



Annual Report 2020



COMHAIRLE | CLARE
CONTAE AN CHLÁIR | COUNTY COUNCIL

June 2021



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INTRODUCTION BY THE CATHAOIRLEACH AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

We are pleased to introduce the Council's Annual Report 2020, which outlines the work of the Council in delivering on a wide range of vital public services and a number of major projects during the year.

The year 2020 was an extraordinary one locally and globally in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of Covid-19 is evident throughout this Report. The pandemic, and the Government restrictions necessary to safeguard public health, significantly impacted the nature of service provision. The Council had to respond decisively and innovatively to challenges that could not have been anticipated. Clare County Council provided a leadership role in the Covid-19 response in the county, working with national government, regional partners and agencies, and local businesses and communities to chart paths through the periods of uncertainty.

Council staff across the organisation had to adapt to new ways of working while finding innovative ways to continue to provide its wide range of services. New technologies and new ways of working were embraced by our

staff and elected members as service delivery changed from office-based to remote working. Clare County Council staff met these challenges head on; they are to be commended for the commitment to public service demonstrated in 2020.

In addition to meeting the challenges of Covid-19, Clare County Council continued to deliver core local government services across the county, focusing and delivering on key strategic objectives, creating new opportunities. The Council is responsible for delivering services to over 118,000 individuals, with a staff of 940 and an annual budget of €128m in 2020 and a forecasted capital expenditure of €372m over the next three years.

The pandemic and the associated public health measures presented immediate and severe financial challenges for the Council and business communities as they dealt with the economic impact and restrictions on business activity. The Council had forecasted extraordinary financial and cash flow impacts in the areas of Commercial Rates, Income from

Goods and Services and additional expenditure incurred in responding to the crisis in excess of €25m.

During 2020, a combined total of €215.4m was spent in the revenue and capital account (excluding transfers) of Clare County Council in delivering services and developing infrastructure. It is positive to report that the Council recorded a near break-even financial result for the year after the receipt of Government support for lost income and additional expenditure incurred.

In the area of physical development, the 2020 Schedule of Municipal District Works provided for a Roadworks Programme which had a total fund of €30.6m, which was completed successfully. Much progress was made by the PMO team during the year on its portfolio of projects, including major roads projects such as the Killaloe Bypass, new Shannon Crossing and R494 upgrade project.

The Water Services staff, following all safety protocols, provided an uninterrupted service throughout the year. The Council delivers a service level agreement (SLA) on behalf of Irish Water through an Annual Service Plan.

A diverse range of activities continued in the Environment section, such as waste enforcement, waste management, environmental awareness, energy, climate action, gardening, scientific services (laboratory, water, air), veterinary services and Blue Flag beaches.

Clare County Fire and Rescue Service attained accreditation to the ISO 45001 Health & Safety Management System Standard in April for the implementation of its Safety Management System throughout the service following an audit by the National Standards Authority Ireland.

Sections of the Major Emergency Plan were implemented in the response to protracted flooding at Clonlara in February 2020. Emergency exercises carried out during 2020 include the ESB Moneypoint test of the External Emergency Plan (Seveso Plan) and the Limerick Tunnel inter-agency response exercise.

2020 saw the largest number of duties and responses carried out in the history of Clare Civil Defence in a single year. The members contributed over 900 hours in Covid-19 related duties alone. In July, Clare Civil Defence moved into a new state-of-the-art, purpose-designed headquarters at the Quin Road Campus.

Housing staff worked tirelessly to maintain standards of service delivery in the critical areas while adapting to remote working and huge changes in the working environment. Despite these challenges a comprehensive work programme was delivered during 2020.

In terms of capital project delivery, there were four social housing developments completed in 2020, providing a total of 30 units of accommodation for applicants on our social housing list. This was in addition to purchasing 35 units at various locations and the provision of a new four-unit turnkey development in Ennis.

Covid-19 brought significant extra complexities to a service that engages with Clare's most vulnerable, the Homeless Action Team (HAT). The HAT continued to work towards building a service that can appropriately meet the needs of homeless clients in Clare.

2020 was a challenging year for the sport and recreation facilities in the county as the facilities were closed for a period due to Covid-19 restrictions. New booking systems were implemented for the facilities once they were permitted to open. The public library

service nationally was hit with intermittent periods of opening and closing in 2020. During periods of complete 'lockdown' staff were engaged with book delivery services to cocoons which was extended to all who requested the service.

The impact of Covid-19 was felt deeply in the arts sector, and Council staff endeavoured to provide supports to both artists and audiences. Clare County Council maintained its focus on providing quality public services by working closely with community groups, organisations and businesses to deliver positive change for communities in the county.

2020 saw a further expansion of the DigiClare initiative with the establishment of an additional five digital hubs/remote working facilities throughout the county. This is now particularly relevant due to the increase in the number of workers seeking to work remotely as a result of the Covid-19 epidemic.

The Department of Rural and Community Development channels a number of funding programmes through the Council. In 2020, the schemes attracted projects and funds under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2020 and Accelerated Measures, the CLÁR Initiative 2020, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme 2020 and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

In response to Covid-19, approximately 40 community and voluntary groups around the county supported the 'Community Call' by assisting vulnerable individuals in their community with practical supports such as collection and delivery of food, fuel and medicine.

The Community Response Helpline, a dedicated phone service responding to the needs of the people of County Clare, has operated seven days a week throughout the various stages of restrictions. There were 1,136 calls to the helpline in 2020.

The Clare 'Keep Well' campaign commenced, connecting the public to information about local wellbeing resources and initiatives.

The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) had another busy year of managing an extensive range of strategic programmes and activities, while a Service Level Agreement for 2020 was finalised between the Public Participation Network (PPN) and Clare County Council and an annual work plan agreed for the year.

The sudden stop to international travel and tourism deeply impacted domestic tourism within Ireland. However, the Tourism Department continued its development, planning and promotional work and managed to contribute significantly to the strengthening of the tourism product in Clare.

Clare County Council, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, established a Clare Tourism Recovery Taskforce to guide the reactivation of Clare as a tourism destination in a tactical response to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In September 2020, the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 – Guiding our Journey to a Vibrant New Future in Tourism – was adopted by the elected members of Clare County Council.

In the area of planning and economic development, the two-year statutory process of preparing a new County Development Plan

2022-2028 commenced on 18th September, 2020. The new County Development Plan will set out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county over a six-year period.

In 2020, a group of public and private sector leaders was convened to inform and guide appropriate economic measures that will stimulate job creation in County Clare. The Clare Economic Task Force worked together in 2020 to address a number of strategic challenges facing County Clare and the Mid-West region.

In 2020 Clare County Council, in conjunction with Tipperary County Council, commenced the preparation of a Town Enhancement, Tourism and Mobility Plan for Killaloe-Ballina. The Spatial and Economic Masterplan for Shannon Town Centre also commenced in 2020.

While the official launch of the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy has been postponed due to the impact and restrictions of Covid-19, Clare County Council continues to progress with the objectives set out in the strategy to transform Ennis enabling the town to prosper as a successful, diverse and vibrant social, civic, commercial, cultural and residential centre.

The Council's focus on heritage continued. Clare County Council signed a framework agreement with the National Biodiversity Data Centre to undertake actions to support pollinators in County Clare. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a cross-sector initiative, led by the National Biodiversity Data Centre with local authorities, farmers, businesses, schools and local communities to support pollinators such as bees.

The Property Management Unit advanced a number of property refurbishment projects during the year, while significant progress was made in rectifying and registration of title to Council-owned properties and dealing with queries from the public.

Even with the various levels of restrictions in place, Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Clare reported another successful year. Despite economic challenges such as Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, the quantity and, more importantly, the quality of projects applying for support was very encouraging.

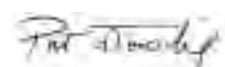
During 2020, LEO Clare ran 149 training programmes with over 2,643 participants. In addition, LEO Clare ran 14 Start Your Own Business programmes to encourage and help new start-ups and 350 'one to one' mentoring assignments took place. To adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic and e-commerce trends, 439 enterprises applied for Trading Online Vouchers in 2020, a dramatic increase from 34 the year previous.

Clare County Council is at the heart of public service delivery in the county. While many of the challenges of Covid-19 will remain in 2021, the Council, working with its communities, large and small, will continue to be innovative and responsive to the changing needs and expectations of the people of Clare during 2021 and beyond.

Le meas,



CLlr Mary Howard
Cathaoirleach



Mr Pat Dowling
Chief Executive



CLARE COUNTY COUNCILLORS 2020

Ennis Municipal District



Cathaoirleach
Mary Howard
(FG)



Mayor of Ennis
Paul Murphy
(FG)



Mark Nestor
(FF)



Clare Colleran Molloy (FF)



Ann Norton
(NP)



Pat Daly
(FF)



Johnny Flynn
(FG)

Killaloe Municipal District



Chair
Pat Hayes (FF)



Joe Cooney (FG)



Tony O'Brien (FF)



Alan O'Callaghan
(FF)



Pat Burke (FG)

Shannon Municipal District



Chair
Pat McMahon
(FF)



Michael Begley
(NP)



P.J. Ryan (NP)



John Crowe (FG)



Donna McGettigan
(SF)



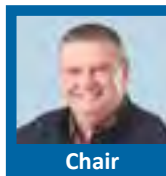
Pat O'Gorman
(FF)



Gerard Flynn (NP)

West Clare Municipal District

Ennistymon Electoral Area



Chair
Joe Garrihy (FG)



Joe Killeen (FF)



Shane Talty (FF)



Susan Crawford
(GP)



Cillian Murphy
(FF)



Ian Lynch (NP)



P.J. Kelly (FF)



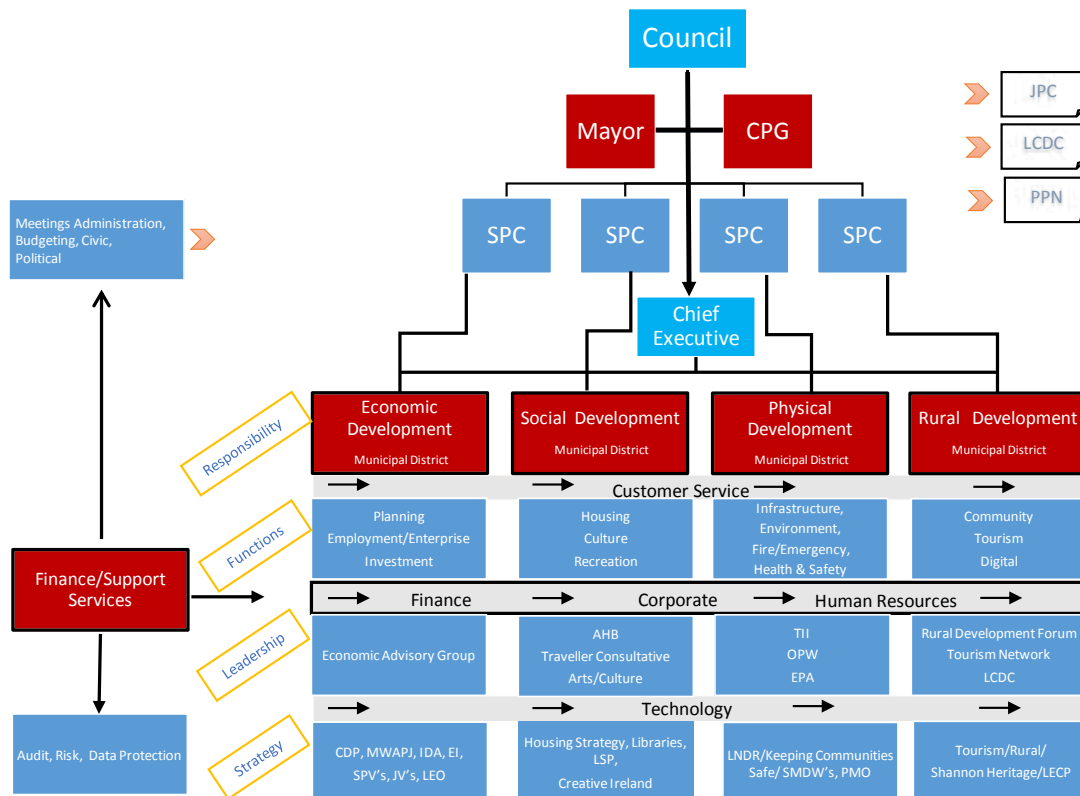
Gabriel Keating
(FG)



Bill Chambers
(FF)

Kilrush Electoral Area

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



Corporate Policy Group

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) consists of the Cathaoirleach of the day together with the chairs of the Strategic Policy Committees. Each Municipal District is represented on the CPG. It has a statutory basis set out in Section 133 of the Local Government Act, 2001 and has specific functions in relation to the preparation of the Annual Budget and the Corporate Plan. The CPG meets on a monthly basis with the Council Executive.

Strategic Policy Committees

Strategic Policy Committees (SPC) are structured around the main functions of Council. They are made up of elected councillors and other representatives of the social partners and other sectoral interests. Each SPC is chaired by an elected councillor and is supported by a Director of Services. The task of the SPC is to assist and advise the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy. The SPCs will not be concerned with individual representational or operational issues. Final policy decisions, however, will ultimately rest with the full Council acting as a body.

Clare County Council adopted a new SPC Scheme 2019 to 2024 in October 2019. The new scheme provides for four SPCs as follows:

- **Economic Development SPC**
- **Physical Development SPC**
- **Rural Development SPC**
- **Social Development SPC.**

The climate change agenda and the biodiversity agenda are key policy areas across all SPCs. Each councilor is a member of an SPC and each SPC has at least one-third of the membership drawn from sectoral interests. The sectoral representatives for the SPCs are drawn from the agriculture/farming, environmental/conservation, development/construction, business/commercial, trade union, community/voluntary and social inclusion sectors.

SPC Membership

Economic Development	Members	
Elected Members (7)	Cllr. Pat McMahon (Chair) Cllr. P. J. Kelly Cllr. Pat Daly	Cllr. P.J. Ryan Cllr. Michael Begley Cllr. Gabriel Keating Cllr. Johnny Flynn
Agriculture & Farming (1)	Rosaleen O'Reilly	
Environment/ Conservation (1)	Emma Karan	
Development/ Construction (1)	Pat Keogh	
Business/ Commercial (1)	Pat Morris	
Trade Unions (1)	Seamus Ryan	
Social Inclusion (1)	Elaine D'Alton	

Physical Development	Members	
Elected Members (7)	Cllr. John Crowe (Chair) Cllr. Patrick O'Gorman Cllr. Alan O'Callaghan	Cllr. Clare Colleran Molloy Cllr. Joe Cooney Cllr. Ian Lynch Cllr. Susan Crawford
Agriculture & Farming (1)	Kieran Woods	
Environment/ Conservation (2)	Aisling Wheeler, James Gillar	
Development/ Construction (1)	Lorchan Hoyne	
Community/ Voluntary (1)	Damon Matthew Wise	
Social Inclusion (1)	Padraic Hayes	

Rural Development	Members	
Elected Members (7)	Cllr. Pat Hayes (Chair) Cllr. Bill Chambers Cllr. Cillian Murphy	Cllr. Shane Talty Cllr. Joe Killeen Cllr. Mary Howard Cllr. Pat Burke
Agriculture & Farming (1)	Denis Tuohy	
Environment/ Conservation (1)	Anny Wise	
Business/ Commercial (1)	Niamh O'Callaghan	
Community/ Voluntary (1)	Eugene Crimmins	
Social Inclusion (1)	Jean Tierney	

Social Development	Members	
Elected Members (7)	Cllr. Gerry Flynn (Chair) Cllr. Tony O'Brien Cllr. Mark Nestor	Cllr Paul Murphy Cllr Joe Garrihy Cllr Ann Norton Cllr D McGettigan
Development/ Construction (1)	Larry Brennan	
Business/ Commercial (1)	William Cahir	
Trade Unions (1)	Tommy Guilfoyle	
Community/ Voluntary (1)	Mary Leahy	
Social Inclusion (1)	Noel Kearney	

Representation of Elected Members on Committees

Chair Designate for each of the four Strategic Policy Committees

Cllrs. P. McMahon, P. Hayes, J. Crowe, G. Flynn.

Regional Assembly

Cllrs. A. O'Callaghan, P. J. Kelly

Education & Training Board

Cllrs. A. Norton, P. Murphy, G. Keating, C. C. Molloy, J. Killeen.

Local Authority Members Association

Cllr. B. Chambers.

Association of Irish Local Government

Cllrs. J. Crowe, M. Begley, P. Daly.

Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd

Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy.

Board of Management of Kilkee Waterworld

Cllr. C. Murphy.

Board of Management of Lahinch Seaworld

Cllr. S. Talty.

Hunt Museum Trust

Cllr. P. Murphy.

Lisdoonvarna Fáilte.

Cllr. J. Killeen.

Board of Glór Irish Music Centre

Cllrs. S. Crawford, M. Howard.

Clare Sports Partnership

Cllrs. J. Killeen, J. Garrihy.

Local Traveller Accommodation Advisory Committee

Cllrs. T. O'Brien, C. Colleran Molloy, D. McGettigan, A. Norton, P. Murphy, J. Garrihy.

Twinning Committee

Cllrs. M. Begley, P.J. Ryan, P. McMahon, P. Hayes, T. O'Brien, J. Crowe, P. Murphy, M. Howard. Cathaoirleach of the day.

County Clare Road Safety Working Group

Cllrs. C. Murphy, J. Cooney, P.J. Ryan.

County Rural Water Monitoring Committee

Cllrs. S. Crawford, S. Talty, P. Burke.

Active Ennis Sports and Leisure Committee

Cllrs. M. Nestor, A. Norton, J. Flynn.

Audit Committee

Cllrs. P. Hayes, G. Keating

Regional Health Forum West

Cllrs. S. Crawford, C. Murphy, B. Chambers, P. Burke.

Joint Policing Committee

Cllrs. I. Lynch, A. Norton, M. Begley, P.J. Ryan, B. Chambers, P. Daly, P. McMahon, A. O'Callaghan, J. Killeen (for 2 years), S. Talty (for 3 years), M. Howard, P. Murphy, P. Burke, J. Crowe, G. Keating.

Kilrush Amenity Trust

Cllrs. I. Lynch, G. Keating.

Board of Clare Local Development Company

Cllrs. P.J. Ryan, G. Keating, J. Killeen.

Local Community Development Committee

Cllrs. B. Chambers, C. Murphy, J. Flynn, G. Flynn.

Western Inter County Railway Committee

Cllrs. A. O'Callaghan, P. Hayes, S. Crawford, J. Crowe, G. Keating.

Standing Orders Sub-Committee

Cllrs. B. Chambers, C. Colleran Molloy, P. Murphy, J. Cooney, P.J. Ryan, G. Flynn.
& Cathaoirleach of the Day

Memorial Committee

Cllrs. P. O'Gorman, C. Colleran Molloy, A. Norton, G. Flynn, P. Murphy, J. Cooney.

Rural Development Forum

Cllrs. Two Councillors to be nominated from each Municipal District.

Board of Cliffs of Moher

Cllr. S. Talty, G. Keating.

Governing Body of the National University of Ireland

Cllr. P.J. Kelly.



FINANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES DIRECTORATE



NOELEEN FITZGERALD
Director of Finance
and Support Services

Finance Department

The Covid-19 pandemic brought fast-moving and unexpected variables to Clare County Council. Throughout 2020, County Clare was effectively put on varying levels of lockdown with businesses and society closed and with only essential services being provided. The pandemic and the associated public health measures presented immediate and severe financial challenges for the Council and

business communities as they dealt with the economic impact and restrictions on business activity that in planning for 2020 we could not possibly have foreseen or planned for. The Council had forecasted extraordinary financial and cash flow impacts in the areas of Commercial Rates, Income from Goods and Services and additional expenditure incurred in responding to the crisis in excess of €25m.

The Annual Financial Statement gives an overview of the financial position of Clare County Council at 31st December, 2020. The table on page 97 outlines the results for the year in abridged format. During 2020, a combined total of €215.4m was spent in the revenue and capital account (excluding transfers) of Clare County Council in delivering services and developing and enhancing infrastructure. It is positive to report that the Council has recorded a near break-even financial result for the year after the receipt of Government support for the lost income referenced and additional expenditure incurred.

At the time of completion of the 2021 Budget for members, the pandemic and the required public restrictions on travel and movement, here locally in Clare, continued to impact on our main income streams in Commercial Rates, Tourism, Parking and Sports and Recreation. The draft budget was presented to members and adopted on the basis of continued central Government supports will be required for this Council to continue to meet budget commitments in 2021.

Commercial rates

Commercial rates are payable on a diverse range of commercial properties across business sectors. The national valuation office based in Dublin (www.valuations.ie) determines the valuation that is to be applied to a rated property. Following the adoption of the budget 2020, the elected members determined the rate to be levied at €72.99, billing a total of €44.7m in 2020.

In 2020, the revaluation of rateable commercial properties was ongoing in County Clare. This revaluation is part of a national programme to ensure that the rateable valuation of all commercial and industrial properties reflect a contemporary business environment and bring increased transparency and equity to the rating system. This process was due to be

in place with updated valuations in 2022. It has now been deferred for a further 12 months as a result of the pandemic and the restrictions on engagement with business sectors and property owners.

Clare County Council billed a total of €44.7m in commercial rates in 2020. The collection percentage inclusive of the waiver recoupment has remained the same as 2019. At 87 per cent, this is a positive position reflecting €8.7 of every €10 billed in the year is collected. To alleviate the impact of Covid-19 on eligible businesses during 2020, the Government announced a nine-month rates waiver scheme. The value to this Council was €13.6m and enabled this Council to continue to meet its services in line with the 2020 budget.

The Council continues to engage with all customers in agreeing payment arrangements. It is important to note that there are a large number of customers whose business has not been impacted by Covid-19 and this Council will continue to engage with these customers on their payment of commercial rates.

The table below outlines the collection performance of the main income sources as reported to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC).

Main Income Sources							
Income Department	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Commercial Rates	75%	82%	84%	86%	87%	87%	87%
Housing Rents	86%	87%	86%	84%	85%	85%	86%
Housing Loans	62%	58%	60%	66%	69%	74%	78%

Non-Principal Private Residence (NPPR) charge

The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended by the Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 and the Local Government Reform Act 2014 introduced a €200 annual charge in respect of all residential property not used as the owner's sole or main residence. This charge has been amended and removed by subsequent legislation; however, unpaid charges remain a charge on properties and continue to be collected by Clare County Council.

Motor taxation

€4.7m was receipted by Clare Motor Tax office for the period January to December 2020 with income transferred to the Exchequer on a daily basis. There was a substantial increase in use of the online Motor Tax system, which is managed by the Department of Transport. 82.43 per cent of transactions were online in 2020, up from 73 per cent in 2019, rating Clare 12th in terms of online useage nationally, up from 18th place in 2019. Cavan, Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Louth, Meath, Wexford and Wicklow collectively have online usage ranging from 83.04 per cent to 92.17 per cent (Dublin). In 2020, Clare Motor Tax service delivery was reviewed in the context of increases in online transactions. Municipal District Offices in Ennistymon, Kilrush and Scarriff changed to facilitate the online service only and public counter provision was consolidated in Ennis.

Information Communications Technology (ICT)

Clare County Council Information Communications Technology (ICT) department is part of the Finance and Support Services team. The ICT operations support nearly 600 users, delivering and supporting ICT infrastructure, ICT applications, enterprise productivity software, graphical information systems (GIS) and web services. The team is tasked with driving innovation and enabling public-facing directorates to improve service delivery through technology.

Support and ongoing upgrade of ICT infrastructure system and services continued in 2020. However, Covid-19 created an unprecedented challenge for Clare County Council to maintain services during the pandemic. Service delivery had to change from office-based to remote working. Clare County Council staff met the challenge, with staff across Clare County Council embracing new technologies or stretching the functionality of existing technologies to continue service delivery.

ICT was at the forefront of these changes. ICT staff provided the commitment to meet the challenge, upgrading or deploying new technologies, software, systems, and providing advice to enable Clare County Council staff to work remotely, meet remotely, and continue to deliver services.

ICT operations Covid-19 achievements in 2020 include:

- Provided the technology to support the Community Call in County Clare. The Community Call ensured those most at risk from Covid-19 had access to essential services, including collecting and delivering food, essential household items, fuel, and medication. Transport

to community testing centres, clinical Assessment Hubs, GP, and hospital appointments.

- 1.9 million visits to websites managed by Clare County Council. We are providing the public with safe access to information and services.
- Enabled Clare Council staff to work remotely and continue to deliver Council services during the lockdown. Required upgrading our primary firewall, updating security software, providing Microsoft Teams software for video conferencing, VPN (virtual private network) connection to ensure work could continue while working from home.
- ICT deployed over 300 laptops to support remote working.
- Set up and supporting video conferencing for employees and Councillors.
- ICT set up and provide support for the Council meetings online.
- Provided the technology to support grants giving financial support to ratepayers impacted by Covid-19 with the financial backing during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Electronic forms replaced paper-based processes.
- Provided web services support to the Digital Hubs projects.

Human Resources

The Human Resources (HR) Department of Clare County Council leads and manages recruitment, learning and development, employee welfare, industrial relations, superannuation/payroll and workplace partnership work areas. Clare County Council is committed to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect the human rights of staff and those whom they provide services when carrying out our daily work. 2020 has been an exceptionally challenging year which has seen staff adapt to change quickly. Remote working, online meetings, e-learning, online interviews and other innovative ways of working have been embraced by staff. They are to be commended for their commitment to public service.

The noteworthy achievements of the HR Department are:

- The four Municipal Districts were re-structured and resulted in the appointment of Senior Executive Officers with responsibility for strategic management of the areas.
- Recruitment processes moved online for both candidates and interview board members.
- Apprenticeship programmes remained a priority and saw the appointment of an Accounting Technician apprentice to the Finance Department.
- The Co-operative Education Programme facilitated a number of third-level students to gain invaluable work experience in various departments of the Council.

- Numerous learning and development supports were made available to staff.
- Clare County Council's HR management systems and practices met the requirements of the Excellence Through People standard thereby retaining the Gold standard certification.
- Initiatives for National Workplace Wellbeing Day, which included fitness demos and a meditation video for use by staff, were implemented.
- Cllr Susan Crawford delivered an online Autism Awareness Training session to mark Social Inclusion Week.
- Initiatives for World Mental Health Day were made available online and included courses on Mental Health Awareness, Stress Awareness and Coping with Covid-19 Anxiety. A Mental Health Wellbeing Suggestion competition was also arranged and lots of excellent ideas were put forward.
- The Council arranged for over 100 staff to avail of the flu vaccine.
- Telephone counselling services were made available to staff and members.
- The Council promoted the Government's Covid-19 Temporary Assignment Scheme. While no staff were called on, their co-operation is acknowledged.
- Covid-19 Induction and Refresher induction training was rolled out to all staff.
- Guidance for Working from Home which was prepared by the LGMA was circulated to staff as an aid to manage the working from home environment.





- The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circulated Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers During Covid-19 which was made available to all staff. This ensured that staff were updated on any changes to arrangements.
- The Wholetime Equivalent Staffing Number as at 31st December, 2020, was 803.84.

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services Department provides a support service to the Elected Members and to Council management and administers a number of functions directly to the public.

Municipal District Areas

Members meet at area level throughout the year to discuss matters relevant to their particular electoral area. Each Municipal District committee has a senior official assigned to it to co-ordinate functions and assists the members in their deliberations. The meetings are attended by the Senior Executive Engineer and a member of the administrative staff in the area. These meetings are generally attended by the press and the minutes of each area meeting are listed on the agenda at a subsequent Council meeting for noting.

Clare County Council consists of 28 elected members representing five Electoral Areas and four Municipal Districts. Local elections were held on 24th May, 2019, to fill 28 seats on Clare County Council.

Municipal Districts

There are 4 MDs in Clare as follows:

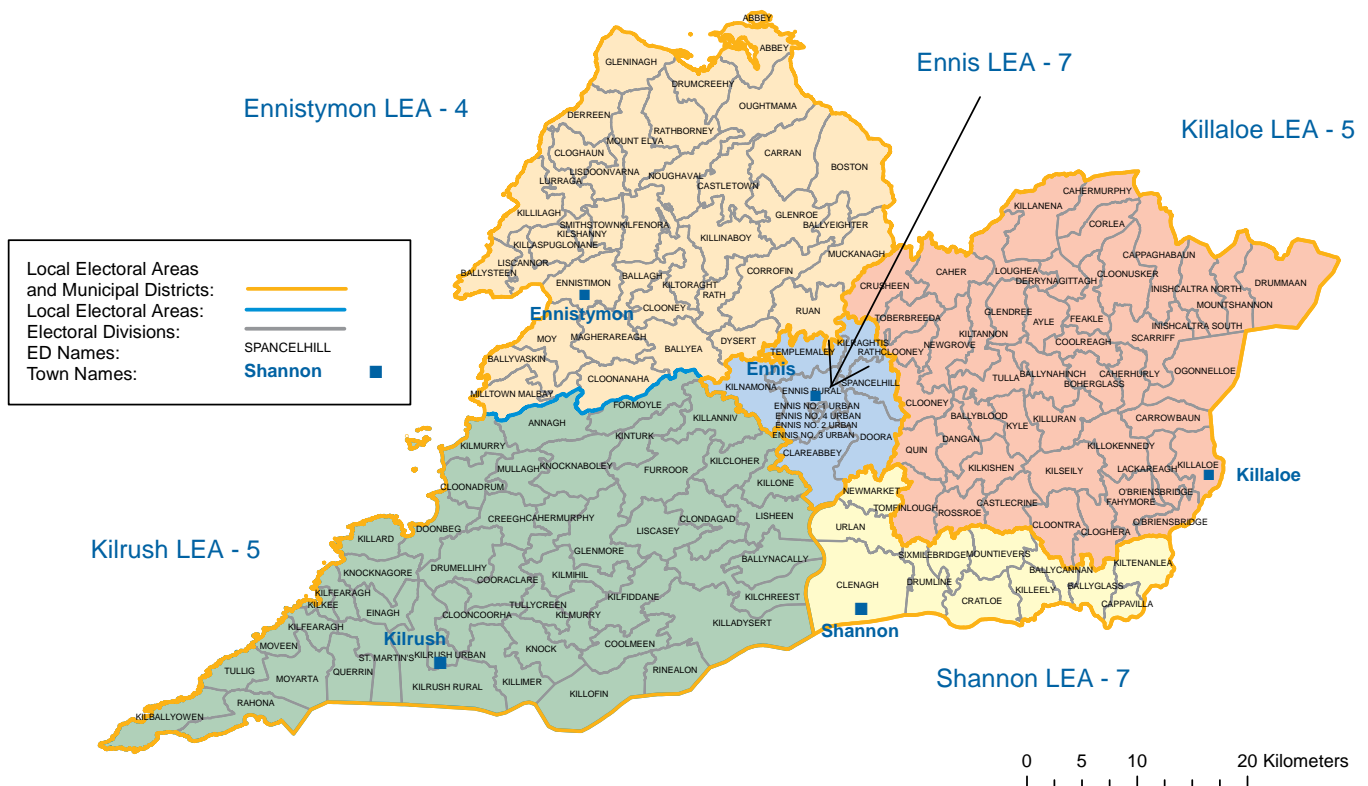
Ennis MD – Ennis Local Electoral Area

Killaloe MD – Killaloe Local Electoral Area

Shannon MD – Shannon Local Electoral Area

West Clare MD – Kilrush and Ennistymon Local Electoral Area

County Clare



Meetings of Clare County Council

Clare County Council conducts much of its business at meetings of the full Council. Such meetings are regulated by law.

During 2020, Clare County Council held the following types of meetings:

- Annual General Meeting – 1
- Ordinary Meetings – 10
- Adjourned Monthly Meetings – 7
- Budget Meetings – 1
- Special Meetings – 3.

Meetings of the full Council are presided over by the Cathaoirleach of the Council. In the event that the Cathaoirleach is absent, the Leas Cathaoirleach chairs the meeting. The public and the media have a statutory right to attend meetings of the Council. Council meetings are held on the second Monday of each month with the exception being August, in the Council Chamber, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about many changes in how we deliver our services and conduct our business and meetings. In June 2020, our Council meeting venue changed to glór Theatre and measures were put in place to ensure compliance with public health guidelines. In October 2020, the members adopted Covid-19 Standard Operating Guidelines for attendance at meetings. A Statutory Instrument was signed by the Minister in October 2020 to allow Council meetings to be held remotely. Following a number of hybrid meetings (mix of physical and virtual attendees), full virtual meetings commenced in February 2021 with all members, media and public attending virtually via MS Teams.

The Annual General Meeting is held in June each year. Councillor Mary Howard, who represents the Ennis Municipal District, was elected

Cathaoirleach in June 2020 for the ensuing year. Councillor Pat Burke, who represents the Killaloe Municipal District, was elected Leas Cathaoirleach at that same meeting.

Corporate Plan 2019 -2024

The Corporate Plan 2019-2024 was adopted on 14th December, 2019. Clare County Council will be a professional, responsive and agile local government that will lead the social, economic, physical and rural development of our county, and to have sustainable communities at its heart.

Strategic Objectives 2019 -2024

Clare County Council operates under five directorates, namely Social Directorate, Physical Directorate, Rural and Tourism Directorate, Economic Directorate and Finance and Support Services directorate. These directorates have agreed strategic objectives and supporting strategies as set out below.

► Economic Directorate

To facilitate a pro-active economic environment where businesses locate and grow and create sustainable employment to support our communities, thus enhancing the economic value of County Clare.

► Social Directorate

To enhance the quality of life for the people of County Clare through the provision of appropriate housing supports to those in need and by enabling and fostering access to information, learning, arts, cultural and recreational opportunities.

► Rural and Tourism Directorate

To put in place a process of engagement in a rural development strategy to deliver key projects that will improve the quality of life, social and economic wellbeing of people in County Clare.

► Physical Directorate

To deliver, maintain and protect key infrastructure to facilitate the economic, social, physical and rural development of County Clare in a manner which promotes sustainability, accessibility, connectivity and respect for the environment.

► Finance and Support Services Directorate

To provide human resources, financial and corporate infrastructure to support and develop the Council's ability to deliver evolving services to its customers by empowering our staff and enabling them to deliver to their best capacity.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee has an independent role in advising the Council on financial reporting, processes, internal control, risk management and audit matters, as part of the systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the Council. It supports the work of the Internal Audit Department and advises the Chief Executive in relation to the operation and development of the department.

The committee is non-executive and is independent in the determination of its work programme and in formulating any recommendations, taking account of the functions referred to above.

Consequent to the 2019 local elections, a new committee was formed. The new committee will run for the full duration of the Council 2019-2024. The committee has five members, three external members and two Elected Members as follows:

- Austin Slattery, qualified Chartered Accountant (Chairperson)
- Ms Rose Hally
- Mr Jimmy Browne
- Cllr Gabriel Keating

- Cllr Pat Hayes.

The committee met six times in total in 2020. The committee completes an annual report to Council each year.

Civic/Mayoral Receptions 2020

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there were no Civic/Mayoral Receptions held in 2020.

Register of Electors

Clare County Council is responsible for the compilation of the Register of Electors for County Clare. The Boundary of the Dáil constituency of Clare is the same as the county boundary of Clare in accordance with the electoral amendment (Dáil Constituencies) Act 2017.

The Register of Electors is used for voting purposes and it is compiled on an annual basis. When published it is effective for a period of with effect from 15th February. In the event of any election or referendum being held during the life of a Register a supplement is compiled which is used on polling day in conjunction with the current Register of Electors.

Every person aged 18 years of age or over and who permanently resides at a particular address within the state is eligible for inclusion on the Register of Electors.

While every resident is entitled to be registered, the registration authority needs to know a person's citizenship to determine the elections at which they may vote.

The total number of Local Government electors on the 2019/2020 Register of Electors is 91,781.

During the lifetime of the 2019/2020 Register of Electors the Local and European Elections were held in conjunction with a referendum

on the Thirty-eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Dissolution of Marriage) Bill 2016, on Friday, 24th May, 2019.

A supplement was compiled in this instance resulting in an additional number of 2,434 additional eligible electors plus 124 additional postal and special voters.

The General Election was held on Saturday, 8th February, 2020. An additional supplement was compiled resulting in 4,366 additional electors (including the electors added on for the previous elections/referendum of 24th May, 2019) and an additional 481 Postal/Special voters (including the electors added on for the previous elections/referendum of 24th May, 2019).

Protected Disclosures Act 2014

Clare County Council confirms that no Protected Disclosures were received in 2020. Consequently, no action was required to be taken by Clare County Council in relation to Protected Disclosures.

Business Review Initiatives 2020

Service catalogue

Business Review worked with the national project team to catalogue public-facing services across each Directorate. 1,100 services registered. The next stage involves the development of a Service Catalogue website which will host details of all services.

Excellence in Local Government & LAMA awards

- Excellence in Local Government Awards 2020 – six submissions, one award received for Best Library Service – Connections: Stories by Syrian Families in County Clare

- Local Authority Members' Association Awards 2020: 19 submissions, 15 shortlisted, six awards received.

Innovation Awards

Clare County Council signed the Public Service Innovation Declaration, declaring the organisation's commitment to promoting, developing and embedding a culture of innovation. In order to advance this process Business Review co-ordinated an innovation competition. All staff were invited to submit an innovative idea which would result in a smarter way of working and greater efficiencies.

Competition winners as follows:

1st prize: Nicola Killeen & Deirdre Power, Rural Development.

Developed an online web based application process, pilot initially for the Community Support Scheme, backed up by a robust Content Management System.

2nd prize: Eoghan Kelly – Physical Development.

Developed a dynamic on site recording of works uploaded to the CRM using a handheld data recorder.

3rd prize: Sheila Downes – Economic Development.

Enhancement of biodiversity on Council property.

Book of Condolence

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, an online book of condolences was established. The first online condolences opened in August 2020 in memory of the late John Hume RIP.

Customer Care Co-ordinator

The Council is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers and has a complaints/ comments policy in place. The Council's Customer Care Co-ordinator investigates all complaints/comments received. A person not satisfied with the response provided by the Customer Care Co-ordinator can request to have their case reviewed again by the Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services. In 2020, the Customer Care Co-ordinator responded to 10 complaints received, 3 of which were dealt with under appeal, to the Senior Executive Officer.

Our Customer Service Team supported the Rural Development Directorate in taking calls from the Covid-19 Community Call Response Line, which was set up to support the Clare community during Covid-19 restrictions which were in place throughout 2020.

Covid-19 restrictions led to new challenges for the Customer Service Team, with restricted access to Clare County Council public counters. Our Customer Service Security Officers continued to provide excellent customer service, working with members of the public who presented at Áras Contae an Chláir, assisting them outside the building with their queries and directing them to appropriate services.



Communications and Public Relations

Clare County Council continued to make progress in further enhancing the means by which it communicates with staff, elected members and service users during 2020.

The Council now has a combined following of approximately 25,000 people on social media. In 2020, across corporate social media channels (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) the Communications Office posted more than 2,000 times. Posts gained 3.7 million impressions and 220,000 engagements on Facebook; and more than 2 million impressions on Twitter.

The Communications Office issued over 140 media releases in 2020, promoting the full breadth of services provided by Clare County Council resulting in extensive local and national coverage.

The Communications Officer is a member of the Covid-19 Crisis Management Team (CMT) and supported the work of CMT with key communications campaigns throughout the year. These included information on accessing Council services during Covid-19; information on Government public health advice and Covid-19 restrictions; and support to members of the community to maintain their wellbeing through various initiatives.

From November, 2020, the Communications Officer co-chaired the Clare County Council 'Keep Well' working group and co-ordinated the group's communications activities in mainstream and social media to raise awareness of and promote engagement with Covid-19 wellbeing resources.



Staff newsletters (The Banner Bulletin) and Monthly Management Reports reporting the progress made by Clare County Council Directorates during the preceding month were produced. The Communications Officer continued to provide news items for the main Council website, as well as the Intranet and Extranet.

The Graphic Design & Print Service staff further enhanced the quality of internal and external communications carried out by Clare County Council, by producing high-quality design and print material.

The Irish Language Officer provided communications in the Irish language throughout 2020 and works with all departments to assist them in compliance with the legislation and promotion of the Irish language in all elements of service delivery.

2020 saw the launch of a new publication by Clare County Council, 'The Story of Clare and its People 1570-2020', by Dr Matthew Potter and Dr John Treacy. The book details 450 years of local government in County Clare.



Pictured at the launch of 'The Story of Clare and its People 1570-2020 – A History of Local Government in Ireland's Banner County' in glór in December 2020 were Dr John Treacy, Dr Matthew Potter and Dr John Power with Cathaoirleach of Clare County Council, Cllr Mary Howard, and Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, Clare County Council.

Office of the Ombudsman

This office was established under the Ombudsman Act, 1980. Its role is to investigate complaints about administrative actions, delays or inactions, adversely affecting persons or bodies in their dealings with state bodies including Local Authorities. The Office of the Ombudsman dealt with 23 Customer complaints in 2020 which were referred to Clare County Council for a response and report.

Ombudsman for Children

In 2020, no complaint was made to the Ombudsman for Children.

FOI & Data Protection

Freedom of Information

In 2020, there were 122 FOI requests, five internal reviews and two appeals to the Information Commissioner.

The outcome of valid requests received in 2020 was as follows: Granted – 41; Part-granted – 25; Refused – 53; Transferred – 1; Withdrawn/outside FOI – 2.

The categories of the requests are as follows: Journalists – 35; Business Interest Groups – 7; Oireachtas/Public representatives – 1; Staff – 0; Clients/others – 79.

The policy of Clare County Council is:

“To give members of the public access to information held by this authority, to the greatest extent possible, in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy of the individual.”

Further information, application form and details of the fee structure is available on the Council’s website: <https://www.clarecoco.ie/your-council/how-we-manage-information/freedom-of-information/how-to-apply-for-information/>

The Freedom of Information Act sets out appeal mechanisms in the event of a refusal of a request, or in relation to deferral of access, charges, form of access etc. Fees are also payable in certain cases on appeal as follows: The fee for internal review under Section 21 is now €30 (€10 for medical card holders and their dependants). The fee for appeals to the Information Commissioner under Section 22 is now €50 (€15 for medical card holders and their dependants).

Data protection

Clare County Council processes all personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Acts, 1988 to 2018. The GDPR applies from 25th May, 2018. It has general application to the processing of personal data in the EU, setting out more extensive obligations on data controllers and processors, and providing strengthened protections and rights for data subjects.

During 2020, the Data Protection Officer (DPO) provided advice, guidance and support to departments in relation to GDPR, provided training for departments and Councillors to gain an understanding of the GDPR and how best to meet their specific obligations. Data access requests and data breaches are also handled through the DPO. There were 25 data access requests made under the Data Protection Acts for access to personal data held by Clare County Council in 2020.

Privacy Statement

At Clare County Council we are committed to protecting and respecting your privacy. The Privacy Statement lets you know how we look after your personal data. It also informs you as to our obligations and your rights under data protection law. Clare County Council's privacy statement can be found at: <https://www.clarecoco.ie/%5binfo%5d/privacy-statement/>

Records Management

Our Records Management Unit ensured that vital records are permanently and securely preserved. Substantial volumes of records were archived which are required to be retained under the National Retention Policy for Local Authority Records. In addition, records were disposed of in accordance with the National Retention Policy for Local Authority Records.

Works are progressing in the fit out and layout of Quin Road Records storage facility and on the implementation of the ADLIB Archives and Records Management database system is ongoing with testing taking place.

Records management has collected all Chief Executive Orders, County Council minute books and registers of electors that will be bound and subsequently archived, thus ensuring vital records are permanently and securely preserved.



GDPR



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE



CARMEL KIRBY
Director of Physical Development

Roads and Transportation Department

Roads and Transportation co-ordinate the design, maintenance and improvement of the national, regional and local road network throughout the county and also has responsibility for road safety, public lighting, hedgecutting, parking management, active travel, insurances, health and safety and arterial drainage.

Schedule of Municipal District Works 2020

The 2020 Schedule of Municipal Districts Works provided for a Roadworks Programme which had a total fund of €30.6m. This programme was completed and all approved allocations drawn from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the Department of Transport (DoT) respectively.

Listed hereunder are a number of the highlights/works that took place:

- Strengthening/surface dressing of more than 252km of road network
- Continuation of enhanced bridge remediation programme. Works were carried out on 19 bridges in 2020
- Completion of five safety improvement schemes.

Public lighting

Clare County Council has responsibility for the management and maintenance of over 14,425 public lights in the county. Public lighting is by far the largest energy consumption component

of Local Authority infrastructure and the costs associated with same continue to increase. Currently, all lights that have reached the end of life due to the lack of replacement parts or age are being replaced with new LED luminaries which are more energy efficient. Currently there are 44 per cent of the lights changed to LED through maintenance in Clare. The key priorities in relation to public lighting include changeover to LED technology, achievement of the 2020 carbon footprint reduction target and replacement of supporting infrastructure where required.

Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS)

The Draft Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS) document was approved by the National Transport Authority (NTA) board during 2020 and the draft report and the Executive Summary have been published. The supporting documents have been developed. The LSMATS public consultation, to which all Members were invited, was launched by the NTA on 2nd September, 2020, and was on public display for an eight-week period up to 30th October. There were over 112 submissions during the process which the NTA is now considering. A second round of consultation will commence in Spring 2021. The NTA intends to finalise the strategy by September/October, 2021.

Active Travel 2020

On 23rd July, 2020, a July Jobs Stimulus Plan was announced by Government for which the Department of Transport had funding oversight. The package of measures, called Active Travel Measures Allocations, was designed to stimulate a jobs-led recovery and build economic confidence while continuing to manage the impact of Covid-19. As part of the Stimulus Plan, an allocation of €27 million was made available to eligible local authorities funded under the Department's regional and

local road maintenance and renewal grant programmes. The Road Design Section led a funding application, in conjunction with each Municipal District, which resulted in an allocation of almost €2 million for shovel ready projects in Clare in 2020.

A further €6 million for active travel projects in Clare has been allocated by the National Transport Authority (NTA) for 2021.

Other roads activities

Community Hedgecutting Grant

Clare County Council provided an allocation of €10,000 to continue the Community Hedgecutting Grant Scheme in 2020. Twenty-eight grants were approved in 2020. This initiative is facilitating greater awareness among landowners of their responsibilities in relation to management of roadside hedges on their properties.

Community Involvement Scheme

An allocation of €142,000 under the Community Involvement Scheme in 2020 facilitated work being carried out to four public roads throughout the county.

Local Improvement Scheme

Clare County Council was allocated total grant funding of €480,811 for Local Improvement Schemes from the Department of Rural and Community Development in 2020. The grant funding facilitated the approval and completion of LIS works to 12 non-public roads in 2020.

Traffic management

The Council has responsibility for the management and enforcement of traffic throughout the county. Parking Bye-Laws and pay and display facilities are in operation in Ennis, Kilrush, Kilkee, Lahinch and Doolin. The Council continues to invest in staff and resources to improve the service delivery in this area.

Roads Performance Indicators

While the indicators for 2020 are not yet compiled, the indicators for 2019 are listed hereunder for roads.

R1 % of roads that received a PSCI condition rating

Description	%
% of regional roads that received a PSCI rating in 24 months prior to 31/12/2019	99.49%
% of local primary roads that received a PSCI rating in 24 months prior to 31/12/2019	68.97%
% of local secondary roads that received a PSCI rating in 24 months prior to 31/12/2019	72.82%
% of local tertiary roads that received a PSCI rating in 24 months prior to 31/12/2019	77.87%

R1 B % of roads represented by PSCI condition rating

Road Type	1-4 Rating	5-6 Rating	7-8 Rating	9-10 Rating
Regional	6.32%	25.92%	29.02%	38.28%
Local primary	2.92%	19.03%	48.11%	21.84%
Local secondary	6.19%	25.89%	42.74%	17.44%
Local tertiary	25.77%	20.43%	22.30%	14.89%

R2 Regional Road Works

Km of regional road strengthened during 2019	9.1km
Amount expended on regional road strengthening during 2019	€ 2,339,528
Km of regional road resealed during 2019	22.3km
Amount expended on regional road resealing during 2019	€ 654,115

R2 Local Road Works

Km of local road strengthened during 2019	103.3km
Amount expended on local road strengthening during 2019	€ 7,624,288
Km of local road resealed during 2019	109.3km
Amount expended on local road resealing during 2019	€ 1,812,947

Health & Safety

In 2020, a significant proportion of the Health & Safety team's time was allocated to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic in addition to conducting the standard H&S Officer functions. The Senior Executive H&S Officer attended all 62 Crisis Management Team Meetings of the Council, was part of the National Working Group in the development and delivery of 30 Standard Operational Guidance Documents for the LA Sector and was part of a team that continually reviewed, revised and updated the Clare County Council Covid Response Plan. The H&S team continually interpreted the national and sectoral guidance developing and updating Covid-19 Risk Assessments and provided advice and guidance to staff on compliance with the relevant control measures in an ever-evolving situation.

In 2020, Clare County Council continued to implement its Occupational Health & Safety Management System and seek continuous improvement in Health & Safety. The Clare County Council Occupational Health & Safety Management System was updated in 2020 to reflect the revised organisational structures, all 22 Department Safety Statements and associated Risk Assessments and Health & Safety Plans were revised, updated and communicated.

Physical Development Strategic Policy Committee

The Physical Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) held three meetings in 2020. This Committee has a membership of 12, comprising seven Elected Members and a representative from each of the following sectors:

- Agriculture/farming
- Environment/conservation
- Development/construction
- Community/voluntary
- Social inclusion.

The Chairperson of the SPC is Councillor John Crowe.

Issues discussed by the SPC in 2020 included the following:

- **Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**
- **Biodiversity**
- **Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS)**
- **Waste Minimisation**
- **EPA Water Quality Report.**

Project Management Office

Despite the unprecedented challenges we faced for most of 2020 including temporary site closures, works not being allowed to commence, increased health and safety mitigation measures, restricted travel and ban on physical meetings, much progress was made by the PMO team during the year on our portfolio of projects. Some of the main highlights are outlined below.

Major roads projects

- Detailed design and land acquisition continued on the Killaloe Bypass, new Shannon Crossing and R494 upgrade project. A significant milestone was achieved in late Summer 2020 with the completion of the prequalification tender process which resulted in a shortlist of six major contractors being selected to tender for the main works contract once advertised. In preparation of, and to de-risk for same, a significant Advance Works Contract costing over €1.2m was awarded in early December 2020.
- Publication and submission of the CPO for the N67/N85 Ennistymon Inner Relief (Blake's Corner) project.
- Submission of project appraisal documents to the Department in November re the Limerick Northern Distributor Road.

Flood relief schemes

The five Clare Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) schemes, namely Shannon, Kilkee, Springfield, Bunratty and Kilrush, were to be progressed. In parallel, work continued on a number of other coastal, harbour and minor works schemes throughout the county where the Council has been pursuing feasible solutions in a number of areas with a

view to minimisation of flood risk. Significant milestones achieved in 2020 included the following:

- Contract signing for the appointment of consultants for the Shannon Town & Environs Flood Relief Scheme.
- Ministerial visit by Patrick O'Donovan TD in December.
- ABP planning permission for Springfield Flood Relief Scheme.
- Approval and grant funding for a number of other schemes including Ennis Lower Flood Relief Scheme, Miltown Malbay Flood Relief Scheme and Spanish Point Coastal Protection works.

Other projects

- Following the allocation of €255k Carbon Tax Funding, the West Clare Railway Greenway project was able to progress to strategic assessment stage for the entire route and tender for the appointment of technical advisors for the priority section between Kilrush and Kilkee.
- The Doolin Pier Visitor Services Building was developed further during the year and is being advanced to detailed design and planning stage. On completion, subject to planning, it will provide a state-of-the-art Visitors Services Building.
- Following pre-Covid meetings with the Department in February relating to the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) project at Claureen, preliminary design of the road infrastructure to support same was progressed and submitted for Part VIII planning in early summer. Approval was granted for same at the September monthly meeting of Council.



Site visit to the Ennis South Flood Relief Scheme works at St Flannan's College, November 2020.



Sheet pile flood defence wall construction along the River Fergus.



Socially distant contract signing for Shannon Flood Relief Scheme in July, 2020.



PMO team with Minister Patrick O'Donovan in December, 2020.

Fire & Building Control



Fire Service Operations

The Fire Service attended 1,014 call-outs in 2020, which was a slight decrease of 3 per cent on the number for 2019. There was no fire fatality in 2020 in County Clare. Chimney fire callouts decreased by almost 15 per cent to a historical low of 69 from 81 in 2019. There was also a 26 per cent decrease in domestic fires in 2020 from 53 to 39.

Capital/Procurement

Capital Grant Aid Funding was received to develop a new Workshop and Spare Appliance Storage Shed at Ennis Fire Station at a total cost of €1,229,936. The project progressed to construction phase and is nearing completion at this time. A new Class B Fire Appliance at a cost of €451,141 was delivered to and went operational in Shannon Fire Station in September.



New Ennis Workshop.

Recruitment & Retention

Recruitment and retention of Retained Personnel continues to be a challenge throughout the country. In Clare in 2020, four personnel were taken on but unfortunately five left the service in the same period.

Health & Safety

In April 2020, Clare County Fire & Rescue Service attained accreditation to the ISO 45001 Health & Safety Management System Standard for the implementation of its Safety Management System throughout the service following an audit by the National Standards Authority Ireland.

Fire Prevention

A total of 85 Fire Safety Certificate Applications were received in 2020, a decrease of 19.8 per cent on the 2019 figure of 106. Fire Prevention Officers assessed 72 licence applications. These apply to pubs, hotels, community centres and theatres throughout the county.

National Fire Safety Week took place from 5th–12th October. Activities carried out during the week included the use of social media for fire safety messages and fire safety discussions on local radio stations.

Building Control

A total of 4.9 per cent of buildings notified to us through BCMS were inspected by Building Control Staff in 2020. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and limitations on the construction industry, fewer inspections were carried out than in previous years. A total of 68 Disability Access Certificate Applications were assessed by the Building Control Section in 2020, a decrease of 13 per cent from 2019.



Major Emergency Management

Sections of the Major Emergency Plan were implemented in the response to protracted flooding at Clonlara in February 2020.

The following Emergency Exercises were carried out during 2020:

- ESB Moneypoint - test of the External Emergency Plan (Seveso Plan)
- Limerick Tunnel inter-agency response exercise.

A severe weather workshop for key personnel in the Council was held in October 2020 to ensure preparedness for the 2020/2021 winter season. Clare County Council participated in inter-agency co-ordination of the national responses to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This included the establishment and management of national facilities for responding to the Covid-19 crisis.



Dangerous Structures

Building control staff dealt with 21 Dangerous Structure complaints in 2020, an increase of 31 per cent from 2019.

Fire Service Performance Indicator		2020
F1	Cost per Capita	€51.41
F2-B	Average time taken, in minutes to mobilise Fire Brigades in Part-Time Stations in respect of Fires	5.28 min
F2-D	Average time taken, in minutes to mobilise Fire Brigades in Part-Time Stations in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	4.77 min
F3-A	% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	36.48%
F3-B	% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	40.68%
F3-C	% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	22.83%
F3-D	% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	40.70%
F3-E	% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	43.33%
F3-F	% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	15.97%
P5-A	% of applications for fire safety certs that were decided (granted or refused) within two months of their receipt	69.09
P5-B	% of applications for fire safety certs that were decided (granted or refused) within an extended period agreed with the applicant	23.64
P1	Buildings Inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified to the local authority	4.9%

Expectations for 2021

It is expected that the new Workshop and Spare Appliance Storage Shed at Ennis Fire Station will be operational. A new Class B Fire Appliance to be ordered. Delivery is expected of four new all-wheel drive vans.

In relation to the Health & Safety Management System it is intended to retain accreditation to OHSAS 45001.

It is planned that there will be a substantial fire safety awareness campaign which will include a media campaign and the use of firefighters to carry out fire safety checks for specific vulnerable groups.

The Major Emergency Management preparations will be continued and updated where applicable as part of the County's Interagency Response.



New Clare Civil Defence HQ at the Quin Road Campus.

Clare Civil Defence

Currently, there are 88 active volunteer members trained in a variety of disciplines including:

- Emergency medicine
- Search & rescue
- Severe weather response
- Swiftwater rescue
- Boating and search procedures
- Unmanned aerial vehicles (drones).

In July of this year Clare Civil Defence moved into its new headquarters at the Quin Road Campus. This is a state-of-the-art, purpose-designed building provided through the generosity of the elected members of Clare County Council and Clare County Council. It is currently the largest and most modern Civil Defence headquarters in the country.

2020 was an extremely busy year for Clare Civil Defence, which resulted in the largest number of duties and responses carried out in the history of the unit in a single year. The members responded to 314 separate requests

for assistance. This represents a 51 per cent increase from 2019. 261 of the responses were directly Covid-19 related and the members contributed over 900 hours in Covid-19 related duties alone. During the pandemic the members provided assistance with meal deliveries to HSE frontline staff, meals on wheels facility to elderly and vulnerable persons in the Ennis and Shannon areas, transport of patients to and from hospital and doctor appointments, transport of HSE staff (in particular public health nurses) to palliative care patients in remote areas, provided assistance to the Irish Blood Transfusion Service at their Blood Donation Clinics, assisted Clare County Council and An Garda Síochána with beach patrols, the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to community groups throughout the county and assisting the HSE with some transport issues. One of our members (Cian O'Shea) received the University of Limerick's President's Gold Award for volunteerism as well as a special Covid-19 volunteer award as a direct result of his work for Clare Civil Defence.

At the beginning of the year the unit spent almost four weeks assisting the residents of Springfield in Clonlara during severe flooding. Members provided transport, food runs, etc. throughout this period using a specialised Unimog vehicle borrowed from our colleagues in Kerry. Transport was also provided to public health nurses during the period of severe weather at the beginning of the year. The unit also assisted An Garda Síochána with several missing persons searches throughout the year. One of these searches resulted in a late night, successful search for and rescue of a father and daughter, by Clare Civil Defence members, who were trapped in a densely forested area surrounded by flood waters. Members also provided medical cover for the RTÉ series “The Big Build DIY SOS” at a site in Limerick. The Civil Defence fleet was updated with two Ford Ranger 4x4 jeeps with the assistance of the Civil Defence Branch, Department of Defence. The training regime for the year was severely restricted due to the pandemic, however essential mandatory training was carried out in line with the strictest adherence to Covid-19 guidelines for all the members. Towards the end of the year, Clare County Council and the Department of Health sanctioned the position of a permanent Assistant Civil Defence Officer for Clare Civil Defence. This position will be advertised and filled in Q1 of 2021.

The volunteer members of Clare Civil Defence have gone above and beyond what could be expected of them for the year 2020. This year has been exceptional in many ways – the response, professionalism and selflessness of the members has matched this exceptionality and they are to be thanked and congratulated for again rising to meet the challenge.

Water Services Department

Annual Service Plan

The Covid-19 pandemic was a challenging time for the delivery of the frontline essential Water Services function. The Water Services staff, following all safety protocols, provided an uninterrupted service throughout the year. The Council delivers a service level agreement (SLA) on behalf of Irish Water (IW) through an Annual Service Plan (ASP). We achieved a Performance index compliance score of 89 per cent for 2020 and delivered the plan to within 1 per cent of budget. In 2020, the Water Services teams dealt with 194 customer complaints, completed 17 emergency work orders, 3,170 reactive work orders, 12 Customer Asset Flooding work orders, raised 1,394 service requests and responded to 411 outage notifications on the IW system.

Water and wastewater operations

In 2020, work was carried out in a number of areas including mains replacement at Erin Street, Kilkee, major upgrade works carried out at Castl lake WTP, installation of a booster pump set at Kilkishen to facilitate supply to Tulla from Castl lake. Approximately 800 leaks were repaired on the water network which generated significant savings in water production.

A complete plant optimisation was carried out in the Ennis North WWTP resulting in a 52 per cent drop in energy usage and an increase of 30 per cent flow capabilities. A programme of upgrade work to the wastewater treatment infrastructure was completed in 2020 at a number of locations including Clareabbey, Sixmilebridge, Westfields and Ennis. Electrical upgrade work was carried out at Toonagh WWTP, Archways and Joe Rouines Pumping Stations.

Water conservation

Under the National Leakage Reduction Programme Irish Water set Clare County Council a leakage reduction target of 850m³ per day in 2020. Based on Irish Water's audit data, leakage savings of 4,260m³ have been achieved in county Clare up to the end of September 2020, greatly exceeding the target. The Distribution Inflow figure has reduced by 2,880m³ during the same time period.

Asset transfer project

A total of 20 assets were transferred to Irish Water in 2020. As of December 2020, 137 assets remain to be transferred to Irish Water by Clare County Council. The process is complicated by both the division and registering of land folios.

Water Services capital projects

The capital programme includes the Clare Untreated Agglomerations Study (UTAS) projects which involves five agglomerations in Clare – Clarecastle, Kilrush, Kilkee, Liscannor and Ballyvaughan – where untreated sewage is discharged to receiving waters. The project represents a €25m investment in the coming years. The five towns are at different stages of progression through the design and planning process and this work continued in 2020. Construction works to upgrade wastewater treatment plants at Quin village and Shannon Town continued during 2020. Planning permission for works at Kilfenora was received and Irish Water progressed a compulsory purchase order for the land required. Design and feasibility studies for a variety of other wastewater projects in Lahinch, Ennistymon, Newmarket on Fergus, Inagh, Clareabbey and Miltown Malbay also progressed in 2020.

Other water services works outside the scope of Irish Water – Rural Water Programme (RWP) Under the Multi Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021 upgrade works were undertaken on 15 group water schemes in 2020. A total of 10 group water schemes were taken in charge by Irish Water in 2020, which represented the highest number nationally. A further seven schemes were submitted in 2020 and are awaiting taking in charge.

In addition, under the Rural Water Programme 92 grant applications were received in 2020 for bored well upgrade works representing an investment of €129,336. The Annual Subsidy Grant was also administered to 47 schemes with an overall payment totalling €1,772,759.

Obsolete assets



The old Ennis Town water treatment plant filter beds and lake impounding dam at Gortaganniv were also decommissioned and a new wetland and habitat created in their place.



Environment Section

The Environment Section has responsibility for a diverse range of activities including waste enforcement, waste management, environmental awareness, energy, climate action, gardening, scientific services (laboratory, water, air), veterinary services and Blue Flag beaches. The 2020 work programme was largely driven by an extensive regulatory framework. Since the onset of Covid-19 in March 2020, the Environment programme has been deemed an essential service. We have operated under all safety protocols while providing uninterrupted essential services to the public.

Climate action and energy

The Council is progressing well with action items set in the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, 2019-2024. Clare County Council is continuing to drive energy reduction and has implemented and achieved the ISO 50001 Energy Management System award in February 2020.

Beaches and amenities

The Environment Section monitors 14 bathing areas and has maintained our nine Blue Flags and four Green Coast Awards, all checked for compliance with 180 water samples taken during the season. All bathing areas monitored achieved “excellent” quality status. Beaches and related activity are covered by our Beach Bye-laws. Due to the rise in staycations and the advice to limit inter-country travel, our visitor numbers increased. In total, 51 lifeguards provided services on Clare’s beaches for the summer season. This was a busy period for

the lifeguards, who carried out the following services: Rescue – 248; First-Aid – 730; Lost child – 41; Advice given – 9,340; Accidents prevented – 5,027.



Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI)

Across all Environment service areas, Clare County Council undertook 5,084 routine and 1,382 non-routine inspections. The Waste Enforcement team received and investigated 2,506 complaints relating to litter and waste. A total of 178 litter fines and fixed payment notices were issued. In addition, Clare County Council served 81 legal notices for breaches of litter and waste legislation. Over 300 letters were issued under the Waste Management bye-laws. The Council continues to avail of Anti-Dumping Initiative funding to combat illegal dumping. We have investigated 156 complaints relating to water, air and noise pollution. In order to check environmental compliance and to protect water quality, 92 inspections were carried out at licensed facilities. In addition, 33 domestic wastewater treatment systems were inspected. The Environment section also received and reported on 380 planning applications. All of the above aims to ensure protection of our local environment.

Waste management and landfills

The waste management section provides five recycling centres, three of these are also waste transfer stations and we provide 50 bring banks sites countywide.



The Central Waste Management Facility (CWMF) landfill, Doora Landfill and Lisdeen Waste Transfer Station continued to be monitored in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) waste licence requirements.



Water Framework Direction and the River Basin Management Plan

A total of 44 river and 19 lake sites were monitored in compliance with the EPA Monitoring Programme. The Environment section was one of the stakeholders involved in making submissions for the third River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027, which is in public consultation until June 2021. In the recently published report on Water Quality in Ireland, Clare coastal water improved from 100 per cent "Moderate" to 100 per cent "Good".

Water/wastewater services

During the year, 19 public water supplies, 19 private supplies and 83 group water schemes were monitored and achieved a compliance rate over 98 per cent across the various parameters measured. In total, 30 licensed or certified municipal plants were monitored.

Education and awareness

Clare County Council has promoted low smoke coal, waste prevention, recycling, www.mywaste.ie, illegal dumping and littering, An Taisce Green Schools, Spring Clean, Clean Coast, Blue Flag initiatives and pollinator friendly areas to promote a greener environment.

Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), dog and horse control

Clare County Council is an official agent of the FSAI. In 2020, a total of 2,993 beef animals and 19,878 sheep were slaughtered in County Clare plants. In total, 200 stray dogs were picked up and 138 dogs were surrendered. In addition, 63 were reclaimed by their owners, 45 rehomed and 224 rehomed in consultation with the Dogs Trust and other rescue groups. We have dealt with 29 straying horses and have rehomed 28 horses in 2020.

Gardening section

The Gardening section continued to maintain high standards in ensuring the attractiveness of our towns and villages and work closely with advising community groups on landscaping matters. The All-Ireland Pollinator policy was adopted and actions in the policy document are in place with increased pollinator friendly species and perennial flowers being planted.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE



ANNE HAUGH
Director of Social Development

The overarching vision for the Social Directorate is:

To enhance the quality of life for the people of County Clare through the provision of appropriate housing supports to those in need and by enabling and fostering access for all our citizens to information, learning, arts, cultural and recreational opportunities.

The Social Directorate of Clare County Council comprises the areas of responsibility as per the schematic hereunder:



Housing

Provider of housing solutions for people who are in need and who are deemed eligible for social housing support.



Killaloe MD

Area administration of functions with particular focus on the physical environment.



Sports and recreation

Provision of facilities for participation in active recreation, sport and physical activity.



Cultural services

Provision of Library, Arts and Cultural services in County Clare

2020 was a year like no other. In March, the county shut down in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the continued delivery of service during Covid-19 restrictions has seen the most intensely concentrated period of change in the public service. All the 'norms' of public service activities were turned on their head with no map to traverse the uncharted waters of a worldwide pandemic.

It was incumbent on us all to continue to deliver services to the most vulnerable in society in the most unprecedented times the country has ever faced. Most housing services were identified as 'essential services' in the Local Government Management Agency's (LGMA) catalogue of essential services for the sector. Staff worked tirelessly to maintain standards of service delivery in the critical areas while adapting to remote working and huge changes in the working environment. Despite these challenges a comprehensive work programme was delivered during 2020.

We continued to work towards the delivery of Rebuilding Ireland housing targets following the formation of a new government in February 2020.

Covid-19 restrictions resulted in the closure of all construction sites from 27th March until 11th May, 2020. During this period travel was severely restricted with travel permitted for essential 'emergency' service delivery only. Clare County Council continued in the pursuit of work programmes in the new operating environment and overall performance for 2020 was commendable given the circumstances under which the team were operating.

Clare County Council did not receive delivery targets for 2020 from the Department of Housing, the Council worked to the overall

Rebuilding Ireland targets in setting local targets for housing delivery in the county.

2020 Performance:

	Output
Build	85
Acquisition	35
Leasing	28
Sub-total	148
HAP	320
RAS	15
Sub-total	335
TOTAL	483

The Social Development Directorate continues to deliver on our objectives and work programme and to that end we work closely with the Elected Members and sectoral interests on our Strategic Policy Committee (SPC), which met on four occasions in 2020 to discuss and agree a range of policies and initiatives which are or have been implemented including an updated *Differential Rent Scheme*. Clare County Council hosted two *Housing Options Information Workshops*, one in Shannon on 27th February and in Ennis on 5th March.



There was significant local interest in these events with many enquiries on housing options. The event was drop-in style with personnel from the Bank of Ireland, AIB, PTSB, EBS, Ulster Bank, MABS, Revenue, Estate Agents and Clare County Council available to

answer queries on the night. The schedule of additional workshops was a victim of Covid-19 restrictions, it is hoped that the schedule can be completed in the future once restrictions allow.

The Council established the Housing High Level Steering Group with the inaugural meeting on 23rd September, 2020. The aim of the group is to deliver an interagency approach to housing in County Clare and to work collaboratively to tackle issues that give rise to homelessness, anti-social behaviour and within Traveller accommodation.

Maintenance

During 2020, 84 vacant and acquired properties were refurbished and made available for reallocation. In addition, three long-term void properties were completed and returned to stock with several other long-term void properties progressed to design stage. This is a significant achievement in light of the impact of Covid-19 on the construction sector.

Maintenance was carried out on an “essential works only” basis during Level 5. In general, this progressed well due to an understanding from tenants and procedure management by council staff and our contractors. 5,306 maintenance calls were logged during 2020. Contracts were signed to develop the existing Planned Maintenance Programme into a fully functioning Asset Management System during 2020. This will incorporate void, responsive and planned maintenance into one system and will provide a more streamlined process and, ultimately, a better service to our tenants.

To support the works programme, a new Minor Building Works Framework was advertised during 2020 in which 20 local contractors successfully applied.

Capital project delivery



There were four social housing developments completed in 2020. Eight houses at Roslevan, Ennis, were delivered in June 2020 followed by 18 units at Quilty, and two units each at Kilmihil and Sixmilebridge in December 2020. These are A2 rated energy efficient homes providing a total of 30 units of accommodation for applicants on our social housing list. This was in addition to purchasing 35 units at various locations and the provision of a new four-unit turnkey development in Ennis.



The Approved Housing sector boosted voluntary housing provision in the county by the construction and acquisition of 51 units in 2020. Twenty-nine family units were provided for at Gleann Cora, Newmarket-on-Fergus, by Co-Operative Housing Ireland.



A conservation project undertaken by Cuan an Chláir led to 14 dwellings for elderly persons being provided in a courtyard setting at the Cuan an Chláir development at Cahercalla, Ennis. This, together with eight units through Part V, enhanced voluntary activity and augmented supply in line with requirements of Rebuilding Ireland.

Housing assessments and allocations

Allocations of social housing tenancies are made in accordance with the Clare County Council Social Housing Allocation Scheme. This scheme is used in the allocation of standard Council housing units, casual vacancies and long and short-term lease properties. During 2020, a total of 197 households were appointed tenants of Local Authority properties, an additional 62 households were appointed tenants of Approved Housing Bodies.

During 2020, Clare County Council introduced Choice Based Lettings (CBL). CBL is a system where available social housing is let by being openly advertised, allowing qualified applicants to express an interest in available homes. Rather than waiting for Clare County Council to make an offer of support as is the case under the traditional direct letting model, CBL involves applicants having to respond to adverts and 'bid' for dwellings that they would like to live in. The ultimate allocation of support will still continue to be made in accordance with the priorities set down in our Allocations Scheme. Available CBL properties are advertised on the CBL website <https://cbl.clarecoco.ie> each Tuesday night at midnight and they remain advertised until midnight the following Tuesday night. CBL simply changes the way applicants experience the allocation process.

Housing rents

The collection of housing rent remained strong with an 86 per cent collection rate and a total income of €8,627,919 from 2,999 rent accounts during 2020.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme

The Council set up 320 new HAP applications during 2020 including 41 households qualifying for Homeless HAP. The total number of households supported under the HAP scheme during 2020 was 1,412; of this, 58 households are being supported outside of the county.

Rent Allowance Scheme (RAS)

During the course of the year 28 households left this scheme, the majority availing of alternative housing supports, a portion left to work outside of the state and a number purchased their own property. There were 217 households availing of this scheme at the end of 2020.

In addition, the Council works with 15 Approved Housing Bodies in supporting 165 of their tenancies through the RAS scheme.

Social leasing

The Council provides two types of leasing: short-term leasing up to 9 years and 11 months; and long-term leasing from 10 years to 25 years. During the year five new short-term lease agreements were negotiated bringing the overall total number of households availing of this scheme to 123, the average term of lease is five years.

A further 12 new long-term lease agreements were negotiated during 2020 bringing the overall total number of households availing of this scheme to 171 by the end of the year. The average term of lease is 17 years. The varying level of Covid-19 restrictions during the year had a negative impact on securing potential

leases as capacity to inspect properties was reduced and property owners found it difficult to secure building contractors to undertake necessary works.

Private rented inspections

274 private rented inspections were undertaken during 2020, this figure is significantly less than numbers achieved in previous years due to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the inspections programme.

Of the 274 properties inspected: 158 properties are under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme; nine properties are under the Rental Allowance Scheme (RAS); and the remainder of the properties inspected were private rented properties.

Rebuilding Ireland Affordable Loan

The loan scheme offers a fixed interest rate for credit worthy low to middle-income first-time buyers with a view to making home ownership more affordable.

Despite the impact of Covid-19 on earnings during 2020, 38 'Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan' applications were received and 15 loan applications were granted provisional approval during this period. A total of 21 loans were drawn down during 2020. Interest rates increased on applications received after the 15/01/2020 from 2 per cent to 2.745 per cent (25-year term) and from 2.25 per cent to 2.995 per cent (30-year term).

Vacant Homes Strategy

Cross-directorate networking to identify and address vacancy in towns and villages across the county continued in 2020. A focus was placed on the villages of Broadford, Sixmilebridge, Tulla and Killaloe. Issues with ascertaining ownership, title/legal/financial/

mortgages/probate, etc. proved and continue to prove challenging. The result is that significant resources are invested in pursuing individual properties with limited return.

Estate management

The Council's Estate Management team were available to meet with tenants and tenant associations on a regular basis to deal with issues that occurred throughout 2020 including the management of anti-social behaviour and its impact on the community. In total, 316 complaints of ASB were investigated and dealt with in accordance with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy during 2020. The Council continued with the programme of engagement with tenants in spite of Covid-19 restrictions by utilising technology to engage with tenants and the resident committees.

A total of €5,200 was spent in 2020 under the Local Authority Best Kept Local Authority Estate competition which supported improvements being carried out in 12 Local Authority estates.

A total of €70,000 was budgeted in 2020 to facilitate estate management works including grass cutting, maintenance and rectification of boundaries, management fees and supporting residents' associations.

Homeless Action Team

In what has been a challenging year whereby Covid-19 has brought significant extra complexities to a service that engages with Clare's most vulnerable, the team has continued to work towards building a service that can appropriately meet the needs of homeless clients in Clare. At the end of 2020, there were 73 adults and 20 dependents in homeless accommodation.

There were 1,549 presentations (267 new and 1,282 repeat), and 48 new households were placed in accommodation in homeless services during 2020.

New presentations	267
Repeat presentations	1,282
Total presentations	1,549

During 2020, 36 households exited homelessness to new tenancies (LA - 11, AHB -12, and HAP - 13). These figures represent a significant amount of prevention work and this will continue to be the focus of the service going forward.

Exits		80
Housed	LA =11 AHB =12 HAP =13	36
Self-discharged		18
Discharged		26

Within these figures a significant amount of work continues to support clients to address presenting issues. Consequently, the team is continuing to foster strong working relationships with our partners in the HSE (Primary Care, Disability, Social Inclusion, Mental Health, Safeguarding and Addiction), Gardai, Tusla (Child Protection, Domestic Violence and Aftercare), Probation and Community Partners to address the ever-increasing complex needs which are being compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Traveller accommodation

The Covid-19 response focused on protocols to protect vulnerable groups and in this regard Covid-19 response protocols were developed to address accommodation and isolation requirements in Traveller accommodation.

Extensive resources were invested in Traveller accommodation during the pandemic. The Council worked closely with the HSE in the development of these protocols and in relation to Traveller accommodation we worked with the Irish Traveller Movement and the HSE Traveller Health Unit to address public health concerns.

10 Traveller households were accommodated during 2020 with three in Traveller specific and the other seven households in standard social housing.

Housing grants

At the beginning of 2020 the substantial backlog of applications on hand had been cleared and this allowed new applications for all three grant types to be accepted once again. The onset of Covid-19 in March 2020 meant that we had to adapt to new challenges in administering the scheme and this was successfully managed.

A total of 346 grants were approved and paid which assisted in providing adaptations to private homes to enable disabled and elderly persons to live in comfort. A total of €2,774,454 was expended and this is broken down by grant category in the table hereunder:

Grant type	Number of approvals	Value of works €
Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability	114	1,718,917
Housing Aid for Older People	120	538,715
Mobility Aids Grant	112	516,822
Total in 2020	346	2,774,454

Sports and Recreation



2020 was a challenging year for the sport and recreation facilities in the county as the facilities were closed for a period due to Covid-19 restrictions. Equally, once restrictions allowed the facilities proved hugely popular for individuals and families for exercise and outdoor activities.

Football in John O'Sullivan Park, Lees Road and Tim Smythe Park notably increased during the summer and the latter half of 2020. Both John O'Sullivan Park and Tim Smythe Park retained their Green Flag status for 2020. The Green Flag is awarded by An Taisce in recognition of the facility meeting the benchmark standards for parks and green spaces.

New booking systems were implemented for the facilities once they were permitted to open, this pre-book prepay system was welcomed by the customers and provided assurance to customers in the management of public health during the pandemic.

Project and maintenance works continued during 2020. The following projects were completed or near completion by the end of the year



- New automated gates at Lees Road

- Construction of new dressing rooms at Tim Smythe Park
- Tiling upgrade of dressing rooms at Active Ennis Leisure Centre.



Atlantic Youth Project

2020 was the final year of Clare County Council's participation in the Atlantic Youth Project. The intention was that there would be a final transatlantic gathering of partners and participating schools in Vienna de Castelo in Portugal in May, however this was not possible due to the global pandemic.

The conclusion of this three-year Erasmus+ funded European project ended with both schools partaking in classroom-based zoom presentations on the subjects covered in the previous years. This was followed by an international webinar presentation of the overall project and its outcomes.

With the two schools, Scoil Mhuire, Ennistymon and Scariff Community College, working together, County Clare brought uniqueness to this educational programme. The project's objective was to encourage and develop the maritime culture of young Europeans, through the practice of water sports and maritime education at school, with partners in Spain, Portugal, France, UK and Ireland.



Cultural Services – Library, Arts, Museum, Archives, glór

Library Service

The public library service nationally was hit with intermittent periods of opening and closing in 2020. There was partial re-opening during the summer months and into autumn when visits to the library premises were permitted although not all services were ever fully available. During periods of complete lockdown staff were engaged with book delivery services to cocooners which was extended to all who requested the service. In addition, a cohort of staff were trained and upskilled in the delivery of the library programme through virtual means – podcasting, YouTube videos, etc. Staff also manned the community helplines and were active with the Council’s response to Covid-19 with the “Keep Well” programme organising and distributing 500 wellbeing packs to the public during this time. Despite the closures the following statistics were recorded:

	Library membership	Items issued (not including renewals)	E-resources	Internet sessions	Wi-Fi	No of scheduled activities for public
2020	14,152	269,491	57,678	8,973	7,739	***

***The number of scheduled activities for the public in Clare Libraries included live events, zoom events and other programming.

- 56 in-person events were held with 535 people attending (January, February, early March and September)
- 80 Zoom events were held with 1,765 people attending
- 49 online videos were produced with 2,914 YouTube views.
- 18,940 items were added to stock in 2020.



Clare County Library delivery service.

Library services during Covid-19

- There were 2,419 deliveries of books, audio and DVDs by Clare County Library service to households during each of the level 5 lockdowns in 2020.
- There was a big increase in usage of online resources with e-audiobooks and e-books most popular.

E-Books	16,846
E-Audiobooks	18,219
E-Magazines	11,853
Online Courses	10,760
Languages	78
Newspapers	10,761

Core programming continued supporting Government initiatives around literacy (Right to Read), support to employment (Work Matters), support to the Irish language (Seachtain na Gaeilge), support to younger children (Spring into Storytime) and were uploaded to the library website and social media platforms by library staff, Healthy Ireland with 27 live events and 25 online (over 700 participants) also took place. The national summer reading initiative “Summer Stars” was delivered online while limited branch opening, post-lockdown, enabled children and families to visit libraries to select their reading material. Highlights of the year included a creative writing competition, “A Day in My Life”, organised for children and teenagers and the annual Children’s Book Festival with 40 events taking place online. “Family Time at Your Library” was also delivered online during December with events including story readings, art and craft workshops.

Despite the lockdown periods 170 classes visited library branches in the first two months of 2020 and interaction with schools continued throughout the year through online programming and the class novels lending

scheme. The final highlight of the year was receiving the Chambers Ireland 2020 Excellence in Local Government Award for Best Library Service for the project, Connections: Stories by Syrian Families in County Clare.

Creative Ireland

- 40 projects were supported in 2020 with over 150 events taking place. Over 25,000 people were reached and in addition, the Cultural Companions series of virtual concerts had nearly 40,000 views.



Cruinniú na nÓg

- 22 virtual events were held on Saturday, 13th June, using social media accounts of Clare County Library, Zoom and YouTube. A total of 27,000 people were reached for Clare events.

Decade of Centenaries

- 10 commemorative groups held events sponsored by DOC funding
- 12 events made up a virtual History Week in October reaching 1,500 people
- DOC funding also supported a Clare FM documentary on the Rineen Ambush which was aired twice and is now an online podcast

- Groups included East Clare Memorial Group, Feakle Ambush Commemorative Committee, Dúchas na Sionna, Whitegate Community Council, Inis Cathaigh Kilrush Comhaltas, Lissycasey Community Historical Committee, Mid-Clare Brigade Commemoration Group, Connolly Community Development, Ruan/Dysart History Group and Clarecastle and Ballyea Heritage. Estimated people reached through social media was 10,000.

Grants

Clare County Library received a number of grants in 2020 – €20,000 from Department of Rural and Community Development for sensory facilities and equipment. Work began on sensory gardens in Kilkee and Shannon Libraries. Dormant Accounts Funding of c€13,000 was received for programming. This included smartphone classes, literacy classes in Kilrush, sensory programming in Scariff and play therapy in Ennis. 1,000 Touch-type Read and Spell (TTRS) licences (to aid literacy) were also purchased in 2020 for distribution to a variety of education centres.

A Healthy Ireland grant of €9,348.00 allowed for the purchase of contactless software for checking in and out items of stock by the public. A grant of €100,000 (Small Scale Capital Works) has helped in creating multi-purpose rooms in Shannon and Ennistymon libraries.

Arts Service

The arts sector in Ireland is widely recognised as being one of the sectors most badly hit by Covid-19 and in Clare the impact of the pandemic was felt deeply. Staff endeavoured to provide supports to both artists and audiences.

The Arts Office continued to support the development of Music Generation hubs countywide in partnership with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB), reaching almost 2,300 young people through the Music Hubs in Ennis, Shannon, Ennistymon, Killaloe and Kilkee. Further supports to youth were initiated with 16 schools participating in the Artist in Schools Scheme, engaging 12 artists across all artforms. Over 500 primary school students got to work with professional artists in 2020 with 200 more engaging with the Zoom Art Room (a new national initiative zooming artists into the classroom). Clare Youth Theatre met weekly in glór until lockdown and then transferred to weekly remote activities via Zoom. Culture Night in September moved online, and more than 5,000 people joined for 18 events which took place throughout the county.

Support to artists

To assist artists to develop the necessary skills for digital experiences, two training courses were held with LEO and were very gratefully received by artists. The Arts Office also produced 'Curam', a guidebook for artists working in schools and care settings. The visual arts sector, however, was heavily impacted by Covid-19 with just 10 exhibitions taking place in Kilkee, Scariff and Ennis. However, working with the Limerick and Tipperary Arts Offices, online professional development sessions for artists were run with Visual Artists Ireland.

The Burren College of Art was commissioned to create a piece for Galway 2020, due to take place now in 2021, and support continued to The Courthouse Gallery in Ennistymon as it moved to online exhibitions. Tulla Stables Studios and Easi in Ennis operated to full capacity.

The Arts Office also initiated 10 projects through the July Stimulus fund of Creative Ireland as well as annual projects. A new development scheme for film makers in association with Film in Limerick was one of these initiatives. International filming supported by the Arts Office also took place in Kilkee/Carrigaholt and Lahinch through involvement in part with the WRAP Fund.

A number of arts projects started with disability organisations countywide, but many were paused due to Covid-19. The annual Christmas concert was replaced by “Fionnathan’s Follies”, a concert that toured to nine disability care settings in December.

Highlights

Other initiatives included a Festivals Support Scheme with Smart Marketing Ltd to support and assist events and festivals affected by Covid-19. The arts in health programme continued in St Joseph’s Hospital, Ennis, despite Covid-19. “Tar Isteach”, a regional commission from Age and Opportunity with the “Ground up Artists Collective”, was completed in November with two online presentations on the work of the artists in direct provision centres in Clare, Galway and Roscommon.

The Gaining Ground Public Art Programme culminated with a series of contemporary art commissions countywide and a national symposium on public art in rural areas. Commissions for Cuan an Chláir Housing Scheme and the Ennistymon Streetscape Project were also awarded in 2020.

County Museum

Like similar cultural venues the County Museum was badly hit with lack of visitors in 2020, dropping from a total of 27,000 visits in 2019 to 5,000 for the year with the venue closed to the public for 25 weeks. January and February began with the monthly lecture series attracting a combined audience of 70 people and nine school groups with 318 students attended workshops on St Bridget’s Day traditions. Work continued on cataloguing items in the collection with 420 items added – a mixture of newly donated items and objects donated to the Museum as far back as 2004.

- New items added to the collection included:
 - o Collection of First World War medals belonging to Claremen
 - o Menus from Carmody’s Hotel prior to its collapse
 - o Early 19th century collection of pictures, account books and other documents associated with Cahercon House in Kildysart
 - o A cannon ball donated to the museum under the National Monuments Act. Social media publicity about the find of this cannon ball went viral in Clare.
- 100 photographs were donated to the collection following a public appeal for items relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. The photos include activities of Clare people during the pandemic.

Publicity

- TG4 featured the cannon ball on their news in May
- Documentary makers interviewed the curator for a documentary on the pandemic in June
- Former Taoiseach Enda Kenny came to the museum to film some items for a documentary on the West Clare Railway

- The museum submitted videos featuring artefacts in the collection for Crunniú na nÓg and History Week.

Creative Ireland project

An analysis was completed on the remains of a shoe found at an excavated famine site. This analysis indicated that the shoe dated broadly to the famine period and may reflect pan-European tradition relating to fertility rituals. It may be only the third time such evidence was found in Ireland.

Grants

- Photographic studio equipment was purchased by a Heritage grant for the digitisation of the museum collection and live streaming of videos
- A showcase was purchased for the Clare Embroidery collection.

Archives

Requests for access to Archives are now dealt with by the Library's Local Studies Centre as the archivist is on a career break and access to documents is provided on the premises depending on Covid-19 restrictions.

The Archives Digitisation Project continued in 2020. The County Rates and Valuation Books were completed, and work is ongoing on the Electoral Registers. The Archives Section also scanned an Ennis Club Visitors Book for Ennis Municipal District. The next documents to be scanned will be the Board of Health collections. A number of National School registers have been lodged with the Archives section including Ballycar, Cross and Querrin. These have been sorted, recorded and stored in Archives, detailed cataloguing will take place at a later date.

glór

2020, glór's 19th year, has been very challenging due to Covid-19. The support and funding from Clare County Council and the Arts Council has been critical in ensuring the organisation can continue. Q1 – just prior to the closure of all events and then the building for nearly nine months – was a very strong quarter in terms of output, audiences and related incomes which helped in terms of the financial outlook. The Government's two wage subsidy schemes played a critical role in reducing core staffing costs and keeping the organisation operating. Twenty-four staff were temporarily laid off at the end of March when the building closed, with five of these returning briefly for five weeks of opening and live performances in September-early October for limited capacity audiences of 50-70, and since then all 24 remain temporarily laid off. Despite the challenges, glór has demonstrated its resilience and adaptability, and created three online performance series in glór sa Bhaile, glór sa Bhaile Shorts, and 12 Acts of Christmas with viewership of over 50,000 to date, and also presented ticketed online performance with a range of theatre and music in November and December. Throughout 2020, glór remained committed to supporting artists by providing performance opportunities, seeking funding for creative collaborations and a range of artist support initiatives. In December, €50k of funding from the Department of Arts was approved to be match funded by glór and Clare County Council as part of the 2019-2022 Culture Capital Scheme and will enable a range of upgrades to improve glór's energy efficiency and health and safety management. glór also received a Department of Arts re-opening grant to aid implementation of Covid-19 safety measures including a relocated box office. glór continues to advance its 2020-22 strategic goals including working closely with Clare County Council to realise aligned objectives, as the venue approaches its 20th birthday in November 2021.



RURAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE



LEONARD CLEARY
Director of Rural Development

Digital and Broadband Department

2020 saw a further expansion of the DigiClare initiative with the establishment of an additional five digital hubs/remote working facilities throughout the county. Through this initiative, Clare County Council not only provides communities with access to broadband but it also provides the facilities to enable communities to exploit the potential

of same and work remotely in a safe, suitable environment. This is now particularly relevant due to the increase in the number of workers seeking to work remotely as a result of the Covid-19 epidemic.

A total of eight such facilities are now established throughout the county. The services provided include hot desks, meeting rooms, full audiovisual facilities, etc., with high-speed Wi-Fi connectivity.

The facilities are available to local residents and communities, local enterprises, entrepreneurs and for businesses who need space to work and collaborate, e-workers and commuters who want to reduce commuting time by working closer to home – occasionally, regularly or even on a daily basis – and visitors who need office space and internet connectivity.

Full details and particulars on these facilities are available on www.digiclare.ie

Rural & Community Department

Government Funding – National Schemes

The Department of Rural and Community Development channels a number of funding programmes through the Council. In 2020, the schemes attracted projects and funds as listed below:

- Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2020 – €779,242 for six projects in Newmarket on Fergus, Clooney, Barefield, Lisdoonvarna, Kilfenora and Parteen.
- Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2020 – Accelerated Measures – €425,868 for 16 projects across the county that enabled communities to address the short-term challenges presented by Covid-19.
- CLÁR Initiative 2020 – €261,365 to seven projects located in Lissycasey, Lakyle, Kilnaboy, Broadford, Kilkee and Kilmihill.
- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme 2020 – €488,250 for seven projects in Ennis, O'Briensbridge, Kilkishen, Dysart, Shannon and at the Cliffs of Moher.
- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund 2020 – three applications were submitted for funding consideration by the Department under Category 1 of this scheme. The three projects are the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience project, a coastal amenities project and the Kilmihil People's Park project.



Community Support Scheme

Funding of €533,900 was approved under the Council's Community Support Scheme in February 2020. The allocations to community and voluntary groups supported a broad range of projects including public realm, social inclusion and participation in sport, community Wi-Fi, the arts, Irish language and sustainable tourism.

Age-Friendly Strategy

Clare County Council co-ordinates the delivery the Clare Age-Friendly Strategy for the period 2018-2022 with eight agencies leading or supporting the delivery of the various actions. In 2020 actions in the strategy were progressed including



the development of an 'Information Guide of Services for Older People', the hosting of a free online workshop called 'Age Wise' run by Age & Opportunity, a virtual 'Older Person of the Year Award' ceremony and a series of virtual concerts over five weeks as part of the Cultural Companions Programme. Clare County Council continues to host meetings for the Clare Older People's Council, which were held online for most of 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Clare Comhairle Na nÓg

Clare Comhairle Na nÓg is a Department of Children and Youth Affairs initiative which aims to provide an opportunity for young people in the 12-18 age range to identify the issues that are important to them, discuss some of the changes they would like to see and bring forward ideas and suggestions for bringing about change. The Council contracts the programme to Clare Youth Service which co-ordinates a number of initiatives with the student members. In 2020 the Comhairle Na nÓg AGM was hosted by Clare County Council via Microsoft Teams due to Covid-19 restrictions.



Keep Well campaign and initiatives

The Clare “Keep Well” campaign is being led by Rural & Community Development and hosted on Clare County Council’s webpage (<https://www.clarecoco.ie/together>) connecting the public to information about local resources and initiatives that are available under the following Keep Well themes: Keeping active; Keeping in contact; Switching off and being creative; Eating well; and Managing your mood.

Rural & Community Development are co-ordinating an inter-agency working group to oversee the funding and discuss appropriate initiatives. Cross-collaborative synergies are being achieved with different council departments and external agencies all working together.

Tidy Towns Network

2020 was a difficult time for voluntary groups to progress their work and to connect with each other. By way of response a network of all Tidy Towns groups across the county was coordinated.

This network will maintain and enhance the energy and commitment of all Tidy Towns groups.

Meetings to date have taken place over Zoom, which have included talks by guest speakers and useful information on how to make communities more sustainable and healthier places to live as well as tips on how to improve scoring in the annual Tidy Towns competition.

The network aims are to:

- Develop a Facebook and/or YouTube library of topics and advice to assist, which can be accessed as needed
- Organise a team of people drawn from each Municipal District to lead and co-ordinate the network
- Create a warm social environment where groups can make new connections and share their knowledge and skills with each other.

To face the challenges brought about by Covid-19, the Rural & Community Development Officers have adapted by making the move to virtual/online meetings with community groups to support ongoing consultations and discussions and ensure that the invaluable work of community volunteers throughout the county continues. There has been a fantastic response to this new development by communities who have shown great resilience in working to improve their areas throughout a difficult year.

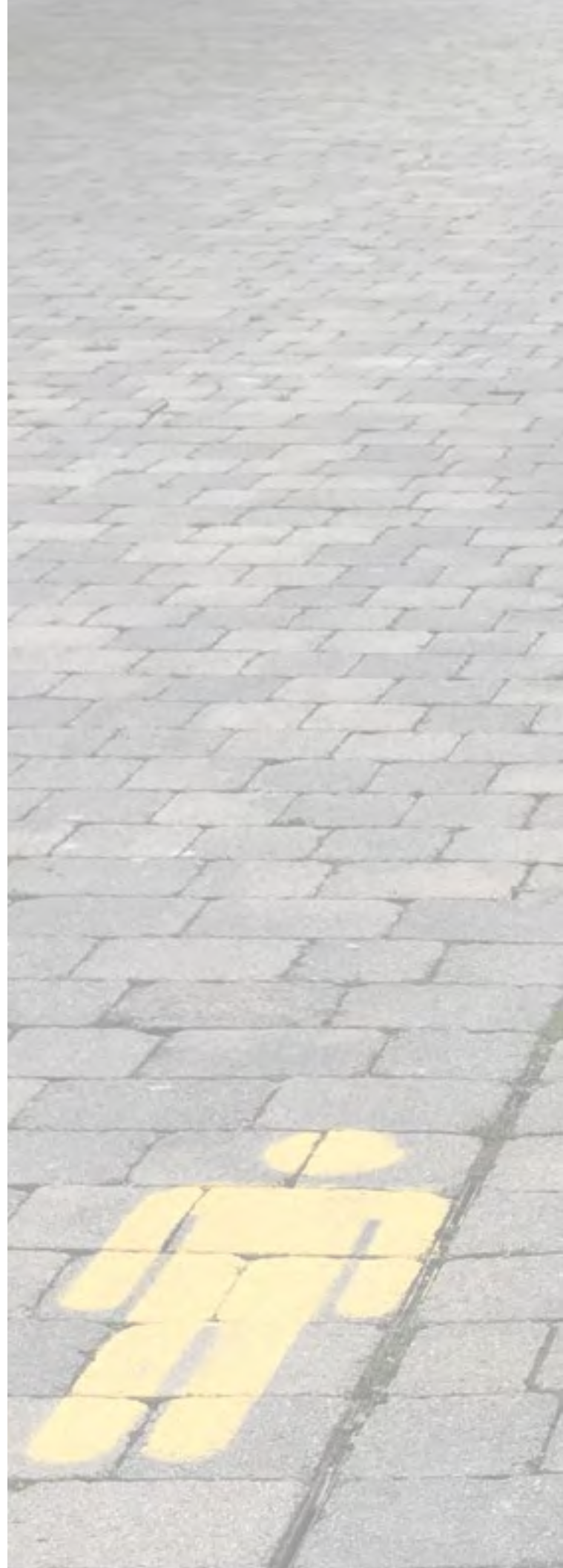
Pride of Place

The 2020 IPB Pride of Place took place remotely. Clare was represented by three groups, namely Labasheeda le Chéile, Broadford Community Action Group and Clare Youth Action. All groups did their localities proud with innovative and engaging virtual presentations that greatly impressed the judges. Labasheeda le Cheile were runners-up in their competitive category while Clare Youth Action won their category outright.

Burial Grounds

Plinth works, tree surgery, wall repairs and path improvement works were carried out at burial grounds around the county during the year. In addition, two community groups were granted funding to assist with the extension of existing burial grounds while a further 41 groups were granted small scale funding through the Community Support Scheme to assist in maintenance costs associated with burial grounds across the county. The ongoing commitment of these groups is invaluable.

The extension of the burial ground at Illaunmanagh in Shannon commenced in 2020. This will provide sufficient capacity for the next 10-15 years.

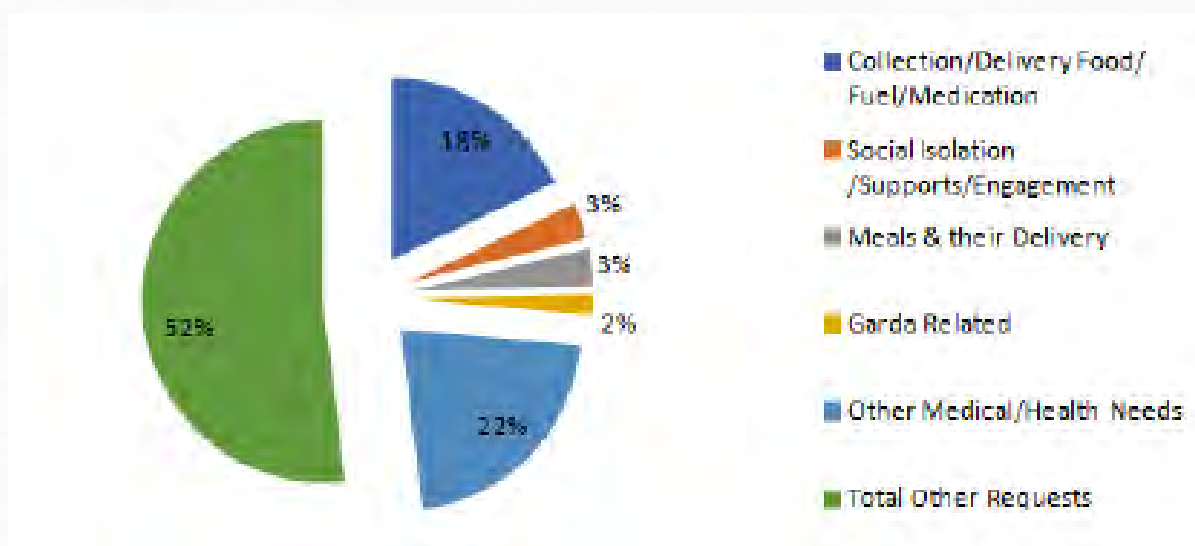


Clare Covid-19 Community Response

In response to Covid-19, approximately 40 community and voluntary groups around the county supported the 'Community Call' by assisting vulnerable individuals in their community with practical supports such as collection and delivery of food, fuel and medicine.

The Community Response Helpline, a dedicated phone service responding to the needs of the people of County Clare, has been staffed by the Rural Development Department, The Cliffs of Moher, Library Services and Customer Services with the support of other County Council staff, since March 2020. The helpline has operated seven days a week throughout the various stages of lockdown and has assisted members of the public with signposting information, agency referrals, community group contacts and transport. There were 1,136 calls to the helpline in 2020.

Nature of calls to the Community Response Helpline in 2020 (1,136 calls)



Approximately 40 community and voluntary groups around the county supported the 'Community Call' by assisting vulnerable individuals in their community with practical supports such as collection and delivery of food, fuel and medicine.

Community Development Committee

The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) had another busy year of managing an extensive range of strategic programmes and activities. The two-year, Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021 continues to deliver on 11 ongoing projects. The LCDC approved 58 projects to the value of €201,075 under the Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) and 57 projects totalling €123,055 under the Covid-19 Emergency Fund.

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) for 2020 was delivered and targets met despite Covid-19 restrictions with a budget of €898,621.

Public Participation Network

A Service Level Agreement for 2020 was finalised between the Public Participation Network (PPN) and Clare County Council and an annual work plan agreed for the year. The Secretariat supported by two part-time Coordinators and a Support Worker drives the work of the PPN.

The 2020 operational costs of the PPN were met from a Department grant of €75,700 and a contribution from Clare County Council of €35,000.

Clare Local Development Committee



Joint Policing Committee

The overall aim of the Clare Joint Policing Committee (JPC) is to facilitate consultations, discussions and recommendations in relation to the policing of County Clare. JPC members comprise elected members, Oireachtas members, community and voluntary representatives, An Garda Síochána, and Local Authority Officials. Due to Covid-19, two meetings were held in 2020. The JPC met in February and October 2020. Following the General Election in February 2020 and the formation of a new government in June 2020, there was a change in the JPC Oireachtas members. New members attended their first JPC meeting in October 2020, which was held in Glór, Causeway Link, Ennis, County Clare. An Garda Síochána provided updated policing statistics at each JPC meeting. A number of issues were addressed in response to the statistics provided as well as matters in relation to enhanced Garda visibility, Illegal encampments, alcohol and drug-related road offences, Garda engagement with community, drug-related behaviour and impact of drugs on society, the reporting of sexual offences and domestic violence crimes, mental health supports, opening hours of Garda stations, thefts from graveyards, racism, Covid-19.



Clare Garda Youth Awards.

In February 2020, a presentation was given on the Property Marking Scheme to encourage individuals to mark their property so that in the event of theft it can be returned to its rightful owner. Also in February 2020, JPC attended the Clare Garda Youth Awards which recognised the achievement of young people in County Clare, individually or as part of the community.



Property Marking Demonstration.

In October 2020, the JPC welcomed a presentation from the Age Friendly Development Officer on initiatives around safety and security for older people, the benefits of community schemes, working with the Gardai, and the positive effects of intergenerational projects. A presentation in October from the Garda Protective Services Unit, located in Crusheen, County Clare, outlined the work of the unit in investigating sexual and domestic crimes under Victims of Crime Act (2017). A Senior Engineer from Clare County Council updated the JPC on the current position in relation to CCTV, litter prevention and use of remotely controlled CCTV cameras.

Tourism Department

As with all services, the activity of the Tourism Department in 2020 was influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, which unleashed a massive economic shock on the world. It brought a sudden stop to international travel and tourism and it also deeply impacted domestic tourism within Ireland. However, the Tourism Department continued its development, planning and promotional work and managed to contribute significantly to the strengthening of the tourism product in Clare.

Clare Tourism Recovery Taskforce

Clare County Council, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, established a Clare Tourism Recovery Taskforce to guide the reactivation of Clare as a tourism destination in a tactical response to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The new Clare Tourism Taskforce engages with key stakeholders across the tourism sector in Clare to ensure that all are working collaboratively for the recovery of the sector. The Clare Tourism Recovery Taskforce worked towards positioning Clare as a destination to be recognised nationally and internationally for its commitment to responsible tourism. The inaugural meeting of the Clare Tourism Recovery Taskforce was held on 7th July, 2020.



Inaugural meeting of the Clare Tourism Recovery Taskforce in July 2020.

Clare Tourism Strategy 2030

In September 2020, the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 – Guiding our Journey to a Vibrant New Future in Tourism – was adopted by the elected members of Clare County Council. This was after an extended period of consultation, and a review in light of the Covid-19 impact to the tourism industry.

The key strategic priorities of the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 are:

1. To establish a county-wide Tourism Advisory Forum to strengthen governance and act as an advisory group for Clare County Council and a spokes-group for tourism
2. To work towards positioning Clare as a destination to be recognised nationally and internationally for its commitment to responsible tourism and sustainability
3. To develop new and strengthen existing approaches to generating integrated and cross-sectoral discussions on tourism locally and regionally.



Tourism Product Development – Capital Projects

In recognition of the requirement for enhanced tourism products within the county, there are several significant capital projects continuing, including renovations to Loophead Lighthouse, Vandeleur Walled Gardens and design plans for the visitor experience for the Council-owned Inis Cealtra (Holy Island).



Photographs depict members of the Clare Tourism Strategy Steering Group including Jennifer Houiellebecq and Caroline Boland from TEAM Tourism; John Leonard from Accolades Marketing; Paddy Mathews and Miriam Kennedy from Fáilte Ireland; Geraldine Enright from Cliffs of Moher; and members of the Clare County Council Tourism Department.

Loophead Lighthouse Visitor Experience

An agreement dated 24th February 2020 was signed between the Commissioner of Irish Lights and Clare County Council to lease the property at Loophead Lighthouse premises for a further term of 25 years.



Back row (left to right): Leonard Cleary, Director of Services for Rural Development; Tim Madden, Temp Burren Geopark Manager; Deirdre O'Shea, A/Head of Tourism. Front row (left to right): Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, Clare County Council; Clare Colleran Molloy, Cathaoirleach of Clare County Council 2020; Dave Ward, Commercial Services Manager, Commissioner of Irish Lights.

On 10th April, 2020, the following consultants were appointed to the Loophead Lighthouse Visitor Experience Design Team: Drake Hourigan as lead architects, along with Feeney McMahon, architects; O'Connor Sutton Cronin, civil structural and mechanical

engineers; Rogerson Reddan as quantity surveyors; and Kerin Contract Management as project management consultants. This design team were contracted to bring to design completion, renovations to Loophead Lighthouse which is funded by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (€0.8m), Project Ireland 2040 under the Department of Rural and Community Development with additional match funding by Clare County Council.

As part of this RRDF-funded project, Michael Boland Contractors were appointed to complete the installation of 1.7km of 100 HDPE waterpipe from Fodra to Loophead Lighthouse. This was completed in December 2020.



The final installation of the watermain into the compound of Loophead Lighthouse.

Vandeleur Walled Garden and Visitor Experience

The Vandeleur project progressed from consultant appointment to tender launch and award during 2020. Clare County Council has demonstrated ongoing commitment to ensuring that the investment in Vandeleur, which is part of an overall Visitor Development Strategy developed in 2020, maximises the use of this important heritage asset. The design development process evolved during the pandemic to identify phased development to address the budget and to ensure that the Vandeleur Walled Garden was best placed to help with recovery following the impact on the tourism sector while also providing an enhanced local amenity.

The works proposed include an interpretive museum, multifunction room, shop and new gardener maintenance building along with the development of a new visitor experience design and approach for the complex which includes work to protected structures primarily within the stable block of Vandeleur House. Clare County Council applied for and secured

additional funding to address accessibility and other ancillary costs within the existing centre in 2020. The project continues to be funded by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, Project Ireland 2040 under the Department of Rural and Community Development with match funding by Clare County Council. This project has extensive stakeholder involvement in particular with the Kilrush Amenity Trust and Coillte who supply ongoing support to Clare County Council for the project delivery.

In October, a contract was signed for survey and design works for Inis Cealtra (Holy Island) Visitor Experience. The consultants appointed are McCullough Mulvin Architects, Tandem Partners Ltd and Tobin Consulting Engineers. This project is in collaboration with the Office of Public Works, National Monuments Service, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. There has been close engagement with Mountshannon Community Council to ensure it enhances and complements the village of Mountshannon and its surrounding area.



Photographed at the official signing of contracts between Chief Executive and officials from Clare County Council and Vandeleur Walled Gardens Design Team with members of Kilrush Amenity Trust and staff members.

The long-term objective of the project is to conserve Inis Cealtra (Holy Island) as a significant historical, ecclesiastical, archaeological and cultural site and to expand its attractiveness as a sustainable tourism destination and, in so doing, address population decline and rural deprivation by providing social and economic benefits derived from tourism for East Clare and the wider Mid-West region.

Following on from engagement with the North Clare Area Elected Members, a cross-directorate team met with Ennistymon Town Team to discuss the concept proposals for funding submission to Fáilte Ireland Tourism Destination Towns. A tourism destination town is a town which a tourist can spend an overnight, and in which a cluster of products, services, activities and experiences are offered. There was agreement reached on the concept proposals following engagement with the Ennistymon Town Team. This project

application was confirmed successful in July 2020. Applications were also made to the Platforms for Growth Fáilte Ireland fund aimed at outdoor water-based activities for all-weather changing facilities, secure storage and bathrooms at the Ballycuggaran Sports Activity Facility in Ogonnelloe and Kilkee Waterworld Activity Facilities. The significant increase in people enjoying outdoor water-based activities such as kayaking, surfing, paddle-boarding and open water swimming is expected to continue to grow year on year, and not just during the summer months.

Work continued between the Clare County Council Tourism Department and Fáilte Ireland on three Visitor Experience Destination Plans across the County to include the Burren, West Clare and North Kerry and Lough Derg.



The signing of contract documents for the Inis Cealtra (Holy Island) Visitor Experience in the Council Chamber, Áras Contae an Chláir, Ennis, County Clare, on 21st September, 2020.

Strategic Marketing Plan for Clare – 2020

In January the newly formed Tourism Department launched its first ever Experience Clare 2020 Scenic Calendar. The calendar is specifically targeted at overseas markets and trade shows. It is a business-to-business tourism promotional tool that will help drive business into County Clare.

The Tourism Department sponsored the 'An Bhoireann' TG4 television series, which took viewers on a journey through the austere beauty of the Burren over the four seasons and the team also produced a video titled 'Dream of Clare' encouraging everyone in the county to remind people around the globe of the attractions of Clare.

In addition to the video production, a trade blog on the Visit Clare website was developed with free resources and promotional collateral for the tourism industry to share on their own websites and social media platforms. Work continued on the creation of a photobank of images that will be a free resource for people to use to promote the county.

Following on from the Government re-opening phase on 29th June, 2020, the Tourism Team ran a suite of newly designed domestic adverts in national, regional and local newspapers. There was also a national radio campaign organised for Clare.



As another measure of supporting the local tourism industry, a digital marketing campaign was launched on Rollercoaster.ie; Evoke.ie and Extra.ie in addition to a Visit Clare social media campaign with a second promotional video, 'It's all there in Clare'.

Activities in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark

The Atlantic Geoparks project (co-funded by EU Interreg and Clare County Council) has produced a new geotourism app called 'Geotours', and the first version is now available to download for iOS and Android. The app highlights and promotes local businesses and geoheritage sites in the Geopark as well as other Geoparks in Spain, Portugal, UK and France.

Working with Evolve Technologies (Ennistymon) the Geopark developed a site monitoring system for our geosites around the Burren. The flexible, mobile or tablet GPS-based monitoring system will allow recording of any number of management issues (litter, invasive species, signage condition, etc.).



Citizen Science project, 'Aille Engaged'

The Citizen Science project 'Aille Engaged' is about having enough data to be able to predict river levels on the Aille River based on climate change predictions for rainfall in Ireland. The project enables local residents to collect real scientific data about their river catchment. This is the first project of its kind in the country with the support of Earth and Ocean Sciences Dept, NUIG, the Lisdoonvarna Historical Society and Geological Survey Ireland. The Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism Businesses, which the Burren Ecotourism Network members sign up to, was revised and upgraded to make it more responsive to business use. The Code made an important contribution to the exciting news of the Burren Ecotourism Network's 'Lonely Planet' 'Best in Travel 2021' Award.



The award has included the Burren in the top 30 places to travel to in the world in 2021. The Network is the only Irish entry on this year's prestigious list. The Network, which has over 60 local businesses promoting sustainable tourism, develops and manages an environmentally sustainable tourism product. A key requirement of membership is that each business completes the Geopark's Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism. The award is the result of many years of collaboration and commitment by Burren Ecotourism Network members and the Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Geopark, reinforced with financial supports from the Local Authority and other agencies.

The Cliffs of Moher

The Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience was set for another record trading year in 2020 but was forced to close to the public on 13th March-29th June due to the Government Covid-19 restrictions; further restrictions were introduced in October with a short trading period before returning to closure again on 26th December. The Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience experienced a difficult trading environment in 2020 with overall visitor numbers down -83% (273,464), group tour activity -99% as a result of extended closures, restrictions and the dependency on the domestic market. The domestic market performed well and the visitor experience satisfaction rates increased due to the safety measures in place, ability to give one-to-one experiences and authentic customer service. The Cliffs of Moher board during 2020 supported the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience in crisis management and with the following initiatives.

Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040

The Cliffs of Moher is at a pivotal time in its development and Haley Sharpe Design, the multi-disciplinary tourism led appointed consultants, are working with a steering committee to guide the Fáilte Ireland supported project. The aim is to deliver a sustainable strategic plan and overall architectural site masterplan for the iconic attraction which is expected to be delivered late 2021. The focus of the work in 2020 is on extensive preliminary research, on-site investigations and on-site studies to understand the challenges and help identify opportunities to realise future aspirations.

Visitor Experience

A new encompassing admission structure was introduced to the dynamic pricing model with O'Brien's Tower included in the ticket price along with value added experiences including a mobility vehicle for visitors with additional needs, high-quality binoculars on loan, picnic blankets, new picnic areas, Wi-Fi and calendar of events focusing on culture and heritage.



Visitor Management

A suite of measures were put in place in line with Government guidelines for safe reopening, including standard operating procedures, signage, capacity management, one-way systems, social distancing, building capacity control, online bookings, employee safety measures and long opening hours.

Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk repairs

A two-kilometre stretch of the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk, one kilometre north and one kilometre south of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre, was identified as requiring urgent health and safety repairs. Following an engagement process with local landowners and stakeholders, repairs and improvements were identified, a Part 5 planning exemption was granted and Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) funding €19,438 for the southern section and €19,933 for the northern section was secured to fund part of the project which is estimated to be €500,000 to complete.



Visitor Centre public toilets upgrade

The public toilets in the Visitor Centre received a full upgrade and revamp for the first time since opening the Visitor Centre including a reversal of the unisex model to segregated male and female toilets. Works were completed in July in time for the season. The total cost of the project was €243,000.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE



LIAM CONNEALLY
Director of Economic Development

Introduction

2020 was another busy year for the Council's Economic Development Directorate. Increased planning and development activity indicates strong signs of a growing economy in the county. Jobs growth in the county continued to increase as highlighted by FDI/SME jobs created and the LEO's performance. The presence of JLR, MeiraGTx and ELS in Shannon are considerable additions to Clare's economy while as part of a multi-agency response the Council's assistance was also provided to Molex, Roche and Avara to prepare a skills

matrix and upskilling of the workforces seeking new job opportunities. Throughout 2020, the Council continued to work closely with the ESB in relation to the future of the Moneypoint power plant.

On 18th September, 2020, Clare County Council commenced the review of the existing Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023, the statutory spatial and economic development plan for County Clare, and the Council will make a new Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028.

The tender process for spatial and economic consultants to prepare the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan was commenced in 2019 and appointed in 2020.

Clare Economic Task Force

In 2020, the Chief Executive convened a group of public and private sector leaders to inform and guide appropriate economic measures that will stimulate job creation in County Clare. The group is chaired by Mr Noel Kilkenny and the inaugural meeting was held on 26th June, 2020, in the Council Chamber in Ennis.

The purpose of the Clare Economic Task Force is to drive and provide a guiding hand to assist Clare County Council to:

1. Identify the immediate priority actions required to maximise our local/regional economic potential
2. To develop future resilience in our local/regional economy. The task force will progress medium/long-term projects/actions
3. The task force will examine how Clare, as part of the Mid-West region, can facilitate and enable decentralised employment opportunities
4. The task force will examine how national, EU and international capital investment opportunities can underpin Clare's future economic growth
5. The task force will build economic confidence in Clare and the Mid-West region
6. The task force will open business and political communication channels to assist all sectors of the County Clare economy.

The task force worked together during 2020 to address a number of strategic challenges facing County Clare and the Mid-West region, with a particular focus on the aviation industry and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown on Shannon International Airport. The group received presentations on the IDA Strategic Plan, the Future Mobility Campus Ireland autonomous car test bed in Shannon Free Zone and a range of other initiatives, capital projects and emergency response measures progressed through Clare County Council.

Future Mobility Campus Ireland

The Council is also a partner in Future Mobility Campus Ireland (FMCI). This project has recently been funded by Enterprise Ireland to build a test bed for future mobility in the Shannon Free Zone. This is an exciting project which has great potential to increase economic activity in County Clare and the Mid-West region. FMCI is made up of many multinational and SME companies on the Western Seaboard as well as Clare County Council and Limerick City and County Council.



Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Four meetings of the Committee were held during 2020 with a SPC training session for all SPC members held on 24th January, 2020. The Committee comprises seven elected members of Clare County Council and six sectoral representatives and is supported by the Director of Service, Liam Conneally. The key work focus for the SPC in the coming five years will include the review of the County Development Plan and the Development Contribution Scheme, the implementation of the Shannon Town Masterplan and the Ennis 2040 Spatial and Economic Strategy. Climate adaptation and biodiversity will be standing agenda items for the SPC during the length of its tenure.

South Clare Economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ)

In April 2018, the Elected Members committed to the preparation of a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) application for University of Limerick's (UL) South Clare campus. The SDZ application will transform a 325-acre greenfield site beside UL's existing 125-acre campus in County Clare into an education/employment/residential university zone. In the process, it is anticipated that at least 3,500 jobs will be created and simultaneously UL will seek the EU designation of Europe's first university town.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the South Region was adopted and took effect in January 2020. In the RSES the SDZ was given significant regional priority and identified as a national enabler. It is an objective

of the RSES to support the designation and subsequent development of the lands zoned as University in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 as an economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ).

The Council has met with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government officials who have requested that additional work, ie. preparation of a strategic environmental assessment and an economic appraisal, be undertaken which will accompany the SDZ application to Government. A social and economic appraisal report of the benefit of the SDZ was completed by Deloitte in 2020. Also during this time the Council and UL have been in discussions to set up a designated activity company to make the SDZ application and the subsequent planning scheme.



Town Enhancement, Tourism and Mobility Plan for Killaloe-Ballina

In 2020 Clare County Council, in conjunction with Tipperary County Council, commenced the preparation of a Town Enhancement, Tourism and Mobility Plan for Killaloe-Ballina. The plan is a strategic priority for Clare County Council and will facilitate a coordinated approach to public realm enhancements within Killaloe and Ballina, providing a clear vision for Killaloe and Ballina as linked settlements.

Specific measures, designs and schemes will promote the towns' complementarity, and create an overall focus on their joint strengths and opportunities in terms of functionality and aesthetics. The plan is being prepared by a design team led by consultants Downey Planning & Architecture. The Killaloe-Ballina Town Enhancement, Tourism and Mobility Plan will comprise a number of components, including:

- A Sustainable Mobility Plan/Strategy
- A Place Making and Public Realm Plan/Strategy and Street Furniture Design Guide (lighting/surface treatment), which will provide an analysis of the towns with a particular focus on the town centres

- A Tourism Strategy; tourism plays a significant role in the local economy of both Killaloe and Ballina
- Identification of initiatives that will encourage an increase in commercial activity on the Main Street in Killaloe and in Ballina. Public realm enhancement, traffic management, car-parking and pedestrian connectivity to the town centres from the residential, educational, community, public spaces and tourism facilities will be considered in this context
- Identification of a green infrastructure network and enhanced connectivity between the green spaces within the towns, for example development of walking routes including riverside walks.

Consultation with the Elected Members of the Killaloe and Nenagh Municipal Districts, commercial and business interests, the tourism and hospitality sector and the general public will be an integral part of the project and initial public consultation took place in late 2020. It is anticipated that the plan, when completed, will assist Clare and Tipperary County Councils, working together, to make an application for and secure funds to implement the plan under a variety of funding streams.



Spatial and Economic Masterplan for Shannon Town Centre

This Masterplan commenced in 2020 is funded by Government's Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) and Clare County Council, and will drive the future economic and spatial pattern for the centre of Shannon Town. The Masterplan, comprising of two elements – a spatial masterplan and an economic viability assessment of the plan – is being prepared by Building Design Partnership and McCabe Durney Barnes economists. Detailed survey work and targeted stakeholder consultation occurred in late 2020, with a view to a preferred Masterplan approach and an emerging concept has been prepared.

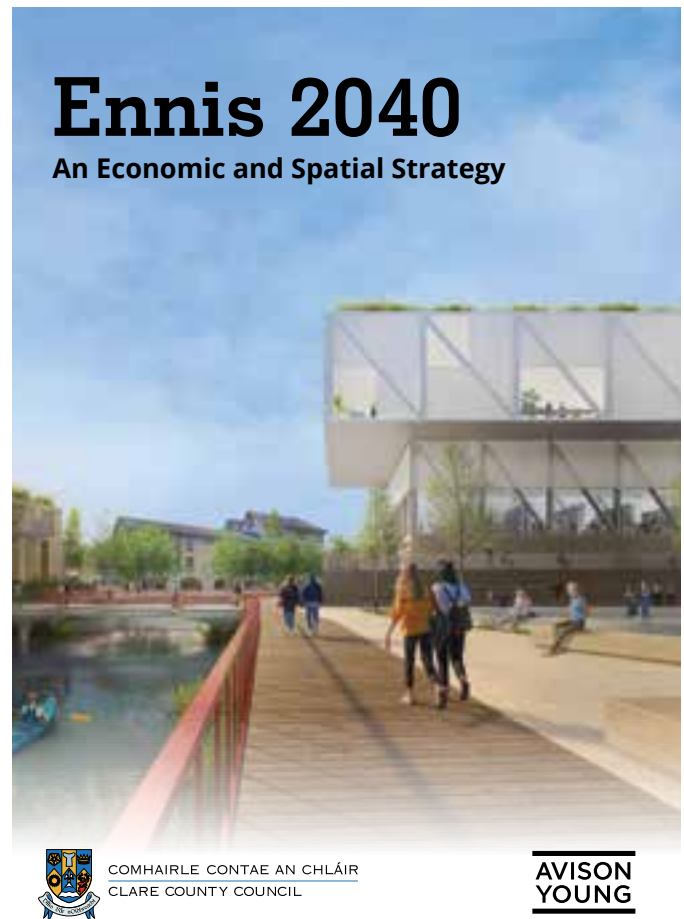
Building on the tradition of innovation in Shannon and with a focus of development in the town centre, the Masterplan will explore and define the spatial layout and economic feasibility of an enhanced urban core and town centre streets for Shannon Town; a consolidated retail offer; opportunities for community and cultural centre and an innovation and enterprise hub while providing for greater connectivity between the Town Centre, the Free Zone, the Airport and the Estuary.



Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy

Due to the impact and restrictions of Covid-19, the official launch by An Taoiseach of the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy has been postponed. While the Strategy itself has not been launched officially, Clare County Council continues to progress with the objectives set out in the strategy to transform Ennis enabling the town to prosper as a successful, diverse and vibrant social, civic, commercial, cultural and residential centre. The Ennis 2040 Spatial and Economic Strategy has a town centre first focus but also looks to prioritise sites outside the town centre that will support compact growth and realise economic opportunities for Ennis and Clare into the future.

In 2020, a local authority wholly owned special purpose vehicle, in the form of Ennis 2040 Strategic Development Designated Activity Company (DAC), was established to deliver a programme of targeted investment and property development. This includes formulating a strategic plan for specific sites, and engagement in the construction and development of these sites across the various development sectors (commercial, residential, office, social, community and recreational amenities, etc.) over the coming 20 years. The role of Ennis 2040 DAC is, in partnership with Clare County Council, to promote the economic development, social integration and environmental improvement of the town of Ennis and its environs in County Clare to further enhance its positioning as a great place to live, work and visit.



Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary (SIFP)

In 2017, McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan (MKO) was commissioned to carry out a bird usage survey of the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA) comprising the entire estuarine habitat from Limerick City westwards as far as Doonaha in County Clare and Dooneen Point in County Kerry. This survey was commissioned under the auspices of the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary, an inter-jurisdictional land and marine-based framework to guide the future development and management of the estuary. The survey was completed in 2019.

However, during this 2017/2018 survey a small area remained un-surveyed. The un-surveyed areas included sections of the Estuary that were not visible from the shoreline as they were too distant or obscured by islands. In order to obtain a 100 per cent year round survey of the entire SPA, the services of MKO were retained to complete a survey of the previously un-surveyed areas throughout 2020. The output from this will be the most comprehensive waterbird survey of the River Shannon and Fergus Estuaries that has ever been undertaken. It will provide the baseline data to inform all future potential development within the Estuary.

Atlantic Economic Corridor

The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) is the term applied to a non-administrative or “linear” region along the Western seaboard, stretching from Kerry to Donegal, and includes County Clare. The aim is to build and increase collaboration within the AEC that maximises its assets, attracts investment and creates jobs and prosperity in the region. A key objective of the AEC is to drive significant regional development, complementing and balancing Ireland's east coast. Key projects during 2020 were the support to hubs in the region with funding under the hubs outreach programme to help fund measures to deal with Covid-19. In addition,

a hubs strategy was drafted in conjunction with the Western Development Commission and has informed the work of the Department of Rural and Community Development in proposing a network for all digital hubs in the country. This will be further advanced in 2021.

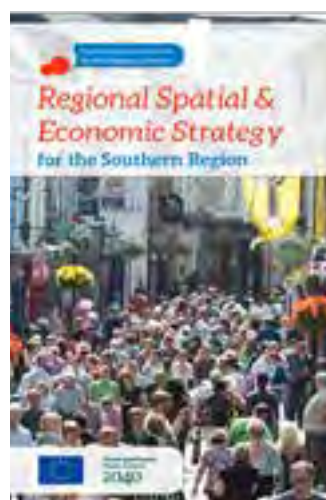
PLANNING

Forward Planning

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Southern Regional Assembly has prepared a Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region which came into effect on 31st January, 2020.

The RSES provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region and includes Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) to guide the future development of the region's three main cities and metropolitan areas – Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford.



The RSES seeks to achieve balanced regional development and full implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework. It will be implemented in partnership with local authorities and State agencies to deliver on this vision and build a cohesive and sustainable region.

Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028

The two-year statutory process of preparing a new County Development Plan 2022-2028 commenced on 18th September, 2020. The new County Development Plan will set out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county over a six-year period. The process commenced with an eight-week period of pre-draft public consultation which, faced with Covid-19 restrictions, was promoted through various means with a particular emphasis on virtual engagement.

This included the preparation of an Issues Paper and the production of a video to stimulate interest, engagement and debate in identifying the key issues which should be the focus of the Development Plan, which were placed on a dedicated webpage for the Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028 and were posted on the Council's social media. Extensive engagement with both primary and

secondary schools through the production of project books and teacher guidance notes provided a medium through which children of all ages could effectively participate in the plan-making process. This was supplemented with virtual workshops with student classes and presented the opportunity to link the plan-making process with the school curriculum. Scarriff Community College participated in a live virtual session with the elected members of the Killaloe Municipal District to present their projects and engage in discussion with the local representatives. This was an innovative approach to establish direct engagement between school students and elected representatives within the classroom environment.

The process will continue through 2021 when there will be further opportunities to engage through public consultation at specific stage, with the process concluding when the Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028 is adopted in September 2022.



Cappa Enhancement Strategy

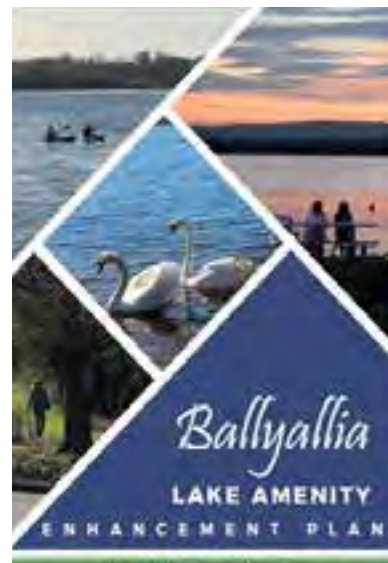
Cappa village sits on the outskirts of Kilrush town on the Wild Atlantic Way. It was identified as a village with large potential due to its maritime location and endearing character and scale. Clare County Council appointed a design team, led by Helena McElmeel Architects, to analyse the existing village and propose a new vision for its future development. The study looked at the village and its connection to the sea, the pier and the beach and sought to consolidate these amenities through new interventions. The study proposed a redevelopment of the beach front and the construction of new tourism and recreational amenities. The process was informed by public consultations and close collaboration with community groups and stakeholders. The report was concluded in late 2020, and will provide a valuable framework for the future development of the village.

Ennistymon Masterplan

Clare County Council, together with its partners Clare Local Development Company and Ennistymon Town Team, have appointed a multi-disciplinary team led by Helena McElmeel Architects to complete a Masterplan for sites with the town of Ennistymon. The Masterplan seeks to build upon existing Clare County Council proposals in place associated with the planned new bridge crossing for the town and the upgrading works to take place along the Main Street, Ennistymon. The study will explore the potential of the existing streetscape and its built environment in order to guide the development of the town in a positive way. It will also comprise of a new signage strategy and streetscape enhancement plan, which seeks to improve both the visitor and residents experience. The study will be finalised in 2021 and will provide a valuable blueprint for the future development of the town.

Ballyallia Lake Amenity Enhancement Plan

The Ballyallia Lake Amenity Enhancement Plan was officially launched on 22nd January, 2020, by Clare County Council's Planning Department, Barefield Tidy Towns and Clare Local Development Company (CLDC). A new approach to community collaboration was adopted in the preparation of the Ballyallia Lake Amenity Enhancement Plan by placing the community at the very heart of this



enhancement plan initiative. The engagement of Barefield Tidy Towns, embracing its lead and catalyst role in reaching out and bringing the community together, combined with the collaboration and support from LEADER, the CLDC, Ennis Municipal District and Clare County Council Planning Department reflects the strong collaborative approach adopted for this initiative.

This approach met the challenge of developing a plan that achieves a balance between meeting the needs of the community and key users with the protection of this important unique natural resource. It has provided a long-term vision and strong sense of ownership of the amenity ensuring it will be protected and cared for into the future. It will provide an incredible resource for all sectors of the population to enjoy, enhance lives and

contribute to the health and well-being for all. As the first plan of its kind for the Ballyallia Lake Amenity it is the blueprint for a future sustainable recreation amenity which will guide decisions in the future management and investment in the Ballyallia Lake Amenity Enhancement Area.

Corofin Enhancement Strategy

Work on the preparation of a Streetscape Enhancement Strategy for Corofin commenced in 2020 and will continue into 2021. The process was initiated by Clare County Council and National Parks & Wildlife Services who worked together to develop a brief for the Strategy. The Corofin Enhancement Strategy seeks to maximise the potential of the village and its proximity to the Burren through thoughtful and sensitive interventions. The Strategy will look to identify a suitable location and develop a design for a Burren National Park Visitors' Centre and Administration Facility for NPWS, provide public realm improvements through a streetscape enhancement plan and improve the tourist experience through the development of a new signage strategy. It is envisaged that the architect/urban designer lead Design team will be appointed in March 2021, with a view to completing the Strategy before the end of 2021.

Ennis Town Centre Health Check

A survey of Ennis Town Centre land uses was undertaken for Ennis in 2020 and is available from the Planning Department.

Vacant Sites Register

During the year, the Planning Department carried out an assessment of lands across the county where the levy may apply in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (as amended 2018). A number of appeals were decided by An Bord Pleanála in relation to sites that were proposed for inclusion on the Council's Vacant Site Register. Following the confirmation of those appeals the Planning Authority has commenced the process of getting valuations prepared on the sites and will continue to monitor the lands and engage with landowners in 2021.

Architectural conservation

During 2020, 22 Section 57 declarations were issued relating to works on protected structures. Support was given to the public, elected members, tidy towns and community groups on various conservation issues.

Funding for protected structures and buildings in ACAs was provided in 2020 by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht through the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structures Fund (HSF). In total, grants totalling €60,000.00 were provided to assist works on eight projects under the BHIS and €35,000 of grant aid was provided under the HSF in respect of works for O'Connell Monument, Ennis.

The Turret Lodge, Kilrush

Clare County Council officially opened the Turret Lodge, Kilrush on 22nd September, 2020. Turret Lodge is a notable landmark in Kilrush Town controlling access between the town and the Vandeleur Estate demesne. This project received funding under the Historic Towns Initiative 2019 which is a partnership between the Heritage Council, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with Clare County Council providing match funding.

The delivery was based on a collaborative approach between Kilrush and District Historical Society, Clare County Council and the Heritage Council providing the local community with a space which they will be responsible for while also delivering on the conservation of an important building.



Heritage

All Ireland Pollinator Plan

On 3rd February, Clare County Council signed a framework agreement with the National Biodiversity Data Centre to undertake actions to support pollinators in County Clare. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a cross-sector initiative, led by the National Biodiversity Data Centre with local authorities, farmers, businesses, schools and local communities to support pollinators such as bees. In becoming an All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Partner, Clare County Council agrees:

- To support the ethos of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and will consider the Plan in its policies, plans, and management decisions where possible
- To consider the evidence-based actions in the guideline document, Councils: Actions to help pollinators, and to carry out one pollinator-friendly action in the first year of signing up and plan to carry out at least three more within the following five years. The guideline document lists 30 possible actions
- To update the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Team (within the National Biodiversity Data Centre) on the positive pollinator actions the local authority have planned, implemented or maintained at the end of each year, when contacted, to help us promote their work.

Clare Biodiversity Best Practice Staff Manual and Training Project

The first phase of this project was completed in 2020 and consisted of a Gap Analysis report, which comprised a review of current work practices and an examination of the biodiversity resource available to Clare County Council staff in order to identify training requirements and to examine how work practices may be altered

to benefit biodiversity. This report, along with a staff consultation and a Biodiversity Questionnaire, has informed the development of the Biodiversity Resource Manual.

It is anticipated that the Biodiversity Resource Manual (including the Environmental Procedures on Hedgerow, Drainage, Grassland Management and Trees Management and the Use of Herbicides) will be completed in early 2021 and a training element on the use of the Manual will be delivered to Clare County Council staff in Q1 2021.

Biodiversity Demonstration Sites

The Biodiversity Demonstration Sites project was completed in 2020 from funding received from the Heritage Council, and through the July Stimulus funding from the National Biodiversity Action Plan, and resulted in area based, tangible demonstration of best practice in the management of public land for the benefit of biodiversity and nature conservation, involving all the relevant stakeholders. 10 Demonstration Sites for Biodiversity Management were chosen and they have been surveyed, species list compiled in partnership with the relevant people who manage these sites and with the Municipal Districts and the local community.

The sites chosen were Tim Smythe Park, Ennis, Shannon Wetland, Shannon, Public Green area on the Cooraclare road in Kilrush, Two Mile Gate, Ballycuggeran, Killaloe, public park near to the Church in Miltown Malbay, triangular area at junction of Liscannor/Ennistymon Road in Lahinch, public road between Ennistymon and Lahinch, picnic area across from Ennistymon Church on the Lahinch Road, Riverside Park, Scarriff, Ballycannon Graveyard, Meelick.

The Biodiversity Demonstration Sites final reports and recommendations on the

management of 10 have been distributed to the relevant stakeholders.

Clare Holy Well Audit and Survey

On foot of Heritage Council funding a survey of Holy Wells across the county was completed in 2020. The survey looked at the 241 Holy Wells in the Record of Monuments and Places for County Clare and engaged with many of the local communities that tend to these sacred places. This has resulted in a comprehensive data base of information being compiled. It is intended that in 2021 that additional funding will be sought to facilitate the making available of this database to the public in the hope of raising awareness and knowledge of the rich heritage associated with Holy Wells and their settings.

Heritage Week

Heritage Week in Clare 2020 (August 15th-23rd) was like no other, where the focus was on creating heritage projects that could be showcased online. There were more than 33 Clare Heritage Week projects registered from around the county with some of these projects still accessible on the Heritage Week website.

Biodiversity Week

Biodiversity Week ran from 22nd to 29th May and Clare County Council used Clare FM radio to highlight and promote the “Dawn Chorus” and to further encourage the renewed interest in bird song and as part of Clare County Council’s Wellness Initiative. In addition, Clare County Council put on infomercials on Clare FM to promote biodiversity and pollinators which were run over the course of Biodiversity Week.

County Clare Swift Survey 2020

The final results of the Clare Swift Survey 2020 shows that there is a very small population of Swift remaining, with only 56 Swift nests or breeding pairs. Low numbers of breeding pairs

have been confirmed in Ennis, Kilrush, Quin, North Clare, Whitegate, Scarriff, Killaloe and Tuamgraney. Many of our town and villages such as Lahinch, Corofin and Miltown Malbay did not have Swifts. In light of the very low numbers of breeding Swift in Clare, Clare County Council has purchased a small number of bird nest boxes for communities and householders to be erected on buildings as opportunities arise. Swift nest bricks and nest boxes will be made available to house owners in 2021 to encourage building owners to retain and supplement opportunities for Swift nest sites in suitable buildings

National Heritage Awards

The National Heritage Awards took place virtually and were hosted by the Heritage Council. The Awards recognise the efforts of individuals, families and community groups across Ireland to ensure the preservation, protection and promotion of Ireland’s built, natural and cultural heritage.

Clarecastle and Ballyea Heritage and Wildlife Group was awarded the Clare County Heritage Week Award 2020 for its project, “Clarecastle on film in the 1950s”. The film entailed the discovery and restoration of old cine-film taken in Clarecastle in the 1950s, which shows aspects of the village that have changed and, in particular, the unloading of ships at Clarecastle Quay. The project organisers established a website, Facebook and Instagram pages, where collections of old photographs, publications, research documents and more are on display.

Labasheeda Project Group was named as a runner-up in the ‘Heritage of Education Award’ category for the project, ‘Labasheeda Ar Scoil – An Educational Journey.’ This project told the story of education in the Labasheeda area throughout the ages from describing how locals overcame many challenges during the penal days right up until the present day, with

the opening of a new school in 1975.

Shannon Town Community Wetlands was a runner-up in the 'Water Heritage Award' category for the 'Shannon Town Community Wetlands Project', an initiative to develop an attractive amenity within the town that promotes biodiversity and enhances the community value of the site, while making it user-friendly and accessible.

Adopt a Monument programme

With funding from the Heritage Council through the Creative Ireland/Adopt a Monument programme, Kilmurry Tidy Towns undertook an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment along with emergency conservation works to the Lime Kiln in order to make it an accessible heritage destination for the local community. Further conservation works to conserve the distinctive brick-lined pot are planned as part of the next phase of works.

The Labasheeda Projects Group, with funding from the Adopt a Monument Scheme, commissioned an ecological survey of Kilkerrin Battery Fort and immediate environs and a conservation report.

Community Monument Fund

The Community Monument Fund has for the first time been announced by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Fund is to support the conservation of our archaeological heritage. County Clare has one of the highest densities of monuments of any county in Ireland and is particularly rich in early field monuments and ecclesiastical settlements. There are approximately 7,500 known archaeological sites and many more yet undiscovered in the county. There are over 170 historic graveyards in the county, not including Cillíní or children's burial grounds. The Monument Fund by the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht had very

tight timelines and was oversubscribed from interested monument owners in County Clare when it was announced in September 2020. The Planning Department is working to assist communities to avail of this funding opportunity which should be announced again in early 2021.

Development management – planning applications

The number of planning applications received in 2020 was 1,013, similar to the numbers received in 2018 and 2019. In addition there were eight Part VIII Local Authority own development applications, some of which included housing developments, resulting in a total of 26 new dwellings being permitted. Determinations were made in relation to 848 planning applications, of which 786 (92.7 per cent) were granted and 62 (7.3 per cent) were refused. Of the 44 applications determined by An Bord Pleanála during the year, 34 decisions of Clare County Council were upheld.

Pre-planning enquiries

A total of 274 pre-planning consultations took place during the year to enable applicants to discuss the principle of their proposals free of charge with a Council planning officer.

Development contributions

The sum of €2,693,292 was collected during 2020. These contributions provide funding towards capital work programmes on a range of services, including roads, amenity, community, recreation and car parking. The Council continues to collect water and sewerage contributions on behalf of Irish Water on planning permissions granted prior to January 1st, 2014.

Enforcement of planning law

The Enforcement Section of the Planning Department was busy during 2020 and the activity is summarised in the following table:

Number of complaints received	198
New cases investigated	127
Warning letters issued	150
Enforcement notices issued	12
Legal cases initiated	1
Files closed	120

Sixteen(16) housing estates were taken in charge by Clare County Council in 2020. Progress was made on the completion of many other estates through engagement with bondholders, developers, contractors and residents.

The taking in charge team in the Planning Department proactively monitored 16 new developments under construction during 2020. This ongoing monitoring of estates, albeit resource intensive, should ensure that housing developments in the future are finished to a higher standard and that subsequent taking in charge processes should be more straightforward.

The Planning Department continued to finalise site resolution plans and to arrange for remedial works contracts to be put in place on several estates where the Council were in receipt of bond monies.

Contracts were substantially completed on the following developments during 2020 (in addition to works on a number of smaller developments throughout the county):

- Woodmount, Ennistymon
- Woodstock Hill & Woodstock View Ennis
- Gort na mBlath/Rath Ban/Lios Ard, Ennis
- Mountclare, Claremount Clarecastle
- Boheraroan, Newmarket on Fergus
- Dun Aras, Shannon
- Cluain Alainn, Shannon
- Dun Aras Avenue, Shannon
- Craglands Ballynacally
- Ballycasey Avenue, Shannon
- Clochan na mara/Blackthorn Drive, Liscannor.

In developments where the bonds, for a variety of reasons, are insufficient to complete the required works, it is hoped that a national incentive scheme, similar to that provided by the Department in 2016, would become available to the Council, which would assist in the completion of such developments.

Property Management

The Property Management Unit advanced a number of property refurbishment projects during the year, as detailed below.

In addition, significant progress was made in rectifying and registration of title to Council-owned properties and dealing with queries from the public. The Council leases and licences property to many community groups and also has some commercial leases and these are managed as a key support to other directorates. Long-term leases and sales are subject to the approval of the elected Council.

The table below shows the number of property transactions completed by the Property Management Unit in 2020.

Transaction type	Number
Lease of property/building	4
Licence to use property/building	9
Grazing agreement for lands	18
Deed of transfer signed	9
Deed of rectification signed	3

LIT Ennis Campus

Clare County Council's work in acquiring and refurbishing the building on Bindon Street as Ennis's first permanent third-level campus for Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) was recognised at a national level by winning the award by the Local Authority Members' Association (LAMA) for the 'Best Educational Building'. President of LIT, Professor Vincent Cunnane, congratulated Clare County Council on having its work so well recognised at these prestigious awards and that the new LIT, Ennis Campus, is a testament of what can be achieved through a strong working partnership between public bodies and organisations.



Shannon allotments project

During 2019, a new site at Ballycasey was sourced for the relocation of the allotments in Shannon from their current site in Illaunamanagh, as this area of land was required for the extension of the burial ground. Construction of the area for the 39 allotments was completed in early 2020 and while the Covid-19 pandemic had an adverse impact, the allotments became a hub of activity in summer 2020 and have proven to be very successful, with a waiting list now to get an allotment. A new Allotment Association was formed by the allotment holders and engages regularly with the Council on operational matters.



Quin Road campus project

Work on the refurbishment of a former vacant building in the Quin Road Industrial Estate in Ennis commenced in 2019 for a modern Civil Defence headquarters with full facilities for the Clare Civil Defence Volunteers (currently 90 active volunteer members), training facilities and an area to store and manage the fleet of operational vehicles used by Civil Defence.



The fleet currently includes three ambulances, three 4x4 jeeps, a communications vehicle, search & rescue van, mini-bus and operational support van, as well as two boats, one rescue watercraft and a rescue raft. The building will also house a records management centre for Clare County Council. This new campus will complement our objective of increasing the services that we can provide to the people of Clare, it will attract new volunteers and allow training to be delivered to the highest possible level. In particular, the training facility will provide scope for collaboration with other parties in the facility.

While work was paused during Covid-19 restrictions, summer 2020 saw the Civil Defence taking up occupation in its new permanent site.

Refurbishment of beach huts at Kilkee

Three beach huts in Kilkee were totally refurbished and created a great sense of excitement in Kilkee as the potential of these historical structures was maximised. The provision of an accessible public toilet at the centre of the beach is a great addition for all beach users. A solar panel was gifted to the Council and has been installed on the lifeguard hut, thus providing a sustainable source of hot water.

County Museum upgrade project

Design work was completed in 2020 and this project involves investment in the museum offering by increasing the proportion of space for the County Museum to incorporate Eamon De Valera's 1947 Dodge car, refreshing the space for the tourist office to make it more inviting and upgrading the meeting room, office space and canteen/break-out space in the first and second floors. Subject to Covid-19 restrictions, it is likely that works will only commence in 2021.

Supporting primary level education

Under a national agreement, Clare County Council works with the Department of Education and Skills to acquire sites for new schools. The Council acquired lands in Kilrush for Gaelscoil Uí Choimín, which originally opened 25 years ago.

The Council agreed to sell lands in Shannon to the Department of Education to provide a new school for Gaelscoil Donnacha Rua. The Department will now advance this to planning stage in 2021, which will provide the school with permanent buildings and a bright future. The Council is working with the Department of Education to source a site in Ennis for a new school site for Ennis Educate Together and discussions are ongoing in relation to this.

Facilities management

Improvement and monitoring of measures to ensure that the workplaces and arrangements for staff and elected members meet the requirements of the Council's response plan and the national and HSE guidance on Covid-19 was a key priority for our Facilities Team in 2020.

The lighting up of the Áras to support various organisations and occasions was done during the year, including for Christmas period.

Casual trading

Under the Casual Trading Act 1995, and the Bye-Laws made thereunder, the Economic Development Directorate is responsible for the administration of casual trading in County Clare. All casual traders, who trade on a public space, must hold a valid Casual Trading Licence. During 2020 the following licences were granted for County Clare and, in general, activity and trading levels were severely impacted by Covid-19 and the normal festivals and events were cancelled.

	Annual licences	Special event licences
Ennis	11	
Kilkee	11	
Ennistymon	1	
Doolin Pier	1	
Killaloe	16	
Total licences issued 2020	40	
Kilrush - 1 Horse Fair		4
Total event licences in 2020	40	4

Derelict sites

During 2020, the derelict sites function transferred to the Economic Directorate. A review of all files, sites and properties on the Derelict Sites Register is being undertaken and will take some time. There has been a positive response to some of the engagement with owners of derelict sites and while there were restrictions on getting works done, a number of files have been closed. Pre-planning meetings have been held in relation to some sites and some works have been completed or are planned by owners to render sites non-derelict. The table below provides a snapshot of the activity in the year 2020.

Derelict sites activity in 2020	Number
No. of new complaints	19
No. of Section 8(2) Notices issued – Intention to enter site on Derelict Sites Register	0
No. of Section 8(7) Notices issued – Entry onto Derelict Sites Register	0
No. of Section 11 Notices issued – Measures required to render the site non-derelict	0
No. of files closed / property removed from Register	6
No. of Compulsory Purchase Orders	0

Local Enterprise Office

In a year dominated by lockdowns and restrictions, 2020 was remarkably another successful year for Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Clare. Despite economic challenges such as Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, the number and, more importantly, the quality of projects applying for support was very encouraging. Training programmes remain a key focus and are aimed at improving the skill set of small business owners. During 2020, LEO Clare ran 149 training programmes with over 2,643 participants.

Programmes covered topics such as Start Your Own Business, Marketing, Management Development, Financial Management and Digital Marketing.

In addition, LEO Clare ran 14 Start Your Own Business programmes to encourage and help new start-ups. These courses had 181 participants. Mentoring remained a key priority with 350 “one to one” mentoring assignments taking place. To adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic and e-commerce trends, 439 enterprises applied for Trading Online Vouchers in 2020, a dramatic increase from 34 the year previous. In addition, 397 businesses were provided with funding totalling €678,000 to enable them engage with professional consultants under the Business Continuity Scheme aimed at navigating a pathway through the challenges posed by Covid-19. Against this backdrop of economic turmoil, the number of feasibility, priming and business expansion grants approved continued to improve on the 2018 and 2019 figures with 28 enterprises receiving funding approval of just over €650,000.

Notwithstanding the challenges of social distancing and lockdowns, we continued our proactive engagement in various national programmes such as Student Enterprise Finals at which over 225 students from 11 different schools participated.



The National Enterprise Awards for clients of LEO Clare remains a key event to recognise success among our own clients and help them promote their enterprise to a national audience. In 2020, LEO Clare's client WowWee.ie was our county winner and went on to represent Clare at the national event, which was delayed until early 2021. The county final event on 6th March, 2020, turned out to be the last public event hosted by Local Enterprise Office Clare in 2020.



LEO Clare launched a podcast series called #Making It Happen in early September 2020 to promote eight clients meeting the challenge of Covid-19. The series was published on seven podcast platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Overcast. Listeners tuned in from all around the world with Ireland and the United States yielding more listeners than any other countries. To date, the podcast series has 367 listens, 61 per cent of which were on the Spotify platform.

In the lead up to Christmas, LEO Clare, along with the Clare Echo, launched the Click for Clare campaign. This campaign was a major success, overall visits on Click for Clare related articles was 62,000 and over 12,000 visited the online directory. The print version of the Clare Echo newspaper featured 18 full printed pages with LEO Clare branding comprising of 16 full business profile interviews and business listings. This campaign provided a platform for LEO supports to be promoted to the public, as well as free marketing for local enterprises in the lead up to Christmas as consumers were encouraged to "shop local". This campaign was further supported by a complimentary campaign "Look for Local" which ran in the other local media outlets. Overall, feedback from participating businesses was that this campaign assisted in them winning new customers.

In an effort to develop capability in new technologies, Local Enterprise Office Clare, in conjunction with Local Enterprise Office Limerick, ran a pilot scheme aimed at assisting early-stage ideation projects focused on Industry 4.0. Thirty entrepreneurs participated in a series of workshops and one to one mentoring before pitching their idea to a panel of external judges. Six businesses were chosen to receive vouchers up to a value of €25,000 aimed at assisting their idea to a minimum viable product/service. This work will take place in 2021.





MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS

There are four municipal districts in the county, which provide a range of local services at local service centres in Ennis, Scariff, Kilrush and Shannon.

Ennis Municipal District

Temporary Covid-19 Town Centre Mobility Plan for Ennis

This plan was formulated in response to the published Government roadmap for easing of restrictions and the requirements for social distancing. Clare County Council formed a stakeholder group including representatives from business, community, and statutory groups (Promote Ennis, Retail Excellence Ireland, Ennis Chamber, Vintners Federation of Ireland, Ennis Tidy Towns, Older Persons Council, disability advocates, elected representatives, the HSE, An Garda Síochána, Retailers of Ennis, Better Ennis). The group was tasked with providing a safer environment for all in line with public health guidelines, while supporting the business sector through various initiatives in addition to attracting people to Ennis as part of their staycation.



Ennis Municipal District (MD) implemented alternative parking arrangements to support these objectives and the new operating environment. These included priority parking spaces, click & collect parking and additional free parking at the Cloister/GAA car park on a temporary basis.



A parklet using age friendly seating was installed on O'Connell Street.



New bicycle stands were installed at Bank Place and on Bindon Street.



Ennis Municipal District crews stencilling in town.

Environment and biodiversity initiatives

Cutting of grass was delayed, while only the edges of roundabouts were cut until the end of season, facilitating dandelion growth to benefit pollinators, as well as other insects.



Water filling station – Abbey Street.

A water filling station, the first in the county, was erected in Abbey Street car park in an effort to reduce the number of single use plastic bottles in circulation in Ennis on a six-month pilot basis. Supplied by Ennis Tidy Towns, Clare County Council supplied the site, water and carried out installation as well as organising a cleaning contract.



A non-chemical method of killing weeds that involves hot water and an insulating foam was trialled which proved very effective but extremely labour intensive, which would result in a substantial increase in costs. The Municipal District responded to and managed the increase in illegal dumping in Ennis and environs.

Festivals & Events

Seven festivals and events, and 15 community projects were supported from the General Municipal Allocation (GMA).

Christmas 2020 online event

A virtual event, shared on social media, substituted for the traditional 'switching-on' event with a reach of 40k. The beat was back on the streets of Ennis with Christmas street radio, a joint initiative between Clare County Council and Ennis Chamber. The Municipal District also collaborated with Ennis Chamber to launch the Clare Gift Card.



Roadworks programme

The Schedule of Municipal District Works was delivered on time and within budget despite being limited to essential works for almost two months. This body of work included drainage maintenance, surface dressing, road reconstruction including resurfacing on roads such as Cloughleigh, Turnpike and Cusack Rd. Another achievement was the extension of the cycleway between St Flannan's and Ennis NS and the associated pedestrian crossing on the Kilrush Rd.



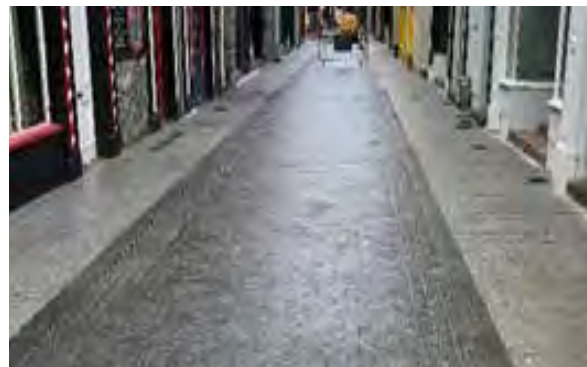
Ennis Municipal District supported the Clare branch of the Irish Kidney Association with planning and designing the area for a memorial stone dedicated to organ donors and their families.



Ennis Public Realm Regeneration Project – Parnell St

The regeneration and revitalisation of Parnell Street and an additional 23 adjoining lanes and bow-ways (funded under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund [URDF],

Project Ireland 2040 and Clare County Council) moved to implementation phase with Shareridge Ltd, the project contractors, commencing works on the ground in July 2020. Civil engineering works began in River Lane and continued until mid-August. Civil works to Parnell Street began shortly after, starting at the junction with Carmody Street. In conjunction with the works in Parnell Street there were also works being carried out in the Laneways and Bow-ways off Parnell Street. Paving works started on Parnell Street and River Lane at the beginning of October. At year end, 35 per cent of the civil works to Parnell Street were complete as well as all the civil works on River Lane, O'Halloran's Lane and Curtin's Lane.



Ennis one of three towns deemed 'Cleaner than European Norms' in 2020

Ennis Municipal District would like to acknowledge the hard work undertaken by the street cleaning crews, Ennis Tidy Towns, and the gardening section of Clare County Council for all their hard work.



Shannon Municipal District

During February 2020, Councillors Donna McGettigan and Pat O’Gorman were co-opted onto Clare County Council, taking up their seats in the Shannon Municipal District.



Cllr Donna McGettigan and Cllr Pat O’Gorman.



Following a review by management team there was an adjustment of Municipal District structures in March 2020 with the Shannon Municipal District now reporting into the Director of Economic Development.

This change coincided with the appointment of a Senior Executive Officer to lead in each district and a new focus by the team in the Town Hall in Shannon on the wider business activities of the organisation. Cllr Gerry Flynn was the Cathaoirleach of Shannon Municipal District during this transition period and Cllr Pat McMahon was the Leas Cathaoirleach.

The earlier months of 2020 saw the team of 35 in the district respond to both the Covid-19 emergency in their activities and practices and to the impact of the inclement weather

on infrastructure and customers. This severe weather was to present again during August and threatened to disrupt the road surfacing programme.

As always, the team responded to the highest standards ensuring safe working environments while meeting customer needs. The Municipal District reached out to the partner organisations such as the Shannon Leisure Centre, Shannon Group, Coillte and various community groups and worked together in meeting the challenge.

Notwithstanding the limitations set upon us all during 2020, the windows of opportunity that did present for our operational teams saw the delivery of a number of key infrastructural projects such as the completion of the Gort Na nUll flood defences, installation of public lighting in Cratloe and Section 38 (road safety) measures in both Westbury and Larkin’s Cross with the installation of traffic management systems – all projects delivered with the support of our seven elected district members. The Shannon Municipal District managed the tender for the 2020 ‘Regional and Local Roads Overlay Project’ for the county which coincided with the adoption of the Schedule of Municipal District Works programme. The programme of works was funded to the value of €4,144,684 and this represented in an increase in output by the team of 25 per cent from the previous year.

During the year the Municipal District made several successful applications for funding under the ‘Town and Village Renewal Scheme’ for Parteen Village (new footpaths); ‘Climate Adaptation’ funding was secured for works in Westbury pump station and Shannon Town; ‘Active Travel’ funding was secured for a new footpath in Meelick; and the Development

Contribution Scheme supported the installation of a new surface in the Shannon Town Playground, Tír Na nÓg.

During 2020, a total funding allocation of €35,000 was awarded to 39 sporting, cultural, historical and community groups under the Community Grant Scheme of the Shannon Municipal District. The objective of the grants scheme is to encourage and support local community organisations and community groups active in the cultural, artistic and community development areas of the district. Groups who received support for their projects included Dúchas Na Sionna, Shannon Men's Shed, Clonlara Development Group, Bunratty Local Development Group and Keelgrove-Ballyglass Residents Association, among others.

Cllr Pat McMahon became the Cathaoirleach of Shannon Municipal District on 30th June, 2020, with Cllr John Crowe taking on duties as Leas Cathaoirleach.



Above: Cathaoirleach Pat McMahon with Cllr Gerry Flynn. Below: Leas Cathaoirleach John Crowe.



During the year, the seven councillors worked with the Municipal District team to identify projects, support initiatives and influence policy. There were a number of workshops held during the year and the Municipal District Councillors provided observations and guidance into key policy documents such as the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Areas Transport Strategy (LSMATS), The Draft County Development Plan, N19 upgrade works and the Shannon Embankments Scheme.

As the year came to an end the team in the Shannon Municipal District installed new lighting in the Shannon Town Park to provide uplift in this exceptional year. The year ended with a live streamed event from the band stand in Shannon Town Park, where members of a local musical society and our own local Santa Claus and Ms Claus sent a 'socially distanced' festive message to the Irish diaspora abroad as part of the 'To Be Irish At Christmas' initiative promoted through the Department of Foreign Affairs.



This hugely popular 20-minute celebration of music can be viewed on Clare County Council's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMulUxLrtCI&t=305s>.

The event was a credit to the crews of Shannon Municipal District who prepared the setting in the days leading up to the event and to those who supported and participated in bringing life to this entertainment, including Santa, Ms Claus and the musical society. It is a true reflection of the community spirit of the people of Shannon Town.

Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)

During 2020, an application for funding was made. While no specific funding call was made under this scheme in 2019, arrangements were made to procure economic and spatial consultancy partnership in order to prepare a Shannon Town Masterplan. The consultants will be appointed in early 2020. A further call for applications under this scheme, which is focused on the towns of Ennis and Shannon, will be made by Government in January 2020.

West Clare Municipal District

The elected members of the West Clare Municipal District met regularly during 2020 to consider the provision of services and the improvement of facilities and amenities in their district. The members met with numerous representatives from local community groups throughout the year to discuss issues relevant to their areas. As well as the statutory meetings, a number of special meetings took place during the year for a number of reasons, including the Covid-19 crisis and economic development of the Municipal District post-pandemic and the provision of supports for water supply in Miltown Malbay and surrounding areas. The General Municipal Allocation facilitated funding of a number of community projects in 2020.

Cllr Joe Garrihy was elected Cathaoirleach at the Annual General Meeting in June 2020 and Cllr Cillian Murphy was appointed as Leas Cathaoirleach. There were some changes to the staffing structure within the Municipal District with the appointment of John O'Malley to the role of Acting Senior Executive Officer, and Alan Kennelly and Enda MacNamara as Senior Executive Engineers in 2020.

At the September meeting of Clare County Council, Susan Crawford was co-opted to fill the vacancy on Clare County Council arising from the appointment of Róisín Garvey to Seanad Éireann. By virtue of her co-option to the Council, Susan Crawford filled the vacant Councillor position on the West Clare Municipal District for the lifetime of the full Council.



A Strategy and Work Plan of Projects was agreed by the West Clare Municipal District members in 2020, with works on the projects continuing throughout the year. A workshop on the plan was held in December 2020 with the West Clare Municipal District members.

The vision of the Strategy and Work Plan is for the regeneration and sustainability of our towns and villages with a view to making West Clare the best place to live, work and visit in that order of priority.

The principal actions agreed include:

- Population stabilisation/growth
- Delivery of sustainable tourism products
- Linked cycleways/walkways
- Making access to information for our citizens
- ICT role out in Clare County Council and across the District

- Network of water-based resources to be put in place
- Programme to refurbish older properties in towns and villages
- Broadband
- Re-purposing a new 'Moneypoint'
- Assess and maximise transport links across the Municipal District.

Working with our farming and fishing communities to create more added value to locally produced goods and services.



Examples of some of the projects that were progressed in 2020:

- Sustainable Energy Communities – Working with Loop Head Energy Action Partnership (LEAP) as a lead party with a view to replicating across the Municipal District, developed a model of community-based sustainable energy appropriate to West Clare. Setting up of the West Clare Municipal District Sustainable Energy Community.
- Cliff of Moher Strategic Plan – Members have actively worked with the Cliffs of Moher in the development of the ongoing Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040.
- Cross Village Hub and Parlour – Remote working hub and development of age-friendly community space in former school premises progressed throughout the year.
- Ennistymon Town Project – Progress on Fáilte Ireland Tourist Destination Town public realm project with planning progressed for street plans. Significant progress on plans for parking areas off the main street. CPO progression on Blake's Corner by the Project Management Office.
- Kilrush Projects – Cappa Enhancement Strategy completed. Progress on development of Masterplan for Town working with Town Team. Vandeleur Woods pathway improvement works and progress on RRDF project related to Vandeleur Gardens.
- Doolin Village enhancement – significant progress on pathway public realm improvements.
- Loop Head Lighthouse – works progressed on watermain extension and project for improved visitor experience.

- Lahinch Seaworld Project – significant progress on overall major redevelopment of the facility with construction commencing in 2020.
- Michael Cusack Centre – The 'Going Well' national wellness experience programme was launched in September 2020.

Some of the other issues discussed and agreed at West Clare Municipal District Meetings during the year included:

- Consideration and adoption of the Schedule of Municipal District Works for 2020
- Taking in charge of roads in a number of estates in accordance with S11 of the Roads Act 1993
- Taking in charge of private roads in accordance with S11 of the Roads Act 1993
- S183 Disposal of Council owned properties at various locations within the Municipal District
- S38 Traffic calming measures at a number of locations.

Killaloe Municipal District

Municipal District meetings were held bi-monthly during 2020. The AGM of the Killaloe District took place on 29th June, 2020. Cllr Pat Hayes was elected Cathaoirleach, taking over from Cllr Pat Burke, with Cllr Joe Cooney elected Leas Cathaoirleach.

The members of Killaloe Municipal District discussed the provision of services within the area and looked to progress the strategic development of facilities and amenities in the towns and villages in the district. All statutory obligations were met in relation to Municipal Meetings being held in the midst of Covid-19.

Councillors passed the General Municipal Allocation at the July meeting of the Municipal District. These projects enabled the Councillors to work with the Executive to ensure the projects were prioritised throughout the Municipal District where funding streams were not present and enabled Councillors to support many community activities throughout the area. Examples of such work in 2020 were housing estate and footpath infrastructure works in O'Briens Bridge, Kilkishen, Scarriff and Kilmurry, drainage works in Whitegate and bridge works in Dromindoorra, among others.

The members also adopted the budgetary plan and agreed a General Municipal Allocation of €227,321 for 2021 at their budget meeting on 11th November, 2020.

Throughout the year, the members were briefed on numerous cross-directorate projects from Inis Cealtra Holy Island to the Killaloe Ballina Mobility Plan.

Members exercised their powers throughout the year in:

- Consideration and adoption of the Schedule of Municipal District Works for 2020
- Taking in charge of roads in estates in accordance with S11 of the Roads Act 1993
- S183 disposal of Council owned properties at various locations within the Municipal District
- S38 traffic calming measures at a number of locations.

Staffing

A new structure came into being in March 2020 with the placing of a Senior Executive Officer into the Municipal District to assume responsibility for the running of the MD and to look at strategic projects and pathways for the future of the MD in collaboration with Councillors.

Senior Executive Engineer Niamh Madden took over from Tom Mellett in December 2020.

Rural Grants and Physical Grants

Killaloe Municipal District submitted a Town and Village Renewal Project for Clooney which was successful in acquiring funding. Funding of €100,000 was awarded for the provision of much-needed infrastructure in the village. Works are due to begin in Quarter 3 2021.

CLÁR Grants: Killaloe Municipal District was successful with a CLÁR application to upgrade infrastructure in Broadford Village. Works are currently ongoing.

ORIS Funding: The construction of the Blueway Amenity Trail linking Killaloe to Tuamgraney began in April 2020. Construction works took

approximately 8 months. Works involved the construction of a new trail from Tuamgraney to Bealkelly and an upgrade of the existing trail from Bealkelly to Twomilegate. Works totalling approximately €1 million were carried out. The end product creates an 18km multi-modal trail between the towns of Killaloe and Tuamgraney as well as promoting physical and mental wellbeing.

Active Travel: Killaloe Municipal District was successful in achieving funding for new Active Travel infrastructure at Tulla, both to the soccer field and also adjacent to the R352. While one project is complete, Covid-19 restrictions mean a delayed finish to the second project.

Climate Adaption Funding: Killaloe Municipal District secured funding totalling approximately €170,000 for a number of projects directly related to ongoing flooding issues in the area. There was a challenging delivery time in relation to these projects. However, all projects were delivered by December 2020. The arrival of Covid-19 brought challenges to the Municipal District in terms of service provision, both at the Scarriff office and for outdoor activities. Roadworks recommenced in May 2020.

Service provision carried out by the supervisors and outdoor staff included: road maintenance of all types, emergency callouts, aiding An Garda Síochána and the Fire Service, Traffic management, Covid-19 signage, responding to public complaints and installation of social distancing infrastructure in some towns.

An ambitious roadworks programme was carried out over the Summer months across

several categories including restoration maintenance (€0.8m), restoration improvement (€2.7m) and drainage (€0.2m). These works were led by the Technical Team of the Municipal District and included planning, procurement, all aspects of health and safety and oversight of works.



Blueway Amenity Trail linking Killaloe to Tuamgraney.

Amenities

The emphasis of Summer 2020 was on 'staycationing'. With that in mind, Killaloe Municipal District put an emphasis on ensuring both Lakeside Park Twomilegate, and Mountshannon, the two blue flag areas of East Clare, were prepared and maintained to a high standard. The expectation will be the same for Summer 2021.

Killaloe Municipal District, in collaboration with Councillors and Waterways Ireland, also made progress in the removal of derelict boats from the harbour at Mountshannon.

ABRIDGED FINANCIAL STATEMENT: YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

Income and Expenditure	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
State Grants	79.8	41.8
Local Property Tax	8.0	6.5
Goods and Services	28.2	38.1
Commercial Rates	44.7	43.0
Income from Other Local Authorities	0.1	0.1
Pension Levy		
Total Income	160.8	129.5
Total Expenditure	148.3	116.8
Surplus / (Deficit) for year before transfers	12.5	12.8
Transfers to / from Reserves	(12.2)	(12.2)
Overall Surplus / (Deficit) for Year	0.26	0.54
General Revenue Reserve / (Deficit) - Opening	2.5	1.9
General Revenue Reserve / (Deficit) - Closing	2.7	2.5
Balance Sheet	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
Fixed Assets	2,782.0	2,770.9
Work in Progress and Preliminary Expenses	42.2	37.0
Long term Debtors	22.6	21.0
Current Assets	75.0	66.2
Current Liabilities	(41.6)	(35.3)
Net Current Assets / (Liabilities)	33.4	30.8
Creditors (Amounts falling due after more than one year)	(81.3)	(82.9)
Net Assets	2,799	2,777
Financed by		
Capitalisation Account	2,782.0	2,770.9
Income Work in Progress	41.6	37.0
Specific Revenue Reserve	-	
General Revenue Reserve	2.7	2.5
Other Balances	(27.5)	(33.6)
Total Reserves	2,799	2,777

SEMINARS/CONFERENCES/TRAINING ATTENDED BY CLARE COUNTY COUNCILLORS IN 2020

Finance Act 2019 Carlingford, Co Louth: 10th-12th January, 2020 (1 member attended)
Irish Planning Institute conference Cork: 5th February, 2020 (1 member attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training Cavan: 13th February, 2020 (3 members attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training Waterford: 15th February, 2020 (14 members attended)
Heath and Safety in the workplace Clonakilty, Co Cork: 21st-23rd February, 2020 (3 members attended)
Colmcille Winter school, Churchill Donegal: 28th-29th February, 2020 (1 member attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training Longford: 4th March, 2020 (17 members attended)
Western intercounty rail committee Mayo: 23rd July, 2020 (3 members attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training, Claytons Whites Hotel, Wexford: 25th July, 2020 (3 members attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training, Carrickdale Hotel Dundalk, Co Louth: 30th July, 2020 (1 member attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training Horse & Jockey, Co. Tipperary: 6th August, 2020 (2 members attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training, Rochestown Park Hotel, Cork: 13th August, 2020 (11 members attended)

Contact information/telephone numbers

- **Clare County Council**
Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare Telephone: (065) 6821616,
Fax: (065) 6828233,
email: customerservices@clarecoco.ie,
website, www.clarecoco.ie

Hours of business: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday

Note:

Public Counters at Planning

Department: 9:00am to 4:00pm

Housing Department and Cash Office:

9:00 a.m to 1:00 p.m.

Emergency contact number: (087) 4169496 (outside office hours only)

- **Motor Tax**
Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis
Telephone: (065) 6844661, 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday
email: motortax@clarecoco.ie
Public Counter 9:00am to 1:00pm Monday to Friday
- **Clare County Museum**
Tel: (065) 6823382,
email: ClareMuseum@clarecoco.ie
- **Active Ennis Sports and Leisure Facilities**
Tel: (065) 6821604,
- **Glór Music Centre**
Tel: (065) 6845370

Direct dial in facility

To facilitate our callers all sections have a direct dial in facility. Individual sections can be contacted by dialling the following numbers:

- Archives (065) 684 6402
- Arts Office, (065) 6899084
- Broadband & Digital, (065) 6846375
- Central Cash Office, (065) 6846208
- Civil Defence, (065) 6822199
- Corporate Services Department, (065) 6846209
- Environment Department, (065) 6846331, fax (065) 6846444
- Environment anti-litter freephone, 1800 606706
- Finance Department, (general queries), (065) 6846329
- Fire and Emergency Services Department, (065) 6846410
- Freedom of Information, (065) 6846405
- Group Schemes, (065) 6866119
- Higher Education Grants, (065) 6846320
- Housing Department, (065) 6846334
- Human Resources Department, (065) 6846415
- IT Department, (065) 6846339
- Local Enterprise Office Clare, (065) 6846230
- Partnership Facilitator, (065) 6846435
- Planning Department, (065) 6846232
- Records Management, (065) 6846414
- Register of Electors, (065) 6846363
- Revenue Department, (065) 6846530
- Transportation Department, (065) 6846312
- Road Design, (065) 6846479
- Rural and Community Department, (065) 6846222
- Tourism Department, (065) 6846283
- Veterinary Services Department, (065) 6846560
- Water Safety, (065) 6846270
- Water Services Department, (065) 6866116

Municipal district offices

- Ennis, (065) 6866133
- Killaloe, (061) 640815
- Shannon, (061) 362319
- West Clare, (065) 7072283/ (065) 9054310

Library branches

- Corofin, (065) 6837219
- De Valera Branch Library, (065) 6846353
- Ennis Library Headquarters, (065) 6846350, website www.clarelibrary.ie
- Ennistymon, (065) 7071245
- Kilkee Sweeney Memorial Library, (065) 9056034
- Kilmihil, (065) 9050528
- Killaloe, (061) 376062, Fax (065) 376062
- Kilrush, (065) 9051504
- Lisdoonvarna, (065) 7074029
- Local Studies Centre, Ennis, (065) 6846271
- Miltown Malbay, (065) 7084822
- Newmarket-on-Fergus, (061) 368411
- Scariff, (061) 922893
- Shannon, (061) 364266
- Sixmilebridge, (061) 369678
- Tulla, (065) 6835919

Other useful numbers

- Central Waste Management Facility, Ballyduffbeg, Inagh, (065) 6836960
- Scariff Recycling Centre and Transfer Station, (061) 921735
- Shannon Recycling Centre, (061) 364483
- Lisdeen Recycling Centre and Transfer Station, (065) 9060175
- Ennis Recycling Centre, (065) 6893705





Comhlairle Contae an Chláir
Clare County Council

Oifigí



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL