

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE**

**Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Locha Riach  
Municipal District of LOUGHREA**

**Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held  
remotely on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021 @ 10.30 am.**

**I LATHAIR:**

**Cathaoirleach**

Cllr. M Maher

**Baill:**

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

**Oifigigh:**

Mr. D. Mitchell, Senior Engineer;  
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer;  
Mr. F. McGillicuddy, Area Engineer;  
Mr. B. Sheehy, Assistant Engineer;  
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer;  
Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer;  
Ms. M. Finn, Administrative Officer;  
Ms. A. Cunningham, Staff Officer;  
Mr A. O Halloran, Assistant Engineer;  
Ms. R. Mulhern, Tourism Officer;  
Ms. P. McHugo, Assistant Staff Officer.

Apologies from Ms. Ruane, Director of Services, who was unable to attend.

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea  
held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021** **LMD 2113**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting for Loughrea MD held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were proposed by Cllr Finnerty, seconded by Cllr Byrne and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Arising from the Minutes, Ms Lowe confirmed for Cllr Canning that the total spent on renovations of 3 Council houses in Killimor was approximately €166,000. Mr Mitchell confirmed for Cllr Canning that funding under Active Travel would be considered for speed ramps at Forest Glade, Portumna.

Mr Mitchell confirmed for Cllr Curley that the issue of additional outdoor staff and a technician for the municipal district was being dealt with by Human Resources Department.

Ms Finn advised Cllr Byrne that in regard to the roll out of the Household Waste Bye Laws, the following was the position: -

1. Data Protection Impact Assessment to be finalised by end of May (estimated timeline)
2. By the end of June, it was expected to have consultations completed with Waste Collectors in the area.

**Confirmation of Minutes of Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021** **LMD 2114**

The Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 were proposed by Cllr McClearn, seconded by Cllr Donohue and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Arising from the Minutes, Mr McGillicuddy, agreed with Cllr Donohue that he would discuss her concerns with Mr F. Fahy, E.E. regarding the parapet at Gilroe Bridge.

**Flooding Update**

**LMD 2115**

Mr Gallagher updated the meeting as follows: -

**South Galway Gort Lowlands FRS** – the Options Public Consultation commenced on the 26<sup>th</sup> February and was scheduled to close on 3<sup>rd</sup> April. Due to the volume of requests from landowners to meet on site, it has been decided that a further 4-week consultation period will be added to the consultation process. This period will allow face to face meetings with landowners on the ground. The period will commence when current government covid guidelines permit.

Environmental studies are continuing at present and the engineering consultants have been providing detailed responses to specific queries that have been raised during the consultation process. Queries raised have already led to several workshops between the consultants, Galway County Council and the OPW.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed that submissions from the public will be gladly accepted up to the end of the additional period and encouraged people to make their observations known to the project team. A report will be compiled following this consultation, detailing the concerns and observations submitted by members of the public. During the Exhibition process, all landowners will be served with notices if their lands are to be interfered with – if a landowner missed this current opportunity to comment, they will have another opportunity at Exhibition.

**Dunkellin** – The OPW are currently undertaking landowner accommodation works. All outstanding works and compensation payments associated with the scheme will be finalised before the end of this year. The report being commissioned on flood alleviation works at Mannin and Ballyboy will be available for the next MD meeting. It is hoped the report will be ready to circulate to members in advance of the meeting.

Cllr Byrne welcomed the proposed one to one meeting with landowners and requested a Schedule of frequently asked questions and answers to be issued to all members. He also

wished to thank Brendan McDonagh for all his work on the provision of flood barriers for Kinvara. Mr Gallagher will investigate if additional works are required on the blocked openings on the N18 at Cllr Byrne's request.

Mr Gallagher also confirmed for Cllr Donohue that submissions are still being accepted.

Mr Gallagher also confirmed for Cllr Murphy that if some landowners had not been contacted at this stage, every landowner will be advised in advance of the Exhibition stage with maps etc.

**To consider the report under Part 8 of Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), proposed development at Woodpark, Portumna, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway consisting of the demolition of an existing dwelling and construction of a 2-bedroom dwelling, together with connection to existing services and ancillary site works – LA 02/21  
LMD 2116**

The above proposal was proposed by Cllr McClearn, seconded by Cllr Canning and agreed by the Members.

Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer in the Housing Unit gave a summary of the CE report on the demolition of a single house at Woodpark and construction of a 2-bedroom dwelling. She gave a brief description of the proposed house per the elevation, plan and site layout as circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting. Ms Lowe noted that the site is within the 50kph speed limit area, and the works would include the decommissioning an existing septic tank - which was preferable from an environmental perspective. Ms Lowe concluded by advising that the CE report recommends granting of the development and she asked the Councillors for their favourable consideration of same.

Regarding St. Bridgets – Ms. R. Lowe advised that a capital scheme incorporating a revised layout had been considered for this area but had faced some hurdles; the zoning of the triangle of lands to the rear of the houses, and that GCC was not successful in purchasing the privately-owned properties. Ms. Lowe advised that the Housing Unit are considering what could be done with the Council-owned houses to bring them fully back into use and improve their appearance. Ms. Lowe said she would keep in contact with the members regarding this development.

Cllr. Kinane asked for an update on the proposal to redevelop a single rural house at Killeeneebeg in Craughwell. Ms. Lowe advised that it was currently being considered by the Maintenance team for redevelopment under their section and that demand was very high in the area for a property of this nature. She said that they are considering whether this needs to be a capital project or if it can proceed further as a refurbishment property. Ms Lowe said she would give a further update to Cllr. Kinane after the meeting.

**Notice of Intention to Extinguish Public Right of Way at Stowlin, Loughrea LMD 2117**

The Notice of Intention to Extinguish Public Right of Way at Stowlin, Loughrea was proposed by Cllr McClearn, seconded by Cllr Canning and agreed by the Members.

**Presentation by Tourism Officer, Ruth Mulhern LMD 2118**

Ms. Mulhern opened by outlining her experience in visitor attractions including museums, galleries and OPW sites and academic and teaching background and went on to discuss the Tourism service in Galway, and her prior role as Tourism Marketing Officer in Tipperary County Council.

She informed the members of the work of the Tourism service in local authorities and how these fits into the ERCD Unit and synergy and collaboration with colleagues across the Local Authority and in particular, the recent synergy with colleagues in ERCD Unit. Tourism had also played an important part in the County Development Plan and that there had been engagement with the team in Planning to feed into same.

Ms Mulhern discussed the importance of engaging externally; working with state agencies such as Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and OPW. The role also required promoting Tourism across the county with traditional media and a digital strategy as well as developing tourism product and engaging with tourism networks and developing and progressing tourism plans and strategies. Fáilte Ireland are the key agency for Tourism and Galway fits into two Fáilte Ireland brands; Ireland's Hidden Heartlands proposition and the Wild Atlantic Way.

The members were informed of the following statistics regarding the tourist industry in Ireland and in Galway as part of the presentation;

- In 2019, out-of-state (Overseas and Northern Ireland) tourist expenditure amounted to €5.6 billion. With a further €1.8 billion spent by overseas visitors on fares to Irish carriers, foreign exchange earnings were €7.4 billion. Domestic tourism expenditure amounted to €2.1 billion, making tourism a €9.5 billion industry.
- The figures per county were developed in 2017 and they are as follows: 1.024 million domestic visitors; spent €247 million; 1.674 million international visitors; spent €589 million
- 2.7 million visitors came to Galway City and County, the value of Tourism to region was €836 million

Ms Mulhern referenced the richness of visitor assets in the Loughrea MD and the importance of a Tourism Network group like the Lough Derg Marketing group driving tourism in the Lough Derg Destination. However, she pointed out that there was less of an accommodation base than other parts of the County and accommodation has to be in place to allow for overnights which increase local spend. She outlined projects that have emerged from the Lough Derg Visitor Experience Development Plan that is being launched on the 20 April.

She informed the members of Portumna Vision 2030 which is a multi-agency steering group administered by the Tourism Officer to deliver on projects in the town. A cluster of projects have been awarded RRDF cat 2 funding and the Portumna Courthouse was submitted for Cat1 funding which was pending award (awarded €2.5 million funding on 19 April 2021). This project will redevelop the historic courthouse building and courtyard in Portumna to deliver a state-of-the-art venue for the arts and culture, a remote working space for entrepreneurs and a new meeting and social space for the community.

Ms. Mulhern also outlined the Destination Recovery Taskforce actions for the region, the Blueway Accreditation process, The Lough Derg Discovery Points project and the potential of larger capital projects like the Dublin to Galway Greenway and how these can boost tourism in a rural location. She closed the presentation by detailing the marketing strategy for the burgeoning Galway tourism brand 'Discover Galway' which is gaining traction on social platforms and has garnered a good following.

Cllr McClearn thanked Ms Mulhern for her comprehensive overview of Tourism in the County. He stated that Portumna has a lot of tourism assets that need to be developed. He noted that the success of the Camper Van Park was as a result of all the agencies getting involved and working effectively together. While he expressed disappointment that Portumna lost out on Destination Town status, he noted there were now a number of projects coming on stream. He added that The Workhouse has huge potential, but the way the lease is configured makes it difficult for the Board to apply for grants for same. He added that this may be an area that could be looked at and one in which agencies could work together to sort out. He outlined that the lack of accommodation in Portumna remains a big issue and being without a hotel for the last 10 years is hitting the town hard. He said the more added value that we could give to Portumna the more likely it is that initiative could be taken to provide a hotel in the area.

Cllr Donohue thanked Ms. Mulhern for her presentation. She stated it was very important to look after the local tourists with tangible projects within the Loughrea MD. Ms Mulhern stated that small schemes such as projects around Loughrea Lake would be worth exploring and that good tourism development is often driven by community groups such as the Burren Lowlands Group.

Cllr Byrne thanked Ms Mulhern for her most informative presentation. With the allocation of €100,000 from the budget to help promote Tourism in the county, he stated that this was a huge opportunity to develop tourism in County Galway. However, he noted from the presentation the lack of funding that is invested in tourism overall and pointed to the lack of support staff to the Tourism Officer in comparison to other counties such as Tipperary. In response Ms. Mulhern stated that in terms of the budget this year that the Council had been resourced adequately, but the issues are with the provision of sufficient staffing resources.

Cllr Byrne stated that Galway County Council need to take the initiative and try and ensure that the OPW take over the running of Dun Guaire Castle in Kinvara and felt that this is one such project that should be taken on. Ms Mulhern said they could look into

Dun Guaire castle and agreed that the OPW were excellent custodians of any sites they manage.

Cllr Kinane referred to local tourism initiatives and the setting up of a group called 'Bridging that Gap' which formulated a tourism network between Oranmore and Clarinbridge. Following fundraising they put together an event called the 'Rising Tide' event which was held in Oranmore a number of years ago with over 100 participants. A feasibility study has been done on the area and she asked that Ms Mulhern help move this project forward which will help support not just the Clarinbridge/Oranmore as a tourist destination area but South Galway as a whole.

Cllr Curley thanked Ms. Mulhern for her presentation. He stated that he had been looking at social media pages and noted the growth in the following on these platforms over the last number of months. He asked about a dormant Discover Galway Facebook page with almost 6 thousand followers and suggested the possibility of merging Facebook pages to maximise exposure for the brand. In response Ms Mulhern stated that there are a number of different tourism related social media sites in operation in Galway County which had thousands of followers each. There would be considerable cost to look at buying social media accounts from businesses. However, she stated that she was confident that we could organically grow our own followings through investment in a marketing strategy and there would not be a need to look at buying other sites.

Cllr Canning thanked Ms. Mulhern for her contributions and added the importance of communication with the people on the ground such as landowners and indeed the elected members in developing projects such as the Court House in Portumna. He said if that there was anything to do to help with tourism projects in Portumna that he was there to help.

Cllr Hynes thanked Ms. Mulhern for her interesting and well researched presentation. He mentioned the importance of the Kilmacduagh Monastic Settlement Centre as an area that could be developed and the need for the reopening of Dunguaire Castle in Kinvara. He also asked regarding what finances could be put in place for the greenways in the municipal district including the walkway and cycleway around the lake in Loughrea. In response Mr. Mulhern said she understood the point regarding the re-opening of Dunguaire Castle, but this was not within her remit, but it was important to try and work towards creating the conditions to place to facilitate its re-opening.

Cllr Finnerty suggested that agritourism needs to be developed and marketed further especially in South Galway and the importance of interaction with Clare County Council in order to attract people to the area. He outlined the need to market more effectively the limestone landscape that exists in the South Galway region and felt that greater support should be given to attractions such as Thor Ballylee and the Kiltartan Gregory Museum.

In response Ms Mulhern agreed with Cllr Finnerty and said that the food and tourism industries are intertwined. She added significant work is being carried out in this area with promotion of the Discover Galway Food experience and that members of the public like to

buy local foods from a good quality supplier. Food trails are also important in promoting this.

### **Cathaoirleach's Business**

**LMD 2119**

Cllr Kinane looked for feedback regarding the strategic land acquisition for future recreation and amenity needs of Renville and asked that a meeting be scheduled with Galway City Council to discuss this issue. She asked for support of the Loughrea Municipal district for the provision of bike parking infrastructure in Renville Park which would help encourage accessibility of the park to bicycle owners.

Cllr Kinane asked for clarity on the €100,000 allocated toward a transport strategy and that there is a need to address issues such as public lighting, footpaths, cycle lanes and bus shelters in Clarinbridge. In response Mr. Mitchell outlined that as part of the Active Travel measures there is traffic management plans for Loughrea, Kinvara and Oranmore. He said also that they were updating the Galway Walking and Cycling Strategy and Clarinbridge would come under this in relation to pedestrian access/crossings and cycling lanes.

She also added that Galway City Council had applied for funding for school zone measures under the NTA and if Galway County Council could do so also. She felt that this was needed to address issues outside Clarinbridge and Killeeney schools. In response Mr. Mitchell said that correspondence had been issued by the NTA on the 18<sup>th</sup> March last to each school in the county asking them to fill out an expression of interest form. He added that he would encourage any school in the MD area that is looking for funding for these measures to send back that expression of interest as soon as possible but the deadline date was the end of this week. It was agreed that a copy of the expression of interest would be emailed to the members for their information.

In relation to the repairs carried out to the three Council houses in Killimor, Cllr Canning asked whether there was any stipulation in the Council's tenancy agreement that following upgrade works or repair to a property, that no subsequent or additional works would be carried out by the Council for a stated period. In addition, he asked what provisions are in the tenancy agreements for tenants to provide evidence of a waste collection service and whether funding could be transferred from other schemes and ringfenced for smaller scale works to property needed by council tenants.

Cllr McClearn voiced his concerns that irrespective of where funding comes from there needs to be a responsibility and obligation on tenants to ensure that properties are looked after. He added that the issues experienced in Killimor are being experienced throughout the county.

In response to Cllr Canning, Ms. Lowe confirmed that there was no stipulation in the tenancy agreement that states that if works are done on a property then no further works could be done again within a certain time period. She noted that there is reference in the Tenancy Agreement that if a property is affected by neglect or damaged and that if works are subsequently carried out by the council to protect or maintain the property, then the

cost of such repairs would be charged to the tenants Ms. Lowe stated that the Council as a landlord has an obligation under the Housing Standards for Rented houses regulations to ensure its properties are maintained to a minimum standard. In terms of seeking payment for repairs in response to Cllr Canning's query, Ms Lowe advised that she couldn't speak about specific cases due to GDPR concerns but there is a facility within the tenancy agreement for the Council to recoup the cost for repairs carried out on properties and this certainly has been sought on a number of occasions in the past. A copy of the tenancy agreement would be circulated to the members of the Loughrea MD.

In regard to waste disposal, Ms. Lowe stated that there is an obligation for the tenant that they arrange for regular removal of domestic refuse and evidence of receipts or a letter from an authorised waste disposal collector can be requested by the Housing Section.

Ms. Lowe advised that the substantive funding for the traveller accommodation programme comes directly from the Traveller Accommodation Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and not from GCC resources. There is no flexibility to allocate money from traveller accommodation to another non traveller specific house. She said that there was an opportunity to carry out necessary works on stock through the Planned Maintenance Programme which was being rolled out across the county, through the Just Transition Programme and the expansion of the Energy Retrofit Programme.

Cllr Byrne informed that when the NTA had announced the Active Travel funding, it was confirmed through the CCMA that there was additional funding to be made available to councils for the engagement of technical staff to help deliver these projects. He asked whether Galway County Council would be getting additional financial resources to put technical staff in place to deliver these projects.

Mr Mitchell confirmed for Cllr Byrne that there was announcement there would be 247 additional staff for projects under the Active Travel measures. A recommendation was made in relation to the number of staff under each category and to each council and this is currently under discussion with the NTA, CCMA and local authorities as to which volume of staff would come to Galway County Council.

### **Mor Action Deputation**

Mr Aenghus Kelly and Ms Caroline Rowan, representing Residents from Maree, Oranmore presented the members with an overview of their submission on Renville Park Extension and Improvements. Their request that Galway County Council consider the purchase of lands adjacent to Renville Park which would allow the Special Area of Recreation and the Park itself to expand to include multiple different habitat areas and in the future stretch from one inlet of Galway Bay to the other.

Mr Kelly and Ms Rowan also outlined for the Members the existing problems in Renville Park with regard to Bike Parking and the locations of the current facilities, with suggestions on improvements going forward.

All Members thanked Mr. Kelly and Ms. Rowan for their detailed presentation. Cllr Kinane welcomed the forward thinking of the group and suggested that Minister Anne Rabbitte be contacted with regard to additional funding for bike parking facilities. She also suggested

that a conversation regarding the purchase of the land by Galway City Council and Galway County Council should be initiated. –

### **Children's Tree Campaign Deputation**

Cllrs Curley and Donohue introduced the members of the Children's Tree Campaign ([childrenstreecampaign.org](http://childrenstreecampaign.org)) whose aims are to plant, protect and promote trees all over Ireland. They have already been involved in the planting of trees in conjunction with Athenry Tidy Towns and Athenry School of Music. They outlined their Tree Town Charter and the idea of a Tree Town, which would support appreciation for the existing trees sown in the town, plant, protect and promote the trees within the official town, village or city area.

Cllr Donohue suggested tree planting in unused lands owned by the Council under this initiative and Cllr Maher suggested further discussions with regard to planting in the town. –

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Loughrea Municipal District would take place on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 11 am and all motions listed for the 12 April meeting will also be discussed.

**CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CHRUINNIU ANSIN**

  
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CLLR MICHAEL MAHER  
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD