

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara

Municipal District of Conamara

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara

held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 10.00am in the Council Chamber.

I LATHAIR:

CATHAORILEACH: Cllr. T. Welby

BAILL: Comh T. Ó Curraion, Comh Mac An Iomaire, Cllr. S. Walsh, Cllr. E. Mannion, Cllr. G. King. Cllr M. Leainde, Cllr. N. Thomas, Cllr. Lee

OIFIGH: U Finn, DOS, L Hanrahan, DOS, C. Cosgrove, S.E. Planner, D. Egan, Executive Planner, T. Prendergast, S.E., TJ Redmond. S.E.E. N O'Conaola, E.E. I Martyn, A.O. Meetings Administrator, S. Casey A.S.O.

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2025.

On the **Proposal** of Cllr. Welby and **Seconded** by Cllr. Lee the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025 were agreed.

2. Declaration of a Road to be a public Road (Road commencing at junction with L-13145 (53.39080, 9.22816) in the townland of Pribbaun and extending East as appropriate for a distance of 400 metres in the townland of Pribbaun and finishing at (53.39120, - 9.22299) in the townland of Pribbaun.

On the **Proposal** of Cllr. Mannion and **Seconded** by Cllr. Welby .

**3. Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm** Section 291 of the Planning and Development Act 2000(as amended).

Mr. Hanrahan gave a detailed presentation on the location of the Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm Development and its timeline to date.

In September 2020 Sceirde Rocks Offshore Windfarm was confirmed as a Relevant Project. The application for the foreshore lease had been submitted but not yet determined and that a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) was required to lodge the application for development as per Section 291 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

A Pre-planning consultation commenced in June 2023 with An Bord Pleanála and subsequently pre-planning meetings were held in Galway and Clare County Councils. The application was then lodged with An Bord Pleanála on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

Mr. Hanrahan then delivered a description of the development both Offshore and Onshore and what this would entail. He informed that a ten-year development permission and a 38-year operational life of the proposed development from date of commissioning of the proposed development is sought. The application must include a Planning Report, Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement.

Stated within the presentation was information that the documentation for the application can be viewed at [www.sceirderockswindfarmplanning.ie](http://www.sceirderockswindfarmplanning.ie), Galway and Clare County Council and The Office of An Bord Pleanála for 8 weeks as of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 but that submissions or observations may be made only to An Bord Pleanála for a fee of €50 that must be received not later than 5.30pm on 25<sup>th</sup> March.

Within the presentation the role of Galway County Council was highlighted. In accordance with Section 291(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000(as amended) Planning are required to submit to the Bord a report with the views of the authority of the effects of the development on the environment, the correct planning and sustainable development for the area. Members were informed that Galway County Council will not have any role in deciding on the application.

He advised that the report would come before the members at the March Pleanary Meeting and that any observations raised by the elected members would be incorporated into an addendum to the report and also that members can make an individual submission to An Bord Pleanála.

**Matters Arising and Responses:**

- Cllr. King sought clarification as to whether An Bord Pleanála would be extending the date mentioned in the presentation. Mr. Hanrahan replied

that it would not be extended and he went on to explain that this is the largest windfarm on the West Coast and An Bord Pleanála would be prioritizing this project.

- Comh O' Curraoin enquired if this would have implications on fishermen's rights and their livelihoods and he advised that many families depend on fishing as their main source of income and it is hugely important in this area.
- Cllr. Walsh remarked that people in Connamara were living in fear of this development. The sheer size and height of the turbines and their proximity to the shore was a major cause of concern for the local community. He shared with the members that he felt that these turbines were far too close to the shore approx. 5km out at sea.
- Cllr. Welby pointed out to the members that the discussion regarding concerns, questions and opinions relating to the Windfarm would be for discussion at the Pleanary Council meeting.
- Cllr. Thomas added that he too was apprehensive regarding the sheer size of these turbines. He was anxious about the sufficiency of research done on these farms and how this would interfere with marine life? He remarked that he understood that shallow waters make it easy to erect these massive turbines but wondered how the noise of the turbines would impact members of the local community, and would there be consequences in the aftermath of construction and completion?
- Mr. Hanrahan responded that reports have been prepared on the Wind Farms bearing on the wildlife and marine life of the locality. He believed that this Windfarm will indeed impact views and alter Connamara forever. Again, he advised that the documents were available to view for those that wished to.
- Cllr. Mannion enquired in relation to the Chief Executive report and when it was available.
- Cllr. Welby replied that the technical document was obtainable and should highlight the effects this had on the environment and the Development Plan and he directed to Mr. Hanrahan if the Council could comment on community gain.
- Mr. Hanrahan replied that this could be commented on.

- Cllr. Thomas speculated how this would influence rates of the community, and if this development would be rated.
- Comh. O'Curraoin said he was worried about the financial consequences this would have on the local community and again re-iterated that he was concerned regarding the community's fishing livelihoods. He was baffled with how this company could come into the local community to construct a Wind Farm of such large size when it was difficult to build a local road in the area.
- Mr. Hanrahan replied that the application had been made, that it would be assessed on its merit and that nothing has been granted yet. He reassured Comh Ó'Curraoin that the work was done, engagement was made with the local community and that the company had sent out a survey in relation to the application.
- Comh O'Curraoin told the meeting that he was very anxious that the same would happen here as in Shell to Sea in Mayo.
- Cllr. Welby reassured that this was only a discussion and that all these contemplations rested with An Bord Pleanála but that the council members would and could have the opportunity to liaise with the Bord via the Appendix for the Councillors.
- Cllr. Welby then **Proposed** that the members have a meeting before the Municipal District Meeting in March and Comh O'Curraoin **Seconded** this.
- Cllr. Walsh remarked about exemption planning in Connemara.
- Cllr. Welby ruled this point out of this agenda and thus completed the discussion on Item 3.

#### 4. Discussion on LPT Funding prior to drafting MD Programme of Works

- Cllr. Welby **Proposed** a deferral of this item and Cllr. Mannion **Seconded** this.

#### 5. Municipal District of Conamara Director's Business

Mr. Finn communicated with the members that the road allocations had just been received. The Department of Transport notified local authorities of their annual roads programme allocations, and Galway County Council was to receive an

allocation of €43,650,160, which is an increase of €3,723,860, or almost 10%, on the 2024 allocation.

#### **Matters Arising and Responses:**

- Cllr. Mannion enquired about the road allocations for Connamara.
- Mr. Finn replied that the Draft Roads Programme for 2025 will be finalised based on the allocations advised to us and then presented to the Members for their consideration at the Municipal District Meetings in March, together with the other items that form the Schedule of Municipal District Works. He pointed out that the preliminary elements of the roads programme was brought to the January MD meetings and approved by members so the Tenders could go out early to ensure the possibility of getting the best deal possible. These elements that were approved in January will be incorporated into the overall MD Programme that will come to the March MD Meeting.
- Cllr. Mannion thanked Mr. Finn for this information, and this concluded Item 5 on the agenda.

#### **6. Municipal District of Connamara Cathaoirleach's Business.**

Cllr. Mannion thanked Mr. Finn and all the Council staff for their efforts in the aftermath of Storm Éowyn. She also acknowledged the ESB and those dealing with water outages and she suggested that plans should be put in place for future storms.

Comh O'Curraoin thanked everyone who put their lives in danger to assist the public and clear up damage after the storm. He also noted how pro-active and helpful members of the community were in the clear-up. He said that there may have been a slight delay in setting-up the hubs and suggested that smaller trees should be planted on the roadside in future instead of large ones that caused such destruction when they fell.

Cllr. Leainde noted that there should be a plan in place in advance of these storms and he highlighted that a hub should have been set up in Inverin as this is a large area.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire thanked the staff in the Carraroe office and everyone that helped out with fallen trees and damage. He alluded that the community were eager to assist but people needed to be trained to deal with certain areas of the

damage and that the Council needs to be more prepared going forward regarding these storms and should be more engaged with people.

Cllr. Lee commented that there were issues with Eir and the people of Connamara were left without certain services for far too long. He put forward that maybe a meeting should be set up between Eir and the Council to discuss these issues. Put forward that more money should be sought out and put into storm damage. He agreed that the hubs were a great idea if not a little late in coming. He also suggested that more forward planning in relation to these storms must be done. He thanked Galway County Council staff for all their hard work.

Cllr. Walsh thanked all GCC staff and the ESB for their amazing work but considered that the infrastructure was not there prior to the storm. He criticised Eir for their customer service and lack of action after the storm and voiced that the Government need to add more funding to the storm budget and the County's infrastructure.

Cllr. Welby thanked Mr. Finn, Ms. Elwood and all the staff for their hard-work during the crisis. He observed that more generators should be put in place and water services were essential and should be prioritised, ESB and then phone services and communication with these companies was vital. He concurred that the tree situation should be inspected in further detail and the hubs worked very well and expressed his gratitude to the work done on the ground by the outdoor staff in such challenging conditions. He accepted that forward-planning in relation to these storms was essential as we need to be better prepared if another storm of that magnitude happens again.

Mr. Finn articulated his gratitude to all the staff members of Galway County Council for their fast-action and demanding work in the aftermath of Storm Éowyn. He advised that he and Mr. Prendergast would be compiling a report and this report would also feed into the National Report. He indicated that better communications would be upheld and created with the media. That Storm Éowyn was the third red warning this winter along-side Storms Bert and Darragh. A week of sub-zero temperatures hit and the winter maintenance crew responded with swift action. Mr. Finn reminded the members that un-predictable weather was something they now factor into plans due to climate- change. Mr Finn added that lessons were learned during this unprecedented storm, but that protocol was followed. He acknowledged that Galway County Council connected with all the relevant groups such as, the Fire Station, the public, the Garda Síochána and the National Emergency Co-Ordination Group.

## **7. Votes of Sympathy/Congratulations.**

Comh Ó'Curraoin paid tribute to the very sad passing of former hurler Michael Coleman RIP. He commented that Michael was a great man, a leader on an off the pitch and that the entire community grieved his passing.

Cllr. Leainde joined in the tribute to Mr. Coleman RIP and mentioned the sad passing of Mick Ó'Flaherty RIP. His presence shall be missed back West and that he was a huge loss to the area.

Comh Mac An Iomaire joined his colleagues in offering condolences. He offered his congratulations to the Carraroe Team who won the Junior Final League a few weeks back and that the community was immensely proud of the team.

Cllr. Mannion wished Sean Kyne all the best on his successful election to the Seanad Eireann and commiserated with Cllr. Thomas.

Comh O'Curraoin offered his best wishes to Shane Curly and PJ Murphy who were elected to the Seanád and congratulated An Cheathrú Rua Football Team on their win.

## **8. AOB**

Cllr. Welby proposed that the members would meet before the next Connamara MD meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> March at 9.30 am in the Council Chamber and the Connamara MD. Meeting would commence at 10.30 and this was agreed.

Cathaoirleach Cllr Welby concluded the meeting.

**Críochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.**

Signed: h Welby

Date : 7/3/2025