

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara

Municipal District of Conamara

**Minutes of the Municipal District of Conamara Meeting
held on Tuesday 13th June, 2023 at 10.0 a.m. in the Council Chamber**

ILATHAIR:

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr. N. Thomas

BAILL: Cllr. E. Mannion, Comh. T. Ó Curraoín, Comh. Mac An Iomaire, Cllr. G. King, Cllr. S. Walsh, Cllr. A. McKinstry, Comh. Dáithi Ó Cualáin & Cllr. T. Welby.

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

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Thursday 18th May 2023

CMD 21159

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Thursday 18th May, 2023 were **PROPOSED** by Comh. Ó Cualáin, **SECONDED** by Cllr. King and **AGREED**, subject to the following clarifications

Cllr. Mannion said she would like to see the rollout of broadband on inhabited islands and the mainland.

Cllr. Mac An Iomaire requested that the communities of Baile Eamonn and Baile Liam be connected to the new sewage system in An Spidéal.

2. Update on the Sewage Scheme for An Spidéal

CMD 21160

Ms. Martyn informed the meeting that she had contacted Irish Water and invited them to attend the next meeting. Cllr. Thomas advised that works were proceeding and the plant would be functional before the end of the year and he understood that the final electrical connection works are due to be completed in the next two to three weeks, which is the final step before the plant can start accepting flows.

3. Update on the N59 Projects at (1) Claremont (2) Clifden to Maam Cross

CMD 21161

Ms. Lowe provided an update on the N59 projects on behalf of the NRPO. In the report she confirmed that development consent had been received from An Bord Pleanála (ABP) in November 2013. In the consent, Galway County Council are obliged to get the approval from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) 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. NPWS have indicated that they do not have a timeline for a response on the proposals submitted to date.

The N59 Clifden to Maam Cross is a project included in the National Development Plan. An application for development consent was made to ABP 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.

Cllr. Walsh said he was disappointed that the N59 project is at the method statement stage. The N17 Galway to Tuam road was built through a SAC, and the NPWS have carried out development in SAC's. He indicated that the issue requires consideration at national level. Planning is being refused because the NPWS are not satisfied and the state agencies are not communicating with each other.

Cllr. Mannion requested an update on the N59 project as it is not progressing. The Maam Cross to Bunnakill has been completed but it is very disappointing that Clifden to Maam Cross has not yet commenced. She highlighted her concerns regarding the dangerous bend near Derrylea where there is no signage erected and the road is subsiding in this section, and she advised that there is no footpath between Derrylea and Clifden.

Cllr. King agreed, that this is on-going for a long time and the method statements seem to be the issue. The method statement for the 10km stretch to Oughterard should be the same as the method statement for Bunnakill to Claremont and he requested that the next section between Derrylea and Clifden should be progressed immediately.

Comh. Ó Curraoin agreed with the issues raised and he said the N59 to Clifden was a very important route which needed urgent attention.

Cllr. Welby agreed with previous contributions from the members. He queried if a Part 8 can be completed without environmental implications and he suggested that the NRPO should carry out a Part 8 on this section.

Cllr. Thomas said that the Bunnakill to Maam Cross was a trial run which was successful and therefore cannot understand why the project has been delayed. He queried why there is no hard shoulder along the road.

Ms. Lowe responded that she would raise the issues with the NRPO who would provide an update. She advised that there are different standards for different types of roads and suggested that the speed limit may be a reason.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Mannion **SECONDED** by Cllr. Welby the Members **AGREED:**

Galway County Council write to the TII to put in place a scheme to improve the section of the N59 from Derrylea to Clifden.

4. Update on Bearna / Salthill Greenway

CMD 21162

Ms. Lowe informed the meeting that Atkins carried out the assessment on the Salthill to Bearna Greenway. The report was a high level constraints study and route options assessment for the Greenway which was completed some years ago. There are a number of locations where the proposed Greenway impinges on the Special Area of Conservation. This is a significant constraint to the delivery of this Greenway. The report also considered a cost estimate for the scheme, but the scheme was based on permissive access over private lands. This may not be feasible. A significant proportion of the 7km Greenway is located on private lands, private roadways and will therefore necessitate the acquisition of land to deliver this Greenway.

The proposed Greenway did not provide for full segregation of cyclists and this may give rise to conflict between vulnerable road users and motor vehicles. The design no longer meets the current improved and required design standards for greenways and cycleways, which have now been significantly updated in the interests of safety.

For the reasons outlined above, this project was not brought forward to planning stage. However, this greenway remains a high priority and Galway City Council will consider options to progress this project with additional active travel staff that have been sanctioned.

She advised that the update received from Galway City Council would be circulated to the members.

Cllr. McKinstry enquired regarding the options available to the Council, as Galway City Council have not progressed the project. He enquired if a review of the Section 85 Agreement is an option to the Council.

Ms. Lowe responded that a considerable amount of work has been done and there is no intention to change the lead on the project. Galway City Council have a substantial active travel team and they will be working on it. The project is a priority for Galway County Council and it is in our interest to progress the Greenway.

Comh. Ó Curraoín said that the Greenway was to go to Bearna Pier as the land is zoned and landowners are willing to give the land and he questioned the reason that it was being delayed in Salthill.

Comh. Ó Cualáin raised the query regarding the segregation of cyclists and pedestrians.

Ms. Lowe said the original high-level project didn't provide full segregation for cyclists. The design that may have been acceptable in 2016 no longer meets the current and improved required design standards of today.

Comh. Ó Cualáin queried why health and safety is not a concern for cyclists on the R366 but it is on the Greenway. He suggested that cyclists and pedestrians could use the same path if it was widened.

Cllr. Thomas suggested that the SACs are beautiful areas full of diversity and the greenway would open up the SACs for people to see and enjoy.

Cllr. McKinstry proposed a joint meeting between the City Council and the Council to progress the Greenway.

Cllr. Walsh raised the issue of the proposed pedestrian bridge in Oughterard which was refused by the NPWS due to the potential casting of a shadow by a bridge on the river. He enquired what action the Department of Fisheries and NPWS are taking regarding the state of the river as it is overgrown, polluted and is closing in due to overhanging trees.

Cllr. Thomas stated that every river casts shadows and asked Ms. Lowe for an update.

Ms. Lowe replied that an update on the N59 project and the bridge would be provided.

5. Municipal District of Conamara Director's Business

No matters were raised by the Director of Services.

6. Municipal District of Conamara Cathaoirleach's Business **CMD 21163**

Cllr. McKinstry raised the issue of the footpath in Doire Fea in Moycullen and said that the local community have requested a footpath or an overpass. He said that he had discussions with Mr. Lally, NRPO and Senator Sean Kyne and it was decided that a

further design would be carried out. There are concerns that if the footpath is removed then the lights may also be removed and he suggested that bollard lights would be an option. He proposed that no permanent works would commence until a discussion is held with the Director of Service at the next meeting.

Cllr. Thomas added that he has met with the residents and they want to retain the old footpath. He measured the new route versus the old route and estimates that there is only approximately 50 metres of a difference. He stated that if the footpath is retained, then the lighting must also be retained, otherwise it may become a dangerous area attracting anti-social behaviour. He enquired if low-level lighting would be an option.

Ms. Lowe replied that she would discuss the issue with the NRPO.

Cllr. McKinstry thanked Ms. Lowe for her response and reiterated that he wanted the works on the footpath put on hold until after the next M.D. meeting. He added that the route is a quiet cul-de-sac at the moment but it will be busy when the Community Centre is constructed.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McKinstry **SECONDED** by Cllr. Welby the Members **AGREED:**

That we keep the old footpath at Doire Fea at Moycullen open (not including temporary works for ducting, etc) pending a meeting of this MD on the future of the path, and that we have a meeting of the NRPO and Councillors on this issue.

Cllr. Mannion proposed a motion relating to the Fire and Rescue Services. She explained that she knows first-hand the strain and commitment of the fire service staff, she was concerned that the Fire and Emergency staff feel undervalued and underappreciated and asked that they be fully supported.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Mannion **SECONDED** by Cllr. Welby the Members **AGREED:**

That the Connemara Councillors support the Retained Fire and Rescue Service personnel and their continued struggle for improvement in pay, conditions and a decent work/life balance with agreed time off and call on the Minister for Local Government and the Minister for Public Expenditure to provide the funding necessary to sustain and enhance the service now and for future generations.

Cllr. Mannion raised the issue of the rubbish that was left behind near beaches, wild camping, blocking of entrances by parked cars, double yellow lines being ignored and the extra traffic resulting from the good weather and June Bank Holiday weekend. She called for an integrated approach between NPWS and the Gardaí and a joint meeting in the next couple of weeks to make a plan for the future.

Cllr. Mannion advised of the returning of 13 skulls from Trinity College, Dublin to Inishbofin in July, which had been taken from a cemetery on the island more than a century ago. She requested that the necessary preparations are carried out for the return of the skulls.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Comh. Ó Cualáin and **SECONDED** by Cllr. King the Members **AGREED:**

That we as members of the Connemara MD write to the Minister for Housing and Local Government Dara O'Brien highlighting our support to the men and women of the retained fire service and their call for improved pay and conditions to address the ongoing recruitment and retention crisis within the service.

Comh. Ó Cualáin agreed that the two motions were of similar sentiment.

Cllr. Thomas expanded on the subject informing that fire fighters must be within a prescribed distance of the station and added their lives are on hold. Comh. Ó Cualáin stated that 60% of emergency staff have threatened to leave the service in the next 18 months. He asked if the dispute continues, what the contingency plan for emergencies was. Comh. Mac An Iomaire concurred with the previous comments and added that they cannot get staff due to the pay conditions. Cllr. McKinstry agreed also. Comh. Ó Cuarroín said that he understands the pay they receive is less than €700 per month, they should be able to work on a week on week off rota as they currently have no family life, he strongly supported the motion. He also joined Cllr. Mannion in her points regarding the traffic and rubbish and parking of cars and the traffic around Furbo during the fine weather.

Cllr. King seconded the motions placed by Cllr. Mannion and Comh. Ó Cualáin. Many staff have already left the service and this has placed extra pressure on those that remain and some have had to move beyond the permissible 2.5km from the station.

Regarding the beaches he said that the Gardaí and the Council staff need to work together and particularly on bank holiday weekends. The huge amount of rubbish that is left behind and the state of the lands destroyed by the Camper vans. The situation is near crisis point and especially at bank holiday weekends.

He enquired regarding interviews for general operative staff in Conamara.

Cllr. Welby agreed with Cllr. King, he had been contacted by comanage landowners that experienced third party individuals moving in and renting out their lands for campers and events. The landowners are concerned that they could be sued if no third-party insurance is in place.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire enquired about R336 because of the development of Rossaveal Harbour which will potentially provide between 900 and 1000 jobs. This is great for the area, but while we may have the best pier in the country it is no good if you cannot get to it, due to the lack of progress on the R336, €30 to €40 million has been invested in the pier but without the infrastructure in place it currently takes 1.5 to 2 hours to get to it.

He enquired when an Executive Engineer will be appointed to the office in An Cheathru Rua.

Cllr. Mannion asked about the bye-laws for Inis Oirr and the appointment of an Harbour Master. She also enquired regarding the bye-laws or planning guidelines governing the playing of amplified music outside premises.

Comh. Ó Cualáin joined in the sentiments of Comh Mac An Iomaire regarding the lack of progress on the R336. He raised his concern regarding the on-going issue in An Maoilin, Bearna where the construction is impacting on the footpath and road.

He queried the progress of a review of the areas prone to flooding and he highlighted the issue of flooding at Cul Na Loinge, Leitir Meallain.

Mr. Owens responded that the dual Fire and Rescue service that is provided by the Fire Service is excellent. The Minister has received 13 recommendations on pay and conditions, but he understood that the talks have broken down. Galway County Council fully support the fire staff and urged recommencement of talks at national level. If the talks are not resolved by the 20th of June there will be an all-out strike.

The lines of communication between the 11 stations are open. 50% of the retained units are closed on a rolling basis. 4 out of 5 of the 11 retained stations are not operating, Inis Mor is not included and the Clifden station will ensure cover at all times. The Council can assure the public that a contingency plan is in place. The public are encouraged to check that they have working smoke alarms and to continue using 911. Mr. Owens reiterated that the Council support the fire staff and wish that the matter will be solved at national level.

In response to Cllr. Mannion on the repatriation of skulls to Inishboffin from Trinity College, Dublin, Mr. Owens confirmed that Galway County Council would be available to assist in relation to the preparatory works at the burial ground on the island.

Regarding the noise pollution he said that noise pollution is covered by the EPA Act 1992 which governs noise regulations 1994 Statutory Instrument 179. This provides access to the courts where there is an annoyance caused by noise. There is no stated level of acceptable noise, but a court order can be obtained. The court can set a level of noise and the individual is obliged to comply. A complaint can also be made to and by a local authority.

The issue at An Maoilin, Bearna requires compliance with both the planning permission granted and the requirements of the Roads Act. An Extension of Duration on the planning permission has been granted and Mr. Owens advised that accordingly it is a matter currently more appropriate for consideration under the Roads Act than planning enforcement.

Regarding the Summer Ready Programme, Mr. Owens confirmed that an inter-agency approach including the Gardai, Community Wardens and other services will be facilitated.

Ms. Lowe informed the meeting that there is a vacancy for a general operative in the Conamara Area and she will enquire regarding the filling of the post. Regarding the Area Engineer vacancy she expects an offer will issue as there is a panel in place.

Regarding An Maoilin, a road opening licence has been applied for and the Council will work with the contractor to obtain a satisfactory resolution.

In response to the coastal erosion query at Cul na Loinge, Leitir Meallain an application was made to the Department for a grant for the tertiary road. No decision has issued

but a positive outcome is expected. Once it is finalised in the Climate Action Plan she envisages that work will then begin on a plan for the works.

Mr. Prendergast advised that a Harbour Master will be in place by the end of the year before the commencement of the construction in 2024. In the interim a Community Warden will enforce the bye-laws.

Comh. Ó Curraoín enquired regarding repairs to the slipway in Inis Meáin.

He raised his concern regarding the construction works in An Maoilin, Bearna as it is a dangerous road with heavy traffic.

Cllr. Mannion requested an Inter-Agency meeting regarding the wild-camping, litter and camper van parking.

Comh Ó Cualain enquired regarding Burial Ground funding.

Mr. Owens replied that there are three environmental factors in the allocation of funding and obtaining funding for a schedule of works.

- Size of the site
- Maintenance requirements
- Recommendation of the Area Engineer

He advised that he would circulate the details.

7. Votes of Sympathy / Congratulations

CMD 21164

Cllr. Thomas wished to convey his congratulations to Mairtin Mulkerrins on winning the Open Championship World Title in handball.

Comh. Ó Curraoín wished to be associated with congratulations on the wonderful achievement.

CHRÍOCHNAIGH AN CRUINNIÚ ANSIN

Signed and Approved: Cathaoirleach: Neil Ross

Date: 16-07-2020

