could become a support centre for the existing hospital.

There have been a number of requests across the county for policies and objectives to be included for the upgrade and extension of existing graveyards, community centres, public lands to be made available for sporting facilities and public open spaces (i.e. public parks, playgrounds, community gyms, greenways, athletics tracks, community gardens etc.) as well

as more indoor facilities. It is also noted that a number of submissions have raised concern with regard to the provision of facilities for minority sports (i.e. hockey, tennis, handball).

A number of submissions have been made with respect to accessibility particularly with regard to an aging population and people with disabilities. These submissions have raised a number of points including public open space, public buildings, housing, transport, social inclusion, employment opportunities and accessible playgrounds.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

It is the intention that the provisions of the Draft County Development Plan will develop policies to support the provision of social and community infrastructure to enforce the established and encouraged community resilience needed in settlements throughout the county. It is also intended that robust policies to further promote cultural development and the Arts.

It is considered that the Draft County Development Plan will continue to support the educational needs of the county particularly regarding the development of new schools and the expansion or alteration of existing ones. The issue of land use zoning for specific settlements would be considered within each of the Settlement Plans/Local Area Plans as appropriate taking cognisance of the local context from a school's perspective and from consultation with the Department of Education and Skills.

It is the intention that the provisions of the Draft County Development Plan will develop policies to support both the aging population and people with disabilities.

It is envisaged that the cultural heritage and the arts of the county will be developed upon in the Draft County Development Plan.

The Galway Gaeltacht and Islands

22 submissions were received in relation to the Galway Gaeltacht and reference to Islands.

A number of submissions have specifically requested that there would be special recognition to the status given to Irish language in the Draft County Development Plan. It has been stated that the Gaeltacht communities cannot survive without Irish Speakers, and that the Draft County Development Plan should support and facilitate Irish speaker in both rural and urban areas in order to prevent population decline. The *Polasaí na Gaeltachta* was also referenced and it has stated that there should be an independent assessment of who qualifies under these criteria.

A submission was received which specifically requested that the percentage currently identified (20%) for all new housing developments (greater than two residential units) to be occupied by Irish speakers should be increased to 35%. In a related submission it is requested that this requirement for percentage of Irish speakers should not only be applied to multiple units but also single residential units. The Language Enurement Clauses relating to these developments, it is requested in a number of submissions that the 15-year limit should apply whereas in a number of other submissions it is requested that this would be reduced to 7 years.

Advertising signage in relation to retail and commercial units in the Gaeltacht was also referenced in a number of submissions, requesting that signage should be as Gaeilge only. Signage along national routes for Gaeltacht areas should also be as Gaeilge however Baile Chláir is cited in a submission that the signage should be bilingual. It has also been requested that it should be a policy of the Local Authority to use place names as Gaeilge.

In a detailed submission there is reference to the South West Conamara area and the requirement for this area to be addressed in the forthcoming Draft County Development Plan. It is specifically requested that the five-year development plan for Carna/Cill Chiaráin should be supported along with the development of the Páirc na Mara site. An Spidéal is also referenced in a number of submissions and that special recognitions should be given to this settlement. An Spidéal has also been referenced in a submission, in relation to the poor planning of the village and the impact on the Irish language.

There was a number of submissions relating specifically to the Islands and the concern in relation to the infrastructure deficit that is present on Oileáin Árann. It is also queried as to the impact on the islands of renewable energy in the form of additional wind turbines.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

The Galway Gaeltacht and associated Islands play a fundamental part in the socio-economic and cultural profile of the county. This has been reflected in the number of submissions relating to the protection of the Irish language, protection of the Gaeltacht communities and support requirements for these communities.

The Draft County Development Plan will be prepared in accordance with adherence to the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Ministerial Guidelines under Section 28. As outlined in previous sections namely the Core Strategy and Settlement there will be a review of the existing settlements in the county as part of the Housing Need Demand Assessment and Core Strategy. The positioning of settlements within the Core Strategy will be evidence based and a full review of these will be carried out.

Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure

46 submissions received in relation to these topics.

It is stated that the Draft County Development Plan should strengthen the focus and protection on biodiversity, promote awareness and provide access to natural heritage. Also, new development should include appropriate designs that focus on biodiversity enhancement.

It is suggested in the submissions that the Draft County Development Plan set out a framework for the restoration of peatlands as habitats. Other biodiversity improvements suggested in the submissions are: limit hedge trimming; reinstate hedgerows; and create and ecological corridor along with the creation of living roofs and walls. While a number of submissions place emphasis on the protection of trees and seek additional tree cover in community and public spaces in an effort to implement the Pollinator/Biodiversity Plan.

The submissions call for reference to be made to the National Landscape strategy 2015 – 2025 in the Draft County Development Plan and for the inclusion of a Landscape Character Assessment for the County. The submissions call for the roll out of a Green Infrastructure Strategy in the Draft County Development Plan. It is suggested in a number of submissions that a network of greenways, blueways, coastal walkways and peatways should be rolled out across County Galway and into the wider region to the benefit of the public. It is suggested that these could also include Public Rights of Way and the development of green and blue infrastructure could promote tourism, the environment and well-being. Within green corridors, it is suggested that these corridors be reserved and protected. In some instances, it is suggested that cycle routes and walking trails could provide access to a number of submissions call for a clear distinction between green infrastructure and greenways, blueways and peatways within the Draft County Development Plan.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

As part of the Draft County Development Plan there will be a review of the existing policies and objectives pertaining to Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and each area will be updated as per recommendations submitted and where it is considered appropriate.

The Local Authority proposes to review the existing Landscape Character Assessment for County Galway and update, as necessary. The Council recognises the unique landscape in County Galway and that this uniqueness merits protection along with review and monitoring on a continuing basis. Such a review will consider the content of the National Landscape strategy 2015 – 2025.

It is clear from the submissions received that there is a need for the delivery of a Green Infrastructure network across County Galway and eventually linking to the wider region. The Local Authority recognises the benefits of a Green Infrastructure for both persons living in County Galway and also visitors to the County.

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Marine

17 submissions were received in relation to this topic.

A number of submissions was received in relation to the rural economy and the increased importance of agricultural diversification. It is requested that there would be policies and objectives that would support farm diversification. It has been stated the Galway is uniquely positioned to exploit the rural economy and to encourage the reuse of brownfield sites and buildings that are not currently in use.

The importance of forestry has been raised in several submissions and it has been indicated that forestry provides an alternative to traditional farm practices. It has also been suggested that forestry could be utilised for recreational purposes, but that this should occur in a controlled manner.

In relation to the marine industry it has been requested that there would be special recognition of the fishing ports within the county i.e. Cill Chiaráin and Ros an Mhíl and it is

considered that the marine potential in the county should be exploited and a section included in the Draft County Development Plan relating to marine industry and the maritime culture of the county. It is stated that the importance of the lakes in the county, particularly Lough Corrib and their preservation and development should be high level objectives in the Draft County Development Plan. In framing a Marine section in the Draft County Development Plan, it is requested that the Draft County Development Plan would align with the proposed Marine Spatial Planning Policy and National Marine Planning Framework.

In reply to submissions on this high-level summary:

Agriculture makes an important contribution to the County's rural economy. It is considered appropriate to support rural diversification where possible and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The continued development of the agri-food sector will be supported in the Draft County Development Plan. Combined the development of agriculture, fishing and forestry industries will not only sustain rural employment but also contribute to driving the national economy, a sentiment that it is expressed in the NPF. NPO 39 of the NPF seeks to *"Support the sustainable growth and development of the maritime economy and continue to invest in the seafood sector and our Fishery Harbour Centres, particularly in remote rural coastal communities and islands."* This is of relevance to County Galway given our extensive coastline.

This is a great asset to the rural economy which provides communities across the county the opportunity to become involved in maritime related industries. It is envisaged that there will be a designated section in the Draft County Development plan relating specifically to the Marine Industry and this section will support the enhancement of the fishing ports and marine related activities in the county subject to the normal planning and sustainable development of the area.

THIS CONCLUDED THE PRESENTATIONS.

Upon completion of the presentation by the Forward Planning Team- the Mayor welcomed questions from the members.

The following outlines the issues raised by the members under two distinct topic and under other matters.

Rural Housing assessment- GTPS- Back land development-

Members warned that without adequate provision for one-off housing and 'backland development' parts of rural Galway will face rapid decline. Cllr. Cuddy expressed his disappointment at the prescriptive approach taken by County Planners in the assessment of applications in particular assessments that relate to 'backland development'. He noted the lack of ministerial guidelines on the matter and the need for same. He hoped the review of CDP would take note of these issues. Cllr. Hoade agreed with his input. Cllr Curley stated that young people, in particular returning emigrants need serviced lands in which to build and that any new policy should enhance the rural area in question. Cllr M. Connolly expressed his

concern with respect to the policy at present and articulated that lack of farming lands should not exclude who has a wish to settle in a rural area. Cllr. Donohue concurred in her comments, agreeing that development of 'backlands' needs to be reviewed as most applicants would be normally resident in the backland in question anyway. Cllr. Geraghty noted a 'rural and urban divide' - and expressed his view that the current policies of the CDP do not account for the desire of his constituents to develop in their locality. Other members noted the need for properly serviced areas to accommodate development. Cllr Thomas stated that a 'bona fide' necessity to develop within the GTPS area should not form part of a rural housing need assessment – a simple desire by a prospective applicant to develop should be enough to substantiate an application. Various members raised the issue of Irish speakers being refused applications on the basis of not born and raised in the area. Cllr. Welby raised concerns about the Planning Authority receiving a surge of applications in anticipation of changes to the Development Plan. The Chief Executive clarified that while there would be changes to align the CDP with the NPF and the RSES, he does not foresee major changes in national policy.

Cllr. Welby queried with the Executive as to what a 'vibrant Gaeltacht' comprises of? He also expressed concerns at the possibility of a surge of planning applications in light of the incoming Draft plan. In responding, the CE, Kevin Kelly noted that all applications received are subject to existing regulations and must meet the required standard in all cases. Cllr. Welby said that while he supports the review of backland development- which he considered would make it possible for families to develop within the same cluster- that he would support a policy that would extend to family members only. Cllr. Kinane supported his comments but in addition noted the need for careful consideration of who would be classified as a family member in light of various family structures that exist. Cllr. McHugh noted the need for review of current rural housing need policy in relation to backland development. She cited necessity as being a primary reason people wish to develop on family lands with no other option left open to them.

Cllr. Byrne noted any policy adopted needs to abide by Objective 18 & 19 of the RSES, citing Kerry County Development Plan where 59% of applications relate to one-off housing comparable with 76% in Co. Galway. He is also opposed to requirement that an applicant must demonstrate an economic or social need to live in a rural area as this has a direct effect on local businesses in the area.

Provision for Water & Waste Water Treatment System

Many members noted the importance of the delivery & implementation of a suitable water treatment scheme going forward in light of the representations they receive from their constituents. Cllr Maher noted in his constituency – that the viability of Loughrea Lake with respect to treatment is being impeded by Irish Water as connectivity to the local area is not of the required standard. Robust water treatment systems are imperative for the regeneration of county towns and villages. Cllr. McClearn expressed concerns about the lack of a proper sewerage system and the need for comprehensive engagement with Irish Water. Concerns were echoed across the floor with Cllr. Broderick expressing his concern at the huge raft of land across the County that is deprived of development due to inadequate wastewater treatment system. Cllr. D. Connolly referred to the current CDP and the provisions contained

within it that alluded to the regeneration of same but expressed his concern at progress yet to be made. Cllr. Byrne suggested that depending on Irish Water was not going to elicit progress- rather the Planning Authority should allow private developers to construct wastewater treatment system complete with a bond of 12-15 years to ensure accountability. Cllr Broderick opined that unless Irish Water are prepared to participate in a more favourable manner , that progress on the Draft is hindered insofar as the issue of water treatment cannot simply be overlooked. He expressed concerns about the submission made by Irish Water which he felt indicated that it would appear that Irish Water have no immediate plans to upgrade treatment systems to align itself with the incoming draft. Cllr Connolly noted that at present there is only one WWTP to serve Corrandulla therefore engagement with IW on the matter should be advocated for.

In other matters:

1. Cllr. Byrne- raised the issue of the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan- he considered it a good idea in principal but only if appropriate infrastructure is in place in order to rejuvenate small villages. Cllr Byrne also asked of the role that the Office of the Planning Regulator have in the deliberation of any draft. He also sought clarity on the operation of the GTPS in the incoming plan especially in regard to NPF objectives.
2. Cllr. McKinstry raised the issue of future transport infrastructure and noted the need for policy to reflect changing norms of car usage in rural areas. He referenced models in Paris that reduced car usage by 40%, and a model in Scotland that reduced car usage by 20%. He considered a 10% reduction of car usage achievable over the course of the next few years. He also raised the issue of flooding in the County and stated that long term infrastructure should be 14m above sea level.
3. Cllr. Maher raised concerns regarding provisions for forestry and fishing.
4. Cllr. Cronnelly also raised the issue of flooding- stating that a comprehensive cleaning of local rivers and bodies of water could alleviate flooding risks
5. Cllr. Hoade requested clarification on the timeline for the Draft document. She reiterated the importance of public consultation in going forward. She also expressed concerns about how the incoming draft will revitalise rural towns. She also sought clarification on the status of town plans and their expiry in relation to the CDP timeline. Cllr Curley raised this issue in the context of attracting people back into rural areas
6. Cllr. Donohue acknowledged and commended the work undertaken by the Forward Planning Team but queried where funding would be sourced for the various initiatives. In responding Kevin Kelly, CE clarified that the Draft Plan as a policy document is a facilitating document.
7. Cllr. Donohue also raised the issue of illegal dumping in SAC's – incoming plan should incorporate a policy to overcome this.

8. Cllr. Carroll: raised concerns about projected population growth in the County. He noted that with key towns taking 30% of this projection, there would be surplus displacement that would impact Oranmore. He opined that Oranmore is a town already at full capacity with children attending schools in neighbouring towns to due a dense populace. He also asked for the Oranmore LAP to be addressed in the incoming plan. To offset the change in recent working circumstances & patterns, provision should be made for the clustering of office space to allow facilitation of the new norm.
9. Cllr. Sheridan: Queried the introduction of a licensing agreement for the placement of fast charge E.V. points on privately owned grounds where there is site location transmission and non-availability of appropriate council owned grounds.
10. Cllr. Geraghty: queried why peat is being imported. He also suggested that Anaerobic Digestors as an energy medium needs to be explored further by central government which should filter into the local authority system
11. Cllr. Reddington: expressed his hope that more facilities would be made for Sport Clubs.
12. Cllr. M. Connolly – Welcomed the identification of key towns such as Ballinasloe and Tuam but expressed his hope that the economic corridor would extend as far as Ballinasloe. He also queried the timeline for the Transport study and hoped that larger applications would make available adequate recreational and infrastructural amenity. He expressed a hope that use of Galway airport would be included in the incoming plan.
13. Cllr Thomas raised issues with respect to figures provided by the Forward Planning Unit to the Dept. of Education around Moycullen N.S.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr McClearn **SECONDED** by Cllr Byrne, it was **AGREED** to commence the preparation of the Draft Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. However, for the Elected Members who could not be in attendance at this meeting it was considered warranted to convene a subsequent briefing on Tuesday 5th January 2020 via "Microsoft Teams" due to the imposition of Level 5 restrictions.

Chríochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.

Submitted, Signed & Approved:

Cathaoirleach: 

Date: 25/1/21

