



Annual Report 2021



COMHAIRLE | CLARE
CONTAE AN CHLÁIR | COUNTY COUNCIL

June 2022



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INTRODUCTION BY THE CATHAOIRLEACH AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

We are delighted to present Clare County Council's Annual Report 2021, which outlines the work of the Council in delivering on a wide range of public services and a number of major initiatives during the year.

The year 2021 was another extraordinary one locally and globally in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. As in 2020, the impact of Covid-19 is evident throughout this Report. Council staff across the organisation continued to adapt to new ways of working while finding innovative ways to continue to provide its wide range of services.

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, and creating new opportunities. The Council is responsible for delivering services to 119,000 individuals, with a staff of approximately 975 and an annual expenditure of €217.3m during 2021.

In the area of physical development, the 2021 Schedule of Municipal District Works provided

for a Roadworks Programme which had a total fund of €34.6m, which was completed successfully.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected but did not stop progress being made by the Project Management Office (PMO) team across a wide range of the county's major capital projects throughout 2021. Much progress was made by the PMO team during the year on its portfolio of projects, including national and non-national roads projects, flood relief schemes and greenways.

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.

Diverse activities continued in the Environment Section, including 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 attended 900 call-outs in 2021 resulting in a decrease of 11% on the number for 2020. There was no fire fatality in 2021 in County Clare.

Sections of the Major Emergency Plan were implemented in the response to severe weather events in February (snow and protracted rainfall) and in December for Storm Barra, a Status Red warning. 2021 was another extremely busy year for Clare Civil Defence which resulted in a large number of duties and responses carried out. The members responded to 274 separate requests for assistance.

In Ennis, the Parnell Street, Lane-ways and Bow-ways project continued construction throughout 2021, with work substantially completed in December 2021.

Despite Covid-19, delivery of social housing was strong in 2021 with close to 300 approved social housing households housed in Clare during 2021. In terms of capital project delivery, the completion of a new 51-unit PPP development in Shannon was a significant addition to the Council's social housing stock. Two new social housing units were delivered at Doonbeg and two derelict properties were re-constructed in Kilrush and returned to use. The Approved Housing Body sector played a significant role in 2021 in assisting with the provision of social housing across the county.

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

2021 was once again a very challenging year for the sport and recreation facilities in the county as Covid-19 restrictions necessitated the closure

of facilities and subsequent disruption of activities. However, once restrictions permitted a return, the facilities proved hugely popular.

As with all services nationally, Covid-19 played a major part in service provision and opening hours in all branch libraries during 2021. However, core library services and programming were maintained when libraries were open, all branches being closed for 18 weeks in total but staff continuing to work in providing stock to all through delivery services and pivoting programming to online means, particularly for children's activities.

Following the cessation of work on the new Ennis library site in 2020 due to the contractor encountering financial difficulties, the contract was subsequently terminated and the process of securing the site and preparing for retendering was commenced.

The Arts Sector continued to be impacted by Covid-19 in 2021, which led to unprecedented demands on the Arts Office. Arts Council supported programmes were delivered mostly online, including the Arts and Education programme.

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.

The Council was requested by Cabinet to commence discussions with Shannon Group in relation to the proposed transfer of Shannon Heritage DAC County Clare based tourism sites to Clare County Council, including as part of the proposed transfer at national level from the Department of Transport to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

In June 2021 Clare County Council commenced

a Due Diligence Process to consider the potential transfer by Shannon Group Plc of its subsidiary company Shannon Heritage DAC to Clare County Council.

2021 saw a further expansion of the DigiClare initiative. Funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development through the Connected Hubs programme enabled the Council to provide additional facilities at a number of its existing hubs and also to establish a new facility in our capital town Ennis.

The Department of Rural and Community Development channels a number of funding programmes through the Council. In 2021, the schemes attracted projects and funds under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme, the CLÁR Initiative, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

In response to Covid-19, approximately 40 community and voluntary groups around the county continued to support the 'Community Call' during 2021 by assisting vulnerable individuals in their community with practical supports such as collection and delivery of food, fuel and medicine.

The Clare 'Keep Well' campaign continued in 2021, 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 the 2021 Service Level Agreement was finalised between the Public Participation Network (PPN) and Clare County Council and an Annual Work Plan was agreed for the year.

In October 2021, the Clare Joint Policing Committee (JPC) welcomed a visit by the Garda

Commissioner, Drew Harris. The Commissioner addressed the JPC Members in the Council Chamber.

2021 was a very challenging year for the Tourism Industry but also provided a time to strengthen and build networks and improve destination marketing which managed to contribute significantly to the strengthening of the tourism product in Clare.

In March, the Clare Tourism Recovery Taskforce moved to become the Clare Tourism Advisory Forum, maintaining the focus on the recovery of the tourism industry post Covid-19 pandemic but also bringing a focus to long-term strategic actions to be implemented across the county. April saw the launch of the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 by Cathaoirleach Mary Howard and Paul Kelly, Chief Executive of Fáilte Ireland.

Work continued on the Tourism capital projects throughout 2021, namely the Loop Head Lighthouse Visitor Experience, Vandeleur Walled Gardens and Inis Cealtra (Holy Island).

Cliffs of Moher Experience was closed for the first three months of 2021 and experienced a difficult trading environment as a result of extended closures, Covid-19 restrictions, and the dependency on the domestic market. Overall domestic market performed well, and visitor experience satisfaction rates excelled due to the safety measures in place, ability to give one-to one experiences and authentic customer experiences.

In the area of planning and economic development, Clare County Council continued 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 2023-2029 early in 2023.

The preparation of both the Killaloe Town Enhancement and Mobility Strategy and the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan neared conclusion, while the preparation of a Roche Masterplan commenced earlier in the year. The establishment of a Maritime Training Centre in Kilrush was progressed.

The Clare Economic Task Force, consisting of a group of public and private sector leaders, continued to meet. The Task Force continued to focus on the aviation sector and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic during 2021.

The Council continued work on the preparation of the South Clare/University of Limerick (UL) Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) application. 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 SDZ.

In October, the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy was officially launched by An Tánaiste, Leo Varadkar TD. 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.

After the successful launch of the Ennis 2040 Strategy, locals in Ennis had another reason to celebrate in November, as Ennis was named Ireland's Tidiest Town 2021 at the SuperValu TidyTown's competition. We commend the

excellent work of all those involved in achieving the prestigious accolade.

Clare County Council's Property Management Unit advanced a number of property refurbishment projects during the year. Construction work took place on the refurbishment of the County Museum building in Ennis. A review of all files and properties on the Derelict Sites Register was undertaken during 2021 and many new properties were inspected, assessed and contact made with owners or their representatives.

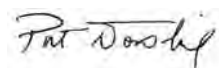
2021 was another successful year for Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Clare. Despite economic challenges such as Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, the number, and more importantly the quality, of projects applying for support was very encouraging. During 2021, LEO Clare ran 93 training programmes with over 1,537 participants.

Clare County Council is at the heart of public service delivery in the county and takes a leadership role at national level in areas such as rural development and tourism. 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 2022.

Le meas,



Cllr PJ Ryan
Cathaoirleach



Mr Pat Dowling
Chief Executive



CLARE COUNTY COUNCILLORS 2021

Ennis Municipal District



Mayor of Ennis

Ann Norton
(NP)



Mary Howard
(FG)



Paul Murphy
(FG)



Mark Nestor
(FF)



Clare Colleran
Molloy (FF)



Pat Daly
(FF)



Johnny Flynn
(FG)

Killaloe Municipal District



Chair

Joe Cooney
(FG)



Pat Hayes
(FF)



Tony O'Brien
(FF)



Alan O'Callaghan
(FF)



Pat Burke
(FG)

Shannon Municipal District



Cathaoirleach

P.J. Ryan
(NP)



Chair

John Crowe
(FG)



Pat McMahon
(FF)



Michael Begley
(NP)



Donna McGettigan
(SF)



Pat O'Gorman
(FF)



Gerard Flynn
(NP)

West Clare Municipal District

Ennistymon Electoral Area



Joe Garrihy
(FG)



Joe Killeen
(FF)



Shane Talty
(FF)



Liam Grant
(GP)

Kilrush Electoral Area



Chair

Cillian Murphy
(FF)



P.J. Kelly
(FF)



Gabriel Keating
(FG)



Bill Chambers
(FF)

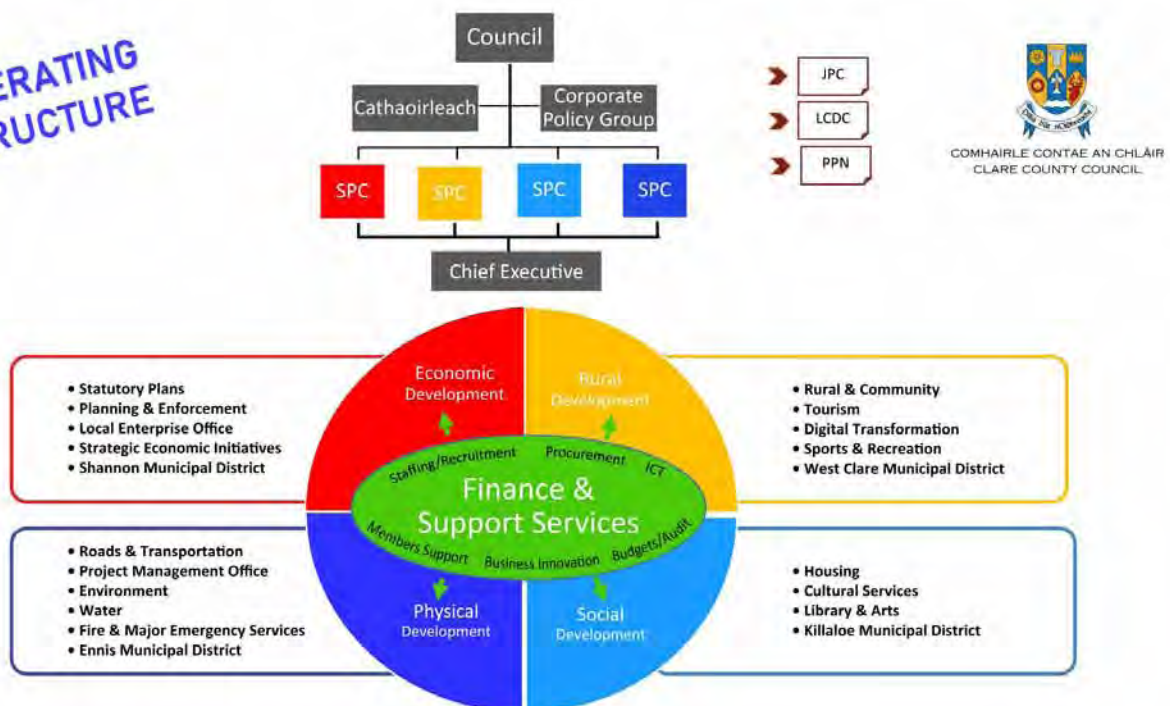


Ian Lynch
(NP)

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



OPERATING STRUCTURE



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 assist 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.

Elected Representatives

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

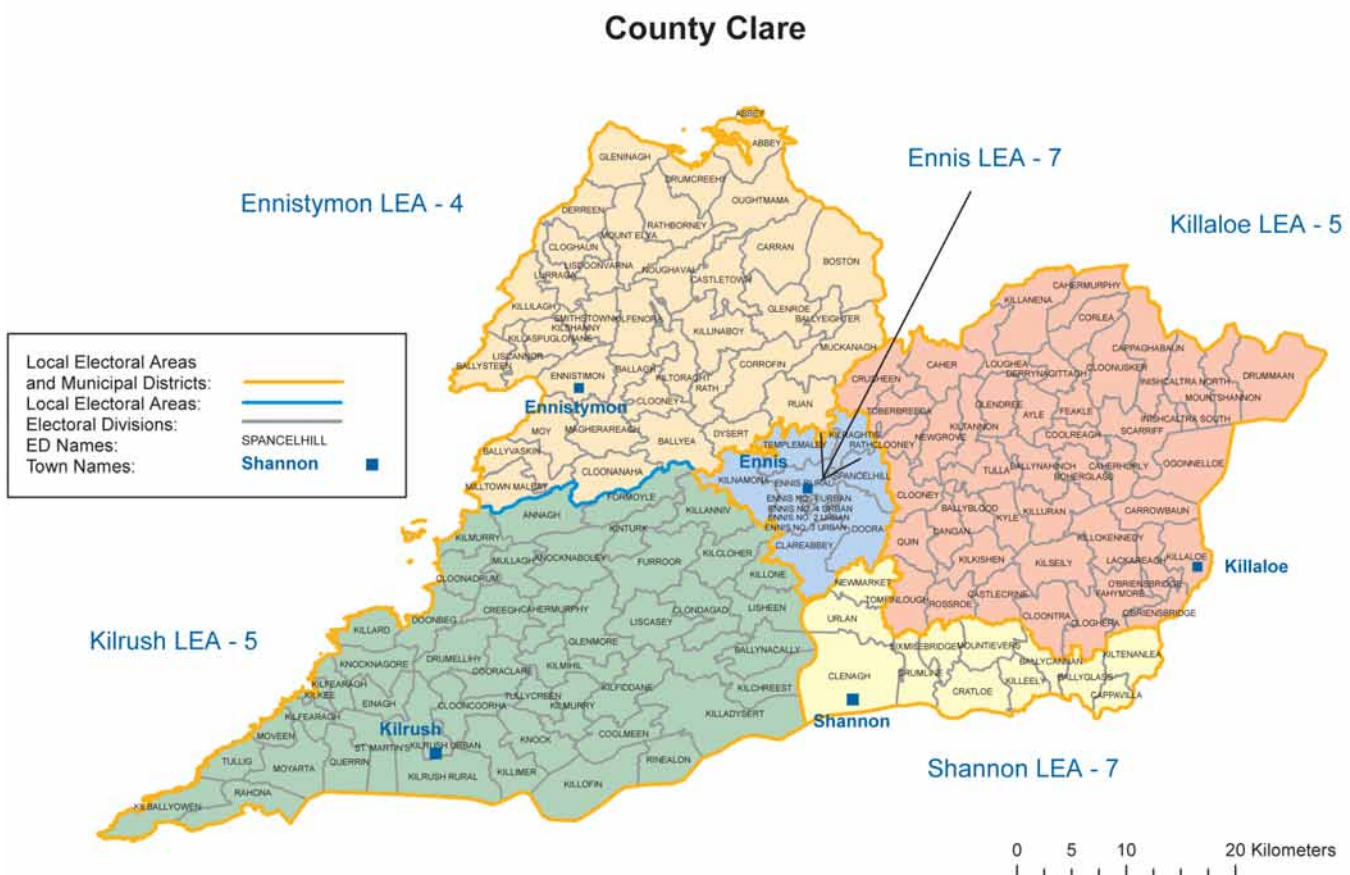
There are 4 MDs in Clare as follows:

Ennis MD – Ennis Local Electoral Area

Killaloe MD – Killaloe Local Electoral Area

Shannon MD – Shannon Local Electoral Area

West Clare MD – Kiltrush and Ennistymon Local Electoral Area



Corporate Policy Group

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) consists of the Cathaoirleach of the day together with the chairs of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPC). 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 2019-2024 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 councillor is a member of an SPC and each SPC has at least a 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.

The membership of each SPC is as follows:

SPC Membership

Economic Development	Members	
Elected Members (7)	CLlr Pat McMahon (Chairperson) CLlr PJ Kelly CLlr Pat Daly	CLlr PJ 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 (Chairperson) Cllr Patrick O’Gorman Cllr Alan O’Callaghan	Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy Cllr Joe Cooney Cllr Ian Lynch Cllr Liam Grant
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 (Chairperson) 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 Gerard Flynn (Chairperson) 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

Appointment of 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, PJ Kelly

Education & Training Board

Cllrs A. Norton, P. Murphy, G. Keating, C. Collieran 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. Collieran 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 L. Grant, M. Howard

Clare Sports Partnership

Cllrs J. Killeen, J. Garrihy

Local Traveller Accommodation Advisory Committee

Cllrs T. O'Brien, C. Collieran 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 L. Grant, 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 L. Grant, 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, L. Grant, 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

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

**Ennis 2040 Strategic Development
Designated Activity Company (DAC)**

Cllrs C. Colleran Molloy, J. Flynn, A. Norton



FINANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES DIRECTORATE



NOELEEN FITZGERALD
Director of Finance
and Support Services

Finance Department

The financial impact of Covid-19 has been discussed and presented to members on several occasions in the past two years. Covid-19 has had a profound impact on our society and the economy, the effects of which will continue into the future. The introduction of government health and safety advice and pandemic restrictions has led to a significant decline in local government goods and services income and income from commercial rates, which are important

components of this Council's funding. In 2021 we experienced a full year of restrictions on businesses and society that were particularly challenging for this Council as we continued to experience significant losses of income in the areas of tourism, parking and amenity facility income. In parallel with these income losses, this Council did incur additional unplanned expenditure above that budgeted and/or grant funded in dealing with the impacts of the pandemic. These additional expenditure areas were across service areas but primarily in the areas of beach and public amenity maintenance, tourism initiatives and publicity, ICT infrastructure improvements and supports to remote working and service provision. To support local authorities, the government announced funding of €61m for the sector to combat these financial challenges and this Council received an allocation of €3m to mitigate against the losses. The balance of financial loss relating to these areas was borne by this Council.

The Annual Financial Statement gives an overview of the financial position of Clare County Council at 31st December, 2021. The

table on page 100 outlines the results for the year in abridged format. The Council incurred total expenditure of €217.3m (excluding transfer for expenditure) during 2021. This comprises revenue expenditure of €141m and capital expenditure of €76.7m. In total, broadly in line with overall expenditure in 2020 of €215.3m. Notwithstanding the continuing challenges referenced earlier, I am pleased to report that the 2021 Statement of Comprehensive Income (Income and Expenditure Account) shows a near balanced position year after the funding of revenue and own resource funding of capital projects. This represents a positive outcome given the fiscal climate and builds on the results of recent years in eliminating the revenue deficit of this Council.

Commercial Rates

Commercial rates income is this Council's main income source for the delivery of services. Continuing in 2021, particular industries within our customer base were significantly impacted by the challenges of Covid-19 over the full 12 months of 2021 by the restrictions on their businesses to operate. The announcement and implementation of the 2021 commercial rates waiver to various sectors of the economy in the year has provided this Council with the funding of €11.6m to waive commercial rates partially or fully across 2,100 customer accounts. This government support has proved significant in the financial results of 2021, as previously expected irrecoverables in this area have now not materialised. It is important to be cognitive of the future landscape in this area and re-engaging with commercial rates customers who have received a commercial rates waiver in the past 24 months will be challenging. It is likely that the true impact of the pandemic on commercial rates collections will only become apparent as the national business supports cease and we return to full commercial rates payable.

In 2021, 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 contemporary property valuations 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 so that the impact of Covid-19 on the commercial property market can be assessed and reflected in the new valuations.

Clare County Council billed a total of €42.1m in commercial rates in 2021. This Council reports a collection percentage of 87% after adjustment for the rates waiver, the same percentage collection as 2019 and 2020. Arrears on commercial rates reduced by €0.7m in the year. The Government announced a rates waiver scheme to alleviate the impact of Covid-19 on eligible businesses during 2021 to waive commercial rates partially or fully across sectors (the amount waived was €11.6m).

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	2021
Commercial Rates	75%	82%	84%	86%	87%	87%	87%	87%
Housing Rents	86%	87%	86%	84%	85%	85%	86%	86%
Housing Loans	62%	58%	60%	66%	69%	74%	78%	78%

Motor Taxation

€3.9m was receipted by Clare Motor Tax office for the period January to December 2021 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. 86.18% of transactions were online in 2021, up from 82% in 2020 and 73% in 2019. In 2021, the Motor Tax public counter was closed from January to July in line with national Covid-19 restrictions. The public counter reopened in August 2021 to the public with reduced opening hours, this position will be revisited in 2022.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Department

Clare County Council Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Department is part of the Finance and Support Services Directorate. The ICT team provides a wide range of support services across the organisation with responsibility for system, network and web technology of the Council. The department supports innovation, enabling public-facing directorates to improve service delivery through technology. The ICT operations team support 600 users, providing and supporting ICT infrastructure, ICT applications, enterprise productivity software, graphical information systems (GIS), and web services.

Covid-19 continued to disrupt the delivery of services in 2021. In response, ICT has embraced innovative technologies and is stretching



the functionality of existing technologies to continue service delivery and support blended working during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, ICT enhanced remote working solutions and provided a digital engagement platform for Clare County Council to continue consultation with the public during the lockdown.

ICT operations achievements in 2021 include:

- Supported digital data capture and processes automation for HR and Corporate Services.
- Introduced a digital online consultation platform, allowing citizen engagement to continue during the lockdowns.
- Upgraded Clare Council broadband and VPN (virtual private network) capacity to support over 450 remote workers.
- Started the migration of users from on premise email to cloud email supplying increased security, storage, and functionality.
- Developed a new Intranet site supporting improved information sharing within the Council.
- Responding to the growing cyber security threats, ICT improved multiple cyber security systems and controls to reduce the risk of cyber security attacks.
- Worked in partnership with HR to provide users with information and cyber security training.
- Completed a tender process and started the deployment of hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI), offsite backup, and DR facility for critical servers. Offsite DR will be up and running in Q2 2022.
- We have completed the upgrade of key operational systems in the Planning, Housing and Finance sections.
- Supported the rollout of rates waivers, restart grants, SBASC grants.
- Deployed remote working functionality to replace legacy computer systems.

Human Resources

The Human Resources department activities include the roll-out of comprehensive Learning and Development opportunities for staff, operation of the employee welfare programme, recruitment, superannuation, industrial relations management and workplace partnership. The provision of human resources services are delivered in accordance with the Council's Workforce Plan, the National Human Resources Strategy and the national agreements governing the sector. The Human Resources department delivered on the following in 2021:

- The Excellence Through People gold standard was again retained in 2021. The process was rigorous and many improvements and initiatives were applauded.
- The Recruitment section ran 59 recruitment campaigns which resulted in the formation of 44 panels across numerous grades. The process included the management of eligibility and desktop shortlisting exercises, shortlisting interviews, final interviews, and onboarding of staff.
- Six graduates commenced employment with Clare County Council under the National Graduate Recruitment Programme. They are working in the skills areas of communications, tourism, data analytics, climate action, programme and project management and business.
- CoreHR is the human resources system in use in Clare County Council. In August 2021, the system was upgraded from version 19 to People XD version 28 and further upgrades will continue into the first quarter of 2022.
- MakoData, a HR data analytics platform was implemented during quarter 4. The platform provides access to four dashboards, namely Workforce



Profiling, Retirement Analytics, Joiners Leavers Turnover and Sickness Absence Analytics.

- The Performance Management and Development System was reviewed and improvements made to the process. Start of year, mid-year and end of year reviews are now recorded online.
- The Workplace Relations Commission and the Health and Safety Authority published a new 'Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work'. The new code replaced the Commission's 2002 Code and the HSA's 2007 code. As a result, the Council's Dignity at Work policy was updated and incorporates the requirements of the code. The policy extends to employees of Clare County Council, Councillors, clients, customers, contractors, volunteers and other business contacts, etc.
- 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 during the year via remote technology.
- Initiatives for World Mental Health Day were made available online and included lunch and learn workshops on Mental Health Awareness, Stress Awareness, Resilience and Digital Wellbeing. Work-out recordings were also made available online.
- The Council arranged for over 100 staff to avail of the flu vaccine.
- Telephone counselling services were made available to staff and members.
- 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 fulltime equivalent staffing number as at 31st December, 2021, was 862.75.



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.

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 2021, Clare County Council held the following types of meetings:

- Annual General Meeting - 1
- Ordinary Meetings - 11
- Adjourned Monthly Meetings - 2
- 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. Full virtual meetings commenced in February 2021 with all members, media and public attending virtually via MS Teams. As the year progressed and public health restrictions were eased meetings moved to hybrid meetings in the Council Chamber.

The Annual General Meeting is held in June each year. Cllr PJ Ryan, who represents Shannon

Municipal District, was elected Cathaoirleach in June 2021 for the ensuing year. Cllr Joe Killeen, who represents West Clare 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 proactive 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 eight times in total in 2021. The committee completes an annual report to Council each year.

Civic/Mayoral Receptions 2021

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there were no Civic/Mayoral Receptions held in 2021.

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 2020/2021 Register of Electors is 92,950.

Protected Disclosures Act 2014

Clare County Council confirms that no Protected Disclosures were received in 2021. Consequently, no action was required to be taken by Clare County Council in relation to Protected Disclosures.

Business Review Initiatives 2021

► Service Catalogue

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

► Excellence in Local Government and LAMA awards

- Excellence in Local Government Awards 2021 – Clare County Council submitted 14 projects for the 2021 Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government awards. Eight of these projects were shortlisted for consideration. The Council won an award for a project entitled 'Restructuring of Municipal Districts to improve community and economic outcomes.'
- Local Authority Members' Association Awards 2021: 19 submissions, nine shortlisted, five awards received.

► Business Innovation

Clare County Council established a Business Innovation team, consisting of representatives from various Directorates. This team worked on the development of a Business Strategy, in conjunction with Ernst & Young. The team also proposed innovative

suggestions aiming to position Clare County Council as a leader in public service delivery.

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 2021, the Customer Care Co-ordinator responded to 11 complaints received, four 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 in 2020 to support the Clare community during Covid-19 restrictions which were in place in 2020 and 2021.

The challenges presented by Covid-19 restrictions continued in 2021, with restricted access to Clare County Council public counters. Our Customer Services Team 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

The Communications Office communicates and promotes Council activities and services and raises public awareness of issues of local and national interest.

In 2021 the Communications Office issued more than 140 media releases, resulting in extensive local and national coverage, and answered press queries from local and national media.

The Communications Office updates social media channels with creative content to enhance engagement with the public and maintain awareness of the work of the Council. The Council's corporate social media accounts now have a combined following of approximately 27,000.

The Communications Officer is a member of the Crisis Management Team (CMT) and continued to support the work of CMT with key communications campaigns throughout 2021. These included leading the communications around the local authority response to Covid-19 and supporting members of the community to maintain their wellbeing during the pandemic.

During severe weather events in 2021 the Communications Office provided regular updates to the public via local and national media as well as on social media and the news section of the Council website.

Clare County Council supported a number of worthy causes by participating in lighting-up events throughout 2021, with the Communications Office helping to raise awareness of these initiatives.

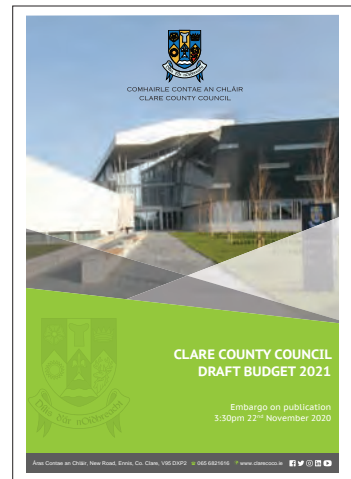
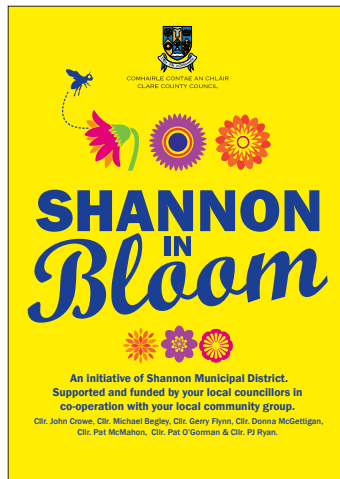
Staff newsletters (The Banner Bulletin) and Monthly Management Reports reporting

the progress made by Clare County Council Directorates during the preceding month were produced. The Communications Office continued to provide news items for the main Council website, as well as the Intranet and Extranet.

The Irish Language Officer provided communications in the Irish language throughout 2021, working with all

departments to assist them in compliance with the legislation and promotion of the Irish language in all elements of service delivery.

The Graphic Design and 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.



Cad a dhéanfaimis gan BEACHA a bheith ann mar phailineoirí?

1. Cad é an Pailniú?
Téarmais an pailniú nuair a sárfaíonn an phailín a mairbh agus go bhfuil sí ag fás.

2. Deirtear gun pailneoir an fheithid ná aistriúirín sí pailín ó bhliadh go bliadh eile, agus go gcuideann sí leis an bplanda siolú dá réir.

3. An pailín á haistriú ó bhliadh amháin go bliadh eile

4. Ach Céard Is Pailnitheoir Ann?
Is é an t-athair nó an mháthair a dhéanann an fheithid a bheith ann.

5. Neachtar...
Is é an t-athair nó an mháthair a dhéanann an fheithid a bheith ann.

6. Cén Fáth A Bhfuil An Pailniú Chomh Tábhachtach Sin?
Mar sin, tá an t-athair nó an mháthair a dhéanann an fheithid a bheith ann.

7. An Pailniú → Siol → Planda nua

8. Ainmhithe agus Éin
Beirann go leor dár ainmhithe agus éin nár dánta arís agus siolta ó ghléasraí fáilte a bhfuil siad fairs.

9. An bhfuil na Pailneoirí i mBaol?
Tá! Tá na pailneoirí i mbaol.

10. Blúire beag faoi Bheacha
In Éirinn, tá 21 speiceis bumbóga againn, 77 speiceis beacha aonair agus aon speiceis beacha meala amháin.

11. Níor Cheart A Bheith Eaglach Fúthu
Is é an t-athair nó an mháthair a dhéanann an fheithid a bheith ann.

12. Pailneoirí Eile a Dhéanann a gCuid Féin
Tá siad ábalta a chuidiú le siolta a fás agus a bheith ann.

Jóc:
Céad a bheith ann? Ar bheith ann?

Fric Fhánach:
Tá pailneoirí ag fáil i gceannas agus i ndomhan. An t-athair a bheith ann go dtéann siad go leor cineálacha beatha a bheith ann.

An bhfuil a fhios agat?
Labhair le beacha meala lena chéile tríd an domhan. Nuair a bhíonn beacha ag iarraidh a cuid a chur ar an eolas is bhfuil an bia is fearr, déanann siad dánta fíor a hocht ar a dtugtar an dánta fíor.

An bhfuil a fhios agat?
Is é corra a dath is fearr le beacha.

An bhfuil a fhios agat?
Is é corra a dath is fearr le beacha.

An bhfuil a fhios agat?
Is é corra a dath is fearr le beacha.

An bhfuil a fhios agat?
Is é corra a dath is fearr le beacha.

Sample work from the Graphic Design and Print Service.

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 2021 which were referred to Clare County Council for a response and report.

Ombudsman for Children

In 2021, no complaint was made to the Ombudsman for Children.

Freedom of Information and Data Protection

Freedom of Information

In 2021, there were 163 FOI requests, 11 internal reviews and two appeals to the Information Commissioner.

The outcome of valid requests received in 2021 was as follows: Granted – 49; Part-granted – 54; Refused – 57; Transferred – 3.

The categories of the requests are as follows: Journalists – 59; Business Interest Groups – 4; Oireachtas/public representatives – 2; Staff – 0; Clients/others – 98.

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. GDPR has general application to the processing of personal data in the EU, setting out extensive obligations on data controllers and processors, and providing strengthened protections and rights for data subjects. During 2021, the Data Protection Officer (DPO) provided advice, guidance and support to departments in relation to GDPR and provided training to increase understanding of the GDPR and how best to meet specific obligations. Data access requests and data breaches are also handled through the DPO. There were 36 data access requests made under the Data Protection Acts/GDPR for access to personal data held by Clare County Council in 2021, 29 third-party access requests and seven data subject access requests.

Privacy Statement

Clare County Council is committed to protecting and respecting 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 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.



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 & safety and arterial drainage.

Schedule of Municipal District Works 2021

The 2021 Schedule of Municipal Districts Works provided for a Roadworks Programme which had a total fund of €34.6m. 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 261km of the road network.
- Continuation of enhanced bridge remediation programme. Works were carried out on 27 bridges in 2021.
- Completion of 11 safety improvement schemes.

Public lighting

Clare County Council has responsibility for the management and maintenance of over 14,528 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. 46% of the public lights in Clare have been changed to LED through maintenance. 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.

Cork County Council published the tender for the Public Lighting Energy efficiency Project in County Clare and four other counties in October 2020. Following the successful conclusion of the procurement process, a contractor has been appointed as the Design Build Works Contractor for this regional project.

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. 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 have considered. A presentation was made by the NTA to the Physical Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) in February 2021. The NTA are reviewing the draft LSMATS document.

Active Travel 2021

In 2021 Clare County Council received an allocation of €5.9m for projects under the NTA's Active Travel programme. Funding of €5.3m has been allocated for 33 projects

in 2022 to complete the 2021 programme and initiate further projects. The National Active Travel Programme is a rolling five-year programme.

Other Roads activities

Community Hedgecutting Grant

Clare County Council provided an allocation of €13,500 to continue the Community Hedgecutting Grant Scheme in 2021. 34 grants were approved in 2021. 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 2021 facilitated work being carried out to five public roads throughout the county.

Local Improvement Scheme

Clare County Council was allocated total grant funding of €828,528 for Local Improvement Schemes (LIS) from the Department of Rural and Community Development in 2021. The grant funding facilitated the approval and completion of LIS works to 20 non-public roads in 2021.

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

Performance Indicators for 2021 are set out below.

R1 % of roads that received a PSCI condition rating

Description	%
% of Regional roads that received a PSCI rating in 24 months prior to 31/12/2021	71%
% of Local Primary roads that received a PSCI rating in 24 months prior to 31/12/2021	67%
% of Local Secondary road that received a PSCI rating in 24 months prior to 31/12/2021	60%
% of Local Tertiary road that received a PSCI rating in 24 months prior to 31/12/2021	62%

R1 B % of roads represented by PSCI condition rating

Road Type	1-4 Rating	5-6 Rating	7-8 Rating	9-10 Rating
Regional	3.20%	22.61%	41.03%	33.00%
Local Primary	2.87%	22.63%	44.44%	23.74%
Local Secondary	5.69%	28.10%	40.79%	18.59%
Local Tertiary	26.68%	23.26%	22.46%	14.36%

R2 Regional Road Works

Km of Regional road strengthened during 2021	16.56km
Amount expended on Regional road strengthening during 2021	€3,795,924
Km of Regional road resealed during 2021	19.04km
Amount expended on Regional road resealing during 2021	€592,190

R2 Local Road Works

Km of Local road strengthened during 2021	106.80km
Amount expended on Local road strengthening during 2021	€8,757,930
Km of Local road resealed during 2021	126.47km
Amount expended on Local road resealing during 2021	€2,377,586



Health & Safety

In 2021 a significant proportion of the Health & Safety (H&S) team's time was once again 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 36 Crisis Management Team Meetings of the Council, was part of the National Working Group in the development and delivery of 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 2021 Clare County Council continued to implement its Occupational Health & Safety Management System and seek continuous improvement in H&S as follows:

- Clare County Council rolled out a Training Programme and Traffic Management Dashboard Manual to 154 staff across 23 half-day training courses in compliance with the Revised Chapter 8 2019 ahead of the deadline date of 1st January, 2022.
- 23 Staff were trained as Traffic Management Designers in the organisation who all have access to the Pro Work Software to assist in the development of Traffic Management Designs.
- A Clare County Council Designed Toolbox Talk Manual with 54 separate Toolbox Talks was issued to each outdoor supervisor for communication to staff on relevant topics in order to enhance awareness around H&S.

- 281 Safety Inspections were completed in 2021 with an Internal H&S Audit conducted across all five Directorates of the Local Authority resulting in 796 action items being identified and entered onto the relevant Department NCR/PAR Register.

Physical Development Strategic Policy Committee

The Physical Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) held four meetings in 2021. This Committee has a membership of 13, comprising seven Elected Members and representatives from the following sectors:

- Agriculture/Farming
- Environment/Conservation
- Development/Construction
- Community/Voluntary
- Social Inclusion.

The Chairperson of the SPC is Cllr John Crowe.

Issues discussed by the SPC in 2021 included the following:

- Biodiversity
- Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS)
- Beach Bye Laws
- National Waste Management plan for a Circular Economy
- Photovoltaic project
- Greenway project
- Air quality
- River Basin Management Plan
- Fire & Emergency Operations Plan.

Project Management Office

The enduring Covid-19 pandemic affected but did not stop progress being made across a wide range of the county's major capital projects throughout 2021. The PMO Team adapted their work practices to ensure momentum was kept up and milestones were achieved.

Some of the main highlights of 2021 are outlined below.

National and Non-National Roads Projects

- In June 2021, An Bord Pleanála set aside two days to hear evidence from both the County Council and the affected parties following the publication and submission a year earlier of the CPO for the N67/N85 Ennistymon Inner Relief (Blakes Corner) Project.
- In December 2021, Ministerial approval had been given to award the long-awaited Killaloe Bridge and Bypass project following a two-stage public tender competition earlier in the year. This follows much work done by the Project Team in order to de-risk the main scheme works which included a €1.4m bundle of advance works carried out earlier in the year.
- Further works were done throughout the year in terms of updating survey and ecological data relating to the Limerick Northern Distributor Road (LNDR), approval to progress to the next stage of project development is awaited from the Department of Transport.
- The public display of the Preferred Option for the N19 Shannon Airport Access Road Improvement Scheme was held during November and December

2021 with Council and Oireachtas Members briefed beforehand. The display was used to inform the public and stakeholders of the Preferred Option developed for the project, the works undertaken to date and the programme for advancement of the project. The public display also provided the public with an opportunity for feedback to be submitted.

Flood Relief Schemes

The PMO team continue to work on the CFRAM flood relief schemes in Clare, namely Shannon, Kilkee, Springfield, Bunratty and Kilrush. In parallel, work continued on the smaller but equally important minor works schemes as well as significant works being carried out throughout the year on a number of coastal locations and piers and harbours. Notable milestones reached in 2021 include the following:

- The completion prior to the summer bathing season of the Coastal Erosion Protection measures in Spanish Point.
- Commencement of construction on site mid-year of the long-awaited Springfield flood relief scheme in Clonlara.
- Contract signing for the appointment of consultants for the Shannon Town & Environs Flood Relief Scheme.
- Substantial completion in late December of the Ennis South Flood Relief Scheme which facilitated and provided for the construction of a riverside walkway as an added value item to the schemes primary function.
- Approval and grant funding for a number of other schemes including Quin, Victoria Court, Shallee Drive and Clounanhinchy.



Killaloe Bridge and Bypass project.



Springfield flood relief scheme in Clonlara.



Springfield flood relief scheme in Clonlara.

Greenways

- Following a tender competition, Roughan O'Donovan Consulting Engineers were appointed as Technical Advisers in July 2021 for the West Clare Railway Greenway (Section 1: Kilrush to Kilkee) project. Much work was done through the summer and autumn period leading to a public display of the various routes emerging for comment and feedback which will inform the preferred route that will be brought forward to the statutory consent stage.
- In late 2021, a tender competition was run with a view to appointing technical advisors for Section 2 of the West Clare Railway Greenway project from Ennis to Ennistymon.
- In September 2021, TII became the Approving Authority for Greenways and in late December Minister Eamon Ryan announced funding of €970k towards the progression of Greenway developments in County Clare.

Other Projects

Public Realm Regeneration Project (Ennis)

In late 2021, responsibility for Phase 2 of the Ennis Public Realm project transitioned to the Project Management Office. Part VIII planning approval was most of the works was already in place from Phase 1 stage and approval for the O'Connell Street element was recommended following consideration by members at the November 2021 Council meeting. In parallel, a prequalification tender competition was run late in the year to identify interested contractors for shortlisting to tender for the main scheme works. Work continued in relation to the detailed design and preparation of tender documents which will be key to ensuring that construction can commence on site in mid-2022.

Doolin Pier Visitors Services Building

In April 2021, the project consultants Bucholz McEvoy presented outline design options for the Visitor Services building to a cross-directorate team comprising the PMO, the Rural Development Directorate and West Clare MD. A preferred option received the unanimous approval of the group and is being progressed by the Design Team. In parallel, options are being examined for long-term parking for both the pier and the village with specific reference to road access and ecology which will inform the optimum design to be submitted to An Bord Pleanála.

Overall, 2021 was a successful and productive year for the PMO team with further works needing to be done in the coming year to ensure timely delivery of the key infrastructural projects for the benefit of Clare and the Mid-West region generally.

Fire & Building Control



Fire Service Operations

The Fire Service attended 900 call-outs in 2021 resulting in a decrease of 11% on the number for 2020. There was no fire fatality in 2021 in County Clare. Chimney fire callouts increased by almost 27% from a historical low of 69 in 2020 to 88 in 2021. There was also a 23% increase in domestic fires in 2021 from 39 to 48.

Capital/Procurement

With Capital Grant Aid Funding, construction was completed on a new Workshop and Spare Appliance Storage Shed at Ennis Fire Station at a total cost of €1,229,936. The Brigade fleet took delivery of four new 4-wheel-drive vans which were delivered to and went operational in Shannon, Ennistymon, Scarriff and Kilkee Fire Stations in September at a cost of €248,270 along with a new maintenance van at a cost of €44,414. Capital Grant Aid Funding was received for all five vans. Capital funding was also received for a range of equipment including seven Battery Positive Pressure Ventilation Fans, seven Drills, seven Fog Nail Branches and seven Mobilisation Screens at a total cost of €67,140. Capital Grant Aid Funding has also been received for a new Class B Fire Appliance which has been ordered at a cost of €433,224 which is expected to be delivered in the autumn. Approval was also given to procure four second-hand Class B appliances at a cost of €160,000.

Recruitment & Retention

Recruitment and retention of Retained

Personnel continues. In Clare in 2021, seven personnel were recruited but unfortunately 11 left the service in the same period.

Health & Safety

In March 2021, Clare County Fire & Rescue Service re-attained accreditation to the ISO 45001 Health & Safety Management System Standard for the implementation of their Safety Management System throughout the Service following an audit by the National Standards Authority Ireland.

Fire Prevention

A total of 78 Fire Safety Certificate Applications were received in 2021, a decrease of 8.2% on the 2020 figure of 85. Fire Prevention Officers assessed 83 Licence applications. These apply to pubs, hotels, community centres and theatres throughout the county.

National Fire Safety Week took place from 4th–11th 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.



Expansion of Brigade Fleet.

Building Control

A total of 10.18% of buildings notified to us through BCMS were inspected by Building Control Staff in 2021. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and limitations on the construction industry, fewer inspections were carried out than in previous years. A total of 46 Disability Access Certificate Applications were assessed by the Building Control Section in 2021, a decrease of 32% from 2020.

Major Emergency Management

Sections of the Major Emergency Plan were implemented in the response to severe weather events in February 2021 (snow and protracted rainfall) and in December for Storm Barra, a category red warning.

Clare County Council participated in the following Emergency Exercises in 2021:

- Two-day Emergency Aircraft Crash Exercise at Shannon Airport
- Tabletop Emergency Exercise for Limerick Tunnel.

Clare County participated in the ongoing inter-agency co-ordination of the national responses to the continuing Covid-19 crisis.

Dangerous Structures

Building control staff dealt with 13 Dangerous Structure complaints in 2021.

Performance Indicators		2021
F1	Cost per Capita	€52.19
F2-B	Average time taken, in minutes to mobilise Fire Brigades in Part-Time Stations in respect of Fires	4.81 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	4.79 min
F3-A	% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	52.28%
F3-B	% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	32.52%
F3-C	% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	15.20%
F3-D	% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	42.07%
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	41.35%
F3-F	% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	16.59%
P5-A	% of applications for fire safety certs that were decided (granted or refused) within two months of their receipt	70.00%
P5-B	% of applications for fire safety certs that were decided (granted or refused) within an extended period agreed with the applicant	30.00%
P1	Buildings Inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified to the local authority	10.18%



New Clare Civil Defence HQ at the Quin Road Campus.

Expectations for 2022

Delivery of the new Class B appliance is expected in Autumn 2022. It is anticipated to have two second-hand appliances operational in May 2022. It is intended to retain accreditation to OHSAS 45001 as part of Clare County Council's Health & Safety Management System.

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.

Clare Civil Defence

Currently there are 84 active volunteer members trained in a variety of disciplines including:

- Emergency medicine
- Search and rescue
- Severe Weather Response
- Swiftwater Rescue
- Boating and search procedures
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (drones).

2021 was another extremely busy year for Clare Civil Defence which resulted in a large number of duties and responses carried out. The members responded to 274 separate requests for assistance. Many of the responses were directly Covid-19 related and the members contributed over 600 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 and provided assistance to the Irish Blood Transfusion Service at their Blood Donation Clinics.

The unit assisted An Garda Síochána with several missing persons searches throughout the year. Three of these searches resulted in the safe and successful recovery of missing persons by the Clare CD Drone and Search & Rescue

Teams. The Civil Defence fleet was updated with a Rescue Watercraft (RWC) provided with the assistance of the Civil Defence Branch, Department of Defence. A new state-of-the-art drone was also purchased to enhance the search capabilities of the unit. This new drone was instrumental to the successful rescue and recovery of two missing persons. Both rescues were the first ever successfully recorded rescue and recovery operations of missing persons with the use of a drone in Ireland. 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. Eight members of the unit began an Emergency Medical Technician's (EMT) course in September 2021 which will be completed in May of 2022. This is a demanding course which will result in the members qualifying as Pre-hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) clinical practitioners.

The new Civil Defence headquarters is proving to be a huge asset to both the unit and the Principal Response Agencies (An Garda Síochána, the National Ambulance Service and Clare County Fire and Rescue Service). All three services are using the headquarters as a training centre for their members, on a regular basis.

The volunteer members of Clare Civil Defence have again shown their huge worth and commitment to the organisation and their communities in 2021. The response, professionalism and selflessness of the members has been absolute, and they are to be thanked and congratulated for again rising to meet all challenges put before them.

Water Services Department

Annual Service Plan

The Covid-19 pandemic was a challenging time for the delivery of the front-line essential water services function in 2021. 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). In 2021 we achieved a performance index compliance score of 91% and delivered the plan to within 2% of budget. In 2021 the Water Services teams dealt with 254 customer complaints, completed 14 emergency work orders, 5,197 reactive work orders, 10 customer asset flooding work orders, raised 2,987 service requests and responded to 459 outage notifications on the IW system.

Water and Waste Water Operations

In 2021 work was carried out in a number of areas including mains replacement at Tullabrack, west Clare and Tobertascain, Ennis. In addition, 4.7km of mains were replaced on the Old Doolough to Miltown Malbay trunk main.

Approximately 770 leaks were repaired on the water network which generated significant savings in water production.

Water Conservation

Under the National Leakage Reduction Programme Irish Water set Clare County Council a leakage reduction target of 1,250m³ per day in 2021. The actual leakage reduction achieved was 2,940m³ per day which was a significant exceedance of the original target set by Irish Water.

Asset Transfer project

Following an assessment of the water and wastewater networks in County Clare, 320 assets have been identified for potential transfer to Irish Water to date. By December 2021 a total of 208 assets have now been fully transferred to Irish Water. The remaining 112 assets to be transferred are divided into various categories which need input from the property registration authority and Irish Water.

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 to end this discharge. The five towns are at different stages of progression through the design, planning and construction process. Works to Liscannor commenced on site and advanced works to Clarecastle were also completed. Construction works to upgrade waste water treatment plants at Quin village and Shannon Town were completed in 2021 bringing increased treatment capacity to the towns. Planning permission for a new treatment plant at Kilfenora was granted and works have progressed on site. Design and feasibility studies for a variety of other waste water projects in Lahinch, Ennistymon, Newmarket on Fergus, Inagh, and Clareabbey also progressed in 2021.

Other significant upgrade capital works are also underway in Corofin and New Doolough water treatment plants as part of the Remedial Action List (RAL) programme.

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 costing €1.12m were undertaken on 17 Group Water Schemes and one Group Sewerage Scheme in 2021. A total of 18 group water schemes were taken in charge by Irish Water in 2021, which represented the highest number nationally. In addition, under the Rural Water Programme 106 grant applications were received in 2021 for bored well upgrade works representing an investment of €121,667. The Annual Subsidy Grant was also administered to 44 schemes with an overall payment totalling €1.63m.

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 2021 work programme was largely driven by an extensive regulatory framework. Since the onset of Covid-19 and throughout 2021, the Environment programme was 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 are progressing with action items set in the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, 2019-2024. Clare County Council achieved a 34% energy efficiency rating which was announced by the Sustainable Energy Authority Of Ireland (SEAI) in 2021 compared to the 2020 government target of 30%.

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 187 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 which were revised and adopted in June 2021. 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: Rescues – 54; First Aid administered – 1,898; and dealt with 56 lost children.



Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI)

Across all Environment service areas, Clare County Council undertook 5,260 routine and 2,506 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 82 legal notices for breaches of litter and waste legislation. Over 285 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 274 complaints relating to water, air and noise pollution. In order to check environmental compliance and to protect water quality, 108 inspections were carried out at licensed facilities. In addition, 23 domestic wastewater treatment systems were inspected. The Environment section also received and reported on 778 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 51 bring bank 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. The Council also commenced a capital project in Q4 2021 for the completion of the Closure Restoration and Aftercare Management Plan (CRAMP) at the closed landfill at BallyduffBeg (Inagh). Works are expected to be completed in 2022.

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 was out for 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 Irish Water plants were monitored.

Education and awareness

Clare County Council has promoted low smoke coal, waste prevention, recycling, www.mywaste.ie, illegal dumping and littering, dog fouling, 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 2,903 beef animals and 15,604 sheep were slaughtered in County Clare plants overseen by our veterinary inspector. In total, 168 stray dogs were picked up and 133 dogs were surrendered. In addition, 77 dogs were reclaimed by their owners, 56 rehomed and 154 rehomed in consultation with the Dogs

Trust and other rescue groups. We have dealt with six straying horses and have rehomed six horses in 2021.

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. The creative pollinator friendly colourful flower arrangements were also commented on by the Tidy Towns judges and greatly assisted Ennis in being awarded as the overall winner of the 2021 National Tidy Towns competition.

The Reflective Garden developed by the Gardening section at Áras Contae an Chláir was officially opened on 11th May, 2021, and provides a new amenity for staff to sit outdoors and enjoy nature.



The Reflective Garden at Áras Contae an Chláir.



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 Municipal

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.

2021 began and ended with Covid-19 and pandemic restrictions very much to the fore. Due to the roll out of the vaccination programme in early 2021 lockdown was gradually lifted but Delta and Omicron variants saw sharp increases in incidents of Covid-19 but fewer resulting deaths. In response a curfew on indoor hospitality was introduced at the end of the year, however all restrictions eased in the first quarter of 2022.

In spite of Covid-19 service delivery continued in our second year of this new 'normal'. Delivery targets were set and achieved with a renewed focus on making up lost time on projects once construction restrictions were eased in April 2021. Staff adapted to ensure services were delivered with blended working arrangements and copious online meetings to ensure delivery of work programmes.

Despite Covid-19, delivery of social housing was strong in 2021 with close to 300 approved social housing households housed in Clare during 2021.

The Government launched Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland on 2nd September, 2021. The document sets out a multiannual funding programme for 2022-2030 to deliver over 300,000 new homes including 90,000 social and 54,000 affordable homes with an anticipated spend of in excess of €4bn per annum. There is also a firm commitment to ending homelessness by 2030.

This document sets the framework for the delivery of housing in the county with an overall build target of 833 new social housing units in the county over the period 2022 to 2026 as below:

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Build	200	149	153	164	167	833

Clare County Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan was returned to the Department on 17th December; the plan outlines current and projected social housing delivery in the county with reference to current housing need and the objectives of Housing for All.

While affordable housing is a keystone of Housing for All, the criteria to qualify for funding of local authority led affordable housing is based on a determination of affordability constraint and in the case of a significant number of counties, including Clare, the assessment has not evidenced a sufficient constraint to satisfy the eligibility requirements.

The Social 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 2021 to discuss and agree a range of policies and initiatives to address housing delivery in Clare.

2021 Housing Delivery performance

Clare County Council did not receive delivery targets for 2021 from the Department of Housing, the Council worked to the overall Rebuilding Ireland targets in setting local targets for housing delivery in the county.

	Output
Build	75
Acquisition	89
Leasing	57
Sub-total	221
HAP	225
RAS	36
Sub-total	261
TOTAL	482



Completed development at Quilty.

Capital Project delivery

The completion of a new 51-unit PPP development in Shannon during 2021 was a significant addition to our social housing stock. Tuath Housing Association are managing the estate and are actively involved with tenants in community participation and development. These A2-rated energy efficient homes were allocated by Tuath to social housing applicants from our social housing list.

In addition, two new social housing units were delivered at Doonbeg and two derelict properties were re-constructed in Kilrush and returned to use.

The Approved Housing Body sector played a significant role in 2021 in assisting with the provision of social housing across the county. Co-Operative Housing Ireland delivered 14 homes, consisting of a mix of two-bed and three-bed properties, at Roslevan, Ennis, and two further three-bed family units at Newmarket on Fergus.

Cluid Housing Association acquired eight homes at Tulla Road, Ennis, which were previously leased to the Housing Department. Newgrove Housing Association acquired and

refurbished four units at Edenvale, Ennis, for approved applicants with disabilities. Banner Housing Association acquired five properties in Ennis, Shannon and Kilrush while Inis Housing Association acquired one unit in Inagh.

Approved Housing Bodies have a further programme of delivery planned for the coming year which will greatly assist with social housing delivery targets under Housing for All.

Housing stock management

During 2021, 83 vacant and 17 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 and construction stage. This is a significant achievement in light of the impact of Covid-19 on the construction sector.

An Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme was announced on 18th February, 2021. Under this scheme, the Council upgraded 32 properties to a BER level of B2 or higher. The total grant approved was €839,134.

Maintenance was carried out with Covid-19 operating procedures remaining in place. The onus was on all parties to plan and implement works with regard to preventing further spread of the virus. In general, this progressed well due to an understanding from tenants and procedure management by council staff and our contractors. 4,498 maintenance calls were logged during 2021.

Defective Concrete Blocks

The issue of defective concrete blocks in Clare came to the fore in late 2021 with much engagement with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage seeking extension of the Defective Concrete Blocks Scheme to Clare. Housing staff were involved in the preparation of various technical reports on this matter with a final decision on Clare's inclusion in the scheme yet to be made.

Housing Assessments and Allocations

Allocations of social housing tenancies are made in accordance with the Clare County Council Social Housing Allocation Scheme. This Allocation Scheme sets out the priorities and procedures for allocating properties. The Scheme is used in the allocation of standard Council housing units, allocations by Approved Housing Bodies, casual vacancies and long and short-term lease properties. During 2021, a total of 417 allocations were made.

During 2021, properties available for letting continued to be advertised on the Choice Based Letting (CBL) website: cbl.clarecoco.ie

CBL gives applicants the opportunity to express an interest in a range of residential properties within their area(s) of preference that are suitable for the size of their household. The list of available properties are displayed from Wednesday to Tuesday every week on the CBL website. The process is designed to be as fair

as possible as it gives all housing applicants an equal opportunity to view available properties that meet their needs.

Housing Rents

The collection of housing rent remained strong with an 86% collection rate and a total income of €9,064,051.32 from 3153 rent accounts during 2021.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme

The Council set up 225 new HAP applications during 2021 including 40 households qualifying for Homeless HAP. The total number of households supported under the HAP scheme during 2021 was 1,344, of this 64 households are being supported outside of the county.

Rent Allowance Scheme (RAS)

There were 189 households availing of this scheme at the end of 2021. During 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.

In addition, the Council work with 15 Approved Housing Bodies in supporting tenancies through the RAS scheme, this figure includes 36 new tenancies that joined the scheme during 2021.

Social Leasing

In 2021, the Council provided 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 eight new short-term lease agreements were negotiated bringing the overall total number of households availing of this scheme to 116 by the end of the year. The average lease term is five years.

A further 24 new long-term lease agreements were negotiated during 2021 bringing the overall total number of households availing of this scheme to 137 by the end of the year. The average term of lease is 16 years.

The Covid-19 restrictions earlier in the year impacted on the potential to secure additional leases and delayed the leasing process as the capacity to inspect properties was reduced. Property owners also encountered delays in securing building contractors to undertake necessary works.

Private Rented Inspections

74 physical inspections were undertaken during 2021, this figure is significantly less than numbers achieved in previous years due to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on our inspections programme. To mitigate the impact of these restrictions we rolled out a virtual inspection programme inviting landlords to partake in the inspection process. We issued 280 virtual inspection packs during 2021 and 98 landlords engaged in this programme.

Under our physical and virtual inspections programme 104 properties inspected were under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme; of this 18 physical inspections and 86 virtual inspections were undertaken; 42 physical inspections of properties under the Rental Allowance Scheme (RAS) were undertaken and the remainder of the properties inspected were private rented properties of which 14 physical inspections and 12 virtual inspections were undertaken.

Rebuilding Ireland Affordable Loan

The loan scheme offers a fixed interest rate for creditworthy 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 2021, 45 'Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan' applications were received and 34 loan applications were granted provisional approval during this period. A total of 11 loans were drawn down during 2021. Interest rates reduced by 0.25% on applications drawn down after the 10/09/2021 from 2.745% to 2.495% up to a 25-year term and from 2.995% to 2.745% up to a 30-year term.

The Rebuilding Ireland Affordable Loan (RIHL) was replaced by the Local Authority Home Loan (LAHL) in January 2022.

Vacant Homes Strategy

The Vacant Homes Section is tasked with monitoring and assessing vacancy data locally in towns and villages across the county in an attempt to bring such properties in areas of housing demand back into use. In 2021 a targeted focus was placed on the Killaloe and West Clare Municipal Districts. Vacant properties in the towns of Broadford, Sixmilebridge, Tulla and Killaloe were examined and those seen as most amenable to being re-introduced into the liveable housing stock were prioritised. Homeowners were contacted and provided with useful information on how to bring properties back into use and made aware of the financial supports available to them. One property in the Killaloe Municipal District is currently being progressed for CPO and engagement with a number of other property owners is continuing. In the West Clare Municipal District a high level of dereliction and vacancy was identified within the town of Kilrush. A number of buildings are currently under review for progress under a regeneration programme.

The challenges associated with establishing ownership, title issues, communicating with banks regarding properties in receivership, and costs associated with refurbishment of houses continue to prevail. However, the

Vacant Homes Team are active in engaging with owners and pursuing all options to enable vacant and under-utilised properties to be returned to use as quickly as possible.

Estate Management

Following additional funding being approved by the Elected Members for the 2021 budget, Clare County Council enhanced the Housing Estate Management unit by appointing three temporary Tenancy Enforcement Officers (TEOs) in January 2021 to support existing staff, to help address and enforce instances of anti-social behaviour in Local Authority tenancies in a more proactive manner. The TEO team carried out 3,136 separate call outs in 2021.

The primary role of the TEO team is to:

- Receive and investigate fully in a proactive manner, as part of the Estate Management team, any complaints relating to alleged failure of tenants to abide by the conditions of their letting agreements
- Work closely and collaboratively with the Traveller community and respond to complaints of anti-social behaviour, serve notices on illegally parked caravans as required and to liaise with Local Authority services and other statutory agencies, i.e. Gardaí, to remove unauthorised encampments within the county in accordance with the relevant legislation
- Provide support to communities in relation to anti-social behaviour of Council tenants.

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 2021 including the management of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and its impact on the community. In total, 379 complaints of ASB were investigated and dealt with in accordance with the Council's

Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy during 2021. 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 €6,700 was spent in 2021 under the Local Authority Best Kept Local Authority Estate competition which supported improvements being carried out in 15 Local Authority estates.

A total of €7,000 was budgeted in 2021 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 2021, there were 53 adults and 24 dependents in Homeless accommodation.

There were 1,959 presentations (626 new and 1,333 repeat), and 29 new households were placed in accommodation in Homeless services during 2021.

New presentations	626
Repeat presentations	1,333
Total presentations	1,959

During 2021, 76 households exited homelessness, 26 exiting to new tenancies (LA-5, AHB-12, HAP-5, PR-2, SNN Project-1 and Housing First-1). These figures represent a significant amount of prevention work and this will continue to be the focus of the service going forward.

Exits		76
Housed	LA = 5 AHB = 12 HAP = 5 PR = 2 SNN = 1 HF = 1	26
Self-discharged		20
Discharged		28
RIP		2

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), Gardaí, Tusla (Child Protection, Domestic Violence and Aftercare) Probation and Community Partners to address the ever-increasing complex needs which were compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic.

During 2021, the following new projects came on stream:

- Clare HAT commenced Clann Nua (Own Front Door) Project in May 2021. Eleven individuals successfully transitioned from private emergency accommodation to this supported shared living accommodation.
- In August 2021, Clare HAT commenced Housing First with three households successfully transitioning to this new supported model (one from private emergency accommodation, one from street homelessness and one from State facility). This project is the primary policy response to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to address street homelessness and those with complex needs that inhibit their ability to live independently. Consequently, an

innovative implementation group led out by Clare HAT in partnership with our colleagues in HSE Social Inclusion will look to better meet the needs of this cohort going forward through this project.

Traveller accommodation

The Covid-19 response continued to focus on protocols to protect vulnerable groups and in this regard Covid-19 response protocols remained in place to address accommodation and isolation requirements in Traveller accommodation.

In June 2021, the Council appointed a Traveller Liaison Officer to strengthen the support services and communications between members of the Traveller community and the Local Authority in relation to housing matters. The Traveller Liaison Officer acts as a conduit between the Local Authority Housing Department and members of the Traveller community. The Traveller Liaison Officer also works collaboratively with various working/consultative groups on Traveller accommodation matters and issues relevant to the Traveller community.

Housing Grants

During 2021, Covid-19 protocols meant that we had to continue to adapt to challenges in administering the housing grants schemes and meeting the demands for assistance. Despite this, 401 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 €3,016,913 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	136	1,753,846

Housing Aid for Older People	140	707,723
Mobility Aids Grant	125	557,344
Total in 2020	401	3,016,913

In addition, 119 Council-owned properties were adapted during the year and €796,225

Sports and Recreation



2021 was once again a very challenging year for the sport and recreation facilities in the county as Covid-19 restrictions necessitated the closure of facilities and subsequent disruption of activities. However, once restrictions permitted a return, the facilities proved hugely popular for individuals and families for exercise and outdoor activities. Clubs returned to our facilities in April with sustained demand for the facilities for the remainder of the year. Active Ennis Leisure Complex reopened on 7th June after a significant period of enforced closure. The reopening of the facility was greatly supported by users with capacity demand sustained until restrictions were further eased.

Football in John O'Sullivan Park, Lees Road, and Tim Smythe Park notably increased during the summer and the latter half of 2021. Both John O'Sullivan Park and Tim Smythe Park retained their Green Flag status for 2021. The Green Flag is awarded by An Taisce in recognition of the facility meeting the benchmark standards for parks and green spaces.

was spent on works such as the installation of ramps, level access bathrooms and stairlifts. These modifications will add to the level of comfort for our tenants with disabilities in their homes.

During 2021, a booking system was implemented for the facilities to manage capacity necessary to comply with restrictions. This pre-book/pre-pay system, was found by the customers to provide assurance in the management of access to the facility in compliance with public health guidance.

Active Ennis Tim Smythe Park

The dressing rooms at Tim Smythe Park were officially opened by the Mayor of Ennis Municipal District, Cllr Ann Norton, on 5th October. The dressing room complex houses a fully accessible changing facility, this facility is the first of its kind in the county and indeed is one of a few such fully accessible changing facilities in the country.

In addition, the facility provides the users of Tim Smythe Park, both local and visitors, with new, spacious and comfortable changing rooms which meets current standards and includes state of the art toilet and shower facilities.

This project represents a significant social and community asset and enhances the existing facilities in Ennis Town.

In addition to the dressing rooms at Tim Smythe Park the following projects were completed during 2021:

- Refurbish of Active Ennis Cloughleigh Astro Turf, the project was part funded with a Sports Capital Grant.
- The steam rooms in Active Ennis



Completed refurbishment of Tim Smythe Park dressing room.

Leisure complex were replaced during the lockdown period in addition to essential maintenance to AHUs and the pump systems.

- Additional benches were installed at John O'Sullivan Park, Lees Road, to ensure inclusive use of the facility by all.
- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) funded projects at Tim Smythe Park and John O'Sullivan Park, Lees Road, were completed during 2021. These projects generally involved enhancing accessibility by surfacing footpaths and parking areas.

In December, we welcomed Minister of State with responsibility for Planning and Local Government Peter Burke TD to Clare. Minister Burke visited John O'Sullivan Park, Lees Road.



Atlantic Youth Project

The Atlantic Youth Project was selected as winner under the category 'International Cooperation in the Atlantic Area' for the Atlantic Project Awards. The awards ceremony took place October 21, in Dublin, as part of the 8th annual Stakeholder Platform conference, which brings together all agents of the blue economy in the Atlantic region to debate issues related to the sea.

The Atlantic Youth Project was led by CIM Alto Minho (Portugal) and funded by the Erasmus+ programme and aimed to promote inclusive maritime education in schools, involving a range of international partners, namely the Patronato Municipal de Deportes de Ayamonte (Spain), the We Atlantic (France), the Center de Moulin Mer (France), the Cornwall Marine Network (UK) and Clare County Council (Ireland).



Cultural Services (Library, Arts, Museum and Archives)

Update on new library for Ennis

Following the cessation of work on the library site in 2020 due to the contractor encountering financial difficulties, the contract was subsequently terminated and the process of securing the site and preparing for retendering was commenced.

The re-tender for the new library consisted of a two-stage restricted process through the OJEU, stage 1 was completed by 7/4/2021 and stage 2 by 20/9/2021. Three tender bids were assessed at end of year with the successful tenderer expected to be appointed in 2022.

Library Service

As with all services nationally, Covid-19 played a major part in service provision and opening hours in all branch libraries during 2021. However, core library services and programming were maintained when libraries were open, all branches being closed for 18 weeks in total but staff continuing to work in providing stock to all through delivery services and pivoting programming to online means particularly for children's activities. Year on year, library membership fell as did the issue of stock items, however the use of e-resources increased from 2020 to 2021 with an 8% increase in e-books and a substantial increase of 44% in e-audiobooks, internet sessions and Wi-Fi suffered a period of decline during the closed periods. A total of 5,872 books, audio and DVDs were delivered to homes by Clare County Library staff during the level 5 lockdowns in 2021, an increase on 2020 deliveries.

	Library membership	Items issued	E-resources	Internet sessions	Wi-Fi	No of scheduled activities for public
2021	10,060	235,122	63,088	1,886	4,889	***
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 online programmes in 2021.

- 118 in person events were held with 747 people attending
- 85 Zoom events with 2,202 in attendance
- 309 online videos were posted with 10,357 views on all platforms.

The support to Government initiatives continued throughout 2021 with Clare libraries participating in all programmes. Highlights included supporting the Ireland Reads promotion in February 2021, 500 copies

of Niall William's novel, *This is happiness*, were delivered to nursing homes, direct provision centres and other community groups. Four online events were held with 350 people attending. The 'Grow it Forward' campaign saw 800 packs of seeds distributed to organisations, groups and individuals in Clare. In partnership with Healthy Ireland this initiative has a goal of seeing half a million people across Ireland enjoy the benefits that come from growing food at home. The literacy programmes continued with 'Spring into Storytime' in April/May, 'Summer Reads' during the months children are off from school signing up to participate in book clubs, storytimes, craft workshops and creative writing groups. 'Children's book

festival’ in October saw 46 events hosted (a hybrid of online and in person) and ‘Family time at your library’ in December included storytelling, drawing, festive craft making, an intergenerational book-making workshop and drama workshops. The Healthy Ireland campaign ran 28 events on Zoom with 415 participants, there was one live event, the ‘Work Matters’ programme saw seven events being hosted.

Grants

Clare County Library received €18,419 in Dormant Accounts Funding for programming and equipment. This included smartphone classes, Work Matters classes, an art therapy programme and funding for hearing loop systems and wayfinding signage. A total of 500 Touch-type Read and Spell (TTRS) licences were also purchased in 2021 for distribution to a variety of education centres. Clare County Library also received a Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) Healthy Ireland grant of €5,455 to purchase equipment for outdoor programming and reception seating.

Creative Ireland

A total 24 Project Awards were granted to community groups and individuals to run projects which encouraged ‘Creativity in the Community’. Projects included Sparks Youth Film Festival, a podcast series with Pamela Finn on craftworkers of Clare, an arts project based on Lickeen Lake, a video on Spancil Hill Horse Fair, Kildysart Drama Festival and an Arts Week in CBS Ennistymon. A further 32 projects were initiated by the Council’s Creativity and Culture Team including Dial a Seanchaí, Cultural Companions and Clare Youth Theatre events. In support of Cruinniú na nÓg 22 virtual events were held on Saturday, 12th June, using the social media accounts of Clare County Library, Zoom and YouTube. A total of 36,120 people were reached by Clare events and the online

projects continue to be accessed through YouTube. Highlights included Fanore National School’s *Magic of the Sea* which was shown on RTÉ on the day, *Rising Tide* with Maeve Stone which was held on Lahinch beach and Inis Cathaigh Comhaltas which highlighted traditional music videos throughout the day.

Decade of Centenaries

This national programme continues until the end of 2023. In Clare, 11 historical and commemorative projects received funding in 2021. These included the West Clare War of Independence Commemoration Group, Oidhreacht an Chláir, Lissycasey Historical Committee, East Clare Memorial Group, Lough Graney Association, Glenwood Ambush Memorial Group, Inis Cathaigh Comhaltas Kilrush, Clare Roots Society, Brian Spring, Christy McNamara and Joe Ó Muirheartaigh. Three Arts Decade of Centenaries Project Awards were given to artist Marie Connole, musician Tim Collins and playwright Dermott Petty. History Week took place in October 2021 with 21 events, these included five exhibitions in library branches, one radio documentary, 10 online lectures, a primary school resource pack by Brian Spring, musical contributions by Tim Collins and Mike Hanrahan and an in-person lecture by Dr John Treacy in DeValera Library, Ennis.

Arts Office

The Arts Sector continued to be the sector most affected by Covid-19 in 2021, which led to unprecedented demands on the Arts Office. Arts Council supported programmes were delivered mostly online including the Arts and Education programme – the delivery of arts projects with 12 artists in 16 primary schools. Clare Youth Theatre likewise delivered workshops online during periods of lockdown. The Embrace Arts and Disability Programme delivered arts projects in disability settings with 10 artists in 12 settings and one client

mentoring project. A total of six Keep Well projects took place throughout Clare as part of the Arts Office Covid-19 response.

Outdoor performances came from Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Company which brought its 'A Handful of Dreams' show to Ennis through the Arts Council's Faoin Speir initiative in August and artist William Bock began his River Residency in Kildysart. Ennistymon was selected as Clare's Poetry Town and Grace Wells as Poet Laureate. Culture Night was a hybrid event in 2021 with 10,222 people attending 33 Clare events in person and online. The artist studios operated at 100% capacity with significant demand for more spaces. The Arts Office was active in supporting training for creatives throughout 2021, consisting of training courses in digital upskilling with the support of LEO, online workshops and seminars with Visual Artists Ireland and capacity building initiative training for 15 festivals with SMART Marketing. A total of 85 grants for artists, communities and festivals were approved through the Community Supports Scheme and two residencies happened at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre. Maeve Stone was awarded the inaugural Platform 31 bursary. The public art programme continued with the Cuan an Chláir Per Cent for Art Scheme artworks installed in the communal areas on site as well as in each resident's home. Clare was selected as a showcase county for an Interdepartmental Review of Per Cent for Art Guidelines. Over 100 performance projects and events took place countywide with the support of the Department of Tourism and Culture's Live Local Performance Scheme with 350 musicians and crew employed for over 1,200 days in the county.

Film

Assistance was provided to 25 film projects in 2021 including the inaugural Engine Shorts film programme. The WRAP fund continued to

attract substantial inward film investment to the county.



County Museum

Clare Museum was closed to the public from January until 23rd August, initially because of Covid-19 restrictions, then from May onwards for renovations to upgrade the building to accommodate the Ennis 2040 office and the refurbishment of the Tourist Office space, lobby and other meeting rooms in the building. Visitor number at end of year was 1,645.

A total of 66 social media posts were made from the Museum during 2021, featuring photographs and videos from the museum collection and appeals to the public for information in relation to research. This allowed the Museum to reach a wide local audience, and facilitated socially distanced interaction between the museum and the public. As a result of this online interaction, a total of 13 collections were donated to the Museum during the year, including a letter from Daniel O'Connell, a collection from Cahercon House and posters associated with the events of Ennis 750 in 1990. In addition, a chalk drawing by Frederick William Burton was purchased for the Museum by the Friends of the National Collection. A total of 292 items

were accessioned into the collection on the new Adlib database, bringing the official figure for the size of the museum collection to 3,417 items. About 80% of the museum collection is now catalogued, one of the highest percentages in the country. Over 500 items were photographed, using a new camera acquired in late 2020.

A great deal of Museum activity was taken up preparing the application for maintenance of full accreditation under the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland, and this involved assessing the Museum's current situation, updating documents and preparing for the assessment by the Heritage Council. As part of this process, a new Strategic Management Plan for 2021-2023 has been adopted by Clare County Council and covers a short period to allow for the museum to be flexible in the face of uncertain times and resources. An exhibition of medals won by Clare Athlete Willie Keane went on display in November. These items are on loan to Clare Museum.

Archives

The Archives Service in 2022 continued to provide access to the collection through the Local Studies Library depending on Covid-19 restrictions.

The Archives' Digitisation Project continued in 2021. A total of 154 volumes from the Board of Health Collection of Manager's Orders and Minute Books dating from 1915-1966 have been digitised. The complete collection of Electoral Registers has been completed. The Dwyer Collection has been added to the online collection on Clare Library's website. Work has resumed on the design and completion of a website facility to display and provide access to County Clare's Archival collections. The newly acquired database (Adlib) has been functioning as a register of collections held in the archives, this in time will be used in

tandem with the website for access to digital collections.

George Cunningham, the well-known antiquarian, historian, author and conservationist has donated part of his collection to Clare Archives. This collection is extensive and relates to the research notes, files and publications by the author whose works explored the archaeological, historical and environmental heritage particularly in the Burren area. A collection of 25 volumes from Ballycar National School has also been donated.

glór

2021, glór's 20th year, remained very challenging due to Covid-19 and its impact. The support and funding from Clare County Council and the Arts Council were critical in ensuring the organisation can continue. Q1 and Q2 were largely focused on artist development initiatives and online programming. glór initiated a range of supports focussed on artists and artist wellbeing such as Creative Circles and Artist to Artist mentoring and developed a number of online programme initiatives including *Folk Nights at glór* (April), *Young Curators Lasta Festival* in conjunction with Nasc Theatre Network and *Beat Your Drum!* with Creative Ireland for Cruinniú na nÓg (both June). A number of outdoor events were supported and presented in the car park beside glór in the summer months, and in September events in glór were able to take place again, at very restricted capacities. The capacities continued to shift through Q4 making scheduling very precarious. Some of the staff who had been laid off since March 2020 returned gradually over the autumn. The Government's employer's wage subsidy schemes played a critical role in reducing core staffing costs and keeping the organisation in operation despite such reduced income streams. glór presented 68 events from

September to December and two exhibitions. This included three commissioned works designed for the 20th birthday including the children focused storytelling performance *Wild Atlantic Tales*, a traditional music commission of a new work called *Shorelines* by Nuala Kennedy and a unique audio project accessible by phone called *Dial a Seanchaí* curated with John Lillis. glór awarded the Shannon Family (Garry, Majella, Sharon and Mary) the MÓRglór Award in November at a memorable sell-out performance, which was also streamed. glór marked its 20th birthday in a relatively low-key way given the limitations of the pandemic, and plans to celebrate the 21st

in a more public way in autumn 2023 instead. The café at glór remains very challenged by the impact of the pandemic and the library construction site beside glór in terms of both visibility and footfall. glór continues to advance its 2020-22 Strategic Goals including working closely with Clare County Council to realise aligned objectives, and will embark on a review and development process to initiate its 2023-2025 strategy later this year.





RURAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE



LEONARD CLEARY
Director of Rural Development

Shannon Heritage DAC Due Diligence Process

Clare County Council was requested by Cabinet to commence discussions with Shannon Group in relation to the proposed transfer of Shannon Heritage DAC County Clare based tourism sites to Clare County Council, including as part of the proposed transfer at national level from the Department of Transport to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

In June 2021 Clare County Council commenced a Due Diligence Process to consider the potential transfer by Shannon Group Plc of its

subsidiary company Shannon Heritage DAC to Clare County Council. Shannon Heritage DAC would then become a subsidiary company of Clare County Council.

The commencement of the Due Diligence Process is a pledge by both statutory bodies to provide for an in-depth review and focus on the recovery from the devastating impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the tourism industry, the airport and on overseas visitors to the Mid-West region. The central role that Clare County Council plays in tourism product development and sustainable tourism development, has made the organisation a natural fit to explore this opportunity with Shannon Group Plc. Clare County Council has



considerable experience of operating existing visitor attractions with the assistance of two other subsidiary companies, i.e. Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC and Kilrush Amenity Trust Ltd.

The following Clare tourism sites are being considered and subject to Due Diligence and subsequent negotiation:

- Bunratty Castle and Folk Park
- Knappogue Castle
- Craggaunowen – Bronze Age Park
- Retail Outlet at Cliffs of Moher.

In relation to the impact of this transition Clare County Council has appointed a steering group and project manager who is working with experienced specialist services to examine the following topics:

- Operational and Financial to include business performance
- Technical Due Diligence to include property and asset surveys
- Human Resource
- ICT
- Legal
- Capital Investment
- Taxation.

The transfer of Shannon Heritage Clare properties to Clare County Council is subject to approval by the elected members of Clare County Council, as well as consent between the various Government Ministers and Government Departments.

Rural and Community Department

Government Funding - National Schemes

The Department of Rural and Community Development channels a number of funding programmes through the Council. In 2021, the

schemes attracted projects and funds as listed below:

- **Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2021** - €784,310 for four projects in Mountshannon, Drumgeely, Clonlara and Corofin.
- **CLÁR Initiative 2021** - €308,313 to eight projects located in Caherea, Crusheen, Ballynacally, Kilbaha, Tulla, Fanore, Kilalloe and Kilmihil.
- **Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme 2021** - €417,751 for 10 projects.
- **Rural Regeneration and Development Fund 2021 (Category 2)** - €524,00 for Scariff Regeneration Plan.

Community Support Scheme

Funding of €575,500 was approved under the Council's Community Support Scheme in February 2021. The allocations to community and voluntary groups supported a broad range of projects including public realm, social inclusion and participation in sport, community wifi, the arts, Irish language and sustainable tourism.

Clare Age-Friendly Strategy



Clare County Council co-ordinates the delivery of the Clare Age-Friendly Strategy for the period 2018-2022 with eight agencies leading or supporting the delivery of the various actions.

In 2021 actions in the strategy were progressed including:

- The launch of Ennis as Clare's first Age Friendly Town.
- Hosting of Age-Friendly Business workshops for Ennis businesses.



Mary O'Mara, Winner of the 2021 Clare Older Person of the Year Award.

- A Digital Nursing Home Project saw every nursing home in Clare receive a tablet and Alexa device to connect residents with the outside world and their friends/relatives.
- Hosting of an 'Older Person of the Year Award' ceremony in the Templegate Hotel.
- A digital smartphone project allowed socially isolated older people to stay digitally connected with their friends, families & neighbours within their communities.

Clare County Council continues to host meetings for the Clare Older People's Council, which were held online for most of 2021 due to Covid 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 2021 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 continued in 2021 and was led by Rural and Community Development. It was hosted on Clare County Council's webpage <https://www.clarecoco.ie/together> connecting the public to information about local resources and initiatives that were available under the following Keep Well Themes: Keeping active, Keeping in contact, Switching off and being creative, Eating well and Managing your mood.

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



Tidy Towns Network

Clare Tidy Towns Network, an initiative by the Rural Development Directorate and led by the Rural and Community Development Officers (RCDOs), with support from the Heritage Office, initiated a virtual Tidy Towns Network, which synergises the knowledge and volunteerism of community groups. Within the framework of the county's Rural Development Strategy and its core objectives (e.g. creating cooperation across communities), the RCDOs operate closely with community partners to develop solutions to forward the aims and objectives of the strategy. The importance of retaining volunteer enthusiasm, expertise and engagement was highlighted by community participants with the RCDOs, resulting in the first stage in the development of a digital platform for the exchange of ideas and expertise which focuses on keeping volunteers informed and engaged on a cross county level. The network, accessible countywide, facilitates knowledge sharing, expertise led insights and coordinated actions to support Tidy Towns groups to continue making their localities a better place to work and live, whilst creating space for all voices to be heard despite the restrictions of the pandemic.

This initiative was run on a countywide basis, on foot of a consultation process involving input from 45 Tidy Towns groups. Through a series of interactive workshops, which all groups were invited to, digital media was created to form the basis of the digital library/database, stored on the platform. This facilitated cross county communication and generation of network links. The communication with and participation of all Tidy Towns groups was facilitated by the working relationship of the RCDOs and the Rural Development Department with these groups. The interactive online nature of the network allowed for engagement and participation at a time when in person meetings were impossible and

created a tool for supporting this engagement throughout the Covid-19 crisis and beyond.

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.



The RCDOs facilitated the growth of the network by utilising their community engagement expertise, to bring voices from across the county on board. By identifying community leaders to continue to drive the platform and network and supporting them, the LA/RCDOs supported the participants to continue their important community role.

It is envisaged as the network beds in, and community leaders supported by Rural and Community Development Officers, lead out on further work, the network can apply for support funding from appropriate schemes. Funding the network will have a greater 'ripple out' impact, as it can target all Tidy Towns groups in the county, generating increased impact for investment. The Rural Development Directorate has identified network establishment as a key tool in generating broad community engagement with a focus on these supports being sustainable and replicable and will offer financial support in the short term and staff support in the medium term.

Pride of Place

The 2021 IPB Pride of Place took place remotely. Clare was represented by two groups, namely Ballyvaughan Community Development Group and Spanish Point Community Group. All groups did their localities proud with innovative and engaging virtual presentations that greatly impressed the judges. Due to Covid-19, the award ceremony for 2021 has not yet taken place.

Burial Grounds

The Council continues to oversee the burial ground function with ongoing maintenance and upkeep of over 160 burial grounds.

Grass cutting and maintenance was carried out by Council personnel, contractors and community groups.

In addition, in 2021, significant work was also carried out on tree surgery, gate refurbishment, ivy shaving, increased signage and on improvements to internal footpaths and roadways.

The input of local community groups into the upkeep of older burial grounds is supported annually under the burial ground element of the Council's Community Support Scheme.



Burial Grounds.

Clare Covid-19 Community Response

Approximately 40 community and voluntary groups around the county continued to support the 'Community Call' during 2021 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 356 calls to the helpline in 2021.

Local Community Development Committee

The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) had another busy year of managing an extensive range of strategic programmes and activities.

A total of €139,257 was awarded to Clare County Council under the Community Enhancement Programme for 64 local projects. The key theme for 2021 was aimed at supporting groups to re-open facilities which were closed due to Covid-19 which included community centres, men's and women's sheds, parish halls and youth centres.

The Covid-19 Emergency Fund is also administered locally by the Clare LCDC received a second round of Covid-19 Emergency Fund totalling of €49,351 in 2021 which funded five projects.

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) for 2021 was delivered and targets met despite Covid-19 restrictions with a budget of €939,232.17.

Public Participation Network

The Public Participation Network (PPN) structure brings together volunteer-led groups in each local authority area from the community and voluntary, environment and social inclusion sectors. Clare PPN is committed to community consultation and participation so that the experience and expertise of those of living in County Clare is reflected in policy and decision-making at a local and national level to deal with a drastically changed society.

The 2021 Service Level Agreement was finalised between the PPN and Clare County Council and an Annual Work Plan was agreed for the year. The Secretariat is supported by two part-time Co-ordinators and one Support Worker who drives the work of the PPN.

The 2021 operational costs of the PPN were met from a Department grant of €75,700 and a contribution from Clare County Council of €55,000.

Healthy Clare

Healthy Ireland, a framework for improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025 is the national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of Ireland over the coming generation. The strategic direction and priorities outlined in the Plan were aligned to regional policies and strategies and identified a number of community-based activities that would impact positively on people's lives in terms of their physical, mental and sexual health which also challenged and addressed the negative effects of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

Healthy Clare launched the 'Not Around Us' campaign to coincide with National No-Smoking Day on 17th February, 2021. It was aimed at creating a Smoke and Vape Free environment, to help de-normalise smoking for the next generation and also to protect our older citizens of the future. The campaign was in response to the government's national

We're Breastfeeding Friendly Clare.





JPC Members with the Garda Commissioner, Drew Harris.

target for a less than 5% smoking prevalence in Ireland by 2025.

On 4th October, 2021, Healthy Clare, in conjunction with the HSE, launched the 'We're Breastfeeding Friendly Clare' campaign which coincided with the National Breastfeeding Week (1st-7th October) and was supported by Healthy Ireland. This campaign was an important step in the right direction to build on community and societal support for breastfeeding.

In October 2019 the Department of Health approved a third round of funding for the Healthy Ireland Fund. A total of €184,000 was allocated to LCDC/CYPSC for this Round 3 grant which ran from 1st July, 2019, to 31st March, 2022.

Joint Policing Committee

The Clare Joint Policing Committee (JPC) was established in 2009 under the Garda Síochána Act 2005. The overall aim of the JPC is to serve as a forum for consultations, discussions and recommendations on matters affecting the policing of Clare County Council's administrative area. The JPC also review levels

and patterns of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour and the factors contributing to such crime. There are 31 JPC members comprising Elected Members, Oireachtas Members, Community and Voluntary representatives, An Garda Síochána, and Local Authority Officials. Due to Covid-19, the first three meetings were held online in February, April and September of 2021. At the April 2021 meeting, a presentation was given on the supports available for victims of crime. 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 a discussion on matters relating to the following issues:

- Illegal encampments
- Barring order breaches and domestic violence in Clare
- Drug dealing/detection
- Alcohol and drug related road offences
- Homeless situation in Ennis
- Increase in anti-social behaviour in Ennis and Kilrush
- CCTV Scheme for Clarecastle
- Temporary Accommodation for the Winter Initiative

- Legislation in relation to body cams for An Garda Síochána
- Theft of MPVs, catalytic convertors and thefts from cars
- Kilrush Multi-Agency Task Force
- Tourism; staycations, camping and traffic pinch points/congestion
- Garda patrols in housing estates
- Mental Health Supports
- Unanswered 999 calls in the Clare division
- Ennis Purple Flag status
- Policing Plan in relation to staycations/ tourists
- JPC 6 Year Plan 2022-2027
- Community Safety Partnership Pilots
- Retirement of Superintendent Brendan McDonagh
- Boy racers and anti-social behaviour in Ennis.

In October 2021, the Clare JPC welcomed a visit by the Garda Commissioner, Drew Harris. The Commissioner addressed the JPC Members in the Council Chamber and delivered a presentation on the New Garda Operating Model. He took questions from JPC Members around community engagement, crime and traffic/roads policing.

The aim of the new Garda Operating Model is to help modernise An Garda Síochána at divisional level. This has included organisational changes in Clare, aimed at strengthening An Garda Síochána's high visibility presence in local communities and enhancing their capability in frontline policing.

Tourism Department

2021 was a very challenging year for the Tourism Industry but also provided a time to strengthen and build networks and improve destination marketing which managed to contribute significantly to the strengthening of the tourism product in Clare.

Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 - Guiding our Journey to a Vibrant New Future in Tourism

On 22nd April, 2021, and in keeping with the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions in place, Cathaoirleach Mary Howard virtually launched the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 along with Mr Paul Kelly, Chief Executive of Fáilte Ireland.

This launch of the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 was one of the first of its kind in terms of a long-term Tourism Strategy to be launched with full consideration given to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 has defined a clear direction. It reflects the aspirations of local government, industry and communities and has established a new level of consensus that will stimulate collaboration and coordinated action. The concept of sustainability underlies the entire ethos of the Strategy and is embedded within all 29 strategic priorities. It offers a path toward a greater level of resilience which is crucial at this moment of anticipated recovery, and it highlights the regenerative potential of tourism when all players work together toward the same vision. Maintaining this consensus and momentum and following this road map will set the stage for Clare to be lead destination at the forefront of innovation in rural tourism within Ireland, and indeed beyond. Tracking this progress and the factors that contribute to it will remain of high interest as the county seeks to operationalise this new paradigm for doing business, and for working collaboratively on

integrated planning, experience development and marketing.

Clare Tourism Advisory Forum

In March 2021, this Clare Tourism Recovery Taskforce moved to become the Clare Tourism Advisory Forum, maintaining the focus on the recovery of the Tourism Industry post Covid-19 pandemic but also bringing a focus to long-term strategic actions to be implemented across the county. The Clare Tourism Advisory Forum, along with Elected Member representatives of each of the Municipal Districts of the county, is chaired and vice chaired by the Tourism Industry, namely Mr Sean Lally and Mr Maurice Walsh, respectively. It is the voice of tourism in Clare. This forum is about ensuring a unified approach to tourism across the county.

Marketing and Promotion

In 2021, the Clare Tourism Department created a free Share Clare Marketing Resource Bank which makes available online a range of digital promotional resources which are free-to-use including:

- Over 1,700 professionally taken tourism photos of Clare, including stunning

aerial images. These photographs are searchable and free to use. Most photographs include people enjoying Clare – showing others what they can expect to experience. If you are looking for brilliant images of the Cliffs of Moher, the Burren, Clare's Wild Atlantic Way, the River Shannon and Lough Derg, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, brilliant activities and attractions, history hunting, dining, unique features of Ennis, Clare's towns and villages, as well as the riches of the Shannon Estuary walk in South Clare, etc. – they are all here and easy to find and download.

- The Bank also includes links to County Clare Digital Flipbooks.
- Social media posts, sized for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Plus, there are backgrounds that can be used for online meetings.
- E-Brochures: 32 Reasons to Visit Clare and Clare's Wild Atlantic Way.
- QR codes that link to resources.



Photograph of Cathaoirleach Mary Howard, Chief Executive Pat Dowling, Director of Service for Rural Development, Leonard Cleary and A/Head of Tourism, Deirdre O'Shea taken at the Bridges of Ross to officially mark the launch of the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030.



Also during 2021, the Tourism Department created a suite of promotional videos which were free to use and share by the Tourism Industry in promoting the county for a time that is safe to travel. Clare was strongly promoted as a place to visit for staycations during 2021.

Fáilte Ireland 'Outdoor Seating & Accessories for Tourism & Hospitality Business' Scheme

The Tourism Department administered over €540,000 in Fáilte Ireland outdoor dining funding, which was provided to support Clare businesses, to the benefit of the local economy. 186 County Clare tourism and hospitality businesses were enabled to create outdoor dining experiences during 2021.

The purpose of this scheme was to assist tourism and hospitality businesses in

purchasing or upgrading extra outdoor seating, thereby creating additional dining capacity in a regulated manner.



Capital Projects

Work continued on the Tourism Capital Projects throughout 2021, namely the Loop Head Lighthouse Visitor Experience, Vandeleur Walled Gardens and Inis Cealtra (Holy Island), each funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development, with match funding from Clare County Council.



Inis Cealtra (Holy Island) Visitor Experience

The Old Rectory site complete with a Georgian house was purchased in 2021. The consultants worked hard to expedite designs to repurpose the Old Rectory building as visitor facilities and community hub. A Part VIII (planning permission process) was adopted by the full Council in May 2021.

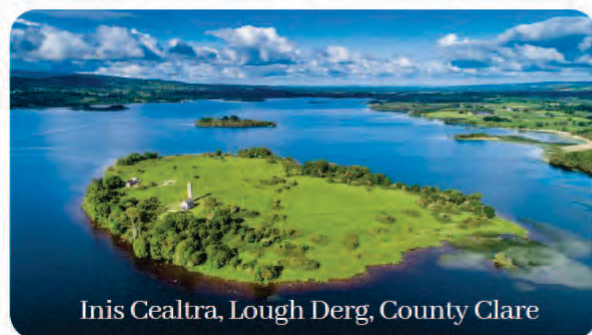
This project is in collaboration with the Office of Public Works, National Monuments Service, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. There has been close engagement with Mountshannon Community Council to ensure it enhances and complements the village of Mountshannon and its surrounding area. 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.

Applications were successful under 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. Clare County Council commenced work on adapting the designs for both locations. 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.



A view of Mountshannon from Lough Derg



Inis Cealtra, Lough Derg, County Clare



The Old Rectory to be re-purposed and extended as a Visitor Centre



Riadas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Tionscatal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Árdíodhchái
Tuaithis
Our Rural
Future



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithis agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development



An Ciste um Athghineáil
agus Forbartha
Rural Regeneration and
Development Fund



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLAIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

Cliffs of Moher Experience

Cliffs of Moher Experience was closed for the first three months of the year and experienced a difficult trading environment as a result of extended closures, Covid-19 restrictions, and the dependency on the domestic market. Overall domestic market performed well, and visitor experience satisfaction rates excelled due to the safety measures in place, ability to give one-to-one experiences and authentic customer experiences. In August restrictions were lifted on international travel and this marked the return of overseas visitors in small numbers. Overall visitor numbers were 333,041 with 266,390 FIT's and 66,651 groups. The Cliffs of Moher Board supported the Cliffs of Moher Experience in crisis management through extended closures and with the following initiatives.

Governance

Cliffs of Moher Centre Ltd company status was updated to Cliffs of Moher Centre Designated Activity Company (DAC). Clare County Council and the Cliffs of Moher Centre Board collaborated to update the company constitution and company type, and both were registered with the Company Registrations Office. A Service Level Agreement was developed between Clare County Council and Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC setting out the roles and responsibilities between both parties, both Clare County Council and Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC Board have approved the agreement.

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 site masterplan for the iconic attraction that

protects the natural environment and enhances the overall experience over the long term. Preliminary research is complete, onsite investigations and onsite studies are ongoing to understand the challenges and help identify opportunities to realise future aspirations. In a two-phase consultation process, extensive round one public and stakeholder meetings took place between April and September. 25 stakeholder consultation meetings were held including Fáilte Ireland, IFA, NPWS, North Clare local Community Groups, tenants, staff, local landowners, local businesses, Burren Eco Tourism, Clare PPN, Ennis 2040, ITOA and CTTC. Public display boards were placed in each municipal district outside the public libraries in Ennistymon, Ennis, Kilrush, Shannon and Killaloe and at the Cliffs of Moher Experience. 5,200 questionnaires were posted to North Clare Residents, written expressions were invited, and information made available on the website and through social media. The feedback will help shape the project before it is finalised.

Cliffs of Moher Design Package

Dovetailing with the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 is a package of works for design with appointed consultants Henchion & Reuter Architects and led by Steering Committee. The focus of the design package is to develop a set of designs emerging from the concept designs of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy to take to planning stage. These designs include remediating cliff side landscape west of the R478, pathways, viewing areas, new arrivals, parking scheme and significant habitat improvements. Site and infrastructure appraisals, ecological surveys and site investigations are ongoing to inform designs.

Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk Emergency 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 ORIS funding €19,438 for the southern section and €19,933 for the northern section was secured to fund part of the project. Guerin and Considine were appointed to complete the works which included raising Liscannor Stone flags, gravel pathways, handrails, and steps and a 500m dry stone wall in the northern section. Works were completed in September 2021. The final cost of the project was €630,980.

Sustainability and Community

Cliffs of Moher Experience is a main Geosite in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Geopark adhering to the Code of Practice, committing to continuous sustainability improvements. An audit on water, waste and energy was completed and a system for ongoing monitoring has been put in place, highlighting areas for improvement. A series of sustainability initiatives have been implemented including, reducing consumption of resources, improved maintenance practices,

adopting the National Pollinator Plan, new water refill station, replacing paper site maps with Audio Guide and map, working with local food, craft, art and designers and training all staff under the 50 Shades Greener Programme. 14 staff participated in the Junior Achievers Programme online with local primary schools, 2 TY students were facilitated from local secondary schools.

Visitor Attraction Management System

Viva Ticket have been appointed to implement a new visitor attraction management system. The system is being introduced to assist with capacity management onsite and includes ticketing, number plate recognition cameras, new barriers, new point of sale systems and enhanced reporting capabilities.

During 2021, Cliffs of Moher staff and Vivaticket worked on functionality and design of the new system, going live with phase 1 early 2022. Phase 1 covered the ticketing requirements onsite, while Phase 2 of the project will implement Group and online bookings.



Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk.

Visitor Experience

Initiatives including all-encompassing admission, online bookings under a dynamic pricing model, 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

Covid-19 measures continued and adjusted 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.

New Website and Audio Guide App

New website launched at the end of November, 60 pages in total with new imagery. Website promotes the Cliffs of Moher Experience and County Clare with its beautiful landscape, other attractions and activities, and award-winning accommodation. Collaborative marketing with local stakeholder, hoteliers, ferry companies, is pushed out on all digital platforms.

New app and audio guide launched in July. The app includes exclusive discounts available in the café and in the gift stores. All stories about the Cliffs brought to life by our Cliffs of Moher team voices. Upcoming events promoted on the app. In phase 2 for translation and other features. Increase uptake by promoting to coach drivers, signage etc. Updating regularly with offers and news.



Rebranding

Cliffs of Moher Experience had a requirement to undergo a visual identity and brand strategy exploration to develop the brand creatively and strategically, to keep current, to appeal to new markets, and to stand out in the marketplace. The rebranding scope/requirement was to produce a dynamic branding system that will be applied to a variety of sites, media, platforms, and environments and produce a guideline document demonstrating brand usage across all relevant media applications.

Research and consultation was required on existing brand identity, to develop a brand strategy that will help with positioning, values, and tone of messaging and will result in a final set of guidelines that will become the brand bible that has a fully comprehensive set of rules, templates, and available assets for anything related to the brand and usage across all relevant media applications. The proposed outcome will be to cement the Cliffs of Moher Experience as a brand that is recognised worldwide and is portrayed as a world-class destination and holistically tying in with the Wild Atlantic Way, Cliffs of Moher and Burren UNESCO Global Geopark, the Burren and VisitClare.ie

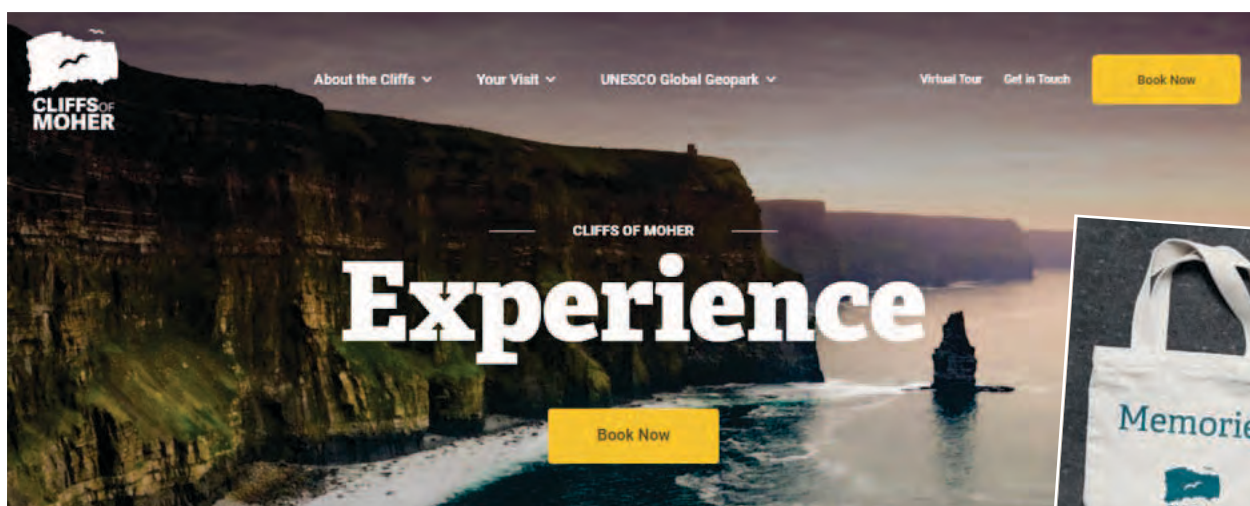
Trade Events

In person events were attended:

- World Travel Market, November 2021, London
- USTOA 2021, San Diego, 7-10 December, 2021.

Social Media

Platform	13th Dec 2021	Jan 18th 2021	Variance
Facebook followers	128,853	123,545	+5,308
Facebook likes	123,729	119,452	+4,277



Twitter	10,353	9,957	+396
Instagram followers	12,546	9,296	+3,250
LinkedIn followers	935	347	+588
Youtube subscribers	513	439	+74
Email subscribers	21,848	14,000	+7,848
App downloads	2,970	1129 in Oct	+1,841

Online digital marketing: social media figures.

Digital and Broadband Department

2021 saw the establishment of a number of open Wi-Fi zones in various towns and locations throughout the county. This initiative was developed and rolled out by Clare County Council in partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development and the European Commission following the successful application to both organisations for funding under the WIFI4EU Programme. These open internet access points are located in a number of towns and villages in the county and provide access for all to hi-speed broadband at these locations. The towns of Kilrush, Ennistymon, Ennis, Scariff, Lisdoonvarna and Kilkee have now been completed with planning for a number of other locations now underway. To

date this service has proved to be extremely popular with both locals and visitors finding the service to be hugely beneficial in facilitating access to broadband and the internet.

DigiClare remote working/ community hubs

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. The services provided include hot desks, meeting rooms, full audiovisual facilities etc. with hi-speed Wi-Fi connectivity. 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 pandemic. 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.

In 2021 the Digital and Broadband Department successfully secured funding from the Department of Rural and Community

Development through the Connected Hubs programme. This enabled the Council to provide additional facilities at a number of its existing hubs and also to establish a new facility in our capital town Ennis. The Ennis Digital Hub, which is located in the Quin Road Business Park, now provides the facilities of hot desks, private offices and pods, meeting rooms and training rooms, video conferencing and audiovisual facilities. This facility was officially opened by Minister Heather Humphreys in June 2021 and all information and online booking is available at www.digiclare.ie.

Cross Digital and Community Hub: This project was completed in partnership with the local development association, Kilballyowen Development. Funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development Town and Village Renewal Accelerator programme

was successfully secured. It involved the refurbishment and repurposing of the existing national school building in Cross village into a Digital and Community Hub.

This facility not only provides remote working facilities for both local and visitors but it also provides a community space for local groups and organisations to use as they require be it for group meetings, events or social gatherings. Since its opening it has also proved to be an extremely popular remote working location particularly during the holiday periods.

All information in relation to the network of Council operated DigiClare Hubs is available on www.digiclare.ie.

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





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE



LIAM CONNEALLY
Director of Economic Development

Introduction

2021 was another busy year for the Council's Economic Development Directorate. Increased planning and development activity (up 35%) 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 Clare LEO's performance. In addition to the Shannon aviation and light engineering clusters 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

Lufthansa, Roche and UDC/PPG to prepare a skills matrix and upskilling of the workforces seeking new job opportunities. Throughout 2021 the Council continued to work closely with the ESB in relation to the future of the Moneypoint power plant.

Throughout 2021 Clare County Council continued 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 2023-2029 early in 2023.

The preparation of both the Killaloe Town Enhancement and Mobility Strategy and the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan neared conclusion, whilst the preparation of a Roche Masterplan commenced earlier in the year. The establishment of a Maritime Training Centre was progressed with the securing and reassigning of €1.75million EI grant for a site in Kilrush Marina, adding to the momentum and national focus in 2021 towards harnessing opportunities emerging for the wider renewable energy industry in Shannon Estuary and the West Coast.

Clare Economic Task Force (CET)

During 2021, the CET consisting of a group of public and private sector leaders continued to meet. The Group chaired by Mr Noel Kilkenny informs and guides the Council in economic development measures that will stimulate job creation in County Clare.

The Clare Economic Task Force terms of reference are 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

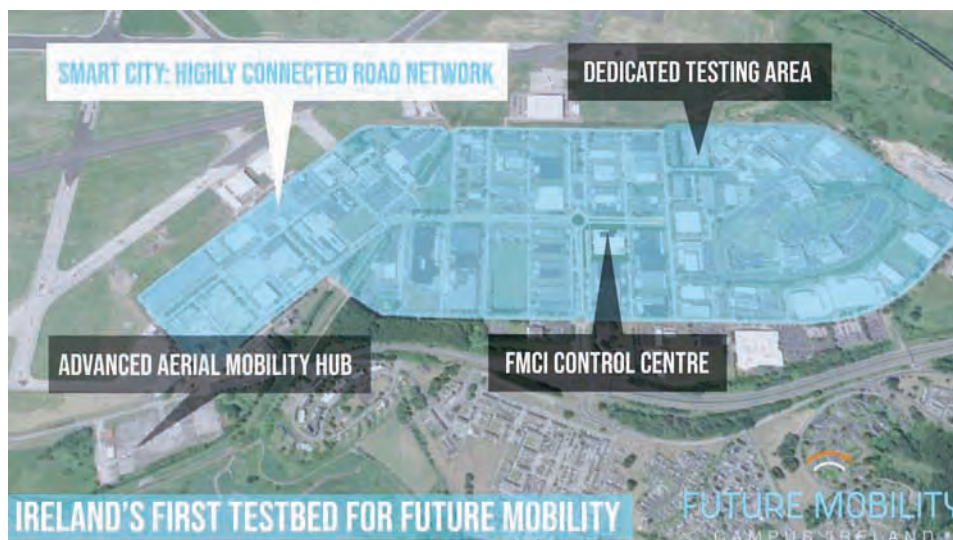
assist all sectors of the County Clare economy.

The task force continued to focus on the aviation sector and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown during 2021. The IDA's "Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021" and the Regional Enterprise Action Plan 2021 were presented to the task force and provided insights to both local and regional challenges.

The group received presentations on the Future Mobility Campus Ireland autonomous car test bed in Shannon Free Zone, 'Investment Potential on the Shannon Estuary', the potential of the off-shore renewable energy sector for Clare and a range of other initiatives, capital projects and emergency response measures progressed through Clare County Council.

Future Mobility Campus Ireland (FMCI)

The Council is also a partner in Future Mobility Campus Ireland (FMCI) and the Director of Economic Development is a company director representing the public sector on the Board. FMCI is made up of many multi-national and SME companies on the Western Seaboard as well as Clare County Council and Limerick City and County Council. This project has been funded by Enterprise Ireland, both Councils





and private companies to build a Test Bed for future mobility (connected autonomous vehicles and drones) in the Shannon Free Zone. This is an exciting project which has great potential to attract economic activity in Shannon, County Clare and the Mid-West Region.

Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Four meetings of the Committee were held during 2021 with a range of policy areas such as climate adaptation, biodiversity, planning, offshore renewable energy examined. The Committee comprises 7 elected members of Clare County Council and 6 sectoral representatives and is supported by the Director of Service, Liam Conneally. The key work focus for the SPC in the coming years will include the review of the County Development Plan and the Development Contribution Scheme, enablement of the offshore renewable energy industry and associated supply chain supports, 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)

Acting on a decision by the Elected Members in 2018 the Council continued work on the preparation of the South Clare/UL Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) application. 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 SDZ.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the South Region provides significant regional policy priority to the SDZ and identifies the site 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 focus in 2021 following the completion in 2020 of a Social and Economic Appraisal Report of the benefit of the SDZ Deloitte in 2020 was on the establishment and legal framework 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

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 comprises 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 MDs, commercial and business interests, the tourism and hospitality sector and the general public took place throughout 2021 with the plan adopted by the Members of Killaloe MD in November and the Full Council meeting in December. 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 is funded by Government's Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) and Clare County Council. The Masterplan, comprising 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

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 whilst providing for greater connectivity between the Town Centre, the Free Zone, the Airport and the Estuary.

The purpose of the Masterplan is to plan for the economic future and spatial pattern for the centre of Shannon Town. The Masterplan proposes to unlock development potential in Shannon Town Centre and guide its built and economic development.

Among the proposals set out in the draft Masterplan is:

- Activating greenfield land in the town centre and the creation of an Innovation Campus
- an improved Main Street
- the creation of a New Street and new Town Square, and
- high-quality urban town centre living areas
- enhancement of connections to the estuary and preservation and

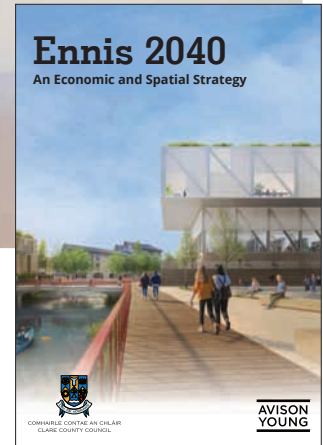
enhancement of the amenity of the Town Park, as well as

- an implementation roadmap for its delivery.

One Shannon Hub will be a place with multiple uses developed and owned by Clare County Council to create a civic building which will combine as a town hall, a performing arts venue, and a flexible working and innovation space. This three-in-one approach will merge community, cultural and civic uses, with Council offices relocated to the heart of the town, reinforcing the commitment by the local authority for a town centre presence. Taken together with the proposed Innovation Campus in the town centre, these projects will provide a significant opportunity to create a vibrant Shannon Town Centre.

Two rounds of public consultation occurred in 2021 with the Masterplan at the concluding stages of development by way of a final round of public consultation in November. It is intended following current round of public consultation that the Masterplan, which will align with the emerging 'Town Centres First' policy will be adopted in January 2022 and an application for significant funding under the *Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)* will be made to Government in the new year for implementation of the plan.





Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy

During 2021 the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy was officially launched by An Tánaiste, Leo Varadkar, TD. 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 2021, 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)

During 2021 work on 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 Co. Clare and Dooneen Point in Co. Kerry continued. 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 included un-surveyed areas 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% 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 and early 2021. 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.

PLANNING

Forward Planning

Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

The preparation of the new Clare County Development Plan continued during 2021 throughout the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and will set out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county over a six-year period.

The Draft Clare County Development Plan was issued on 16th June to the Elected Members for their consideration prior to its adoption and public consultation. On 16th July the government issued new legislation, the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2021, which includes provisions that enable a planning authority to extend the development plan process by up to a period of one year due to the impacts of Covid-19. The Elected Members decided to avail of these provisions and to extend the period by up to 7 months to prepare the new Clare County Development Plan, thereby amending the timeline for the final making of the new County Development Plan 2023-2029 to March 2023.



The adopted Draft Clare County Development 2023-2029 was placed on public consultation on 10th December for a period of 15 weeks during which time a programme of consultation events are planned at a number of locations around the county during the consultation period.

The Draft Clare County Development Plan consists of 10 volumes which, in addition to the main policy written statement and written statements and maps for all settlements within the county, included a Record of Protected Structures, a new Clare Renewable Energy Strategy, Retail Strategy and Housing Strategy as well a Natura Impact Report, Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.



Sixmilebridge Town Centre Masterplan

On December 9th the Minister for Rural and Community Development announced funding to deliver the first ever Town Centre First Plans to tackle dereliction and revitalising town centres, and Sixmilebridge was one of the first 26 towns selected under this initiative.

The funding of €100,000 was allocated to Clare County Council to prepare a Town Centre Masterplan for Sixmilebridge town centre and immediate surrounds which will provide a vision for the development of the town, include a detailed study of the area and identify key projects / actions which will revitalise the town centre e.g. refurbishment/repurposing of vacant and/or derelict buildings, development of key underutilised town centre sites, traffic management, place-making etc. The Masterplan will be key to leveraging funding from multiple funding streams, including RRDF and Town & Village Renewal Scheme as it will provide a co-ordinated programme of investment for the town into the future. The preparation of a Town Centre Masterplan will be progressed by the Planning Department during 2022.

Ennistymon Enhancement Plan

Clare County Council, together with its partners Clare Local Development Company and Ennistymon Town Team, and the design team led by Helena McElmeel Architects continued work on the preparation of the Ennistymon Enhancement Plan. The enhancement plan seeks to build upon existing Clare County Council proposals in exploring the potential of the existing townscape and its built environment. The strategy is looking at key sites in the town centre to guide their development in a positive way. It seeks to enhance the quality of the public space to create a vibrant and inclusive townscape. Public consultation continues to be a key part of the project, and the Design Team have engaged with the local community through a robust and intensive two-stage consultation plan. The outcomes and observations obtained from both stages of the public consultation process is richly informing the design process, which is due to be finalised by in late summer 2022.



Corofin Enhancement Strategy

Throughout 2021 Clare County Council and National Parks & Wildlife Services (NPWS) continued in their partnership to prepare an enhancement strategy for the village of Corofin. In March 2022, The Department of Rural and Community Development announced that the Corofin Enhancement strategy has been successful in its application to the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. This funding stream supports the development of projects aiming to breathe life into rural communities, tackle vacancy and address dereliction in our towns and villages. The aspirations of the Corofin Enhancement Strategy align well with these principles, as we look to define new uses for derelict properties and provide public realm improvements through thoughtful and sensitive interventions. A design team led by the award-winning Hall McKnight Architects has been appointed. The design team are currently in the first stage of the design process, and this is heavily informed by the findings of the first stage of public consultation and baseline research. The enhancement strategy will be finalised by early 2023.



The Manchester Martyrs Monument

The Manchester Martyrs Monument in Kilrush is being repaired and restored with grant aid received from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the Historic Structures Fund 2021. This capital investment fund seeks to promote the conservation of historic structures for the broader benefit of communities and the public. This monument was erected in the heart of Kilrush Town in 1903 and is one in a series of monuments built around Ireland to commemorate the memory of the Manchester Martyrs. Mid-West Lime Ltd have been appointed to carry out the repair works on site. Restoration works commenced in January 2022, with the removal of the wrought iron railings for repair off-site. These repair works are being undertaken by the historic blacksmith Brendan St. John, and will continue into the coming months. The repair and cleaning of the stonework has progressed significantly, revealing the significant progress made on the repair of the stonework to this point. Work on the monument will continue into late-summer 2022.



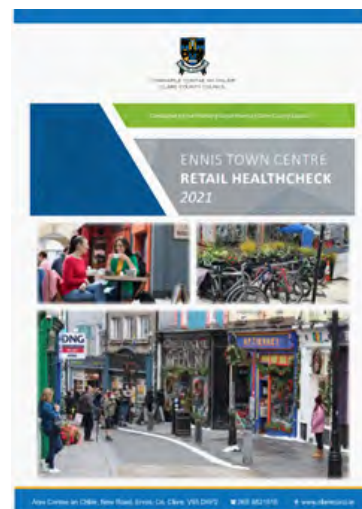
Flexible Outdoor Structures

In 2021 Clare County Council received funding under the Outdoor Public Space Scheme as promoted by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. This funding stream seeks to reimagine how we use our outdoor public spaces. The use of public space for cultural offerings is an intrinsic

part of our traditional way of life, in particular the rich tradition of festivals and outdoor events we have in County Clare. This project looks to support this culture, offering new ways to diversify and enhance its experience while prompting us to consider new ways and new settings in which they can occur. GKMP Architects have been appointed to lead a multi-disciplinary design team to develop this project. It proposes a series of flexible outdoor structures for use during festivals and outdoor events. The project is currently in the design stage, and the project team will be initiating the consultation process with key stakeholders as part of this stage of the project. The project will be completed by year end 2022.

Ennis Town Centre Health Check

A survey of Ennis Town Centre ground floor land uses was undertaken for Ennis in 2021. The Town Centre Health Check presents a valuable comparison between the results for 2021 with those of previous years allowing for patterns of land use to be identified. Copies are 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 commenced the process of getting valuations prepared on the sites and will continue to monitor the lands and engage with landowners in 2022.

Architectural Conservation

In November 2021 the Planning Department welcomed a new Conservation Officer who took up their position in the Forward Planning Section. During 2021, 20 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 and the Conservation Officer will continue to develop this advisory role moving forward.

Funding for protected structures and buildings in ACAs was provided in 2021 by the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage through the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structures Fund (HSF). In total, grants totalling €72,000 were provided to assist works on 9 projects under the BHIS. Also in 2021 €94,129 of grant aid was provided under the HSF in respect of three projects which included

- Oatfield Church, Sixmilebridge
- Manchester Martyrs' Monument Kilrush
- St Flannan's Cathedral Killaloe.

Heritage

Burren World Heritage Tentative List Application

Clare County Council continued to liaise with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the two applications made to the World Heritage Site tentative List for the Burren and Holy Island.

Phase 2 of the Biodiversity Demonstration Sites

The final reports from Phase 1 of the Biodiversity Demonstration Sites conducted in 2020 including species records and recommendations on the 10 biodiversity demonstration sites (public amenity areas) were distributed to the relevant stakeholders, including Clare County Council staff and community groups. These demonstration sites were featured in a two-part documentary series on TG4 on 31st March 2021, *Cumhacht an Nádúir, The Power of Nature*. This documentary looks at the solace nature has offered during this pandemic and how it may fuel the debate for a broader range of wildlife habitat and land management. Work on Phase 2 continued in 2021 with projects undertaken at Two Mile Gate, Ballycuggeran, Shannon, O'Sullivan Park and the Tidy Town Network in early 2021.

Biodiversity Webinars

Online biodiversity webinars were facilitated to Tidy Town groups in association with the Rural Directorate. A series of three biodiversity webinars were delivered to the community groups in Shannon Town as part of a cross-department collaboration between Shannon MD, Planning and the Rural Directorate.

The County Clare Swift Survey

On foot of the results of the Clare Swift Survey 2020 (which showed that there is a very small population of Swift remaining in the county, with only 56 Swift nests having been located), a number of swift nest bricks and nest boxes were purchased and made available to encourage owners of suitable buildings to retain and supplement opportunities for Swifts to breed.

Clare Keep Well campaign

A Spring into Heritage poster was published on the Clare Keep Well website on 10 ways

to experience Clare Heritage in the Spring of 2021. The Planning Department facilitated the distribution of 200 apple trees as part of this campaign.

Clare Heritage Plan Funding

The Heritage Council granted funding to Clare County Council under the Clare Heritage Plan 2017 to 2023 for the following projects:

- Conservation Plan for Hastings Farmhouse in Shannon
- Heritage from the water in association with the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board
- Clare Heritage Map Viewer
- Heritage Information Provision.

Biodiversity Week 2021 – 15th-23rd May

The Planning Department organised two online webinars in association with iCAN for Biodiversity Week. On 19th May, Dr Fran Giaquinto spoke about Biodiversity for Citizen Scientists and on 22nd May, Janice Fuller presented on Biodiversity for Community Spaces.

National Heritage Week 2021 – 14th-22nd August

Over 50 projects and in-person cultural, natural and built heritage events featured throughout County Clare during National Heritage Week. One of the many in-person events as part of Heritage Week was a tour of the Turret Lodge in Kilrush, which was a project delivered by the Planning Department on foot of Historic Towns Initiative funding.

National Biodiversity Action Plan Funding 2021

Clare County Council was awarded funding of €82,965 for new biodiversity projects from the National Parks and Wildlife Service under the National Biodiversity Action Plan grant scheme to Local Authorities. The following projects

were funded:

- Clare Wetland Project.
- Establishment of a monitoring programme to record and mitigate visitor impacts at Fanore Dunes.
- Giant hogweed eradication from a pilot test area, i.e. from the location where the Giant hogweed is first recorded on the upper catchment of River Blackwater.
- Clare County Council Invasive Alien Species (IAS) online web resource.
- Educational strategy to enhance biodiversity learning within the Local Authority, leading to improved work practices. This work will expand into community support, school education and training.
- Support for the elimination of Knotweed species:
 - (a) Knotweed eradication in Ennis
 - (b) Knotweed Survey and Action plans,
 - (c) Purchase of Knotweed treatment equipment and app development.

Clare Holy Wells Project 2021

The Clare Holy Wells Project aimed to create awareness of the many holy wells of County Clare and to celebrate their built, natural & cultural heritage significance. The resulting online resource provides information on the holy wells of County Clare which have been surveyed and explores the traditions associated with these holy wells, the historical accounts relating to the customs at the sites and provides information about the landscape in which each well sits. These web pages are not a static resource, but will develop as research on the holy wells of Clare continues. <https://heritage.clareheritage.org/category/places/holy-wells>

237 Holy Wells were surveyed with associated maps and records produced. The next phase of the project will aim to raise awareness of local Holy Wells in the community and in making them more accessible to the public and this is planned for 2022.

Heritage Council Community Heritage Funding

The Planning Department supported and facilitated community groups in their applications to the Heritage Council Community Heritage Funding, for which €87,267 was allocated to 12 projects as follows:

Applicant	Project Description	Amount
Labasheeda Projects Group – Labasheeda Le Chéile	Kilkerrin Napoleonic Battery Historical Report and Community Liaison.	€5,585
Scattery Island Heritage Group	To gather, preserve, safeguard oral histories, documents, photographs and artefacts relating to the Island community in Scattery Island in the 19th and 20th centuries, with a view to digitisation and display.	€1,478
New Quay Community Development Group	Management plan/report of art work (14 Sean O’Sullivan paintings and 2 stained glass windows) in St Patrick’s Church, New Quay, Co. Clare. Assessment of conservation needs.	€4,100
Dúchas na Sionna	Hastings Farmhouse – Conservation Works and Architectural Survey.	€10,000
Scariff Community Council	To carry out a Conservation/Condition Report on the Workhouse Water Tower in Scariff.	€12,000
Cuimhneamh an Chláir	The Clare Oral History Podcast – a podcast series based on the oral history archive of Cuimhneamh an Chláir	€8,000
The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group	Rejuvenating the Shannon Dolphin Centre and the collections it houses for greater accessibility.	€15,000
Lough Graine Nature Sanctuary	To protect biodiversity and natural heritage of the Lough Graine valley, and to raise awareness about our natural and cultural heritage, through a river survey, bat presence survey, and nature cam.	€3,867
Shannon Tidy Towns	Sustainable Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Plan for Shannon Town 2021.	€6,000
Irish Seed Savers Association	Digital Heritage Resource Development – Irish Seed Savers Virtual Reality 360 Experience.	€3,400
Cratloe Community Council	Community Heritage Audit 2021: To undertake a Heritage Audit to determine suitable actions for our new Community Plan, in order to identify, interpret, protect and manage our built heritage while respecting nearby natural heritage.	€13,487
Tuamgraney Development Association	Access and Interpretation at Limekiln, Tuamgraney: To complete the limekiln restoration project by installing a metal covering over the top of the kiln pot so it can be safely viewed and by erecting an interpretative sign for visitors.	€3,350

Conservation Plan for Hastings Farmhouse, Shannon

Hastings Farmhouse, located in Shannon Town and in the ownership of Clare County Council, was a traditional thatched farmhouse with mud/cob wall construction which has fallen into a ruinous condition. On foot of funding secured from the Heritage Council and match funding from Clare County Council a Conservation Plan, Structural Assessment Report, Specifications and Method Statements for Hastings Farmhouse has been prepared where options have been proposed with regard to the site.

Community Monuments Fund 2021

Four Clare built heritage projects received funding from the Community Monuments Fund 2021.

- Clonrush Burial Ground €30,351
- Kilkerrin Battery €29,129
- Templemaley Church and Burial Ground €13,478 and
- Kilfenora Cathedral €29,950.

Tidy Towns Local Authority Pollinator Awards 2021

In 2021, eight towns and villages in Clare have entered the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Awards including Ennis and Ennistymon along with the first time entrants from Shannon, Kilrush, Doonbeg, Labasheeda, Knock and Kilmurray McMahon, which illustrates the further success of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan approach. Not only did Ennis Tidy Towns win Ireland's Tidiest Town Award 2021, Ennis also won the Large Urban Centre Award, Sustainable Development Goals Award, Climate Action and Air Quality Awards and Water and Communities Award. Ennis is again for the third time running the winner of the South West and Mid West region All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Award.

Traveller Heritage Project

Clare County Council worked with the Burren

Outdoor Education and Training Centre (OETC) on a Traveller and Heritage Initiative in 2021. This followed on from a very successful 2020 initiative where by Traveller families and teachers from Scoil Chríost Rí, Ennis, supported and facilitated by the Burren Outdoor Education and Training Centre, participated on an eight-week kayaking programme on the River Fergus and Ballyalla Lake. The project was based on the ORBITAL* programme.

This 2021 project explored the importance of heritage to Traveller families in the Ennis area. The project involved visiting heritage sites by walking and/or kayaking to the sites and exploring the surrounding areas. Heritage site visits took place to Knockalough Lake to explore the crannog there, to Holy Island on Lough Derg, to the Ballyhee Cutting, to Quin Abbey and using the 'Pilgrim Path' which begins at the Cathedral in Ennis via 'The Rocky' on to St. John's Well near to Killone Abbey. The project funding enabled 48 parents and 48 primary school children to visit Bunratty Castle and Folk Park.

Development Management

Planning applications

The number of planning applications received in 2021 was 1399, and this represented a significant increase of almost 40% over 2019 and 2020 figures. In addition there were 7 Part VIII Local Authority own development applications. Determinations were made in relation to 1164 planning applications, of which 1096 (94.2%) were granted and 68 (5.8%) were refused. Of the 30 applications determined by An Bord Pleanála during the year, 16 decisions of Clare County Council were upheld.

Pre-planning enquiries

A total of 353 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. This represented an increase of 30% on 2020 figures.

Development contributions

The sum of €2,849,453 was collected during 2021. 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 also saw a significant increase in activity during 2021 and the activity is summarised in the following table:

Number of complaints received	306
New cases investigated	135
Warning letters issued	92
Enforcement notices issued	23
Legal cases initiated	2
Files closed	69

Taking in Charge of Housing Estates

Eight (8) housing estates were taken in charge by Clare County Council in 2021. 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 19 new developments under construction during 2021. 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.

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.

County Museum Building Upgrade Project

Construction work commenced on 5th May for the refurbishment of the County Museum building, following the lifting of the Covid-19 Level 5 restrictions for the construction sector. The main contractor was M. Fitzgibbon Ltd and there were a number of sub-contractors also involved. The project was designed in-house by Clare County Council's Design Office in conjunction with the Property Management unit, with external consultancy services engaged for mechanical, electrical and interior design. The project involved investment in the museum offering by increasing the museum space to incorporate the DeValera 1947 Dodge car (to be moved in in 2022), improving the space for the tourist office to make it more



Pictured outside the County Museum following the commencement of the County Museum refurbishment project in Ennis are (l-r): Aldo Andreucetti, Design Lead, Clare County Council; Carmel Greene, Project Leader, Clare County Council; Cllr Mary Howard, Cathaoirleach of Clare County Council; Helen Walsh, County Librarian; Niall Coonan, Project Manager, M Fitzgibbon Contractors Ltd; Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, Clare County Council; and Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development, Clare County Council.

inviting and improvements to the upstairs areas with new offices and an upgrade to the meeting room. This project shows the importance of investment in our existing buildings, particularly those at key locations in town centres. This project, completed in November 2021, has breathed new life into the County Museum building and increased footfall in the town centre. The photo shows the new office space created on the second floor which is being leased to Ennis 2040 DAC, who are driving re-investment in the town of Ennis.



Shannon Allotments Project

While the new site for the relocation of the Shannon Allotments was sourced in 2019 and completed in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic had an adverse impact in opening up the site for use. But, it became a hub of activity in Summer 2020 and has 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. A new polytunnel was installed in mid-2021 by the Allotment Association with funding from the Shannon Municipal District. The photos capture the occasion when the Cathaoirleach, PJ Ryan and the Chief Executive Pat Dowling visited the site in September 2021 and met with the allotment holders.



Resource House, Cloughleigh, Ennis

A meeting was held in September with the Ennis Community Employment Scheme Ltd who co-ordinate the participants in the scheme and are based at the Resource House in Cloughleigh. The building is owned by the Council and licensed to the Company. Their work on projects throughout the town, supported from their base here, is commendable and provides work for 35 participants, with up to 10 of them being based here. Pictured is the Scheme Co-ordinator Michael Guerin, Scheme Supervisor, Aidan O'Shea, Secretary of the Company, Cllr Mark Nestor and Ailish McMahon of the Property Management unit.



Property Transactions

The Table below shows the number of property transactions completed by the Property Management Unit in 2021. Enquiries to the Property Management Unit on issues associated with title, boundaries, old leasehold folios etc have continued to increase this year, which is indicative of high levels of activity in the property market in the county generally. The Council leases and licenses 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.

Transaction Type	2021
Lease of Property / Building	4
Licence to use property / building	11

Grazing Agreement for Lands	22
Deed of Transfer signed	12
Contract for Sale signed	3
Deed of Right of Way / Wayleave signed	3
Deed of Rectification / Variation signed	7
Allotment Agreements signed	39

Facilities Management

Improvement and monitoring of measures to ensure that the workplaces and arrangements for staff, elected members and our customers met the requirements of the Council's response plan, the national and HSE guidance on Covid-19 was a key priority for our Facilities Team in 2021.

The lighting up of the Áras to support various charitable organisations and particular occasions was done during the year, including for Christmas period. A number of improvement projects took place, including optimisation of floor space and a full refit of the Canteen in Áras Contae an Chláir.

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 Co. Clare. All casual traders, who trade on a public space, must hold a valid Casual Trading Licence. During 2021, the activity and trading levels were severely impacted by Covid-19 and most of the normal Festivals and events were cancelled.

The Casual Trading Bye-laws 2021 were adopted by each Municipal District following consultation, public display and the submissions received were all considered by the MD Members. The new Bye-Laws, the

first since 2008, are available to view on the Council's website.

	Annual Licences	Special Event Licences
Ennis	7	
Kilkee	11	
Ennistymon	2	
Doolin Pier	1	
Killaloe	15	
Fanore	1	
Total Annual Licences issued 2021	37	
Kilrush - 3 no. Horse Fair		11
Total Event Licences in 2021		11

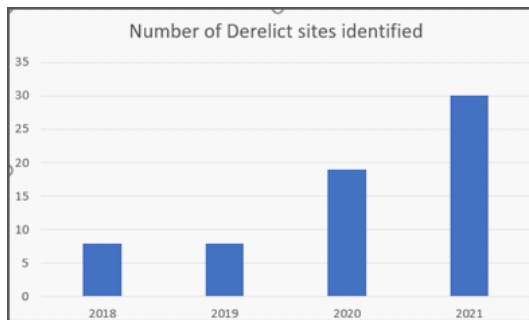
Derelict Sites

A review of all files and properties on the Derelict Sites Register was undertaken during 2021 and many new properties were inspected, assessed and contact made with owners or their representatives. There has been a positive response to the engagement with owners of derelict sites and while there were restrictions on getting works done, a number of files were closed in 2021. 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 Council welcomes the focus at national level on the vacant and derelict properties in the country and it is now well recognised that there is significant potential for re-development of such properties. This is not to say that there will not be challenges in dealing with derelict sites as we come across many issues which need to be resolved. However, with time and effort, working with owners and other departments, there are definitely

options for positive re-development and revitalisation of many such derelict sites.

The table below provides a snapshot of the activity in the year 2021, which is a substantial increase on previous years' activity, as shown in the following chart.



Derelict Sites	2021
No. of new files opened	35
No. of Section 8(2) Notices issued - Intention to enter site on Derelict Sites Register	20
No. of Section 8(7) Notices issued - Entry of site onto Derelict Sites Register	4
No. of Section 11 Notices issued - Measures required to render the site non-derelict	2
No. of files closed / property removed from Derelict Sites Register	25
No. of Notices served to Compulsorily Purchase (CPO)	0

This photograph shows a house on Ardlea Road in Ennis, which was completely refurbished. This shows again what can be done with existing vacant and derelict properties.



Local Enterprise Office

In a year dominated by recurring lockdowns and restrictions, 2021 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 2021, LEO Clare ran 93 training



programmes with over 1,537 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 164 participants. Mentoring remained a key priority with 350 “one to one” mentoring assignments taking place. Against the backdrop of economic turmoil, the number of feasibility, priming and business expansion grants approved continued to improve with 30 enterprises receiving funding approval of just over €786,000.

2021 presented a new challenge in running our annual Local Enterprise Week as all events had to be delivered online. During the week, LEO Clare delivered 18 events with 455 people attending. Overall, the week was a success and reflects a new way of delivering upskilling events in the future.

Our Student Enterprise Programme which encourages entrepreneurship across Junior, Intermediate and Senior levels in secondary schools was also hosted online for the first time ever. The programme has a total of 589 students from 10 different schools participating. The winners in 2021 came from Scoil Mhuire Ennistymon and St Joseph’s Spanish Point.



With the ongoing challenges posed by Covid-19 and impact on supply chains, LEO Clare facilitated the delivery of a client stimulus fund

to 75 enterprises that had been supported by LEO Clare historically. This programme involved the identification of specific challenges within each business and the appointment of a suitable qualified professional to assist the business overcome that challenge. Following the significant investment from LEO Clare in assisting businesses move ‘online’ in 2020, the focus turned to providing those businesses with the necessary skills to maximise new market opportunities from their newly acquired online presence. This involved upskilling in digital marketing training, promotion via #clickforclare and an audit of some businesses to measure effectiveness in using the new tools available to them. This was further supported with the return of our #lookforlocal campaign in the run up to Christmas.

2021 saw the introduction of new pilot programme “Green For Micro” aimed at raising awareness and promoting good sustainability practices among Clare enterprises. In the initial phase of this programme, 17 businesses participated.

The most pleasing outcome in 2021 was the increased number of people being employed by micro-enterprises in Clare. After registering job losses in 2020, enterprises in Clare registered a net growth in jobs of 153, placing Clare as one of the top performing counties nationally for job creation in 2021.





MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS

Clare County Council has four Municipal Districts: Ennis, Killaloe, Shannon and West Clare.

Ennis Municipal District

Ennis Public Realm Enhancement projects

The Ennis Public Realm Regeneration projects involve regenerating the public realm, significantly improving accessibility for pedestrians, providing an enhanced streetscape, and delivering two expanded, high-quality civic spaces with the overall aim of making the Town Centre experience more appealing and conducive for both retail and social purposes. The key features of the projects include shared surface treatment, widened footpaths, high-quality surface materials with improved street furniture, lighting and signage, street trees, canopy structures. The Parnell Street, Lane-ways and Bow-ways project continued construction throughout 2021, with work substantially completed in December 2021.



The High Street, Bank Place, O'Connell Square, O'Connell Street, Old Barrack Street and Barrack Square project was submitted for funding in 2021. The project, with an overall cost of €5,390,391, 75 per cent of the cost being granted funded under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund under Project Ireland 2040, and the remaining 25 per cent being financed by Clare County Council. Part VIII planning permission was secured for the O'Connell Street element of the project in 2021, with detailed design for the project being informed through a process of public

consultation, stakeholder engagement and technical design studies.

Roadworks Programme

The SMDWs was completed on time despite challenging conditions imposed by Covid-19 restrictions. The restoration improvement grant provided for asphalt overlays in Clarecastle village, Summerhill, Francis St, Claremont (Clarecastle) and Drehinagower Road, Ennis. Furthermore, funding was provided for asphalt overlay on the former national roads at Carmody St, Cornmarket St and Mill Rd. Low cost safety work was undertaken at Corrovorin junction on the Tulla Rd and at Spencilhill. Works were carried out to the tidal barrage in Clarecastle in 2021 under drainage works funding. Additional gullies were provided at various locations where historical ponding occurred.



Disability Funding

Works were undertaken at Abbey St. carpark to provide access along the riverbank and to connect the riverbank to Shanks Lane/Abbey Street. The existing disabled parking bays were re-configured to present standards. Additional drop-kerbs were provided at a number of locations in the MD.

Active Travel

Active Travel projects completed include: (1) Ballybeg footpath works (phase 1) from the Water Tower to the Quarry; (2) Cappahard Lane footpath, from Tulla Road to Cappahard Estate; (3) the pedestrian crossing on the Gort Rd, at Aughanteeroe; (4) the traffic calming project in Abbeyville/Abbeycourt.



Town & Village Renewal

The Clarecastle public realm enhancement project at the junction between Main St and Patrick St was completed. Furthermore, Barefield public realm scheme will provide safe access for pedestrians and cyclists through the village.

Traffic Management

Ennis MD implemented a traffic management system outside the HSE vaccination centre at the West County. This system was agreed with the other agencies. EMD wish to thank residents on the Clare Road for their co-operation during this time.

Climate and Environment

- Refillable water station installed in Abbey St carpark
- Biodiversity management plan – continued to implement in 2021.

Stakeholder Engagement

Temporary Covid-19 Ennis Town Centre Mobility Plan Taskforce

This group which comprised representatives from various organisations continued meeting, reviewing and assessing the current implementation of the plan at a point in time, ensuring it was fit for purpose. The exit strategy was agreed and effected 31st August. It achieved its objectives ensuring Ennis was and remains a safe place to live, visit and do business during the pandemic.

Ennis Pedestrianisation Survey

The survey was conducted in an online and paper format (distribution through the branch library network), guaranteeing accessibility to all members of the public. The objective was to capture individual preferences for navigating the town centre, the collated results informing decision making in terms of the Ennis Mobility Plan. The results were scheduled to be published by the Council in early 2022.



Fáilte Ireland Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme

Working with the Chamber, three outdoor dining zones were identified in Ennis, Abbey St, Lower Parnell St and Francis St. Using funding secured from Fáilte Ireland, festoon lighting was erected, branded parasols and windbreakers as well as outdoor furniture were secured and distributed. Planter boxes came into full bloom as the outdoor dining season took off.

Ennis launched as 'Age Friendly Town'

The aim is to make the town a great place in which to grow old. The Ennis Age Friendly Town initiative is built on the recognition of the valuable role that older people can and should play in shaping their communities for the better. Working with the Clare Older People's Council EMD have progressed a number of projects throughout Ennis Town and its environs to make the town more accessible including shared surfaces, table-top crossing points, dropped kerbs, pedestrian crossings,

age-friendly parking spaces and age-friendly seating areas.



Heritage and Culture

Daniel O'Connell Monument (RPS 702) – Refurbishment and Conservation

This project funded by the Historic Structures Fund and Clare County Council commenced, with a custom designed and built scaffolding installed around the 17.25m structure. Detailed examination revealed extensive cracking. Following cleaning, a stitching system was employed and a lightning protection system was designed and fitted into place.



St Patrick's Day 2021

St Patrick's Day 2021 was a virtual event with the theme 'Connecting Clare' where members of the public could submit their performances online which were broadcast on the day.

Christmas in Ennis

Christmas in Ennis involved turning on the lights virtually. The 'Christmas Village' in Abbey Street was a huge success. EMD together with the Arts Office welcomed and facilitated a number of pop-up music and dance performances, including a fireshow at the Height.



Killaloe Municipal District

Municipal District (MD) meetings were held bi-monthly during 2021. The members of Killaloe MD 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. The AGM of the Killaloe District took place on 24th June, 2021. Cllr Joe Cooney was elected Cathaoirleach taking over from Cllr Pat Hayes with Cllr Alan O'Callaghan elected Leas Cathaoirleach.

Cllrs passed the General Municipal Allocation at the July meeting of the MD. These projects enabled the Councillors to work with the Executive to ensure the projects were prioritised throughout the MD where funding streams were not present.

Examples of works funded and communities funded in 2021 were:

- Ballymulcashell Footpaths
- Works adjacent to Whitegate GAA and Lakyle School
- St Luas Villas Footpath, Killaloe
- Beechwood Lawn Footpath
- Clonmoney Grove Footpaths, Crusheen

- The members also adopted the budgetary plan and agreed a General Municipal Allocation of €227,321 for 2022 at their budget meeting on 10th November, 2021.

Throughout the year, the members were briefed on numerous cross-directorate projects including:

- Casual Trading Bye Laws
- Beach Bye Laws
- Inis Cealtra Holy Island
- Scarriff RRDF.

Members exercised their powers throughout the year in:

- Consideration and adoption of the Schedule of Municipal District Works for 2021
- 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 MD
- S38 Traffic calming measures at a number of locations including multiple Active Travel projects and Safety.

Strategic Workplan

Elected members along with the Executive of the MD met for workshops in mid-2021 to formulate a workplan for strategic projects. Discussions took place in relation to the future direction of the MD. A 'Strategic Workplan' document was finalised and adopted by the Councillors of the MD at the September meeting of the MD. The document listed specific priority projects/directions that the Councillors of the MD wish to pursue over the next few years.

Schedule of Municipal District Works 2021

Restoration Improvement Programme 2021 – 33km of road upgraded totalling €2,843,000.
Restoration Maintenance Programme 2021 – 43km of road upgraded totalling €779,555.
Drainage Grant – Works totalling €204,000 carried out including the upgrading of pipework and drainage ditches across the MD.

Footpaths

Multiple upgrades to footpath infrastructure across the MD including footpaths at Clonmoney Grove, Beechwood Lawn, St Luas Villas, Kilmurry Village, Doonane Footpath Tulla.

Local Improvement Scheme

Upgrade works to four roads in the MD were carried out in 2021.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

Works On the Clooney Village Town and Village Renewal Scheme occurred over 2021. The technical team in Killaloe MD oversaw construction of the project. Works were completed by Christmas 2021. The works saw an enhancement of connectivity within the village and was a project which had at its core giving Clooney Village a sense of place.

CLAR Grant

Works to Broadford Village were completed in 2021.

Active Travel

The following Active Travel projects were developed over 2021:

- Kilmurry Village – Design, Procurement and Construction complete.
- Quin Village – Design, Procurement complete in 2021. Construction complete in April 2022.
- Tulla Footpaths – Design, Procurement complete in 2021. Construction Complete in June 2022.
- Dromindoora – Design complete in 2021.
- Clarisford Park – Project design in 2021.

Climate Adaption Funding

Killaloe MD secured funding 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 2021.

Service Provision

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.

Continuing service provision in the Scarriff Office included:

- Collections of rates
- Collection of Motor Tax
- Customer complaints
- Liaising with Elected Representatives
- Administration towards the delivery of the SMDW.

Amenities

The emphasis of Summer 2021 was again on

‘staycations’. Killaloe MD put an emphasis on ensuring both Twomile Gate and Mountshannon, the two Blue Flag areas of East Clare, were prepared and maintained to a high standard.

The presence of a licensed Aquapark at Ballycuggeran was widely praised and resulted in additional tourism activity for East Clare. Additional toilet facilities were put in place at Ballycuggeran for Summer 2021.



Scarriff RRDF

A submission to the Department of Community and Rural Affairs in July 2021 regarding a Regeneration Plan for Scarriff was finalised in July 2021. The ambitious plan looks to develop physical infrastructure for the long-term benefit of the town including a multi-service centre hub, a new town car park and a Market Square public realm project. Councillors were briefed during the process. The submission was successful with €524,000 awarded to the MD to develop the project. The project will continue in development over 2022.

Ballycuggeran Amenity Building

A submission by Clare County Council to Fáilte Ireland to fund the development and construction of an amenity building at Ballycuggeran was successful in 2021. Project design was ongoing during the latter part of 2021 and will go to An Bord Pleanála for permissions in Q1 2022.

West Clare Municipal District

The Elected Members of the West Clare Municipal District (MD) met regularly during 2021 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 MD post pandemic and the provision of supports for wastewater and water supply in the MD. The General Municipal Allocation facilitated funding of a number of community projects in 2021.

Cllr Cillian Murphy was elected Cathaoirleach at the Annual General Meeting in June 2021 and Cllr Shane Talty was appointed as Leas Cathaoirleach.

At the October meeting of Clare County Council, Liam Grant was co-opted to fill the vacancy on Clare County Council arising from the retirement of Susan Crawford. By virtue of his co-option to the Council, Liam Grant fills the vacant Councillor position on the West Clare Municipal District for the lifetime of the full Council.

In November 2021 Clare County Council won a Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government (ELG) Award for an initiative to restructure its four Municipal Districts (MDs) including the West Clare MD.

The Council's winning entry was entitled 'Restructuring of Municipal Districts to improve community and economic outcomes'. The restructuring initiative involved the



realignment of staff structures at MD level in Clare County Council to identify and advance opportunities for economic development and to improve the quality of life of communities in County Clare.

Under the initiative, a senior staff member (Senior Executive Officer; SEO) was assigned to each of the MDs, and each MD was assigned to a Director of Service.

The overall objectives of the restructuring were to: identify and develop sustainable solutions to enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of local communities; advance opportunities to further drive the economic performance of MDs; exploit funding opportunities to stimulate and support local development; and ensure cross-directorate cohesion on strategies such as the County Development Plan and the Tourism Strategy.



Examples of some of the projects that were progressed in 2021:

- **A memorial garden and sculpture** marking the County Clare Nursery (Mother & Baby Home) was unveiled in June 2021 in Toler Street, Kilrush.
- **Sustainable Energy Communities** - the West Care MD continued working with Loop Head Energy Action Partnership (LEAP) and other communities in the MD on community-based sustainable energy projects in 2021.
- **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.
- **Little Ark Project**, Kilbaha completed in 2021.
- **Ennistymon Town Project** - Progress on Fáilte Ireland Tourist Destination Town public realm project with on street works commenced in 2021. Significant progress on purchase of parking areas for off the main street. CPO progression on Blake's Corner by the Project Management Office. Progress on Town Enhancement Strategy with the Project Team including Helena McElmeel Consultants, our Planning Section and the Town Team.

- **Kilrush Projects** - Significant progress on development of Masterplan for Town working with Town Team and consultants with identification of key projects being finalised. Vandeleur Woods pathway improvement works completed and Vandeleur Gardens RRDF project progressing on site. Benefits of the Kilrush Walkability Audit brought significant improvements to the public realm with the use of various funding streams including Active Travel and Council resources in ensuring works completed.
- **Doolin Village enhancement** - significant progress on pathway public realm improvements and works to the pier area.
- **Loop Head Lighthouse** - works progressed on watermain extension and project for improved visitor experience, including resurfacing and widening of the regional road.
- **Lahinch Seaworld Project** - significant progress on overall major redevelopment of the facility with construction nearing completion by end of 2021.
- **Miltown Malbay** - significant public realm works including Church Car Park resurfacing with assistance of the America Fund and Footpath improvements throughout the town under the Active Travel programme.
- **Reinstatement of significant lengths of public roads** following construction of new watermains by Irish Water from Mullagh to Miltown Malbay and at Cloonlaheen West.
- **Spanish Point** - additional works carried out at this increasingly popular location with the addition of new footpaths.
- **Fanore** - Dune Protection Works were carried out in 2021 with the MD liaising with the NPWS and UNESCO Burren

Geopark on this project.

- **EuroVelo Route** - New signage and bicycle racks were installed throughout the MD in 2021, which has helped with the ever-increasing popularity of cycling in the region.
- **Several locations benefitted from the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2021** including significant repair works on Carrigaholt piers and the installation of a new pontoon in Doonmore Pier, Doonbeg.
- A number of projects were completed under the **Climate Adaptation and Resilience Works programme in 2021** including flood relief works in Shragh and Seafield and coastal protection works in Ballyvaughan, Kilbaha, Carrowmore and Cappagh.
- The MD benefitted from the **installation of additional solar compaction bins** in a number of locations including Kilrush town and Lahinch beach. This has assisted with litter issues in these areas.
- **New bus shelters** were installed in Kilkee and Lisdoonvarna.

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 2021.
- 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.



Shannon Municipal District

Cllr John Crowe from Sixmilebridge became the Cathaoirleach of Shannon Municipal District on 18th June 2021 with Cllr Michael Begley from Clonlara taking on duties as Leas Cathaoirleach. During 2021, a total funding allocation of €27,470 was awarded to 30 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.



Cllr John Crowe - Cathaoirleach of Shannon Municipal District 2021/2022.

As the pandemic continued into 2021 the team in the Shannon Municipal District, supported by our seven Municipal District Councillors, focused on service delivery in line with national health guidelines. Our crews responded to emergency works across the MD and delivered the annual works programme on time, taking actions as restrictions adjusted. The community was served with new accessible bus shelters under Active Travel measures, upgraded footpaths, signage and cycling infrastructure at key locations while local businesses were supported with additional infrastructure and temporary road closures to enable outdoor dining.

Shannon Town Park

The Municipal District team continued our focus on biodiversity and our natural environment during 2021 having run a series of webinars in collaboration with our Heritage Officer and Rural Development Officer earlier in the year. As the season progressed we worked with a range of partners to secure a 'Green Flag Award' for the park. Green Flag is the benchmark standard for publicly accessible parks and is overseen by An Taisce and this achievement was made possible through collaboration with a number of bodies who work together

to ensure the highest standards: Some of our partners include the Shannon Leisure Centre, Councillors, Shannon Social Economy, Tidy Towns, An Garda Síochána, Dromoland Castle and of course our own staff from within the MD and across the Council.

The amenity of the Shannon Town Park was further enhanced during the year with the addition of new basketball hoops on the hard surface. One of the local teams, 'The Shannon Jets Basketball Club', were supported in their endeavours by Cllr Donna McGettigan.



Shannon In Bloom

October saw the launch of 'Shannon In Bloom' across the Shannon Municipal District with the planting of 60,000 pollinator friendly bulbs with the aid of our community networks in eleven communities. Coordinated by the team in Shannon, this project was prompted by our ongoing biodiversity focus, adding to the significant green infrastructure in the Municipal District and complementing the Shannon Town Park.



The objective was to bring colour and a sense of hope onto the landscape in the new year. The project was funded through the general municipal allocation (GMA) with the support of the seven municipal Councillors while engagement with communities was coordinated through the Rural and Community Development Officer. Graphics and logos were produced by the Clare County Council's in-house design team.

Events

The team in Shannon MD worked with a local drama group during the summer to enable the running of a successful 3-day outdoor production at the bandstand in the park.



We took this new experience of event facilitation to work with our Arts Officer and another local production company to roll out a series of busking events, 'Bualadh Busk', over the summer months – Buskers played weekly and brought joy to streets at key locations in the Shannon Town Park, Shannon Town Centre, Bunratty, Sixmilebridge and Newmarket on Fergus.



At Christmas 2021 the MD team asked our own local Santa Claus and Ms. Claus to send 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 was our second year running this event and was supported by several local singers and songwriters who brought a festive cheer via YouTube.

Tributes

This year marked the second anniversary of the passing of Cllr Mike McKee RIP. At a small ceremony in the Shannon Town Park a plaque in memory of Cllr McKee and his service to the community in Shannon Town was unveiled.



Capital Projects

The Town and Village Renewal and enhancement project for Sixmilebridge was delivered during October ahead of the festive season. During the summer the team in the Municipal District worked with the School of Architecture from the University of Limerick (SAUL) to consider the opportunities for the town – Notice was received in December that Sixmilebridge had been selected as one of the towns in the country to receive Master Planning funding under the 'Town Centre First' initiative in 2022 – further adding to the potential and energy in this thriving town.



During the year the Municipal District was also successful in securing Town and Village Renewal Funding for projects in Drumgeely, Shannon Town and Clonlara Village – projects which are due to commence in 2022. Funding for works in Newmarket on Fergus and Drumgeely, Shannon Town under the Outdoor Recreation & Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) were also secured during the year.

While these projects will be developed in the coming year the existing Town & Village Renewal Schemes in Bunratty and Parteen were substantially progressed in 2021 with design and Section 38 (road improvement) processes progressed.

The Municipal District teams were successful in progressing projects under Climate Action – a project at the Westbury Pump Station – and the NTA's Active Travel programme. The team delivered an upgrade to the Walkway in Shannon Banks during the year, improving accessibility for all users, while progressing the Meelick footpath project to design stages.



ABRIDGED FINANCIAL STATEMENT: YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

Income and Expenditure	2021	2020
	€'000	€'000
State Grants	67.0	79.8
Local Property Tax	8.0	8.0
Goods and Services	30.2	28.2
Commercial Rates	42.0	44.7
Income from Other Local Authorities	0.1	0.1
Pension Levy		
Total Income	147.3	160.8
Total Expenditure	135.1	148.3
Surplus / (Deficit) for year before transfers	12.1	12.5
Transfers to / from Reserves	(11.9)	(12.2)
Overall Surplus / (Deficit) for Year	0.18	0.26
General Revenue Reserve / (Deficit) - Opening	2.7	2.5
General Revenue Reserve / (Deficit) - Closing	2.9	2.7
Balance Sheet	2021	2020
	€'000	€'000
Fixed Assets	2,814.3	2,782.0
Work in Progress and Preliminary Expenses	60.9	42.2
Long term Debtors	32.6	22.6
Current Assets	76.2	75.0
Current Liabilities	(43.5)	(41.6)
Net Current Assets / (Liabilities)	32.7	33.4
Creditors (Amounts falling due after more than one year)	(92.9)	(81.3)
Net Assets	2,848	2,798
Financed by		
Capitalisation Account	2,814.3	2,781.6
Income Work in Progress	59.7	41.6
Specific Revenue Reserve	-	-
General Revenue Reserve	2.9	2.7
Other Balances	(29.3)	(27.5)
Total Reserves	2,848	2,798

SEMINARS/CONFERENCES/TRAINING ATTENDED BY CLARE COUNTY COUNCILLORS IN 2021

Association of Irish Local Government Training , Tralee, Co. Kerry. 16th September, 2021 (1 Member attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training Module One , Tower Hotel, Waterford. 18th September, 2021 (8 Members attended)
LAMA Autumn Training Module One , Sligo Park Hotel, Sligo. 1st-2nd October, 2021 (7 Members attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training , Horse and Jockey, Co. Tipperary. 5th October, 2021 (1 Member attended)
IPB - Members Engagement forum , Athlone. 7th-8th October, 2021 (1 Member attended)
Celtic Conferences Mental Health and Wellbeing , Clonakilty, Co. Cork. 8th-10th October, 2021 (9 Members attended)
Celtic Conference - Housing for all , Carlingford, Co. Louth. 29th-31st October, 2021 (2 Members attended)
LAMA Autumn Training Planning and Mental Health , Sligo Park Hotel, Sligo. 3rd-5th November, 2021 (16 Members attended)
Association of Irish Local Government Training Module 2 , Castlecomer, Kilkenny. 10th November, 2021 (16 Members attended)
IPI Annual Conference , Wexford. 17th-18th November, 2021 (2 Members attended)
Celtic Conferences Mental Health and Wellbeing , Carlingford, Co. Louth. 3rd-5th December, 2021 (1 Member 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 and Cash Office: 9:00am to 4:00pm

Housing Department:

9:00am to 1:00pm

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,
Fax: (065) 6823655
- **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

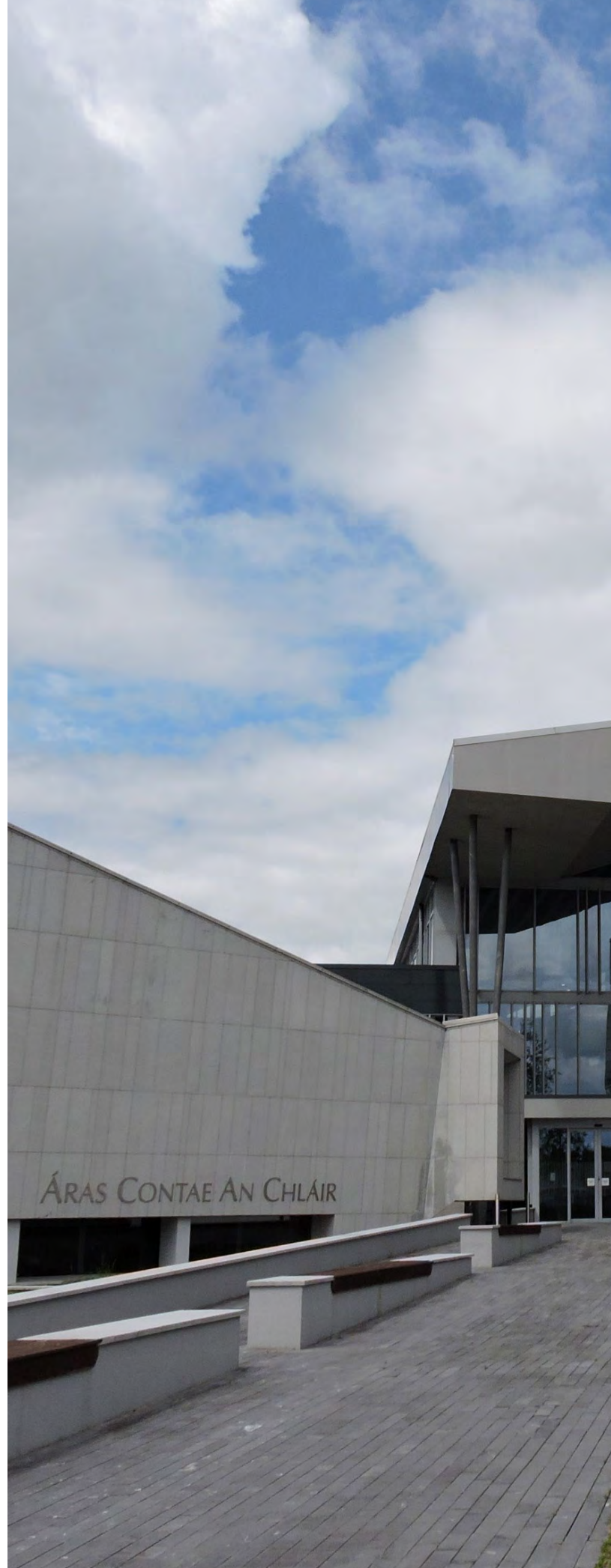
- Ennis, (065) 6866133
- Killaloe, (061) 640815
- Shannon, (061) 362319
- West Clare, (065) 7072283/ (065) 9054310

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





COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL