

**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 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 11.00 am**

**LLATHAIR:**

**Cathaoirleach**

Jimmy McClearn

**Baill:**

Cllr. Ivan Canning, Gerry Finnerty, Joe Byrne,  
Geraldine Donohue, P.J. Murphy, Martina  
Kinane, Moegie Maher, Declan Kelly

**Oifgich:**

Mr. John Coyle, Executive Engineer  
Ms. Eileen Ruane, Director of Services  
Ms. Rachel Lowe, Senior Engineer  
Ms. Siobhán Cleary, Staff Officer  
Ms. Colette Kennedy, A/Assistant Staff Officer

**Leithscéalta:**

Cllr. Shane Curley  
Gerard Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer  
Enda Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer  
Niall Kennedy, Executive Engineer  
Maria Flynn, Administrative Officer

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Municipal  
District of Loughrea held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

**LMD2301**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Donohue and seconded by Cllr. McClearn and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Finnerty raised concerns regarding the town enhancement Scheme for Gort stating he attended a meeting with Council members and Outreach members. He wished to make it clear that he supports 90% of the plan and added that he is not in agreement with 10% of it, he advised he hasn't had sight of a Plan B yet. He stated that he had a meeting with the executive team and design team regarding the project and a further consultation is scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> June. He added that the project affects two thirds of the town and stressed that proper consultation must be had with those affected firstly and their observations should be considered prior to observations of others. He advised that he is informed the project might not be a Part VIII.

Cllr. Donohue stated if the project team want everyone on board, the stakeholders need to be onboard. Cllr. Byrne stated there should be a meeting to advise the Councillors of proposals contained in the plan adding that the plan will need to be amended to make it work. He called on the Director to engage with Mr. Mostert, Executive Architect before Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June to provide an update. Cllr. Kinane highlighted concerns regarding the removal of parking spaces in Gort and enquired how this will be addressed. The Members requested more information on the project, Ms. Ruane replied that she will contact Mr. Alan Farrell, Director of Services on concerns raised.

Cllr. Maher requested an update from Uisce Eireann regarding a boil water notice in Loughrea which he states has been in place for two months, he stated he received an email advising the matter would be rectified within a few days from the issuing of the notice and enquired if the boil water notice is still in place and when it will be lifted. He requested Uisce Eireann fix the problem very soon or to revert to sourcing water from Loughrea Lake which he said is probably the best source of water in Ireland.

A discussion took place regarding the sequence of traffic lights at the Westbridge in Loughrea, which, Cllr. Maher stated is causing havoc in the town since they were changed, he asked why the change had taken place. Ms. Lowe advised that the traffic lights at the Westbridge are a regular source of comment as the junction is operating at capacity, with significant throughput of traffic, with 5 roads leading to it together with other accesses and exits in close proximity. She advised that it is a complex junction and operating system and there is a MOVA system in place and small adjustments can have wider impacts on traffic flow. She advised that this junction is continuously monitored with a view to implementing improvements and it falls under the remit of the Municipal District Office technical team to assess any submissions in relation to this and to exercise engineering judgement as to whether changes can and should be made. She added with respect to the junction, there is no perfect solution, but the aim is to balance the needs of motorists, pedestrians, vulnerable users and cyclists. She added that the Local Traffic Plan (LTP) will shortly be published and Systra will be requested to review this junction with a view to finding a better solution, this she stated, will be discussed with the Members. She stated the LTP will be an appendix to the Local Area Plan for which the Members and public can make submissions. Mr. Coyle advised that on receipt of issues raised by members of the public traffic solutions were contacted to improve traffic flow, he stated, the junction is continuously monitored. Cllr. Maher stated he wants his name disassociated with the recent alterations made to these lights.

Cllr. Canning requested an update on the provision of signage on the N65 at the Green Door where, he stated, there is a very dangerous section of road. He thanked the staff of the MD for arranging the cutting of hedges at the Old School House in Portumna and for the installation of traffic feedback signs in Abbey and Portumna.

Cllr. Kelly stated that he was unable to attend the MD Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> May due to a road traffic accident. He said no amount of signage will deal with bad driving.

Cllr. Kelly welcomed funding provided for resurfacing works outside Kilcooley National School.

He expressed his dissatisfaction where Cllr. Evelyn Parons who attended the Regional Health Forum was not afforded the opportunity to make comments due to Standing Orders despite her three attempts to do so.

A discussion took place regarding the number of planning permission refusals in the Municipal District. Cllr. Byrne proposed that a workshop should take place to discuss the implementation of the County Development Plan, which he stated a member of the Planning Team should attend. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Donohue. Cllr. Canning requested the workshop be held in the Loughrea Municipal District. Ms. Ruane responded that she will follow up on this request and that it can be included as an item on the agenda. The members agreed the workshop would be beneficial.

### **Flooding Update**

**LMD2302**

In Mr. Gallagher, in a written correspondence he requested that the Members be advised he will provide a full update on the South Galway Flooding Scheme at the June MD meeting.

Cllr. Byrne stated on 19<sup>th</sup> May the Members attended a meeting in Gort with stakeholders and Ryan Hanley where issues regarding the scheme were addressed and the EIS progressed. He stated that the culvert was identified as a major problem under the M18 as it is required to take up to 100 cubic meters of water per second but at present only has capacity to take up to 35 cubic meters of water per second. He stated it should be pressed upon TII that this is a major flaw, and that co-operation is required from TII to ensure the culvert is fit for purpose. He added, in 2023 the project is going to public exhibition stage and the position regarding culvert can delay the project or put it at risk.

Cllr. Byrne proposed that the Members meet with TII and the Executive to deal with the issue as being provided with updates at this stage is not enough, he stated that the design should be completed by Ryan Hanley. Cllr. Kinane seconded the proposal. Cllr. Murphy stated that the error rests with TII and that the problem was flagged to TII at the design stage. He added that TII should carry the financial burden in resolving the matter and said resolving the issue may lead to closing motorway during remedial works.

Cllr. Finnerty stated significant progress was made at the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May and asked if TII will resolve the problem, he stated widening the culvert could resolve the issue as the area is prone to more flooding in the future. He stated that including this project there are 3 major projects ongoing in the MD at present, the other projects being the Greenway and the Gort Town Enhancement Project. He said this project needs to be put to public consultation and a resolution reached. Cllr. Kinane expressed her concern regarding the cost of remedying the matter together and the need to close the motorway, she stressed that TII need to attend and to act promptly to deal with the problem.

Cllr. Donohue stated that she understood Minister O'Donovan was to travel to the area regarding this matter. She stated that of the €16 billion surplus announced a few million euros could fix the problem with the culvert. She proposed that 8 of her fellow Members whose parties are in Government should correspond with Minister

O'Donovan this week requesting him to visit Gort to remedy the culvert, Cllr. Kelly seconded the proposal.

Cllr. Byrne stated that in 2016 Mr. Enda Kenny, Taoiseach gave a commitment that the flood scheme would be dealt with, he added that Micheal Martyn and Leo Varadkar promised they would follow up, this now needs to be dealt with. Cllr. Byrne stated that Minister O'Donovan will be in Gort within the coming fortnight to address the issue and ensure it is dealt with.

### **Cathaoirleach's Business**

**LMD2303**

Cllr. Kinane enquired regarding the provision of funding for resurfacing of footpaths in Renville Cemetery. She enquired who will maintain and repair the Renville Gate Lodge and Tower House which is in a state of deterioration and should be repaired before it is too late. Cllr. Kinane thanked Cathaoirleach Maher for officially opening trails at the Cowpark. She stated that there is an issue with horses in the area and enquired if permission was given to retain horses at the location, Cllr. Maher agreed that the horses should not be present in the area, Ms. Ruane responded that she will follow up on this matter with Michael Owens, Director of Services.

Cllr. Donohue stated that she had received calls from constituents advising that insurance claims were disallowed by IPB Insurances, she asked with whom liability lies and raised concerns regarding potholes on roads in the MD stating that the overlay/resurfacing of roads is unravelling at some locations and enquired if roads can be repaired to a higher standard. With respect to IPB insurances, Ms. Ruane stated she will contact the Finance Department.

Cllr. Byrne raised two areas of concern. He stated he carried out a safety analysis of emerging traffic from junctions where there is a significant amount of growth, he stated there are no sightlines making it very dangerous and he asked the local office to deal with this. He said he has submitted a list of 30 or 40 areas.

Cllr. Byrne raised safety concerns regarding the N67 between Drumacoo and Kilcolgan and stated that there have been numerous accidents at this location and stated cars drive too fast in the area. Cllr. Byrne stated he had been contacted by elderly people who are nervous of driving at that stretch of the N67. He requested TII and Galway County Council review sightlines and speed on that section of road and asked the Engineer to attend to this matter urgently. Mr. Coyle responded that the Council has linked in with TII and the National Road Design Office to consider possible solutions. Mr. Coyle added, he will contact Colas with a view to ascertaining what can be done with respect to sightlines and additional signage for National Roads. He added that tenders will be issued shortly with respect to hedge cutting at junctions.

Cllr. Murphy requested that the traffic island be removed from the road at Labane graveyard as he said larger vehicles including cars with trailers are required to drive on other side of the road to make the turn. He said the island is not serving to improve the junction. Mr. Coyle responded that he would review the situation regarding the traffic calming island.

Cllr. Murphy stated that the crossroads at Killeenavara in Ballinderreen is very dangerous as traffic is not stopping as it approaches the junction, he proposed installing rumble strips at the location to slow down traffic approaching the junction.

Cllr. Byrne seconded the proposal.

Cllr. Maher requested Mr. Alan Farrell, DOS to attend the next MD meeting to provide an update on the progress of the town hall in Loughrea. He thanked all who attended the Mayor's ball and for contributions made to the charities. He enquired when the Local Area Plan will be open to the public for submissions. Cllr. Maher enquired if fobs can be provided to the Councillors to provide them with access to the Loughrea Regional Office. In response to Cllr. Maher's question on the purpose of transferring Community Wardens to other Municipal District Offices, Ms. Lowe advised that administration and engineering grades are also subject to transfers within the Council.

Cllr. Canning stated that he has been contacted by staff of the Bank of Ireland, Portumna advising they wish to provide wheelchair access to the bank they state they are required to provide funding to the Council to resurface a section of road. He sought clarification on the position and will provide further details to Ms. Lowe to follow up.

Cllr. Canning asked if the Council would link in with Coillte regarding the presence of deer on roads in the Forest Park area in Portumna which he stated is extremely dangerous. He enquired if the area can be fenced urgently. Ms. Lowe responded that she would discuss possible options with Mr. Coyle, and she will visit the site to review the position.

He also requested if safe access could be provided for people fishing in the Portumna area as access to different points along the lake and river can be problematic.

Cllr. Canning asked if a disabled parking bay can be provided outside the pharmacy in Portumna. He complimented Karl Brundrit and the staff in Portumna on the installation of mats at the swim area which increases safety. Cllr. Canning enquired when an Engineer and Driver for the patching unit will be appointed to the Portumna area. Ms. Lowe advised an Executive Engineer panel is in place and it is hoped to fill the Engineering position in the Loughrea MD very soon.

Cllr. Kinane requested written confirmation that hedge cutting will commence in the Maree area this year.

Cllr. Byrne asked if the Council's website can be updated with information on Declarations submitted by Members.

Cllr. Donohue requested an updated on the 1.5m cycle guideline signage and in particular on the Loughrea to Gort Road. Ms. Lowe advised that the 1.5m guideline signage can only be applied on wider roads, such as national and former national roads with hard shoulders. There are limited options beyond this in respect of installation of the signage. Cllr. Donohue also sought clarification on the position regarding dieback on Ash Trees and enquired if anything can be done to give flexibility landowners to fell ash trees during nesting season. She stated that if landowners cut trees during the nesting season, they will be liable to penalties, Cllr. Murphy agreed with the request for a change in the rule. Cllr. Maher stated two farmers requested a letter of indemnity from the Council to enable them to cut Ash

trees. Cllr. Murphy enquired if they can be reclassified by the Department of Agriculture as scrub. Cllr. Donohue proposed the Municipal District to send a letter to the Deputy McConalogue, TD, Minister for Agriculture seeking financial assistance to enable landowners and this Municipal District to professionally remove the Ash Trees affected with the Ash Dieback Disease on Public roads. Cllr. Kinane seconded the proposal. Ms. Lowe responded that it would be useful if the Department of Agriculture would provide advice for the public.

Cllr. Donoghue stated that a public meeting is scheduled to take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023 with concerned citizens and all are welcome to attend.

**Any other business**

**LMD2304**

The members expressed their appreciation to Mr. Coyle for his hard work and dedication in the Loughrea Municipal District over the previous fourteen months and stated that he has left a positive mark on the MD. Mr. Coyle takes up his position as Senior Executive Engineer in the Tuam Municipal on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June and the members extended their good wishes to him. Cllr. Donohue stated that a public Meeting for the Concerned Citizens Group will take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June in the Temperance Hall, Loughrea.

The members also extended their good wishes to Mr. Pat Finn who is retiring from Galway County Council. Cllrs. Byrne and Finnerty paid tribute to Mr. Finn stating that he put a wonderful effort into the Gort area, Cllr. Byrne wished to inform Mr. Finn that a lot of communities would like to thank him for his service over the years.

**CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN**



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**CLLR JIMMY MCCLEARN  
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD**