

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara

Municipal District of Conamara

Minutes of the Municipal District of Conamara Meeting held on Friday 14th July 2023 at 10.00am in the Council Chamber.

I LATHAIR:

CATHAORILEACH: Cllr. N. Thomas

BAILL: Cllr. E. Mannion, Comh T. Ó Curraion, Comh Mac An Iomaire, Cllr. S. Walsh, Cllr. A. Mc Kinstry, Comh Dáithi Ó Cualáin, & Cllr. T. Welby

OIFIGH: M. Owens, DOS, I. Martyn, A.O. Meetings Administrator, D. Pender, A/ DOS, R. Lowe, S.E. T.J Redmond A/SEE, K. Lydon, S.E. Technician, S. Coogan Water Safety Awareness & Development Officer, M. O'Donnacha, Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge, M. Flynn, A.O. M. Molloy, Assistant Environmental Awareness Officer, A. Quinn, SSO, C. Kilcoyne, S.E.O. M. Connellan, SSO, L O' Donnell, ASO.

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Tuesday 13th June 2023

CMD 21165

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Tuesday 13th June 2023 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Walsh **SECONDED** by Comh. Dáithí Ó Cualáin and **AGREED**.

2. **Confirmation of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Tuesday 13th June 2023** **CMD 21166**

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Tuesday 13th June 2023 were **PROPOSED** by Comh. T. O' Curraoin, **SECONDED** by Cllr. S. Walsh and **AGREED**.

Matters Arising

CMD 21167

Cllr. Mannion expressed disappointment with the response received from the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) regarding improvement works on the section of the N59 Clifden to Derrylea. She said that crash barriers were required for a dangerous bend and there needed to be vegetation clearance, signage and some drainage works carried out on the road in the short-term to avert fatalities.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire, acknowledged the update given by Ms. Lowe at the previous meeting regarding extra staff and he looked forward to the commencement of a new Area Engineer in the Connemara area. He raised concern over the condition of the R336 as a result of the development of the pier at Rossaveal and he said that the proposed wind energy hub tipped to create 900 jobs could be in jeopardy unless it is upgraded. He said he would like to know the Department's plan for the R336 without the ring road.

Cllr. Walsh and Cllr. Mc Kinstry concurred in relation to the condition of the R336 and Clifden to Derrylea section of the N59 and the response from TII.

Comh. Ó Cualáin stated that there is a continuous white line for approx. 30 kms on the R336 where motorists cannot overtake cyclists.

He queried if there was an update on An Spidéal Seweage Scheme from Irish Water.

Cllr. Thomas replied that the new Seweage Scheme for An Spidéal would be functional within the next few weeks.

Mr. Pender agreed with the members that the response from the TII in relation to the N59 was far from palatable and reiterated to the members that he would continue to liaise with the Department on this issue. He confirmed that there will be an update on the An Spidéal wastewater treatment plant for the management report at the next Plenary Council Meeting.

3. Approval of Litter Management Plan 2023 - 2025

CMD 21168

Ms. M. Flynn presented to the members the Draft Litter Management Plan 2023 to 2025. She highlighted the major issues facing County Galway in the amount of litter that defaces the countryside. She also highlighted the main objectives of the plan including:

- Partnership with community groups, Tidy Towns Committees, resident's associations, local business, voluntary sector, education sector etc on educational programmes and anti-litter initiatives.
- Educate and raise awareness of the effects of litter on our environment.
- Implementation of a consistent and co-ordinated approach to the enforcement of litter pollution legislation.
- Promotion of recycling and recovery.
- Deliver an efficient and comprehensive litter control operation programme through our five Municipal Districts.

Ms. Flynn detailed the consultation process and advised that five submissions were received in total including Kinvara Tidy Towns and three submissions from individuals regarding dog walkers and dog fouling.

Cllr. Mannion thanked Ms. Flynn and her team for the work involved in the preparation of the report. She highlighted that more emphasis should be put on the disposal of coffee cups and she requested the installation of more rubbish bins on the beaches to support the Leave no Trace Campaign.

Comh. Ó Curraoín highlighted that the public need to be responsible in relation to litter and he highlighted the amount of litter on the roadside following the weekends.

Cllr. Walsh suggested more signage to remind those visiting the area of the need to keep Conamara litter free.

Cllr. Mc Kinstry acknowledged the work of the Environment section and he advised that we need to reduce our waste and increase recycling schemes through incentivizing schemes to recycle coffee cups. He suggested fast food restaurants labelling their packaging with names and phone numbers to allow for tracking purposes.

Cllr. Welby welcomed the plan and asked if this could be implemented in partnership with community groups. He raised the issue that insurance is problematic and expensive for community groups.

Cllr. Mac An Iomaire pointed out that shop owners are reluctant to have bins placed outside of their premises due to malpractice and suggested that the Council supply bins in some villages like An Spidéal.

Comh Ó Cualáin welcomed the overall plan and reiterated Cllr. Welby's concerns in relation to insurance for community groups and tidy towns. He said that more should be done in relation to recycling and he highlighted that there is no civic amenity site at Casla in South Conamara.

Comh Ó Curraoín suggested that the re-introduction of glass bottles and brown paper bags and the offering of a reward on returns would act as an incentive to return such items as the society is over run with plastic.

Cllr. Thomas concurred with the issues raised and informed the meeting of a scheme in Killarney where coffee shops were issuing reusable coffee cups for an initial deposit. He too was in favour of tracking strategy for fast food packaging.

Mr. Molloy thanked the Councillors for their comments and suggestions, and he also pointed out that management of litter is a personal responsibility. He informed the members that there was a campaign rolled out previously in Loughrea in relation to "GO Cups" and they will look at expanding more on this. He noted that "The return bottle scheme" is due to be launched at national level where such items are returned to retail outlets and there should be more information on this scheme in Q1 of 2024. He gave an overview of The leave no trace campaign which is being promoted at beaches throughout the County and details of forthcoming events in relation to this scheduled for the 18th August will be circulated to the members.

Comh. Ó Cualain asked if there was sufficient staff and funding to implement the plan. Ms. Flynn confirmed that the staffing resources are in place and there is an additional €50,000 funding available. She thanked the Councillors for their positive contribution.

The Draft Litter Management Plan was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Mannion, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Walsh and **AGREED**.

4. **Update on the N59 Projects:**

CMD 21169

- (I) **Claremont**
- (II) **Clifden to Maam Cross**
- (III) **Moycullen Bypass.**

Mr. Pender provided an update on the N59 Projects.

(i) N59 Bunnakill to Claremount

As part of the development consent for this project Galway County Council is obliged to get the approval from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Inland Fisheries Ireland for the construction stage method statements. The method statements for the Advanced Works Fencing Contract and Topographical Surveys have been submitted and agreed. Additional method statements for Archaeology, and Ground Investigations have been submitted to NPWS/IFI, however Galway County Council are yet to get approval for these. On 27th June 2023 the NPWS wrote to Galway County Council advising that the

responsibility for ensuring that the method statements comply with the EU Habitats Directive lies with Galway County Council. The project team are currently assessing this position with a view to progressing the advance works contracts.

(ii) N59 Clifden to Maam Cross.

The N59 Clifden to Maam Cross project is included in the National Development Plan. An application for development consent was made to An Bord Pleanála in June 2014, however, in May 2016 development consent was refused. Galway County Council and TII continue to seek funding to progress the scheme, however it was not a scheme that was allocated funding by the Department of Transport this year.

(iii) N59 Moycullen Bypass

The N59 Moycullen Bypass is currently under construction. The works are 85% complete and are due for substantial completion in November 2023.

Doire Fea /Knockferry Road

The existing footpath will be left in place until such time as the permanent works for the Doire Fea Road and Footpaths are completed. Once everyone has an opportunity to see the completed access road and footpaths the requirement to retain a short section of the existing footpath can be discussed further

Cllr. Mannion queried if that meant progress as the Council no longer had to wait months for a response from NPWS at every stage.

Cllr. Mannion requested that the pavement works at Killary be deferred until after the tourist season.

Mr. Pender replied that he would seek legal advice and Galway County Council, TII and NPWS would have to sign off on it. He confirmed that the pavement works at Killary would not commence until September.

Cllr. McKinstry enquired about a slip-road on to the Moycullen Bypass from Knockferry that the slip road would help alleviate traffic at the lights in the centre of the village and divert heavy vehicles from the junction.

Cllr. Thomas concurred and highlighted the poor visibility at the Homefarm road junction on the new Moycullen bypass and expressed his dissatisfaction that there is no slip road access to the bypass.

Mr. Pender replied that the Moycullen Bypass is 85% complete with the project due to be completed in November. He said there was no permission for a slip-road but once the bypass is complete the Council would engage with the TII to get a properly designed access route from the Knockferry road.

He confirmed that the existing footpaths would be left in place until the permanent works for the Doire Fea Road and footpath were completed.

He advised that a Part 8 application for Traffic lights on the Oughterard bridge will be presented to the members next month.

Cllr. Welby expressed disappointment that the members were not more involved in the Part 8 application for the traffic lights at Oughterard. He sought clarification on the operational sequencing/duration of the traffic lights and scope to suggest changes with the project design.

Cllr. Walsh said that residents had wanted temporary child-friendly puffin lights to be erected which could be activated by pressing a button until a pedestrian bridge could be built to ensure the safety of 600 children crossing the bridge to school.

Mr. Pender advised that as a local authority we are obliged to provide a safe mechanism for people to get across and he said that it was the sequencing of the lights that is crucial and he would give his commitment to finding the best solution.

Mr. Pender in response to Cllr. Welby said that a meeting took place in Oughterard previously and that the plans somewhat changed based on submissions/input from the public with a view to finding the best resolution to provide for a safe mechanism for all road users. He also confirmed that the operation efficiency of the works will be monitored in the initial stages after completion. He advised that on the completion of the Moycullen bypass a feasibility study could be considered for a slip road to the new bypass. Mr. Owens highlighted that a motion to deviate from the County Development Plan would need to be passed by the members at Plenary Council meeting.

5. **Galway to Oughterard Greenway.**

CMD 21170

Mr. Lydon presented a report to the members on the Galway to Oughterard Greenway.

Galway County Council, in partnership with Galway City Council and in association with Transport Infrastructure Ireland are working to develop a recreations trail which provides commuters and leisure cyclists with a corridor linking the city of Galway to the town of Oughterard.

The Galway to Oughterard Greenway project is currently nearing the completion of Phase 2 (Options Selection) process. The project team have been liaising with numerous landowners and representatives on the Emerging Preferred Route Corridor.

Cllr. Mannion, Cllr. Mc Kinstry, and Cllr. Welby all complemented Mr. Lydon for his work on this infrastructural project. Cllr. Thomas concurred with his colleagues and praised the liaison officers who were engaging with the landowners.

Mr. Lydon said that the public consultation had been very positive and of the 700 who attended 200 were landowners directly affected by the route corridor and the liaison officers agreed to meet them on the ground. He said that the Greenway project would move to (Phase 3 – Design and Environmental Evaluation) in September with a view to lodging same with An Bord Pleanála in

September/October 2024 and there are now a team of three staff from Galway County Council working on the Project.

Cllr. Thomas agreed that the liaison officers meeting the landowners on the ground was a very positive step in dealing with their individual needs.

Cllr. Welby concurred that it was a great idea and said it will have a huge impact on Conamara.

6. **Municipal District Programme: Verge Trimming at Junctions**

CMD 21171

Mr. Redmond updated the members on Verge Trimming at Junctions. Restrictions on cutting hedgerows are governed by legislation prohibiting removal of vegetation between the 1st March and the 31st August each year.

Comh. Ó Cualáin queried if there were exemptions to the regulations where there is a Health & Safety issue. Comh Ó Curraoin also agreed that where signposts are being obstructed the area should be cut back and in some cases boreens are so overgrown with vegetation that it is not possible to overtake.

Cllr. Mc Kinstry suggested photographing the worst affected areas with a view to planning how much trimming work is required. He also suggested raising the matter with the Climate Change & Biodiversity SPC to seek advice on best practice for verge trimming whilst safeguarding biodiversity.

Comh Mac An Iomaire referenced the changes in land use activities which may have a bearing on the current condition of roads verges .

Cllr. S. Walsh suggest that in some problem areas trimming alone is not sufficient and that the removal of such vegetation should be considered. He also raised concerns in relation to the rapid rate of deterioration of the resurfaced roadway at Glann.

In reply to the members concerns Ms. Lowe informed the meeting that while verge cutting is regulated under the Wildlife Act, there were exemptions under the Roads Act to facilitate removal in instances where the situation is hazardous to roads users. She indicated that the NPWS should be notified of such works

as a matter of courtesy. The funding for verge cutting is part of the overall general roads maintenance budget and Ms. Lowe indicated that additional funding will be sought for next year as part of the local authorities Roads Programme.

In reply to Cllr. Walsh, Ms Lowe explained that the type of road resurfacing materials used is dependent on the category of road and if such treatment works had not worked this would have to be investigated.

7. Municipal District of Conamara Director's Business

(i) Scoil Samhraidh an Phiarsaigh 2023

Pádraig Pearse Summer School 2023

CMD 21172

Mr. O' Donnchadha updated the members on the forthcoming Scoil Samhraidh an Phiarsaigh 2023/Pádraig Pearse Summer School 2023 which will take place in Ionad Cultúrtha an An Phiarsaigh I Ros Mus in Connemara on Thursday the 27th and Friday 28th July 2023.

Patrick Pearse is known as a writer, educator, barrister, community activist and leader of the 1916 Easter Rising. Pearse came to Ros Muc in 1903 as an inspector for Conrad na Gaeilge. He fell in love with the place and the language and he returned every year until 1915. Galway County Council began the Pearse Summer School in 2015 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Pearse's leaving of Ros Muc. Mr. O' Donnchadha then gave details on the itinerary for the two-day event and extended an invitation to those present to attend.

Comh O'Curraoin, Cllr. Mannion, Comh Mac An Iomaire and Cllr. Walsh all complemented Mr. O' Donnchadha for his involvement in this venture and were very pleased to see the return of the Summer school this year.

(ii) Briefing and Presentation on Water Safety Awareness.

CMD 21173

Mr. Coogan, Water Safety Awareness and Development Officer presented to the meeting on Water Safety Awareness. This year the Water Safety Programme involved the recruitment of a panel of 45 trained Lifeguards to provide services at ten locations in the county and at six locations in the city as part of a Shared Service Agreement with Galway City Council. Two lifeguards are provided at all beaches in compliance with International Lifesaving Federation of Europe (ILSE). This season the Lifeguards started on the 28th May and will finish on 11th September 2023. City and County Beaches operate between 11am and 7pm.

Mr. Coogan also delivered some informative Water Safety Statistics and awareness in relation to various aspects of water safety, including winter swimming, children's safety, ring boys etc. He acknowledged the efforts of Mr. Owens in the promotion of water safety and securing the sanctioning of the full-time Water Safety Officer. He commended the upgrade works carried out at the lifeguards huts on Inis Oirr & Inis Mór and the installation of defibrillators at all beaches in the County.

The members expressed their thanks to Mr. Coogan on a very detailed presentation. Cllr. Mannion asked if the members could receive a copy of this presentation and suggested that there should be more lifeguards working in the Connemara area. In reply to Cllr. Mannion's request Mr. Coogan expressed a willingness to promote water safety with any interested groups.

Cllr. Mac An Iomaire queried the use of inflatable devices and Mr. Coogan confirmed there is a plan to ban inflatables in the proposed new Beach-Bye laws.

Comh. Ó Curraoin said that the public should take personal responsibility where water is concerned and the importance of wearing lifejackets. Cllr. Thomas suggested a campaign to promote the wearing of wetsuits. Mr. Coogan indicated that the Winter Swimming signage would be rolled at designated areas and promoted on social media over the coming months.

Revised Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Scheme

CMD 21174

Ms. Kilcoyne briefed the members on the Revised Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Scheme. With effect from 1st July 2023 additional funding

is available under the Vacant Property Grant Scheme to support the refurbishment of vacant and derelict properties located on the islands. The maximum rate of Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant payable is up to 20% higher for eligible vacant and derelict properties on qualifying islands. The qualifying islands for County Galway are Inishbofin, Inis Mór, Inis Oirr, Inis Meáin. This brings the maximum grant rates for refurbishing properties on islands up to €60,000 for the refurbishment of vacant properties and up to €84,000 where the property is confirmed to be derelict. The maximum cost limits for the individual works categories are also increased by 20%.

Municipal District of Conamara Director's Business

CMD 21175

Mr. Owens confirmed that following on from the concerns raised under the Summer Ready Report at the Ordinary Meeting of Conamara Municipal District Meeting held on 13th June 2023 an inter-agency meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 18th July 2023.

Municipal District of Conamara Cathaorileach's Business

CMD 21176

Cllr. Thomas enquired if the Clooniffe Road could be considered for upgrade works due to its deterioration from the construction traffic associated with the Moycullen bypass project. Ms. Lowe acknowledged the request and confirmed that a submission for funding will be made for any damage caused by the construction traffic.

Votes of Sympathy/Congratulations

8. **A.O.B.**

CMD 21177

Comh. Ó Curraoin and Cllr. Thomas expressed disappointment that the road remediation works at Truskey West, Bearna has not yet been completed as part of the housing estate planning application. Ms. Lowe acknowledged the public's frustration and confirmed that the roads department are continuing to engage with the Developer on this issue.

Comh Mac An Iomaire enquired regarding the damage caused to the roads at Seanafeistin to Ros a Mhil and Lettermore to Ros a Mhil for the construction of the pier at Ros a Mhil. Ms. Lowe confirmed that a survey of the damage to the roads has been completed by the Area Office and a submission will be made to the Department of Fisheries.

Comh. O'Cualain conveyed his disappointment that settlements such as An Cheathru Rua, An Spideal, Indreabhan & Bearna were not included in the Active Travel Transport Study. Ms. Lowe suggested that there may have been a population threshold whereby the NTA focused on the larger towns and she said she would circulate details of the Community Transport Plan which may provide scope to include these areas in the scheme.

Comh Ó Cualáin noted that there were no plans to provide a bus service along the coast road. He also raised concerns in relation to the parking of campervans at the Sean chéibh in An Spidéal. He pointed out that these campervans were double parking in the designated parking areas, dumping rubbish and one discharged effluent from a campervan.

Ms. Lowe confirmed that the roads department were not aware of any complaints in relation to this matter. She also informed the meeting that applications in relation to bus services for the area are overseen by the NTA.

Cllr. Welby expressed disappointment that the bus shelter application for Oughterard was not successful. Ms. Lowe confirmed that the specifications for bus shelters applications are uniform, but that the NTA have a rolling programme and should an alternative location be identified a new application can be submitted.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Conamara MD would take place on 8th
September 2023 at 10.00am

Neil Thomas

13/10/23