

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Locha Riach Municipal District of LOUGHREA

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Council Chamber, Loughrea on 12th May 2025

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. M. Kinane

Baill:

Cllr's. M. Maher, G. Donohue, D. Kelly, P. Killilea, I. Canning,
J. McClearn (online), G. Finnerty, M. Regan, L. Harney

Oifigigh:

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services (online)
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. D. O'Loughlin, Executive Engineer
Ms. D. Feeney, Administrative Officer
Ms. L. Cooney, Clerical Officer
Ms. C. Kennedy, Clerical Officer

Deputation – YWIG Youth Access Group – Breaking Barriers

Katie Joyce advocate for YWIG Youth Access Group made a presentation to the Elected Members requesting help to provide Audio on all pedestrian crossings in the Loughrea MD and requested financial support for the project from the Council.

Deputation – Gort Community School

Clara Blodau student from Gort Community School made a presentation on the development of cycle infrastructure in Gort and surrounding areas.

The Cathaoirleach opened the meeting by extending her sympathies to the family and friends of the late Garda Kevin Flatley. A minute silence was observed.

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of
Loughrea held in the Loughrea Council Chamber on 14th April 2025**

LMD2422

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District (MD) of Loughrea held on 14th April 2025 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Maher, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Finnerty and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Cllr. Harney to the Loughrea Municipal District area.

Cllr. Maher requested an update on the lights at Westbridge, he stated they were out of sync at the weekend causing huge delays in the town. Mr Haugh responded that he wasn't aware of any issues being reported but the traffic lights will be monitored and reviewed over the coming week. Cllr. Maher requested the costing on having maintenance persons coming down from Dublin every few weeks to maintain the lights. Mr Haugh replied that the lights have operated effectively for several months with no maintenance costs and that previous works to address damaged in-ground detection loops and software issues had appeared to resolve the previous issues that had occurred. He also stated that Systra, a traffic management consultancy company, are doing modelling work on this junction as part of the Loughrea Transport Plan and they are looking at various options at this junction.

Cllr. Maher thanked the council staff for facilitating the opening of the disabled toilet at Long Point.

Cllr. Finnerty enquired as the Roads programme has been approved and a new contractor is in place with a more competitive quotation than previously, would the extra funding be used towards other roads projects. Mr. Haugh replied that the contractor will not be in place until mid-June and once they are on site and progressing through the jobs, he will be in a better position to determine the extent of savings that are likely to be realised. Cllr. Finnerty also supported Cllr. Maher in relation to the lights at Westbridge.

Cllr. McClearn also thanked Mr. Haugh and staff for facilitating the opening of the toilets at Portumna bathing area and added that this will need to be looked at in next year's budget to ensure that the toilet facilities are opened from St Patricks Day onwards.

Cllr. Donohue enquired about the costings to keep the toilet facilities open and asked if this could be received prior to the budget in September. Mr. Haugh replied that he had previously emailed all Cllrs with the budget details and that any extension of opening would essentially require a pro-rata increase in budget allocation. He reiterated that at present there is not a budget in place to keep the toilet facilities open for any longer than approximately 3 months. Cllr. Donohue also enquired if the footpath in Bride Street, which she had raised previously, had been investigated. Mr. Haugh replied that this will be reviewed by Mr. Kennedy.

Cllr. Canning requested an update on the signage at the Green Door to which Mr. Haugh replied that he believed additional signs were already installed. Cllr. Canning also looked for an update on the Community Warden flexibility to attend out-of-hours. Mr. Haugh replied that the Community Wardens were available on flexible hours and that, as communicated to all Cllrs last week, it is intended that out-of-hour patrols will be carried out in the Loughrea, Portumna and Gort areas over the coming weeks. Cllr. Canning also requested an update on the safety signage at Ballyshrule bridge.

Flooding Update

LMD2423

Following a meeting with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) at the end of February, the project team have been asked to provide details on ecological surveys used to establish upper

turlough habit levels, shapefiles (mapping information) on the upper habitat levels and shapefiles of the proposed scheme outline.

The environmental consultant has completed their onsite surveys and have prepared the turlough ecological mapping. The engineering consultants have commenced a review of the turlough hydrology report, based on Mott MacDonald's findings. The mapping and report are to be provided to NPWS in the next fortnight and it is hoped to have a follow up meeting with NPWS before the next MD meeting.

Mr Gallagher stressed that the current level of engagement with NPWS was not anticipated but is fully welcomed by the project team. NPWS is one of the principal project stakeholders and will be expected to provide inputs during the planning process. The current discussions will be beneficial in the long term.

Desirable road raising works, identified during the course of the project, are being undertaken this year at Grannagh, near Ballybackagh bridge. Funding for the road raising was secured through Climate Action funding. Works are expected to commence on site within a month.

Cllr. Donohue enquired if the zoning of lands in Gort town, currently zoned as being at flood risk, would be reviewed when the flood scheme is constructed? Mr Gallagher replied that the scheme would provide flood protection to a number of areas in Gort town that are currently at flood risk, but he understands that planners are not permitted to take flood protection schemes into account when proposing the rezoning of lands. This is a national approach, to ensure no additional properties are put at risk, if for any reason, there is a failure of flood protection measures.

Cllr. Maher enquired as to when the river drainage would take place from Craughwell to Kilrickle to which Mr. Gallagher replied that these works were under the drainage district funding and the area office will be responsible for taking care of this funding.

Cathaoirleach Business

LMD2424

Cllr. Kinnane read out a motion requesting Galway County Council take full ownership of Renville Coast walkway:

"I am formally requesting that Galway County Council take full ownership of the Renville Coastal Walkway, Renville, Oranmore.

This pathway, designated as a public right of way, is a vital community amenity. It is widely used by walkers, runners, and nature enthusiasts—not only from Oranmore, Maree, and Clarinbridge but also from surrounding areas and even Galway City.

Over the years, I have worked closely with both the Loughrea and Athenry-Oranmore area offices in efforts to repair sections of the pathway and install rock armour to protect the vulnerable coastline. However, because the land remains under private ownership, Galway County Council cannot secure public funding for necessary works. Nor can the OPW undertake critical coastal protection measures to address the ongoing erosion at this location.

To date, Galway Bay Golf Club, the current owners, have carried out some maintenance work with the support of the Council and through local fundraising efforts. However, these efforts are not sufficient to ensure the long-term protection and viability of the walkway.

A recent and promising development is that Galway Bay Golf Club has formally issued a letter relinquishing their title to the land and fully supporting its transition into the ownership of Galway County Council. This is a significant step forward in removing the primary barrier to securing funding and initiating protective works.

Therefore, I respectfully call on Loughrea MD Senior Area Engineer, Gerard Haugh and Director Eileen Ruane to work with me in advancing this process. I also urge the support of all ten councillors of the Loughrea Municipal District in our shared goal of having Galway County Council—potentially in conjunction with the Department of Parks and Wildlife—assume full ownership and responsibility for the Rinville Coastal Walkway.

This action is essential to preserve and protect an irreplaceable public asset for the benefit of current residents and future generations.”

The above motion was proposed by the Cathaoirleach and seconded by Cllr. Canning.

Ms. Ruane welcomed this opportunity and supports this positive venture and stated that if the Golf club were willing to relinquish ownership, then this could facilitate opportunities.

Mr. Haugh stated that the general view of the District was favourable towards this proposal, as it a well-used amenity that would likely benefit from being in public ownership but highlighted that advice would be required from other directorates and the law agent in relation to the most suitable option under which this walkway would be taken in charge. He also stated that the Council needed to approach this with their eyes wide open in terms of the likely maintenance and coastal protection works that would be required in the years ahead. Mr Haugh stated that he would bring the matter to the attention of DoS, Uinsinn Finn, as requested.

The Cathaoirleach stated that over the last number of years two Ministers had visited the location in question, and both agreed that Coastal Protection work is needed. The Cathaoirleach thanked the work of Oranmore Tidy Towns. Cllr. Maher wished the Cathaoirleach well in her proposal.

Cllr. Regan thanked Mr Haugh and the team on opening the toilet facilities at Long Point and stated that these facilities need to be opened 365 days of the year as this is an essential service for the town. Mr. Haugh stated that the annual budget has not been increased and therefore we are not in position to open the facilities as requested. Mr Haugh also stated that NOM money cannot be used to supplement the existing budget as had been suggested. Cllr. Kelly agreed with Cllr. Regan stating that it is a very basic amenity that should be available to members of the public and taxpayers. Cllr. Maher also agreed with Cllrs. Regan and Kelly and stated that this issue has been ongoing for the last number of years.

Cllr. Canning queried why the four vacancies for retained firefighters in Portumna were not filled. He stated that three of the vacancies are in place for over 2 years and one vacancy for the last 5 months. He stated that there are a crew of 8 staff and if this goes below six then the firefighters cannot go out. Ms. Ruane stated that she will speak with Uinsinn Finn, Director of Services and revert.

Cllr. Canning requested an update on the camper park in Portumna. He stated that there are only 18 spaces and the previous weekend there were 52 campers in Portumna. He added that a great job is being done by the caretaker with limited resources. Cllr. Canning requested clarity on what the income from campers is on a yearly basis and how much of this is kept in Portumna for the maintenance works and stated if a percentage of the income could be kept then improvements could be made. Mr Haugh responded that these figures had been looked at previously, the budget allocated (approximately €65,000) is based on the maximum potential income calculated for full year-round occupancy seven days per week. In reality the income was likely less than €40,000 and the budget allocated is essentially subsidising this facility.

Cllr. Killilea requested that the Kinvara Community Transport study be kept on the agenda and awaits correspondence from Paula Higgins regarding a briefing in May. Cllr. Killilea requested clarification on what date in May the correspondence would be received and requested that Ms. Higgins attend the next MD meeting with an update.

Cllr McClearn welcomed the great news that the Portumna courthouse will be officially opened in June and enquired if the seats that were outside the courthouse be put back in prior to the opening. Mr. Haugh replied that he would bring this request to the attention of Brent Mostert.

Cllr. McClearn enquired if an application could be made to Failte Ireland for funding to extend the very successful campervan park in Portumna and enquired if a footpath or traffic calming measures could be installed on the road from the entrance gate to the Marina. Mr. Haugh stated that there may be archaeological constraints in place that would restrict any further road widening and the inclusion of footpaths, but that consideration of traffic calming measures was previously considered and could be reviewed once again.

Ms. Ruane commented that the extension of the campervan park may have been looked at previously in terms of resources and she will revert to Liam Hanrahan, DOS, for consideration.

Cllr. Maher wished to express his gratitude to Brent Mostert and all the team for the works taking place in the Loughrea Town Hall at present and thanked him for his update on the progress on the 25th of April.

Notice of Motion

Opening of Toilet Facilities at Long Point

I propose that Galway County Council open the toilets at Loughrea Long Point as a matter of urgency to facilitate people that are using the lake and walking to the Long Point

PROPOSED by Cllr. Michael Regan

SECONDED by Cllr. Declan Kelly

Derelict Site Legislation

Loughrea Area Councillors call on the government to amend the Derelict Sites Legislation as it is totally inadequate and favours speculators and absentee owners

PROPOSED by Cllr. Jimmy McClearn

SECONDED by Cllr. Martina Kinane

A discussion took place regarding these motions.

Cllr. Kinane closed the meeting and stated the next meeting will be held on Monday 9th June 2025.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN



CLLR PAUL KILLILEA

DATE