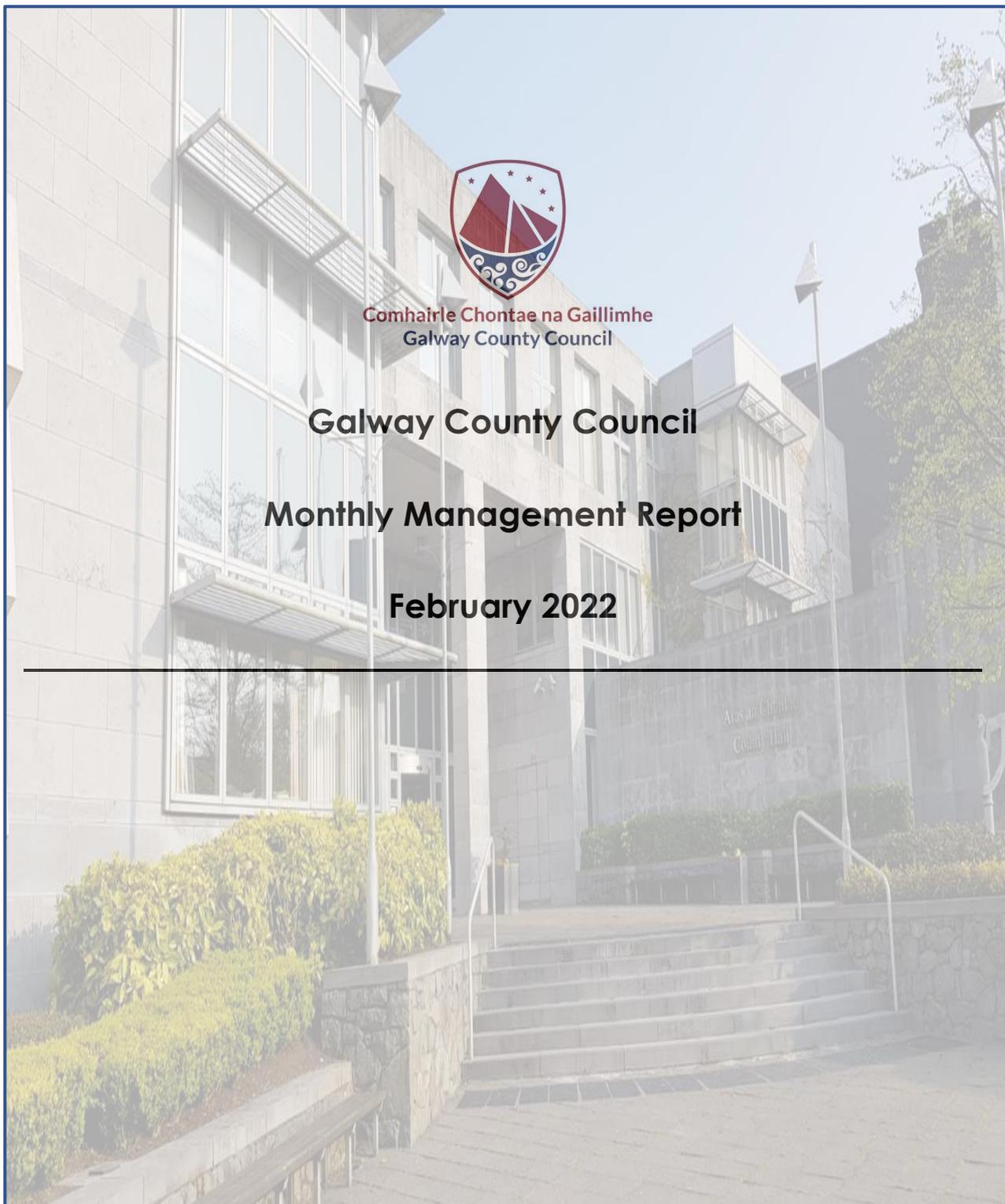




Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Galway County Council
Monthly Management Report
February 2022



HOUSING & ECONOMIC, RURAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Housing Update

Galway City & County Housing Taskforce update:

The Taskforce met on Tuesday 15th Feb. Agenda included:

- Capital Update
- Housing for All Targets
- Homeless Numbers and Traveller Accommodation

A meeting with the Department officials was held on the 14th Feb – in advance of a meeting with the Minister for Housing on the 23rd Feb to discuss Housing for All; both social and affordable housing targets.

Capital

Formal appointment of Design Team for 30 units at Weir Road, Tuam. Proposed to go to tender in Q3 2022 and to have a contractor appointed by year end.

Fana Bhuí, Tuam (below) on programme to be completed by end of Q2 2022.



Hospital Road, Clifden on programme for delivery of 18 housing units by end of Q2 2022. Apartments units (8No.) delayed until year end due to the extent of conservation works associated with these buildings. However, the 10 housing units will be allocated while works to apartments continue.

Bridge Court, Ahascragh preferred tendered identified following procurement process and formal appointment to be completed by end of February 2022. 18-month build programme which includes demolition of 10 units, refurbishment of 6 units and construction of 12 new units.

Tender for construction of 6 No. single rurals to be completed in February and anticipated construction to commence before end of Q1 2022.

Part VIII planning granted for single unit at Williamstown, advertisement for tender to construct unit to published before end of Q1 2022.

Formal appointment of Design Team for Cosmona, Loughrea (Social and Affordable) to be completed in February for delivery of social and affordable units

Approved Housing Bodies

A series of meetings were held this month with the AHBs in Galway to discuss progressing their build programme and opportunities for site development, regeneration projects and developing Cost Rental schemes in Galway. The meetings also introduced the new AHB Voids Tracker developed by Galway CoCo Staff (Housing & IT). This system ensures that all vacant AHB properties are notified to us, and nominations are fast tracked.

Disability Friendly	Contact Name	Email	PROPERTY ID	Property Description	HOUSING_AOC
Has wet room	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	5326	Semi detached bungalow, there are four of these house types. Eircodes for other units have been provided separately.	[Redacted]
first floor bathroom	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	5320	Semi-detached. There are 6 of this house type, eircodes forwarded seperately	[Redacted]
Has wet room	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	5319	Detached Bungalow	[Redacted]

Affordable Homes

Over the past number of years, the Council has focused on the provision of social housing, and social housing remains the top priority for local authorities. However, the Council is now engaged in the construction and/or acquisition of affordable housing developments.

It is envisaged that over the lifetime of Housing for All that 50-60 affordable units per annum may be required to by Galway County Council.

The Department has set the maximum market value of the property that can be purchased or self-built under this Home Loan in Co. Galway at €320,000. However, we need to deliver properties below this pricing level and deliver housing for sale at a discount of at least 15% below 'open market values of comparable new build properties.

The home loan also specifies income limits: • as a single applicant have an annual gross income of not more than €65,000 (gross) in Co. Galway • as joint applicants have an annual gross income of not more than €75,000(gross) in all counties.

The Council's draft Housing Strategy and Housing Needs Demand Assessment (HNDA) Oct 2021 discusses income levels etc. It concluded that demand is primarily for social housing, but it is important to bring affordable schemes forward and that there will be a market for such homes in some locations.

A careful location by location assessment is therefore required. Affordable housing will only be sold to those persons who qualify for affordable housing. A list of qualified applicants will be compiled per development and units will only be sold to the applicants on that list.

To support the scheme to be successful in Galway, we have tendered for *Affordability and Economic Assessment* to be undertaken to identify locations, assess suitable unit typologies, and quantify the level of delivery that will be viable (saleable). The analysis will also inform the Council's land acquisition work. The analysis will help reduce the risk of the Council retaining affordable units that cannot be sold, to reduce the risk associated with delivery into the private market, while simultaneously assisting those persons in need of affordable housing.

Rebuilding Ireland/Local Authority Home Loan Allocation

Galway County Council wishes to confirm that it has been approved for a €4m allocation towards home loans for 2022. The following conditions apply:

- This is the total amount which we are allowed to grant as AIP in 2022 [either under RIHL or LAHL]
- date of AIP to be recorded for the Department and on HFA website

- loans that received AIP in 2022 may also be drawn down beyond the end of 2022
- 2022 loan approvals that expire can be recycled for 2022
- Lending allocation may not be exceeded without prior approval from the Department. Additional allocation may be available.

We are advised that, in 2023, we are authorised to approve new lending up to 20% of the value of your 2022 lending allocation. This is to ensure that there are no delays to issuing AIPs for LAHL applicants pending the official notification of lending allocations for 2023 from the Department.

ERCD Update

Streetscape Enhancement Scheme

Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway, Cllr. Peter Keaveney visited Glenamaddy and Ballygar at the end of January meeting with representatives from Glenamaddy Tidy Towns and Ballygar Tidy Towns to thank them for the promotion of the Streetscape Enhancement Scheme and to encourage those offered funding in all six locations to complete works.

Ballygar and Glenamaddy are two of six involved in this Scheme which was rolled out in Loughrea, Headford, Oranmore and Oughterard. Elected Members have been proactive in promoting the Scheme and assistance to the overall Scheme has been exceptional from local Tidy Towns Groups in all locations and Local Development Groups in Headford and Business Groups in Loughrea. Galway County Council was further assisted in the set-up of the Scheme by Helena McElmeel Architects and Anne Curtin Colour Consultants who has continued to hold colour advisory clinics with property owners to advise on the colour combinations.

The closing date for completion of works and final claims is April 22nd 2022. Members are asked to encourage applicants to progress works and make final claims as soon as feasible.

Galway County Council has submitted an application for funding under the Town and Village Renewal Programme 2021 to fund a Streetscape Scheme in Tuam in 2022-2023 and for extension of existing Streetscape Scheme in Athenry. These applications are under the broader Regeneration Framework and Work Plan for these Towns. A decision on funding under the 2021 Town and Village Scheme is still awaited from the Department of Community and Rural Development and there has been no announcement on a 2022 Scheme to date.



Members of Ballygar Tidy Towns – Promoting Finished Properties in National Streetscape Scheme.

Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) – Advisory Steering Group

The composition of the Advisory Steering Group was agreed at the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 14th February 2022. Membership includes the Chair of the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC and the Chair of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). The CPG agreed that the Chair of SICAP Sub-committee, currently held by Donal Walsh, GRETB would join the Advisory Steering Group along with one sectoral rep from the SPC and the LCDC. Mr Dave Hickey (business sector) has expressed an interest in being the SPC rep and this will be considered at the next SPC, and it was proposed that the other LCDC rep would be a PPN member to achieve the correct balance of business and community, the rep will be agreed at the next LCDC meeting.

Community Activities Fund

Galway County Council was allocated €286,805 under the Community Activities Fund funded by Department of Rural and Community Development. A total of 264 applications were received from Community and Voluntary Groups and these were reviewed internally by the LCDC support staff. Following assessment 170 applications were considered appropriate for funding under the scheme with a 60/40 split between running costs and projects as per DRCD guidance. The applications were reviewed and considered by the LCDC Grants Sub-Committee and were approved at the full LCDC meeting on 15th February 2022.

SICAP

In line with SICAP Programme Requirements, the LCDC are required to carry out an Annual Performance Review of 2021 and approve the SICAP Annual Plan 2022. Galway Rural Development, Programme Implementer, presented to SICAP Sub-committee and the LCDC on both outlining the work achieved in 2021 and the goals for 2022. The KPI and targeting for

2021 were very satisfactory with over-achievement and good targeting of disadvantaged groups.

The budget for the Annual Plan 2022 was increased by 5% to €1,732,111. The plan clearly outlines where the priority groups and Emerging Needs Group are targeted and the LCDC felt there was a very high level of collaboration evident in the Plan, and that the community development approach was very strong. The LCDC approved the Annual Performance Review 2021 and the Annual Plan 2022 at the LCDC meeting held on the 15th of February 2022.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) 2022

The objective of the Scheme is to provide funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for the necessary repair, enhancement, or promotion of existing outdoor recreation infrastructure in countryside areas across Ireland. It specifically supports the growing outdoor activity tourism sector as prioritised in “Our Rural Future”, Ireland’s Rural Development Policy 2021-2025. As per the email to the Elected Members on Friday 18th February which outlined the details of the scheme, it is necessary that all relevant planning permissions and consents must be in place for Measures 1,2 & 3. The Scheme also allows for one application under the Project Development Measure for the development costs for a strategic large-scale project.

Tourism

Tourism Strategy

Tourism Strategy project has commenced with project initiation between GCC project steering team and consultants. Broad reaching consultation will take place through programme of workshops and surveys. Project completion scheduled for October 2022.

Galway Destination Brand

Galway County, Galway City and Fáilte Ireland have initiated the brand project with consultant team. Concepts to be presented to City and County SPCs in September 2022.

Community Support Scheme

51 Festival and Events and Economic Grants have been submitted for evaluation.



Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Flipbook

Failte Ireland have just launched this digital flip book; [Shannon Gems](#) that was produced by 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' team, in collaboration with local authority Tourism Officers in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands (IHH) throughout 2021.

As part of a collaborative effort Failte Ireland each worked with representatives from the local authorities and IHH regions to highlight the tourism riches in our respective localities.

Local Galway experts feature in the book:

- Noel Leahy, Beekeeper
- Eimear Noone, Composer
- Steve Dolan, Historian & Galway Rural Development
- Teresa Roche, Kylemore Cheese
- Paul Dillon, Pallas Karting
- Dick Ridge, Podumna

There are some great visitor tips for visitors to the Shannon and vicinity, which forms the spine of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

The finished product is a great guide that highlights lots of personal recommendations and hidden gems from local characters within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

Arts Office

- Artist Funding workshop for Galway County Based Artists took place on the 1st of Feb with 42 artists in attendance online.
- Artist Support Bursary open for applicants – closing date 28th February
- Local Live Performance Scheme Round 3: Arts Office has been awarded €143,000 to run Local Authority programming of live for the period 01 February 2022 to 30 June 2022. The funding will be used to support employment and wellbeing in the commercial arts and culture sectors through the provision of live performances by engaging the services of locally based professional artists, musicians, crew and other staff members involved in live performances. A programme of events will take place in May & June 2022 in collaboration with existing partners.
- Arts Grants (Community Support Scheme – Culture) closing date Friday 4th Feb. The aim of this category is to provide financial assistance to voluntary arts groups/organisations to carry out an arts activity or project within the community.
- Public Art Management Group: Three external Art Experts have been selected to sit on this management group alongside nominated Councillors and Staff. First meeting will take place early March 2022.
- Post of Assistant Arts Officer – A candidate has been selected, contract issued and will be in place Mid- March.
- Places Matters Conference **“Investing Creatively in People and Places”** /Arts Council and Local Government Conference takes place in Carlow 24/25 March. It will be of interest to local authority staff including Arts, Culture Teams, Planning, Community, Libraries, Enterprise, and Environment as well as artists, arts organisations and policy makers.
- Platform 31 – National initiative led by Local Authority Arts Officers and the Arts Council will be announced shortly. Bursary available to a Galway County based artist for €8,000.

Creative Ireland

- Increase in Creative Ireland budget for 2022. **Total funding allocation of €175,161** (€145,161 Core funding + €30,000 Cruinniú na nÓg funding) to allow Galway County Council to deliver collaborative projects of scale, innovation and ambition in 2022.
- Culture Team have submitted an application for funding (€27,000) under the Creativity in Older Years in collaboration with the Healthy Ireland & Age Friendly Coordinator.
- Tender for Service of a Project Management of Creative Ireland Programme closes Friday 4th Feb 2022. Tender to be awarded week of 7th Feb.
- **The Creative Communities Economic Action Fund** has just been announced and its objective is to support local authorities lead the development of the creative economy at local/regional level through initiatives and models which **harness** and **demonstrate** the value of culture and creativity in local economic development. Funding from €50,000 to €75,000 available for projects.

INFRASTRUCTURE & OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

2022 Roads Programme



The Council is pleased to announce the following allocations in relation to the 2022 Roads Programme. Currently the Municipal District Meetings where the annual roads programmes are been presented are ongoing. In summary allocations for 2022 are as follows:

National Roads and Motorway

The grant allocated by Transport Infrastructure Ireland for Motorway and National Roads for the year 2022 is **€38,857,958** which represents an increase of **€10,322,587** on the 2021 allocation. The 2022 allocation divides as follows:

Improvement Works	€34,689,600
Maintenance Works	€ 1,048,358
Greenways	€ 3,120,000

Improvement Works

National Primary Improvements Total	€ 2,320,000
National Secondary Improvements Total	€ 30,810,000
NP & NS Eng Support Total	€ 1,559,600
Total Improvement Works	€34,689,600

Maintenance Works

National Primary Maintenance Total	€ 316,807
National Secondary Maintenance Total	€ 669,551
NP & NS Eng Support Total	€ 62,000
Total Maintenance Works	€1,048,358

Greenways

Athenry to Milltown	€ 70,000
Conamara – Clifden to Recess	€ 1,900,000
Conamara – Derrygimlagh – Clifden – Kylemore Abbey	€ 550,000
Conamara – Galway to Maigh Cuilinn	€ 600,000
Greenway Total	€3,120,000

Regional and Local Roads

The grant allocated to Galway County Council for the Regional and Local Roads in 2022 is **€36,393,523**. This represents an increase of **€878,715** or **2.5%** on the 2021 allocation of **€35,514,808**. The priority is to protect the existing road network and the investment made in it over the last number of years.

The total grant allocation of **€36,393,523** for Regional & Local Roads is broken down as follows:

Improvement Works	€ 31,060,523
Maintenance Works	€ 5,333,000

The grant allocation can be classified under the following broad headings:

Grant Category	2021	2022	Difference
Restoration Improvement	€ 17,847,000	€ 19,357,000	€ 1,510,000
Restoration Maintenance	€ 2,986,500	€ 2,986,500	-
Supplementary Restoration Maintenance	€ 2,133,000	€ 2,346,500	€ 213,500
Discretionary Grant	€ 5,711,000	€ 5,687,500	- € 23,500
Bridge Rehabilitation	€ 620,000	€ 630,000	€ 10,000
Safety Improvement Works	€ 400,000	€ 417,500	€ 17,500
Specific Improvement Grant	€ 1,900,000	€ 1,650,000	- € 250,000
Strategic Regional and Local Roads	€ 1,000,000	€ 250,000	- € 750,000
Speed Limits – Housing Estates	€ 13,125	€ 42,000	€ 28,875
Speed Limits – Rural Speed Limit Signage		€ 99,800	€ 99,800
Cycle Signs		€ 14,000	€ 14,000
Training Grant	€ 128,000	€ 128,000	-
Drainage Works	€ 1,397,683	€ 1,397,683	
Community Involvement Scheme	€ 953,000	€ 964,160	€ 11,160
Former National Roads	€ 373,500	€ 370,880	- € 2,620
PSCI: Survey Support	€ 52,000	€ 52,000	-
	€ 35,514,808	€ 36,393,523	€ 878,715

As the impact of climate change on the road network is becoming more apparent, the Department has introduced a Climate Change Adaptation & Resilience Grant. Total allocation approved for 2022 is **€1,032,500**.

Council own funding of Regional and Local Roads

The sum provided from the Council's own resources in 2022 is **€ 6,462,799**, which includes a provision for public lighting. This is an increase of **€ 105,027** on the 2021 provision of **€6,357,772**.

It is proposed to allocate the funding as set out below:

Description	Allocation
Local Road General Maintenance	€ 1,819,815
*Operational Costs incl. ineligible expenditure under DTTs Memorandum	€ 1,206,950
**Notice of Motion – Roads	€ 491,300
Winter Maintenance	€ 30,000
County Galway Signage Scheme	€ 30,000
Roads Management Office contribution	€ 70,000
Roads Laboratory/Material Testing	€ 20,000
Local Road budget reserve	€ 50,000
Legal Costs	€ 50,000
Public Lighting	€ 1,350,000
Walking Routes	€ 5,000
Strategic Roads Accommodation Works	€ 45,000
School Wardens	€ 34,500
School Flashing Lights (Maintenance)	€ 30,000
Risk Management	€ 35,000
Technical & Service Support	€ 60,000
Fleet Management	€ 76,234
Op Cost – Community Broadband & WiFi	€ 35,000
Op Cost – Conamara Greenway	€ 15,000
Weighbridge Maintenance & Repair	€ 9,000
Town & Village Maintenance incl. Street Cleaning	€ 1,000,000
Galway County Council Own Resources Total	€ 6,462,799

Active Travel



The Council is pleased to confirm that the National Transport Authority (NTA) has approved **€7,850,000** in funding for the **Active Travel Programme** for 2022. Details of the individual projects to be funded and the 2022 allocation amounts are below*. Active Travel is travelling with a purpose using your own energy. Generally, this means walking (including all users of footpaths) or cycling as part of a purposeful journey.

The Council is aware that all infrastructure funded through the Active Travel Grant must be fully accessible to all. In designing and delivering the projects the Council will be cognisant of its requirements under the Disability Act 2005 and the United Nations Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In regard to construction of new footways, or renewal of existing footways, the Council will be adhering to the following specific conditions:

Footpaths must be useful for active travel purposes i.e. for travel to work/school/shops/ services etc. Footpaths that are predominately for leisure/recreational purposes (e.g. walking loops/leisure tracks/Slí na Sláinte) are generally not suitable for funding under the Active Travel Programme.

**Reference to 2021 is referring to carryover from 2021 or a Phase 2 of works done in 2021 where the same job code is being retained.*

Active Travel Investment Grants 2022 Allocations		
Project Code	Project Name	2022 Allocation
<u>Galway County Council</u>		
GCO/21/0001	Cycle Parking	€180,000
GCO/21/0002	Footpath Improvements Package A – Ballinasloe Town	€230,000
GCO/21/0003	Footpath Improvements Package B – Ballinasloe Town	€100,000
GCO/21/0004	Footpath Improvements Package C – Loughrea, Gort, Oranmore	€845,000
GCO/21/0005	Footpath Improvements Package D – Athenry	€200,000
GCO/21/0006	Footpath Improvements Package E – Tuam	€415,000
GCO/21/0007	Footpath Improvements Package F – Maigh Cuilinn, Bearna, An Cheathru Rua, Na Forbacha, Cill Chiarán	€170,000

GCO/21/0009	Footpath Improvements Package H – Craughwell, Abbey, Kiltormer, Eyrecourt, Monivea, Headford and Caherlistrane	€185,000
GCO/21/0010	New Footpath Package A – Caltra, Glenamaddy, Ardrahan, Ballinderreen and Garrafauns	€140,000
GCO/21/0011	Safe to Schools Programme – Support Infrastructure	€400,000
GCO/21/0012	Low Cost Junction Tightening/Pedestrian Crossing schemes – County Wide	€120,000
GCO/21/0013	Light Segregation Cycle Schemes	€100,000
GCO/21/0014	Network Plans – Tuam	€250,000
GCO/21/0015	Transport Studies/Urban Mobility Plans/Active Travel Network Plans	€250,000
GCO/21/0016	Low Cost Permeability Measures	€20,000
GCO/21/0017	Access to Public Transport – Ballinasloe & Oranmore	€220,000
GCO/21/0018	Safety Intervention – Signage & other measures – Various locations countywide	€20,000
GCO/21/0019	Parkmore transport framework – improvements	€190,000
GCO/22/0001	Conamara South	€480,000
GCO/22/0002	Conamara North & Tuam	€415,000
GCO/22/0003	Pedestrian Crossings	€500,000
GCO/22/0004	Safe route to schools	€165,000
GCO/22/0005	Speeding Intervention Signage	€90,000
GCO/22/0006	Footpath Improvements Loughrea	€490,000
GCO/22/0007	New Footpath Ballinasloe	€500,000
GCO/22/0008	Footpath Improvements Tuam	€500,000
GCO/22/0009	Footpath Improvements Countywide	€420,000
GCO/22/0010	Footbridge Project – Clondara foot bridge	€30,000
GCO/22/0011	Galway County Council Active Travel Office – Staff Costs	€250,000
	Total:	€7,875,000

N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment Scheme

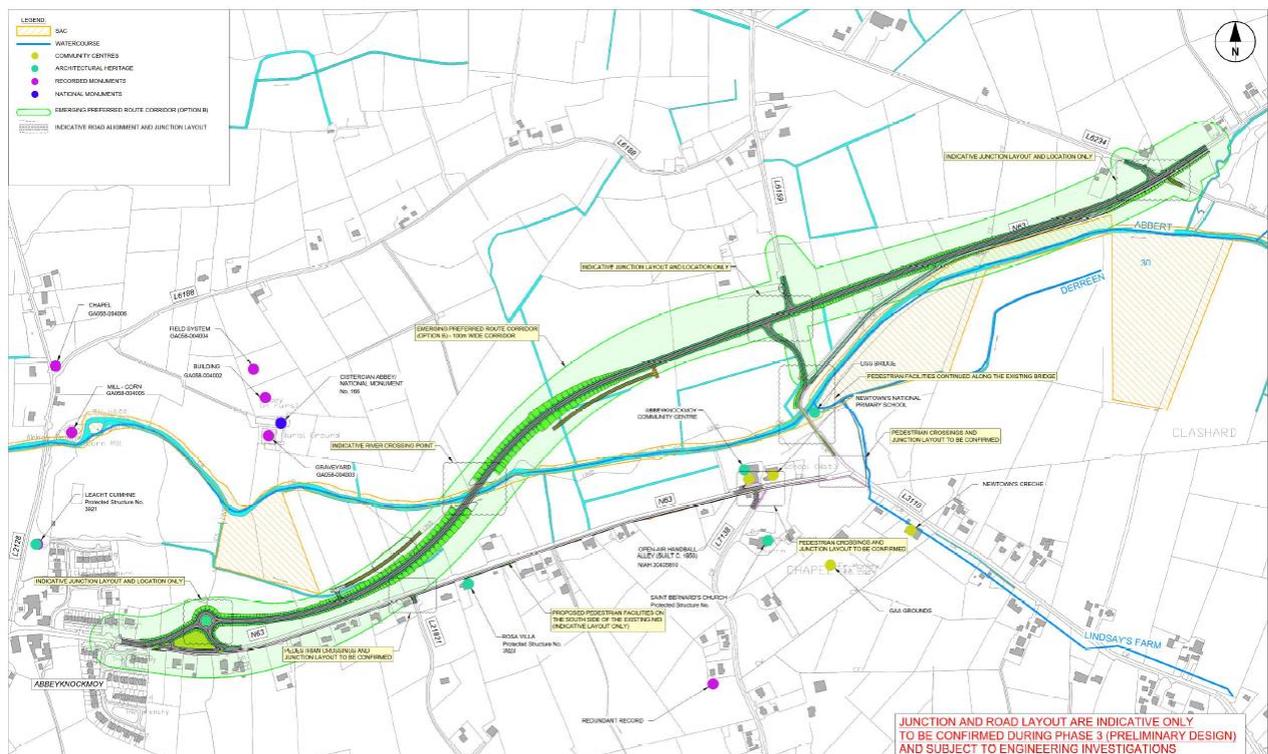


The Council is pleased to inform the members that an application for consent for the above road development and CPO was lodged with An Bord Pleanála in the last week.

The overall length of the Proposed Road Development is circa 2.3 km of new single carriageway road (predominantly offline). The Proposed Road Development site covers an area of circa 12 ha.

An overview of the Proposed Road Development includes the following;

- One new roundabout at the western end of the scheme to provide connection with the existing N63;
- Two new priority junctions to provide connection to the existing L6159 and L6234, including some minor local road realignments;
- One new clear span bridge crossing of the River Abbert;
- New piped culverts over existing field ditches;
- Improved and new pedestrian and cycle facilities, predominantly located along the existing N63;
- Associated earthworks including excavation of unacceptable material, excavation and processing of rock and other material, provision of material deposition areas and deposition and recovery of unacceptable material for reuse in the works;
- Accommodation works, including the provision of access roads and accesses;
- Drainage works, including the construction of attenuation ponds;
- Utilities and services diversion works;
- Safety barrier, public lighting, fencing;
- Landscaping works; and
- Environmental measures and other ancillary works.



Galway to Oughterard Greenway

Commencement of Public Consultation Event Nr 1

Galway County Council, in conjunction with Galway City Council now invite the residents of the local area, members of the public and other interested parties to participate in a non-statutory public consultation on the Study Area and Constraints for the Galway to Oughterard Greenway project. The Council would appreciate if the members if the members would encourage participation in this consultation.

Due to the on-going Covid-19 Pandemic, exhibitions of maps and documents will not be held in local areas at this time. Instead, a project website has been developed containing all the information normally displayed at such events, including a scheme brochure and questionnaire which provides an opportunity to have your say on the project. The information will be accessible online at galwaytooughterardgreenway.ie from Monday 28th February 2022 to Tuesday 22nd March 2022 inclusive.

The Project Team hope that circumstances will permit local exhibitions for future Public Consultations.

Submissions, views and feedback can be done on-line or sent by post or by email on or before 22nd March 2022 to:

Email: galwaytooughterardgreenway@aecom.com

Post: Connemara Greenway Project, NRPO Office, Galway County Council, Corporate House, City East Business Park, Ballybrit, Galway, H91 KT67

If anyone does not have access to email or internet, please feel free to contact the project team on 091 509570 (9:00am to 4:30pm Monday – Friday).

**PLANNING & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT &
CORPORATE SERVICES**

Corporate Services

Sports Capital Funding 2022

Two separate funding applications were submitted to the Sports Capital Grant division of the Department Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media by the Corporate Services Department – Facilities Section of Galway County Council in relation to improvement works to the Tuam and Ballinasloe Leisure centres. These two leisure facilities are currently operated by Coral Leisure Ltd on behalf of Galway County Council.

Grant allocation details

Ballinasloe Leisure Centre:

Total Funding	€213,999.00
Sports Capital Grant allocation	€149,799.00
Galway County Council contribution	€64,200.00

Project Summary – Refurbishment and upgrade works to the changing room facilities.

Tuam Leisure Centre:

Total Funding	€213,999.00
Sports Capital Grant allocation	€149,799.00
Galway County Council contribution	€64,200.00

Project Summary – Refurbishment and upgrade works to the changing room facilities.

Communication Boards at Playgrounds

Galway County Council recently had communication boards installed in 3 of our playgrounds, Palace Grounds, Tuam, Gort Road, Loughrea and St Michaels, Ballinasloe as part of the funding received from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth Capital Grant Scheme for Play and Recreation 2021.



The boards are primarily a communications support, with particular benefit to children or adults who are either pre-verbal or non-verbal and/or have communication difficulties. Communication Boards, which include picture representations of day-to-day core words, as well as images that are specifically tailored for its environment and the location for which it is proposed, help bridge this communication gap for everyone. The communications board are bilingual (Irish and English) and represent and offer a unique opportunity for the community to communicate and connect with each other in a new way.

Register of Electors

Modernisation of the Electoral Registration Process

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage recently advised the Electoral Reform Bill is at an advanced stage of drafting and will be published and progressed early in 2022. The Electoral Reform Bill is the most significant development in the electoral system in decades. It will provide for a range of significant electoral reforms under four main headings:

1. Establishment an independent Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission will take on several existing statutory electoral functions, including responsibility for the registration of political parties, the work currently carried out by Referendum Commissions, Constituency Commissions and Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees. In addition, it will have responsibility for the regulation of online political advertising during electoral periods, oversight of the Electoral Register, and a new public information, research and advisory role in relation to electoral matters.

2. Modernisation of the Electoral Registration Process

The Electoral Reform Bill provides the framework for the introduction of:

- **Rolling Register**

A single, live, continuously updated 'rolling' electoral register will replace the current annually updated register of electors. Individuals can inspect the rolling register at any time and submit updates or changes, whenever necessary, up to 14 days before any polling day.

- **Identity Checks and Individual Registration**

Applications for entry to, or amendment of details on, the electoral register will be made via prescribed form, which will include a requirement for name, address, Eircode, PPSN and date of birth.

- **National Electoral Register Shared Database / On-Line Registration**

One designated registration authority will manage a national electoral shared central database, which all registration authorities will use.

- **Data Sharing**

Provision for data-sharing for the purposes of updating and maintaining the electoral register. This will include sharing data between local authorities and enabling data to be matched against other public sector data.

- **Anonymous Registration**

Anonymous Registration will be provided for where a person's safety may be compromised by their name and address being publicly available specifically in cases of domestic violence or harassment.

- **Arrangements for Electors Experiencing Homelessness**

A person without a permanent address, can register at an address where they are availing of emergency accommodation or where they spend most of their time, for example a homeless shelter where they are availing of essential services.

- **Pre-Registration for 16 and 17-Year Olds - Pending Electors**

Local authorities will be enabled to maintain a list of 16 and 17-year old's who have applied to be entered onto the register. Once a person turns 18, they will be moved to the register and their details will be removed from a pending elector list.

- **Abolition of the Edited Register**

3. Regulation of online political advertising

The Electoral Reform Bill will provide for the disclosure of specified information in connection with online political advertising. Online paid-for political advertisements commissioned for use during electoral periods will be required to be clearly labelled as such. The advertisements will display specified information by way of a transparency notice, linked to the advertisement in a transparent and conspicuous manner. The transparency notice will include information on who paid for the advertising, details of any micro-targeting which was applied and the total cost of the advertising.

4. Amendments to electoral law which will assist in the holding of electoral events if Covid-19 restrictions are in place.

The Electoral Reform Bill includes legislative amendments to facilitate the holding of polls if Covid-19 restrictions are in place including:

- provision to hold a poll over more than one day – which would assist with social distancing at polling stations and
- giving the flexibility to returning officers to provide a postal vote to those on the special voters list if nursing homes and hospitals are inaccessible at the time of an electoral event.

Preparation for Implementation

To ensure a smooth transition to the new registration process in 2022 the Franchise Section continue to have regular meetings with the Department.

Over the past year the Franchise Section have been working on a data clean up to improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the existing Register focusing on a number of areas:

- Updating Eircodes - Most electors were registered prior to the introduction of Eircodes. As a result, there is a significant gap in terms of Eircode data on the Register. As a large rural county, it is difficult to update Eircode data without some form of direct contact with electors. In the past year we have updated Eircodes for over 7500 electors with the information available to us.
- Removing the names of deceased persons on the register - Mindful of the impact this can have on families when they receive polling cards and calls for jury service as well as on the accuracy of the register. In the past year 1255 names have been removed from the register based on information received from the General Register Office. All deaths registered in county Galway from the start of 2019 have been updated. This work continues on a fortnightly basis.
- Upgrades are also underway in respect the systems used by Galway County Council in the delivery of their electoral registration functions. These upgrades will enable delivery of a number of improvements to the registration system in 2022 and ensure compliance with the provisions of the new legislation.

Following publication of the legislation the Franchise Section will be tasked with adding PPSN, Eircodes date of births for all existing electors on the register. The Department have advised there will be a large scale national public communications campaign to inform the general public and support this work.

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

Environment

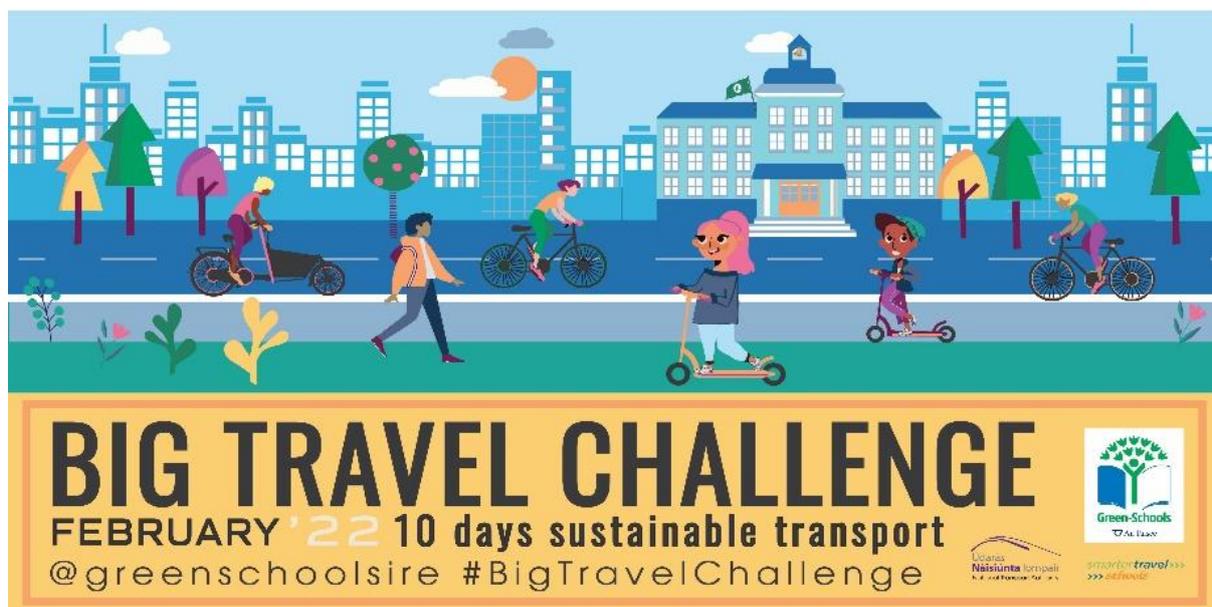
National Spring Clean

The Registration for National Spring Clean is now open to all community groups. This is organised by An Taisce to encourage clean ups of local areas. Galway County Council will participate in the An Taisce National Spring Clean by providing support to communities involved in clean ups.



Big Travel Challenge

Galway County Council are supporting a social media campaign for the Big Travel Challenge. This involves the [Green-Schools Travel](#) team inviting all awarded/active Travel and Global Citizenship Travel schools to take part in the BIG TRAVEL Challenge in February by promoting a sustainable mode of transport of their choice for 10 days during the month.



What goes in my recycling Bin?

There has been a change in the material which can go in the Recycling bin.

- All plastic packaging can now go in the recycling bin along with paper, cardboard and tins.
- All material must be clean, dry and loose.

Galway County Council is promoting this on social media avenues.



Christmas Trees

Over 2,000 Christmas Trees were collected for shredding at 13 sites during January.

School Workshop to address the impacts of both Fast Fashion and Textiles

The Regional Waste Management Offices have funded 31 workshops in schools across the Country. These online workshops will introduce students to the complexities of the global fashion industry and the impact it has on both our planet and people. Circular Fashion Ireland will navigate students through the world of sustainable fashion, via reuse and repair, sustainable brands, who to follow and how to avoid greenwashing. Schools in Galway County are participating.

Green School Assessment Programme

At the beginning of the year, we receive new applications for the Green School Programme. These are assessed in accordance with the guidelines. Schools who apply to renew their Green Flag are also assessed in relation to their work in the Green Flag project. Assessment also includes how they deliver the information throughout the school and community. A team of assessors from An Taisce and Galway County Council (Assistant Environmental Awareness Officer) review and help the schools with their applications. Final figures in relation to assessments will not be available until April.

Media Campaign:

Litter Outside Businesses: This advert was run in conjunction with the Roads Section in the Connacht Tribune and Tuam Herald in January 2022. The advert highlights the obligations of property owners to maintain the area outside their property litter free.

Radio sponsorship for Anti-Litter Message on Connemara Community Radio.

Illegal Dumping Campaign: Williamstown Development company, in conjunction with Williamstown Tidy Towns, publish a local magazine each Christmas for sale in the community. Galway County Council purchased a ½ page advertisement calling on readers to be aware of illegal dumping and to report any incidents to Galway County Council

Partnership with Secondary and Primary Schools

Schools are one of the most important platforms we use to deliver our environmental messages. All information that we receive on environmental related projects and competitions are circulated to all schools and we encourage them to participate.

Ireland's Best Kept Town Competition

Ireland's Best Kept Town Competition is proceeding this year. As a result of Covid-19, the competition did not proceed in 2020. It is an All-Island Competition.

Abbey Village have been nominated by the Department of Rural and Community Development for the competition and adjudication will take place in May 2022.

The Environment Section are working with Abbey Community Development Association to assist and support with the Competition.

Oil Pollution

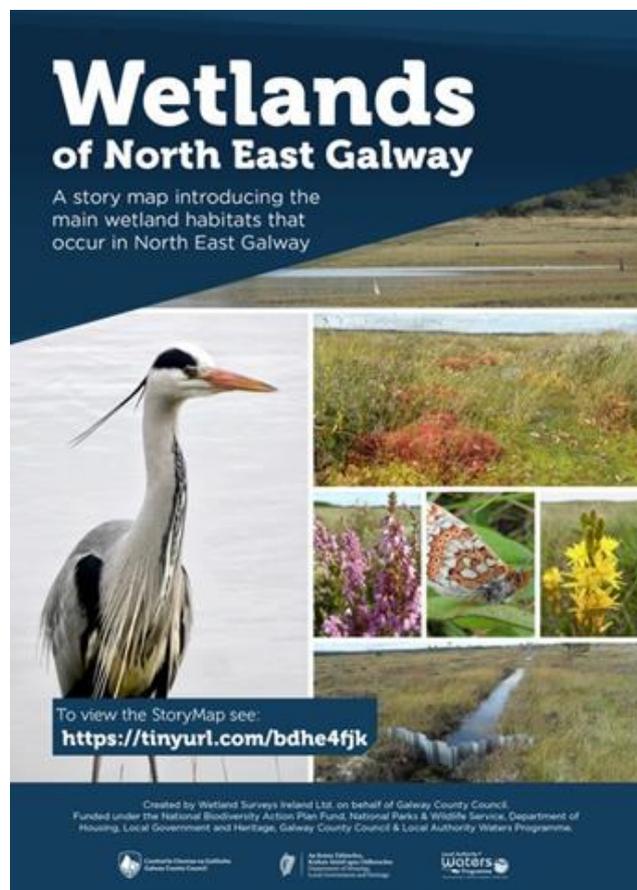
A contractor has been appointed to develop a Draft Oil Pollution Plan for the county and an emergency response exercise was carried out on the 25th of November.

Provision of Dog Facilities

There were 8 responses to our Expressions of Interest for the Provision of a Dog Shelter and shortlisting of application received is ongoing.

Biodiversity

Go Explore! The Wetlands of North- East, Galway The “Wetlands of North- East Galway” StoryMap was launched by Galway County Council to celebrate World Wetlands Day on 2nd February.



Galway County Council engaged Wetlands Survey Ireland to help tell the remarkable stories about the rich heritage and biodiversity of the wetlands of North- East Galway using StoryMaps. Built on leading-edge geospatial technology it is hoped that this customised storymap will inform and inspire people to explore this wealth of heritage that is available right on their doorstep.

This StoryMap brings together the latest innovative mapping technology with text, images and multimedia content to tell powerful location-based stories accessible from any internet enabled device with a Web Browser including tablets and phones. They are therefore an ideal tool to communicate the stories of the main wetland habitats that occur in North- East Galway and why we should value them.

The story map features a range of information about the wetlands found in North-East County Galway, their importance to our wildlife and the environmental and health benefits they provide us with. The StoryMap includes a section on wetlands to visit in North- East County Galway. It also lists a series of measures that we can all take to help protect wetland habitats. The story map was produced by Peter Foss and Mary Catherine Gallagher from Wetland Surveys Ireland.

The project was funded under the National Biodiversity Action Plan Fund, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Galway County Council. It is an action of Galway County Heritage and Biodiversity Plan 2017-2022 and managed by Galway County Council and the Local Authority Waters Programme.

To view the StoryMap see: <https://tinyurl.com/bdhe4fjk>

Mechanical Hedgerow Cutting Guidance for County Galway – Bi-lingual Leaflet

This bilingual publication deals with the values of hedgerows, hedgerow management, the level of cut, trees in hedgerows, machinery, frequency of hedge cutting, record keeping and additional resources. It has been circulated to all Area Offices in a pdf format in both English and Irish. Hard copies to follow and it will also be available online.



Values of Hedgerows

- Hedgerows have huge value for wildlife because they provide food and shelter for numerous birds and small mammals.
- Hedgerows are a much-loved feature of the Irish landscape and contribute to the beauty of the countryside.

Fire and Major Emergency Services

Loughrea Fire Station

The tender has been accepted for the design of the station and contracts have been signed to appoint the design team. It is anticipated that the Part 8 application will be lodged in March 2022.

Athenry Fire Station

Following the approval of the Athenry/Oranmore Municipal District members of the Part 8 planning permission for the station in Athenry approval has been sought from the Department to proceed to the construction stage.

Mise, Le Meas,

Mr. Jim Cullen

Chief Executive

Galway County Council

25th February 2022