



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Galway County Council
Monthly Management Report
September 2021

HOUSING & ECONOMIC, RURAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Housing for All

The National Strategy – Housing for All- was launched by the Government on the 2nd of Sept. This specifically provides 4 overarching objectives:

- Supporting Homeownership and Increasing Affordability
- Eradicating Homelessness, Increasing Social Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion
- Increasing New Housing Supply
- Addressing Vacancy and Efficient Use of Existing Stock

Each local authority will have to prepare a Housing Delivery Action plan to include social and affordable housing delivery by December 2021.

There are significant targets to be reached for local authorities. The strategy includes targeting vacant stock, a new towns fund to renovate properties in town centres – *Croi Conaithe*, reviewing vacant property tax & CPO powers. New supply of social housing will be required supported by increased funding and prioritization of funding and schemes through Irish Water.

Resources – staffing and funding – have been committed to with the Strategy to support this significant increase in housing delivery and we await confirmation of this funding from the Minister prior to recruitment.

Housing Capital

Tenders for design teams for several sites recently acquired by Galway County Council are currently being finalised and it is envisaged these tenders will be advertised in Q3 2021. Design team services include for sites at Cosmona, Loughrea (80 to 90 units, mixed tenure) and Dunlo Hill, Ballinasloe (10 to 12 units).

Q2 of 2021 saw the appointment of Design Teams for Claregalway and Ballymoe. Claregalway consists of a mixed tenure development of 90 units approximately and will deliver an even split of both social and affordable homes. Surveys and reports are underway, and it is envisaged a planning application will be made in Q4 2021. Ballymoe is a smaller development of 8 units and as per Claregalway it is envisaged a planning application be submitted in Q4 2021.

Department approval was granted for 58 social housing Turnkey units at Cullarbaun, Athenry. Planning permission is in place for these and contracts and start dates are being agreed.

Following grants of planning permission in Q2 2021, tenders will be advertised seeking competent contractors for housing schemes at Bridge Court, Ahascragh (18 units – stage 3 dept approval granted Sept 21) and single units at:

- Creggatlough, Craughwell
- Ballyglass, Ardahan
- Woodpark, Portumna
- Carrowmore West, Ballinasloe

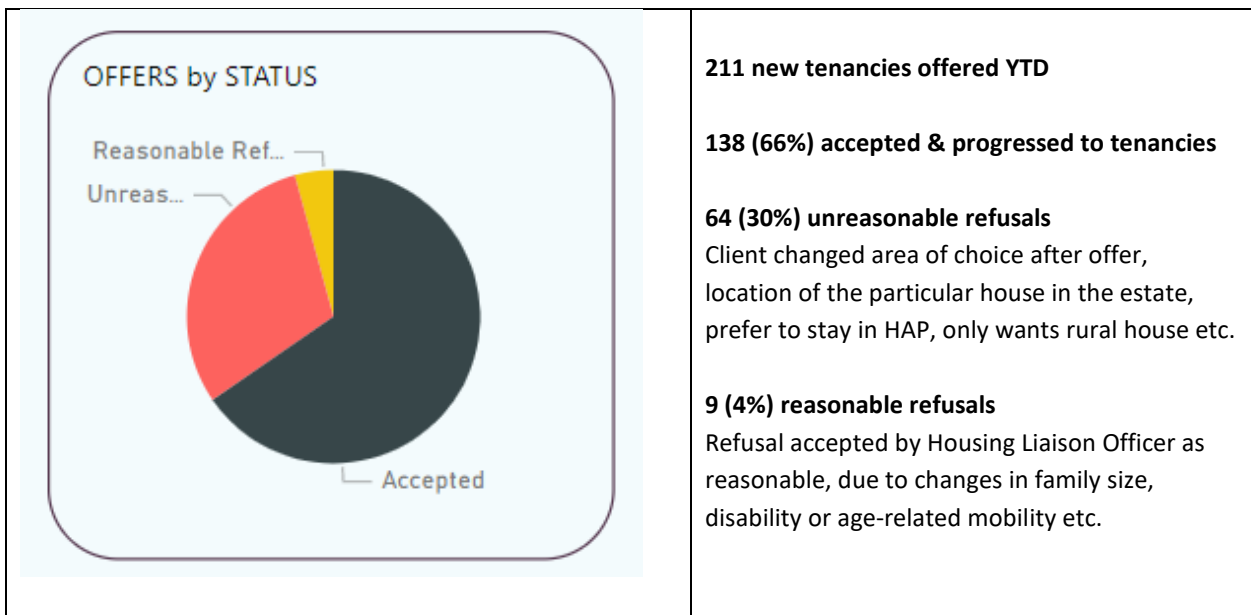
- Knockaloura West, Browns Grove
- Woodfield, Dunmore

Contracts of the development of 10 houses at Cartron Kinvara were signed in June and the contractor commenced this development in August 2021. Other developments at construction are Fana Bhuí, Tuam (49 Units) and Hospital Road, Clifden (26 Units).

Housing scheme completed in Q3 include the final phase of the turnkey acquisition at An Garraí Gabhainn, Moycullen and the LA Build Scheme at Barrack Street, Loughrea - site of the former Loughrea Area Office at Barrack Street, Loughrea. **This development has been entered into The Irish Council for Social Housing Allianz Community Housing Awards 2021 under the category *Housing for Families*.**

Allocations – 2021

In 2020 there were 138 offers made Jan to August, this has increased to **211** for the same period in 2021.



Applications Jan – Aug 2021

| | |
|--|---|
| Received | 808 |
| Incomplete & Returned fully to Applicant | 323 (40% of all application are incomplete) |
| Further info sought | 23 |
| Entered on system | 409 |
| Awaiting attention | 53 |

Over the course of the next few months, we intend to launch an online system for all housing applications and housing grants. This will support Applicants to upload their applications and supporting documents as one and get a reference number.

The Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme

This aims to enable older people to live and remain in their own homes and communities with support where required. This is achieved with the help of the local Healthy Age Friendly Homes Coordinator for Galway county and city, who visits older people and carries out a needs assessment which looks at areas such as health, housing, community, and technology, and from this assessment determines which supports may assist the older person to age in place with confidence and security. From the 30 or so assessments carried out to date these supports vary from providing information on home adaptation grants, linking with organisations providing befriending, meals on wheels, and personal security solutions. Information and advice had also been given on community supports such as library services, transport services, and HSE services for both older people and their family carers. The Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme is open to all older people in county Galway and referrals can be made by organisations, family, friends, or by self-referral. For further information please contact Francis Kane, Healthy Age Friendly Homes Coordinator Galway on 085 8622841.

Economic & Rural Community Development

SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme)

Joe O'Brien TD, Minister of State for Community Development and Charities has announced a one-year extension to the current SICAP Programme and requested all LCDC's to review the operation of the current programme against 5 national priorities identified as acute needs arising from the pandemic:

New Communities with particular focus on those living in Direct Provision

Mental Health (including youth)

Long Term Unemployed

Travellers/Roma

Older People and Isolation

Galway Rural Development as Programme Implementer, as well as the other members of the LCDC, have been notified of the extension, and arrangements have been made for a mid-term programme review at a meeting facilitated by Pobal in September which will feed into the development of priority actions for the programme in 2022.

Town & Village Renewal – Streetscape Enhancement Scheme 2021

Work has continued on maximising the opportunities under the recently announced the Streetscape Enhancement Measure 2021 as an addition to the Town & Village Renewal Scheme. The aim of the programmes is to deliver on the commitment to upgrade and enhance shopfronts and street facades in our rural towns & villages

Galway County Council in nominating the maximum number of towns it could i.e., Ballygar, Glenamaddy, Headford, Loughrea, Oranmore and Oughterard has worked with key community and business partners on the ground as well as with the Elected Members in an effort to get the maximum impact in the selected towns. The response has been very positive and despite the very

challenging short timeframes involved, all parties are making significant efforts to get the necessary documentation for the application and to line up contractors to do the work.

Since the briefing for the Elected Members on Friday 20th August a number of other engagements have taken place including one on Tuesday 23rd August for all the towns and local partners such as the business community, Tidy Towns and other key local stakeholders. A series of workshops were held as follows:

August 26th Oranmore

August 27th Oughterard

August 27th Ballygar

August 31st Oughterard

August 31st Loughrea

These workshops were held online and were informed by Street and Building Audits which had been carried out by Architectural Services with presentation on key sites, issues and Building Checklist. As well as direct contact by the Elected Members and other stakeholders the Council issued details on Social Media and place adverts in the Connacht Tribune and Tuam Herald during the week of August 23rd. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have been updated on a regular basis and the team have worked closely with the Department of Rural & Community Development to try and make it as easy as possible while complying with good governance and audit practice. At the request of many of the Elected Members a request for an extension of the deadline was made and we were able to extend the application date by a few days but ultimately the deadline for completion of the works remains early November as the money has to be spent by then.

Outdoor Seating and Accessories for Tourism and Hospitality – Update

In total there are 333 outdoor seating and accessories scheme applications in the system. Of this 176 are completed with 158 in draft. 115 of the 176 completed have received an approval with the remaining number either ineligible, awaiting full verification or further information to reach assessment stage.

The total amount paid out under the scheme as of late August 2021 is €168,321.

The majority of applications in the system have a food offering but with the recent addition to the scheme to include public houses with no food offering more applicants of this nature are applying for support.

About 45% of approved applications from the Hidden Heartlands or East Galway region with the balance of applicants from western part of the County.

Tourism Update

There has been continued support and engagement with the **Connemara** VEDP/ CAITN network. Minister Humphreys launched the Town & Village marketing initiative during her visit to Galway.

Work has also progressed on **Clifden Destination Town** with work an audit of wayfinding and orientation strategy and reworking of public realm plans in context of Town Centre Enhancement Plans. This is being coordinated with the Regeneration Team.

'Destination **Portumna**' tenders have been returned with evaluation pending. Appointment expected to be made in late September. Lough Derg Adventure, supported by Fáilte Ireland in collaboration with Lough Derg Marketing Group is ongoing and being promoted across various social platforms. Lough Derg Discovery sites project is in train, with Portumna identified and a further site to be agreed in Loughrea MD in the vicinity on the lake.

The **Local Live Performance Scheme** is being rolled out through the Tourism and Arts staff in ERCD with external programming assistance. The Ceol an tSamhraidh Programme currently under further development by to support the local commercial performance sector. Proposal is a series of live outdoor and indoor/streamed events by local music artists during August and Sept in the county. The Council will spend the budget allocation of €143k and have requested additional funding if available. So far, performances have taken place in Ballyglunin, Corr na Móna, and Headford with further events scheduled in Portumna and Gort in September. 11 gigs so far scheduled in total with audiences' numbers at 1650 for all of these locations, in keeping with government guidelines.

Creative Ireland Tourism project

Creative Ireland photography and poetry book has been delivered with launch pending. Copies of the book will be made available to all libraires in the City and County.

Corrib Blueway

Outdoor recreation Northern Ireland appointed to deliver a feasibility study for the 'Great Western Blueway' between Galway City, County and Mayo local authorities. Project to commence in October 21 and conclude with report in March 22. Project value 30k, shared between City, County and Mayo.

Discover Galway Food Experiences:

Ongoing mentoring supports are being offered to food producers to support development of visitor experiences. 12 offered targeted supports with 6 providers uptaking mentoring appointments. All suppliers are based in the eastern part of the County.

Marketing Tourism Co. Galway:

While there has been ongoing work in relation to marketing Galway, the Council in association with Galway City Council and Failte Ireland are working together to development a destination brand for Galway. A request for tender has been issued with a in Project value in the region of €60k, shared between City, County and Fáilte Ireland.

Galway County LCDC & Community Development - Membership

Due to the expiry of the term of office of the 5 no. PPN representatives on the LCDC, nominations were sought, and elections held, and the following will be formally elected to the LCDC from September 2021:

Social Inclusion Pillar: Peter Gohery and Kevin Gavin

Community & Voluntary Pillar: Máirín Ní Chonghaile and Gerard Costello

Environment Pillar: Venetia McEllin

Induction Training for the new PPN representatives has been organised subject to formal approval of the Members at the September Plenary Meeting.

Healthy Ireland

Frank Feighan T.D., Minister of State for Public Health, Wellbeing and National Drugs Strategy, visited Healthy Ireland projects in Galway City & County on Friday 10th September. The project selected in County Galway is “Independent Living Skills for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities” led by the Disability Federation of Ireland, which aims to deliver a programme of tailored nutritional support to people with intellectual disabilities living either in residential care or with ageing parents, who are emerging into independent living. In conjunction with the training of participants, it also aims to ensure transfer and legacy post-training by delivering support sessions to 60-100 staff, family and friends of the participants.

Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme 2021

This funding scheme is an initiative being taken by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland which is funded under Dormant Accounts. The Scheme will provide funding of €30,533.17 towards small-scale capital projects for social enterprises in County Galway, and will be administered by the LCDC, with final approval of grants by the Minister.

Public Participation Network

A meeting of the PPN Secretariat was held on 1st September and a representative from the Department of Rural and Community Development was in attendance which is part of an initiative by the Department to review workings of local PPN’s and target supports accordingly.

Social Inclusion

A meeting of the Age Friendly Alliance takes place on Wednesday 22nd September and a programme of events has been organised for Positive Ageing Week culminating in a 2-page editorial in the Galway Advertiser and an exhibition in the Galway Shopping Centre of biographies of community representatives epitomising positive ageing which have been collated through communications with Community Groups.

CLÁR Programme 2021

The CLÁR programme (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in designated rural areas that have suffered significant levels of population decline. A significant number of communities in rural areas of county Galway have benefited from CLÁR funding since the programme re-launch five years ago.

Under the 2021 programme, Galway County Council made a submission for funding for a total of 11 projects across the county under 3 measures.

Measure 1 – Safety Measures at Schools or Community Facilities

Measure 2 – Outdoor Community Recreation Facilities Outdoor Community Recreation Facilities

Measure 3A – Community Gardens, Allotments & Sensory Gardens

We are happy to have received confirmation from the Department of Rural & Community Development that a total of 7 projects have been awarded funding. Details of each are outlined in the table below. This investment in our rural communities aligns with Government’s plan to enhance facilities and infrastructure in areas that have the greatest need. Feedback and follow up advisory meetings will be facilitated with groups who were unsuccessful on this occasion with a view to enhancing future applications for funding.

| County | Measure | Applicants | Project Outline | Funding Awarded |
|--------|---------|---|---|-----------------|
| Galway | 1 | Clonbern NS | Pedestrian Crossing & School parking upgrades | €50,000 |
| Galway | 2 | Lurga NS | Development of a Community MUGA | €50,000 |
| Galway | 2 | Skehana Community Development Committee (SCD) | Development of a community accessible playground. | €49,513.13 |
| Galway | 1 | Galway County Council & Woodford Parish Development | Extension of footpaths from Woodford to Derrycrag Nature Reserve | €50,000 |
| Galway | 2 | Glinsk Community Development Association | Development of a community Playground | €50,000 |
| Galway | 2 | Abbey Community Development Association | Final phase of Community MUGA, Lighting, Access to adjacent sensory play area, gym. | €27,000 |
| Galway | 3(a) | Comharcumann Forbartha Arann | Development of a community garden at Garrai na gCrann. | €8,100 |

Arts Office

Culture Night Friday 17th Sep 2021: Events are now live on Culturenight.ie with 30 events taking place online and offline this year all around the county.

Middlethird Farm, Maree Oranmore, Co. Galway

6.30pm – 7.30pm

Poetry Reading with Bernie Crawford

Local poet, Bernie Crawford will read a selection of poems from her newly published book 'Living Water'.

Broken Vessels: Interface Inagh Valley, Recess, Co Galway

5pm – 6pm

Artists Talk - Broken Vessels is a site specific, international collaborative arts project curated by South African artist Brent Meistre.

Let's go outside in Ballyglunin Station presented by Three Rings

6pm – 9pm

Let's Go Outside - is an escape from living with Covid's hardship through live performances of zydeco music & an audacious exhibition of unbridled art in all forms. Make your way to Ballyglunin Station to enjoy Ireland's most vibrant young band - the Barcelo Brothers, who will transport you away with their sydeco style of music infused with R&B. Reggae, soul and funk.

Athenry Heritage Centre: Retreat! Meet the characters

7pm – 8pm

Live comedy. Meet the characters from the play Retreat by Aoibheann McCann

UNBOUND - Ballinasloe Town Hall Theatre/Artisan Alley

All day – 9pm

UNBOUND is the result of collaborative work the members of Group 8 undertook, taking inspiration from the experience of living through the Covid 19 pandemic and finding hope despite loss, grief, and uncertainty. It will feature writing, paintings, wood turning, textiles, ceramics, mixed media and sculpture inspired by pandemic experience.

Poetry Town (Athenry): Athenry is taking part in Poetry Town, an initiative from Poetry Ireland in partnership with Galway County Council Arts Office. An exciting range of activities will take place around the town and online over 9 days from 10-18 September.

The Poet Laureate for Athenry is Elaine Feeney, who will be unveiling their Town Poem at Athenry Arts & Heritage Centre on September 18th at 7pm.

Specialist Staffing Scheme: The Arts Council have approved the Arts Office's application to the Specialist Staffing Scheme to commence in 2021. Funding has been awarded for a three-year period on a sliding scale for an Arts Engagement Officer (Grade 5 post) to support the Arts Office. Post must be filled in 2021 to guarantee the 75% funding allocated in 2021.

**INFRASTRUCTURE & OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE
HOUSING & ECONOMIC RURAL & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE**

TII's Role in relation to Greenway Delivery

As you are aware, in signaling the Government's commitment to developing Ireland's Active Travel (i.e., cycling and walking) and Greenway infrastructure, the Programme for Government contains a commitment to allocate an equivalent of 20% of the 2020 transport capital budget per annum, or €360 million, to cycling and walking projects for the period 2021 to 2025 inclusive.

Given the increased financial and policy commitment to Active Travel and Greenways, the Department of Transport have engaged recently with TII to discuss the role that TII can play in assisting delivery. Arising from this, two specific enhanced roles have been identified for TII as outlined below.

TII Role in Greenways

Over recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number and complexity of proposed Greenway projects overseen by the Department of Transport, having increased from 5 in 2018 to over 40 in 2021.

Similarly, the budget for Greenways has increased from €3.6 million to circa €70 million in the same timeframe. TII currently have experience in developing Greenways, in particular in the following areas:

- TII are developing a Code of Practice for Greenways through the establishment of a working group. This Code will deal with issues such as agreeing the consultation process, the factors to be considered when choosing a route, appropriate levels of payment for land, agreement on the level of on-going maintenance and payment required, suitable types of access both for landowners and the public, ways of minimising severance, a range of possible mitigation mechanisms to minimize disruption and providing for the timely delivery of Greenway projects. TII has advanced this task with a wide range of stakeholders and it is nearing completion.
- In February 2019 the then Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, under Section 32(2) of the Roads Act 1993, requested TII to progress the planning, design and construction of the Athlone to Galway Greenway. This is part of the Galway to Dublin Greenway, which will see the construction of a coast-to-coast Greenway forming part of Eurovelo 2 – the Capitals Route – that traverses the continent from Galway to Moscow.

As such, given TII's experience with the Galway to Dublin Greenway and efficient infrastructure delivery more generally and taking account of the increased number/complexity of proposed Greenway projects, it is now intended that TII (rather than the Department of Transport) fulfils the role of "Approving Authority" under the Public Spending Code for all Greenway projects. This would apply from the 20th September 2021. In this regard, from that date, it is intended to bring TII's project management expertise to bear with respect to all such Greenways as follows:

- TII will administer annual funding to Local Authorities to advance the Greenway programme. This would be administered and governed in the same manner as other national roads funding. TII are currently working on the incorporation of Greenway projects into Project Reporting System (PRS) software and it is intended that PRS will go live on September 20th, 2021 for Greenway projects.
- TII will review/approve proposed Greenway projects as Approving Authority pursuant to the Public Spending Code.
- TII will apply and extend its existing project management, appraisal and delivery processes and procedures to provide for efficient Greenway delivery, including leveraging the knowledge and expertise within the National Roads Offices (NROs).

Transition arrangements to facilitate the above are currently being worked through between TII and the Department of Transport and it is anticipated that TII will be issuing further communication in due course.

Galway To Oughterard Greenway

AECOM Consulting Engineers have secured the commission for the provision of Multi-disciplinary Engineering & Other Specialist Consultancy Services to bring the Greenway through the statutory planning process. The length of the commission is 30 months.

The Galway to Oughterard Greenway will form an integral part of the strategic Galway to Clifden Greenway. This Greenway will be delivered in accordance with the Department of Transport Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways. A Greenway is defined as a recreational or pedestrian corridor for non-motorised journeys, developed in an integrated manner which enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area.

The Greenway will be required to be Scenic, Sustainable, Substantially Segregated of Shared Use, Strategic, and can Offer lots to See and Do. It will provide an excellent experience for all visitors and will be developed to be a significant tourist attraction for international and local visitors. The Galway to Oughterard Greenway is to commence at Fisheries Field/O'Shaughnessy Bridge on the campus of National University of Ireland, Galway and terminate at the end point of the approved Clifden to Oughterard Greenway (ABP Ref: 07. JA0033) in the townland of Cregg, Oughterard. See Information Pack.

Spiddal Sewerage Scheme

Irish Water, in partnership with Galway County Council, will shortly commence construction on the new wastewater treatment plant and associated infrastructure for Spiddal. The completed project will ensure all wastewater is treated appropriately.

A new pumping station will be constructed and will transfer wastewater to the new wastewater treatment plant for appropriate treatment. The new treatment plant will serve a population equivalent of 1000 PE. Works on the project are expected to commence in the coming weeks and will be completed by early 2024. Coffey Water Ltd is delivering the works on behalf of Irish Water.

The Spiddal Sewerage Scheme will ensure the treatment of wastewater is fully compliant with EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directives and Wastewater Discharge Licensing Emission Limit Values and will eliminate the discharge of raw sewage into Galway Bay.

What are the benefits of this project?

The works carried out as part of this project will:

- Improve water quality and integrity of Galway Bay benefitting fishing and other water sports.
- Enhance Spiddals amenity value due to a cleaner environment, and thus act as a platform for social and economic development.
- Ensure that wastewater will be treated in accordance with EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directives and Environmental Protection Agency wastewater discharge licensing.

What is involved as part of this project?

The project includes:

- Construction of a new wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) that will serve a population equivalent of 1000 which equates to stopping over 600 wheelie bins of raw sewage being discharged to Galway Bay per day.
- A new below-ground pumping station including pumps, mechanical plant and a storm water storage tank
- Sewer pipelines to divert untreated wastewater to the new pumping station and onto the new WWTP
- Re-use of an existing effluent pipe to bring treated wastewater from the new WWTP to the existing marine outfall

Broadband

The Council is happy to announce that the 10 wi-fi access points in Connemara at Clifden Public Library/Clifden Area Office, Clifden (Old Fire Station), Clifden Town Centre, Killronan Harbour master's office on the Pier, Moycullen, An Spidéal, Leabharlann na Ceathrun Rua/An Cheathrú Rua Area Office, Oughterard Town Centre, Oughterard GAA Club and Barna which went live on Friday July 30th. These wi-fi access points were funded under the Wi-Fi4EU rollout. Also, of the 21 approved Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) across the county, 8 are currently live at Inis Mór, Inis Oírr, Inisbofin, Leitrim Ballydugan, Clonberne, Lettermullen, Glenamaddy and Cortoon. These WiFi4EU and BCP locations will provide free WIFI hot spots to the public and have the potential to offer other services to their community, such as remote working spaces or locations for skills training.

Community Involvement Scheme 2022-2023

In July the Department of Transport advised Galway County Council of its continuing support in the Community Involvement Scheme and under RW09/2021 has requested preparation of list of priority application for the scheme for 2022 and 2023 to be prepared for submission to the Department of Transport. There are a number of changes to the CIS for 2022/2023 with regard the minimum community contribution of either 10% (reduced from 15%) or 20% (reduced from 30%) based on the criteria below.

- Where the local community contribution is monetary a minimum contribution rate of 10% will apply
- Where the local community contribution comprises works the minimum contribution rate will be 20%

No other grants allocated under Department of Transport grant programme can be used for the Community Contribution.

Similar to previous years, eligible works consist of:

General (G): providing hard stands at field entrances; removal of grass verges or banks; site preparation works including the removal of grass from the centre of the road (where required).

Drainage (D): opening, deepening and generally maintaining drains alongside roadway and adjoining land including the laying of drainage pipes, where appropriate; providing gully traps at suitable

locations and piping to drains, where appropriate; opening inlets; opening backshores; unblocking of shores/surface water drains;

Pavement Works (P): repair of potholes (**P-RP**); surface dressing works (**P-SD**); road strengthening works (**P-SR for Surface Restoration, P-SO for Structural Overlay, P-RR Road Reconstruction**)

Footpaths (F): repair of footpaths (**FR**); construction of new footpaths (**FN**)

Closing date for receipt of applications was Thursday 16th September 2021. All applications received will be reviewed by the relevant Municipal District and costed appropriately. A priority listing will be prepared, inputted on Map Road PMS for submission to the Department of Transport by Thursday 30th September 2021.

Multi-Annual Restoration Improvement Programme

In accordance with Circular RW 11/2021 that was issued on 30th July from the Department of Transport, each Municipal District has been requested to prepare a draft restoration improvement programme for 2022 – 2024, based on the current years RI grant allocation which was €17,847,000 for County Galway. The draft multi-annual programme is to be prepared by the technical staff for each Municipal District. A draft programme is to be complete by 30th September 2021, which will be brought before the Elected Members in the October Municipal District meetings for approval.

Once approved, the list of projects as referred to above must be uploaded and submitted to the Department of Transport using the MapRoad System no later than 29th October 2021.

Local Improvement Scheme 2021

Additional funding in the amount of €703,912 was allocated to Galway County on 29th July 2021 giving a revised allocation of €1,580,871 for Galway County. A priority list to allocate this additional funding was submitted to the department and approved, which was taken in order of priority from the supplementary list submitted in June. The additional funding is allowing us to proceed with a further 21 projects, giving a total of 49 projects to be completed by end October 2021 under this scheme.

PLANNING & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & CORPORATE SERVICES

Update on Draft County Development Plan 2022-2028/ Review of Ballinasloe Local Area Plan 2022--2028

We have received circa 2,244 submissions on the Draft CDP.

We received 50 submissions from Councilors, TDS and Senators. We have received 22 submissions from Prescribed Authorities.

The Chief Executive Report will be issued to the Elected Members on the 22nd October 2021.

The Ballinasloe Plan will be going on public display on the 21st October 2021 and the notice will be published in the local press and on GCC website.

The Planning Department attended a Ballinasloe MD meeting on Wednesday 8th of September 2021 and gave an overview of strategic planning issues facing Ballinasloe to the members.

National Heritage Week 2021

Overview

National Heritage Week 2021 took place from Saturday 14th to Sunday 22nd August 2021. The Heritage Council once again invited individuals, communities and organisations to develop Heritage Week projects, and the call for accepting National Heritage Week projects was open on Wednesday, 16th June 2021.

Heritage Week Projects

There was no subject-specific theme for National Heritage Week 2021. Instead, project organisers were encouraged to consider how they could connect with 'heritage newcomers', who did not engage with National Heritage Week before; groups or individuals who may not traditionally feel included in local heritage; and heritage enthusiasts of all ages, when planning their projects. Projects could involve developing something new, e.g. the development of research about a particular place in a locality, exploring an aspect of local biodiversity, or developing an oral history collection about a particular moment of history in a community.

Projects could also involve revisiting or building on a heritage project that a group or individual may already have worked on, for example showcasing research that was already done on a monument, a waterway, or a skill or tradition in the community, and finding new ways to grow awareness of it.

Presentation of Projects

It was recommended that the results of projects should be presented in a format that could be shared widely, for example an online talk or exhibition; a video; podcast or oral history recordings; a PowerPoint presentation, newsletter, dedicated website or blog; or via an interview with a local radio station or newspaper. A dedicated, moderated social media account could also be included as part of project outputs. As during previous National Heritage Weeks, there was a designated 'Water Heritage Day' and 'Wild Child Day'.

Organisers were informed only to host in-person events if they were 100% compliant with prevailing Covid19 guidance.

The last day to submit a project to the National Heritage Week website was Monday, 30th August 2021.

Heritage Week Awards

All projects that met the objectives of National Heritage Week in a meaningful way, were promoted on the National Heritage Week website and will be considered for the National Heritage Week Awards 2021 (currently being assessed). Nominations for the National Heritage Hero Award are open from **6th to 20th September**. National Heritage Week Awards will be announced on at a virtual event on **20th October 2021**. For more information see

<https://www.heritageweek.ie/about/heritage-awards>.

Heritage Week, County of Galway 2021

A total of **1055** entries were received nationwide by The Heritage Council via the Heritage Week site; these were a mix of projects and events.

Of the 1055 entries received **95** entries were from the County of Galway (excluding Galway City).

This was the highest number for any county or city.

Of the 95 entrees received from the County of Galway **33** were built heritage projects in nature: **50** cultural heritage and **12** natural heritage.

The listing of the 95 Galway County projects can be found here

<https://www.heritageweek.ie/projects?q=&where%5B%5D=galway-county#listings>

The following is a flavour of the 95 entries for the county of Galway:

Loughrea Virtual Medieval Festival

Loughrea Medieval Festival Committee and Galway County Council produced 15 videos in total. Topics covered included arts, crafts, food and heritage videos as well as videos which showcase medieval Hungary and its medieval city of Győr. It was promoted on social media, using Galway County Council, PPN and community mailing lists as well as the local newspapers and local radio.

Live Streaming of Loughrea Virtual Medieval Festival took place on Sunday 22nd August 2021 at 1pm on Galway Beo Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/GalwayBeo>

There were 20,395 views of Loughrea Virtual Medieval Festival Videos up to now. There are also available to view on YouTube and the Website:

<https://heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org/content/category/topics/loughrea-virtual-medieval-festival> and

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x54ZAPiwTH4&list=PLJUAXHOGuQkv_rbJcDuiR9cV35QgLenMC

***Daoine agus Áit* Project**

Over the summer of 2021, members of the Galway Community Heritage Archive Network (iCAN) worked together to create a Heritage Postcard Collection under the theme of 'people & place'.

The bi-lingual project title encapsulates the objective of drawing on a shared history and heritage to connect people with their place, as well as connecting people within each community to each other and with their diaspora. Another aim was to strengthen the connections between the community groups within the iCAN network, while promoting members' well-being through participating in creative activities.

Eight community heritage groups in County Galway namely, Abbey, Killrerin, Maigh Cuillin, Milltown, Moylough, Oughterard, Skehana, Woodlawn participated in a series of creative workshops to equip and inspire them to document their local heritage through photography and creative writing. Participants were encouraged to explore their locality with fresh eyes and experiment with different creative techniques. Each group then chose some of their imagery and text to feature on the front of their postcard. On the reverse, each group's community archive website, social media and email are detailed, serving as an open invitation for both senders and recipients to connect with our iCAN communities in County Galway.

Daoine agus Áit: Connecting our Communities is an iCAN project co-funded by the National Museum of Ireland and the Heritage Offices of counties Galway, Clare and Wicklow County Councils; with grants from the Healthy Ireland Keep Well Campaign & Creative Ireland. For further information please see: https://www.ouririshheritage.org/content/category/about/network_news/daoine-agus-ait-connecting-our-communities-ican-heritage-week-project

'Digital StoryMap of Dunmore, Co. Galway 2021'

The 'Digital StoryMap of Dunmore, Co. Galway 2021' received funding from the Heritage Council under the Community Heritage Grants Scheme. The aim of the StoryMap is to highlight the history

and development of Dunmore Town from Medieval times to the present day in ArcGIS map form. The story which is still under development will include aspects of the ecclesiastical, medieval, architectural history of the town, the natural history of its setting and the stories and cultural connections of its people.

The user will click on any of 15 highlighted locations and text, photographs, music and film will be activated to relay the town's story.

From a burial mound associated with King Turlough O'Connor, the medieval Dunmore castle and Friary, the growth of the market town, the milling industry of the 18th and 19th centuries, the houses of the landed gentry, vernacular shopfronts, commerce, fairs and markets right up to today's vibrant community life, it's an action packed story.

When complete the interactive StoryMap, being developed by Dunmore Heritage Group, will be hosted on Galway County Council website and showcased on the Dunmore Page of the Galway Community Heritage website.

For Heritage Week 2021, Dunmore Heritage Group provided a 'taster' of what is to come with 3 trailer videos that will be part of the Digital Storymap. The full project with additional and extended videos will be launched in October 2021!

For further information see <https://www.heritageweek.ie/projects/a-digital-storymap-of-dunmore-co-galway>

Joyce Country and Western Lakes Region: a virtual Heritage Tour

The Joyce Country and Western Lakes region of North Galway and South Mayo is a treasure trove of breath-taking landscapes shaped by millions of years of geological activities and the more recent Ice Ages that shaped its lakes and mountains. It is home to a fantastic range of wildlife and local communities have developed a specific culture and accent based on their interaction with the landscape.

The Joyce Country and Western Lakes geopark project aims to bring all of the above to the fore by applying for the region to get the UNESCO Global Geopark status, a way to celebrate all the types of heritage mentioned above and highlight the region's offering as a whole. Working towards this, a free online conference was organised in June 2021 for which was produced video content that acted as a showcase for the region.

This National Heritage Week project was an opportunity to share this content to a wider audience and for the public to (re)discover specific sites and their geological, natural and historical significance as well as particular aspects of the local heritage such as crafts, music and local food. Part of the project focuses on education with the showcase of our animated videos on the landscape development and a video where primary school teachers are given examples on how to bring the outdoors in the classroom.

For more details see: <https://www.heritageweek.ie/projects/joyce-country-and-western-lakes-region-a-virtual-heritage-tour>

Wild Child at Thoor BallyLee

The event was designed to connect children to the wild wonder of the place and ignite the magic of the realm that Yeats so loved. There were fairy tales and fables from Yeats as well as poetry and song. We are also preparing a fairy walk with fairy volunteers imparting exciting titbits of woodland lore to children and adults

Fairy walk video 1

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v7UBJWhRHwri0BOxt2PsAm8Uzi9owCli/view?usp=sharing>

Fairy walk video 2

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Fx2r-aBxC5qRGMazAdxKsCmtvdhncwL-/view?usp=sharing>

Photos

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1W4E3y2ih5Pwx6b1NKHCyZjOLsXRlge4V?usp=sharing>

For more information please see:

<https://www.heritageweek.ie/projects/wild-child-at-thoor-ballylee>

Conservation Letterfrack: Online lecture tour featuring a number of heritage objects

This was a live video tour (vlog) of Conservation Letterfrack workshop with Sven Habermann, which will feature a number of historic objects. The tour gave an insight into materials, construction, unique feature and conservation treatments of the selected objects.

Skehana & District Down Memory Lane E-Book

The seeds for this were sown when Emma Laffey opened a Facebook page on which she started to upload old black and white photographs for her family and her own locality. The concept caught the imagination and interest of hundreds of her followers and gradually they started to support and contribute to the project. It quickly achieved over 1500 regular readers and over 2000 images. This e-book project will create a greater awareness, knowledge and pride in their local heritage, in particular the intangible cultural heritage. The photographs and memorabilia which heretofore have only been seen by those who have them in their possession, are now shared and can be viewed by everybody. The images are categorised under the different headings that reflects the people and heritage of the area.

For more information please see:

<https://dpgay9x1sxad.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2021/08/web-version-of-book-compressed.pdf>

**ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE, FIRE & MAJOR
EMERGENCY SERVICES, HUMAN RESOURCES &
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES
DIRECTORATE**

Climate Action Opportunity Fund 2021

Galway County Council's Climate Action Opportunity Fund 2021 was launched earlier this year. It is a competitive Scheme aligned with the Council's Climate Adaptation Strategy and provides

opportunities for Communities and Not for Profit Groups within the County Council's jurisdiction to have a significant impact on our overall ability to meet our climate targets.

40 applications were received seeking support funding under the various categories:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Category 1 | Energy Efficiency |
| Category 2 | Biodiversity |
| Category 3 | Renewable Energy |
| Category 4 | Cycling and Walking |
| Category 5 | Resource Efficiency |

The Environment Section are in the final stages of the Assessment Phase and correspondence has issued to a number of applicants requesting further information required to complete the process. A report, to include award recommendations, will be prepared for consideration in the coming weeks.

SEAI Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) Program

Under SEAI's Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) Program, the Environment Department have engaged with a number of Sustainable Energy Communities throughout the County to support them develop their own Energy Master Plans (EMP). To date, SEAI have approved applications from 5 SECs for 100% funding:

- Headford SEC (€15,000)
- Athenry SEC (€15,000)
- Ballinasloe SEC (€15,000)
- Milltown SEC (€15,000)
- Dunmore SEC (€15,000)

Following a Tender Competition, Galway County Council have appointed a Consultant to deliver an EMP for Ballinasloe SEC. Tenders for the remaining SECs are currently being assessed with appointments expected shortly.

Burial Grounds

Killimordaly Burial Ground

The Environment Department have completed work on an extension to Killimordaly Burial Ground. The development has delivered an additional 36 x double plots.

Quansboro Burial Ground

Work to deliver an additional 51 x double plots at Quansboro Burial Ground commenced recently. Work is approx. 50% complete.

175 applications have been received by the Environment Section from community groups in respect of the Burial Ground Maintenance Grant. The closing date for receipt of applications was the 3rd September 2021.

This scheme gives financial assistance to local community groups for the upkeep/maintenance of burial grounds in their area. Grants of €300(closed/smaller burial grounds), €450(larger/well maintained) and €600(exceptional maintenance) are awarded to successful applicants and the grant amount determined by the level of maintenance carried out.

Update on Anti – Dumping Initiative 2021

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications developed an Anti-Dumping Initiative to work in partnership with local authorities and community organisations in identifying high risk or problem areas, developing appropriate enforcement responses and carrying out clean-up operations.

The initiative is co-ordinated through the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WERLAs). The Environment Section secured €129,700 in funding for 12 projects under the Anti-Dumping Initiative Funding for 2021.

The projects are as follows:

| Project No. | Name |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | M6 Slip road clean up, Pollboy |
| 2 | Gort River clean up |
| 3 | Bulky Goods |
| 4 | Bikes for Africa |
| 5 | Barrier at Sonnagh, Loughrea |
| 6 | Boardwalk project Lawrencetown |
| 7 | Fines app |
| 8 | Billboards/ signs / awareness |
| 9 | Fencing for Cloontua |
| 10 | S34c Reg - Eircode project |
| 11 | Estate enhancement |
| 12 | Open-source investigations course |

Projects 1 & 2 are clean-up projects. Project 1 is a clean-up of a motorway slip road at Pollboy, Ballinalsoe. Waste was dumped in drains within the River Suck Callows SAC and drew numerous complaints from members of the public and elected representatives. Project 2 involved waste dumped on the banks of the Gort River close to the new river walk.

Barna Waste have been contracted for both of these projects and arrangements have been made to install barriers at both locations to prevent future dumping. Works are due to commence shortly.

Project 3– Bulky Goods Collection. This collection took from the 26th July to the 14th August at the civic amenity sites at Tuam, Ballinasloe and Clifden and also at the Barna Waste facility on the Headford road. This was a joint project with Galway City Council and saw a huge uptake from members of the public who booked a slot online through the Barna Waste website to avail of the service.

Project 4 – Bikes for Africa – This project was also run as part of the 2020 ADI through the Rotary Club. A container to hold the bikes was purchased last year and thus far has seen a big uptake from members of the public. For 2021 we have funding to collect / repair 400 bikes.

Project 5 - Barrier at Sonnagh, Loughrea. This project involves the installation of a barrier at an illegal dumping black spot.

Project 6 – Boardwalk Project Lawrencetown. The Environment Section are assisting a local community group in cleaning up waste dumped in the general area where they are developing a boardwalk project. The area office staff have already spent one day removing waste at the site with a small amount of waste at the location still to be removed. This will be removed in due course and the Environment Section will provide anti-dumping signage for the location.

Project 7 - The Environment section have been liaising with Ascendas in regard to the introduction of new fines app which will be used initially for the issuing of litter fines. The fines system is an application for issuing and managing local authority fixed penalty notices such as litter fines.

It is hosted in the cloud using Amazon Web Services as a multi-tenanted application. There are 2 components to the solution:

1. The mobile app is used by wardens to record the details of offenses, it is a react native mobile app.
2. Web application to manage fines and record payments.

Training has carried out with the Community Wardens in regard to use of the application with a view to introducing the system during Quarter 4 2021.

Project 8 – Billboards / Electronic Signs. The Environment Section have displayed a large advert on billboards around the county with a message advising that waste collectors need a permit and urging people to report unauthorized waste collectors.

We have also hired electronic signs to display a number of different anti-dumping messages at 6 locations throughout the county.

Magnetic signs have been ordered to affix to the side of the community warden vans displaying an anti-dumping message.

Project 9 - Fencing for commonage area at Cloontua Tuam. This area is an illegal dumping blackspot and has been for years. Recently a number of local community groups had cleaned up the area and installed a barrier. We intend to install fencing along the edge of this site to prevent future dumping. A contractor has been appointed for this project with works to commence shortly.

Project 10 – S34c Register Eircode project. This project is paused currently pending confirmation of the Data Protection Impact Assessment by the Data Protection Commissioner. It is intended to use the funding allocated for this project to purchase a small van for the Environment section, which we will get wrapped in graphics displaying various anti-dumping awareness messages. This can be used at subsequent Environmental Awareness Days.

Project 11 – Estate Enhancement - Joint initiative with the Housing Section involving the clean-up of laneways and playground at the Hymany/Curragh Park Estate in Ballinasloe and the holding of an awareness day in the estate.

Hymany/Curragh Park was selected as the pilot area for this initiative because there was an existing residents committee in place for some time who had highlighted the ongoing issues in the estates through the housing section and the local litter warden.

A clean-up of the Laneways was conducted with signage installed at these locations. The playground in the estate was also cleaned and much improved. An awareness day was held on Saturday 14th August attended by staff from the Housing and Environment Section and the local litter warden. A stand was set up by staff on the day and information made available to the residents on waste management, waste segregation and litter management. Waste Enforcement staff on site highlighted the obligations on householders to have a household collection service and that door-to-door checks will be commencing in the area in the near future.



Project 12 – Open-source investigations course through La Touche training. Funding was made available to send a number of waste enforcement staff members on this course – A number of staff members have already completed the course with further training scheduled for November 21.

Waste Presentation Bye Laws

The waste enforcement team commenced door to door inspections in Ballinasloe on 13th September to ensure compliance with Galway County Council's Waste Management Bye-Laws in relation to the management of waste. The principal requirement of the bye-laws is for all homes and businesses to ensure that waste arising from that property/business is collected by an authorised waste collector. Door to door inspections as part of enforcement of the bye laws will continue with Tuam scheduled next once inspections have been completed in Ballinasloe.

Anti-Dog Fouling Launch

Galway County Council launched its Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign '**If They Poop You Scoop**' during the month of the August. The campaign is set to firmly emphasise that dog fouling is the responsibility of the dog owner/walker and that they must clean up after their dog. The campaign will attempt to address a range of issues surrounding dog fouling, from its effect on the public who use our streets, parks and beaches, to the attitudes of dog owners in cleaning up after them, from a public health and civic pride perspective.

The campaign was launched at Renville Park by Cllr Geraldine Donohue, Cathaoirleach of the Municipal District on Friday 6th August and rolled out subsequently across the county during the month of August with launches in Athenry, Ballinasloe, An Spidéal, and the Palace Grounds at Tuam.

For Phase 2 of the campaign, patrols will be carried out by Community wardens outside of Core working hours while additional signage and temporary stencilling has been made available to our area offices which will be utilised at locations throughout the county to assist in getting the message across to all dog owners.

Green Dog Walkers Programme

The Environment Section plan to pilot the Green Dog Walkers Programme in one area of the County, and if successful will roll it out countywide.

The Green Dog Walkers programme is run under licence from Falkirk Council Scotland, who developed the campaign and are running it in several Irish Local Authorities, including Westmeath, Roscommon, Waterford and Dublin Local Authorities.

Green Dog Walkers (GDW) is a non-confrontational, friendly way to change attitudes about dog fouling. Volunteers register and pledge to be a Green Dog Walker.

Volunteers wear a GDW hi vis jacket / Armband or badge with artwork which signifies that they have "Taken the Pledge" to always:

- Clean up after their dog
- Carry extra dog waste bags
- Be happy to give a spare dog waste bag to those without a bag
- Be a friendly reminder to other dog walkers to clean up after their dogs and at no time be aggressive or confrontational with anyone about dog fouling.

It is hoped that voluntary groups such as Tidy Towns and individuals would be interested in getting involved in this campaign and help spread awareness and a change of attitude to the problem of dog fouling in the county.

Biodiversity Report September 2021

The following gives an insight into biodiversity initiatives that have been undertaken or are planned by Galway County Council in 2021:

1.Pots for Pollinators

Galway County Council in partnership with a number of Tidy Towns Groups in the county of Galway and the National Biodiversity Centre have launched a new initiative called ***Pots for Pollinators***.

One third of our bee species are threatened with extinction from Ireland. This is because we have drastically reduced the amount of food (flowers) and safe nesting sites in our landscapes.

The ***Pots for Pollinators*** is an initiative where local communities working with a Tidy Towns Group can take a very simple action for bees and pollinators and generate a very positive impact for nature. People are becoming more conscious of nature and biodiversity and taking a great interest in the birds, bees and bugs that are all around them. It is hoped that this simple project ***Pots for Pollinators*** which gives details of plants that can be bought in any garden centre in the county will see lots more people helping our pollinators.

Planting a 'pot for pollinators' is a wonderful project for patios in nursing homes or hospitals, apartment balconies, urban hotels and small gardens."

2. Biodiversity Training for Galway County Council Staff and Community Groups

Forty members of Galway County Council staff received 3 training sessions with regards to biodiversity and pollinators (this was co-ordinated by the HR Dept Training Unit)

Eighty members of Tidy Towns and Community Groups received a 5-week training course on biodiversity and pollinators (this was run jointly by Tidy Towns Section and Heritage Section of Galway County Council and funded by the Public Participation Network)

Upcoming Biodiversity Online Training for Council Staff & Communities

Dr Amanda Browne, Ecologist will deliver a series of 6 recorded online presentations that will primarily be aimed at community groups who would like to get a better understanding of the biodiversity of their local area as well as ways in which they can enhance it. In addition to this she will also deliver a series of 6 recorded online presentations for local authority staff to assist them in dealing with biodiversity issues and support them in finding opportunities to enhance biodiversity of towns and villages in the county.

3. Invasive Species

The Invasive Species working group of Galway County Council has established a system to record details of invasive species that are submitted by members of the public and staff with regards to invasive species on Council property. Targeted Gunnera and Japanese Knotweed control measures are taking place in a number of places in the ownership of Galway County Council. It is also hoped to undertake invasive species management plans for a small number of areas of the county. In addition to this advice and guidance is given to members of the public with regards to invasive species.

4. National Biodiversity Week

National Biodiversity Week took place from 16th to 23rd May 2021.

National Biodiversity Week is all about connecting people with nature and inspiring them to learn more, see more and do more for biodiversity. It's also about communicating the importance of biodiversity and encouraging people to play their part in protecting it as well as enjoying it.

Galway County Council and its partners celebrated National Biodiversity Week virtually this year, through the Galway Buzz.

The following is a listing of online events scheduled for each day of week to create a better awareness, knowledge and pride in the biodiversity of the county:

- ***Bird song on the bog (Dawn Chorus)***

John Lusby of BirdWatch Ireland and Ruth Hanniffy held a virtual dawn chorus. They visited Attymon Bog and Carrownagappul Bog to listen to and record bird song when it is in full flow at sunrise.

This initiative is supported by the Peatlands Community Engagement Fund with Attymon Development Group and in association with Galway County Council.

- ***Great yellow bumblebee art (for Children)***

Aga Grandowicz, award-winning wildlife illustrator demonstrated how to make some great yellow bumblebee art.

- ***Creating a sensory Garden***

This talk was delivered by horticulturist and environmentalist Aoife Munn covered everything a person would need to know to create a sensory garden. Participants were able to discover which plants can stay standing in a school sensory garden and which ones are best for creating a garden that changes with the seasons.

- ***Painting a wildflower meadow***

On this online video Aga Grandowicz taught participants how to paint a wildflower meadow.

- ***The Wonder of Woodland***

In this video people could discover the wonder of woodlands. The video dealt with the many flowers that carpet the woodland floor in springtime, our native trees and shrubs, and why woodland has such enormous value for wildlife and the natural world.

- ***Planting for biodiversity and climate change***

A talk on planting for biodiversity and climate change was given by horticulturist and environmentalist Aoife Munn. The aim of this interactive talk was to help make informed planting choices to support local wildlife. It will also look at the challenges presented by climate change and what plants can use to reduce the effects.

- ***A Wild Galway Garden - Garden biodiversity from the soil to the sky***

Galway County Council Community Warden, Rosina Joyce shows the public around her plot in East Galway and demonstrated some simple ideas that can bring life to your garden. This online session also featured poetry from Christy Corcoran, and photography from Thomas O'Sullivan. This was a Galway County Council staff initiative.

- ***Pollinator Planting***

This talk discussed the best plants for attracting pollinators to your garden, how to ensure they are fed year-round and how to create habitats in close proximity to the pollinator planting.

- ***Sustainable Living***

This video looks at reducing waste, looking at use of chemical, eco-friendly crafting projects such as making your own wax cloths.

- ***Making your garden a haven for hedgehogs***

Elaine O'Riordan from the Irish Hedgehog Survey met up with Bev Truss from the Hogprickle Wildlife Carers and got some tips on making your garden a haven for hedgehogs. Bev also advised on how to know when a hedgehog may need help and what to do if you find a sick or injured hedgehog or another wild animal.

- ***Mammals of the Wild Atlantic Way - the lesser horseshoe bat***

The Vincent Wildlife Trust presented a short film about the lesser horseshoe bat, which is Ireland's most strictly protected bat species. The lesser horseshoe bat colonised Ireland 6,000 years ago and its distribution is currently limited to six western counties: Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry and west Cork. Viewers can discover the world of one of Ireland's smallest mammals and Vincent Wildlife Trust's work to conserve it.

- ***River biological diversity***

For International Day of Biological Diversity Day, Galway Heritage Office and the Local Authorities Waters Programme produced a video showcasing river biological diversity.

- ***Barn Owls, Buildings and Biodiversity***

'Barn Owls, Buildings and Biodiversity' was a short visual presentation hosted by John Lusby, BirdWatch Ireland in association with Galway County Council, which celebrated one of our most iconic birds. Through footage, images and tales of personal experiences studying Barn Owls in Galway and beyond, John explored why the Barn Owl is so special in Irish culture and in the Irish countryside and what the future holds for Barn Owl populations in the county.

This Biodiversity Week initiative was funded by Galway County Council under *Galway County Heritage & Biodiversity Plan 2017 - 2022* and the Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the *National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2021* and supported by The Heritage Council and Galway County Heritage Forum. It initiative has received **5372 views** on Facebook and YouTube up to this point in time.

5. Audit of Wetlands in North East Galway.

This desktop audit is currently being undertaken and it is envisaged that it will be completed by the beginning of November 2021.

6. Yellowhammer Survey in south Galway

The Yellowhammer was formerly a widespread breeding species in Ireland but is now mainly restricted to the east and south. The breeding range of the Yellowhammer is strongly linked with the cultivation of cereals, so much so that their population has declined and disappeared from areas where cereals are no longer grown, to the extent that the species is included on the Red list of the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland. A few isolated Yellowhammer populations have been recorded in areas such as the Burren in County Clare and also small numbers of birds in Connemara in Galway. In recent years, Yellowhammer have been recorded in an area of intensively farmed land in south Galway during the winter and breeding season, despite the fact that there is no cereal grown in this area. A survey to establish the size and extent of the breeding population and to determine their habitat associations and feeding patterns is currently underway.

7. Barn Owl conservation and research in County Galway

The Barn Owl was once a much more common sight in the Irish countryside. Due to extensive declines in their breeding range they are categorised as a Red-listed Bird of Conservation Concern.

As a top predator and sentinel species for the health of our countryside, these declines are worrying and indicative of wider biodiversity declines. There is a unique opportunity to harness the interest and goodwill towards the species to deliver widescale biodiversity benefits through conservation and education focused on Barn Owls.

There is a long history of Barn Owl monitoring and conservation efforts in Galway. Work is currently ongoing to 1) implementing a citizen science and strategic survey to assess the status and breeding performance of Barn Owls and to identify their conservation requirements, 2) producing three high-quality videos to provide practical guidance on; nest boxes, managing and creating habitat, and rodenticide use.

8. People and Nature: Galway County Biodiversity Project Website and Facebook Page

The website and Facebook page are used to disseminate biodiversity information to the public. Biodiversity information such as Local Biodiversity Action Plans, information on dealing with invasive species, advice, guidance can be found on the website. The Facebook page is used to promote various events and biodiversity initiatives.

<https://biodiversity.galwaycommunityheritage.org/>

Mise, Le Meas,

Mr. Jim Cullen

Chief Executive

Galway County Council

16th September 2021