

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara

Municipal District of Connemara

**Minutes of the Municipal District of Conamara Meeting
held on Thursday 2nd March, 2023 at 12.00 p.m. at Áras an Chontae.**

ILATHAIR:

CATHAOIRLEACH: Comh. Dáithí Ó Cualáin

BAILL: Cllr. E. Mannion, Comh. T. Ó Curraoín, Comh. Mac An Iomaire, Cllr. N. Thomas, Cllr. G. King, Cllr. S. Walsh & Cllr. T. Welby.

OIFIGH: M. Owens, Director of Services, D. Pender, Director of Services, R. Lowe, Senior Engineer, I. Martyn, Administrative Officer/Meetings Administrator, TJ, Redmond, Senior Executive Engineer, T. Prendergast, Senior Engineer, G. Byrne, Administrative Officer, H. Riordan, Assistant Staff Officer.

1. To consider and adopt the 2023 Annual Schedule of proposed works of maintenance and repair to be carried out in the Conamara Municipal District

CMD 21142

Mr. Pender gave a detailed overview of the annual schedule of proposed works of maintenance and repair for the Conamara Municipal District. He thanked the roads

team for their efforts in producing the report and he advised that the TII allocation had only been received 10 days prior to the meeting.

Cllr. Thomas acknowledged that the preparation of the Roads Programme was a very difficult task due to financial constraints. He acknowledged that staff were doing the best they could given the condition of the roads and the extent of the road network in Connemara.

Cllr. King also acknowledged the work of the staff and said it is a case of trying to do the best with the allocation but that more funding is required to maintain the network of roads across Connemara. He requested details of the specific works to be carried out on the N59 Clifden to Oughterard with the allocation of €400,000 and details of the Drainage Grant of €294,424.

Cllr. Walsh also complimented the work. He enquired regarding the funding for N59 Bunnakill to Claremount and an update on the bridge and footbridge works in Oughterard.

Comh. Ó Curraoin acknowledged the work of the indoor and outdoor staff.

Cllr. Mannion commended the work on the bypass at Moycullen and the N59. She raised concerns regarding the Bunnakill to Claremount road and the Derrylea to Clifden road. She said the road has deteriorated and there are 0bends along this stretch of road and especially along by the lake requires attention.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire thanked the team for their work. He enquired regarding the road markings and cats eyes on the R336. He asked if the monies that were granted last year for the Durrow bridge were still available and if funding was available for Seanafeistin.

Cllr. Welby complimented the staff on their work and he enquired if the funding of €140,000 was still available in conjunction with the 3-year programme.

Mr. Pender responded that this is year two of the three-year programme.

Mr. Pender continued stating that €500,000 has been allocated to N59 Bunnakill to Claremount scheme, for which planning permission will be adjudicated on by An Bord Pleanála. Consultation with NPWS and Inland Fisheries is progressing in relation to the section between Oughterard and Maam Cross, however it is not progressing as quickly as expected.

In response to Cllr. Walsh he said that the Oughterard bridge is a 2-stage process and the short-term aim is to address the health and safety issues. He confirmed that there is funding in amount of €250,000 in the Connemara Roads budget to set in train a Part 8 planning process for the project. It is a health and safety issue with the priority being to ensure the safe passage of pedestrians, students and cyclists across the bridge. The long-term solution is a separate structure to create an alternative safe method of crossing for all. The current bridge is not fit for purpose, it is possible a footbridge adjacent to the road bridge will be constructed.

Cllr. Welby enquired if plans could be put on public display in Oughterard, as the community should have an active part in the process. Mr. Pender replied that online submissions would be invited in line with the public consultation process.

Cllr. Welby said that the proposals for the bridge needed to be discussed in great detail with the local community and school principals. He said we need to ensure we protect children, parents and the elderly who have to use the bridge.

Cllr. Mannion stated that all stakeholders should be consulted with and she recommended the possibility of an open day in Oughterard to deal with the issues.

Cllr. Walsh said that what was required now was a set of lights on the bridge whereby pedestrians would press a button to get across. He said that people are of the opinion that he requested this large scheme, but he wanted it noted that he only requested pedestrian lights.

Mr. Pender replied that the local authority is obliged by regulations and road safety audits to carry out more interventions where necessitated.

He undertook to consult with the members in advance of the plans which would involve consultations with all the stakeholders. He clarified that the TII listed allocation of €1million for Oughterard Bridge was also for spending on other bridge projects in the region.

Ms. Lowe responded regarding the R336 and drew attention to the two kilometers on the maps provided that were highlighted in blue showing where replacement lining and cats eyes are proposed.

Mr. Prendergast said that works in Seanafeistin required the carrying out of surveys and the funding would be included in the allocation for this year and he stated that he would revert to Comh. Mac An Iomaire regarding Durrow bridge.

Ms. Lowe responded on the drainage query, saying that the funding is general and not specific for specific locations. It is ring-fenced solely for drainage and would be used as was deemed fit.

Comh. Ó Cualáin thanked everyone for their work in preparing the schedule. He referred to the monies that have been granted for speed limit signage enquiring if a review of the speed limit would take place in 2023. He said that the R336 has a continuous white line and it is unsafe for cyclists and added that public consultation is vital. He noted that the R336 feasibility study was not included in the report and enquired regarding the funding.

Mr. Pender replied that the speed limit review has commenced, he added that it is an elongated process and would not conclude in 2023. A commitment was made for the R336 in the development plan, this commitment will be actioned before the end of Quarter 2. 2023.

Ms. Lowe informed the meeting that it is very difficult to put signage for 1.5 meters safe cycle paths where the speed limit is over 50km/h zones.

Cllr. Mannion requested that the Municipal District send a letter to Vodafone raising their concerns on the quality of phone coverage in the Conamara area. It was noted that the quality of phone coverage was raised at Plenary with a motion adopted in relation to the matter.

Ms. Lowe in reply to Comh. Mac An Iomaire confirmed that interviews are underway for Executive Engineer and that the team are invested in getting a replacement for An Cheathru Rua as soon as possible.

4. Votes of Sympathy / Congratulations

CMD 21145

Comh. Ó Cualáin wished to convey his sympathies to Cllr. Mannion on the passing of her mother Mary. Cllrs. King, Welby and Comh. Ó Curraóin also added their sympathies.

Mr. Owens offered sincere condolences to Cllr. Mannion and her extended family on his own behalf and on behalf of all the staff associated with the Conamara MD.

5. A.O.B.

CMD 21146

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Conamara MD will take place in Indreabhán on the 19th May.

Dáilí Ó Cualáin.

CHRÍOCHNAIGH AN CRUINIÚ ANSIN

Regarding the bridges she advised that the consultants are not concerned over major structural issues but rather the containment of the parapets. These are protected structures and it is difficult to retrofit old structures to current standards. The ideal solution is to reduce the speed limit. She confirmed that there would be engagement with the members and a public consultation would be held.

The 2023 Annual Schedule of proposed works and maintenance and repair, to include the Roads Programme 2023, to be carried out in the Municipal District of Connemara was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Thomas, **SECONDED** by Comh. Ó Curraoín and **AGREED**.

Comh. Ó Cualáin enquired regarding the allocation of €35,450 for burial grounds being low compared to the allocations to other municipal districts.

Mr. Owens responded that the basis for the allocation of funding would be clarified for the Members.

2. Municipal District of Conamara Director's Business

CMD 21143

The Draft Annual Report for the Municipal District of Conamara for inclusion in the Annual Report 2022, as circulated prior to the meeting, was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. King, **SECONDED** by Comh. Ó Curraoín and **AGREED**.

3. Municipal District of Conamara Cathaoirleach's Business

CMD 21144

Cllr. Mannion referred to an article that was published in a local newspaper stating that a number of planning staff were leaving over the next few weeks.

Mr. Owens responded that over the next 6 to 8 weeks the Planning Section will be losing eight staff including Planners and Engineering staff. He advised that it was intended to continue to provide pre-planning meetings but that this would be kept under review based on staffing levels and other commitments including statutory timeframes for the development management function. He informed the meeting that interviews were scheduled for the following day with three candidates due to attend.