

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceanatar Bardasach Bhaile Locha Riach *Municipal District of LOUGHREA*

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Area Office, Council Chamber on 12th February 2024

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach	Cllr. J. McClearn
Baill:	Cllr's. G. Donohue, S. Curley, M. Maher, J. Byrne, M. Kinane, D. Kelly, G. Finnerty, PJ Murphy
Oifigigh:	Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer Mr. D. Mitchell, Senior Engineer Mr. T. Prendergast, Senior Engineer Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer Ms. P. Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer Mr. L. Flynn, Executive Engineer Ms. S. Silke, Executive Engineer Ms. D. Gibbons, Executive Engineer Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer Ms. C. Kennedy, Assistant Staff Officer
As Láthair:	Cllr. I. Canning Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services

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

LMD2339

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 8th January 2024 were proposed by Cllr. Byrne, seconded by Cllr. Kelly and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Byrne sought an update on the replacement of a wall at Newtown, Mr. Flynn advised that he attended the location, a report has been completed and three options will be put in place.

Cllr. Byrne requested an update on Climate Action Funding stating that there are hundreds of Galway County Council cones greeting people in Tracht following Storm Debi. In response Ms. Lowe stated a lot of damage was caused by the storm on the west coast and a submission to the Department has been made for Tracht and Tawney Island, a response is awaited. She advised that the funding in respect of roads allocations has not been confirmed yet.

Cllr. Kinane enquired from Mr. Haugh if any suitable location was identified for locating salt bins in Craughwell and Renville, he confirmed a location has been identified in Renville but not for Craughwell yet. In response to Cllr. Kinane's request for a meeting with an official from the Office of Public Works on flooding in Clarinbridge, Ms. Lowe confirmed that an update is not yet available.

Cllr. Maher requested an update on the traffic lights at the Westbridge he stated there is still havoc at the location and understands additional loops are to be installed. Ms. Lowe responded that traffic at the Westbridge is being looked at presently in terms of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and proposals could result in reducing traffic at the location by 50%, she added that further surveys will be undertaken as part of the Local Area Plan (LAP) process to gather and assess as much information as possible. Mr. Haugh stated that a contractor has been instructed to insert an additional loop, but it is the view of the Municipal District Office that the lights are working satisfactorily.

Cllr. Maher acknowledged the good works done in The Grove, Loughrea with the removal of dangerous trees and tree limbs. He stated that a budget of €33,000 will be required to complete works in The Grove and highlighted the importance of the facility to the public and our elderly constituents. He said the footpath needs to be made safe and enquired if Members are prepared to contribute Notion of Motion monies for the completion of works.

Cllr. Curley stated he is receiving calls from members of the public regarding vehicles travelling at high speed on the Old Galway Road. Mr. Haugh stated that he issued a reply to Cllr. Curley on this matter. Ms. Lowe referred to new legislation to be passed this year to reduce speed limits, she said this is a bigger picture nationally, and speed limits will be considered following the passing of new legislation.

Cllr. Donohue stated that at the January Municipal District (MD) meeting she requested a member of the Local Link to attend the MD meeting to discuss public transport. She stated that Ms. Flynn issued correspondence to Local Link but understands there was no response. Cllr. Donohue stated she is aware that Cllr. Kinane met with Minister Jack Chambers recently and enquired if the issue of public transport in the MD was raised.

Cllr. Kinane responded she met with Minister Chambers on 8th February and round table meeting was held with representative groups regarding the R350 route, this followed meetings she attended with Bus Eireann auxiliary busses on the route between Maree, Kilcolgan, Clarinbridge, Ballinderreen and Kinvara. She stated that she had requested the Minister to engage with officials in the National Travel Agency (NTA).

The Cathaoirleach stated that the Local Link fulfils a need in this County regarding public transport and connectivity. He stated it is disingenuous of the NTA to put the transport responsibility on the Local Link. He said, there is a necessity to provide appropriate transport between Loughrea and Galway City and, Loughrea and Ballinasloe.

Cllr. Maher stated, he had requested an official from the NTA attend a Municipal District (MD) meeting as transport is a major issue which affects the ability of students to attend college. He said he raised the issue in the Dáil but it gets pushed down the line. He stressed that the

NTA should attend a plenary meeting and advise when Galway County, and Loughrea, will be provided with a fit for purpose bus service. Cllr. Maher proposed a letter should be sent to the NTA requesting an official attend an MD meeting as the public transport system is not good enough. The proposal was seconded by the Cathaoirleach. Cllr. Curley supported the call for a member of the NTA to attend a meeting of the Council stating that the provision of a bus service is also important from a Climate Change viewpoint.

Cllr. Donoghue stated it is not acceptable for the NTA to pass the responsibility back to The Local Link. She requested an update on the Greenway project and for a member of the Greenway team to attend an MD meeting to provide an update.

Flooding Update

LMD2340

Mr. Enda Gallagher apologised for being unable to attend the Loughrea MD meeting in January.

He stated environmental consultants are currently examining the model results and report for the option of placing weirs on outlet channels from a few of the turloughs within the study area. This examination is scheduled to be completed within a fortnight. If no other issues arise during the review, it is hoped that drafts of all environmental documents will be sent to the (Office of Public Works) OPW for review before the next (Municipal District) MD meeting. Mr. Gallagher clarified a tender is currently being prepared for a Geophysics survey of the area, with a proposed commencement date of May 2024.

He explained with respect to the engineering side, the design, scheme drawings, interference notices and schedules are all at an advanced stage. The findings from the weirs review will be required to complete these documents. The Options Report is up to date, it will remain in draft format until the Public Exhibition process has been completed.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed that an environmental consultant has been appointed to undertake an AA Screening for proposed works at Killeenaran on the Kiltiernan to Ballinderreen flood relief channel. There is a large vegetation blockage in the channel causing localised flooding. The house holders and landowner have been consulted on the proposal to remove four trees from the channel. It is hoped the works will be undertaken before the 1st of March.

Mr. Gallagher referred to Storm Debi and advised, a meeting was held with the OPW in mid-January and an application to fund a coastal study was submitted on 29th January. It is proposed that the study will examine areas in Oranmore, Clarinbridge, Kilcolgan Weir, Killeenaran and Kinvarra village – where houses and business properties were flooded. He continued, recommendations are also being sought on the reconstruction of walls on the Maree Road and Coast Road in Oranmore. The Tawnagh causeway is to be examined to see if it acts as a flood defence. The consultants will be asked to examine the storm event, undertake studies, develop flood mapping, examine various methods to protect properties, provide cost estimates and initial environmental assessments. The findings from the study should facilitate the Council in accessing funds from the OPW to undertake flood protection works.

In response to a query from Cllr Byrne, Mr. Gallagher stated it was confirmed that the Public Exhibition for the Gort lowlands project is scheduled for Q2 of 2024. It was also confirmed that the proposed coastal study will review the flood gates provided at Kinvarra. Mr. Gallagher noted that the Kinvarra floodgates were installed as an enhancement of the existing sandbag protection used by locals and were not designed to prevent flooding during an event equivalent to Storm Debi. The floodgates installed would only provide protection up to approximately three-foot depth of flood waters. A review of the Kinvarra defences is included in the study application submitted to the OPW. Mr. Gallagher noted that the consultants will be asked to identify *feasible* flood defences for properties.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed to Cllr Kinane that any queries from residents or business owners affected by Storm Debi could be addressed to himself or Tom Prendergast. It is not proposed to install floodgates on premises in advance of the required study been undertaken. The study is required to identify where/if floodgates are a suitable form of protection for properties or if more suitable alternatives are available. He stated costs associated with floodgate proposals must be justified initially, in our case, through the proposed report. It is proposed that the report will form the basis of a business case for funding to the OPW.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed to Cllr Murphy that the M18 culvert issue at Raheen is being dealt with by Galway County Council outside of the main flood project forum. The project team have been advised that costs associated with the culvert works are not to be considered as an impediment to the project progressing.

Speed Limit Review – Tom Prendergast, Senior Engineer

LMD2341

Mr. Tom Prendergast made a presentation to the Members on the Speed Limit Review of Schools. He explained that The Speed Limit Review is considered an important part of the Council's work programme which forms part of a larger framework of complementary measures and tools which work together with the overall aim of making roads safer.

He explained that the team focused on as much relevant data as possible on all locations identified through submission and feedback to come up with a consistent and coherent approach which is firmly based on the overarching guidelines contained in the statutory document "Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland". He stated, it ultimately aims to achieve a speed limit regime which is sensible and appropriate (and will engender the support of the wider public and build confidence in, and respect for, the system). He added, the setting of speed limits is primarily driven by road safety, the need to reduce collisions and their severity and, to gain consistency in the setting of suitable limits to ensure road traffic speeds are appropriate to their environment.

He stated engineering measures should be investigated and or implemented and only supplemented by a Special Speed Limit if necessary. Mr. Prendergast stated the Local Authority is obliged to set speed limits within guidelines contained in the plan with a review being carried out every 5 years.

He added, analysing accident data forms part of the review. Mr. Prendergast advised that 22 submissions were received relating to specific schools 6 of which had other safety concerns,

16 locations were considered. Mr. Prendergast also confirmed that four submissions were received seeking the blanket introduction of a 50kph speed limit at all schools. He continued, ensuring school flashing lights are kept in working order during at the required times is essential. Mr. Prendergast advised that 218 submissions have been received for consideration before the Speed Review goes on display.

The Cathaoirleach and Members thanked Mr. Prendergast for his comprehensive presentation.

The Cathaoirleach stated that the introduction of new speed limits will be ineffective if not covered by enforcement to penalise those driving more than the legal speed limit.

Cllr. Maher requested Mr. Prendergast to circulate the guidelines to the Members. He stated that driving at 30 kph in town centres will be very slow and highlighted that a change of speed limit at Coldwood school is needed.

Cllr. Curley raised concerns regarding road safety at Bullaun National School requesting a reduction of the speed limit coming into Bullaun Village. He enquired if there will be any change of speed limits on regional roads. Mr. Prendergast responded that a submission has not been received from Bullaun National School and therefore it is not included at this time, however he stated he will raise the issue.

Cllr. Finnerty stated that a lot of schools are in areas where they probably would not be granted planning permission in current times, he referred to the large number of road collisions on Irish roads. He emphasised the important of ensuring school flashing lights are working properly stating some of them were turned the wrong way.

Cllr. Kinane stated she believes that as an elected member of Galway County Council and a member of the Loughrea Municipal District she should be afforded the opportunity to exercise her reserved function to amend special speed limits around schools. She said if the data of near misses was available a different outcome could emerge.

Cllr. Kinane proposed that the amendments/submissions received (as part of the consultation process of the 2023 County Road Traffic Special Speed Limits) in respect of schools within the Loughrea Municipal District, be placed on the agenda of the March meeting of the Loughrea Municipal District for approval." Cllr. Curley seconded Cllr. Kinane's proposal and the motion was agreed by the Members.

Cllr. McClearn stated, the public and those who put forward submissions expect a response. Cllr. Donohue advised the Members that Ms. Quinn is attending the Speed Limit Review as a concerned parent whose children attend Peterswell School and she has a document she wishes to present to Mr. Prendergast.

Cllr. Donohue raised concerns regarding discrepancies of signage placed at schools adding that some schools have signage and others don't. She stated that the lights at Kiltartan National School are out of order for approximately 6 weeks and enquired how this can be escalated.

Cllr. Murphy welcomed proposals for Lough Cutra and Kiltartan. He stated that some roads have inappropriate speed limits and referred to the Clarinbridge to Gort road which was

reduced from 100 kilometres per hour to 60 kilometres per hour, he stated that the motorway has reduced traffic on this road to 25% adding that motorists have received penalty points on this stretch of road and realistically the speed limit should be restored to 100 kilometres per hour (kph). He said inappropriate speed limits undermine the procedure. He enquired if Members could make a decision to request to have the 100 kph limit restored.

Cllr. Byrne stated that there is a need to differentiate different schools on different roads and it is up to the Local Authority to ensure safety at those schools. Cllr. Byrne stated, on local roads the issue surrounds driver behaviour, he stated at Peterswell there is a high volume of irregular traffic and motorists unfamiliar with the road and don't slow down.

Cllr. Curley enquired if it is the function of the Members to change speed limits. Mr. Prendergast clarified it is a reserved function of the Members to approve speed limits clarifying that there is a legislative process in place for the making of byelaws and legislation must be complied with. He informed the Members that submissions must be analysed to develop byelaws which must go on public consultation and findings must be brought back to the Members to enable a set of byelaws be prepared.

The Cathaoirleach enquired if it would be possible for this MD to test the process having regard to the potential for the occurrence of serious accidents as speed limits currently stand. Mr. Prendergast stated there is a requirement under the Act to review speed limits every 5 years and submissions can be made at that point in time. He added, the Government in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority (RSA) have assessed road deaths and speed limits. Cllr. Curley proposed testing the legislation in Bullaun on the Loughrea side of the village. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Maher. Cllr. Byrne enquired if a proposal to change speed limits could be included in Standing Orders adding that there must be a process. Ms. Lowe reiterated Mr. Prendergast's clarification that the process is mandatory in line with legislation. Ms. Lowe stated legislation is expected within Q1 of 2024 which will change the baseline for assessment. She said national legislation is critical and a framework as to what will be done.

Housing Capital Programme update – Damien Mitchell, Senior Engineer

LMD2342

Mr. Damien Mitchell, Senior Engineer made a presentation to the Members regarding the Housing Capital Update for the Loughrea Municipal District. Mr. Mitchell explained that the Government's plan (2022-2030), 'Housing for All' aims to address housing with four pathways to achieve the overarching objectives of (1) supporting homeownership and increasing affordability, (2) eradicating homelessness, increasing social housing delivery, and supporting social inclusion (3) increasing new housing supply and (4) addressing vacancy and efficient use of housing stock. He stated that the plan requires the public and private sector to work together to provide the target of 300,000 homes by 2030 which include 90,000 social housing units and 35,000 affordable housing units.

Mr. Mitchell advised that a key component of the Housing for All Policy is governance and reporting with the establishment of a dedicated unit for oversight. He stated Local Authorities are required to prepare a 5-year Housing Delivery Action Plan (HADP) for the period 2022-2026 setting out the way housing requirements will be delivered.

Mr. Mitchell explained that Galway County Council's Social Housing target is the provision of 1,717 social houses during the period of the Plan. He explained the pathways through which social housing construction will be provided are Local Authority direct build, Approved Housing Bodies, Turnkeys from private developers and Part V requirements.

Mr. Mitchell explained that Galway County Council's target of Affordable Housing provision during the 5-year period of 2022-2026 is 226 affordable houses, the Council received confirmation on 30th March 2022 of its affordable housing targets. Mr. Mitchell stated that, as of 8th February 2024, the Housing Demand in the areas of Gort and Environs totals 201 units, Loughrea and Environs totals 266 units and Portumna and Environs totals 111 units, a total of 578 units demanded in this combined area. Mr. Mitchell provided an update to the members on various Local Authority Build Projects throughout the Municipal District which are at different stages. He notified the members of the intention of the GCC Housing (Capital) Department to submit a 3-no. 2 bed housing scheme for planning through the Section 179A process to be located at Hillcrest Estate, Loughrea. The Cathaoirleach and Members thanked Mr. Mitchell for his informative presentation.

Cllr. Byrne stated that, as part of the remit of the Strategic Policy Committee the Housing Capital Programme is reviewed and he added it is important to let people know what is happening in the area regarding housing. He stated it is positive going forward with the amount of planning and it releases pressure on the rental market and will bring down rental prices. He stated it is disappointing that 90 houses in the Gort area are held up due to planning controversy. He said there is a lot of great work being done adding that, turnkeys should not be underestimated. Mr. Mitchell stated that he is aware of the Part V's however he did not count them as they have not commenced. Cllr. Byrne added the process of Local Authority direct builds could take half of the time.

Cllr. Murphy stated that whenever the Government introduce an Affordable Housing Scheme there is a massive appetite for young people wanting to buy their own home.

Cllr. Kelly referred to the number of properties planned for Loughrea and Portumna and asked for a timeline of when the properties will be available for occupation. He stated most of the calls Councillors get refers to housing. He added this has a direct effect on people's mental health. Mr. Mitchell stated housing provision depends on planning permission granted and it is the aim to have units in Loughrea and Portumna delivered by the end of 2025.

Cllr. Maher stated that affordability and availability of houses in this area is very small, he stated that 200 houses out of 1700 is very small. He added, if you look at properties in Loughrea town, 80% of buildings are not lived in and it would be great if they were available for occupation.

In response to Cllr. Maher's query on rezoning of lands in the Local Area Plan, Mr. Mitchell stated the Housing Unit will consider everything including Local Authority Builds and turnkeys, he stated regarding derelict buildings help is available from the housing unit.

Cllr. Finnerty stated there is a lot of good land in Gort, but the Council does not have the appetite to seek funding for it. He added it is great to see capital projects coming on stream and more are needed, he said, it is essential that utilities such as water and sewage are

available to provide for future development. Mr. Mitchell responded that the Council has lands in Courtney's Lane, Gort for which the proposal for development is being advanced through a licencing agreement.

Cllr. Donohue stated that the lack of housing provision is having a serious negative effect on people's mental health and social well-being, she stated that young people and young families need housing.

Cllr. Curley stated that HAP is a problem, and stated people have 2 alternatives, either live with parents or go homeless. He added, we need to go back to the Department regarding affordability.

Cllr. McClearn stated if we want a solution to the housing crisis, we need to look at modern ways in which houses can be constructed. He added a lot of Local Authorities are not meeting their targets, but Galway County Council are doing well.

Active Travel – Paula Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer

LMD2343

Ms. Paula Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer provided the Members with an update on Active Travel projects being undertaken in the Municipal District. She clarified that Active Travel is intended for projects specific to walking and wheeling to and from school, works and shops generally within a 50/60 kph speed limit. She advised that Active Travel works on regional and local roads are funded by the NTA and projects on National roads are funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). She stated that the Climate Action Plan is the driving force behind the scheme aiming to deliver 1000 km of new walking and cycling infrastructure by the end of 2025 to facilitate a need to reduce carbon emissions by 50% by 2030.

Ms. Higgins provided an update on various schemes and related funding which were completed between 2021 and 2023 and, discussed schemes included in the Active Travel Programme for 2024. Ms. Higgins introduced Ms. Donna Gibbons, Executive Engineer who was recently appointed to the Active Travel Team and will be dealing with the bus shelter enhancement programme.

The Cathaoirleach and members thanked Ms. Higgins for her presentation. He raised concerns on behalf of Cllr. Canning regarding safety issues at Gortanumera during school times stating there is no safe area for cars to stop for children to access the school. Ms. Higgins responded that he should make a written submission to her via email. Cllr. Kelly stated, following all works done by various engineers it is very disappointing that a proper and safe footpath has not been provided at Shannon Road for vulnerable people who need the facility. He also expressed his disappointment that funding could not be provided for St. Joseph's Road.

Cllr. Kinane stated she was disappointed that none of the projects put forward met the criteria under Active Travel emphasising it is essential to have Active Travel available for rural areas and enquired where the fault lies. She stated she had met with Minister Chambers recently and informed him that Community Groups could not get access to Active Travel and informed him that rural Ireland was being left behind. She stated that the Minister will discuss the

matter with the NTA. Ms. Higgins stated that projects are constrained by resources. She explained there are approximately thirty/forty projects ongoing and only three engineers, she added when further resources and funding are available other projects can be considered.

Cllr. Maher stated that Active Travel was explored to produce a safe route around Loughrea town from the Loughrea Hotel to the Gaelscoil making it safe for walkers, he requested an update. He stated, with respect to the Local Area Plan, a meeting was held recently, and people were very angry about the closure of roads around the town. Ms. Higgins responded that cameras and cables was installed at roads and junction under survey for the collection of data which will inform part of the Local Transport Plan. Cllr. Maher added, the road passing St. Brendan's National School is very narrow and the only other route around the town is by the Coursing Route. Ms. Higgins advised that projects for *The Loughrea Active Travel Schemes Design* for which €100,000 was provided by the NTA for work in 2024 are in the process of being defined. Cllr. Maher advised Ms. Higgins that Loughrea needs two bus shelters for commuters.

Cllr. Curley enquired if funding was approved for the Caheronaun/Danesfort Road. He stated a wheelchair user must come down the hill at Ard Breeda and travel 200 metres to cross the road. He stated one third of housing in Loughrea is in this area and, parents are nervous of letting children walk, cycle at the area. Ms. Higgins stated that other routes can be reviewed under Active Travel in Loughrea in time.

Cllr. Murphy welcomed plans for works to take place in Ballinderreen. He stated that a pedestrian crossing with lights in needed in Labane and stated he is prepared to put NOM fundings towards this it. Ms. Higgins responded that the team would need to work with TII on this, she stated the area office would be involved in the process.

Cllr. Donohue stated she would like to emphasise the importance to the Active Travel Team regarding works required in Glenbrack. She added, Craughwell needs proper bus shelter. She stated people in Ardrahan need assistance from Active Travel to provide a safe route to walk to the bus stop.

Cllr. Finnerty stated he made submissions under Active Travel and enquired if these still stand and asked if every project must be within the specified speed limit. He stated the importance of providing a safe route between Labane and Ardrahan and asked if it is possible having regard to speed limits. Ms. Higgins confirmed the area currently falls outside of the required speed limit restriction. Cllr. Finnerty sought clarification on when the bus stop will be provided. Ms. Lowe responded that Ms. Gibbons is dealing with bus shelters and will provide clarification. She stated there is an allocation of €500,000 for bus stops and disability access.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2344

The Cathaoirleach referred to an email from Sean Devaney, Senior Engineer to Ms. Flynn regarding the N65 Kilmeen Cross in which he stated 'The Emerging Preferred Option for the N65 Kilmeen Cross minor improvement scheme was identified in 2022. The National Roads Project Office was to commence the design of the scheme in 2023, however the office is waiting for engineer vacancies to be filled for this to start. Once the project can be resourced

the detailed design and environmental assessment will commence followed by the statutory processes thereafter.

The Cathaoirleach stated that he had thought this was a major scheme adding it was his understanding that a major roundabout was being provided but now he understands it is 'minor.'

Cllr. Kinane stated it is a disgrace that this project has been raised for 20 years and no work completed. She said residents attended numerous meetings on this issue and will again.

Cllr. Finnerty requested a survey on the R350 as there are strips coming away from the surface and cats' eyes are missing, he said he has serious concerns regarding the condition of the road.

In response to Cllr. Finnerty's request for a date when the Roads Programme meeting will be held, Ms. Flynn confirmed it is scheduled to take place on 5th March 2024.

The Cathaoirleach raised a concern regarding the considerable number of resources used to patch roads which weren't on the roads programme last year, he asked if additional funding is available can these roads be considered although they are not included in the roads programme. He enquired if a contingency can be arranged, Ms. Lowe clarified that the road budget allocations have not yet been allocated.

Cllr. Curley stated that legislation has been enacted by the Department allowing the use of CCTV footage he asked if those who are found to be responsible for illegal dumping can be prosecuted, he added the speedy roll out of cameras is required. Cllr. Curley sought a breakdown of how many houses were visited to ascertain if they were compliant with waste disposal regulations. Ms. Lowe advised that the legislation surrounding the Council's use of CCTV will be reviewed.

Ms. Annemarie Johnston, Senior Executive engineer forwarded an update on progress of the Galway to Athlone Cycleway project which was read to the Members by Ms. Lowe. Cllr. Donohue proposed that Ms. Johnston attend an MD meeting to provide an update.

Cllr. Murphy sought an update on the provision of a bus shelter for Labane, Mr. Haugh responded that a bus shelter will be provided at the location.

Cllr. Murphy raised concerns regarding illegal hare coursing in the Ballymanagh and Craughwell areas and requested Community Wardens and members of An Garda Siobhána to attend these locations to impound the dogs.

Cllr. Maher stated that pedestrian lights on the Gort Road are bleeping at night and causing a nuisance for residents. He also stated that lights on Main Street have been out of action for over one month and, lights at Clostoken have not worked in over two years, he enquired if correspondence could issue to Electric Skyline on this issue.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN



**CLLR JIMMY MCCLEARN
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD**

Presentation by Students from St. Bridget's College Loughrea

Ms. Evie Treacy and Ms. Ellie Niland students from St. Bridget's College, Loughrea made a presentation to the Members entitled 'Our Idling Campaign.'

The students opened their presentation by explaining to the Members that they are attending the Municipal District Meeting requesting help from the Members and Galway County Council to prevent vehicles from idling during school drop offs and pick-ups and they wanted to change the way in which school busses are run.

Ms. Treacy explained the students took part in a project organised by Globe Ireland which focussed on the consequences of vehicles idling outside of schools and the relationship this had with nitrous gases in the school's atmosphere. She explained when a vehicle is stationary 20 seconds or more it is considered as idling, she added that 50% of cars monitored over a four-week period at the school were idling.

Ms. Treacy explained that two probes were used to measure nitrous gases at the school which were sent to Globe Ireland to be measured and observed by NASA. One probe was located on the road close the traffic and the second probe was placed in the car park. It was found that the probe located nearest the road recorded NO₂ pollutant level of 6.9 while the probe located away from the road recorded a pollutant level of 4.85.

Ms. Niland explained that inhaling Nitrous Dioxides can cause serious health issue such as pulmonary edema, pneumonitis, bronchitis, bronchiolitis, emphysema and methemoglobin. She added that her and Ms. Treacy's plan is to spread the word of their project through social media posts and posters around the school.

Ms. Niland stated a large poster will be placed outside St. Bridget's School asking motorists not to idle. She asked for correspondence to issue to Bus Companies, in particular School Busses, requesting them not to idle. Ms. Niland stated the plan is to take part in the project next year to compare findings, and an update will be presented to the Elected Members.

The Cathaoirleach and Members thanked the students for their very informative presentation. The Cathaoirleach stated the students have educated the Elected Members on the issue of idling. He added that an item is on the Agenda for today's Municipal District Meeting on making it safer for students to walk or cycle to school which should reduce congestion. Cllr. Kelly stated that the presentation backed by science is the excellence he would expect to see from St. Bridget's School and stated that it highlights the urgency for the Government to introduce electric buses quicker. Cllr. Maher stated that it might be no harm

to send the presentation to Ministers to assist, Cllr. Murphy stated he is looking forward to seeing the online version of the presentation.

The Cathaoirleach explained that the Members will have a conversation and take on board the details of the presentation for discussion and will revert to the students. He stated he will see how far the Municipal District's remit goes to help with the issue raised. Ms. Flynn stated that the presentation was impressive, and she will share it with the Active Travel Team. Cllr. Curley stated that on a National Level correspondence should issue to the National Transport Agency and Bus Eireann asking drivers to switch off engines when idling.

Ms. Tannion congratulated the 3rd year students on their presentation. She stated the students are struggling to get the message to a national level.