

Minutes of Meeting of the Environmental Protection and Agriculture Strategic Policy Committee held on Wednesday 23rd July 2025 at 11 a.m. in the Council Chamber (and via Microsoft Teams).

Members in attendance:

Cllr. James Charity, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. Karey McHugh
Cllr. Cillian Keane (online)
Cllr. Dermot Connolly (online)
Cllr. Andrew Reddington (online)
Cllr. Geraldine Donohue (online)
Ms. Karina Finn
Ms. Elaine Murphy
Mr. Kevin O’Crowley

Apologies:

Mr. Noel Finnegan

Oifigigh I láthair:

Ms. Ann Dolan, A/Director of Services
Mr. Mike Melody, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr Colin Ryder, Executive Scientist
Ms. Mary McGann, Administrative Officer
Ms. Angela Quinn, Senior Staff Officer
Mr. Felix Chimedza, Assistant Staff Officer

Cllr. James Charity, Cathaoirleach, welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies received.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of Meeting of the Environment Protection and Agriculture SPC held on 11th March 2025.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2025 were proposed by Mr. Kevin O’Crowley, seconded by Cllr. Geraldine Donohue, and agreed by all.

Matters Arising:

Cllr. Connolly raised the issue of worsening illegal dumping in Ballinasloe and urged the Council to clean-up blackspot areas and install CCTV, in particular at Pollboy. In response, Ms. Dolan confirmed that funding has been received from the Department for this location under the Anti-Dumping Initiative, and the Environment Department are liaising with the Housing department to address the issue of illegal parking of a caravan at the slipway and hope to action this by mid to Late August. Following this process, the main focus under the funding will be to get clean-up works done in Pollboy and if there is any residual funding, it will be used in other areas of Ballinasloe. In relation to CCTV, Ms. Dolan confirmed that an Oversight Committee is in place to review CCTV policy to ensure full compliance with GDPR requirements and in any case, the Council will be obliged to erect overt signage advising the public that CCTV is in place at any relevant locations under future policy requirements. Ms. Dolan also stated that the Waste Presentation Bye-Laws are being implemented on an ongoing basis through inspections and spot-checks with progression to prosecutions where required. Cllr. Connolly welcomed the proposed actions at Poolboy and expressed appreciation for the efforts to reach a successful conclusion on a difficult issue.

Cllr. Donohue acknowledged the excellent work carried out by Community Wardens and volunteers in cleaning up local areas. In this regard, Cllr. Donohue raised the issue of illegal dumping of domestic waste at bottle banks and queried the extent of checks on payment of waste collection bills as part of Waste Presentation Bye-Laws. In response, Ms. Dolan advised that receipts for other methods of waste management are checked including proof of payment for services at Civic Amenity Sites, and in addition, where deemed necessary, additional checks are conducted with waste collection service providers to confirm valid waste collection arrangements are in place from a household. Ms. Dolan acknowledged the difficulties in dealing with illegal dumping of waste at textile banks and stated that additional out-of-hours monitoring by Community Wardens was now being conducted in conjunction with an awareness campaign and multi-language signage, to promote appropriate use of the bottle bank services.

Cllr. Mc Hugh alluded to the issue of illegal dumping at textile banks in Palace Grounds Tuam and queried if the Council are liaising with the Contractor regarding additional scheduling of collection services as required. Cllr. McHugh also queried if it was possible to remove the textile banks to an alternative location such as the Civic Amenity Site. In response to Cllr. Mc Hugh, Mr Melody confirmed that the Tuam site is serviced every 2 weeks by the service provider and acknowledged the difficulties with the textile bring banks which are being experienced nationwide. In this regard, Mr. Melody stated that the Local authority is guided by the EU Waste Directive which obliges each member state to provide the textile segregation service, however, the growth of the fast fashion industry has overloaded the market and service providers are withdrawing the service in some locations, which means we must redirect customers in these locations to our Civic Amenity Sites.

2. Presentation on Management of Historic Landfills – Mike Melody, Senior Executive Engineer

Mr. Melody confirmed that Galway County Council have 18 historic landfills which are registered with the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) under Section 22 of the Waste Management Act 1996. Mr. Melody outlined the process for attaining a Certificate of Authorisation (CoA), and the agencies and staff involved in this process. Mr. Melody also outlined the remediation programme for historic landfills post-CoA issue including the nature of works and national and local sources of funding.

Cllr. Charity thanked Mr. Melody for the informative presentation and asked for the presentation to be circulated to the members after the meeting.

Cllr. Donohue queried if remediation works at landfills can include planting of trees and in response, Mr Melody confirmed that the main focus of remedial works is capping of the site and this membrane cannot be damaged through developments such as tree planting, however, the EPA are open to integrating amenity facilities where it doesn't interfere with the integrity of the main landfill site and is in compliance with the licence conditions.

Cllr Donohue requested an update on the Gort Civic Amenity Site and in response, Mr. Melody advised that tenders are currently being evaluated, and this process will be completed in the coming weeks.

Mr. O'Crowley enquired about the gases in landfills and asked if there's any way it can be utilised. In response, Mr. Ryder pointed out the site was last used a long time ago so would only have residual gas which is not viable to extract. Mr. Ryder confirmed that the main issue is leachate and the focus is to eliminate fall-off into water bodies through capping and remediation works.

Ms. Finn enquired about the frequency of water quality testing and the main chemicals which were used in the process, and the penalties in place in the case of non-compliance with standards. In response, Mr. Ryder advised that only one EPA licence has been issued to date, and that in the first two years of the licence, surface and ground water quality is tested six times per year, and thereafter testing will be on a quarterly basis. Mr. Ryder stated that Ammonia Nitrogen is tested downstream, and in the case of non-compliance, the EPA will carry out site inspections and work with the licence holder to remediate the situation. Mr. Ryder noted that if Galway County Council is not compliant, it will result in prosecutions and fines, so the onus is on the Council to do all remediation and post remediation works. Mr. Melody pointed out that the EPA set out specific remediation measures and the scope within the licence for those measures, and the Council adhere with these requirements.

Ms. Finn enquired if landfills were taken into account when identifying high risk areas on nitrate level PIP (Pollution Impact Potential) maps, and in response, Mr. Melody advised he would need to check further if historic landfills were included on such mapping.

In response to a query from Cllr Andrew Reddington regarding any remediation plans for landfills in the Headford area, Mr Melody advised that it is not yet assessed, and consultants have been engaged to carry out the application process for the Certificate of Authorisation. Mr. Melody also confirmed that the City Council will be responsible for the licensing process for Carrowbrowne landfill.

In response to a query from Cllr Donohue about the range of land uses allowed when remediating landfills, Mr. Melody stated that the Gort landfill site is on public land so the Council could consider recreational uses such as campsites or walkways on condition they do not interfere with the primary landfill site. Mr. Melody clarified that the recreational uses for Pollboy and Kilconnell landfills were subject to consultation with the EPA and had now progressed to planning stage. In response to a query from Cllr. Connolly on the extent of screening for the Kilconnell project, Mr. Melody confirmed that there was a request for further information on the ecological components and these surveys were being updated and the updated reports will be re-submitted.

3. Any Other Business

Cllr Donohue expressed concern about the environment impact of decommissioning 70 wind turbines at the Derrybrien Windfarm which would have been a source of energy generation for the local community. Ms Dolan stated that discussions are ongoing with the Planning Department, and they are in the process of making a submission to An Coimisiún Pleanála.

Cllr Connolly referenced the upcoming meeting in Ballinasloe regarding a proposed Biomass plant which has gone for decision to An Coimisiún Pleanála, and enquired if this Committee had any role is evaluating the potential impact and scale of development if the location is close to a river. In response to Cllr Connolly, Ms Dolan stated that Galway County Council would have no input into the planning process for a biogas plant and all the issues raised will be part of planning evaluation process.

Cllr. Connolly raised the issue of the blue tongue virus affecting the agricultural sector in England and Wales and enquired if there is a proactive role for the local authority in this regard, as it would have a potentially big economic effect in the west of Ireland. In response, Ms. Dolan advised that preventative measures would be the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture, but the Council would link in with their Veterinary Inspectors to support and raise awareness of any actions brought forward by the Department at a local

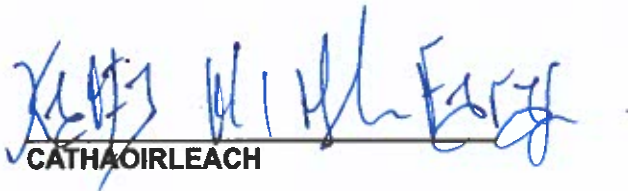
level. Cllr. Connolly agreed to send the correspondence received from the Shorthorn Society so that Ms. Dolan could link in with the Department.

Ms. Finn enquired if the Council could provide education on disinfection protocols as part of farm inspections, and in response, Ms Dolan advised that proper procedures are in place and being adhered to on farm inspections.

Cllr Charity thanked the members for their input and assistance over the past year and noted that this was his last meeting as Cathaoirleach of the SPC.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the SPC would be held online on Monday 6th October 2025.

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CATHAOIRLEACH

06/10/25
DATE