

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 Council Chamber, County Buildings,
Galway County Council on 13th March 2023 at 10.00 am

I LATHAIR:

Leas Cathaoirleach

Cllr. Declan Kelly

Baill:

Cllr. Geraldine Donohue
Cllr. Michel (Moegie) Maher
Cllr. Martina Kinane
Cllr. Jimmy Mc Clearn
Cllr. Ivan Canning
Cllr. Shane Curley
Cllr. Joe Byrne

Oifigigh:

Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative officer
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer
Mr. Mairtín O'Donnacha, Oifigeach Forbartha
Gaeilge
Mr. David O'Loughlin, Executive Engineer,
Environment

Apologies:

Cllrs. PJ Murphy and G. Finnerty

Presentations by:

Micheál Callaghan, Community Wetlands Forum
Concerned Citizens Loughrea Day Care Centre
Brent Mostert, Executive Architect, Development
of Long Point and Loughrea Lake

Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 13th February 2023 **LMD2280**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 13th February 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Maher seconded by Cllr. McClearn and agreed. The Minutes will be signed at the Loughrea MD Meeting scheduled for Monday 17 April.

Cllr. Curley requested an update on the progress, development and funding of the Loughrea Town Hall and enquired if anybody will be available to provide an update to the Members. Cllr. Maher advised that funding cannot be discussed as the Tender process is yet to be completed.

Cllr. Byrne enquired if the Community Transport Plan for Kinvara will commence in Q2 of 2023. Mr Haugh advised that he will request an update on the Local Transport Plans and Community Transport plans to be circulated to all members. Cllr. Byrne sought an update regarding the sewerage system in Gort, he stated that Uisce Éireann advised that significant works will be carried out in Georges Street and that assessments on odour and leakage caused by storm water overflow will be undertaken. Cllr. McClearn stated a motion was passed in the January Plenary meeting requesting a representative from Uisce Éireann attend the Plenary Meeting to discuss serious issues and requested an update. He referred to correspondence which issued to Uisce Éireann from Mr. Cullen, Chief Executive and enquired if a response was received, Ms. Ruane advised she will follow up on this query.

Cllr. Canning enquired if vegetation in Shannon Park can be cut back as it is negatively affecting public lighting in the area causing a health and safety concern for members of the public walking in the area. Cllr. Canning stated that NOM funding would not be sufficient to cover the cost of this and asked if the Council can provide funding to deal with this issue. Mr. Haugh stated that he will review the location but highlighted the recent changes to allow the allocation of NOM funding towards Public Lighting and he suggested that other Members are welcome to jointly allocate NOM funding to progress the installation of additional lighting.

Following up on previous Minutes, Cllr. Donoghue enquired if Cllr. Maher attended an updated meeting with HIQA and the HSE regarding the Day Care Centre at St. Brendan's Nursing Home. Cllr. Maher advised that the meeting was postponed and will take place in two weeks' time.

Cllr. Kinane queried an application for the provision of new footpaths under an Active Travel Scheme to Sycamore Cove. Cllr. Kinane stated she had allocated NOM funding towards works previously but this was not sufficient, she enquired if anything could be done to progress the project and asked if the NTA could be contacted to request funding be provided. Mr. Haugh stated that he will follow up with the Active Travel Team and seek a response to Cllr. Kinane's query.

Cllr. Maher extended his congratulations to Cllr. Curley on requesting the Municipal District Meeting to be held through Irish in the Council Chamber during Seachtain na Gaeilge and for arranging to have Mr. O'Donnacha, Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge present to translate

discussions. He stated that the Pádraig Pearse's Gaeltacht Scholarship Awards were taking place at 3 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

In response to a request from Cllr. Maher, Ms. Flynn advised that she issued a response to students of St. Bridget's Secondary School regarding queries raised by them at their presentation in the Loughrea Municipal District Meeting held on 13th February 2023. She advised Cllr. Maher that she would forward her response to the Members.

Cllr. Curley raised concerns regarding provision of water at Cahertinny, he stated that since the last MD meeting, constituents in this area have been without water on three occasions. He requested a response from Uisce Eireann.

Development of the long Point and Loughrea Lake

LMD2281

Mr. Brent Mostert made a presentation to the Members on the proposed development works to take place at the Long Point in Loughrea. He advised the members that a children's art competition was held, and that more than 400 responses were received. Mr. Mostert stated that the message coming from the community was that the facilities were outdated and new facilities to accommodate more water sports, an enhanced natural environment and improved connection between the green space on the R351 to the picnic area, greater access to the beach area for people with limited mobility should be explored. He stated that consideration to refocus car parking spaces to the back of the facility may be considered and that anti-social behaviour occurs at this location. He stated that suggestions were submitted on permitting coffee trucks/ice-cream vans at the location. He advised that the Consultants had proposed making a presentation to the Members via teams between the 22nd and 28th March, date to be decided.

In response to Cllr. Curley's request to locate a sensory garden or play space in the forested area, Mr. Mostert advised that such an area would be located away from the forest and would be required to be fenced off. Cllr. Canning agreed that a sensory garden would be beneficial in the area. Cllr. Donoghue referred to a report on a sensory playground in the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown area and suggest it may assist with the plans for Long Point. Cllr. Maher welcomed the proposed design and stated that the lake is underused, he stated that a floating pool would be a great addition and the lake is an ideal facility. With respect to the locating of coffee trucks/ice cream vans, Cllr. Maher stated bye-laws would need to be considered and possibly amended. Cllr. McClearn welcomed the proposed enhancement and agreed that permitting a coffee truck/ice cream van would be beneficial and stated that Portumna hoped to have a floating play facility this summer and he stated something similar would be good for Loughrea. Cllr. Byrne complemented the Team on their work with the project, Cllr. Canning expressed his disappointment that only 32 people attended the Open Consultation event, and we need to encourage more people to get involved.

Flooding update

LMD2282

Mr. Enda Gallagher updated the meeting as follow: -

The Engineering consultants are currently providing additional information to inform the EIAR, as requested. They are also preparing exhibition documents and have commenced preparation of interference notices. The Cost Benefit review, under recently published revised OPW Guidelines, will commence soon.

The Environmental consultant will continue to work on the preparation of the EIAR and NIS. This will continue for the next two months. A small number of additional field surveys have been identified to date and will be undertaken in the next two months. The wintering birds' surveys will finish this month.

Following a request from Cllr. Finnerty at the previous MD meeting, Mr. Gallagher provided an estimate of expenditure to date on the scheme of €2.7M.

Mr. Gallagher highlighted the main areas of expenditure, which included: six years of Project Manager fees, five years of engineering and environmental fees, an extensive Ground Investigation contract, three years of model development costs (including extensive surveying) and a significant number of environmental surveys (salinity, wintering, and breeding birds, turlough field surveys, bat surveys, archaeology).

Mr. Gallagher noted that the expenditure is very significant, but the scale and complexity of the project has necessitated this expenditure. The resulting scheme will provide protection to householders and will protect commuter routes throughout the Lowlands area. Following the extensive works carried out to date, it is hoped that the final scheme will prove both cost beneficial and environmentally acceptable.

In addition to the project development costs that have been incurred by the OPW, Mr. Gallagher outlined eight schemes that have been progressed in South Galway as a direct result of findings from the scheme. The eight schemes included five road raising jobs, the construction of a channel, channel maintenance and the provision of an emergency access route. The costs of these schemes were approximately €1M and they were funded from Departmental Climate Action funding, an OPW specific grant and Galway County Council's own funds.

Cllr. Byrne acknowledged that flood relief scheme is one of the most complicated to date. He referred to the 1998 James O'Donovan report which he referred to as a flood channel. He stated the flood relief scheme is very encouraging and has progressed with the maintenance of integrity of the habitats with everything working together. He stated the scheme is progressing in the right direction.

Part 8 LA 07/22 Extension to Burial Ground adjacent to Church of Holy Family at Duniry

LMD2283

Mr. O'Loughlin stated he understands the Meeting's Administrator circulated a Part 8 Chief Executive Report on the proposal to extend the Burial Ground at Duniry to a quarter acre site which would provide 60 double burial plots on site.

The extension to the burial ground was proposed by Cllr. Canning who stated that this was very welcome for the area and enquired regarding the duration of time required to deliver the project. Mr. O'Loughlin responded that if the proposal was successful and if planning permission was granted, tender documents could be published in the coming weeks and the project could be delivered by Quarter 4 of 2023.

Cllr. Canning enquired if it was possible to expedite the project due to the lack of plots available in the burial ground. Cllr. Donoghue stated that there are currently no available plots in the burial ground and echoed Cllr. Canning's request to expedite the project. Cllr. Curley seconded the proposal. Cllr. McClearn expressed the wish of local people to have the right to be buried in their own parish.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2284

Cllr. Kinane asked when the pedestrian crossing will be installed on the old Limerick Road to Oranmore, she stated that funding has been allocated for this project. Mr. Haugh advised that he will raise this matter with the Athenry Oranmore Office and request an update. She also enquired regarding the trimming back of overhanging trees on the N67 road at Clarinbridge stating that they are a serious safety hazard and are ready to fall. Cllr. Kinane stated that she is willing to put NOM funding towards the cost of removing some branches and enquired regarding TII's responsibility to deal with this issue. Mr. Haugh advised that NOM funding could not be allocated towards National Routes and that responsibility regarding the maintenance of trees remains with the landowner, but he gave an undertaking to meet with the Senior Engineer in the NRPO to discuss the matter. Cllr. Byrne stated a landowner informed him a number of years previously that he would not be permitted to cut trees on the N67 as it would result in disruption to traffic on the route. Mr. Haugh responded that due to the nature of the work, it may be required to close the national route and Road Closure application and traffic management plan would be required.

Cllr. Kinane also enquired regarding the flashing beacon in Labane on the R458. Mr. Haugh responded that a Contractor has been appointed to this project.

A discussion took place regarding a proposal to request a follow up meeting/workshop with the Athlone to Galway Project Team. Cllr. Byrne proposed the matter and Cllr. McClearn seconded the proposal. Cllr. Donoghue put forward a **counter motion** for the holding of a follow up meeting/workshop with the Project Team for the members of the public that it affected. She stated a further update is needed now. Cllr. Maher supported the requesting of the follow up workshop with the Project Team. It was decided that the request for a follow up meeting would proceed. Ms. Ruane advised the Members that she will contact Mr. Pender regarding the issuing of Minutes of the last workshop.

Cllr. McClearn enquired when an Executive Engineer post will be assigned to the Portumna Area Office. He stated that a full time Clerical Officer and Executive Engineer should be appointed to the Portumna office, he added that the Loughrea Municipal District increased in size in 2019 and this should be taken into consideration. Ms. Ruane responded that an offer has issued in respect of the Clerical Officer position.

Cllr. Canning raised concerns regarding retrofitting works carried out in Cloughbrack Housing Estate, Eyrecourt. He stated that there are a lot of issues and requested a consultation be arranged to provide assistance to residents. Mr. Haugh stated that he will refer this matter to the Housing Unit for response directly to Cllr. Canning.

Cllr. Maher stated that he was pleased to see works at Corry's Field, Loughrea being progressed. He enquired regarding a commencement date for works on the footpath in Kiltullagh and stressed the need for the works to be completed, Mr. Haugh stated that works had commenced but at this point an update on a completion date is not available.

In response to Cllr. Maher's query on the Cow Park, Clarinbridge Mr. Haugh stated he would liaise with Bernie Donnellan regarding the opening date for the Cow Park. Cllr. Kinane added that she had requested signage regarding the control of dogs to be installed at the Cow Park. Cllr. Maher stated that Ms. A. Dolan was launching the 2GoCup at 4 pm today in Loughrea.

AOB – Any Other Business

LMD2285

Cllr. Kinane enquired on the position of holding hybrid meetings in the Loughrea Municipal District in which meetings are held monthly. Ms. Flynn responded that she would liaise with Ms. Jean Brann and revert.

DEPUTATIONS

Micheál Callaghan, Development Officer with Community Wetlands Forum

Micheál Callaghan, CWF Development Officer with Community Wetlands Forum made a presentation to the Members. He explained that the aim of the CWF is to provide a representative platform for community-led wetland conservation groups based on the principles of community development. He explained the benefits of conserving wetlands which included regulation of water flow, improved water quality, carbon storage and sequestration, homes for biodiversity and wildlife, environmental education, recreational value and opportunities, cultural values, and eco-tourism opportunities. He explained the different types of wetlands which comprise area of marsh, fen, peatland, or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres. Mr. Callaghan explained that there are 2 wetlands groups in Galway who meet every month, one in Mountbellew and one in South Connemara, he explained they are membership led organisations working in conjunction with Údaras na Gaeltachta.

The Members thanked Mr. Callaghan for his informative presentation. Cllr. Maher enquired if there are wetlands in the MD or if they are to be created. He enquired if it is intended to

wet formally reclaimed land again. Mr. Callaghan responded that the CWF is community led and the community has responded very positively to rewetting of lands, to include bogs and drained bogs. Cllr. Maher enquired if a grant is available for the rewetting of lands and Mr. Callaghan stated that he understands grants are not available. Cllr. McClearn stated that this brings a new concept to how things will happen, he referred to Boora Bog as an example of what can be achieved with the community, he stated that farmers may be apprehensive about any such proposals.

Concerned Citizens, Loughrea – Loughrea Day Care Centre

Mr. Pat O’Looney, Anna Crosin and Rose Fahy made a presentation to the Members on the closing of the Loughrea Day Care Centre.

Mr. O’Looney thanked the Members for allowing him to make his presentation. He stated he has come to the meeting to ask the Members to support the call of the Concerned Citizens to open the Day Care Centre. He explained that the Day Care Centre is a separate building from the main building connected by a small hallway facilitating access between the two buildings. He stated, in case of infection, the connecting door can be locked restricting access to the unit. Mr. O’Looney presented the members with photographs displaying furniture contained in the Centre and showing the view of the lake from the Day Care Centre, he also showed the Members a photo of a view from the Old Workhouse which was built in 1839 which, he stated, was a county home and which was not suitable for persons attending the centre. The view showed roof tops and only a small gap through which part of the lake could be seen. He stated that 12 days previous he was informed there was no funding to put towards the project at this stage and it takes time to put a team together and he enquired regarding funding for the building and in particular to the €1 million Topping Fund donated to the Day Care Centre. Mr. O’Looney asked the Members to speak to their Government Ministers on this matter.

Anna Cronin stated that the Seven Springs Day Care Centre in Loughrea is a purpose-built Day Care Centre which is now closed for 6 out of 7 days. She stated that the Day Care centre was a home from home for people including those experiencing difficulties. Ms. Cronin stated that HIQA stated that the CMU will be closed if citizens object and she rejected this statement saying it is regrettable that people cannot express their views. She read a letter to the Members written by a Senior Citizen who expressed her sincere sadness at the absence of the Seven Springs Day Care Centre and the inconvenience its absence has caused.

Rose Fahy also made a presentation on behalf of the Concerned Citizens Group. She referred to the level of care given to attendees at the Seven Springs by staff who could assist attendees needing additional support such as medical appointments, food, and shower facilities. She stated that there were 2 tv rooms in the building which are not in use. Ms. Fahy also referred to the use of space in the Centre by staff for office and storage purposes. Ms. Fahy stated that the Day Care attendees enjoyed looking out at the lake and watching people and children walking around the area. She posed a question regarding the cost of funding used to facilitate the Centre in a hotel and called for the Day Care Centre to be put back in use for the elderly.

The Members expressed thanks to the Concerned Citizens for their informative presentations. Cllr. Donoghue stated that the Day Care Centre presented assistance to attendees but when the Day Centre closes due to bad weather the attendees lose out on this social event and they cannot see friends and neighbours. She stated that the campaign will continue, and a further FOI request will bring clarity.

Cllr. Kinane thanked the speakers for attending the meeting and expressed her support for elderly members of the community and for service care. She referred to comments made by Minister Butler and stated the Minister's voice should be listened to and stated that we are all on the same page.

Cllr. McClearn stated that HIQA inspected St Brendan's in Sept 2019 and again in January 2020 and the HSE knew at this stage that there was a problem at St. Brendans and they took no action to address this. He stated a lot of people were fearful of being sent to St. Brendan's and asked the question on whether progress had been made. He raised a question regarding information provided to the Minister by officials. He and Cllr. Curley stated that the Minister should visit St. Brendan's to have a discussion on what is happening. Cllr. Curley suggested that the Members should lobby the Minister on this matter and that, in his opinion, the Minister has been badly advised.

Cllr. Maher made it clear that he cares about elderly people in the Loughrea area and reminded those present that he was involved in securing €14 million for the refurbishment of the new St. Brendan's Home and Day Care Centre when Minister Harney was the Minister for Health.

Cllr. Maher said he has been verbally abused in Loughrea by members of the public saying that he did not care for the elderly and was not looking after the people of Loughrea. Cllr. Maher stated that there were 4 options put forward by the HSE and believed that there was only one option that could rectify the situation, that was to find an alternative building that we could transfer into a Day Care Centre, Cllr. Maher advised those present that he will support anything that can be done to keep the Day Care Centre open for the elderly.

Cllr. Canning advised that he liaised with Minister Anne Rabbitte TD and correspondence had issued to Minister Butler regarding the Day Care Centre. He stated that it is unfair for Cllr. Maher to be treated in this manner. Cllr. Byrne advised that he attend the Council Chamber on International Women's Day where Minister Rabbitte spoke on the issue of bullying online. A discussion took place regarding negative comments made online regarding Minister Butler and all members expressed their disappointment of this.

Cllr. McClearn proposed extending an invitation to the Minister to see first-hand the position on the ground regarding the Day Care Centre, the proposal was seconded by Cllr. Curley.

Motions:

Cllr. Curley

“The Loughrea MD discusses a mechanism, whether by byelaw or any other feasible way, of giving parking permits (to a limited number) to business owners in our towns and villages where paid parking is in existence.”

Ms. Flynn read out the following response:

“Paid parking has a number of benefits for our towns, one of which is the turnover/ availability of spaces for citizens to carry out their business – retail, commercial, visiting services (post-offices etc).

There is a facility in place for residents to obtain a dispensation in relation to parking in these areas. The extension of the permit scheme to businesses will cause a consequential reduction in the availability of spaces for customers and potentially less transactional activity can be completed by citizens.

There are some other considerations; the consequential reduction of income for the Council and how that funding shortfall would be addressed, and the provision of Active Travel measures nationally is to encourage greater take up of sustainable modes of travel – walking, cycling and public transport. This is aligned with strategic policies and plans nationally and with the Climate Change Act. It would be difficult to reconcile the Council’s activities in this area with the extension of free parking to businesses in towns – the impact of which could be significant.”

While the Members agreed the motion was well intended, the proposal was not supported due to the negative impacts it would have on the towns. It was stated this would lead to less parking spaces for customers coming into the towns. Cllr. Byrne stated that Cllr. Curley could submit it to the Plenary Council as this could have an impact on other Municipal Districts.

Cllr. Curley

“Request for the installation of Temporary Speed Ramps at Danesfort to Caheronaun, Bohercom and Atherry Road.”

A discussion took place on foot of a Motion sent by Cllr. Curley for the temporary installation of speed ramps on the Danesfort to Caheronaun road, on Bohercom and Atherry Road on a trial basis. Mr. Haugh informed the Members that there is no funding available for this measure and the Local Transport Plan and subsequent Traffic Management Plan for Loughrea Town will need to be completed before any decisions are reached in this regard. Mr. Haugh added that two of the areas are being considered under Active Travel measures and with respect to Bohercom, a traffic volume and speed review was carried out previously and there appeared to be no significant issue with speed limit violations in this area.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Declan Kelly', written over a horizontal line.

**CLLR DECLAN KELLY
LEAS CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD**