

## 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 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024

##### I LATHAIR:

**Cathaoirleach**

Cllr. J. McClearn

**Baill:**

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

**Oifigigh:**

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services  
Mr. L. Hanrahan, Director of Services  
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. C. Wynne, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. L. Flynn, Executive Engineer  
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer  
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer  
Mr. L. Ward, Assistant Planner  
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer  
Ms. P. McHugo, Assistant Staff Officer  
Ms. C. Kennedy, Clerical Officer  
Ms Sinead Ryan, Clerical Officer

**As Láthair:**

Cllr. Donohue, Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer

The Cathaoirleach opened the meeting by expressing his gratitude to Cllr. Byrne for his service as an Elected Member in Galway County Council. On behalf of the Councillors, the Executive, staff, and electorate he wished Cllr. Byrne well in his retirement from public service. The Members in turn and Director of Services Ms. Eileen Ruane on behalf of Galway County Council expressed their good wishes and gratitude to Cllr. Byrne.

The Cathaoirleach extended good wishes to Ms. Pauline McHugo on her pending retirement from Galway County Council. Each Elected Member in turn expressed thanks to Ms. McHugo for her service in Galway County Council and wished her a long, healthy and happy retirement.

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Hotel on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**LMD2358**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Finnerty, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Curley and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Kinane stated she is not in agreement with a response from Mr. Tom Prendergast, Senior Engineer in respect of a motion put forward by the Members to trial the 30 km/h speed limit at all schools and to roll this out to all schools across the county. She stated, there is no explicit legislation at Municipal District (MD) level preventing Members from amending byelaws with respect to speed limits at schools and added, she hopes that the decision could be made in the Loughrea Municipal District. She stated, speed limits, particularly around schools should remain on the agenda for the June MD meeting.

The Cathaoirleach agreed that the matter regarding speed limits at schools was important and it will be discussed at the June meeting.

**Confirmation of Minutes of Special Meeting held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March LMD2359  
2024 regarding the Loughrea Area Plan**

Minutes of Special Meeting held on Tuesday 26th March 2024 regarding the Loughrea Area Plan were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Curley, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kelly and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Mr. Ward advised the Members that public consultation ends today (13<sup>th</sup> May 2024) regarding the Loughrea Area Plan, and therefore Members could still make submissions.

The Cathaoirleach commented that the Members have had a number of discussions regarding the Loughrea Area Plan, and everyone has had an opportunity to look at the plan and put forward amendments to the drafts.

**Gort Town Team Presentation on Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) Category 2 Application – Annie Rosario and Marion Cahill Collins LMD2360**

Ms. Rosario opened the meeting by thanking the members for affording her and Ms. Cahill Collins the opportunity to make a presentation to them on the Category 2 Application under the RRDF. Ms. Rosario stated they are proposing to secure funding to purchase the Convent of Mercy in Gort. She added the building is a listed building in the heart of Gort and the vision is to make it available as a multipurpose remote working, innovation, cultural and community centre and which could provide additional housing in the town centre.

Ms. Cahill Collins explained, the Gort Mill was previously located near the building but was destroyed over one weekend resulting in a historical loss to the community, she stressed she does not want to see this happen with the Convent. She informed the members the convent offers significant opportunities for an enterprise hub, social, cultural and community services. Ms. Cahill Collins advised, the team provided 250 boxes of food to members of the community but added, the facility they operate from is not fit for purpose, she explained, the availability of the convent would greatly enable them to continue their work.

Ms. Cahill Collins stated that Mr. Liam Conneally, Chief Executive of Galway County Council is 'leading the way' and is in support of the application. She stated, the reason for their attendance at today's meeting to request financial support from the Council.

Ms. Rosario and Ms. Cahill Collins thanked Ms. Hazel Fox, Town Regeneration Officer, Galway County Council for her work and support to the team. Ms. Cahill Collins added discussions have taken place with the Sisters of Mercy who have alluded that Galway County Council would be their preferred bidder.

Mr. Wynne stated the project did not secure funding in previous rounds of funding. He added that it is a very good project for a new application which will be submitted in October. The project will service the community and Galway County Council into the future. A discussion took place following the presentation. The Cathaoirleach and members thanked Ms. Rosario and Cahill Collins for their informative presentation and expressed their full support for the Gort Town RRDF Category 2 Application.

Cllr. Byrne stated it is a fantastic project and he would be willing to help in a voluntary capacity.

Mr. Hanrahan acknowledged the Gort Town Team's proactive approach and hard work in progressing the project and added the project was not contained under the Redress Scheme. He added the Sisters of Mercy have provided accommodation to the Ukrainians over the two years and have made great use of the building. He added it is important to preserve the cultural and heritage aspects of the building.

#### **Flooding Update**

**LMD2361**

Mr. Gallagher updated the meeting as follows:

The Environmental Consultants will be submitting draft copies of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) to the Office of Public Works (OPW) this week. The last two draft chapters of the EIAR and the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be submitted before the end of June.

During the review period, the Environmental Consultant will be undertaking additional breeding bird and bat surveys. Focused ecological surveys of lands proposed for disposal of excavated material and gauge sites within turloughs will be undertaken. An eight-week Geophysics survey is scheduled to be completed during this period also. All EIAR documents are expected to be finalised by September.

The Engineering Consultant will be contacting landowners about disposal sites in the next two to three weeks. A last potential weir site on the scheme is being reviewed. Hydrographs for salinity modelling are nearing completion and the production of landowner schedules for the Exhibition process are being produced. It is anticipated that the Exhibition process will be completed before Christmas.

Tender documents for the Storm Debi Coastal Study between Oranmore and Kinvara are scheduled to be published this week on e-Tenders.

Cllr. McClearn queried when will the machines be on the ground for the South Galway Scheme. Mr. Gallagher explained to the meeting that the duration of the Confirmation

process can vary greatly between schemes, and it was therefore impossible to provide even an indicative timeline for the commencement of works on the ground.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed to Cllr. Murphy that he would provide him with a map and details of the current proposals for works at Labane and Ballinduff.

Following representation from Cllr. Kinane, Mr. Gallagher gave an undertaking to submit a request to the OPW for advance property protection works for two houses on the Maree Road that were flooded during Storm Debi. Mr. Gallagher advised that such works were unlikely to be funded by the OPW in advance of the study that the OPW have agreed to fund. Mr. Gallagher confirmed to Cllr. Byrne that properties on Kinvara Pier were included in the scope of the proposed study of Storm Debi.

**Taking in Charge, Gort na Rí, Gort**

**LMD2362**

The taking in charge of the road at Gort Na Rí, Gort was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Byrne and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Murphy.

Road commencing at its junction with L8531 in the townland of Gort and extending Northeast for 333m to Point C and ending outside house No.40 in the townland of Gort. Point A-B-C on TIC Map.

Road commencing at Point C outside house No.40 in the townland of Gort, initially going in a Southeast direction, then meandering in a horseshoe shape for 160m and finishing at Point D outside house No. 46 in the townland of Gort. Point C-D on TIC Map.

Road commencing at Point B at its junction with A-C in the townland of Gort and extending South for 26m and finishing outside house No.10 in the townland of Gort. Point B-E on TIC Map.

**Taking in Charge, The Orchard, Gort**

**LMD2363**

The taking in charge of the road at The Orchard, Gort was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Murphy and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Byrne.

Road commencing at its junction with L45241 in The Maples in the townland of Gort and extending Southeast for 173m to Point C and ending outside house No.15 in the townland of Ballyhugh. Road Commencing at Point A-B-C on TIC map.

Road commencing at its junction with A-C in the Townland of Gort and extending Northeast for 36m and ending outside house No. 1 in the townland of Gort. Point B- D on TIC Map.

**Cathaoirleach's Business**

**LMD2364**

Cllr. Maher raised concerns regarding the traffic lights at the Westbridge Loughrea stating he is receiving many complaints due to delays at the junction and **PROPOSED** switching the lights

off altogether. Cllr. Maher **PROPOSED** trialling a roundabout at the junction, which was **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kelly.

The Cathaoirleach enquired where liability would lie if an accident occurred following the turning off traffic lights. Mr. Haugh stated, there is no intention to turn off the lights at the Westbridge as the Council must make provision for the safety of vulnerable road users, he added a roundabout is not a suitable solution that could realistically be trialled.

Cllr. Maher stated he wants the item to remain on the agenda until the traffic issue at the junction is fully resolved. Mr. Haugh advised, Uisce Éireann have recently carried out works at the junction which has added to traffic delays and clarified that works at this location should soon be completed. He clarified that the delays experience in recent weeks were not as a result of the existing system but were likely associated with the adjoining work. He added, an additional in-ground detection loop has been installed to improve traffic flow and repairs are scheduled to an existing loop which was damaged. Mr. Haugh added, it will be necessary to have consideration to what will be included in the Loughrea Local Transport Plan with respect to any proposed future changes at the junction.

The Cathaoirleach stated, safety must be considered and an acceptable solution for all at the Westbridge junction is a significant challenge. Cllr. Kelly **WITHDREW** his seconding to the installation of a roundabout following a discussion regarding safety issues and Cllr. Maher also **WITHDREW** his proposal.

Cllr. Maher acknowledged the work carried out by all staff in the Loughrea MD.

Cllr. Murphy requested an update on works to be done at the graveyard at the Labane Junction and sought clarification on whether the island can be removed, and the wall be moved back. Mr. Flynn informed Cllr. Murphy a consultant assessed the junction, and the preparation of a design would cost in the region of €3,000. He added, there is no intention to move the graveyard wall in the absence of a design and funding. Mr. Haugh added, funding will be required initially to proceed with a design and subsequently to carry out any proposed works and added, the Council does not have an in-house design team for this project, clarifying that the role of Engineering Staff in the Roads Unit is primarily to deliver the adopted Roads Programme. Cllr. Murphy enquired if NOM funding is the only avenue of funding, Mr. Flynn responded he will look for other potential areas of funding.

Cllr. Murphy sought an update on the crossroads at Keanes to Beagh, past Lough Cutra National School, Peterswell. He stated, the crossroads is dangerous, and visibility needs to be improved, he suggested providing additional signage and/or road markings. He requested an audit be carried out at the location.

Cllr. Byrne enquired from the Director of Services regarding the provision of a Civic Amenity site in Gort, stating funding had been allocated for the facility. In response, Ms. Ruane stated, she had discussed the matter with the Head of Finance, and it will be necessary to identify if funding is available from the Capital Budget and Development levies to cover the shortfall.

Cllr. Canning sought an update on the provision of a lorry/patching unit for the Portumna/Killimor area. He added, sharing a lorry with another area would cause a backlog

with respect to repair/filling of potholes. Cllr. Kinane agreed with Cllr. Canning expressing her concern regarding the condition of roads in the MD and asked for the costing for the hire of a new velocity patcher, adding additional personnel would be required to operate the vehicle. She added, she would consider contributing her NOM monies towards this work to enable the outdoor staff to continue repairing roads until sufficient funds are received to deal with these issues. Mr. Haugh clarified that dedicating a full annual NOM allocation for the mobilisation of a velocity patcher plus operator would enable the machine to be available for approximately four weeks but welcomed any commitment from Councillors in this regard. He clarified there are two velocity patchers currently operating, 1 shared between Loughrea and Gort and the second dedicated to the Portumna area for 4 days each week. The Cathaoirleach stated, the roads in East Galway are in a terrible condition.

In response to Cllr. Canning's query on hedge cutting, Mr. Haugh advised hedges can be trimmed where there is a road safety concern and requested Cllr. Canning to notify the office of specific locations. He explained, a tender to secure a contractor for hedge trimming on the National and Former National roads will proceed within the coming weeks.

Cllr. Curley enquired, on foot of a query received from a member of the public, if the facilities at the Long Point, Loughrea could be opened. Mr. Haugh explained that the funding allocated barely suffices to have the facilities cleaned and opened from June to September coinciding with the Blue Flag period, adding the MD tries to extend the period where possible during periods of good weather.

Cllr. Kinane enquired when a Caretaker will be appointed to Renville, Ms. Ruane stated she will revert on this matter.

Cllr. Kinane enquired regarding maintenance works to be carried out at the slipway at Blackweir and requested an Engineer assess the facility.

Cllr. Kinane stated local business owners have enquired from her if Dunguire Castle will open to the public and she was advised that the facility will open again to the public.

The Cathaoirleach stated €2.4 million was allocated for local improvement schemes and Elected Members, when canvassing, are being asked where the funding will be allocated. Mr. Haugh stated he will follow up with HQ and request that clarification issued to all Councillors.

Cllr. Byrne extended this thanks to the Directors of Services, Engineering, Administration and Technical staff on their assistance during his service as an Elected Representative. He expressed his gratitude to the administration staff in the Gort Office, Frances Lambert and Agnes Geoghegan. He acknowledged work done by Pat Finn, Retired CES Supervisor, Mattie McMahon, General Services Supervisor, and outdoor staff in the Gort Area, he thanked Enda Gallagher, SEE for his continued work.

Cllr. Byrne also thanked members of the media, Denise McNamara, Connacht Tribune and Sarah Slevin, Galway Bay FM for their excellent reporting.

Cllr. Byrne remembered Cllr. Fahy (RIP) and Cllr. Pat Hynes (RIP) for their friendship and work as Elected Members. He extended his thanks to the Elected Members and wished them well over the coming weeks in their preparation for the June 2024 Local Elections.

Ms. Ruane thanked the staff of the Loughrea Municipal District for the work they do and wished the Elected Members the best of luck in their canvassing campaigns over the coming weeks.

The meeting concluded at 12.45 p.m.

**CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN**



**CLLR JIMMY McCLEARN**

9<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Date

