

Minutes of the West Clare Municipal District Meeting
4pm Tuesday 20th July 2021 held online, following 6th July adjourned meeting.

Cathaoirleach sa Cathair:

Cllr. Cillian Murphy

I Láthair:

Cllr. Susan Crawford, Cllr. Shane Talty, Cllr. Gabriel Keating, Cllr. Joe Killeen, Cllr. Ian Lynch, Cllr. Joe Garrihy, Cllr. PJ Kelly, Cllr. Bill Chambers.

Officials present:

Mr. Leonard Cleary, Area Co-Coordinator & Director of Service

Mr. John O'Malley, A/Senior Executive Officer & Meetings Administrator, West Clare Municipal District

Mr. Alan Kennelly, SEE, West Clare Municipal District

Mr. Enda MacNamara, SEE, West Clare Municipal District

Mr. Steve Lahiffe, Senior Staff Officer, West Clare Municipal District

Cllr. Murphy convened the Meeting.

1. Minutes of May Meeting held on 4th May 2021.
Proposed by Cllr. Killeen and seconded by Cllr. Talty.
2. Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 1st June 2021.
Proposed by Cllr. Killeen and seconded by Cllr. Chambers.
3. Minutes of the AGM held on 23rd June 2021.
Proposed by Cllr. Keating and seconded by Cllr. Talty.
4. Minutes of Special Meeting held on 24th June 2021.
Proposed by Cllr. Keating and seconded by Cllr. Murphy.

Rural Development, Planning & Economic Development, Social

5. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Joe Killeen:

We call on Clare County Council to undertake a study of the East Burren Parishes with a view to encouraging the community supporting community concept in the County Development Plan, identify projects of mutual interest and identify funding sources to progress these projects.

Reply from Bernie Haugh, A/Senior Executive Officer, Rural Development:

The Rural & Community Department are actively engaged with Community Groups in the West Clare MD, including the East Burren area, under the objectives of the Clare Rural Development Strategy and through the work of the Rural & Community Development officer. Inter-parish collaboration and co-operating communities are a key theme in the approach underpinning this work. We will give consideration to the benefit that such a study would bring to the ongoing work, in particular to the East Burren area, and how such might be resourced.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Joe Garrihy.

Cllr. Garrihy made the point that more rural development resources were required.

6. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Joe Killeen:

We call on CCC to outline arrangements which have been put in place or are in hand to cater for the influx of staycationers in the West Clare MD.

Reply from John O'Malley, A/Senior Executive Officer, West Clare MD:

Significant work has gone into planning for the influx of staycationers in the West Clare MD in 2021. Additional resources have been put in place at our main beach locations. Beach Ambassadors are in place in Kilkee, Spanish Point, White Strand Miltown Malbay, Lahinch and Fanore. Full time cleaners are in place at our toilet facilities, with extended opening hours to cover the increased demand. Staff from our existing MD outdoor crews are also working extended hours to cover the volume of work required including large scale clean ups, any issues with blockages in toilets and other ongoing issues that occur due to the numbers visiting our MD.

West Clare MD have been working with our Environment Section to ensure that additional lifeguards are on board to assist with extended duties and Environmental Patrol Wardens are covering the MD at weekends. The MD has been working with Tidy Towns groups through our Rural Development Officers and Environment Section in relation to ongoing clean ups and the provision of community bins. Additional bins have been put in place in Kilkee and Lahinch. New toilet facilities have been installed in Fanore and the Diamond Rocks, Kilkee.

The MD have also worked with our Planning Section in relation to the Outdoor Dining Grant and assisted with hotels, restaurants and pubs who have applied for the grant.

Significant road improvements have taken place at key locations in the MD including the main road to Loop Head Lighthouse.

The MD continues to work closely with An Garda Siochana in relation to traffic safety matters.

Additional parking areas are being provided in Spanish Point through partnership with St Joseph's Secondary School and there is ongoing work in identifying areas in Doolin and other locations.

There are ongoing challenges to meet the demands placed on the West Clare MD by being in an area that attracts large numbers of staycationers with additional pressures in places such as Doolin, various parts of the UNESCO Burren Geopark, Seafield and other popular locations. One of the main challenges in having such an attractive offering from the Flaggy Shore to Loop Head and the Shannon Estuary Way, is having the resources both in terms of staffing and finances to maintain these areas to the level required.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Shane Talty

It was discussed that it was a major challenge for the MD due to the numbers of visitors and the appropriate fund & resources is needed.

7. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Susan Crawford:

Ask West Clare MD to actively engage and promote our "Autism Aware in Clare" pilot which is currently being rolled out. To date we have had 4 online Autism Awareness Training workshops, sensory kits distributed to Churches and Community Centres and Communication Boards specific to each area being designed. I am asking if Council Staff and Members would promote this in their own specific towns/villages.

Reply from John O'Malley, A/Senior Executive Officer, West Clare MD:

West Clare MD will continue to work closely with Councillor Crawford to promote "Autism Aware in Clare". I will ensure there is engagement with staff in the West Clare MD in relation to this and work on promoting throughout all towns and villages in the MD.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Joe Garrihy.

8. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Ian Lynch:

Based on the current density, short and long term disruption to communities, the destruction of habitat, and the ability of offshore energy production to more than meet the needs of Ireland's energy demands, The West Clare Municipal District request that Clare County Council Planning cease the granting of planning for onshore wind farms in the West Clare Municipal District.

Reply from Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner, Planning Department:

The assessment of a planning application is an executive function, and when making a decision on same, the Planning Authority is restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, having regard to the specific provisions of Section 34 (2) (a) of the Planning & Development Act, 2000, as amended, including the provisions of the Development Plan, Ministerial guidelines, the provisions of a special amenity area order, any European site, Government Policy and provisions of the Act and Regulations.

All planning applications are assessed on their own merits in accordance with the above provisions and as such it is not considered appropriate or legal, to impose a cessation on the granting of planning permissions for onshore wind farms.

As you are aware Clare County Council are awaiting the publication of new Wind Energy Guidelines at a national level which will provide for further guidance on new wind energy developments and which will inform any new Wind Energy Strategy that will be prepared by the Council.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Susan Crawford.
Cllr. Murphy also voiced his support for same.

A discussion took place about onshore wind farms. It was felt that they are not community centred and disrupt the tranquility/ peace & quiet of an area.

It was recorded that the County Development Plan should take into account the motion.

9. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Ian Lynch:

Following the changes brought about by Covid-19, I request that Clare County commit to a robust and inclusive strategy to develop the second widest street in Ireland, Frances Street

and the Market Square Kilrush to enhance the public space for commercial, visitors and the local community alike.

Reply from Leonard Cleary, Director of Service, Rural Development:

This project is a key part of the West Clare Strategic Plan of Priority Projects as adopted by Elected Members. Clare County Council has engaged with local stakeholders. A cross-directorate engagement has taken place between the MD and Social Directorate looking at possibilities in this area. An in-house team within the MD and Rural Directorate has been convened to look at such a project and to prepare a plan particularly in the architectural services area.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Cillian Murphy.

10. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Ian Lynch:

I request that the SEO for the West Clare Municipal District provide the members with an update on the role to date, resources and resource requirements and a brief overview of projects for the North and West local electoral areas.

Reply from John O'Malley, A/Senior Executive Officer, West Clare MD:

The role has coincided with the Covid 19 pandemic and the various challenges that have come with this in relation to the focus on resourcing of various works throughout the MD. The focus on keeping the economy moving and providing for the increasing number of visitors to our MD has resulted in various additional grant schemes being released in 2021. The following is a brief outline of some of the grants that have an effect on the West Clare MD:

- Active Travel - approx. €2m additional funding for West Clare MD in 2021 on works related to footpaths, cycleways, pedestrian crossings, etc.
- Anti-Littering & Infrastructure Capital supports - €125k for County
- Allocation for facilitating an Outdoor Summer - €94k for County
- Various Outdoor Dining Grants both Government and Failte Ireland ranging from €4k per individual to larger scale public space grants of up to €250k.

This is in addition to the existing Roadworks Programme and the expanding budget for resourcing of our numerous visitor attractions across the MD.

The role has allowed more focus in the MD on progressing various projects under Town and Village Renewal Schemes, Outdoor Recreation and Infrastructure Schemes and RRDF, Clár and others.

As part of the West Clare MD Plan of Strategic Projects approximately 30 projects were identified as key works to focus on within the MD. A brief outline of some of the projects progressing from this Plan follows:

Kilrush – Development of Kilrush Masterplan and preparation of key elements of plan to ensure in place for future funding opportunities.

Ennistymon Town Enhancement Project – Works progressing with undergrounding of cabling carried out. Significant additional works will progress after the busy summer season in the town. Additional car parking area progressing.

Lahinch Seaworld Project – Project progressing well. MD assisting as required.

Doolin Port – works to pier wall completed. Working with PMO on Visitor Services Building. Work on progressing additional parking areas ongoing.

Miltown Malbay – works progressing on church car park and trail walk development.

Lisdoonvarna – ongoing engagements re development at Spa Wells

Loophead Lighthouse – RRDF project progressing with water main extension complete and significant road overlay complete. Additional assistance required as job progresses through phases.

In order for projects to progress significant resources are required both in terms of staff time and finances. The MD have been working with other Directorates in progressing these projects but as can be seen there is a significant amount of work currently ongoing, especially with the additional works related to the increased visitor numbers to our area.

Additional outdoor resources have been put in place in West Clare MD this season. Extra Temporary General Operatives have been taken on to cover the increased pressures at our beaches in North and South local electoral areas. Additional Beach Ambassadors are in place in Kilkee, Spanish Point, White Strand Miltown Malbay, Lahinch and Fanore. Full time cleaners are in place at our toilet facilities in Doolin, White Strand Miltown Malbay, Spanish Point and Kilkee. Our existing staff are working extended hours to cover additional areas. There is a significant MD beach operative team in place now and with this comes additional need for supervision of these roles and increased administrative duties for MD admin team.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Garrihy.

It was at this juncture that a query was raised by Cllr. Murphy as to whether an apprentice scheme could be looked at?

11. Notice of Motion from Cllr. PJ Kelly:

That an update would be provided on the on the proposal to provide a trans-shipment port at Moneypoint.

Reply from John O'Malley, A/Senior Executive Officer, West Clare MD:

I have spoken to my colleagues in the Planning Department and there is no further update at this point in time. I will revert to the members at the September meeting of the West Clare MD.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Lynch.

12. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Joe Garrihy:

Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy. Can the Director give an update on implementation and inclusion in the Consultants brief of the Motion passed at May meeting of West Clare MD.

Reply from Leonard Cleary, Director of Service, Rural Development:

This motion was discussed in length at the West Clare MD meeting. The consultants (Hayley Sharpe) were briefed on the key points. A special consultation session with the West Clare Councillors was subsequently arranged. There was very positive engagement between the consultants and the Elected Members. The consultants are currently working on it.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Lynch.

A discussion was had were it was noted that it was too important not to get right. Positively so far the consultants seem to be listening to the feedback and it was good to see engagement taking place. All stakeholders and state agencies are on board.

13. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Joe Garrihy:

That the director of Economic Development and Planning and his team accompanied by the Rural Director & West Clare MD Director / SEO visit each small town and large village and give opportunities to the local communities to present their priorities for sustainable development as part of the process of the county development plan 2023 – 2028.

Reply from Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner, Planning Department:

The Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028 preparation commenced in September 2020, with the publication of an 'Issues Paper', the creation of a dedicated Webpage <https://clarecdp2022-2028.clarecoco.ie/> , the posting of a Video online, print and media engagement, the roll out of projects to all primary and secondary schools across the county, a social media campaign and the hosting of a public consultation event in Ennis on 01st October 2020. This first round of public consultation saw 194 written submissions being received from the public and various stakeholders between the 18th September and the 16th November 2020.

At this point in time it is intended that the Draft Plan will go out on public display in mid-August 2021, for a period of not less than 10 weeks. This is the second round of public consultation associated with the plan preparation. As part of this public consultation it is intended that staff from the planning authority will engage in a variety of measures to raise awareness of the plan making process and to encourage the public and stakeholders to avail of the opportunity to make a submission on the draft plan. Among these planned measures it is intended to;

- Make the Draft Plan readily available for viewing in print and soft format.
- Facilitate for the first time the public in making submissions via an online portal that is being developed within the Planning Section and which will be linked to the dedicated webpage associated with the development plan.
- Host a webinar, which will be provided on the Council website providing information on the plan making process
- Hold online meetings
- Engage with the public through social media
- Engage with the public through print media
- Engage with the public through radio media
- Provide copies of the Draft Plan to all council offices and libraries across the county which will be available for viewing by the public
- Host a number of in person events across the county where local communities will have an opportunity to meet with staff and review the draft plan.

It would not be feasible for an event to be held in every town or large village within this public consultation period, however, I assure you that there will be in person events held in each MD area across the county as well as all the other online measures proposed and all efforts will be made to engage with communities in a safe and comprehensive manner and to facilitate submission being made on the upcoming Draft Plan.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Killeen.

Cllr. Garrihy was not happy with the reply; there should be public consultation rather than social media.

14. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Joe Garrihy & Cllr. Shane Talty:

That the identification and prioritisation of a site and location for a community sports amenity facility is included in the current Ennistymon master planning process.

Reply from Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner, Planning Department:

Clare County Council, together with its partners Clare Local Development Company and Ennistymon Town Team, has appointed a multi-disciplinary team led by Helena McElmeel Architects to complete a masterplan for the town of Ennistymon. The masterplan seeks to build upon the existing Council planned new bridge crossing and the upgrading works to take place along the Main Street. The study will explore the potential of the existing townscape and its built environment in order to guide its development in a positive way. It will also comprise of a new signage strategy and streetscape enhancement plan, which seeks to improve the experience for visitors and residents. There have been several public consultation events to date which will also inform the emerging plan. These consultations seek to put the community at the heart of the project, allowing their aspirations for the town to come to the fore. The appointed consultants have been advised of this motion which will be considered in the coming weeks as the plan emerges.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Ian Lynch.

The master-plan approach was welcomed. Cllr. Talty highlighted the need to identify a number of key sites to rectify the lack of community space in particular a playing pitch.

Physical Development

15. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Bill Chambers:

That Irish Water would provide funding to relay the water piping from Ballinagun Cross on the R483 to Tullabrack, as the line is in a very bad state of repair.

Reply from Irish Water:

In response to the Notice of Motion, I can advise that Irish Water are aware of the issues in the distribution network in this area.

A 1.6km section of 7" main south of Cooraclare between Tullabrack and Cooraclare is proceeding to design stage.

It is noted that bursts on this line cause outages in Cooraclare and beyond.

We are also assessing a 700m section of 8" main near Alva between Cree and Cooraclare which has a history of recent bursts.

All works remain subject to funding approval to go to construction.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Keating.

16. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Joe Killeen:

We call on Clare County Council to erect a " Local Access" sign at the cross R460 and the L5244 in the interest of health and safety. A sign pointing to Corofin, and the Cliffs of Moher also be put in place.

Reply from Enda MacNamara, Senior Executive Engineer, West Clare MD:

The West Clare MD office will review the possibility of installing additional directional signage at this junction.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Keating.

It was discussed that a transport directional system was needed. There is a need to guide non-locals to appropriate roads.

17. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Shane Talty:

Request that safety signage and road markings be placed on the road through the village of Bellharbour.

Reply from Enda MacNamara, Senior Executive Engineer, West Clare MD:

Additional signage and road markings will be installed through the village of Bellharbour.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Killeen.

It was pointed out that notice of motions need to be taken into account when there is a Speed Limit Review.

18. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Shane Talty:

Given the huge numbers of visitors to the Cliffs of Moher, Clahane & Liscannor, can a bottle bank be installed in the village of Liscannor.

Reply from Anthony Considine, Executive Engineer, Environment:

There are currently a number of bring bank sites in close proximity to Liscannor including, Lahinch x 2 sites, Ennistymon, Doolin and Lisdoonvarna. This area of North Clare is well serviced by bottle bank facilities catering for free glass, cans and plastics collections.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Murphy.

It was felt that this needed to be looked at for the future – facilities need to be near the areas of greatest need.

19. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Susan Crawford:

Address bottle bank emptying in Coastal areas: Miltown Malbay, Spanish Point and White Strand are all problematic.

Reply from Anthony Considine, Executive Engineer, Environment:

Clare County Council and the service contractor will closely monitor these sites. If there is a need to provide additional collections, this will be arranged with the service provider.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Murphy.

20. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Cillian Murphy:

That low-cost speed measures be put in place in Doonaha village.

Reply from Alan Kenneally, Senior Executive Engineer, West Clare MD:

In the short term, Clare County Council will place some “SLOW” road markings on the L-2006 near Doonaha. We can also place some advance warning signs (*compliant with the traffic signs manual*) if safe locations can be found.

Subject to funding becoming available, it may be possible to erect 2 Driver Feedback Signs in Doonaha.

Again, subject to funding becoming available, it may be possible at a future date to construct additional footpaths in the village. This would narrow the carriageway width through the village and would serve as a traffic calming measure.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Bill Chambers.

21. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Cillian Murphy:

That view points be included as part of the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Works Allocations 2021 on the R473 at Erribul and at Aillroe.

Reply from Alan Kenneally, Senior Executive Engineer, West Clare MD:

Clare County Council successfully applied to the Department of Transport’s “*Climate Adaptation and Resilience Works 2021*” grant scheme, and has received funding to raise the protective estuary wall at Erribul (*approximately 200 linear metres*) & Aillroe (*approximately 150 linear metres*).

The works are necessary as the estuary waters regularly flood the R473 at both locations and raising the estuary wall locally will alleviate this.

Clare County Council did not apply to the grant scheme for monies to create a viewing point at either or both locations. However, the feasibility of a viewing point may be examined (*subject to traffic safety considerations on a busy regional road*).

Subject to funding and assuming that it is possible to provide a safe viewpoint along the R473, then Clare County Council can look at gaining the necessary planning and environmental consents for a viewing point overlooking the Shannon Estuary.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Bill Chambers.

22. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Cillian Murphy:

An assessment of the footpaths in Carrigaholt Village with a view to either making an active travel funding application, or inclusion in a multi annual program of upgrade works.

Reply from Alan Kenneally, Senior Executive Engineer, West Clare MD:

Clare County Council successfully applied to the National Transport Authority’s “*Active Travel 2021*” grant scheme, and has received funding to replace footpaths in Carrigaholt village. We have been granted €10,000 for Carrigaholt village in 2021, and footpath works should be completed this year.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Keating.

23. Notice of Motion from Cllr. PJ Kelly:

That the TII be requested to make the N68 east of Caherea National School safe for road users.

Reply from Alan Kenneally, Senior Executive Engineer, West Clare MD:

The N68 through Caherea is one of the most heavily trafficked routes in the Municipal District. While it is narrow for a National Secondary Road and is undoubtedly congested on occasion, it should not be characterised as unsafe.

Later this year Clare County Council & TII hope to complete a pavement overlay on an approximately 3.5km (*of a 5km stretch*) of the N68, including in the immediate vicinity of Caherea National School. This will strengthen & restore the existing road surface and improve driveability for road users.

In addition, the Board of Management of Caherea National School has recently applied for planning permission "*for alterations to the parking / set down area including adjustments to the front wall along with all necessary ancillary works*".

Perhaps when both of these projects are completed it may be opportune to review the operation of the N68 through Caherea and offer observations to the TII.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Lynch.

24. Notice of Motion from Cllr. PJ Kelly:

That approximately one mile of the L2066 east of Coolmeen Village would be included in the 2022 Roadworks Programme.

Reply from Alan Kenneally, Senior Executive Engineer, West Clare MD:

The L-2066-26 is not included for surface dressing or restoration improvement works on the recently adopted 2021 Schedule of Municipal District Works. It can be considered for inclusion on the 2022 Schedule.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Murphy.

25. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Gabriel Keating:

That restoration works would be carried out on the following roads:

L21420 – Moneen Kilbaha to Kiltrellig which is also an emergency exit from Loophead Peninsula in the event of flooding and storms.

L20301 – Poll an Cheoil road from N67 to Derryard.

Reply from Alan Kenneally, Senior Executive Engineer, West Clare MD:

Neither the L-2142-0 nor the L-20301 are included for road restoration works on the recently adopted 2021 Schedule of Municipal District Works. Both can be considered for inclusion on the 2022 Schedule.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Murphy.

26. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Gabriel Keating:

That road maintenance work be carried out on the following roads:

L2074 – Cahercanavan Kilmihil road to Brendan McMahons from Dan Corry’s Cross via Finucanes.

Reply from Alan Kenneally, Senior Executive Engineer, West Clare MD:

The L-2074-22 (*Cahercannavan to Kilmihil*) is not included for surface dressing works on the recently adopted 2021 Schedule of Municipal District Works. It can be considered for inclusion on the 2022 Schedule.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Murphy.

27. Notice of Motion from Cllr. Gabriel Keating:

In view of the Backlog of applications for LIS Scheme (220 at present 70%) in the WCMD that matching funding of the Departments allocation be made available from the LPT income in order to reduce the number of applications awaiting funding.

Reply from Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance:

The draft budget 2022 process has commenced and will be considered by members at the statutory budget meeting later this year. The Local Government Act 2001 Section 102 as amended by The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides the legislative basis for the preparation of the draft local authority budget.

This process has now commenced earlier than in previous years with the Municipal Districts involved in member workshops around the Local Property Tax Adjustment factor determination. This consultation will continue with the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) and further members workshops and will focus on the overall financial position of the local authority and a number of key items of financial consequences for 2022 including any variation in basic rate of Local Property Tax (LPT), emerging areas of increased expenditure, income reductions over previous years and increased non-discretionary expenditure.

The Council generally do not provide any funding towards the LIS, which is for private roads not in charge by Clare County Council. The costs are funded by way of a grant from the Dept of Rural and Community Development and the local contributions (either 10% or 15%) payable by the residents/landowners. Where there is an amenity road the Council are liable for the local contribution of 15%. Grant funding of €500,811 has been allocated to CCC this year under the LIS which will facilitate works on 11 roads.

The amount this council can allocate as match funding of the Departments allocation for LIS schemes is dependent on the total level of income available to it, and the non-discretionary costs that must be met as a first call on that income, including at municipal district level. The local authority focus is on the public road network as a priority. The ability to allocate additional funds to this councils’ roads own resource budget is highlighted annually as part of the statutory budget process. Consideration will be given to this motion as part of the drafting of the budget 2022.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Killeen.

28. Any other business

- Cllr. Lynch called for recognition of David Tubridy for his contribution to Clare football.
- Cllr. Murphy asked for temporary signage to be put in place at Doughmore. Alan Kennelly SEE, advised that they would be put in place.
- Cllr. Murphy highlighted the recent incident were the emergency services struggled to get through at Kilkee. Better management of the public space is required.
- It was agreed that a physical meeting should take place. Cllr. Keating asked that a morning meeting would be considered.

**Signed: Cllr. Cillian Murphy,
Cathaoirleach**

**Signed: John O'Malley,
Meetings Administrator**

Dated this 7th day of September 2021