

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara

Municipal District of Conamara

Minutes of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Friday 8th of October 2021 at 10.00a.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, F. Holland, Senior Engineer, P. Breathnach, Senior Executive Engineer, D. O'Loughlin, Executive Engineer, I. Martyn, A/Administrative Officer/Meetings Administrator, H. Riordan, Assistant Staff Officer.

1. **Confirmation of Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Friday, 10th September 2021** **CMD 21056**

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Friday 10th September 2021 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Mannion and **SECONDED** by Comh Ó Cualáin.

Matters Arising

Cllr. G. King queried if the verge trimming works had been completed on the N59 and the surrounding local roads. Cllr. Mannion complimented the works that had been carried out during the summer months at the junctions on the N59 but added that the local and regional roads also required trimming.

Comh. Ó Cualáin requested an update on the Causeway Bridges and enquired about the report.

Cllr. Thomas pointed out that the comments on irresponsible housing development in the previous meeting, had been raised solely by him. Cllr. S. Walsh agreed to the removal of his name from the comments.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire requested a response to his query at a previous meeting regarding camper vans.

Comh. Ó Curraoin wished to compliment the engineers on road works carried out. Comh. Mac An Iomaire seconded this comment.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Mannion, **SECONDED** by Comh Ó Cualáin the members **AGREED** the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Friday 10th September 2021 as amended.

Mr. Owens introduced Ms. F. Holland and informed the meeting that she would update the Municipal District on matters relating to piers.

Ms. Holland informed the meeting that The Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine provided funding in May 2021 and that the Roads department were currently progressing several works:

- Inishbofin Harbour – A contractor has been appointed and is currently on-site doing fender replacement, shelter repair, signage, mooring ring replacement etc.
- Cleggan – Minor civil works have been completed. Currently awaiting delivery of new timber beams for surge gate and repair to Palfinger crane.

Works have been completed at Aughrusmor, Árd Mór, Kilkieran, Aibhnin, Maumeen, Caladh Feenish and Trawbaun.

Works at Derryinver are substantially completed.

Contractors have been appointed and are currently on site at An t-Oileán Mór.

The Area Office are scheduling works at Garafin by direct labour.

2022 applications for Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine grant aid, will be prepared by the end of the year. These works will be prioritised based on the master list, which is continually updated. Ms. Holland reiterated that works can only be carried out where there are no planning or environmental issues, unless planning and the relevant screening / Nature Impact Statement (NIS) have been completed.

She informed the meeting of the following:

- The Department of Rural and Community Development Grant. Grants of €14,895 have been provided for works at Inis Mór, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr. The Council are currently working on the logistics of organising and drawing down these monies.
- Coastal Erosion study for Inishbofin – including east end pier. RPS Ireland Ltd. have been appointed consultants for the Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management Study on Inishbofin and have commenced working on the study. It is envisaged that the study will take approximately 55 weeks.
- Protected pier structures. The Roads section are in consultation with the Planning department regarding the 36 protected pier structures. Due to costs, prioritising screening reports are being carried out for 2 structures. Stage 1 is screening and stage 2 is to obtain planning permission for any works that are required to fix the structure.
- Works to slipways. Different factors that must be considered in relation to slipways are permissions, planning, environmental and only a small number of slipways are cleaned each year due to limited resources.
- Crumpáin and Droim. The slipways have been designed and the NIS completed. There is an issue of loss of reef habitat and a meeting has been arranged with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to discuss this.
- Ard Thoir. The Council are awaiting a screening report from the Consultant.
- Aille an Eachrais. Costing of a screening report from an environmental consultant is being sought.

- Draft Byelaws for the regulation of Inis Oírr Harbour have been completed and were presented to the Transport / Infrastructure SPC. The document will be advertised shortly, then a public consultation period of 6 weeks will follow. Once submissions have been reviewed, it is intended to present the document at the December 2021 plenary meeting. If the byelaws are adopted, a Harbour Master (or equivalent) will be provided at the pier to assist in implementing the byelaws. In relation to Céibh Inis Oírr, Ms. Holland informed the meeting that approval of the business-case was received in May 2021 and the foreshore licence pre-application was lodged with the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage in July 2021. The Council are currently awaiting confirmation of a date for a meeting regarding the foreshore license to progress the project further. CPO / land acquisitions are being progressed and Ecological studies and Tender documents are almost complete but these may be subject to change following receipt of foreshore licence conditions. The procurement time-line is dependent on the approval of the foreshore licence and completion of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). Subject to these, the Council hope to go to tender in early 2022, with a view to having a Contractor appointed in Quarter 2 of 2022.
- An Chaladh Mhóir Inis Meáin. A digital model was developed at the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI), Ringaskiddy in 2020. The intention was to simulate the pier and sea area around it and to outline the deficiencies and / or problems that exist at the pier. A visit to the Maritime College took place on 7th July 2021, which was attended by vessel operators, Islanders and staff from Galway County Council. She advised that the model requires further refinement to accurately reflect the pier and surrounding area, and there may be a requirement for an additional visit. Feedback was received from NMCI which highlighted some issues and the Council are currently reviewing same in order to make further progress.

Ms. Holland concluded by welcoming feedback.

Cllr. Walsh queried the lack of a slipway at Kilbricken, an issue he stated he had raised over two years ago. Ms. Holland responded that the Roads Section have a maintenance budget of €150,000 allocated to slipways and there are over 180 piers in

County Galway. She informed Cllr. Walsh that there is a Master List of prioritised works. The time-frame for these type of works is long as they require planning permission. Cllr. Walsh queried in relation to an existing slipway, if it would be included in the list of works for repair. Ms. Holland replied that if no planning or environmental studies were required, then it could be included in the list of works for next year. Cllr. S. Walsh stated that he wanted Kilbricken to be kept at the top of the Agenda.

Cllr. Welby added that both himself and Cllr. King had concerns regarding the safety of the community at Inishturbot as the new inhabitants on the island may not be aware of the dangerous movements of the sea in that area. Cllr. King continued by describing the current situation in Inishturbot; problems of coastal erosion, no ropes, lack of turning space for cars or cattle crossing for grazing. He informed the meeting that it was a very precarious situation due to the volume of traffic in the area. Ms. Holland stated a council engineer had already visited the location that she would revert to him in due course.

Cllr. Welby queried if Árd Mór was included in the works: Ms. Holland confirmed this pier was in bundle 1 and was completed. She also highlighted that the applications made in February had received approval and that one of the requirements of the grant is that the monies are drawn down by November.

Cllr. Welby queried if there was a case for Environmental reports to be carried out in-house, to reduce the costs of going to tender. Ms. Holland responded that piers and harbours are relatively small projects and only a small number are carried out at a time. She advised that having our own Ecologists to carry out reports would not be cost-effective. Cllr. Welby argued that at a cost of €5000 - €6000 per report it may be cheaper in the long run.

Cllr. Thomas queried the progress at Droim Pier. Ms. Holland informed Cllr. Thomas that it was the subject of the NIS which has highlighted a small loss of habitat which the consultant has suggested re-colonisation as a mitigation measure. It is proposed to meet with the NPWS to see if there are any other measures that we could implement before submitting for planning. This project will be a good test case, as potential loss of habitat is a huge problem in getting applications approved.

Comh. Ó Cualáin stated that he appreciated the work carried out on to progress Inis Oirr Pier but he was concerned that red tape is delaying necessary works including

the foreshore license. He said there were serious health and safety issues relating to Inis Oirr and he enquired if the bye-laws would be implemented before the works on the Pier. Ms Holland replied that it is the intention that the bye-laws with the agreement of Plenary council be implemented as soon as possible in order to safely manage the pier in its current form. The Byelaws are also needed to progress with construction of the extension to the pier. She confirmed that a copy of the draft bye-laws would be provided to all present.

Comh. Ó Curraoin thanked Ms. Holland for her report. He raised concerns regarding Dun Angus on Inis Mór. He said that it is very dangerous as horses and cyclists are on top of each other on the road but unfortunately, it is under the control of the Office of Public Works (OPW) and not the Council. A discussion took place with contributions from Cllr. A. McKinstry, Comh. T. Ó Curraoin and Cllr. S. Walsh regarding the lack of parking spaces around the café area. Cllr. Walsh asked that the matter be investigated by the roads department before the next meeting.

Cllr. Mannion thanked Ms. Holland for her report and stated that she had received numerous calls regarding Bun Owen and Aughrusmore.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire was also grateful for the work to date and stated that another visit with the National Maritime College of Ireland would be necessary.

Comh. Ó Cualáin enquired about An Chaladh Mhóir. It was his impression that it was not fit for purpose and was annoyed at the delay in the commencement of works.

Cllr. Mannion queried a review of the speed limit on roads towards beaches. Ms. Holland informed her that the review of speed limits would commence next year.

2. Consideration of the Draft Multi-Annual Roads Programme 2022-2024:

CMD 21057

Mr. Mitchell introduced the Multi-Annual Restoration Improvement Programme 2022-2024 for the Municipal District of Conamara and emphasised that it is a programme strictly for Restoration Improvement. He informed the meeting that these programmes are funded through the Restoration Improvement (RI) grant which is provided to meet expenditure on surface restoration works, road overlays and road reconstruction works. He explained that the roads are given a PSCI (Pavement Surface Condition

Index) Rating between 1 and 10. Roads rated between 1 and 6 will qualify for Restoration Improvement works. There is a very small difference between a rating of 6 and a rating of 7. Mr. Mitchell provided each Elected Member with a list of the roads included in the programme and the list of works to be carried out. He further explained that the figures are based on the funding of the previous year and that this amount can increase or decrease. If there is additional funding, works listed for the following year can be carried out early or the length of road to be treated would be increased in the current year; if funding is reduced, then the length of road to be treated will either be reduced or the works deferred to the following year. Following a query from Cllr. Walsh, Mr. Mitchell confirmed that roads with an RI rating of 1-6 would qualify for works, RI of 7-8 would qualify for surface dressing and RI of 9-10 would qualify for routine dressing. And reiterated that there is a blur between classification of a road between 6 or 7.

The consequence of the lack of a decision regarding the Galway City Ring Road and the impact that it is having on the condition of the R336, was raised by Comh. Ó Cualain and a debate followed. He said that the delayed decision on the future of the Galway City Ring Road is delaying works to the R336 and the R336 is not fit for purpose for the huge volume of traffic that use it and he felt that the decision is being kicked down the road. He stated that he cannot understand the constant delays on the decision on the Galway City Ring Road and future development and job creation of the area is dependent on good road infrastructure. He enquired as to the Green Party position on the issue, and their policy of no new roads when roads are needed.

Cllr. Walsh asked Cllr. McKinstry if he was in a position to outline the Green party stance. Cllr. McKinstry stated that there is a lot that can be done to improve public transport in Galway city. He shared that he is not in favour of the Galway City Ring Road, however he agreed that the R336 needs to be repaired and that it was worth spending monies on the Roads Programme. He advised that our roads still require repairs as they are used by motorists and cyclists and good quality and well signposted roads will take cyclists and other vulnerable road users off the main roads.

In relation to the Moycullen Bypass, Cllr. Thomas raised concerns on the impending increase in heavy goods vehicle traffic in the Moycullen area. He added that the

Contractor was considering a base in the middle of the bypass, which he feels would be very dangerous. He suggested that they gain access from either the Galway side or Rosscahill side of the N59. He continued with concerns regarding disposal of waste from the works and he advised of applications for sites to accommodate this. He added that this would result in increased traffic to the infill sites and a strategy should be put in place by Galway County Council. He advised that the Contractor should resurface any damaged roads, or compensation should be provided to Galway County Council for any damage to roads by either the Contractor or Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

Comh Ó Curraoin suggested a 40-50-year plan for roads would be more beneficial for long term planning and that all bodies should come together and create a plan to suit everyone.

Cllr. McKinstry suggested that a meeting take place between the contractors and Galway County Council to discuss safety plans. This was fully supported by Cllr. Walsh.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire expanded on the current condition of the R336 that it is one of the busiest roads in the County, it requires widening as two trucks cannot pass in certain places and it is very dangerous at night due to lack of white lines and Cats eyes. He stated that he is concerned that there will be no investment in Conamara in the next 4-5 year and people want to live and work in the area but the infrastructure is not there. The situation has been going on for 20-30 years and we need to start thinking about future generations.

Cllr. Mannion added that she fully supports works to the R336 and she is hopeful that a decision on the Galway City Ring Road will be granted and will not be appealed. Congestion resulting from the lack of infrastructure is affecting people's social and mental health and Conamara is suffering greatly regards travelling to Dublin.

Comh. Ó Cualáin requested the opinion of the Executive on this matter.

Cllr. Welby stated that the issues in relation to the works on Moycullen Bypass would be addressed in the Contract and he didn't feel that it was viable to take the fill to

remote locations. Regarding upgrading the R336 he warned that houses may have to be demolished which will not be a popular decision. In relation to the Galway City Ring Road he said that the failure of An Bord Pleanála to make a decision was very disappointing.

On the Proposal of Cllr. Welby and Seconded by Comh Ó Cualainn it was agreed to write to An Bord Pleanála requesting a decision on the Galway City Ring Road

Cllr. Walsh stated that the Elected Members need to be informed of the details of Contracts so that they are equipped to monitor the situation if there are complaints or a breach.

Mr. Mitchell responded regarding the delay on a decision from An Bord Pleanála and he confirmed to Cllr. Walsh that a decision is due by 19th November 2021. Mr. Mitchell continued by informing the meeting that the Contractor for the Moycullen Bypass is will carry out minor works pre-Christmas and he does not yet have the Method Statement or Traffic Management Plan. Regarding the disposal of material pre and post works he will refer this to TII.

Comh. Ó Curraoin added that any roads damaged after the works at Bearna were repaired afterwards as part of the contract.

3. Update Burial Grounds Conamara area:

CMD 21058

An update was given by Mr.O'Loughlin on burial grounds in Conamara. He outlined the efforts undertaken by the Environment Section over the last 14 months to identify land suitable for development of Burial Grounds in South Conamara. The sites proved to be unsuitable for the following reasons:

- Leitir Mor – Two Council owned plots, both of which are unsuitable due to insufficient soil cover and extensive outcrops of rock. The HSE (Health Service Executive) agreed with this assessment.
- Leitir Meallain (private site at Cuigeal) – access to the site is challenging with significant straightening, widening and resurfacing works required.
- Leitir Meallain (Sean Bhaile) – potential additional space proposed here, however reports indicate a large outcrop of rock below the surface.

- Tulleymore (private site) – the land has is designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and National Heritage Area (NHA). Records indicate that the areas of land proposed have a history of flooding.
- Leitir Mor (old burial ground) – the site is known to contain both marked and unmarked graves and there is a stream running north to south through the site.
- Kiggaul Bay (private land) – there is evidence of high-water table on site and extensive drainage works will be required. There are also larger outcrops of rock along the potential access route which would present a significant challenge.
- An Tra Bhain (private land) – there is evidence of large outcrops of rock, the site was waterlogged, there is a stream in proximity, and it is also the site of a National Monument.
- Na hAille, Inverin (private land) – significant investment would be required here to provide suitable access, the site is near a SAC and the site has poor drainage.

In January 2021, Expressions of Interest were sought from landowners in Inverin and Lettermullen, for lands that may be suitable for development as burial grounds, 2 were received:

- Clynagh (private site) – to develop an extension to the existing public burial ground. No further action is to be taken at this time as the proposed development is adjacent to an existing private burial ground which has approximately 1000 plots available. Further expenditure at this location can not be justified at this time.
- Inverin (private site) - this was deemed unsuitable due to extensive rock outcropping and very little soil cover.

Mr. O'Loughlin continued his report by outlining the criteria used for assessing the suitability of land for the development of Burial Grounds: size of the plot, location and sightlines, access routes, surface conditions, capacity of the area to cope with traffic, soil depth, drainage, overhead restrictions, presence of rock and archaeological features.

He advised of the most recent Burial Ground developments as follows:

- Clynagh (private development) – there are approximately 1,000 plots.
- Leenane – there are approximately 50 plots.
- Bealandangain – there are approximately 20 plots. An issue has arisen regarding access to the site. Galway County Council will engage with the relevant stakeholders accordingly.
- Ballynahown – there are approximately 150 plots.

He completed his report by outlining an opportunity in Ballyconneely, where there is the potential for a capacity of 100 plots. Galway County Council have engaged with the landowner regarding acquisition of the site.

A discussion took place following the report on burial grounds. The problem of soil depth in Conamara was highlighted and the capacity issues in current Burial Grounds. Comh. Mac An Iomaire thanked Mr. O'Loughlin, whom he had accompanied on site visits and stated that Conamara needed greater funding for Burial Grounds due to the lack of soil depth there. Comh. Ó Curraoin questioned the possibility of drawing in soil to provide the depth required. Comh Ó Cualáin appreciated the work carried out but requested to know what the Executive's Plan B is, as it is the responsibility of the Council to provide burial plots. Cllr. Walsh suggested the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO). Cllr. Thomas proposed exploring the installation of Columbariums. Cllr. Welby informed the meeting that a previous plan B was a regional Burial Ground. Mr. Owens added that this matter had been raised at Corporate Policy Group level, that it should be deliberated at the Environment SPC where a long-term approach can be agreed, before it comes back to Plenary Meeting.

4. Municipal District of Conamara Director's Business:

CMD 21059

An update of the Clifden relief scheme had been distributed to the Elected Members by Mr. Owens. It stated that the signed Contract documents are scheduled to be received by Galway County Council.

Cllr. Mannion was satisfied with progress and Cllr. King acknowledged the work that was carried out on the ground.

5. Municipal District of Conamara Cathaoirleach's Business:

CMD 21060

No items were raised for discussion under Cathaoirleach's Business.

6. Votes of Sympathy / Congratulations:

CMD 21061

No items were raised under Votes of Sympathy / Congratulations.

7. A.O.B:

CMD 21062

Cllr. King raised the issue of hedge-cutting. He said that it is not viable to fund hedge cutting through Notice of Motion monies every year. Hedges need to be cut from 1st September, he requested that a budget be provided for hedge-cutting.

This was seconded by Cllr. Walsh.

Cllr. King continued that parts of the N59 hadn't been cut in 3-4 years on the Galway side, however it has been cut on the Mayo side. He expanded on the problem by explaining the dangers of overhanging branches to all road users and the reduction of visibility. He queried why this is not carried out by TII, requested an emergency cut as soon as possible and enquired as to the plan for hedge cutting works to that route.

Mr. Mitchell informed Cllr. King that TII have the Contract for the N59 and he would bring it to the attention of the TII. He said that the road maintenance budget is insufficient and if funding was allocated to hedge-cutting, it would have to be taken from another area. He suggested that representations be made at upcoming Budget Meetings.

In response to Cllr. Walsh's suggestion that the Department of Agriculture could entice farmers to cut hedges, Mr. Mitchell replied that it would be a difficult task to engage private landowners to cut hedges as there may be a number of different landowners along a stretch of road. There would be a huge volume of correspondence involved and enforcement would be very difficult to monitor on the 2000km of Conamara roads. Cllr. Mannion added that the hedges need to be cut back completely and not just trimmed. Cllr. King concluded that this issue should be treated as an emergency on health and safety grounds.

Cllr. McKinstry raised the topic of Active Travel and requested an update on the filling of the post and plans for the next round of funding. Mr. Mitchell responded that staff have not been employed as yet but a Team would be in place in the near future. He

advised that there was an issue with Contractors for the Project. He said that works on the extension of footpaths is ongoing and strategic plans for future applications are being tendered. He advised that there are generic designs for most of the Projects, which are predominately pedestrian crossings, cycle lanes, improving footpaths and safe routes to school.

Comh O'Cualáin requested an update on the report on Causeway Bridges. Mr. Mitchell replied that he had met with the Consultants and they were due to complete a draft report the following week and he said that he will circulate it to the Members. He referenced Cllr. Thomas' previous concern regarding the Causeway Project, that the Consultants did not go close enough to the Bridge during the inspection. He followed-up with the Consultants and they had assured him that they had waited for the water to recede and then carried out a full inspection, which is shown in the photographs.

Mr. Owens outlined the schedule of upcoming meetings for Elected Members and concluded that there were limited dates remaining for the Conamara Municipal District Budget Meeting. After a short discussion, it was decided that the Conamara Municipal District Budget Meeting would take place on Friday 5th November, 2021 at 2pm and the Ordinary Meeting of the Conamara Municipal District would follow. Mr. Owens concluded the meeting by informing the Elected Members that they would be invited to the Contract Signing for the Moycullen bypass.

CHRÍOCHNAIGH AN CRUINIÚ ANSIN

Submitted Signed and Approved

Cathaoirleach: Seamus Walsh

Date: _____

