

## **Minutes of Meeting through teams of Climate Change and Biodiversity**

### **Strategic Policy Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

#### **I Láthair:**

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

**Oifigigh:** Ms. Eileen Ruane, DOS  
Ms. Maria Flynn, Administrative Officer  
Ms. Tina Ryan, Climate Change Co-Ordinator  
Mr. Dave O'Loughlin, Executive Engineer  
Ms. Ann Dolan, Senior Executive Scientist  
Ms. Paula Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer  
Ms. Rachel Lowe, Senior Engineer  
Ms. Sabina O Connell, A/Staff Officer

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#### **1. Confirmation of the Minutes of Climate Change & Biodiversity SPC meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022**

The Cathaoirleach requested one correction to the minutes under EV strategy.

He added that it had been agreed to raise the issue of installation of water fountains in new public buildings, this motion he confirmed is to go before the plenary at January's meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Cllrs. McKinstry and Thomas have agreed to speak on motion at the Connemara MD meeting.

Ms. Flynn confirmed that Ms. Mannion will give an update on Biodiversity and that the item on the agenda for pesticides had been amended from pesticides to Sustainable Plant Management Plan and Ms. Lowe will give an update.

Cllr. Sheridan enquired as to whether there was any update on Derrybrien. Ms. Flynn confirmed that neither an acknowledgement nor reply had been received from the Department to date.

Ms. Kinane requested an update on coastal erosion which has been an item on this SPC for many years now. She queried as to whether the post of Biodiversity Officer had been filled. Ms. Ryan to give update later in the meeting.

Cllr. Cronnelly enquired if there was any progress on the "Flag grants" that Mr. Coyne from ERCD section had been looking into, Mr. Coyne had hoped that funding for 2 locations may be obtained. Ms. Ruane confirmed that she had no update and that follow up on this item will be undertaken through Mr. Coyne.

The minutes from 2/11/2022 were proposed by Cllr. Kinane and seconded by Cllr. Sheridan.

### **Biodiversity Update**

Ms. Mannion thanked everyone. She confirmed that due to a 3-month absence and having just returned she did not have a written report for today's SPC meeting.

Ms. Mannion acknowledged the huge amount of work undertaken by Rosina Joyce during her absence which meant all applications for funding projects had been completed and submitted on time.

Staff training had been undertaken in 2022 through the HR department and in conjunction with a consultant. These training programmes will continue during 2023 and the HR Department will log these programmes on individual employees training record.

A guidance document on wildflowers has been produced. Ms. Mannion will send a copy of the booklet to the members.

Additional work on wetlands audit was carried out in 2022. Some new sites were added. Survey work on the ground has occurred. Ms. Mannion is working closely with Mary McGann, Ms. Lowe in Infrastructure and Operations and Rosina Joyce Community Warden in this regard.

The work will continue in the drafting of the Heritage and Biodiversity Plan. Ms. Mannion acknowledged the work Ms. Ruane has done to ensure the position for Biodiversity Officer was advertised. This additional member of staff will be an asset to Galway County Council.

Cllr. McKinstry welcomed Ms. Mannion back and expressed congratulations to GCC for securing funding for the appointment of a Biodiversity Officer who will play a huge role in all areas of the local authority activities. He enquired as to what was the period for the Heritage and Biodiversity Plan.

Ms. Mannion confirmed that the plan will be for the period 2023 – 2030. The development of the plan will commence in March. This will involve having meetings with stakeholders, GMIT, GRD and with local communities to collate as much information as possible. It is amazing how many valuable nuggets of information is formularised during consultation with local communities and there tends to be a big turnout when these events are held in local parish halls / community centres rather than in a hotel setting.

Ms. Mannion added that Mary McGann has carried out trojan work with the tidy town groups and Mark Molly has done likewise in school settings. Like a jigsaw this work brings all sections of the local communities together with one shared aim. Their ideas and suggestions improve their communities. All opportunities for funding are explored and applications made where applicable.

The Cathaoirleach stated that Fingal County Council had 200 actions included in their plan and that a lot of those were regarding funding. He also added that at a previous plenary meeting there was a motion regarding availability of council land for tree planting. The area of land may be small and not suitable for any other development. He enquired if land banks for tree planting could be progressed through this SPC.

Ms. Ruane confirmed that she will follow up with Michael Owens in Corporate Services and the local area offices on this matter. She added that the position for Biodiversity Officer is advertised, and interviews will follow.

Mr. Butler informed meeting that he has worked with Mary McGann in relation to tree planting projects with tidy town groups and that he wants to extend this to public lands. He added that it would be a great benefit if a proposal to sell back public lands for tree planting materialised. The Cathaoirleach stated that this would be a matter for the Corporate Services section of GCC.

Cllr. Parsons welcomed Ms. Mannion back. She expressed her delight at news of the forthcoming appointment of a Biodiversity Officer. There is a lot of interest in Biodiversity amongst the community, and recently Aoife Munn gave a sustainable gardening course in Lawrencetown and 50 local people attended this workshop with a large number on a waiting list.

Ms. Mannion agreed that there is an interest in Biodiversity and Ms. Munn is a very good communicator. She added that gardening workshops organised in Tuam and Clifden in 2022 were over subscribed to. She again acknowledged the work carried out by Mary McGann through local tidy town involvement and provision of funding for projects. GCC will be looking to continue the gardening projects in 2023 and hopefully will extend it to some villages and not confine it solely to towns.

Cllr. Parsons referenced the community enhancement scheme project. Ms. Mannion advised the meeting that this scheme should now be open and the heritage grant for 2023 is available. Any communities looking for a letter of support for it should contact her directly.

Cllr. Kinane thanked Ms. Mannion for her feedback and for the update regarding the forthcoming appointment of a Biodiversity Officer. During attendances at various tidy town meetings, she has seen first-hand awareness of biodiversity increasing in communities. Cllr. Kinane enquired if there is a list of upcoming courses available to the public and if there is a timetable for the different grant opportunities. She thanked Ms. Mannion for the publication of the wildflower booklet and enquired if any progress had been made on one for wild mushroom. There are a lot of walking trails around the county, and these are commonly used by children she concluded.

Ms. Mannion advised that some grant schemes come out in January / February annually. She had received notification of the heritage grant for 2023 the day prior to this SPC meeting. Information on grants is available on GCC's facebook page. The PPN is also notified, and they email the various groups. The PPN had sent an email regarding the heritage grant yesterday. Those applying for funding need to do an online zoom meeting with the Heritage Council. Ms. Mannion added that GCC also requests money from LEADER and details of this is sent to groups that are registered.

Regarding the wild mushroom booklet, Ms. Mannion advised that she spoke to a lady at Trinity some time ago who has knowledge on the subject. It is a very specialised area and GCC hope in time to produce a booklet. The information it contains must be correct and must relate to species of mushrooms that are found in Galway. It will take time to collate

relevant information and consultation with other specialists in this field will be required. Ms. Mannion had spoken to a specialist in Limerick, but he was too busy to commit to it but advised that that we needed to be careful and that whatever information we produce must be correct. The Cathaoirleach agreed that much specialised knowledge should be obtained and great care taken to ensure booklet contains correct information.

Mr. Hynes addressed the meeting informing them that in environment consultancy there is a major shift towards incorporating biodiversity. In the U.K a biodiversity metric is used during planning stages of projects. This is a habitat-based approach, and it is used to assess an area's value to wildlife. The metric uses habitat features to calculate a biodiversity value and the idea is to increase the value with a 10% gain. Bord Pleanála and Galway City Council are seeking to have this implemented in Ireland.

To achieve a 10% net gain development companies may have to look to developing an offsite area. Going forward financiers / wind farms may not invest without bio metrics being applied. Ms. Ryan to discuss this matter further with Mr. Hynes outside of this meeting. Ms. Ruane added that GCC could perhaps use it's, landbank portfolio as a strategic approach rather than a reactive approach. The Cathaoirleach recommended that the addition of the biodiversity metric into new biodiversity plan would be advisable.

Ms. Sheehan asked whether developers could possibly destroy an old site in favour of a new one. Mr. Hynes explained that developers must minimise any damage – the objective is to put a value on site and improve upon that. Sites with a previous value will not be given permission to carry out development works on.

Mr. Butler enquired if the metric applied to infrastructure projects e.g., greenways. Mr. Hynes stated that bio metrics has not been adopted yet and is not in legislative plans but that if / when it is it most likely will apply to all projects. Cllr. Sheridan requested that he be included in any future meeting on this issue. He also wanted update on Derrybrien.

### **Draft Sustainable Plant Protection Plan**

Ms. Lowe informed members that during 2022 GCC set up a working group and are working with Sheila Murphy and Beo-Ecology to help protect, enhance, and work with our environment. The aim of the working group is ambitious, and they are working with various staff within the council. They want to gather as much information as possible on current usage / type of pesticides used / various locations where used.

Ms. Lowe gave a presentation to the SPC. The aim of the working group is to develop a SPPP to assist GCC in reducing the use of pesticides in GCC managed areas in compliance with all legislation and existing plans e.g., National, local and biodiversity plans. Pesticides includes herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides. A copy of the draft of the plan will be distributed to the members of this SPC and comments / suggestions will be welcome.

Galway County Council are carrying out numerous ongoing activities to increase awareness and importance of biodiversity, climate change and invasive alien species amongst its staff and members of the public. All these actions play a role in educating people on the importance of pesticide reduction and public misconceptions regarding areas which are managed for pollinators. Creating awareness is a vital step and the appointment of biodiversity officer is a major achievement in helping GCC achieve its goals Ms Lowe stated.

The first step is to create an existing baseline of pesticide usage, this will help us identify opportunities where the use of pesticides can be reduced. Locations which might currently

undergo pesticide treatment includes roadside verges, paths, roundabouts, graveyards, and carparks. In addition, local authority housing, facilities owned by the council will be included.

Each MD will create a register for their area and provide the location, reason for use, type of pesticide used, quantities being used by GCC and in cases where weed control is tendered out quantity and type used by contractor. The methodology used must also be recorded. Once a baseline is established work will commence towards reduction of use. This will involve working with community groups and the plan will continue to be updated and outcomes noted. It is hoped to progress this as soon as possible.

Galway County Council have examined alternative treatment methods with a view to reducing the use of pesticides. There are options for hand pulling, mechanical removal, hot foam, high pressure water and acetic acid (vinegar) – other methods may come on stream in the future. Not any or all these alternative methods will be realistic, viable or cost effective to use for various reasons but if some can be implemented then it's a plus. Alien invasive species may need intensive treatment.

Recommendation of the final plan might include

- Establish a baseline use of pesticides in GCC managed areas
- Identify potential viable alternative solutions to pesticides
- Conduct alternative solution trials to establish the most viable solutions
- Establish strict criteria during the tendering process for the awarding of contracts requiring the management of GCC
- Both GCC staff and contractors to attend training on pesticide usage
- Exploring the idea of developing an app for GCC staff to populate with pesticide usage data within each MD area

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. Lowe for a very informative presentation which when implemented has the potential to be very promising. He stressed the need to engage with the local communities who carry out a lot of work on the ground in their own individual areas and the need for everyone to be working off the same plan in the use of pesticides. At a plenary meeting in 2019 a discussion took place on use of glyphosates only for invasive species.

Ms. Lowe confirmed that she will investigate this but that she believed that it could still be in use elsewhere and that she would need to investigate as to where and why it is being used. This SPC group will be kept informed on progress of the plan. When it is implemented, it will require monitoring, follow up and engagement.

Mr. Butler thanked Ms. Lowe for an excellent presentation and enquired if the NRA activities form any part in this plan. TII have noxious weed guidelines but ragwort is a contentious issue and ideally should be the landowner's responsibility. GCC have control over roadside verges excluding motorways. Mr. Butler stated that the HSE have a lot of land banks / property requiring treatment and enquired if GCC have had any meetings with our counterparts in the HSE regarding same. The Cathaoirleach agreed that when the plan is finalised, we will explore the option of sharing it with the HSE.

Cllr. Thomas expressed his thanks for the presentation on weed management. He advised that when GCC look at the various solutions in-lieu of chemical pesticides the costings should be examined closely. As a landscape gardener Cllr. Thomas is well informed on weeds and those that grow from a tubor for example a dandelion are much more difficult to treat than other weeds. The overground part can be removed easily but the tubor



continues to grow unless treated properly. Acetic acid is an effective cost-efficient way for treatment of most weeds.

Moycullen Tidy Towns completed trials on use of acetic acid for weed management and it is commonly used by them. Hot foam is very expensive and Cllr. Thomas believes hand / mechanical weeding is not an option. Japanese knotweed requires digging out and deep burial.

Ms. Lowe thanked Cllr. Thomas and added that the information on the treatment of weeds growing from tubor was interesting. Galway County Council will take a pragmatic approach when deciding on best options, and staff availability will be an issue in some MD areas. A demonstration on use of hot foam had been seen by some of Ms. Lowe's colleagues. In certain areas GCC may be spraying too much and too often so a broad approach needs to be taken with reductions for immediate effect. Ms. Lowe added that further new methods may come on stream in the future and that as this will be a live plan, these methods will be investigated

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. Lowe for her presentation adding that it was a very good initiative but concluded that the cost elements involved must be looked at in detail.

### **Climate Action Update**

Ms. Ryan commenced by updating the members on three issues raised at the previous SPC meeting

Ballinasloe Flood Relief Scheme – Briefing has been provided to Ballinasloe Municipal District and they will receive quarterly updates. Brendan McDonagh is Galway County Council's Project Manager on the Ballinasloe FRS and can provide an update to this SPC if required and we can direct any specific queries to him.

Coastal erosion - The Manager has committed to a resource whose role will include Coastal Erosion and GCC will be progressing with the appointment. An update will be provided at the next SPC meeting.

Ballinasloe Landfill - Tender has been drafted for consultancy services to produce a Preliminary Report for an amenity development on the Pollboy landfill site. The requirement for a consultation strategy is included in the draft tender. Progress will be reported to the SPC.

### **Public Chargers**

GCC is working with the EasyGo/EIR consortium to facilitate the installation of EV chargers in key locations in the county in advance of the development of the Regional EV Strategy. EIR/EasyGo is in consultation with Area Engineers in relation to 17 towns/villages across the county and is in the process of carrying out site visits to 13 identified public car parks to confirm suitability for the installation of public EV chargers.

### **Regional EV Strategy**

Current Status - A working group is being established to progress the development of a Regional EV Strategy. Galway County Council will chair the working group and CARO will assist with the management of the process. Subject to support from the Department of Transport, it is proposed to contract external expertise to assist with the development of the strategy. Update expected Q1 2023.

### **Fleet and GCC EV Chargers**

EV chargers were installed at County Buildings, and we are in the process of organising the installation of an EV charger at the Centrepont building. Our Buildings Team has replaced two of their hired vans with electric vans and we will also be receiving an electric car for use by staff on a 3-month trial basis. Awaiting an update on a staff resource to manage the fleet. Update expected Q1 2023.

EV Strategy - It is expected that the strategy will inform the appropriate location of chargers by indicating strategic geographic locations and may drill down into what those locations might look like at a local level (types of location rather than specific identification). The strategy will inform the delivery of EV charging points across the western region, and it is intended that individual local authorities will use this document to plan/inform decisions on EV chargers in their respective areas.

Ms. Ryan provided a presentation on GCC's climate action governance structure. One of the key areas we are required to work on is the establishment of the governance structure and building capacity.

The Energy Team has put forward 3 buildings for funding for initial upgrade works under SEAI pathfinder funding. Response expected Q1 2023. We are investigating the purchase of an IT system for managing, viewing, and reporting on energy data. We are also reviewing the requirements of ISO50001 with a view to reapplying for certification if approved. We are continuing to roll out the national Reduce Your Use Campaign to promote energy efficiency behavior at work, at home, and as we travel.

We applied for and received funding from the DECC for the 2022 Phase 1 deliverables (July to December 2022) which included 100% of salary for Climate Change Coordinator, 20% of salary for the Energy Officer, 100% of our contribution to the Energy Bureau and the full cost for the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Assessment and Risk Assessment.

DECC has confirmed that a Community Climate Action Officer will be funded to administer the Climate Action Fund for a 3-year term and a Climate Action Officer will be funded for a 5-year term to assist with the preparation and implementation of the Climate Action Plan. Approval has been received for these posts and the recruitment process will commence in Q1 2023.

There has been an increase in public LED lightings from 36% in January 2022 to 52% in December 2022 within GCC's administrative area. In social housing 120 energy retrofits were completed in 2022 in Tuam, Tynagh, Athenry, Loughrea, Ardahan, Clifden and Roundstone

Ms. Ryan advised members that a meeting had taken place relating to the climate action plan update.

### **Stage 1 – Advance Planning**

- A draft Baseline Risk Assessment (KPMG) and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Assessment (Bable Gmbh) have been received. To be reviewed by 19th January. Summary will be provided at next SPC meeting.
  - Next Steps:
  - Stakeholder Mapping and Development of Engagement Strategy
  - Review national Climate Action Plan 2023 and Sectoral Plans to understand how they will affect our Climate Action Plan.
  - Work with internal teams and groups such as the County Heritage Forum to review Climate Adaptation Plan and identify potential mitigation and adaptation actions.
- Ms. Ryan stated that she will be working closely with Ms. Mannion and that it is

- expected that there will be one plan to cover all rather than the climate action team having a separate plan
- Workshop with KPMG and Bable to identify potential actions out of County Risk Assessment and Emissions Assessment with further workshops for PPN and the public
- Review Climate Conversations and other submissions from the public. Develop a framework for the plan and "Issues/Vision Paper"
- Set up a system for acceptance of submissions/comments
- Set up of Decarbonisation Zone Steering Group and develop specific Emissions Assessment
- Appointment of Consultants to commence SEA/AA process

## **Phase 2 – Plan making**

- Approximate Timeline:
- March – June 2023 – Initial Stakeholder Engagement
- March – Sept 2023 – Feed in Stakeholder Engagement and Develop Draft Plan
- Oct – Nov 2023 – Public Consultation on Draft Plan
- Dec 2023 – Develop Report on Submissions and furnish all documentation to Elected Members
- Jan – Feb 2024 Amendment of Plan and Circulation to Elected Members
- Mar 2024 – Adoption by Resolution
- Apr 2024 - Publication of Final Plan

## **Sustainable Energy Communities**

- PPN Green Recovery Group Energy Masterplan – GCC are on a steering group
- Funding for Energy Ratings for Community Buildings applications submitted
- Limited number can be funded through Energy Masterplan
- C&E Section and Environment Section are following up to see if additional energy audits can be funded through other schemes. Working closely with Mary McGann
- Funding provided for the ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards programme
- SDG Workshop for staff and Councillors held Dec 2022

## **Additional Areas Progress / Support / Access**

- Community Climate Action Officer to be appointed
- Community Climate Action Fund – develop an online application system
- Creative Ireland Climate Action Fund – applications to be submitted Mar 2023
- CONNECTED – Pobal Funded Decarbonisation Zone Protect project led by NUIG.
- Islands and Gaeltacht Energy Agency - Local Energy Agencies in Peripheral Regions - LIFE Project – GCC are on steering group
- EMERGE Climate Action Training Programme – Just Transition
- Rainfall and Flooding; How Spongy is Your School GLOBE Ireland Project
- Shared Green Deal project led by NUIG – In conjunction with community we will be applying for funding under the Clean Energy Stream
- Public water fonts hoped to be installed in Kinvara – working with Mary McGann for funding re this
- Kilconnell Landfill Eco Park Feasibility Study
- Cities4Forests Partner Forest Program



- o Engagement with Libraries

CONNECTED - Decarbonisation Zone Protect project submitted by NUIG and supported by GCC and many other partners has been awarded funding under the Community Climate Action Programme administered by Pobal. Aims are to:

Develop a decarbonisation engagement, dialogue and participation tool and a low carbon action campaign tool,

Develop a local DZ plan procedure guide to ensure input from marginalised communities.

Develop exemplar case studies and stories and provide training.

Build all the above into one tool and disseminate to DZs, 600 SECs, 200 Spark Change communities, PPNs, Community Futures, Transition Towns, Irish Rural Network, Western Development Commission, The Wheel members etc.

Local Energy Agencies in Peripheral Regions - LIFE Project:

Create multiple local social enterprise “integrated home renovation services” in the North and West of Ireland. The target region for this project includes counties Donegal, Leitrim & Sligo and peripheral communities in west county Galway including the Aran Islands. One of the 3 Local Energy Agencies the project will support will be managed by the Aran Islands Energy Coop. The project aims to develop a pipeline of home retrofitting projects in the target region starting in 2023. Partners in the project include Udaras, ATU and a few Local Authorities.

#### Just Transition

Three areas in the east of the county were identified for the implementation of the EMERGE Climate Action Training Programme. The training programme will work with 20 communities across 8 counties in the midlands region of Ireland to empower them to take climate action and to develop new, sustainable economies. – Portumna and Environs, Ballinasloe, and Environs, Glenamaddy and Environs

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. Ryan for the updates and referred to availability of library energy kits. He requested that a list be provided to the members of location of the public charging points so that we are sure that there are no tourist blackspots. A request for KPMGs assessment reports were also requested for the next meeting of this SPC group.

Cllr. Kinane thanked Ms. Ryan for her presentation and for the update on coastal erosion which has been high on her agenda for many years now. She acknowledged the appointment of an Engineer with responsibility for coastal erosion as part of their remit was good news. She enquired was it possible under the Energy Masterplan for consideration to be given for the inclusion of parish halls with regards to funding. She referenced Clarinbridge which is a protected structure, and it has very substantial energy bills. It would be most beneficial if halls like this could be included.

Ms. Ryan confirmed that we have a list of locations for the EV charging points and that a copy of list will be distributed to the members for consideration before the next meeting of this SPC. She further added that she was not aware that parish halls were restricted from the list but would investigate the query further.

Cllr. Cronnolly raised the issue regarding the specific site location of EV charging points. He referenced the site of the Loughrea EV charger which was installed in car park without

any consultation with the public. It is not accessible for disabled people he informed the meeting. Points should be centrally located and not in a corner as this does not allow space for wheelchair users. Dropped kerbing is also necessary when installing points. Ms. Ryan confirmed that she will relate the issue regarding specific site location of points back to relevant personnel. She understands that there will be public consultation on the matter.

Cllr. Parsons apologised for the necessity for her needing to leave the meeting early, she sought more information on Poolboy Landfill and enquired if there was an amenity plan included. Ms. Ruane confirmed that she had received a report from Mike Melody SEE in Environment. She hadn't read the report in full but there was proposal for an amenity and recreation space, engagement with the local community will take place. Ms. Ruane hoped to review the report over the coming days and have it sent out to relevant parties before end of January.

Cllr. Sheridan requested that any further updates that are received in relation to Derrybrien are presented at future SPC meetings. He advised that offshore wind required acute attention and that Geo locations would be best served by local authority. Cllr Sheridan noted that there are over 200 settlement areas in the county and suggested that areas in addition to the Aran Islands be considered for support as decarbonization zones.

The Cathaoirleach confirmed that Derrybrien and offshore wind will be included on agenda items for next meeting in April. A sub-committee for offshore wind should be formed. Most of offshore planning is managed by Mara with onshore managed by the local authority. Expertise on foreshore planning is recommended, with Rossaveal and Port Harbour being the 2 planned sites. Ms. Ruane confirmed that she would speak to Valerie Loughnane Moran GCC's senior planner on the issue.

Cllr. Sheridan raised the issue of dispersion of dividend (Rossaveal). This is a regional issue and worthy of the consideration of this SPC with the dividend being allocated to as many people as possible. Ms. Ryan acknowledged that community funding and dispersion of dividend were very important and that she will bring this item back to CARO for consideration.

Ms. Ryan finished by saying that for the present The Aran Islands is the nominated decarbonization zone for Galway County, in the future consideration may be given by the local authority to extend to other towns and villages.

### **Active Travel Update**

Ms. Higgins thanked the members of the SPC for giving her the opportunity to update the committee on ongoing active travel projects. She stated that she has learnt a lot re community group engagement from Ms. Mannion and added that she will be able to assist Ms. Ryan on EV location queries. She has also been in contact with Mr. Melody regarding the Ballinasloe Landfill remediation project.

Ms. Higgins gave a presentation to the members commencing with "what active travel is" and the benefits of active travel (environmentally, health-wise, socially, economically and safety). She explained what agencies are involved in implementing the active travel investment programme, from developing national policies to funding been allocated to road safety matters.

Active travel – What is involved:

NTA – National Cycle Manual (2011) / The Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan (2013) / NTA Cycling Project Office

TII – Detailed Guidance Documents and Standards / Rural cycleway Design Standards

An Taisce and Smarter Travel – Safe Routes to School / Green Schools Travel Programme / Workplace and Campus Travel Programme

Galway County Council – TII National Roads Project Office / GCC Community and Enterprise Department / GCC Roads and MD teams / GCC Heritage and Biodiversity Officers / GCC Elected Members / Local Stakeholders – community groups, schools, sports community, business community

Galway County Council has its own local policies and plans, and Chapter 6 of the county development plan contains detail on Transport & Movement.

The NTA Active Travel Project commenced in July 2020 and continued into 2021 and 2022. Projects completed in Galway include:

- Cycling infrastructure – cycle parking and stands
- Footpath improvement packages – a mix of Design and Construction projects across the county
- Speeding intervention measures – driver feedback signs, road line markings, signage
- Junction Tightening / Pedestrian Crossing – pedestrian crossings, junction realignments
- Access to Public Transport – Accessible bus stop design and reconfiguration
- Safe to Schools Support Infrastructure – this is not the same as An Taisce Safe Routes to School project – Line markings, footpath repairs, signage, lighting in the vicinity of schools have been done
- Cycling Light Segregation Schemes – Installation of bollards and line markings to segregate cycle lanes

All projects enable commuters to travel “actively” on their daily commute.

The NTA Active Travel for 2023 has changed its focus. Its allocation has changed and now requires more technical and comprehensive designs with green element to be included. Their objectives include

- Quality projects over quantity
- Strategic and plan led projects
- Process-driven project delivery
- Development of in-house Design expertise

The Roads Department of GCC are working with the Planning Department with regards to the Local Area Plans:

- Ballinasloe – Completed
- Tuam – In progress
- Athenry, Loughrea and Gort – In progress

Safe Routes to Schools Delivery Plans are planned – Round 1 to include 2 schools in Oranmore, 2 schools in Athenry, 1 school in Oughterard and 1 school in Moycullen.

Other projects include NTA National **Cycling Network Cycle Connects**, **Community Transport Plans (6 settlements)**, **Galway County Walking and Cycling Strategy (22 settlements)**.

Ms. Higgins gave a presentation on the **processes** her team are required to complete to comply with the project delivery guidelines. It is expected that projects will take a 12 to 18 months from delivery time to completion stage. Projects must adhere to existing technical and reference documents along with existing plans and strategies.

The rules for NTA Active Travel include

- Works must be carried out within the speed limits of 50/60kph
- Works must be on a non-National Road
- Works must be fully accessible to everyone and incorporate age friendly measures
- Other opportunities should incorporate biodiversity and pollinator areas, Greening DMURS, Urban landscaping and nature-based management of rainwater, nature-based SUDS and Climate adaptation measures

NTA / An Taisce Green Schools Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is another project whereby schools were invited to participate. Under Round 1 Seven schools were selected in Co. Galway and these schools have been working with An Taisce and on completion of An Taisce' delivery plans these schools were handed over to GCC Active Travel Team who will have to secure the funding, procure design consultants to develop and bring the projects through the statutory processes. 7 more schools should transfer to GCC in Round 2. In the interim An Taisce SRTS will conduct surveys and audits with school going populations and management. Under the NTA/An Taisce Green Schools SRTS projects include:

- Cycle parking at schools – covered cycle stands installation
- "Front of school" measures to emphasise the importance of school-going children accessing the school
- Delivery of walking/scooting and cycling infrastructure as identified access routes to schools

There will be an additional Engineer joining the travel team to progress targeted projects. The challenges facing the local authority include the capacity of private design consultants is constrained and increased public engagement. In 2021 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council consultation process on 3 Active Travel routes received over 6000 submissions and the proposed scheme was not approved by the Council.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. Higgins for a very comprehensive report and hoped that these projects are included in the County Development Plan. GCC needs to make sure that we are aligned with the National Plan. It would be helpful to see individual plans once available. The issue of the Moycullen by-pass was raised and whether the project tied in with that. Ms. Higgins stated that it didn't as the school in question was a rural school, but the school in Oughterard did.

The Active Travel Team are working with all teams Ms. Higgins. Safety for all road users is the number one priority. The Cathaoirleach recommended that any further questions and comments on active travel should be sent by email to Ms. Higgins.

Cllr. Kinane again thanked Ms. Higgins for all the work her team have completed around the county under the Active Travel Plan. Active travel is about road safety for all road users and the presentation given was most welcome. She requested that a copy of the presentation be sent to the members.

Ms. Flynn conveyed Ms. Ruane for apologies for leaving the meeting early.

Date of next meeting confirmed as Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 11am.

Ms. Flynn finished by stating that this will be an in-person meeting provided technical difficulties in council chamber are resolved. There will not be a hybrid option if the meeting is in-person.

Meeting Concluded

**CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CHRUINNIU ANSIN**

  
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**CATHAOIRLEACH ALASTAIR MC KINSTRY**



