

Minutes of Meeting through teams of Climate Change and Biodiversity

Strategic Policy Committee held on 16th March 2022

I Láthair:

Baill: Cllr. Alastair Mc Kinstry, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. Evelyn Francis Parsons
Cllr. Martina Kinane
Cllr. Joe Sheridan
Cllr. Noel Thomas
Cllr. Gabriel Cronnelly
Mr. Henry Walsh
Mr. John Hynes
Ms. Mags Sheehan
Mr. Peter Butler

Oifigigh: Ms. Paula Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. David O'Loughlin, Assistant Engineer
Mr. Aidan Cunningham, Staff Officer
Ms. Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer
Ms. Ann Dolan A/Senior Executive Scientist
Ms. Christina Ryan, Climate Change Co-Ordinator
Ms. Sabina O'Connell, Clerical Officer

Guest: Mr. Peter Foss

Apologies: Ms. Eileen Ruane, Ms. Maria Finn

The Cathaoirleach opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. He requested that the timing of the next SPC meeting be fixed so that it doesn't coincide with the timing of the Islands meeting for Connemara as both himself and Mr. Thomas are involved with group, and this has been the second meeting about this that he has had to miss.

He also thanked the administration team for having to re-organise agenda at short notice for today's meeting.

Ms. Ryan apologised on behalf of Ms. Ruane who at short notice has been unable to participate in today's SPC meeting. She added that any issues raised today will be relayed back to Ms. Ruane.

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of Climate Change & Biodiversity SPC meeting held on 19th January 2022

The minutes from 19/1/2022 were proposed by Cllr. Kinane and seconded by Cllr. Thomas.

2. Biodiversity update by Ms. Mannion

Bee Keeping Course

Ms. Mannion confirmed that GCC have received funding through the PPN for 10 people to undertake a bee keeping course run by Tribes Beekeepers. The course commenced on February 23rd and runs for 6 weeks. The course covers equipment, history of the honeybee, practical beekeeping, diseases, pests, and poisoning, harvesting and manipulation of a colony. Galway Co. Co. chose to run the course with Tribes as insurance cover is required by persons undertaking the course and insurance for trainees is provided by Tribes in their course fee. The 10 people undertaking the course are community based with some working with tidy town groups so they will be able to bring this skill base back to their communities.

4th National Biodiversity Action Plan

The first draft of the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan has been developed following a period of rigorous review of national, European, and international biodiversity related plans, strategies, legislation, and other key 'action-focused' documents. Additionally, a panel of experts from KPMG's global offices has provided input and critique. The Plan is guided by three overarching Goals and six Objectives which address primary areas of focus for those responsible for the Plan, and the wider national biodiversity agenda for the period 2022-2027.

Following this review of the first draft of the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan, extensive stakeholder engagement will commence, including a period of public consultation around May 2022 with a conference due to be held in Dublin Castle in June 2022.

The public consultation period hopes to garner feedback and insight from a range of important and critical voices through workshops and surveys. GCC will be assisting and actively encouraging people / community groups to get involved. It is incumbent on everyone to participate so feedback will be welcome Ms. Mannion stated.

Biodiversity and Pollinator Municipal District Plans

Ms. Mannion stated that in 2021 funding was applied for under the National Biodiversity Action Plan Fund (now called Local Biodiversity Action Plan Fund). One of the projects put forward was the Biodiversity and Pollinator Municipal District Plans. The primary aim of Biodiversity and Pollinator Action Plans is to provide a framework for protecting, managing and/or enhancing natural heritage in each municipal district through actions led by the local authority (Area Office) and the local community. Given the size of the county, variation in landscape and natural heritage resources and with the Council's area office's operating within the municipal districts, it was decided to use the municipal district as the basis of area in which the plans would be developed and implemented.

The process of producing and implementing a plan for each municipal district creates an opportunity to co-ordinate action among local groups, individuals, the local authority, statutory bodies, and other organisations at a local level which is more meaningful and achievable.

It is proposed that the plan will capture the objectives, targets and actions for biodiversity that will be undertaken by the local authority, local communities, organisations, and individuals to achieve the objectives of the plan.

Sheila Murphy of Eco Beo is working as a consultant with GCC area office staff and engineering staff in area offices and helping to pull together the biodiversity and pollinator plans for the municipal districts. She has also carried out a number of sites visits. Links

have also been forged with the LEADER companies due the amount of training and workshops undertaken in the county. A meeting was recently held with Forum Connemara with another scheduled for Galway Rural Development.

Connemara blanket bogs breeding bird survey

Working from a limited budget, Galway County Council working with Birdwatch Ireland propose to undertake a comprehensive survey of breeding birds on blanket bogs in the Connemara Bog Complex SPA to understand the species present, the importance of these sites and to inform their future management. This study will be like what was carried out in Carrawnagappul Bog.

Gathering baseline information in this way will allow future changes in the bird populations on blanket bogs to be tracked over time and will contribute to an understanding of the distribution of several priority species (including Golden Plover, Red Grouse and Merlin). This information will be used to increase awareness and appreciation of the biodiversity value of our blanket bogs to a local and national audience and to enhance engagement among local communities with these sites.

In the future it is hoped that funding allocations will permit for surveys such as this to be carried out across all of county Galway.

Control of Gunnera (*Gunnera tinctoria*) in the Clifden Area – 2022

Another initiative that will be undertaken by GCC in 2022 is the targeted control of Gunnera and Himalayan balsam in the Clifden area. It is hoped to start treating these areas in May/June 2022.

Working with nature workshops

Introduction and Background

Considering significant interest for training materials on the sustainable management of spaces, Galway County Council Heritage Office and the Community Water Officer for Galway Conor Ruane engaged specialists in environmental education Janet Laffey (Green Sod NGO) and Kay Synott (Living Gardens). The aim is to develop a practical training course and accompanying resources to upskill attendees in sustainable practices when looking after their green and blue spaces. Workshops in Letterfrack in the west and Ballinasloe in the east of the county will take place over the next few months.

Ms Mannion stated that a swatch of Wildflowers will also be created which will assist people in identifying the various wildflowers that we have. It will be a swatch of 24 and will cost €10 each.

She added that that there is consultation document that refersM to the National Biodiversity Plan. It is the 4th National Biodiversity Diversity Plan (after meeting she will send out details). Email Marie 29/6/2022They are hoping to go out to public consultation in early May and there will be further dialogue facilitated through the 2nd National Biodiversity Conference which will be held in Dublin Castle in June. They want input regarding the development of the 4th plan. The Heritage Office will be assisting in any way we can and will be trying to get it out there to the communities and get community engagement and get people on the ground to input into the National Plan.

The Northeast Galway Wetland Audit 2021

Ms. Mannion stated that it is proposed to undertake another phase of the wetland audit in 2022. It is hoped to survey 15 sites. It is proposed to survey 5 bog sites, 5 fen sites and 5 turloughs sites of high conservation importance.

Mr. Butler stated that individual MD Biodiversity Plans were an excellent idea and enquired as to how GCC were proposing to get local participation in the preparation of these plans. Ms. Mannion confirmed that a draft plan is in place and that consultation will commence with Council staff firstly. There then would be consultation with the PPN, Heritage Group Network and Tidy Town Groups involvement. Ms. Mannion added that GCC have a large network of contacts and that these networks will be utilised. Work has commenced with LEADER groups.

She stated that it was very important plans are commenced locally but that relevant information from different groups in one area are all brought together to complete one large integrated plan for each MD area. The plans will be a digital document and so can be amended as needed such as if new opportunities for funding come on stream.

The Cathoirleach thanked Ms. Mannion for her presentation and for all the work being carried out by herself and her team. He added that it would be a good idea to publicise the plans once completed.

Cllr. Kinane welcomed that local groups will have the opportunity to feed into a Municipal District Biodiversity Plan. She also welcomed greatly the ongoing beekeeping training and asked about the continuation of the project and whether any current funding mechanisms could be provided for more tidy town groups to avail of the training. She also welcomed the production of the wildflower swatches and queried if any progress has been made on a suggestion, she had made some time ago for swatches on wild mushrooms. She felt that this would be very beneficial from safety and education perspective.

In response Ms. Mannion stressed the value of small local plans feeding into one larger plan capturing the ideas of a wider cohort of people. The main plan is a strategic document with pieces from individual smaller plans acting like jigsaw pieces. The plan will improve over time with new fresh ideas.

Ms Mannion confirmed that she has carried out some research into the mushroom swatches. She stated that she has been trying to contact a person in Limerick regarding this matter as she wants to ensure that she gets someone with the relevant expertise to undertake the project and ensure what goes on the poster and swatches relates to Co. Galway. It is hoped to produce a series of talks around awareness raising and a poster and then progress from there to swatches. Cllr. Kinane thanked Ms. Mannion for the update.

Cllr. Parsons thanked Ms. Mannion on the fantastic work being carried out by herself and her team. She stated that she sometimes found that there can be a duplication of work within the local community and that having one overall document will benefit the maintenance of towns and villages in the Municipal District. She added that in Ballinasloe there are approx. 60 flower beds and that having one main plan would identify appropriate plants and every group would benefit from that knowledge. She further enquired as to when drafts of the Biodiversity and Pollinator Municipal District Plans would be available.

Cllr. Parsons stated that new footpaths had been provided for under Active Travel in Ballinasloe and expressed thanks to Ms. Mannion regarding her assistance in relation to the biodiversity, pollination and wildflower planting along the verges of the footpaths. Cllr

Parsons also enquired if the plan would feed into the timing and frequency of hedge cutting by the Council.

Ms. Mannion confirmed that the development of the plans is at the infant stage yet, meetings with local area offices and groups will need to take place and then as much relevant information drawn into larger plan will take place before they can become living plans. She concluded by stating that GCC is the first local authority to develop plans at a municipal level and that considering the size and diversity of Galway County it is very important this work was done. The aim was to try to incorporate as much relevant information collated into the various plans.

The Cathaoirleach enquired whether funding was available for the Connemara blanket bog breeding bird survey. Ms. Mannion confirmed that she has applied to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and was hopeful to hear whether they have been successful in their funding submissions in the next 3/4 weeks. She stated that this funding was very important to GCC due to the limited resources available and that she has been applying for funding for the Council from different funding streams over the last number of months. Ms. Mannion expressed her thanks to Rosina Joyce Community Warden and Conor Ruane in LAWPRO who have done tremendous work. The Roads, Environment and Housing departments have all come on board also and are providing wonderful services. Overall, everyone in the Council is involved which is very positive

The Cathaoirleach likewise expressed his thanks and appreciation to Rosina Joyce and Conor Ruane for their work.

Cllr. Cronnelly enquired if there had been any feedback from the stakeholders on how re-wetting of the bogs was progressing. He suggested that a member of Bord Na Mona be asked to attend the next meeting of this SPC group to update on progress to date. Ms. Mannion informed meeting that as yet she did not have the opportunity to link in with Bord na Mona on this but that she will discuss with Ms. Ruane and Ms. Finn regarding issuing an invite for someone to attend the next meeting of the SPC and to upCllr date the group on work to date.

The Cathaoirleach informed the meeting regarding an EU project called Care Peat, of which NUI Galway is a key partner and who have been doing work on the rewetting, recovery and replanting of bogs. He said they have a conference coming up in April and suggested they it may be useful that they also give a summary of the rewetting work done to date. Ms. Mannion confirmed that she would link in with The Cathaoirleach regarding this project and arrange for feed back to the SPC on this. Email Marie 29/6/2022

Wetland Audit of North East Galway – Presentation by Peter Foss

Mr. Foss introduced himself to the group and delivered a presentation on the Wetlands of NE Galway that he had undertaken with Mr. Patrick Crushell on behalf of GCC in the Autumn of 2021. The aim was to create a site database of known and potential wetland sites in North East County Galway and a GIS system.

Wetlands provide a range of important ecosystem services. Ecosystem services are the benefits that nature provides for everyone, for free. Outside of their biodiversity value, wetlands also provide other benefits to human society, that are crucial to all our wellbeing. These include flood control, climate regulation, carbon storage, water cleaning and filtration, cultural and amenity value. A report was completed on this in Monaghan in 2021.

NPW had work carried out on wetlands through the years he stated, with many maps & other information accumulated by them. Wetland Survey Ireland trawled through 80 different reports to look at everything including subsoils to locate wetlands that fall outside ponds on farms, ponds in urban areas & ponds in industrial areas. As much relevant information as possible was extracted to include record of rare species based on ariel photographs & reports. Land use was looked at to determine how this has changed & how the impacts of such changes have had in the area. Their findings were entered into a database and GIS.

- 442 wetland sites were identified and mapped
- 29,439ha or 17% of the study area
- 66 sites lie within areas designated for nature conservation; 376 are undesignated
- Community engagement took place through wetland story map
- A final project report was produced

It is hoped that funding will be secured by GCC for a phase 2 "Wetlands Field Study" to be undertaken in 2022 – this will involve

- Selection of 15/20 sites for which no detailed information exists and those likely to contain important or Annex habitats
- Undertake field surveys 2022
- Habitat mapping and site survey reports
- Updated Galway site and GIS datasets at end of 2022
- Production of the main Galway Field Surveys report

The Cathaoirleach thanked Mr. Foss for providing such a detailed presentation. He enquired as to what was found to be the reason for changes in certain areas, was it due to agricultural drainage over time or due to misclassification of wetland areas. Mr. Foss confirmed that it has been observed that agriculture, forestry and peat cutting have had a huge impact on changes to the wetlands of NE Galway. Mr. Foss said he had been speaking to the Department of agriculture and they are trying to produce a wetland map so they can pay farmers to keep their wetlands in better condition under the new round of the CAP.

The Cathaoirleach stated that the mapping of wetlands will be very valuable information going forward. Mr. Foss added that the OSI and EPA plan are trying to produce a revised wetland map and he believed that any sharing of information / maps with them would be beneficial. He concluded with, without the heritage officers in local authorities we would not have any of this vital information and highlighted the importance of the role of the heritage officer in local authorities.

Cllr. Cronnelly enquired as to what is the definition of a wetland. Mr. Foss explained that Wetlands are any areas of land that are underwater for long enough that the plants and animals that live there are adapted to water. He added that it can man made or natural, coastal, or freshwater.

The Cathaoirleach noted that it was interesting to see a shift in agriculture and how it is now viewing wetlands. Mr. Foss agreed and that there has been a huge change in this regard and alluded to such projects as the Hare's Corner initiative in the Burren encouraging landowners to put wetlands on their lands.

Climate Action Team – Christina Ryan

Christina Ryan introduced herself and informed that she has been recently appointed as Climate Action Coordinator and will be moving into that role in a few weeks' time. She also welcomed Mags Sheehan from the Headford Environment Group and Peter Butler from Conservation Volunteers Ireland to this SPC. She stated that she was very excited to be starting this new role and that a huge amount of work would be required for GCC to meet its commitments on climate action. She acknowledged the work completed to date by Mr. O'Loughlin.

GCC need to put in place an enhanced staff structure, this will include a Climate Action Community Officer and an Energy Bureau Officer. Ms Ryan will work with The LA Climate Action Steering Group which is already in place. The IT system "ClickUp" is in place, and this will help track and manage our projects and progress.

Ms. Ryan's role will cover communications and training. This will include

- Internal - Support and encourage the participation of colleagues in climate actions and develop climate leaders throughout the organisation.
- Progress already clear from pre-planning meetings
- Survey, blogs, best practice examples, links to further information, pledges, competitions etc
- Develop an external communications strategy and carry out meaningful engagement with all relevant stakeholders.
- Stakeholder mapping
- Sand Dunes Awareness Campaign 2022

GCC's must produce their Climate Action Plan and we expect to start developing this by the end of 2022. At present we are awaiting direction from the Minister. GCC's Heritage Plan will also need to be reviewed. A Climate Adaptation Strategy is in place which was adopted in 2019. Liaising with farming communities and peat cutter from an early stage will be a necessity in developing the Climate Action Plan.

In consultation with the relevant departments Ms. Ryan plans to review the actions set out in the Climate Adaptation Strategy to determine

- Actions that can be progressed in the short term.
- Actions that cannot be progressed
- Actions that should be put forward into a Draft Climate Action Plan

GCC will prioritise the short-term actions Ms. Ryan added and work with the relevant departments within the council to progress them. GCC has established an active travel team, work has commenced with many projects having been completed in 2021 and another 30 projects identified for 2022. A national strategy on electric vehicle charging points is expected in the coming months. Jack Houlihan Executive Engineer from the Roads and Transportation Department and David O'Loughlin Executive Engineer Environment Department are working on the guidance document previously produced.

It is hoped to develop Climate Action Leaders throughout the organisation. It is expected that an external Energy Bureau Officer will be available in the next few months to assist in developing projects for the reduction of energy use by GCC.

GCC will need to

- Include green criteria in all procurement
- Put in adaptation measures to adapt to changes in the climate such as increased risk of flooding, storms etc,

- Work with communities and businesses to drive necessary changes. There will be a climate fund for projects in the communities.
- Plan our towns and villages to address climate change
- Upgrade our housing stock, public buildings, lighting etc.
- Support a Decarbonisation Zone – the Aran Islands has been chosen for this and meetings with relevant stakeholders will be required to see how this can be progressed.

Climate action Ms. Ryan stressed will have very serious impact in Ireland and Galway. It will bring increased risk of storms – damage to properties, flooding, droughts risk to water supplies and water quality in freshwater. An example of areas where risk has increased is the Owenriff River and Loch Corrib, where there were extensive algal blooms in 2021 during a period of low water levels.

Draining of peat and other farmland are a major issue for our rivers.

Paula Higgins SEE infrastructure and Operations introduced herself to the members. She will be leading the Active Travel Team which has now been set up. There are 2 team members in place with 2 more to join it in the coming months. The team are in progress of transitioning over projects which had previously been managed under the remit of the Municipal Districts. Many projects were completed in 2021, more had commenced and were carried into 2022 to complete and 30 new projects have been identified for 2022.

Before leaving Athenry / Oranmore to head up this team many projects had been completed in that MD area under active travel plan Ms. Higgins confirmed. Ballinasloe will be in the pipeline for the next few years and information is being collated on the other MD area projects. The team will need to access the delivery time on projects in the various MD areas. Overall children cycling to schools will reduce traffic of drop-offs / collections. An update on projects completed and timeframes for upcoming ones will be available for next SPC meeting of this group. – Email to Paula Higgins on 6 July.

Cllr. Sheridan stated that there is huge potential for GCC and there needs to be lots of engagement with local communities. Renewable energy and community involvement is the way forward. Ms. Ryan confirmed that GCC will do everything it can to work with businesses and local community groups.

Cllr. Parsons requested that active travel projects currently going on in Ballinasloe be looked at in conjunction with the flood relief scheme in the area. She believes that there may be overlaps in the objectives with Climate Change and Action travel such as options for flood defence walls, footbridges, boardwalks etc. – Response sent 20 July

Cllr. Parsons also spoke of her recent engagement with SAUTI-Youth group which is a youth led initiative co-funded by the European Union which monitors local government commitments on climate action in Tanzania and Ireland. Cllr. Parsons has met with the group, and they have spoken to her about the difficulties they have had in trying to engage with local government in Galway in comparison to Tanzania. She enquired as to the possibility of a representative of the group having a seat on this SPC or getting involved in PPN in the future. Maria Email Cllr. Parsons and explained about the PPN and when setting the Agenda for the meeting we will consider a presentation from SAUTI – Youth Group.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. Ryan for her presentation today and welcomed both herself and Ms. Higgins to the meeting and looks forward to working with them both in the future. He stated that he was unsure on the rules surrounding securing a seat on the SPC and asked this be examined. Ms. Ryan informed the Cllr. that they can discuss the SAUTI-

Youth matter further with regards to meeting with group outside of this SPC. Cllr. Parsons agreed to send on the information.

Mr. Butler referenced Galway City Council's emissions inventory and queried as to whether GCC have any plans to develop this. Ms. Ryan stated that it is something that GCC is required to do for the Climate Action Plan but will most likely be carried out under a regional contract.

Cllr. Kinane raised issue regarding a large number of towns and villages not being eligible to apply for improvements / projects under the active travel plan as they are located on national routes. Cycle lanes along such routes would be a welcome addition. Ms. Higgins stated that works outside of the 60km speed limit do not fall under the active travel programme and that the Roads Department under Tony Collins were setting up a separate National Roads Active Travel team who will be looking at a new national route-based projects.

Cllr. Kinane welcomed the presentation on climate action which she stated is very important. She however asked that it be noted that carbon taxes if introduced in May will be crippling and are extremely concerning with so many people struggling financially at present. She believed that while the tax must be introduced, she queried whether the introduction of the tax should be paused for a few months to alleviate spiralling costs and that as a local authority we could encourage local communities to reduce their carbon footprint if such action was taken. Cllr Kinane also asked could there be a pilot scheme to establish the carbon footprint of a particular town or village and then work with the community to look at reducing carbon footprint. – Tina replied

The Cathaoirleach disagreed with Cllr. Kinane regarding pausing of the carbon tax. It is anticipated that petrol would potentially reach €2.50 a gallon by the middle of summer. He felt that the increase of 2 cent per litre of fuel was almost irrelevant considering the scale of the rises that were happening currently and that funding from the tax would be ringfenced for vital climate change work such as retrofitting of homes and work of Active Travel. He added that the EU expecting that supplies Russian gas / oil will have ceased by 2027. The Cathaoirleach stated that the aim is to have 100,000 homes retrofitted by end of the year and 500,000 by 2030, and that GCC's challenge will be to lobby National Politicians to ensure targets are met. He enquired if "ClickUp" was a public network and would Councillors be able to view it. Ms. Ryan confirmed it is not for public viewing, but reports will be collated when required.

Ms. Ryan stated that as a local authority we must improve the transition to a carbon free environment by protecting low-income people where possible such as retrofitting of their homes. Encouraging a hybrid working system for workers who can work from home will be encouraged. In response to Cllr Kinane's request to look at carbon footprint in local communities, she said that we will need to look firstly at energy master plans that have been produced for a number of towns in the county.

The Cathaoirleach raised the issue of standard of footpaths. Ms. Higgins confirmed that footpaths comply with the relevant standard and added a lot of the projects will be tendered out to design consultants to develop the most optimum solutions for different locations in the area. Projects are at different stages from initial concept to construction stage. The new active travel team need to speak with the individual area offices and look at quick fix low-cost schemes such as line marking, signage and road marking in the vicinity of schools where there would be a high number of pedestrians. Pedestrian crossings in busy towns and villages will also be rolled out in the coming weeks. Again Ms. Higgins stated that at least 30 new projects are to commence this year and

outstanding projects from 2021 will be finished or progressed. As projects progress direction may change, she stated.

The Cathaoirleach asked for follow up in relation to the issue of paths outside of the 60km/hr to areas such as where GAA pitches are located. He would also like to see greenway and cycle plans progress in tandem with one another. – Response issued to Alastair on 20 July

Cllr. Sheridan referred to project prioritising and to locations where a pedestrian cross bridge is tied to an architecturally designed bridge. He asked is there any way a community can progress these as some of the longer projects can take a decade to deliver. One such issue is on N17 at Milltown where public consultation took place 2 years ago. Ms. Higgins requested Cllr. Sheridan to forward the details onto her for it to be investigated. She added that 2 projects were approved in the Athenry and Gort areas with design and feasibility completed with planned construction for 2023. She stated that there is a pipeline of bridge engineer projects open.

Cllr. Parsons asked that it be noted that she is very disappointed with Galway County Council for granting a waste permit in a flood zone area in Ballinasloe despite huge local opposition. The site is located within a flood area and is close to special area of conservation with bird watching. The Cathaoirleach agreed that it was disappointing that the permit was granted.

Ms. Dolan confirmed in response that as of 15th March the permit was issued. She stated that the Council had no reason not to grant its permission. She wanted it to be noted that all procedures were followed, that the matter went through due process and that the Council as regulators of the issuing of waste permits followed all necessary procedures and legislation in granting the permit.

Cllr. Parsons stated that her disappointment regarding the permit grant stood and that it was against the communities wishes to grant it. She added that it was mentioned during the local area plan that the area was not suitable for development and was subject to High Court order in regard to remediation. She added that this was a special policy objective she had had included in the County Development Plan. The Athlone - Galway greenway will be located close to the site also.

AOB

Cllr. Sheridan requested that a letter be sent by the SPC group to Minister Eamon Ryan regarding streamlining of the way in which we facilitate grid connections through the RESS, (renewable energy support scheme) which is the national auction for renewable energy generation and supply here in Ireland.

Cllr. Kinane requested that she also be included in this and the Cathaoirleach stated that they would discuss outside of this meeting.

The LLNC through ESB networks are operating a pilot scheme, which should be applied to a community owned solar farm here in Galway. The proposal should be that the Milltown Community Solar Farm be placed on this pilot scheme as a way of showing how dormant/vacant/unused capacity locked into firm contracts in our substation network be make available for use for small i.e. < 5mw community owned generation projects as they constitute a relatively small supply sink upon a T zero event occurring. .This connection is through the Cloon substation at Tuam and arterially through a 20 kva line operating to the nearby Cloonlusk station feeding the twin turbine Windfarm which

only uses 25% of its line capacity and 50 % of its transformer capacity back at the Cloon site connector .

We all are aware of the pending energy supply demand glut crisis. The essence of this proposal is to ensure we make the best of existing infrastructures without having to over commit large capex on small capacity upgrades and thus forming supply and giving local community and grid resilience.

This is logical use of what is already capacity without physical upgrade but rather by thinking thru the issue and delivering incremental capacity by thinking a little outside the auld box and opening new vistas of approach. Email sent to Minister Ryan 6 July 2022

Cllr. Cronnelly asked that it be noted for the meeting that he felt the recent cut in excise duty on fuel did not go far enough to address the issues that exist. He added that the farming community are suffering badly and that it has now become an emergency. The costs on agricultural fuel and transportation have increased hugely and that consideration should be given to a waiver of excise duty during this period.

The Cathaoirleach added that he felt that the energy cost rise would continue and that we need to further examin at how we can handle it through energy saving measures such as housing insulation and active travel.

The next meeting is Wednesday 13 July 2022.

The meeting concluded.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CHRUINNIU ANSIN



CATHAOIRLEACH ALASTAIR MC KINSTRY

