

**MINUTES OF THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION &
EMERGENCY SERVICES SPC**

**HYBRID MEETING HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE
ON WEDNESDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2025 AT 11.30am**

I Láthair:

Baill: Comh. Pádraig Mac an Iomaire (Chairperson)
Comh. Tomás Ó Curraóin
Ms. Anne Mitchell
Mr. Mark Green
Cllr. Seán Broderick
Cllr. Martin McNamara

Baill ar Líne: Cllr. Michael Connolly
Cllr. Peter Feeney
Cllr. Siobhán McHugh Ryan
Mr. Aodán MacDonncha

Oifigí: Mr. Uinsinn Finn, Director of Services
Mr. Tom Prendergast, Senior Engineer
Mr. Enda Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. Geraldine Byrne, Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary-Esther McHugh, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: -

Absent: Mr. Colm Ryan

Comh. Mac an Iomaire commenced the meeting.

Item No. 1: Minutes of the Physical Development, Transportation and Emergency Services SPC Meeting held on 10th September 2025

- On the **Proposal** of Comh. Ó Curraóin and **Seconded** by Cllr. Connolly the minutes of the Physical Development, Transportation and Emergency Services meeting of the Strategic Policy Committee held 10th September 2025 were agreed and there were no matters arising.

Item No. 2: Matters Arising

- A member queried if there was any progress on parking passes for carers and asked was there a timeline for action.
- Another member raised the hedge-cutting policy and referred to works along the R339 Monivea Road, where Coillte are clearing spruce trees. Concern was expressed that ash and beech do not grow naturally in this area, and with the

spruce removed, the remaining trees may be more exposed, more unstable, and therefore more likely to fall onto the road.

- The member queried whether a licence is required for the removal of these trees, and whether Galway County Council can forego the licence requirement in order to remove dangerous trees promptly. Clarification was also sought on whether the engineers could support or progress this work.
- The SPC hedge-cutting item was raised. It was noted that landowners are responsible for dangerous trees, and the Council can issue notices and coordinate through the Area Office. A letter is required to progress this. It was also recalled from a previous plenary meeting that areas outside the road boundary are the Council's responsibility, and areas inside are the landowners.
- It was also raised that the policy couldn't be supported as minor roads could be missed out on and are the roads that present the most danger. It was also raised that roadside trees can be complex to manage, and there is an awareness of the responsibilities involved. There may not be much scope to place additional pressure on people regarding tree cutting. It was also shared that the Department of Agriculture provides a useful guide outlining responsibilities in relation to tree-cutting.
- It was highlighted that some measure of assessment is necessary to determine whether a tree warrants removal, and that the landowner may be liable from an insurance perspective if a tree is deemed dangerous and no action is taken.
- Operational issues were also noted: fallen leaves are blocking gullies, contributing to flooding in certain areas. The impact of trees on drainage systems and the distinction between public and private (demesne) roads were discussed.
- The Council referenced the national guidelines for landowners regarding tree-cutting. It was noted that a tree-felling licence may be required in certain circumstances, with specific exemptions applying where appropriate. The Area Engineer generally makes an initial assessment on whether a tree presents a hazard, and further professional advice from a tree surgeon may be sought where needed. The Council can issue notices to landowners where action is required. With reference to the carers permit query It was noted that the Council is considering the allocation of an additional staff member to support this area of work, alongside broader responsibilities relating to parking management.

Item No. 3: Urban Areas (30km/h) Speed Limit Review

- Tom Prendergast gave a presentation on the speed limit review Phase 1 (implemented Feb 2025) reduced Local Road limits from 80 km/h to 60 km/h. Phase 2 proposes 30 km/h limits in built-up/urban areas and urban schools by March 2027, implemented via Special Speed Limit Bye-laws. Phases 3 and 4 propose reductions on National Secondary Roads (100 → 80 km/h) and 50 km/h limits at rural schools (dates TBC).
- Updated Guidelines (Chapters 4 & 7 and Appendix G) define Urban Speed Limit Zones as areas with high population density, essential urban infrastructure, and regular vulnerable-road-user interaction. A 30 km/h limit should apply to urban cores, housing estates, residential streets, and roads adjacent to schools within

the USLZ. Small rural villages generally do not qualify unless engineering measures first address high existing speeds.

- The requirements for Local Authorities was also presented and LAs must identify all built-up areas, review current limits, determine appropriate limits, assess periodic limits at urban schools, complete Appendix A (by 25 Feb 2026), prepare mapping, run the Special Speed Limit Bye-law process (to conclude by 30 Oct 2026), install signage before activation, and update MapRoad AMS. DoT funding is contingent on meeting all deadlines.
- The next steps were also presented: previous countywide review (2019) was superseded by the National Review. GCC implemented Feb 2025 bye-laws (retaining 80 km/h at 8 locations, introducing 30 km/h in 76 estates, and 4 periodic school zones). The proposed countywide review will exclude Phases 3 & 4 (and National Primary Routes) pending new guidelines. 43 CSO-defined urban areas and 63 existing 50 km/h Special Limits are to be reviewed, along with 287 public submissions. Timeline includes MD briefings (Jan 2026), statutory engagement, mapping, Council reports (Mar–Apr 2026), public consultation (May 2026), and full conclusion by Oct 2026; delays will require limiting the review to Phase 2 built-up areas only.
- Tom was thanked for his presentation and it was asked how “self-regulating” and “self-enforcing” speed limits would function in practice, and it was suggested that the rollout of 30 km/h zones should be supported by appropriate engineering input and complementary infrastructure.
- Members generally welcomed the proposed reductions but expressed concern that rural villages are being treated in the same manner as urban areas, despite very different conditions; Menlough was specifically referenced, where 76% of drivers exceed the existing limits. Issues around Safe Routes to School were highlighted, with repeated emphasis on the need for physical engineering measures such as ramps and traffic-calming rather than relying on signage alone. Reference was made to ten fatalities in the past decade, petitions from families, and a previously drafted traffic-calming scheme that did not receive funding, with a request that engineering interventions accompany any new school-related speed limits to slow vehicles through villages, including the use of surface-based signage.
- Concerns were also expressed about long-standing delays in progressing schemes, particularly those involving TII, and the difficulty for communities in understanding such timelines. It was noted that requests for ramps and traffic-calming, including in areas such as Newtown-Mountbellew, have been ongoing for years.
- An issue was raised regarding the Tuam–Milltown N17 right-turn junction, which has remained unresolved for nine months due to the RSA’s requirement for traffic data that cannot currently be shared by the local authority for data-protection reasons; clarification was sought on how the required data could be obtained.
- Concerns were raised regarding how “self-regulation” of speed limits will work in practical terms. There was disappointment expressed that progress on the R336 and Safe Routes to School schemes, particularly in Spiddal, remains slow and it was highlighted the need for rural areas to be addressed and not left behind.

- The Council responded that a recurring theme in the discussion was the need for engineering measures to precede or accompany any speed-limit changes, in line with national guidelines, where the local authority should first investigate physical interventions and then supplement these with revised limits.
- It was noted that there is no dedicated additional funding for such works and that all engineering measures must come from existing annual Department allocations. Menlough was acknowledged as a location where compliance issues have been highlighted, and the Council emphasised the importance of measures that support adherence to existing limits.
- Regarding school speed limits, it was clarified that in this phase any schools located within urban zones or within existing 50 km/h limits, such as the school in Athenry, will transition to 30 km/h during prescribed periods, while rural schools outside 50 km/h limits will be addressed under Phase 4, which recommends 50 km/h limits for those locations.
- Funding will be available for street-surface markings, which may reduce the need for excessive signage. The Council reiterated that self-regulating limits should reflect the speeds of approximately 85% of drivers.
- It was confirmed that the R336 is included in the current review and that Safe Routes to School continues to guide traffic-calming priorities. Queries regarding the N17 and RSA funding requirements were noted, and the Council undertook to follow up on the data-related issue.

Item No. 4: Roads Hedge and Verge Maintenance

- The Council advised that the hedge-cutting programme is being updated, with an additional €200k allocation to be distributed through the existing Roads Programme and available for works from January, ensuring it falls within the hedge-cutting season.
- Positive feedback was noted regarding the strong response to hedge-cutting in Conamara, with particular acknowledgment of the work of the local office in Carrow and the area team. It was highlighted that, depending on budget pressures, some minor roads may not be addressed in future cycles.
- The Council shared that Wildlife, National Parks and biodiversity obligations were referenced as areas that will be further developed in policy terms. It was noted that hedge-cutting is costly and subject to budget constraints, and this is the first year operating a specific hedge-cutting allocation, which area engineers are managing alongside weather-related challenges. The level of service delivered locally was reported as being above that of many other local authorities.

Item No. 5: Any Other Business


- Under Any Other Business, the meeting noted that speed-camera enforcement is a matter for An Garda Síochána and not the local authority, with the Council's role limited to setting speed limits; the rollout of camera enforcement is led by the Gardaí, although the local authority continues to cooperate where required.
- Concerns were raised about ongoing delays in activating newly installed pedestrian crossings, with some locations waiting months for electrical providers

to complete connections; the Council confirmed it is actively engaging with providers to ensure crossings are switched on without prolonged delays.

- An update was provided on the funding position for the Loughrea–Craughwell–Clarinbridge scheme, where a briefing note has been supplied to the Municipal District members and a meeting with the Department is scheduled for Thursday 11th December 2025. It was outlined that while the scheme has a €30 million allocation, any costs exceeding this must be met by the local authority, including the 15% match-funding requirement of approximately €2.6 million, as well as project-management and resourcing costs borne by GCC; concerns were expressed that the terms are not acceptable and require further discussion at both SPC and plenary level.
- Appreciation was expressed for the work progressing through the infrastructure and rail committees, including advocacy for the Western Rail Corridor to Claremorris, and thanks were extended to the Minister and Galway County Council staff following recent engagements at Ceannt Station.
- A request was made to add Waste Water as an agenda item for a future meeting, and it was confirmed that additional items from members are welcome.
- Suggested dates for upcoming meetings were outlined as 4th March 2026, 10th June 2026, 9th September 2026, and 9th December 2026.

The meeting concluded.

Críochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.

Signed &
Approved by:  Date: 26/3/2026
Comh. Pádraig Mac an Iomaire
Cathaoirleach