

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 Loughrea Hotel and Spa on 11th October 2021 @ 11 am.

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. G. Donohue

Baill:

Cllr's. P.J. Murphy, P. Hynes, J. Byrne, M. Kinane,
I. Canning, J. McClearn, S. Curley, G Finnerty.

Oifigigh:

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services
Mr. D. Mitchell, Senior Engineer
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. M. Finn, Administrative Officer
Ms. G. Quirke, Staff Officer

Apologies from Cllr Maher who was not in attendance.

Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 20th September 2021

LMD 2143

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 20th September 2021 were proposed by Cllr Kinane, seconded by Cllr Byrne and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Matters arising from previous meeting held on 20th September 2021

1. Cllr Byrne requested an update on the installation of Pedestrian Crossings in Gort.
Mr. Haugh advised that the contractor is currently working in Killimor, has a small project in Portumna and once this job is completed, they will move to Gort. Cllr Byrne requested a timeline and Mr Haugh advised he expected the jobs in Killimor and Portumna to be completed in approximately 2 weeks.
2. Cllr McClearn requested an update on the Portumna floodgate scheme and whether there was any further correspondence from the OPW on the matter. Mr D Mitchell confirmed

correspondence has been received and advised he would circulate an update to everyone on the matter.

3. Cllr Curley requested an update on the Skate park in Loughrea. Ms E Ruane advised that a review of the remaining Budgets is taking place and should there be an underspend on certain job codes, funding may be considered. Ms Ruane advised that once this review is finalised she will provide a further update on the matter.

Cllr. G. Donohue welcomed Mr. Niall Kennedy, Executive Engineer to the Loughrea Municipal District who has taken over from Feidhlim McGillicuddy in the Gort area office.

Flooding Update

LMD 2144

Mr Gallagher updated the meeting as follows:

South Galway Gort Lowlands FRS – The Environmental Consultant continues to undertake baseline surveys to produce the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). The surveys being undertaken at present include wintering birds and turlough ecology.

The Engineering Consultants continue to examine specific issues that were raised during the Public Consultation.

Further to the request from members at the last MD meeting, the issue of producing a programme up to completion of works was raised at the last project Steering Group. The group has indicated, due to the extents of both the study and proposed work areas in the Gort Lowlands, no reliable timeframe can be provided for the Exhibition and Confirmation stages of the project. A programme up to the commencement of the Exhibition stage will continue to be developed and provided to the members.

Road raising works identified as part of the scheme, at Owenbristy, are currently under construction. Site clearance works are nearly completed and retaining wall works have commenced. As per Cllr Murphy's request at the previous MD meeting, GCC are in correspondence with National Monuments regarding the correct treatment of the historic milestone on the site. Maintenance of access to the horse trough is also being considered during construction.

Mr Gallagher confirmed to the members that the works required to alleviate the flooding of farmlands at Ballyboy are not cost beneficial and extremely unlikely to be environmentally acceptable. There is currently no scheme at a national level to compensate landowners whose lands regularly flood during flood events. It was clarified that the Lackan Dam was constructed by the OPW and not Galway County Council.

The OPW responded to a request for an update on proposed CFRAM works in Portumna. The scheme (€3.65M) was approved in 2018 and will be progressed as part of the ten-year programme of investment up to 2028. It was not however part of the first tranche of CFRAM works and will be progressed when resources permit.

Cllr McClearn thank Enda for the update on the Portumna Flood Relief Scheme. He emphasised the importance of priority been given by the OPW to the Portumna Flood Relief Scheme, and it was unacceptable to have to wait because of the impact it was having on local businesses. Cllr MClern requested that we convey our concerns to the OPW. Cllr. Canning agreed with Cllr MClern.

Cllr Byrne stated that in relation to Ballyboy we needed to examine other alternatives regarding the flooding of the farmlands.

Multi-Annual Restoration Improvement Roads Programme 2022-2024 LMD 2145

Mr D Mitchell provided an overview of the Restoration Improvement Programme for 2022 – 2024. He advised the programme is based on an indicative budget which is based on last year's funding. Mr Mitchell outlined that the programme is based on Road Restoration and explained that surface dressing maintenance is a separate matter. Mr Mitchell explained the PSCI rating which is outlined in the Roads programme.

Mr Mitchell highlighted that a massive amount of work from both Technical and Administrative staff contributed to the production of the programme for the next 3 years. He advised that whilst the programme is indicative that it will be adhered to as closely as possible, acknowledging factors like funding and adverse weather events which may result in the programme being adjusted.

Cllr Kinane acknowledged and welcomed that she could see a pattern where the major roads that needed vast improvement were on the programme and getting the attention they needed.

Cllr Byrne queried that as the programme was based on the 2021 allocation, what rates will be used in the next 3 years.

Cllr McClearn complimented the Engineering staff on their work on the programme. He pointed out that whilst a road may be in perfect condition today, a year from now it could be destroyed due to unforeseen weather events. He stated that a common-sense approach needs to be taken with the programme. Cllr McClearn referred to the length of the Loughrea MD road network covering 1898.18 km compared to other Municipal Districts.

Cllr McClearn stated that there is a shortfall in the staff quota within the Loughrea MD and how it does not match the length of road compared to other Municipal Districts. He pointed out that this shortfall in resources needs to be escalated to Senior management level within the Council. He also requested the issue of resources to be added as a separate agenda item at the next meeting. This proposal was seconded by Cllr S Curley.

Cllr S Curley thanked Mr G Haugh and complimented his approachability, stating he is very easy to deal with and very helpful. He pointed out that Tuam MD has similar resources that Loughrea has and that this issue needs to be addressed urgently.

Cllr P. J Murphy complimented Mr G Haugh on the roads programme map, highlighting that the roads in most need of attention were included.

Cllr G. Finnerty complimented the programme for being so detailed, also citing that unforeseen weather and elements will determine whether adjustments to the programme are needed.

Both Cllr Canning, Cllr Hynes, Cllr Donohoe and Cllr Hynes thanked Mr G Haugh and all the staff for preparing a very substantial Road's programme document.

Cllr J Byrne requested a discussion with engineering staff regarding a potential re-scheduling of years when some roads on the programme are due to be completed. Mr D Mitchell agreed to this and re-iterated that the programme is an indicative 3-year programme. He advised that in January 2022 funding will be granted and a meeting will be held in February/March 2022 to pass the Roads programme proposal. A similar process will occur in January 2023. Mr Mitchell concluded that this provisional programme has been prioritised across the County considering the Condition of the road pavement and associated drainage issues, traffic levels and with an emphasis on early intervention before major structural deterioration of the pavement takes place.

It was clarified that as the Roads programme is an Executive function, there is no requirement for the programme to be passed by Councillors.

Clarinbridge Oyster Themed Experience Project

LMD2146

Cllr Kinane provided a comprehensive background to this project which included the following key points:

- The tourism sector is extremely important to the economic development of Clarinbridge and South Galway. The recent feasibility study commissioned by Bridge That Gap (a not-for-profit /social enterprise) recognises, Clarinbridge/South Galway has untapped tourism potential. The Oyster Theme Experience Project would have a potentially transforming effect on how Clarinbridge/ South Galway could re-position itself as serious tourism destination internationally. The consultants (appointed to carry out the feasibility study (Leader funding of 25k was secured by Bridge That Gap to undertake study) recognises, The Oyster Experience combined with neighbouring tourism destinations in the area for example the Burren, Coole Park/Yeats could help align it closely with the established tourism brand Wild Atlantic Way.
- Establishing the region as a must visit/stop off for thousands of tourists that visit Cliff Moher that presently bypass many towns and villages like Gort, Clarinbridge, Kilcolgan, Kinvara /South Galway. The feasibility study is essential to leverage support for funding (under the New Rural Regeneration and Development Fund) for the project.
- Cllr Kinane believes this project will generate incremental employment and provide a new tourism brand for Galway. It is important that the Galway County Development

Plan 2022-2027 fully captures all the emerging tourism plans for the county for this reason I submitted objective CTB6

(Objective CTB 6: Support and facilitate the development of a masterplan for The World is Your Oyster Tourism/Heritage Experience for Clarinbridge/ South Galway) for inclusion in Galway County Council Development Plan 2022-2027).

Cllr Martina Kinane proposes, that the Loughrea Municipal District send a letter of support to Galway County Council interim CEO, Jim Cullen seeking “the inclusion of Objective CTB6 in Chapter 8 (Tourism and Landscape 8.7 Visitor Experience Development Plan Areas) of Galway County Council Draft Development Plan 2022-2027.

Objective CTB 6:

Support and facilitate the development of a masterplan /VEDP for “The World is Your Oyster Tourism/Heritage Experience” for Clarinbridge & South Galway).

Cllr Kinane also requested to invite the Tourism Officer to a LMD meeting in early 2022. This proposal was seconded by Cllr G Donohue.

Cathaoirleach’s Business

LMD 2147

1. Signage around certain Coastal villages in County Galway

Cllr Donohoe referred to an email dated 10th October that was sent by a constituent to numerous Councillors regarding their dissatisfaction with signage erected along coastal villages. The email stated that the appearance and wording of the signage has caused offence and requested for the signs to be taken down immediately. Cllr Donohoe issued a response to the constituent on the same day acknowledging their dissatisfaction and advising that the matter has been raised with the Director of Services, Mr Derek Pender and that it will also be raised at the next Municipal District meeting.

Cllr Byrne acknowledged the fact that the matter will be brought to the attention of the Director of Services and the Senior Engineer in the Roads Section who is looking into the matter. Cllr Byrne suggested that we leave the matter for a few weeks allowing time for its resolution. This course of action was proposed by Cllr Byrne and Seconded by Cllr Donohoe. Cllr Kinane also seconded this motion.

2. One off housing

Cllr Byrne raised the issue of one-off housing and stated that he is concerned at the volume of planning refusals. Cllr Byrne quoted that in his district based on the map planning system between 4th June 2021 and 3rd September 2021 out of 86 planning submissions, 48 were granted and 38 were refused. Cllr Byrne requested that the Director of Planning to investigate this and for a report to be issued on the matter. He also suggested a workshop to be run to assist in the process of planning applications.

Cllr P.J Murphy concurred with Cllr Byrne's comments and concerns and stated that this is a real problem for the young people of South Galway citing that there is no real alternative to one off housing in the area. He stated that from the refusals he has witnessed that some applications could be granted if further information was requested by the Planning section at an earlier stage in the process.

Cllr McClearn added to the discussion that the crux of the issue lies with the fact that Councillors are no longer involved in the process with the Planning section. He stated Councillors need to be included in the process and that this issue needs to be looked at.

Cllr G Finnerty, Cllr P Hynes, Cllr I Can and Cllr M Kinane agreed with the previous statements on the issue of planning. Cllr M Kinane put forward a motion that Councillors be included in the planning application process. This motion was seconded by Cllr Canning.

Cllr Donohoe agreed with all the statements on the issue.

Ms E Ruane advised she would refer the matter to the Director of Planning, and it could be a possibility to run workshops as part of the County Development Plan.

3. A Guide for Landowners to Managing Roadside Trees

Cllr Donohoe read an extract from this publication by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine in relation to the stipulation on hedge cutting and the landowners' responsibilities. Cllr Donohoe advised she would raise this issue at the SPC Roads meeting and that Mr G Haugh will circulate the document to all present.

Cllr Byrne advised that a notice is placed in the newspaper each year highlighting the Landowners responsibilities in relation to hedge cutting and that this should be sufficient.

Cllr M Kinane highlighted that the issue of hedge cutting is an important factor around road safety. Cllr Kinane proposed that additional funding be included in the budget and that all constituents deserve to know the timeframe of when hedge cutting will be completed earlier in the year. She advised that this is an issue that Councillors get contacted about regularly.

Motions

Cllr Curley proposed that a Garden of Remembrance be constructed at the site specified by our senior engineer to all members in a recent email.

This motion involved the planting of 7 Trees to commemorate the 7 Signatories of the Irish Proclamation, to include a plaque and a Tri-colour flag.

This motion was proposed by Cllr S Curley and seconded by Cllr P Hynes.

Cllr McClearn raised a concern on behalf of Cllr Maher that it was previously agreed that no development would take place on the fair green. He raised the query as to who is going to raise and lower the flag each day. Initially, Cllr Curley advised that he organise for the raising and lowering of the flag however, later received confirmation that this was no longer a

requirement. The Garden of Remembrance motion proposal was passed by all Councillors present at the meeting.

A.O.B.

LMD 2148

Cllr Curley requested that the changing facilities at Long Point be open during the winter as the local businesses in Loughrea are losing out on trade. Mr G Haugh advised that currently there is no Budget available to facilitate maintaining the changing facilities. However, as previously advised a toilet facility will be maintained open at this location from 09:00 – 16:00 (Monday to Friday) on a trial basis this winter. Cllr Curley requested that this matter be included in the next Budget.

Cllr Byrne queried the status of the Gort Recycling centre, Ms Ruane stated that we are awaiting a decision on this application from An Bord Pleanála.

Ms M Finn confirmed that the next meeting of the Loughrea MD will take place on Monday 1st November at 10.00 am in the Council Chamber. The budget meeting will commence at 10.00 am followed by the Loughrea MD Meeting.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CHRUINNIU ANSIN


CLLR GERALDINE DONOHUE
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD