

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Locha Riach
Municipal District of LOUGHREA

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea
held in the Galway Council Chamber on 11th September 2023 at 11.00 am

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. J. McClearn

Baill:

Cllr's. G. Donohue, M. Kinane, I. Canning, PJ
Murphy, G Finnerty, D. Kelly, M. Maher, J. Byrne

Oifigigh:

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services
Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. L. Flynn, Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. A. Quinn, Senior Staff Officer
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer
Ms. C. Kennedy, Assistant Staff Officer
Ms. C. Gavin, Clerical Officer

As Láthair

Cllr. S. Curley
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer

Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 10th July 2023 **LMD2313**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 10th July 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Maher, seconded by Cllr. Finnerty and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. McClearn commenced the meeting by welcoming Mr. Liam Flynn, Executive Engineer to the Gort Area of the Loughrea Municipal District and thanked Mr. Niall Kennedy, Executive Engineer for his work in the Gort Area and wished him well in the role in the Loughrea Area.

Referring to previous comments made by him, Cllr. Byrne stated he wrote to the Environment Section to ask why water samples were taken at Traught Beach following a period of very heavy rain, which he stated, resulted in the beach losing its blue flag status. He stated his

dissatisfaction with the response he received from the Environment Section informing him that water samples can be taken where prior notice is given to the EPA and that, due to limited resources the Council does not have the relevant weather app supported by a sufficient number of personnel to monitor same in advance of the taking of water samples.

In response to Cllr. Maher's query, Mr. Haugh advised that a contractor is scheduled to attend at the Westbridge in early October to address the matter adding that an update will be provided at the next Municipal District meeting. Mr. Haugh advised that he cannot commit that the lights will revert to the original sequence as the changes were implemented initially to address safety concerns but changes to the timing sequence would be considered. Cllr. Maher stated that the contractor should attend the Westbridge on a Friday when the traffic is at its worst and he suggested that one of the 5 roads leading into this busy junction should be diverted elsewhere to make the junction safer. Ms. Lowe repeated that an update will be provided at the next MD Meeting and stated that the contractor was scheduled to attend on a Friday. Cllr. McClearn stated that on one occasion last week the traffic through Loughrea town was as far back to Supermacs from the Westbridge.

Cllr. Maher asked if clarification can be given regarding a camera that was recently located in the Long Point Changing Facilities at the Loughrea Lake. Mr. Haugh responded that this matter is currently being investigated by An Garda Síochána and stated it is doubtful that the situation is as it was described when the camera was found. Cllr. Kinane stated that if this is a rumour that's circulating it needs to be quashed as people are worried about it.

Cllr. Finnerty stated that signage along roads is covered over by overgrown hedges and asked if the growth surrounding road signs will be trimmed manually as it will not be possible for this to be cleared by machines, Mr. Haugh confirmed he will liaise with the contractor in this regard. Cllr. Finnerty went on to say the Centre of Gort town has not been sprayed for weeds yet and there is a significant amount of grass growth on the footpaths which needs clearing. He enquired if discussions had taken place with Gort Tidy Towns in this regard as had been previously mentioned, Mr. Haugh explained that engagement had taken place and that further engagement with all Tidy Towns groups regarding the cleaning of footpaths will take place. Ms. Lowe added that consideration is being given to investing in mechanical weeder and collectors for the MD to replace the use of pesticides. She added that this investment will incur additional requirement such as assigning dedicated General Operatives to operate the machines. Ms. Lowe stated that the MD are cognisant of water sources when pesticides are used. Cllr. Finnerty stated that the machine might not be suitable where steps are located and added it may still be appropriate to spot spray at some locations to keep the town tidy, he requested pesticide spraying to be undertaken annually in Gort. Cllr. Murphy expressed his agreement with Cllr. Finnerty with respect to spraying round-up in Gort stating that the amount of spray required to maintain the town is minimal.

Cllr. Kinane welcomed information confirming that hedge cutting will commence in Maree next week and stated she is happy to allocate NOM funding towards it. Cllr. Donohue raised concerns regarding ash dieback in the county adding that it is a worry, she advised that Minister McConalogue confirmed that he will not be providing funding to deal with the issue. She referred to the 1993 Roads Act which was enacted over 30 years ago, and continued by saying that, the trees which seeded naturally and were not intentionally planted must now

be removed by landowners which is costly. This will require specialised training. She stated that it would be unfair to expect Local Authority employees to fell these trees due to the specialised training required for these works. Cllr. Donohue asked if this Municipal District could be proactive in dealing with such issues and advised that in Clare County Council and Cork-West an allocation of €50.00 per kilometre is made to landowners to help with hedge cutting. Ms. Lowe responded that, when assigned to the Roads Department last year, she had looked at the schemes in other LAs where funding is given through grants. She noted that other LAs had indicated that these schemes had mixed outcomes; in some areas the uptake was low, and there is a lot of administration involved. Ms. Lowe advised that were such a scheme to be considered resources would be required to support that scheme and she stated that she felt it would not add to works already being carried out by the Roads Department. She suggested that it could be raised with the Roads SPC. Cllr. Donohue asked if we could get a consensus at this MD as, in the next storm there will be a fatality. She added that trees were not quarantined when brought into the Country which contained diseases, this is now costing thousands of euros to manage. Mr. Haugh stated that ash dieback is an issue requiring a national response.

Cllr. Murphy asked if it is possible to get trees topped to stop further growth on roadsides and he stated this would reduce the burden going forward. He stated that the removal of a tree can cost more than €1,000.00, and that farmers are taking it upon themselves to remove them, he stressed it is a burden facing landowners. Ms. Lowe responded that the responsibility for boundaries lies with landowners, but the Council completes hedge cutting works in accordance with its budget and to promote road safety. The topping of hedges is less environmentally sensitive and is a matter for the landowners. Cllr. McClearn referred to an incident, years previously in the Portumna area, where a tree fell on a car resulting in the loss of life. He stated, following this tragic incident, the Local Authority engaged a consultant to review trees in the area and mark trees that were dangerous so that the landowner could arrange to have them felled. He asked if a similar exercise could take place.

Cllr. Canning enquired if there is any update on the works to be done on the road to the swimming area in Portumna, the footpaths and traffic calming measures in the town. He stated that the works should be completed for next year adding that this year was the busiest year for tourism for Portumna. Mr. Haugh responded that the works referred to formed part of proposed Active Travel Schemes. However, Ms. Lowe added that the works are unlikely to progress under the Active Travel Scheme, but other mechanisms can be examined, and alternative funding may need to be sourced.

Cllr. Kinane expressed her disappointment as a member of the Greenway Project Team was not present at the meeting to give an update on the progress of the project, she stated she had put a proposal forward to have a member of the Project present at today's meeting for this purpose.

Mr. Enda Gallagher updated the meeting as follows: -

The project team are currently very active in the environmental EIAR and NIS preparation stage of the project. The EIAR examines the effect, if any, that the proposed project would have on the environment under a number of headings, which Mr. Gallagher listed. He informed the meeting that the vast majority of the chapters are 85% completed, with the largest chapter on Biodiversity 60% completed. Surveys carried out over the last number of years and completed earlier this year are informing this report.

The NIS (Natura Impact Statement) looks specifically at the effect the project could have on European designated Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs). Most of the SACs in the study area are turloughs and SPAs are sites designated for the protection of (mainly) migratory birds.

Ryan Hanley is currently very active on design and drawing works. Interference notices are being prepared and the Options Report has been circulated for review. Works are also being progressed on the CBA and Carbon Assessment. Maps and feedback are being provided to the environmental consultant on a regular basis following receipt of queries on flood water levels and the effects of proposals. The possible use of flow control structures on the scheme is currently under examination.

The presence of a saltmarsh habitat upstream of the proposed culvert extension at Dungory, requires that the culvert works are redesigned. Talks have reopened with the Greenway and Active Travels teams on this issue.

Regarding the M18 culvert works, Derek Pender DoS has confirmed that the cost of the upgrade works is not to be borne by the flood relief scheme.

Public Exhibition is still scheduled for Q1 2024. Mr. Gallagher highlighted to the meeting that there is still a high environmental risk to the project progressing.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed to Cllr Finnerty that an IROPI (Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest) option would be examined if the EIAR or NIS had unfavourable findings. The IROPI option would only be considered if engineering options could not eliminate negative environmental effects of the scheme.

In response to a query from Cllr Murphy, it was confirmed that the M18 culvert issue is being dealt with by the DoS and the flood relief scheme has been instructed to disregard the upgrade costs in terms of project costs. The specifics of how GCC and TII are dealing with the issue are unknown to the project team.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed to Cllr Byrne and Cllr Donoghue that he would forward details of the required culvert sizes at Dungory and the proposed Greenway route at the location. He also confirmed that the existence of salt marsh upstream of the culvert was known previously but the exact extent was not examined until the extended footprint of the culverts was finalised. The extended footprint was required to accommodate a widened cycleway and traffic safety zone detailed by the Greenway team.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed to Cllr Kinane that he would approach the OPW to include for funding for rehabilitation of local roads, used for the development of future flood relief schemes. This will require pre-work surveys on roads that are to be used during construction of schemes.

It was confirmed to Cllr Maher that the river maintenance works on the Dunkellin are undertaken by the Area Office as part of their Drainage District works. Mr. Gerard Haugh confirmed that works were to commence on the Dunkellin DD, in the Bullaun area, in the near future under this year planned works.

Taking in Charge

LMD2315

Sycamore Grove, Gort, Galway

The taking in charge of the road at Sycamore Grove, Gort was proposed by Cllr. Finnerty and seconded by Cllr. Murphy and agreed by the Members.

Road commencing at its junction with R-458 in the town of Gort and extending South for a distance of 150m to point B, and continuing a further 20m West towards point C.

Road commencing at point B in the town of Gort and extending North for a distance of 12m to point D.

The Meadows Gort

The taking in charge of the road at The Meadows, Gort was proposed by Cllr. Finnerty and seconded by Cllr. Donohue and agreed by the Members.

Road commencing at its junction with L-85072 in the town of Gort and extending north West for a distance of 55m to point A in the town of Gort.

The Crescent Loughrea

The taking in charge of the road at The Crescent, Bride Street, Loughrea Galway was proposed by Cllr. Maher and seconded by Cllr. Kelly and agreed by the members.

Road commencing at its junction with R-942 in the townland of Loughrea and extending north for a distance of 26m to point B, extending further north for a distance of 4.5m ending at point C in the townland of Loughrea.

Road commencing at point B in the town of Loughrea and extending east for 38m ending at point D in the town of Loughrea.

Carraig Geal, Loughrea, Galway

The taking in charge of the road at Carraig Gael, Loughrea was proposed by Cllr. Maher and seconded by Cllr. Canning and agreed by the members.

Road commencing at its junction with L4224-23 in the townland of Pollroebuck and extending north for a distance of 39m to point B, continuing north for a distance of 138m and turning west for a distance of 58m at point E, continuing north for a distance of 66m and turning east for a distance of 52m and finishing at point H in the townland of St. Laurence's fields.

Road commencing at its junction with L-4224-23 in the townland of Pollroebuck and extending north for a distance of 39m to point B and extending north for a distance of 95m finishing at point K in the townland of Pollroebuck.

Road commencing at its junction with B-E in the townland of Pollroebuck and extending west for 35m ending at point D in the townland of Pollroebuck.

Road commencing at its junction with E-H in the townland of St. Laurence's Fields and extending west for 31m ending at the point F in the townland of St. Laurence's Fields.

Road commencing at its junction with E-H in the townland of St. Laurence's Fields and extending south for 11m ending at point I in the townland of St. Laurence's Fields.

Road commencing at its junction with B-K in the townland of Pollroebuck and extending west for 10m ending at the point L in the townland of Pollroebuck.

Cllr. Byrne stated that the delay in taking in charge Gort na Rí is unacceptable adding that this TIC should be progressed, this was echoed by Cllr. Finnerty.

Cllr. Maher stated that the TIC process is complex as there are regularly insufficient funds to finish out estates. He extended his compliments to Edel Hourigan and the TIC team for their work in the TIC process.

Update on the Greenway

LMD2316

Ms. Ruane, Director of Services advised the Members that Mr. Pender has just returned from period of absence in the last few days and due to a commitment to attend another meeting at this time he cannot be present, but he gave a commitment to provide the Members with a report of progress on the Greenway Project by the end of this week.

Cllr. Byrne stated he has issues which he has not received a reply to since March of this year. Cllr. Kinane referred to her proposal at the July MD Meeting requesting a member of the Project Team attend MD meetings on a bi-monthly basis to provide an update on progress and respond to queries received by Members from the community they represent. She added that an information vacuum has been created which is counterproductive and is pitting communities against each other. Cllr. Kinane wished to put her queries on record.

Cllr. Kinane referred to An Bord Pleanála's refusal of permission to the Greenway at the Boyne in County Meath for which it took 3 years for the decision to issue. She asked if the Project Team have inspected the report. She added that the Athlone-Galway Greenway Project should be at the design stage now with plans in place and enquired if ecological surveys have been undertaken with Cloonloosh Boreen, Middle-third to Renville Special Area of Conservation. Cllr. Murphy stated he shares Cllr. Kinane's view regarding Middle-Third, and he added he worries about its viability.

Cllr. Kinane continued by stating that a group at Oranhill to Gort an Dún raised concerns regarding the progress of the Greenway through an area of marsh which is a Special Area of Conservation designated to a protected species of geese, and for which housing planning permissions were refused. She stated that these birds are sensitive to noise and movement,

and feed right up to the boundary of the Greenway, she added 6 months is a long time for people to wait for a response. Cllr. Kinane stated that at the last meeting, she was informed that surveys would be undertaken along the route by in-house staff and enquired if they are going to feed into the Environmental Survey. Cllr. Kinane requested clarification on timelines for the project. Cllr. Kinane proposed that a Member of the Greenway Project Team attend the next MD Meeting, the proposal was seconded by Cllr. Byrne.

Cllr. Donohue stated that she has 2 pages of questions that she needs answers to, and she is very disappointed that a member of the Project Team did not attend the meeting, she stated that the issue regarding the salt marsh is a concern and more information on this is needed. She stated that Minister Ryan was invited to attend the meeting also but didn't attend.

Cllr. Murphy stated that he was disappointed that there would be no briefing on the Greenway Project. He stated that 'any member of the Project Team can attend the MD Meeting' be included in the proposal, he stated it didn't have to be Mr. Pender who attended. Cllr. Byrne stated that the Greenway Project from Athlone to Galway comprises in excess of 200 kilometres, he added that the Flood Relief Scheme is now at EIR and NIS stage and added that, as this Scheme progressed, issues were dealt with as they arose. He commented regarding the Greenway Scheme, the focus was on the route and not the sensitivity issues and added he believes the scheme could fall due to the way in which the process is being managed. Cllr. McClearn stated someone of substance is needed from the Project Team to take on board the views of the Members.

Update on Town Hall, Loughrea

LMD2317

Ms. Ruane explained to the Members that Mr. Brent Mostert was not in attendance but had provided the following update on the progress with the Loughrea Townhall Project for the Members:

The Architects, Services Engineers and Structural Engineers have completed their respective Tender packages. The documents have been issued to the Quantity Surveyors and they have stated the completion date for the Bill of Quantities will be the middle of October 2023.

The Fire Safety Certificate and Universal Access Certificate drawings are complete, and the Compliance Reports are in progress.

Once the Regeneration Team has all of the Tender documents from our consultants, we will publish these on e-tenders. The target date for publication is November 2023.

Cllr. Maher thanked the Regeneration Team stating his appreciation for the great news adding that everyone in the team, Loughrea and the hinterlands will be pleased when the Townhall is back in use again.

Cllr. Maher extended his thanks to Marie Mannion and her team on the excellent work they undertook with the Loughrea Medieval Festival and expressed the importance of the townhall during the walkaround which takes place as one of the activities included in the festival.

Cllr. McClearn stated that Loughrea is a great story, and it needs the Townhall to tell it, he referred to LARC events which had taken place in the past. Cllr. Donohue echoed the comments on the great work done by LARC over the last number of years. Cllr. McClearn

stated the significant positive impact the Townhall will have on the town is not yet understood until it is back in use.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2318

Cllr. Kelly acknowledged and thanked Mr. Haugh, SEE and his team on works done in Tynagh in recent weeks which made a significant difference. Cllr. Kelly wished to extend his acknowledgement to predecessor Cllr. Hynes who requested work, which is now completed by the Loughrea MD Team on the Ballinagreeve Road. Ms. Lowe thanked Cllr. Kelly for his positive feedback and stated that the Roads Programme is progressing very well.

Cllr. Murphy enquired regarding communication masts erected by Iarnród Éireann along the Athenry to Gort stretch, he stated that the masts are approximately 30 metres high and are unsightly. He said it appears they got permission to erect the poles without planning permission and enquired if this is correct, he added that people have no issue with them on condition that they are not immediately outside a private dwelling, however one pole was located immediately to the front of a private home, and he requested that this pole be removed and relocated. Cllr. Kinane agreed and further added that health concerns were raised regarding the location of the pole near a private dwelling. She enquired if there are any health implications. Cllr. Murphy enquired if it is possible for Iarnród Éireann to sell space on the masts. Ms. Ruane stated she will follow up with the Planning Department regarding planning permission.

Cllr. Byrne enquired why there is a delay with the Gort Local Area Plan (LAP) stating that as far as he is aware there is no date available for its publication yet and he understands it could be pushed out to Quarter 1 of 2024. Cllr. Byrne stated that there should be joined up thinking between the Public Realm Plan, Local Transport Plan (LTP) and LAP. He enquired if the LAP will be determined by what has gone before it. Cllr. Byrne stated that there are issues in Gort with parking and provisions to enable those with disability to move freely around the town, for example, crossing the road. He stated that the LAP/LTP is dragging on, for the town.

Cllr. Byrne asked if consideration was given to the public realm project in Gort with respect to the locating of new pay and display machines in the town. Ms. Lowe stated that it is not a big problem to move a parking machine if required and stated it is critical to be able to pay using a card. She continued, that the Local Transport Plan forms part of the LAP and that the LTP will sit as an appendix in the LAP. She added that the LAP, LTP and Regeneration piece all have regard to each other.

Cllr. Byrne stated that the Church ruin at the graveyard in Parkmore is dangerous and Ms. Ruane stated that she will follow up on this query with the Environment Section.

Cllr. Donohue asked if an update can be sought from Brent Mostert regarding the Public Realm Project in Gort. Cllr. Donohue acknowledged Cllr. Byrne's recent announcement that he would not be contesting the next election.

Cllr. Maher asked if the Loughrea LAP will be ready for this year as there are a lot of people and clubs waiting for it. In Response to Cllr. Maher's query regarding an update on the new Fire Station for Loughrea, Ms. Ruane advised that it should be before the Members in November.

In response to queries raised regarding Local Area Plans for Gort and Loughrea, Ms. Ruane advised that she will follow up with the Planning Department.

A discussion took place regarding the connection to an electricity supply in Kilcolgan Village for the purpose of erecting Christmas lights. Mr. Haugh clarified for Cllr. Kinane that the matter should be taken up directly with the ESB or the CRU as a metered connection is the only option. Cllr. McClearn confirmed this position. Ms. Lowe reconfirmed that the relevant community groups should contact ESB directly.

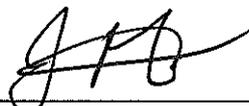
Cllr. Maher stated that there is a new community warden in the town, and he pointed out that if people park in a designated area they need to pay for parking or have their parking permits updated, he emphasised that parking tickets cannot be quashed.

In response to Cllr. Canning's request for an update on the installation of a pedestrian crossing at the Shannon Oaks, Mr. Haugh advised that this proposal is as outlined earlier i.e., it was a project proposed to be funded under Active Travel. Ms. Lowe added that, it could be looked at further to determine if a mechanism outside of active travel could be identified to source funding.

Cllr. McClearn stated that Forsa have advised its members not to engage with Members from 9.00 am today. He stated he is at a loss as to why the public would be deprived of Local Representatives making representations on their behalf and added that Members are conduits for the people. Ms. Ruane responded by saying that the Forsa instruction is a national instruction that Forsa members are not to engage with Councillors and Ministers. She added, Galway County Council will look to ensure there are staff to deal with queries. In response to Cllr. Maher's request for clarification she stated, each Unit in Galway County Council are assessing their position regarding providing assistance to Members.

Cllr. Murphy stated that two months has passed since the Part VIII Application for Social Housing in Ardahan and asked if there is any update on the delivery of connectivity between Ardahan and Labane which is a 1km stretch. Ms. Lowe stated that this was raised with the Director as a Notice of Motion. She outlined other avenues which might be explored but she doesn't have a timeline at present.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN



**CLLR JIMMY MCCLEARN
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD**

