

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 Area Office on 13th February 2023 at 10.45 am

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. P.J. Murphy,

Baill:

Cllr's. G. Donohue, M. Kinane, I. Canning, J. McClearn, G Finnerty, D. Kelly, S. Curley, J. Byrne, D. Kelly

Oifigigh:

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services
Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. J. Coyle, Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. P. Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer
Ms. P. McHugo, Assistant Staff Officer

Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 9th January 2023 LMD2273

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on Monday 9th January 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Curley seconded by Cllr. Maher and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllrs. Byrne, Kinane, Canning and McClearn acknowledged the contribution from Electric Skyline at the January Loughrea Municipal District.

In response to his query on a Road Traffic Management Plan (TMP) for Kinvara, Ms. Lowe advised that this follows the transport studies; Athenry and Tuam are underway, with Gort and Loughrea, then Kinvara and Headford are expected to commence in Q2.

In response to Cllr. Canning's request for an update on the cutting back of the hedge at the old school in Portumna which he said is a danger to pedestrians, Mr. Coyle advised that the Community Warden had discussed the matter with the landowner and an update on the

position will be provided to Cllr. Canning shortly. Cllr. Canning advised that this matter has been ongoing for some time and asked for a prompt response.

Flooding Update

LMD2274

Mr. Enda Gallagher updated the meeting as follows: -

Following a request at the December MD meeting, Mr. Gallagher provided an explanation for the slippage of the project programme by 12 months between the period of August 2021 and August 2022. He outlined that the issue of slippage was quite complicated as a number of the issues he was about to outline overlapped and some issues had a greater impact on the programme than others, depending on if they were on the programme 'critical path' or not. Other issues that arose had no impact on the programme.

He advised, there was a 4-month delay in the production of the Kinvarra Bay 3D Salinity model, caused by contract signing issues with the Marine Institute and the provision of additional modelling information (around the whole of Galway Bay). This delay directly affected (i) the setting of TMFLs throughout the scheme (ii) Phase II of turlough habitat mapping (iii) the close out of the modelling works (question over requirement for weirs).

There were 4-month delays in the SI Contract caused by the necessity to go with second preferred tenderer and additional works identified when on-site following discussions with landowners and additional works identified after preliminary SI works had been completed.

8 additional months were required for the EIAR inputs. Following the initial breeding and wintering birds' surveys, the environmental consultants and the OPW's environmental section agreed that a second round of these surveys was required to adequately assess impacts over such a massive study area. This requirement would likely be insisted upon when the project went before DPERs EIAR review.

9 additional months had been spent on ongoing talks with TII over both the N67 and the M18 culverts. These talks were initiated in March 2020, but the project team were unable to provide final design proposals until April 2021 (findings required from salinity report, turlough habitat assessments and protracted reviews of the extent of the salt marsh habitat at Dungaire). A firm commitment on the acceptance of the proposed designs is still required from TII before the EIAR can be completed. Contractual complexities between TII and the DRT PPP have and will inevitably prolong the M18 issue.

5 months were spent redesigning proposals at Caherawoneen Fen when environmental issues with initial channel and embankment proposals for the fen required that alternative proposals were developed, modelled, and designed.

An additional 2 months of unprogrammed works was spent on targeted turlough habitat surveys and mapping. This was required when the TMFLs were finalised and discrete areas within the turlough SACs were identified as being impacted by scheme proposals. Each area had to be individually surveyed to robustly defend the interference (the lands in general are

isolated raised plateaus and fully cultivated agricultural holdings that fell within the original SAC designations but that don't contain any of the qualifying interests of the SACs and do not exhibit the characteristics of turloughs).

The 32 months of listed additional works added 12 months to the project programme.

At present the main threats to the current programme are:

- The requirement to receive feedback from third parties (TII on the M18 and the N67, Irish Rail on the Castletown culvert)
- Findings that may emerge from the EIAR process – although the continued review of engineering proposals by the environmental consultant has greatly reduced these risks
- Potential issues with the Benefit to Cost ratio, especially given the recent inflation in the Irish economy

A number of additional benefits have accrued to the scheme during the 12-month delay highlighted above:

- Consultation and engagement have continued throughout with members of the public. Changes have been made to the scheme proposals following these consultations, which should prove beneficial during the Exhibition process
- The extension has allowed for detailed consideration of specific aspects of the scheme, e.g. property protection at Thor Ballylee and the disposal of excavated materials

Mr. Gallagher proceeded to outline the works currently being undertaken by the engineering and environmental consultants which includes current surveys, preparation of Exhibition documents and the commencement of the Cost Benefit review.

Cllr. Byrne and Cllr. Murphy acknowledged the report and how detail it was. Cllr. Byrne complimented Mr. Gallagher on his work and stated that we should be getting updates if there are delays with progress. Cllr. Byrne made the comment about the excellent engagement with landowners.

Councillor Finnerty highlighted that the issue of appropriate culverts under the M18 had been raised with TII as far back as 2011 and requested that an estimate on expenditure to date on the project is provided at the next meeting.

Councillor Murphy raised a query about the final maximum water levels in the Ballylee flood plain after the project has been completed. Mr Gallagher undertook to provide this information directly to Councillor Murphy.

Councillors Canning and McClearn raised concern that works being undertaken at present by Waterways Ireland in Portumna may impact on floodgate proposals in the future and queried if Waterways Ireland could undertake some of the preliminary works at the location under their current project. Mr. Gallagher gave an undertaking to have these issues investigated.

Councillors Maher and Curley raised concerns over the levels of Loughrea Lake now that the extraction of water by Uisce Eireann was scheduled to stop in the future. Mr. Haugh responded to say that discussions on this matter had been held. The level of water in the lake has been artificially maintained - at a level suitable to allow the year-round extraction of water - for many years. It was not envisaged that there would be any change in this regime in the medium term.

Active Travel

LMD2275

Ms. Paula Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer made a presentation to the Members on Active Travel for the Loughrea Municipal District. The Members were provided with a copy of the presentation and the up to date position regarding Active Travel. Ms. Higgins confirmed to Cllr. McClearn that there will be a mix of both consultants and in-house staff, she added it is hoped to build up in-house design expertise and more staff are presently being sought. She stated it is hoped to migrate the design function to in-house staff.

In response to Cllr. Finnerty concerns for projects for rural schools and Cllr. Canning's concern regarding the paused works in Portumna, Ms. Higgins advised that the schemes are postponed for the moment but stated the Active Travel Team are working with the Green Schools Officers to achieve safe routes to schools in rural areas. Ms. Higgins confirmed to Cllr. Curley that a public consultation will be held when funding is made available to progress Safe Route to School Projects.

Ms. Higgins confirmed to Cllr. Byrne that indicative dates for the Boardwalk project at Kinvara are not yet available. She stated that regarding the Ballinderreen Safe Routes to School, statistics and an audit result is required. Ms. Lowe added, regarding to Glenbrack footpaths, this is a project that will link residential areas to a large employer in the area and she expects that this can be incorporated in the Local Transportation Plan for Gort.

In response to Cllr. Kinane's query on Sycamore Cove, Ms. Higgins confirmed that she will review the need for footpaths at this location. Ms. Higgins, in response to Cllr. Kinane's query on the need to review Safe Routes to School at Killeeneen, Ms. Higgins confirmed she will revert on same. Cllr. Kinane stressed the need for the provision of a zebra crossing at Maree NS.

Responding to Cllr. Donohue's query regarding Safe Routes to Schools at Kilbeacanty and Lough Cutra, Ms. Higgins replied that An Taisce and the NTA are working together and reviewing shared data regarding these projects.

Cllr. Murphy requested an update on the provision of footpaths in Craughwell which were approved two years previously. He also requested an update regarding the proposed cycleway between Labane and Ardahan.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2276

Cllr. McClearn and Cllr. Kinane enquired regarding the procedure for disposal of waste collected during the National Spring Clean for which waste was traditionally collected by the Council and skips were provided. Cllr. Canning sought clarification regarding the provision of bags and gloves for litter picking, he stated that he had to source such items for Transitional Year Students in Portumna who were helping with litter picking in the area. Mr. Haugh responded that there had been no change to the Council's stance on assistance to Voluntary and Community Groups. Galway County Council also strongly supported the National Spring Clean initiative and the provision of items for litter picking under the scheme are still available. He further stated that the provision of skips will solely be provided to Voluntary and Community Groups registered with the Council and that this will only be on a case by case basis following consultation between the Voluntary and Community Group and the local Community Warden.

Cllr. McClearn raised a concern regarding a high wall on a stretch of the N65 at which there was no crash barrier and he stated this was dangerous and asked if a design can be implemented to prevent accidents at the location. Mr. Coyle advised that he is aware of this issue, he has logged the defects with the relevant Road Section and will follow up with the NRDO.

Cllrs. McClearn and Canning requested clarification on when the Portumna Office will be staffed with a full time Clerical Officer and Executive Engineer. Ms. Ruane advised that when the Clerical Officer panel is completed, the Clerical Officer position will be filled.

Cllr. Curley stated that he had attended a meeting in the previous week regarding the town hall in Loughrea and asked if the town hall could be included on the agenda for the next meeting and if clarification regarding funding and additional funding requirements could be provided. Cllr. Curley enquired when the Garden of Remembrance in Loughrea would be finalised. Mr. Haugh advised that reseeding of the grass in the area will commence in March.

Cllr. Finnerty enquired regarding the cleaning of signs on the R445 and stated that some signs are faded and not legible. Mr. Haugh stated that he will follow up on this matter. In response to Cllr. Finnerty's query, Mr. Haugh stated that there is no difference regarding the cutting back of dangerous trees on local and regional roads and that responsibility in all such cases rests with the landowner., Cllr. Finnerty's concern stemmed from ash trees along the routes which have die back and are potentially very dangerous. Mr. Haugh asked Cllr. Finnerty to identify the location of any dangerous trees which he had specific concerns about for review.

Any Other Business

LMD2277

Cllr. Curley raised concerns regarding water quality in Cross Street and Barrack Street and stated that he contacted Irish Water and was awaiting their response. Cllr. McClearn stated that Irish Water should hold a clinic with the Members as the communication system in place is not effective he added there is an issue surrounding responses to queries raised, he referred specifically to a query he raised regarding works carried out in Eyrecourt. Cllr. Curley reiterated this and asked if a motion could be passed to invite a Representative from Irish Water to attend a full Plenary Meeting as it can take up to 10 days to get a response from Irish Water.

Cllr. Donohue stated that from her experience there is a lack of response from Irish Water which is unacceptable, she stated that someone with authority should respond to issues in the Gort Area which she communicated to them.

Cllr Kelly expressed his concern regarding Water and Wastewater Services and stated that the matter may need to be brought before an Oireachtas Committee, due to the lack of response and he requested a report from Irish Water. Cllr. Murphy expressed his agreement regarding the lack of response from Irish Water and stated that a representative from Irish Water should be requested to respond regarding the lack of response to Elected Representatives.

Cllr. Kinane stated that, the Loughrea Municipal District Members should request someone from Irish Water to attend the Plenary Meeting.

Cllr. Curley sought clarification on funding for the Roads Programme and in relation to the completion of roads on the 2022 Programme, he stated that some roads are in an emergency state. Mr. Haugh confirmed that there was no confirmation on funding yet. Cllr. Byrne referred to the 3 year RIG Programme and sought clarification on the planned completion of roads submitted and possibility of submitting additional roads to the programme, he enquired if there is a funding issue regarding roads that were submitted on the programme. Mr. Haugh confirmed that alterations to the three-year programme were being considered but that, as with all funding categories, the RIG programme was over-subscribed and a short-listing process on the basis of need would be required to be undertaken. Mr. Haugh undertook to hold a separate meeting with the Councillors in advance of finalising the RIG element of the programme.

Cllr. Curley advised that he met with a group regarding suggestions of areas for the development of the Long Point and Loughrea Lake. He requested that this item be on the Agenda for the next meeting of the MD.

Motions

A discussion took place regarding the inclusion of roads matters as Notices of Motion on the Agenda, and to the inclusion of roads in the Roads Programme (the L4101 and the L851). Mr. Haugh confirmed that the process for the inclusion of roads in the roads programme was sent to Members by email for which a closing date was set. He advised that shortlisting is done pursuant to budgetary provisions and that it would be preferable if submissions can come directly to the District or Area Office as per correspondence issued. In response to Cllr. Murphy's question, Mr. Haugh confirmed that the inclusion of roads submission as Motions will not have any direct effect on the roads submitted through the correct process.

Cllr. Byrne stated that that he rejected the response he received in relation to the Motion he put forward in which he requested a detailed assessment of the Foul Sewerage System in Gort to address the continual issue of pungent odors which are unbearable to residents, business owners, shoppers and visitors to the town. Ms. Flynn advised that she request an updated response in this regard.

A discussion took place regarding a motion put forward by Cllr. Kelly in which he requested the Municipal District Councillors to call upon the HSE to reinstate the purpose-built Loughrea Day Care Centre in St. Brendan's Hospital. On foot of the motion, a discussion took place in which Cllr. Maher advised that he would be attending a meeting with the HSE

and HIQUA in the coming two weeks where he would raise all matters of concern discussed by the Members. Ms. Flynn advised that she write to HSE in connection with the motion.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

LMD2278

A discussion took place regarding the scheduling of the Loughrea Municipal District Meeting on 13th March 2023. Cllr. Curley requested that the meeting take place in Galway County Council Chamber to facilitate a bilingual meeting during Seachtain na Gaeilge. It was agreed that the meeting would commence at 10.00 am and arrangements would be made to have Mr. Mairtin O'Donnchadha, Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge present for translation purposes.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN



CLLR P.J. MURPHY
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD

Deputation – St. Bridgets College, Loughrea

A presentation was made to the Members by Riadh McPhilbin, Yasmina Keane, Katie Egan and Billy Griffin representing St Bridgets College, Loughrea. They outlined their current activities both in their school and around the town regarding Biodiversity and Litter Control and Awareness and Education.

They requested the following in support of their endeavours: -

- Segregated bins throughout the town
- Bottle banks located at the Lake, Long Point
- Flowerpots plotted throughout the town (including wildflowers)
- Water fountains
- 2GoCups

All Members congratulated the group on their presentation and offered support in their endeavours to educate students in Biodiversity and Litter Awareness. Cllr's Maher and Curley invited the students to get involved in the Loughrea Tidy Towns committee and all members requested they share their knowledge and presentation in all the local schools in the MD. Ms Flynn advised that she liaise with the Environment Awareness Officer and will ensure that the students are consulted with for input into the Draft Litter Management Plan.

