

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLMHE**

**Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara**

**Municipal District of Conamara**

**Minutes of the Municipal District of Conamara Meeting held on Friday  
1<sup>st</sup> April, 2022 at 10a.m.**

**ILATHAIR:**

**CATHAOIRLEACH:** Cllr. Seamus Walsh.

**BAILL:** Cllr. G. King, Cllr. E. Mannion, Comh P. Mac An  
Iomaire, Comh T. Ó Curraoin, Cllr. N. Thomas

**OIFIGH:** M. Owens, Director of Services, D. Mitchell,  
Senior Engineer, T.J. Redmond, Executive  
Engineer, M. Kerrigan Executive Engineer, I.  
Martyn, Administrative, Officer/Meetings  
Administrator, C. Wynne, Senior Executive  
Engineer.

**Apologies:** Comh Daithi O’Cualainn

A deputation including Cormac MacDonnacha and Declan Dooley was accepted  
prior to the Meeting.

Mr. MacDonnacha gave a presentation on the Economic, Social, Tourism and Societal Benefits of Pontoon Developments in Galway Bay.

He outlined the goals and objectives of the Galway Bay Pontoon Development Group and he highlighted the advantages of pontoons in the County.

- Benefits of Pontoons
- Health & Safety
- Economic Development
- Tourism
- Marine Leisure

Comh Ó Curraoin supported the project and said that safety is key. He said that pontoons are very safe and they will generate tourism.

Cllr. King thanked Mr. MacDonnacha for the detailed presentation and he supported the project. He said there is a huge issue with low-tides in Clifden Bay and a pontoon in Clifden Bay for the RNLI and for passing yachts would be a huge boost for the town. He highlighted that marine activities including swimming, surfing and kayaking have increased significantly in the past 2 yrs.

Cllr. Thomas agreed that pontoons are a big attraction and he supported the project. He raised the following queries:

- Ownership of the Pontoons
- Maintenance of the Pontoons
- Funding
- Management of the Pontoons

Mr. MacDonnacha replied that he would request the Members to work with the Local Authority to make an application for funding. He advised that regarding management of the Pontoons there will be an office managed by part-time personnel and an access code will be provided. Maintenance Costs should be very low and the pontoons will be in the ownership of Galway County Council.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire gave his full support and he said it was very important for Health and Safety reasons and it would be a huge Tourism attraction in the area.

Cllr. Mannion said it was a very interesting and informative presentation. She said it was necessary in the County and a pontoon in Clifden would be very beneficial. Regarding resources the Local Authority is very limited but she would work with them to seek funding.

Comh Ó Curraoin advised that Cill Rónáin on Inis Mór is a central location for a pontoon and the facility will attract more visitors to the area.

Cllr. Walsh complimented Mr. MacDonnacha on an excellent presentation and he said he was delighted with the support of the Members for the Project.

M. Owens joined with the Members in complimenting the presentation and excellent detail provided. He advised that the Planning Section would facilitate a pre-planning meeting at the appropriate time and any support that the Council can give will be forthcoming.

**1. Confirmation of Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.**

**CMD21076**

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2022 were **PROPOSED** by Comh Tomás Ó Curraoin and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Thomas and **AGREED**.

**2. The approval of Information to be included in the 2021 Annual Report of Galway County Council in relation to the performance of functions by the Municipal District of Conamara.**

**CMD21077**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Comh Ó Curraoin and **SECONDED** by Cllr. King the information to be included in the 2021 Annual Report was **AGREED**.

### **3. Municipal District of Conamara Director's Business**

Mr. Owens introduced Mr. O'Malley, Chief Fire Officer to the Members. He advised that he was in attendance to provide a response regarding queries raised at a previous meeting.

- 2 Pump Station – An Cheathrú Rua Fire Station
- Policy in relation to attendance to Fire Station in a red weather alert

Mr. O'Malley gave a detailed response in relation to the provision of a 2-pump station in An Cheathrú Rua Fire Station. He provided statistics in relation to call-outs for a 3-year period and he advised that the minimum average call out of 120 – 150 calls is the requirement to qualify for a 2-pump station.

In An Cheathrú Rua the call-outs were as follows: 2019 = 72 2020 = 112 2021= 76  
10% made pump 2 and it was the highest centre for gorse fires.

Calls were mostly weather events/cardiac/gorse fires/chimney fires etc.

He advised that The National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management published a document in 2013 'Keeping the Community Safe' which includes risk categories from A1 – E2.

An Cheathrú Rua is rated E1 which is a Low Risk category and in accordance with the statistics it would be very difficult to justify An Cheathrú Rua being a 2-pump station.

The number of firefighters would have to be increased and it is difficult to recruit and retain firefighters as the number of calls influences their earnings.

The National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management would not justify a 2-pump station in relation to the risk category in An Cheathrú Rua.

Cllr. Mannion stated that a feasibility study was carried out 10 years ago and ultimately An Cheathrú Rua secured the Fire Station. She advised that a 2-pump station and more staff is required.

Mr. O'Malley replied that approval must be received from the Department to increase the number of staff.

Cllr. Mac An Iomaire said that the Fire Service was extremely busy this week with gorse fires and fire brigades had to be called from Gort, Athenry and Galway. He questioned who was responsible for payment of the attendance of the fire brigade.

Mr. O'Malley replied that the beneficiary pays the invoice.

Cllr. King questioned the breakdown of the call outs.

Mr. O'Malley responded that the objective is to reduce the number of calls by being pro-active in the Community advising on fire precaution and fitting smoke alarms. He said the main priority is the safety of society in the County.

Cllr. Thomas stated that it is very difficult to retain staff as the wages for fire fighters is very low.

Mr. O'Malley replied that the wages is agreed and regulated at national level and he added that many fire-fighters also have a job opportunity to work elsewhere. He said that the candidate must live and work within 1.5 miles from the fire-station.

Comh Ó Curraoin complimented the Fire Service on their work and he advised that a 2-pump station was necessary in An Cheathrú Rua and it is essential for safety in the region.

Cllr. Walsh supported the 2- pump station for An Cheathrú Rua and he advised that Roinn Na Gaeltachta and Udaras Na Gaeltachta should be approached for support.

Mr. O'Malley in response to the query in relation to the attendance of the fire-crew to the station in a red-weather alert said that he had attended a meeting with the Chief Fire Officers and the National Directorate regarding weather events seeking guidance at a national level. He advised that Met Eireann can only give a break-down on a County by County basis and the Chief Fire Officer can contact the daily forecaster for more detailed information in advance of a red warning. A risk assessment is then made regarding bringing in the crew to the station or going to a call in a red alert and he advised that Firestations are not designed to house or sleep people. He said regarding travel in a red alert Insurance Companies are obliged to provide cover.

Cllr. Thomas referenced the previous meeting and a decision by the Members that nobody should go out at all in a red alert. He said he did not agree that firefighters are different to an ordinary person they are trained for these situations. There should be attendance by the fireservice if there is a threat to someone's life.

Mr. O'Malley replied that decisions are made in accordance with the risk.

Comh Ó Curraoin referred to the previous meeting and the discussion following-on from the tragedy of a Council Worker during a red weather event and he highlighted that a storm is very dangerous especially in relation to falling trees and he did not wish to see anyone's life in danger.

Cllr. Walsh thanked Mr. O'Malley for the presentation.

Mr. Wynne gave a presentation on Clifden Town Regeneration Programme.

He highlighted that funding had been granted and a website had been launched.

Cllr. Mannion thanked Mr. Wynne for the update on the Clifden Regeneration Project. She welcomed the funding and the Local Authority working with the Local Community to develop the key infrastructure in the Town.

- Revitalising the Town Centre and Pedestrian Safety
- Encouraging Tourists to spend more time in the Town
- Enhancing the visitor experience
- Creating a new Harbour Park
- Beach Road Quay

Mr. Wynne advised of the project-timelines for the delivery of the three projects and the provision of information boards to present the design options to the Community.

Cllr. Mannion thanked Mr. Wynne for his work in progressing the project. She said the square is very important and she advised that the Chamber of Commerce have applied for Gaeltacht Town status and should be incorporated in the Town Plan in relation to Town Signage. She said she was concerned about taking car-parking spaces out of the town-centre and she expressed her concern regarding having adequate staffing levels to deliver the project.

Cllr. King enquired if a car-park had been identified and if dredging of the Pier was included in the plan as a lot of debris had backed-up.

Mr. Wynne replied that the issues raised would be considered and the work on the Harbour would be included. He stated that as a result of the Design for the Public Realm the likelihood was that car-parking spaces would be reduced in the Town Centre. He said that a survey of sites in Galway County Council ownership might lead to alternative car-parking opportunities, and he advised that potential funding streams would be pursued. He said that the Council will work with the Connemara Chamber of Commerce in developing a Work-Hub and regarding the staffing levels he advised that the staffing shortfall had been identified to Senior Management in a Staffing Workforce Plan.

Cllr. Walsh thanked Mr. Wynne for the presentation.

Cllr. Walsh was joined by the Members in thanking Mr. Mitchell for his service in Roads Section and wished him well in his new role in the Housing Unit. They acknowledged his work in the Conamara area in various roles including most recently as Senior Engineer.

Mr. Mitchell thanked everyone for their kind words and said he enjoyed working with the Members for the improvement of the Connemara Area.

He thanked Mr. Breathnach and his Team for their dedication and assistance in the roads section.

### **A.O.B.**

Cllr. Mannion raised the issue of funding for the provision of bins, waste collection and portaloos on beaches in the Connemara Area to support a Summer Ready Programme in 2022.

Cllr Walsh stated that the funding is necessary and on the proposal of Cllr. Walsh and seconded by Cllr. Mannion it was agreed that a letter issue to the Minister for State at the Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage seeking a continuation of the supplementary funding provided in 2021 to ensure sufficient provision of bins, waste collection and portaloos where necessary to support a Summer Ready Programme in 2022.

Cllr. King acknowledged the service provided by the Council regarding the upkeep of the facilities in Summer 2021.

He expressed his disappointment with the closure of the NDLS service in Clifden. He said that the part-time service is an essential service for the Community in the Clifden/Connemara Area and he advised that a letter issue to the Minister for Transport.

On the proposal of Cllr. King and seconded by Cllr. Walsh it was agreed that a letter issue to the Minister for Transport requesting that the National Driver Licence Service Centre in Clifden remains open on a part-time basis as it provides an essential service for the community in the Clifden/Connemara Area.

Cllr. King referenced the potential for engagement with Pobal and Forum Connemara as the local development company supporting community, rural development and the local environment, in the area as an innovative means of maintaining and enhancing the availability of this essential service for the community.

Comh Ó'Curraoin told the meeting in relation to the Greenway at Bearna Pier the landowners are willing to give 15metres of their lands from Mags Boreen to Bearna Pier and if extra land is required an agreement can be reached.

Cllr. Walsh expressed the view that 15 metres of their lands was sufficient.

Cllr. Thomas referenced a misconception in regard to what was voted on and agreed by the members in considering the submissions on the Draft County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 in relation to the issue. He stated that he believed that 15meters is adequate.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire re-affirmed that the funding for provision of services for the Summer Ready Programme is necessary. He raised his concern in relation to the white line on the R336 which has disappeared in some parts on the road and it needs to be re-instated.

Cllr. Walsh thanked the delegation and staff and wished Mr. Mitchell well.

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**CHRÍOCHNAIGH AN CRUINIÚ ANSIN**

Submitted Signed and Approved

Cathaoirleach:

Seamus Walsh

Date:

17/6/2022

