

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara **Municipal District of Conamara**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held at the Old Courthouse, Oughterard, Co. Galway on the 20th of September 2019 @ 10.00 a.m

ILATHAIR:

Baill:

Cllr. T. Ó'Curraoin Cathaoirleach, N. Thomas, S. Walsh, G. King, T. Welby, E. Mannion, D. Ó'Cuailáin, A. McKinstry, P. Mac An Iomaire.

Oifigigh:

G. Mullarkey, Head of Finance.
R. Lowe, S.E Housing
D. Mitchell, S.E Infrastructure-Operations
P. Breathnach S.E.E Infrastructure-Operations
T. J Redmond, Area Engineer, N. Conamara
N. O'Conaola Area Engineer, S. Conamara
P. Carroll, AO, Environment.
L. Tierney, Technician Grade 1 N. Conamara
S. Groarke, Meetings Administrator.

Apologies:

1. Minutes of the MD of Conamara Meeting held on the 12-6-2019 **CMD 19034**

The adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 12-6-2019 was proposed by Cllr.S. Walsh and seconded by Cllr. N. Thomas.

2. Matters arising from the Minutes **CMD 19035**

Cllr. S. Walsh referred to correspondence he became aware of whereby the Roads Department requested an Area Engineer not to accept additional roads to be taken in charge. He advised that people in rural areas cannot get planning permission due to the condition of the road adjoining their sites and that the NOM allocation of €18,500 per Councillor is the one power they have as regards the nomination and funding of roads to be

taken in charge-it is a reserved function of the elected members but the Engineers have been instructed to refuse to sanction additional roads. The NOM system provides that that the Councillor nominates a road which services at least 2-3 households to be taken in charge, obtains a cost estimate from the Area Engineer and allocates the NOM money to fund the improvement work- the criteria in regard to a private road is that it must serve more than one house. D. Mitchell advised that the reality is that the Council does not have sufficient funding to maintain the existing network of roads and it has to assess each application on a case by case basis. He stated that there are 1,500 km of local roads in Conamara and he recommends that the overall NOM budget of €729,000 should be directed to the areas most in need. He advised that no one is disputing that the NOM procedure is a function of the Councillors but the Council cannot manage the maintenance of the existing road network with the current funding and that applicants for planning permission relating to sites adjoining private roads may have to take responsibility to upgrade that road. Cllr. N. Thomas stated that he agrees with what Cllr. Walsh said but he can also accept the point D. Mitchell made concerning the lack of funding. He stated that the NOM should be used in an appropriate way where there is genuine housing need and referred to the planning restrictions being imposed. He advised that the NOM fund should not be used for cutting back hedges and verges- in most cases this is the responsibility of landowners but the Council is not taking enforcement measures. Cllr. T. Welby advised that most of his NOM allocation is spent on private roads and the procedure should be looked at and a clear policy established. Cllr. Walsh explained that they agreed to allocate NOM for hedgecutting as a token gesture as the €150,000 set aside for this is inadequate. Cllr. G. King that in some cases the roads servicing houses are half a mile to 1 mile long and NOM money is not sufficient to improve these. Comh. T O'Curraoin advised that both sides of the discussion have a point with the situation is caused by insufficient funding and the NOM process would need to be looked at. Cllr. E. Mannion acknowledged the work done on the N59 by Council staff during the Summer and highlighted the fact that there are a lot of accidents between Clifden and Letterfrack and the NRDO should take steps to provide more signage.

3. Declaration of Road as a Public Road- Section 11 Roads Act 1993 **CMD 19036**

On the proposal of Cllr. T. Welby, seconded by Comh. E. Mannion the road at Na Minna was declared to be a Public Road.

On the proposal of Comh D. Ó' Cualáin, seconded by Cllr. N. Thomas the road at Coill Sáile was declared to be a Public Road.

4. Update on Knock (Inverin) & Inis Mór Burial Grounds **CMD 19037**

P. Carroll explained that the Council assessed 5 different sites in regard to a proposed extension to Knock Burial Ground but without success.

- Site adjoining the Burial Ground- Owner refuses to sell.
- Site opposite the church -not suitable due to it part of flood plain.
- Site Galway side of Inverin-no access
- Commonage site at Poitín Stil- road too narrow.
- Site far side of the Poitín Stil- owner looking for development price for it.

He explained that the budget for B.G extensions is only €50,000 which is meant for the whole County. Comh. D O’Cualáin enquired about the allocation of the money received for the sale of plots as it should be ringfenced for the purchase of sites. P. Carroll advised that the Council received approximately €150,000 p.a for this which goes into its fund. G. Mullarkey explained that the €50,000 allocation comes out of this and the Council also has to fund the Caretakers wages and the cost of B.G maintenance- it does not cover the cost of providing the service. P. Carroll explained that there are 9 Burial Grounds which require extensions in the near future. Comh D. O’Cualáin enquired if funding can be sought from Roinn na Gaeltachta and is there a plan b when Knock B.G is full. Cllr. S. Walsh referred to the use of the CPO process where the price of the sites can be determined by an independent Arbitrator. In regard to the Burial Ground at Inis Mór where the wall was damaged by a storm-P. Carroll referred to discussions with Roinn na Gaeltachta to repair this. Cllr. E. Mannion referred to the fact that many burial grounds have bad access roads which the Council do not take in charge.

5 Report on Bridges/Causeways into Ceantar na nÓilean CMD 19038

D. Mitchell advised that the Council should receive the report from the Consultants within the next few weeks which will include a design for the works. He explained that it had applied for funding in the past under the Strategic Works Grant similar to the Derrartha Road Grant but was not successful. It will re-apply for a new Strategic Grant to undertake safety measures such as strengthening the parapets, providing a safety barrier and a one lane traffic lights system similar to that used at Shannonbridge.

6. Traffic/Parking issues at Dún Aonghus & Kilmurvey, Inis Mór CMD 19039

D. Mitchell advised that this refers to an OPW site and is therefore a matter for them to widen the road and provide appropriate parking- the Council will assist if required.

7. Céibh an Srúthan & Irish Water Wastewater Management Scheme CMD 19040

Comh. D. Ó’Cualáin referred to the plan by Irish Water to locate a Wastewater Treatment Plant at Céibh an Sruthán but there are doubts as to the suitability of the site in light of the Climate Strategy Report. Cllr. N. Thomas advised that this Treatment Plant should be built to a higher standard and referred to a judicial review on the site at the moment. This matter will be discussed with Irish Water at the meeting scheduled for Monday 23-9-2019.

8. Fáilte Ireland Destination Towns-Clifden Application CMD 19041

Eimear Dolan, Economic Development Officer, ERCD issued a report which advised that an application has been submitted by Galway County Council under a new Fáilte Ireland Scheme called Destination Towns. The purpose of the Scheme is to enable Towns to become more attractive and focus on retaining Visitors overnight and increase their stay and their local spend. An initial survey was carried out with visitors during August and some key issues persist in Clifden as, many visitors do not stay in Clifden for long, being on route to other places and they are unclear about what to do there. Visitors seem to mostly visit for the main Summer season. The proposal will improve mapping and information for visitors and also improve the access from the Greenway directly into Clifden Town Centre. Fáilte Ireland

Wild Atlantic Way Team invited Local Authorities to apply for one town within their area and they assisted in linking in with the local businesses and Chamber of Commerce in preparing the application. The amount of funding available is a maximum of 500k and Galway County Council has applied for this funding, which must be matched by a minimum of 125k by the Council.

The MD Office has assisted and Eimear Dolan in the Economic, Community and Rural Development Unit is the point of contact (091-509334 edolan@galwaycoco.ie) and is available to members if they have further queries. If funding is offered there will be an opportunity to bring a wider group of stakeholders and members together to advance a plan of action and communicate with the broader community. Members may be aware that there is a Connemara Coast and Islands Visitor Experience Destination Plan and this proposal will help progress that.

Cllr. E. Mannion advised that there is a lot of work to be done to enhance Clifden and acknowledged the roles of Eimear Dolan, Alan Farrell, T.J Redmond and Kurt Lydon and the Chamber of Commerce in regard to this. She advised the meeting of the Clifden Arts Festival which is in its 42nd year.

9. NOM-Prospecting & Mining Licences -Conamara

CMD 19042

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Cllr. Alasdair McKinstry.

“The Council hereby calls on the DCCAE not to issue prospecting licenses and mining licenses for gold and base metals, gold and silver in Connemara. Licenses are currently under consideration for Maam, Corr na Móna (PL 1431, PL 2295, PL 3145, PL 2301, PL 2647 and PL 3227) as well as Ballyconneely Roundstone (PL 930) and Mace Carna Cashel (PL 934).

The communities in this area, as shown in public meetings and petitions, hold the view that a mine in any part of Connemara is unfeasible due to the poor road network, the stark change that the landscape would suffer and the possible environmental implications that would come with mining. Connemara is home to multiple SACs and SPAs threatened by this work. While many believe that such designations will prevent mining, this is not the case in law, as shown by the Natura 2000 guidelines: we need to explicitly prevent mining.

Secondly, granting prospecting licenses opens the State to liability in the event that mining licenses are not granted later: under CETA (agreed by the EU but not yet signed by Ireland), investors may potentially sue under ISDS if expected permissions are not granted. Hence it is important for us to signal that such mining will be denied, by this motion and changes to the upcoming development plan”.

He advised that a change in the Development Plan is required to reflect the motion and explained his opinion that currently mining companies are in a position to sue the state as they have a reasonable expectation of getting such licences. He stated that it is important to propose and agree this motion today that Conamara cannot support mining. The motion was seconded by Cllr. N. Thomas who enquired if it can be included in the Development Plan. Comh. T.O’Curraoin requested confirmation that all the Councillors agreed with the motion and the response was yes. He referred to the controversy concerning the gas terminal at Ballinaboy, Co Mayo and how the state received nothing from the oil and gas licences and this amounts to the same thing and the people have to stand up for their rights. A discussion then took place concerning how some licences are still in place and the need for a legal

requirement as regards alerting the community to this-it was noted that some prospecting licences have been refused.

10. NOM-Hedge & Verge Cutting -Conamara

CMD 19043

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Cllr. Gerry King:

“I would also like to put in a motion/question regarding hedgecutting/trimming. Can the council implement a hedgecutting programme that includes local? Regional and main roads in Connemara on a planned basis ie start Sept 1 and continue until roads complete. We are losing width on both sides of the road due to overgrown bushes and this coupled with already narrow twisty roads is leading to very dangerous driving situations. Complaints are also being made as to the loss of scenery from vantage points such as Aisleagh Falls near Leenane due to this overgrowth”.

He advised that hedge/verge cutting is a major health and safety issue for Conamara as truck and van drivers have to cross the white line to avoid damage to their vehicles. He outlined that this also affects tourism along the Wild Atlantic Way. He proposed that a hedgetrimming program gets underway and that he will contribute from his NOM towards it. Comh. Daithí O’Cualáin seconded the motion and referred to the state of the footpaths along the R-336 and if there are any plans to eradicate ragwort and other weeds. He explained that extra traffic has been generated along this route due to the Wild Atlantic Way. Cllr.E. Mannion advised that they have this discussion every year and a clear policy is needed- everybody expects the Council to do all this work but landowners have a responsibility also. Cllr. N. Thomas stated that timing this for the 1st of September is required- but the tenders for the work have only gone out when they should have been issued in June-doing the work late in the year is a waste of time. He advised that the Council could purchase the equipment to do it by direct labour and also conduct a publicity campaign for landowners as a lot of them do not realise they are responsible for trees/hedges growing from inside their boundary walls/fences. He referred to court cases where landowners were successfully pursued for failure to comply with their legal responsibility. Cllr. S. Walsh explained that the methodology and supervision of the work is important with the need to cut vegetation deeper -in the case of Japanese knotweed you have to get to the roots to cut it right- he stated that the work undertaken on the Glann Road was done well last year. D. Mitchell advised that hedgecutting is a health & safety issue and the Council has to undertake the work on a priority basis to do everything possible but it does not have the resources to do 1,500km of road verges in Conamara every year and that is why it cannot provide a schedule of hedgecutting. He stated that letters are issued to landowners but it is not possible to issue it to every landowner along the 1,500 km of road. He explained that the Council is recording the locations of Japanese knotweed on a database with a view to obtaining funding in the future-he outlined that ragwort is also a serious problem and the Council is doing its best with limited resources to control it on footpaths and has applied for grants. Comh. T. O’Curraoin advised that something needs to be done concerning the responsibility of landowners for the trees/hedges etc which grows from inside the boundary of their property. He enquired if the Council can get FÁS schemes going again and referred to the good work that Tidy Towns volunteers like Furbo do.

11. Planning Application Numbers -Conamara

CMD 19044

Comh. D. O’Cualáin referred to the fact that out of the 1,198 Planning Applications decided by the Council to date in 2019, 1,035 were granted and 163 refused of which 69 refer to Conamara- the refusal rate here is higher than other areas. A discussion took place concerning the difficulties in getting planning permission such as along the R336 due to the volume of traffic, the issue concerning backland development, the restrictions imposed by the SACs, the rural housing policy and in the future the rise in sea levels due to climate change. Cllr. S. Walsh proposed that a special meeting be held which was seconded by Cllr. E. Mannion and agreed. Comh. T. O’Curraoin advised of the difficulties with planning permission caused by the change in speed limits along the R336.

12. AOB

CMD 19045

R. Lowe advised that a meeting of the M.D has been scheduled for 10.00 a.m on Friday 4-10-2019 in the Council Chamber to consider the Report under Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) in regard to the development of 26 housing units in the Townlands of Clifden & Tullyvoheen at Hospital Road, Clifden. She referred to the comments made by the deputation from Foran Iorras Aithneach concerning no current plans for Social Housing units in Carna Cill Chiaráin and she outlined the current plans the Council has under Rebuilding Ireland for Conamara in order to meet the housing need as follows:

PROVISION OF SOCIAL HOUSING IN CONNEMARA – CAPITAL PROJECTS.

Renovation of St. Josephs’ School and Laundry Building in Clifden = 26 no. units (1, 2 and 3 beds)

Roundstone – 14 units under construction

Na Ceathru Rua – 4 units under construction

1 no. derelict unit at Banogues Letterfrack (being assessed for refurbishment).

49 units in Kylebroughlan Moycullen

30 units proposed for Gort Ui Lochlainn in Moycullen

Capital Assist Projects			
No. of Units		Name	Approved Housing Body
8	Construction	Convert Rossaveal Holiday Homes	Tearmann Eanna Teo
11	Construction	Letterfrack Phase 2	Cluid
13	Construction	Eanach Mheain, Carraroe	Tearmann Eanna Teo
4	Construction	Old Post Office, Inverin (Conversion)	Tearmann Eanna Teo
10	Construction	Letterfrack Phase 1 Diamond Hill	Cluid

She advised that there were approx. 3,200 persons on the Housing List, of which circa 150 are in the Conamara South- West area of which Carna Cill Chiaráin is part. She stated that she will check the database to confirm the figures for the other areas in Conamara. Cllr. T. Welby thought that the figure for the Conamara Central area was in the region of 230 applicants.

Cllr. N. Thomas referred to the County Development Plan and advised that the plans for the provision of social housing in Moycullen is out of control and he voiced the concern of the community that it is not compatible with the level of services available such as schools, medical facility and public transport. He proposed the following NOM:

“I propose that Galway County Council suspend the master plan for the development of houses on the Council site in Moycullen village behind the playground until the Local Area Plan for Moycullen has been completed”

The motion was seconded by Cllr. S. Walsh and agreed following a show of hands as requested by the Cathaoirleach. Cllr. Walsh explained that the community in Moycullen are concerned about this. R. Lowe explained that there are 2 Social Housing schemes planned for Moycullen providing a total of 79 units and the level of demand is higher than in many other areas and she requested the Councillors to defer the motion until the meeting scheduled for the 4-10-2019 where the matter can be discussed in more detail. She explained that the proposed units for Gort Uí Lochlainn are likely to fall under the Part 8 planning procedure. She advised that the figure of 270 units being referred to at the meeting is conjecture at this stage. Cllr. N. Thomas advised that his motion still stands.

Comh. T. O’Curraoin requested N. O’Conaola to check the drainage problem near the Devaney House, Furbo where new houses are constructed near the Church. N. O’Conaola advised that there are plans to control it -but it is difficult to prove where the water is coming from. Comh. T. O’Curraoin advised that drains would need to be examined before planning permission is given as some drains are being blocked by developers. N. Thomas referred to the drainage problem at Supervalu Barna. It was decided that the motion submitted by Cllr. E. Mannion in regard to the use of direct labour for self-build houses under Rebuilding Ireland is more appropriate for the Plenary Council. G. Mullarkey advised the elected members of the opportunity to address the funding issue at the Plenary Council meeting on Monday.

13. Date & Venue for Next Meeting

MD 19046

The next meeting will be held on Friday 4-10-2019 at 10.00 a.m at the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae, Galway.

CROCHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN