

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLMHE**

**Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara**

**Municipal District of Connemara**

**Minutes of the Municipal District of Connemara Meeting  
held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 at 10.00 a.m. Council Chamber**

**ILATHAIR:**

**CATHAOIRLEACH:** Comh Dáithi Ó Cualáin

**BAILL:** Cllr. G. King, Cllr. E. Mannion, Cllr. A. McKinstry,  
Comh P. Mac An Iomaire, Cllr. N. Thomas & Cllr. T.  
Welby.

**OIFIGH:** M. Owens, Director of Services, D. Pender,  
A/Director of Services, I. Martyn, Administrative  
Officer/Meetings Administrator, M. Kerrigan,  
Executive Engineer, P. Breathnach, Senior  
Executive Engineer, TJ, Redmond, Executive  
Engineer, B. McDonagh, Executive Engineer, R.  
Joyce, Community Warden, Dr. C. May, PPN Co-  
ordinator, V. Lyons, Galway County PPN  
Secretariat Member & H. Riordan, Assistant Staff  
Officer.

**1. Confirmation of Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of  
Connemara held on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2022.**

**CMD 21102**

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Connemara held on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2022 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Thomas, **SECONDED** by Cllr. King and **AGREED**.

**Matters Arising:**

Cllr. Mannion enquired about the Inis Oirr bye-laws and if the position of Harbour Master had been advertised. She highlighted confusion that had arisen regarding the banning of horses on beaches in the Draft Beach bye-laws and requested that the amendments between the existing bye-laws and draft bye-laws be highlighted.

Comh Mac An Iomaire requested an amendment to the Minutes to reflect an expression of congratulations to the Mícheal Breathnachs ladies football team.

Mr. Owens responded that the translation of the draft beach bye-laws has been finalised and the maps for the beaches were being prepared and will be published in the format the draft bye-laws were presented and approved by Plenary Council. He undertook to also make a copy of the existing bye-laws available during the consultation process for comparative purposes.

Mr. Pender responded that a Harbour Master has not yet been appointed but an authorised person may be appointed to carry out the duties of the Harbour Master until the position is filled.

Comh Ó Cualáin raised concerns that Inis Oirr bye-laws are not being adhered to and they are not being implemented.

**2. Declaration of a road to be a Public Road**

**CMD 21103**

Road commencing at junction with N59 (E513918.716 N741835.388) in the townland of Gortrevagh and extending South for a distance of 72m in the townland of Gortrevagh and finishing at (E513878.787 N741768.661) in the townland of Gortrevagh.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Welby and **SECONDED** by Comh Mac An Iomaire it was **AGREED** that the road at Gortrevagh be declared a public road.

It was agreed by the Members to take Item 6 as Mr. Pender had a prior commitment to attend another meeting.

#### **6. Proposed works on Kylemore Bridge to eliminate flooding.**

Mr. Pender informed the meeting that Galway County Council undertook emergency flood prevention works at the N59 Bridge over the Polladirk River pursuant to the provisions of the Local Authority (Works) Act 1949.

The works commenced on Monday 8th August last for the purpose of removing deposited material (cobbles, sand, gravel, peat, trees and other deleterious material) in order to increase the capacity under the bridge. Works were concluded on Friday August 12th some five days later.

The Council considered that due to the significant quantity of material deposited by the Polladirk river on its lower slopes around the bridge, the capacity under the bridge was severely restricted prohibiting the freeflow of water under the N59 National Road. That posed a serious safety issue at the bridge given that flash flooding of the N59 is occurring on a regular and ongoing basis, and most recently in June of this year.

That in turn presented a clear and present danger to road users and the Council has a duty and obligation to take such action as it deems necessary to preserve life.

Prior to commencing the works, the Council engaged an independent ecologist to complete an environmental method statement and to be present on site for the duration of the works.

Prior notice of the works was given to all relevant statutory authorities.

The Council did and has received correspondence from a number of different parties and is considering all.

The works which were done were a short-term solution to what will be an ongoing problem at this location until such time as a permanent solution and intervention is completed.

To that end, I can assure the members that Galway County Council will engage with all relevant stakeholders with a view to investigating, finding and delivering on a solution and intervention that is fit for purpose and will maintain road safety and

preserve the very sensitive ecological and environmental species and habitats of the area.

Engagement with TII will commence in the following weeks with a view to identifying such a solution and intervention.

Cllr. King acknowledged the work of the Council for taking action and said that on one occasion the water levels rose within a half an hour and flooded the road and a car was almost swept away down river and there were numerous other incidents. He said the emergency works that were carried out have been successful.

Cllr. Mannion insisted that environmental concerns could not take precedence over human health and safety.

Cllr. McKinstry agreed that preservation of life was priority, however, the Council in 2015 had a plan with the NPWS to tackle the problem and yet nothing happened and now emergency works were required. He said that pearl mussel is a key species for cleaning the river and for propagating salmon and other species. It is key to maintaining the quality of water in the river and if pearl mussel is lost it can take 200 years for it to recover. He agreed that a plan needed to be put in place with an ecological solution to prevent build up occurring.

Mr. Pender said that the Council had taken the necessary steps and consultation to protect the environment

Cllr. Welby added that no one wants to destroy the mussels but there is a thin line between safety and preservation and the Council should seek approval from TII to commit to the funding for a long-term solution.

Cllr. Mannion acknowledged the emergency works that were carried out and she added that a long-term solution is necessary.

Mr. Pender re-iterated that there was ongoing consultation between all stakeholders and he said that TII are aware of the situation and consultation will continue regarding the long term requirements.

### **3. Invasive Alien Species**

**CMD 21104**

Ms. Joyce, Community Warden gave a comprehensive and informative presentation on invasive alien species and the work of the Invasive Species Working Group of Galway County Council.

Cllr. Thomas thanked Ms. Joyce for the presentation and commended the working group on their work. He said that public awareness was the biggest issue and he recommended that a public meeting be held in Maam to inform people of the presence of invasive species on lands in the area. He recommended that landowners be notified when an invasive species was found on their lands.

Ms. Joyce responded that she was aware of the situation in Maam and a trial was being carried out in the area. She agreed that a public awareness meeting will take place in the near future.

Cllr. King enquired regarding community groups being trained to remove invasive species on private lands. Ms. Joyce replied that due to the regulations on the use of herbicides, community groups cannot be engaged to carry out this work. Ms. Joyce advised that she can be contacted regarding any issues and she advised that the working group communicate with a number of national groups regarding biodiversity data.

### **4. PPN Presentation**

**CMD 21105**

Dr. May gave a presentation on the Public Participation Network, detailing the functions and work it carries out. Mr. Lyons expanded that the PPN members and staff are there to serve the community and the greater the number of ways that communities come together, the greater the benefits for the community. He said the PPN representation on the Strategic Policy Committee is a way for ordinary people to influence policy and to create real change for people. Cllrs. McKinstry, Cllr. Thomas and Cllr. Mannion thanked the PPN for the presentation and their work.

Cllr. Welby and Comh. Mac An Iomaire highlighted the age profile of members on the PPN and the need to recruit younger members.

## **5. Hedgecutting Works Programme 2022**

**CMD 21106**

Mr. Breathnach confirmed that hedge-cutting would get underway on national and local roads in Connemara from October 1<sup>st</sup>. He advised that there was no specific budget for hedge-cutting and the responsibility of hedge-cutting rests with the landowners.

Cllr. King stated that he had requested a separate hedge-cutting budget for 2022 as Notice Of Motion (NOM) monies have been reduced this year. He criticised the way hedges were being cut and he asked if they could be a change to the angle of cutting.

Cllr. Thomas enquired regarding the tendering process for hedge-cutting and if late tendering had resulted in the delay of the commencement of cutting. He said there will be less hedge-cutting this year as the individual Notice of Motion money has been reduced. He informed the meeting that on some routes there are double-decker buses being damaged by hedges, and in some instances they have to drive on the wrong side of the road to avoid damage. He said that landowners need to be notified of their responsibility, but the Council needs to cut hedges for road safety.

Cllr. Mannion concurred with Cllr. King and Cllr. Thomas. She stated that the hedge-cutting programme is very hap-hazard and regular inspections should be carried out. She said a targeted approach is required and hedges should be prioritised.

Cllr. McKinstry said there had been an increase of 30% in school bus usage and those routes needed to be prioritised. He said hedge-cutting needs to start from 1<sup>st</sup> September and the Climate Change SPC has produced a leaflet which details the best method to cut hedge rows which should be forwarded to Local Authority contractors and landowners.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire said there needed to be clarity between the Council and Údarás na Gaeltachta regarding the cutting of hedges on R336. He said that on a visit

to Donegal and Mayo during the summer months that hedges were being trimmed during the nesting season.

Cllr. Welby concurred with Comh Mac An Iomaire and Cllr. Mannion and he enquired regarding the budget for hedge-cutting as the Notice of Motion monies has been reduced to €7,500. He said that landowners should be notified of their responsibility for hedge-cutting.

Mr. Breathnach responded that the responsibility for hedge-cutting was with the landowners and a policy for hedge-cutting should be put in place. He confirmed that the 1<sup>st</sup> of October is the date for works to commence in Comamara MD, but if dangerous junctions are identified these works can be carried out from 1<sup>st</sup> September.

Comh. Ó Cualáin echoed Comh. Mac An Iomaire's query regarding Údarás na Gaeltachta. He said this debate occurs every year and other MD's can get their hedges cut and he questioned why it is an issue in Connemara every year. He enquired if the Council should write to landowners informing them of their responsibilities.

A discussion took place regarding a media campaign for landowners.

Mr. Owens responded that a report would be presented at the next meeting in response to the issues raised. He advised that if a policy was required consideration could be given to including same in the work programme for the Roads, Transportation and Marine Strategic Policy Committee for 2023 with a view to consideration and adoption by plenary Council.

He confirmed that a notice is published in local newspapers every year detailing the responsibility of landowners in relation to hedge cutting, drainage etc.

## **7. Municipal District of Connamara Director's Business**

**CMD 21107**

Mr. McDonagh gave a progress briefing on the Clifden Flood Relief Scheme. He outlined the different surveys that have been completed to date, bat surveys,

topographical surveys and aquatic habitat assessment survey. He reported that there was good public engagement and the Ground Investigation Contract had been awarded and a provisional start date for works in mid-October. He said that there are ongoing liaisons with landowners and a progress meeting will be held next week and the hydrological method statement and hydraulic modelling assessments are due mid-September.

In response to Cllr. King's query regarding the results of the surveys, Mr. McDonagh responded that he will give the members an update at a later date.

#### **8. Municipal District of Connamara Cathaoirleach's Business      CMD 21108**

Comh. Ó Cualáin raised his concerns regarding safety at Scoil Sailearna, Indreabhan, as there is a serious health and safety concern as traffic does not stop for the children to cross the road. He queried why the school did not receive funding for a pedestrian crossing and if the other 18 applications in the County had been granted. Comh. Mac An Iomaire added Scoil Cholmcille, Ros a Mhil, to the discussion, he said that parents have been waiting over 30 years for a pedestrian crossing.

Mr. Breathnach responded that he will revert on this matter.

Cllr. Thomas expressed his dis-satisfaction with the kerbs in Moycullen and the problem with silt and weeds between the flags.

He extended congratulations to Cólín Ó Neachtain on his nomination for journalist of the year award.

Cllr. Mannion requested a review of the Summer Ready Plan and Piers and Harbours. She requested an update on Oughterard Bridge including assessment of possible impact of traffic when the Moycullen by-pass is opened.

Cllr. McKinstry said that Galway County Council needs a policy and strategy to install EV charging facilities across Connemara. He said that visitors would be deterred from visiting parts of Connemara unless they could charge their electric cars. He said that Galway County Council should be leading the way on this issue.

Cllr. Mannion said that there are just two e-charge points in Clifden and there was a large demand for them.

**9. Votes of Sympathy / Congratulations**

**CMD 21109**

No discussion took place.

**10. A.O.B.**

**CMD 21110**

Comh. Ó Cualáin proposed that the next meeting of the Conamara MD be brought forward to 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

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**CHRÍOCHNAIGH AN CRUINIÚ ANSIN**

Signed and Approved: Cathaoirleach: Dáilbhí Ó Cualáin

Date: 7/11/22

