

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara

Municipal District of Conamara

Minutes of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Friday 5th of November 2021 at 2.40 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, Prospect Hill, Galway

ILATHAIR:

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr. Seamus Walsh.

BAILL: Comh. / Cllr. G. King, E. Mannion, P. Mac An Iomaire, A. McKinstry, D. Ó Cualáin, T. Ó Curraoin, N. Thomas & T. Welby.

OIFIGH: M. Owens, Director of Services, D. Mitchell, Senior Engineer, B. McDonagh, Executive Engineer, P. Breathnach, Senior Executive Engineer, O. McCarthy, Senior Staff Officer/Meetings Administrator, H. Riordan, Assistant Staff Officer. B. McDonagh, Executive Engineer.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Friday, 8th October 2021 CMD21063

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Friday 8th October 2021 were **PROPOSED** by Comh. T Ó Curraoin and **SECONDED** by Cllr. G. King.

Matters Arising

Cllr. E. Mannion raised the issue of electrical power charging points in the Conamara Municipal area.

Comh. D. Ó Cualáin enquired as to the report in relation to the Causeways, when the Members would receive the report and for an estimate of the cost of the works. Mr. D. Mitchell informed him that the purpose of the report was to address remedial works to be carried out. The issues that he requested clarification on were relating to facades, remedial parapets, widening bridges and addressing safety concerns at the causeways. He advised that he expected to have the report shortly.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire queried funding that was not spent this year. Mr. Mitchell assured him that the funding was received via specific grants which are multi-annual and will roll-over until the specific project is completed. That there will be spending this year on design fees and that he expects the funding to continue into next year.

2. Municipal District of Conamara Director's Business:

CMD21064

Two reports were circulated under Director's Business.

Mr. B. McDonagh presented the first report on the Clifden Flood Relief Scheme. He informed the meeting that the Council had appointed Jacobs Engineering Ireland Ltd. as the Consulting Engineer firm to progress both the engineering and environmental elements of the scheme. Jacobs have commenced works and are currently at Stage 1 of the process which will run until next summer.

- Stage 1: Scheme Assessment, development and design (Q4 2021 – Q3 2022). The meeting to kick off the project was held on 18th October 2021 and surveys are scheduled for next spring.
- Stage 2: Planning (Q3 2022 – Q1 2023). This will be in line with the project brief and the tender.
- Stage 3: Detailed design and procurement of works (Q1 2023 – Q3 2023).

- Stage 4: Construction (Q3 2023 – Q3 2024). The construction element is expected to take a year.
- Stage 5: Handover (Q3 2024 – Q3 2025). There is a time period of about a year expected for the handover stage.

Mr. McDonagh informed the meeting that by the end of 2024 there will be a concrete flood defence system. That the timelines indicated above may vary and that there will be a monthly progress report. He continued by relating the progress that had been made to date on the project; the transfer of previous flood data, Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) hydraulic models and related reports to Jacobs and the Initial Environmental Overviews of photographs and walkovers were ongoing in early November. That the next step is a site kick off visit with Jacobs, the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Galway County Council which would be happening in November.

Mr. McDonagh assured the Conamara MD that he would be available to answer queries on an ongoing basis and in addition proposed to provide an update every 3 months to the MD. There are to be 2 public consultation dates in stage 1, the dates of which are yet to be decided. These consultations would provide the public a chance to convey their opinions, ideas, any constraints and previous experience of flooding to the consultants, OPW and the Council.

Cllr. E. Mannion thanked Mr. McDonagh for his report. She enquired if it were possible to install an alarm system in the meantime to alert residents of periods of heavy rain. Regarding the public consultation days, she requested Elected Members be consulted in advance to ensure they will be available to attend, as this is a very busy period for meetings with the upcoming budget and Development Plan. Thirdly, she wanted assurance that there is enough funding for the project.

Mr. McDonagh gave the following response:

- Funding – that €530,000 was allocated for the design, planning and consultancy elements of the project in December 2018. The OPW intend to complete the project using direct labour.

- Public consultation – that he would provide the dates to the Elected Members and would work around their schedule.
2. Alarm system – that hydrology reports have determined that the river is very flashy. That the flooding in September 2020 occurred within 5-6 hours and the pumps do not have the manpower to react quickly enough. The OPW have informed him that an alarm system cannot operate in such a flashy river.

Cllr. A. McKinstry raised the point that in stage 3, between the design and commencement of works, there is no consultation phase. That this is a major piece of work and the OPW have met controversy in the past, that communication is key in avoiding a kick back. He proposed a formal review stage for Councillors before the procurement stage. Mr. McDonagh replied that the public consultation dates had not yet been set. That the date for the second consultation can be made as the project progresses, but that one could be set for between the planning and procurement stages.

Cllr. G. King queried the delays on the environmental survey and the emptying of the water holding tanks on the lower road. Mr. McDonagh informed him that there was not a delay with the survey, that certain surveys are seasonal. Mr. McDonagh replied that regarding the holding tank, that part of the brief for the consultants was to review the tanks capacity and that it was operating as it should be.

Mr. M. Owens referenced the second report that had been circulated to the Members on the Provision of Public Parking Facilities for Camper Vans.

Comh. P. Mac An Iomaire was disappointed with the report; that facilities were needed to prevent waste being left behind and he advised that he would liaise with the Tourist Officer regarding progress. Comh. Ó Curraoin queried if the Council had potential sites in mind and he said that it was necessary to have them established in order to progress funding. He highlighted the facilities in Portumna as a good example of what could be achieved. Cllr. A. McKinstry replied that Ros a Mhíl had been proposed as a potential site. He was concerned on the insurance impact in having camper vans parking anywhere and highlighted the proposal to investigate the possibility of an RRDF application. Cllr. S. Walsh, Comh. Ó Curraoin, Cllr. N. Thomas, Cllr. E. Mannion

and Cllr. G. King agreed on the importance of attracting tourists to County Galway and the benefits that having designated camper van sites would have. Cllr. N. Thomas suggested that private lands could also be considered as sites.

3. Municipal District of Conamara Cathaoirleach's Business: CMD21065

Cllr. S. Walsh raised the topic of a previous allocation of €250,000 for a footbridge in Oughterard. He proposed that the monies be used for the benefit of Oughterard and suggested that it be used to create a coach parking facility. He informed the meeting that tourists are passing through Oughterard but are not stopping due to the lack of place for coaches to stop. He sought proposals for the spending of the money from the other Elected Members and requested that the item be placed on the agenda for the next Municipal District meeting. Cllr. Welby suggested that he bring the matter to the Corribdale Committee.

Mr. D. Mitchell welcomed the matter being raised and recommended that consultations take place with the area staff with proposals then brought to a Meeting. That there were many different proposals for locations for the coach bay and on the monies and that time would be required to investigate them. Cllr. E. Mannion and Comh. T. Ó Curraoin agreed with Mr. Mitchell's idea as it would then require less time for discussion at a full MD meeting. Cllr. Walsh stated that he wanted it on the agenda of the next M.D. meeting; if there were no proposals that it could then be deferred to a later meeting. Mr. M. Owens concluded the discussion by advising that the matter could be added to the agenda for the next MD meeting.

Cllr. A. McKinstry highlighted his concern that Galway County Council are missing an opportunity regarding offshore wind energy. That this has the potential to the biggest industry in Ireland. He informed the meeting that this Council needs to address issues of planning, surveys and offshore planning. He proposed that ahead of the new Marine Planning Act, that the Council include Marine Biodiversity and Marine Planning into the budget and HR policy. He advised that Marine Planning will replace Foreshore Licence Agreements and that the Council should be involved in the process. To ensure that as soon as monies are available, the Council will be ready. Comh. D. Ó Cualáin

agreed with Cllr. McKinstry and suggested that the Elected Members would require a presentation on the item and the implications for the Council.

Mr. M. Owens responded that due to the existing commitments of the Forward Plan Team in relation to the County Development Plan and Local Area Plans it was not possible to facilitate same at present. He confirmed that a presentation could be scheduled following the adoption of the County Development Plan, possibly Quarter 2 of 2022. Cllr. T. Welby suggested that this could be handled in a sub-committee of the Climate Change and Environment SPC.

Cllr. D. Ó Cualáin and Cllr. N. Thomas raised the following points:

- Requested an update on the Area Engineer for An Cheathru Rua.
- When hedge trimming would commence in the M.D.
- The small number of electric charging points for the expected increase in electric cars in the Climate Action Plan.
- Difficulty in obtaining planning permission for one-off houses and the provision of footpaths in some areas as they are outside town/village with an 80km/h speed limit.
- 2 year wait for deep retrofitting of houses.

Cllr. A. McKinstry responded:

- He agreed that more charging points are needed. That the LGMA provide grants and that the Executive need to make recommendations to the Climate Change SPC as to the locations, that we will need to subsidize charging points in rural areas.
- That the retrofitting is bottle necked due to the lack of qualified staff. There are several training groups happening, but 20,000 to 30,000 people are needed to be trained. This project has a huge benefit to peoples' health and to employment.
- In his opinion one-off housing is not a good idea. That the cost of energy and transport is expected to rise which will have a greater impact for people living outside towns. That as much new housing as possible needs to be in towns and villages.

Cllr. N. Thomas replied that he felt that these policies and that the National Planning Framework are for the elite in the county as only they can afford them. That if someone has a site, it is cheaper for them to build, that electric cars are out of most peoples' price range and retrofitting needs to be seriously subsidised.

Comh. P. Mac An Iomaire queried the situation where someone applies for planning permission, but the road has not been taken in charge then the house cannot be sold. He questioned if this was correct and if the Council need to take these roads in charge. Mr. M. Owens informed him that it is not a requirement for planning permission. That to satisfy planning regulations the road must be of a particular standard, have a public right of way and the applicant must have a legal interest to access the site/house.

Comh. D. Ó Cualáin reverted to the earlier topic of hedge trimming. Mr. Mitchell said that there is a shortage of hedge cutters and that the same contractor is employed for every Municipal District. Mr. P. Breathnach informed Comh. D. Ó Cualáin that hedge cutting is expected to commence either this day week or fortnight in Conamara. That the contract is in place but that the contractor is currently in another Municipal District.

4. Votes of Sympathy / Congratulations:

CMD21066

A resolution of sympathy was extended to the following:

- Michael Dodd, Ballinaboy, Errislannan, Clifden, Co. Galway.
- Celia McDonnell and family, Doohulla, Ballyconneely, Co. Galway.
- The Burke Family, Coolacloy, Kingstown, Co. Galway.
- Martin Walter Connolly and family, Doohulla, Ballyconneely, Co. Galway.

5. A.O.B:

CMD21067

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Conamara MD would be on Friday 3rd December at 10am.

Mr. D. Mitchell informed the meeting that Mr. Stephen Lally is the project manager for the Moycullen by-pass and works are to commence before Christmas with site clearance, mobilisation and surveys. That the major construction will commence in the

New Year. He suggested a group of interested parties be formed and that Mr. Lally would be available to brief the Members.

CHRÍOCHNAIGH AN CRUINIÚ ANSIN

Submitted Signed and Approved

Cathaoirleach: Seamus Walsh

Date: 3/12/2021