



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of the Climate Action, Biodiversity and Heritage Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 25th March at 10 am in Council Chambers

I LÁTHAIR:

Baill:

Cllr. Tomás Grealish
Cllr. Paul Killilea (Chairperson)
Cllr. Ollie Turner (online)
Cllr. Laurie Harney
Cllr. Martina Kinane (online)
Ms. Hazel Morrison-Pagett
Ms. Justine Delaney (online)

Oifigigh:

Mr Uisinn Finn, Director of Services, Physical Dev, Fire Emergency, Climate
Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services, Planning
Mr. Daithi Flood, A/Senior Engineer, Housing
Ms. Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer, Planning (online)
Ms. Tina Ryan, Climate Action Coordinator, Climate Unit
Ms. Denise Feeney, Community Climate Action Officer, Climate Unit
Ms. Anne Power, Senior Staff Officer, Planning
Mr. Felix Chimedza, Assistant Staff Officer, Environment

Apologies:

Cllr. Ivan Canning, Chairperson
Mr. Peter Butler
Ms. Rosina Joyce, Biodiversity Officer, Planning

Item No. 1 – Confirmation of Minutes and Matters arising from Climate Action, Biodiversity and Heritage Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on the 26th of November 2025.

The Minutes of the meeting of the 26th of November 2025

Proposed: Cllr. Laurie Harney
Seconded: Cllr. Tomas Grealish

Item No. 2. – Social Housing Retrofit Programme

Mr. Flood presented an update on the retrofit programme to date, and informed members that Galway County Council hopes to bring the social housing stock to A1 rating.

Mr. Flood advised that it is proposed to retrofit 130 units in 2026. He noted the *BER Illusion - Performance Gap* advising that:

- Meeting retrofit targets can yield lower than expected carbon reductions.
- ESRI Metered data shows theoretical energy savings often over predict actual real-world reductions due to “Rebound Effect” where occupants of poorly rated homes historically under-heat to save money.

He informed the members that Part L of the Technical Guidance Document set higher Building Energy standards in 2017, thus, the Energy Retrofit Programme relates only to GCC Social Housing Stock pre-2017.

Mr Flood mentioned that in the Deep Energy Retrofit Framework 2026 – 2029 there is a new procurement strategy for choosing contractors. There are 3 maintenance areas and each area has a cascading framework of 3 contractors to complete energy retrofit works.

He updated on the: Circular 09-2026 Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme 2026

- 3,500 units to be retrofitted nationally in 2026
- Target of 130 Units in 2026 (3.7% of national target)
- Increased funding from €34k to €38k

Mr Flood outlined the key challenges of the Energy Retrofit:

- National programme aims to have all social housing stock to a B1 standard by 2030
- Average cost of a retrofit in 2025 was €49k per unit
- Completing Construction Works with Tenant in-situ
- Competition with other National Social Housing Stock programmes (i.e. Voids and Planned Maintenance).
- Logistical and geographical issues 6. Behavioural change –Tenants discretion.

Mr. Flood commented on Galway County Council Energy Retrofit Programme shortlisted for Irish Construction Excellence Awards in 2026 to be held on the 28th of May 2026 at Convention Centre Dublin.

Cllr. Harney asked where the funding will come from for the social housing stock that is going to be retrofitted this current year as there is a variance of €5m as the grant is 38K and average cost is €49K per unit.

Ms. Morrison-Pagett enquired about the shortfalls in funding and asked if there is any policy to adjust for the shortfalls.

Mr. Flood noted that they are engaging the department in relation to the issue and acknowledges that funding is a challenge. To address the funding gap they are required to focus on less challenging housing stock.

Item No. 3 – Climate Action Update

Ms. Ryan updated the members on Galway County Council significant energy users for 2024 with a goal to reduce energy use by 50% by 2030.

Energy Use: Significant work completed in public lighting through LED retrofitting with the programme 95% complete. Ballinasloe and Tuam Leisure Centre under Design stage with the EXEED Programme. Four buildings are included in Pathfinder II Programme: Ballinasloe Library & Offices, Tuam Regional Offices & Library, Ballinasloe Area Office and Westside Library.

Ms. Ryan commented on the Environmental Management System (ISO 50001) certification

- All 5 non-conformances from Internal Audit April 2025 were fully resolved.
- (NSAI) External Audit February 2026 identified 6 opportunities of improvement and approved to proceed to registration assessment.

Ms. Ryan advised that, 85 applications under the 2nd round of the Community Climate Action Funds, to value > €3 million, were currently under assessment and informed members of additional funding opportunities:

- EU JTF START Scheme – coming up in June and restricted to Ballinasloe MD
- Northern Regional Assembly Decarbonising Zone Adaptation Scheme
- Galway County Council Decarbonizing Zone Fund for Aran Islands will be opened in the coming months.
- Potential for Community Benefits Funds from solar and wind farms

Ms. Ryan gave an update on the planned upcoming events.

- Understanding Climate Change with Jacinta Barrins, Inis Mór - 27th March
- Retrofit Rig - Carraroe 27th April to 1st May and Clifden 5th to 8th May
- Climate Inspirations Festival – 25th to 28th June
- Climate Action Week – October 2026

Cllr. Killilea thanked Ms. Ryan for the presentation and applauded the upcoming event in Inis Mór. Cllr. Kinane acknowledged Ms. Ryan and team on the excellent work they are doing with the communities, evidenced by the volume of applications and events being attended and extended his condolences to Ms. Feeney on the passing of her father. Cllr. Killilea on behalf of the board also extended his condolences to Ms. Feeney.

Cllr Harney requested that LAWPRO be invited to carry out an updated presentation. It was also agreed that the Comharchumann Fuinneamh should be invited to provide an update on the work underway in the DZ zone.

Item No. 4 – Heritage Office Update

Ms. Mannion outlined the significant work completed by the Heritage Office and summarised the highlights of the Heritage Office Annual Report 2025:

- Delivery of conservation, education, and community heritage programmes and heritaeg audits and projects across County Galway.
- Significant progress on Conservation Management Plans and conservation works under the Community Monuments Fund and Irish Walled Town Network Funding and Heritage Council Community Grants Scheme.
- Expansion of digital heritage initiatives, including new story maps, online resources, and mapping projects.

Ms. Mannion acknowledged the support received from Kenny Park GAA Club and Mary Curran, landowner in carrying out conservation works to the walls abutting Kenny Park.

Ms. Mannion gave a report on the funding received from the Heritage Council Community grants with Galway County receiving €130K out of the €1.3m in national funding.

She noted that the Story Mapping Project had received positive feedback and been shortlisted under the Better Public Service Awards. She noted that the Heritage Office is working in partnership with the GIS Section and Environment Section in digitally mapping the graveyards.

Ms. Mannion gave an update on Heritage Week 2025, noting that 109 events were held throughout the county including 6 digital heritage projects.

Ms. Mannion highlighted the Quarter 1 – 2026 Applications for Grants & Funding:

- Community Monuments Fund
- Heritage Council Heritage Plan Projects
- Irish Walled Town Network- Athenry Town Walls Capital Works
- Irish Walled Town Network – Events and Interpretation
- Creative Ireland
- Decade of Centenaries
- Galway County Council Heritage Grants
- Heritage Council Grant Scheme – Support & Advice

She noted that the Community Monuments Fund is a competitive process which offers 3 main streams of funding and 19 applications were received this year, with 15 going through after being assessed (that being the maximum number of projects that can be put forward). She commented that Galway County Council has an independent panel that assess and score the projects.

Ms. Mannion advised that, under the Galway County Council's Grant Scheme, 61 applications were received and 60 applicants received funding for a wide range of heritage projects and initiatives. She also said that in relation to the Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme that in the region of 40 letters of support were written and advice and guidance was given to numerous groups.

Ms. Mannion provided an update on the National Famine Commemoration 2026. Galway County Council and the Irish Workhouse Centre were successful in their bid to host the 2026 National Famine Commemoration in Portumna. The Programme developed collaboratively between Galway County Council, the Irish Workhouse Centre, local partners and community groups throughout the county and noted the following:

- The official State Commemoration Ceremony will take place on Sunday, 17 May, concluding the programme of events.
- The ceremony will honour all those who suffered or died during the Great Famine and acknowledge its profound national legacy.
- The event will include formal State protocol and participation from national representatives, local communities, and diaspora partners: 60- 100 Ambassadors attending the event.
- This commemoration will highlight Portumna's nationally significant heritage and reinforce the lasting impact of the Irish Workhouse Centre's educational and cultural work.

Ms. Mannion informed the members of programmes to be held during the commemoration:

- Community Programme: 9–15 May
- A week of learning, engagement and reflection: 9 May – Academic Conference on the Irish Famine
- 10 May – Community Groups Event
- 11 May – Launch of the Bi-lingual Children’s Workbook
- 12–15 May – Lunch & Learn Talks (daily) featuring historians, researchers, and heritage Specialists.

Ms. Morrison-Pagett asked if there was an update on the Community Archaeologist issue that was brought up last year.

Mr. Hanrahan replied and noted that the position is listed in the work force plan and it is proposed to fill the position on a full-time basis, and this has been put forward to the Department.

Item No. 6 AOB and Agenda Items for next SPC Meeting

Ms. Ryan informed members that the dates for the 2026 meetings were agreed upon.

Meeting Concluded.