

**MINUTES OF THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION &
EMERGENCY SERVICES SPC**

**HYBRID MEETING HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE
ON WEDNESDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 10.30am**

I Láthair:

Baill: Comh. Pádraig Mac an Iomaire (Chairperson)
Comh. Tomás Ó Curraóin
Cllr. Michael Connolly
Cllr. Siobhán McHugh Ryan
Ms. Anne Mitchell
Mr. Mark Green

Baill ar Líne: Cllr. Martin McNamara

Oifigí: Mr. Uinsinn Finn, Director of Services
Mr. Tom Prendergast, Senior Engineer
Mr. Derek Troy, A/Senior Engineer
Ms. Donna Gibbons, Executive Engineer
Ms. Geraldine Byrne, Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary-Esther McHugh, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Mr. Aodán MacDonncha

Absent: Cllr. Peter Feeney
Cllr. Seán Broderick
Mr. Colm Ryan

Comh. Mac an Iomaire commenced the meeting by welcoming Derek Troy and wished him every success in his new position as Acting Senior Engineer.

Item No. 1: Minutes of the Physical Development, Transportation and Emergency Services SPC Meeting held on 16th June 2025

- On the **Proposal** of Comh. Ó Curraoin and **Seconded** by Cllr. McHugh, the minutes of the Physical Development, Transportation and Emergency Services meeting of the Strategic Policy Committee held 16th June 2025 were agreed and there were no matters arising.

Item No. 2: Matters Arising

- A member raised the issue of whether care parking permits could be provided to care workers. In response, Galway County Council confirmed that they are currently examining this proposal as a policy change originating from the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC), and that it would involve an amendment to the existing

byelaws. While a broader review of all byelaws had been raised, there was general agreement that introducing carer permits would not require such an extensive process.

- Another member urged caution regarding changes to the existing parking system, noting that current parking rates are not expensive, and the system appears to be functioning well. This concern was acknowledged and agreed that any changes should be carefully considered to avoid disrupting a system that is currently effective.
- Further discussion was raised around the balance between parking income and budget planning, particularly in relation to Municipal District (MD) parking. The Council responded by highlighting that parking revenue is a consideration in budget discussions, especially in areas like Ballinasloe where town regeneration efforts rely on paid parking as a source of income. They noted that any proposals for free parking periods would need to be addressed within the overall budget framework.
- A member raised the issue of parking in Tuam, specifically asking whether free parking could be introduced during drop-off times. This matter had been discussed at the Tuam MD meeting held the previous Monday. It was explained that any changes to parking in Tuam would need to be guided by a Traffic Management Plan. The Council emphasized that adjustments to the byelaws would require advance planning and coordination with wider parking measures, including the potential expansion of pay-to-park areas.

Item No. 3: Community Involvement Scheme (CIS) funding

- Derek Troy provided an update on the Community Involvement Scheme (CIS), outlining that funding for 2026 and 2027 will be promoted through both paper and social media, with a two-week response time similar to previous years.
- The 2026/2027 CIS scheme will see a slight reduction in applicant financial contribution rate from 10% to 8%. It is anticipated that funding will remain in line with previous Departmental allocations, in the region of €900,000 to €1.1 million split across five Municipal Districts (MDs). Applications will be forwarded to the MDs for costing and prioritisation before submission to the department mid-November.
- Applicants who were unsuccessful under the previous scheme will be notified and given the option to remain in the process without needing to fully reapply.
- The committee welcomed the scheme though concerns were raised about the short turnaround time. The council agreed to pass this feedback to the department. Additionally, it was confirmed that area offices can assist with mapping locations, noting that the inclusion of Eircodes would improve accuracy and usability, especially as members of the public often find the maps challenging.

Item No. 4: Bus Stop Enhancement Programme from Active Travel

- Donna Gibbons, Executive Engineer, gave a presentation on a new bus stop upgrade initiative in collaboration with the National Transport Authority (NTA), aimed at improving bus stop infrastructure across Galway County through funding for local authorities. The programme includes the installation of bus shelters, at stops with at least five services per day over five days a week, with Tranche 1 already delivering nine stops and tenders planned for shelter installation and groundwork next year. The programme also includes installation of flagpoles, where criteria for bus shelters does not apply.
- Future tranches will focus on high-frequency locations, with design and tendering being planned. A separate initiative also supports age-friendly bus stops in Gaeltacht areas with 50% match funding from Údarás na Gaeltacht after a recent Galway County Council award win. This funding will assist with the provision of shelters where services are fewer and Galway County Council are collaborating with Age Friendly Ireland / Meath County Council on this initiative and targeting 2026 delivery.
- A third package addresses infrastructure on national roads, considering challenges like high-speed traffic, lack of lighting, and rural settings, drawing on a consultant-led design approach inspired by NTA pilot projects.
- The presentation was well received, with strong support expressed for the bus stop enhancement programme. There was a request to prioritize Corofin cross on the N83, which will be included in the tender brief for design of bus stops on the national road network, subject to NTA feedback regarding the current pilot projects.
- Concerns were raised about locations like Menlough, which qualifies for flagpole installation but not a shelter due to falling short by one trip. Barna and Spiddal were noted as challenging due to multiple stop locations and footpath constraints, though both are included in Tranche 2.

The importance of shelters was emphasized for encouraging public transport use, especially for children and older people, and there was interest in including stops serving the N63 Athenry–Tuam road, where there is demand for bus shelters.
- Questions were raised about design restrictions in Architectural Conservation Areas and how consultation is managed in rural and village settings, with confirmation that standard Bauer Media designs are used and sensitivity is discussed with the NTA. Real-time bus information was queried, including whether it will be available via app or at shelters, and further clarification will be sought. Accessibility concerns were highlighted, particularly for older individuals without phones or access to timetables.
- It was noted that funding was only secured in April 2025, and continued engagement with Municipal Districts is planned, including invitations to present at future meetings.

Item No. 5: Hedge Cutting Policy

- Derek Troy presented details of a proposed hedge cutting policy, based under in Section 70 of the Roads Act 1993, which outlines the responsibilities of land

owners. Research conducted between 2016 and 2020, led by consultants in Tipperary, revealed significant inconsistencies across counties in terms of hedge cutting policies and procedures with some counties cut extensively along public roads, while others had more limited approaches.

- Galway County Council, which currently undertakes more cutting than most, contributed to this research. It was found that only six of the 26 counties had formal policies in place. Annual spending per municipal district ranging from €100,000 to €150,000 in Galway County Council (GCC) currently.
- The draft policy calls for stakeholder engagement through Municipal Districts to assess current practices and develop a uniform strategy via Strategic Policy Committees. It is intended to create a new GCC hedge cutting policy and procedure, in line with other councils in the region. The new policy would likely result in reduced cutting by GCC, with landowners having to cut where they are responsible to do so, within the nesting season.
- However, it was widely expressed that reduced hedge cutting could not be supported, with concerns raised about the impact on side roads, footpaths, and areas with unknown ownership, as well as the entanglement of wires in overgrown hedges. There was strong sentiment that rural areas should not be excluded, and that more attention should be given to biodiversity, sustainability, and the management of obnoxious weeds, especially ragwort and Japanese knotweed.
- The use of herbicides and pesticides, including glyphosate, was also discussed, with suggestions to shift toward organic alternatives.
- Additionally, questions were raised about restrictions preventing community groups, such as Tidy Towns, from assisting with local maintenance.
- In response, Galway County Council acknowledged the feedback, reaffirmed its comparatively high level of hedge cutting, and committed to further engagement through the SPC process. The Council also noted its current work under the National Parks and Wildlife Act and plans to address the Obnoxious Weeds Act in future presentations.

Any other business:

- A query regarding the speed limit review was raised, and an update was provided confirming that the Council is currently awaiting revised guidelines from the Department. These guidelines will address local road urban speed limits, including those near schools in urban cores, as part of a broader national review. The updated guidance is expected within the coming weeks, and it was confirmed that Furbo will be included in the scope. A future phase of the national rollout will involve reducing speed limits on national secondary roads from 100 km/h to 80 km/h. Once the revised guidelines are received, Galway County Council will proceed with its own review and present a proposal at the next Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) meeting for further clarity and discussion.
- Councillors expressed hope that the changes will be implemented promptly. Concerns were raised about the implications of reduced speed limits, particularly in light of investments made by the NTA and TII in upgrading roads, with suggestions that lower speeds could lead to reduced maintenance needs.

Additional issues were highlighted regarding pedestrian safety, including the need for funding to support pedestrian crossings and speed ramps in areas of concern.

- It was suggested that the next Physical Development, Transportation and Emergency services SPC will take place Wednesday 10th December 2025, confirmation to follow.

The meeting concluded.

Críochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.

Signed &

Approved by: Pádraig Mac an Iomaire

Cmth. Pádraig Mac an Iomaire
Cathaoirleach

Date: 10/12/2025