



COMHAIRLE CLARE
CONTAE AN CHLÁIR COUNTY COUNCIL

Tuarascáil Mhíosúil ón Phríomhfheidhmeannach Monthly Management Report



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A message from the Chief Executive



Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, Clare County Council (front), Sean Colleran, Chief Superintendent, Clare Garda Division, and Maria Bridgeman, Chief Officer, HSE Midwest Community Healthcare, appealed to the public to comply with Government and HSE Covid-19 guidelines ahead of the June bank holiday weekend.

Since the first case of the Covid-19 coronavirus was identified in the Republic of Ireland on 29th February, 2020, we have been living through what are, by any definition, extraordinary times.

Public health measures introduced by Government to combat the spread of the virus have impacted almost every aspect of our lives.

Words like 'unprecedented', 'emergency', 'lockdown' and 'crisis' have become commonplace in our everyday conversations. So, too, have words like 'community', 'support', 'wellbeing' and 'heroic'.

If this crisis has been unprecedented in most of our lifetimes, so too has the response.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of all Council staff, elected members, our partners, the public and everyone who is working to combat Covid-19, including, of course, our frontline healthcare staff. I want to thank you all for your enduring commitment to this unique local, national and global cause.

As we reflect on recent months, we look back on a succession of turning points, of new developments, new information, new restrictions and new challenges.

On 1st May, the Government published a *Roadmap for Reopening Society & Business* to ease the Covid-19 restrictions and reopen Ireland's economy and society in a phased manner. The roadmap commenced on May 18th, from which point our country has been gradually re-opening in a slow, phased way.

We all welcome this, and we look forward to a time when a degree of normality is restored. However, as we ease restrictions, we must remain committed to the cause and continue to comply with all of the guidelines issued by Government. The rate of the virus in the community will be constantly monitored by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), and this will be foremost in all our planning.

We can be sure there will be challenging times ahead. It is vital we stick together as a county and as a country to overcome what obstacles arise.

Council services continuing throughout Covid-19 challenge

Since this crisis first emerged on our island and in our county, Clare County Council's response has been informed by advice from the HSE, NPHE and public health authorities. We have taken a range of actions to minimise the spread of the virus. Day-to-day operations of the Council have, of necessity, changed radically for the period.

On 12th March, following the Government's announcement of a raft of public health measures, Clare County Council closed local authority offices, cultural facilities, and sports and recreation buildings to the public, effective from 6:00pm on that date.

All sections and departments developed business continuity plans to enable the Council to continue to provide key services. Council staff have ensured continuity of essential and critical services across key operations. Arrangements have been put in place for designated staff to work from home where possible. In cases where this cannot be facilitated and attendance at

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work is required, flexible arrangements have been made to ensure compliance with HSE guidelines and social distancing requirements.

All staff have been advised to adhere to public health advice and keep following the five key steps. While they seem simple, they are vital to protect us all: regular hand washing, coughing etiquette, not touching your face, physical distancing, and staying at home if feeling unwell.

The welfare of elected members, staff and their families is a priority for the Council while continuing to provide public services.

Crisis management

A Crisis Management Team (CMT) was formed within the Council in response to the Covid-19 crisis. It has met on an ongoing basis, often daily, to monitor and respond to developments within the county.

The CMT has mobilised Council resources to manage the crisis response and to deliver critical services in light of the restrictions in place. Certain services were agreed nationally as critical services to be delivered by local authorities during this crisis. While the Council adhered in the main to this schedule a practical approach was taken and all urgent issues were addressed appropriately. Areas that have required particular attention include the provision of Homeless services, Traveller accommodation, temporary reassignment of Council staff, health and safety of staff, and mass fatality planning for the region, for the possible eventuality that this would be required – thankfully, it has not been.

The CMT has participated in an inter-agency approach, liaising weekly with the Principal Response Agencies (PRAs), which include the HSE, public health, An Garda Síochána, the Fire Service and other local authorities in the region, in response to this crisis.

Council communications staff have coordinated activity with partners regionally to ensure consistent messaging across the region, and nationally with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and others to enhance public awareness.

The Council continues to issue regular advisory notices, communications and specific targeted campaigns through its various media channels to support HSE and public health guidance in relation to Covid-19.

Clare County Council is acutely aware of the severe challenges facing business as we experience the unprecedented circumstances brought on by Covid-19.

The Council will implement the national policy on commercial rates alleviation measures relating to Covid-19 restrictions. This will include a three-month commercial rates waiver beginning on 27th March 2020 for all businesses that have been forced to close due to public health requirements and also the administration of a Restart Grant, which will give direct grant aid to micro and small businesses to help them with the costs associated with reopening and re-employing workers following Covid-19 closures.

Clare County Council is facilitating the Restart Grant application process for all applicants in County Clare order to restart the local economy. The grants will be equivalent to the rates bill of the business in 2019, with a minimum payment of €2,000 and a maximum payment of €10,000. Applications for the Restart Grant can be made online since Friday, 22nd May.

Meetings postponed, elected members actively involved

The elected members of Clare County Council, while for the most part operating via remote access, continue in partnership with Council staff to co-ordinate a range of programmes across the county. Our elected members are fully engaged and have been actively involved in the running of the Council, and in co-ordinating the Council's response to the Covid-19 crisis. They continue to work on behalf of the people of County Clare, supporting ongoing initiatives.

The April Council meeting was convened on Monday, 6th April, in committee with a minimum number of members present to deal with a small number of statutory items, while ensuring social distancing requirements were in place.

It was agreed to postpone the May meeting of Clare County Council, which was due to be held on Monday, 11th May, in view of the public health restrictions. The holding of statutory Council meetings has remained under review in the context of these restrictions.

The next meeting of Clare County Council has been scheduled for 8th June at Glór, Ennis. Municipal District (MD) meetings and Strategic Policy Committee meetings are also being scheduled to resume at alternate venues.

Arrangements are being put in place to facilitate physical distancing and compliance with public health guidelines at these meetings.

All the while, elected members continue to fulfil their duties via video and teleconferencing with relevant staff on a daily/weekly basis and at MD level.

Community Response Forum providing coordinated response

'The Community Call' went out in early April. This is the initiative that links local and national Government with the community and voluntary sectors, mobilising state and voluntary resources to combat the effects of Covid-19.

The purpose of the Community Call is to co-ordinate community activity, direct community assistance to where it is needed, and marshal the volunteering energy of the country.

On Wednesday, 1st April, I chaired the first meeting of the Clare Covid-19 Community Response Forum. Since then the Forum and its subcommittees have met on an ongoing basis.

The role of the Forum is to ensure there is a co-ordinated community response and to enable all voluntary statutory agencies to collaborate in support of our communities and particularly our most vulnerable members.

The Forum's work has been invaluable. Along with the Council,

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it includes more than a dozen agencies and organisations, including An Garda Síochána and the HSE.

A dedicated community support helpline (1800 203600) has been established to assist at-risk members of the public in accessing non-emergency and non-medical supports and advice during the current public health emergency. The freephone helpline is focused primarily on ensuring that vulnerable members of the community can access deliveries of groceries, medicine and fuels.

In April, I welcomed All-Ireland-winning hurler Anthony Daly ('Dalo') to the Forum as Clare Community Champion. Anthony has been working with members of the Forum to distribute personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies to Covid-19 Community Response Forum volunteers across the county.

The Forum is ensuring there is a co-ordinated community response to the unprecedented crisis through which we are living, enabling voluntary statutory agencies to collaborate in support of our communities.

Phase 2 of the Community Response, the 'In This Together' campaign, has focused on helping our communities and individuals to maintain wellbeing.

As part of the campaign, Clare County Council and its partners have coordinated a range of resources to help people stay fit and active, stay connected and look after their mental health. A list of these resources is available on the Council website (clarecoco.ie/together).

Phased reopening of Council services

In line with the Government's *Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business*, the Planning Department at Clare County Council has resumed the issuing of planning decisions and other planning functions from 25th May, 2020.

The planning public counter is available to members of the public by appointment only. As per normal, planning applications are available online, while pre-planning meetings will continue to be facilitated via electronic means and/or phone calls. Planning staff are available and are responding to customer queries as they arise.

The Library service is in preparation for opening in Phase 2 of the Government roadmap (8th June) – this will consist of an 'order and collect' service from eight branches to members of the public, the cocooning delivery service for older citizens will continue, and e-resources and online learning programmes are continuing to compensate for lack of a complete library service.

In response to the Government roadmap Ennis MD, in consultation with a stakeholder group comprising representatives from businesses, the community, and the wider public sector, is endeavouring to support residents, the business community and all citizens to access the town safely during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result Ennis MD, with its stakeholders, has prepared a Mobility Plan for the town which will evolve in line with the roadmap. Under Stage 1 of the temporary Covid-19 Ennis Town Centre Mobility Plan, traffic

re-routing and other measures came into effect in Ennis Town Centre from Wednesday, 20th May, 2020. This initial stage put in place measures to ensure street space can be shared safely by pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and cars, in order to ensure physical distancing can be adhered to by those coming into the town centre.

Lifeguarding services commenced across the county over the June bank holiday weekend. All lifeguards have been trained and equipped to work safely under Covid-19 public health requirements.

Ahead of the June bank holiday weekend, I worked closely with my colleagues Sean Colleran, Chief Superintendent, Clare Garda Division, and Maria Bridgeman, Chief Officer, HSE Midwest Community Healthcare, to deliver a coordinated message through the media to the public. We appealed to everyone to continue to comply with Government guidelines, and to hold firm in our efforts to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

Staying the course on the road ahead

I must acknowledge the many sacrifices made by the people of Clare. The curtailment of normal activities has been sudden and severe. The adjustment has not been easy. I appreciate this is a difficult time for many people.

Our message to the public in County Clare has been consistent with that nationally, and indeed internationally: stay at home, and save lives. Other than in exceptional cases, we have urged everyone to stay in their homes wherever possible, and to always adhere to Government guidelines.

The public health measures were introduced, and to varying extents remain in place, because they are making a huge difference in reducing the spread of Covid-19. Maintaining this effort will be central to the success of the roadmap for recovery. We cannot relax our efforts now, as to do so would risk undoing the progress that has been made to date.

It is not possible to thank everyone here for the work that has been done and the sacrifices made in recent times. Both within the Council and among our partners and colleagues, there has been a tremendous response to a difficult situation.

To those who have been affected personally by Covid-19, I wish you well and hope you make a speedy recovery. I wish to offer our condolences to those who have lost loved ones.

Make no mistake, the road ahead will be hard. We now have a roadmap, but we know the journey will be difficult, and there will be other crossroads ahead. It is at these crossroads that we must make difficult decisions to do the right thing, and to take the right direction. We look forward to completing this journey, to making a recovery, to reopening our businesses and schools, our hotels and amenities, to welcoming people back to our beautiful county. Until then, I appeal to everyone to remain resolute in our efforts, to stick together, and to stay the course.

We will get there.

Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, Clare County Council

Shine Your Light

On Saturday, 11th April, as part of the Government's Covid-19 Community Call, and in recognition of the unprecedented times in which we are living, lighted candles, other lights, and symbolic equivalents, were placed in windows across Ireland as part of the national #ShineYourLight campaign.

As part of this national initiative, Áras Contae an Chláir and other Clare buildings were lit up, along with a host of national and local public buildings across the country.

Irish embassies and missions around the world also participated in this initiative to remember all of those who have lost their lives to Covid-19 and their loved ones, and to remember and thank our key frontline staff for their ongoing crucial work throughout the crisis.

RTÉ broadcast #ShineYourLight, a short live special featuring music performances and spoken word from a number of artists, on 11th April.

Clare County Council shared photos of local buildings on our various channels.



Ennis Courthouse (above) and SS Peter and Paul Cathedral (below).



Áras Contae an Chláir.

Human Resources

| Work Area | Update |
|---|--|
| Recruitment | <p>The following recruitment competitions were progressed during March, April and May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy Vehicle Mechanic / Construction Plant Fitter • Administrative Officer • Temporary Head of Information Systems • Temporary Assistant Civil Defence Officer • Retained Fire-fighter Kilrush • Acting Senior Planner • Beach Lifeguards |
| Learning and Development | <p>A number of training programmes were arranged during March and April and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Awareness (60 participants) • Safe Pass (15 participants) • Chainsaw Operation (4 participants) • Microsoft Outlook and Teams (23 participants) • Plain English Writing (16 participants) <p>Online training modules were also provided to staff and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coronavirus (40 participants) • Pandemic Awareness (46 participants) • Home Working (35 participants) <p>Covid-19 Induction Training is being delivered to all staff and is based on the Return to Work Safety Protocol and the Council's Covid-19 Response Plan.</p> |
| Parents Leave | <p>Further information was circulated to all staff relating to Parents Leave. This leave applies to new parents/adoptive parents since 1/11/2019 and is legislated for under the Parents Leave and Benefit Act 2019.</p> |
| Covid-19 | <p>Throughout March, April and May, the Human Resources (HR) Department liaised regularly with the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government and the Local Government Management Agency on various HR-related matters, particularly those relating to Covid-19.</p> |
| Covid-19 Temporary Assignment Scheme | <p>The HR Department is co-ordinating locally a Temporary Assignment Scheme which is being managed by the Public Appointments Service. The aim of the Scheme is to facilitate the assignment of staff on a temporary basis to other organisations across the civil and public service in order to ensure the continuity of essential services to the public.</p> |
| Employee Welfare | <p>Telephone counselling services have been made available to employees of Clare County Council that may wish to avail of same during the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Initiatives were organised for staff on National Workplace Wellbeing Day and included fitness demos and a recording on meditation which was produced by one of the Council's contracted counsellors.</p> |
| Statistical Returns | <p>The 2019 return in relation to the Report on Compliance with Part 5 of the Disability Act on the Employment of People with Disabilities in the Public Sector for Clare County Council was completed and returned to the Department in March 2020.</p> <p>The Quarterly Staffing Return and End of Year Projection was submitted to the Department in April 2020.</p> |
| Unions | <p>The HR Department continued to engage and consult with unions on various matters and issues during March, April and May.</p> |

Corporate Services

Freedom of Information & Data Protection

2020 Statistics to 26/5/2020:

- 39 Freedom of Information Requests
- 0 Freedom of Information Internal Review applications
- 2 Appeals to Information Commissioner
- 3 Access Requests (Data Protection) – Data Subjects
- 11 Access Requests (Data Protection) – Third Party Access

Customer Service

As an essential service our Customer Service team continues to engage with all sections of the Council to support them in delivering their services during the current Covid-19 restrictions. The Council offices remain closed to the public in accordance with Government guidelines and the Customer Service team continues to engage with the public by telephone, email and by appointment where required.

With more staff working remotely to achieve social distancing, Customer Service maintains a weekly contact list of the relevant phone/mobile/email contacts for the major service departments to ensure the customer is responded to in an efficient manner.

The Customer Service team also continues to manage all logged Councillor Cases and ensure they are routed to the correct point of contact and auctioned appropriately.

The team has witnessed a rise in the number of queries as a result of the changed nature of services. Alternative solutions have been put in place to accommodate people paying housing rents and motor tax. The types of additional queries include: access to parks, opening hours for recycling centres, how to pay housing rents without a bank card, parking fees, business restart grant. The planning counter reopened to the public on May 25th on an appointment basis.

Regular service updates are provided on the home page of the Council website: www.clarecoco.ie

Procurement

PPE Supplies

The Procurement Unit, in consultation with the Health and Safety Officer, is continuing to source personal protective equipment (PPE) suppliers and process orders for certified PPE to meet the immediate requirements of the Council, in order to reduce the risk to employees and to ensure the continued provision of essential services during these unprecedented times. A further order was also processed for the Council by the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) through the Office of Government Procurement (OGP).

The following list of tenders were advertised on eTenders March to May 2020:

| Short description | Response deadline |
|--|-------------------|
| Construction of double-sided stone wall | 18/03/2020 |
| Visitor Experience/Interpretation Consultants Services for Inis Cealtra (Holy Island) Visitor Experience | 26/03/2020 |
| Remedial Works to Housing Estates, Tulla Road, Ennis, Co. Clare | 08/04/2020 |
| Provision of Services for Pitch Maintenance at Ennis and Kilrush Sports Fields | 17/04/2020 |
| Remedial Works to Dún Aras, Dún Aras Avenue, Cluain Alainn and Ballycasey Avenue Estates, Shannon, Co. Clare | 15/05/2020 |
| Provision of Services for Audio-Visual Exhibit | 29/05/2020 |
| Residential Development of 2 Nr Houses at Maddens Terrace, Clarecastle, Co. Clare | 29/06/2020 |
| 2-Unit Housing Development at Dun Na Mara, Doonbeg, Co. Clare, with revised design for Clare County Council | 29/06/2020 |
| Multiple Operator Framework for Design Consultancy Services for Clare County Council for works with a project value greater than €5m | 30/06/2020 |
| Development of 27 Number Housing Units at Ballard Road, Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare | 03/06/2020 |
| Development of 25 Number Units at Doonaun, Tulla, Co. Clare | 06/07/2020 |

Motor Tax

The Department of Transport has confirmed a large and sudden increase in the percentages of people paying their motor tax online throughout the country. April 2020 records the highest ever usage of the motor tax online system. The lowest online statistic for any county in April was 86%.

In the month between February and March 2020, there was a 10% increase in Clare in the usage by the public of www.motortax.ie, bringing Clare's usage of the online motortax to 82%. Further dramatic increases were recorded for April. In Clare in April, 91% of people did their motor tax online, though 15 counties had an even higher online motor taxing rate than Clare in April.

Finance

As Finance is regarded as an essential service, a number of measures have been put in place to enable the section to continue to provide all finance support services during the current Covid-19 restrictions. Remote working has been put in place to achieve social distancing within the finance area.

Critical sections such as Payroll and Accounts Payable are set up so as to enable full functionality remotely.

In a short space of time, Covid-19 has resulted in effectively locking down economic activity within the county and country for the vast majority of businesses, and brings with it financial uncertainty and consequences that will be of proportions impossible to estimate effectively at this time. Clare County Council's main income source of commercial rates has seen a significant downturn in payments in recent weeks. Other income sources from parking, tourism sites and Active Ennis facilities have also been eliminated. This is in parallel to additional expenditure incurred arising from the Council responding to this health crisis. An estimate of such costs in terms of dealing with the crisis and the direct impact on other income and expenditure will be estimated over the coming weeks and months and presented to members. The Council is also engaging closely with Local Government Finance section of the department on this impact to inform a national position.

Commercial Rates

Clare County Council has implemented the national policy of deferring rates payments due from the most immediately impacted businesses until the end of June 2020 and we will continue to implement policy in line with Government advice post-May 2020.

We are acutely aware of the potential issues faced by our commercial rate customers and are also conscious that the impact is not uniform. While there are many commercial sectors impacted due to Covid-19, this is part of an ongoing review by Clare County Council. Customers that have raised concerns are being dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Clare County Council will continue to support all commercial

rate customers during this difficult time and has also taken the decision to postpone legal proceedings in respect of ongoing issues related to commercial rates. Commercial rates income for 2020 is budgeted at €44.7m, which accounts for 36% of the Council's estimated income in 2020. This is a critical source of income to fund the provision of all Council services.

One initiative introduced by the Government to support businesses is the Restart Grant for Small Businesses.

The Restart Grant will give direct grant aid to micro and small businesses to help them with the costs associated with reopening and re-employing workers following Covid-19 closures.

Clare County Council will be facilitating the grant application process for all applicants in order to restart the local economy. The grants will be equivalent to the rates bill of the business in 2019, with a minimum payment of €2,000 and a maximum payment of €10,000.

Qualifying criteria

- A business must have a turnover of less than €5m and have 50 or less employees
- The business must have suffered a projected 25%+ loss in revenue from 1st April 2020 to 30th June 2020
- The business must commit to remain open or to reopen if it was closed. The business must also declare the intention to retain employees that are benefitting from the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS)
- Businesses should retain supporting documentation as spot-checks may be carried out to verify a declaration to this effect.
- Applications for the Restart Grant can now be made online with a closing date of 31st August, 2020.



(L-r) Noeleen Fitzgerald, Head of Finance, Human Resources and Corporate Services, Clare County Council; Liam Conneally, Director of Service, Economic Development and Planning, Clare County Council; Allen Flynn, President, Ennis Chamber of Commerce; Trina Rynne, Financial Accountant, Clare County Council; and Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, Clare County Council.

€40 million Covid-19 support package for community sector and charities

Minister for Rural and Community Development Michael Ring has announced a €40m grant to aid the Covid-19 response of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises, which had an online closing date of Wednesday, 20th May, 2020, at 5pm. The grant aims to ensure that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society continue to receive services and supports in this difficult period. Clare County Council's team of Rural and Community Development Officers will work, in each Municipal District, to support local community groups' applications.

The Mayor of Clare, Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy, welcomed the Government funding, acknowledging that "it will ensure that the community and voluntary organisations assisting the most vulnerable groups in our communities can continue to carry out this important work in providing help and support to those who need it most during these challenging times."

Chief Executive of Clare County Council, Pat Dowling, thanked the community and voluntary organisations for the significant work undertaken in local communities throughout Clare in recent weeks in responding to the Community Call.

"Led by John Kerin, Chair of the Community and Voluntary Sub-Committee of the Community Response Forum, and Anthony Daly, Clare's Community Champion, their inspiring contribution to the community response in the current crisis is to be commended. This significant funding package for the sector will provide assistance to key organisations to support them in sustaining valuable services in our local communities throughout the current crisis," Mr Dowling said.



Anthony Daly and John Kerin.

The grant (varying in size from €2,000 to €100,000 and dependent on need and demand) will be available to the above organisations:

- that have been delivering front-line critical services in the Republic of Ireland, before 1st January, 2019;
- that have a projected loss in their 2020 fundraising income and/or traded income of 25% or more as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- that are applying to meet their operational and overhead costs such as rent and utilities (excluding salaries) for the next few months.

The funding package for these organisations is complementary to the range of other supports provided by the Government to support businesses, employers and employees on foot of the crisis.

Lahinch prom carpark reopens

The car park in Lahinch prom reopened as part of Phase 1 of the Government roadmap on May 18th. The car park was reopened in a controlled manner with barriers in place to ensure adequate



room for the public to comply with social distance guidelines. Additional signage was also installed for this phase. In the background, work is continuing to the repair of the roof of the Lifeguard building which was damaged during storms.



LCDC approves €73k in funding for community and voluntary groups

The Clare Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) has approved over €73k in funding for community and voluntary groups under the Covid-19 Emergency Fund.

All community and voluntary groups directly involved in the Community Call initiative were invited through a closed call to apply for funding in the sum of €73,704. The closing date for receipt of grant applications was 30th April, 2020, and the Chief Officer of the LCDC received 26 applications for funding totalling €180,164, over 2.5 times the available funding.

Speaking on behalf of the members of the LCDC, the Chair of the LCDC, Andrew Dundas, commented on “the significant volume of applications received, all of which were deserving of funding and very worthwhile, which made the task of distributing the limited resources all the more difficult”.

The Mayor of Clare, Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy, welcomed the funding allocation by the LCDC and the timing of its distribution: “Community and voluntary organisations involved in the Community Call have a very clear focus as to the needs of the most vulnerable in our local communities, and the application of the available funding will assist towards the provision of resources to continue to respond to those needs.”

Bernadette Haugh, Chief Officer of the LCDC, said that two very clear countywide needs emerged from the funding requests for projects in excess of €1,000, namely hardship/food requirements and psychological support, and noted the importance of the LCDC in “ensuring that the operational costs associated with these two specific requirements became the primary target of the Covid-19 Emergency Fund allocation to achieve a countywide focus on these critical areas during the current crisis.”

The list of grant beneficiaries is as follows:



Caption: Bernadette Haugh, Chief Officer of the LCDC; Mayor of Clare, Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy; Andrew Dundas, Chair of the LCDC; and (inset) Deirdre Power, Rural Development Department, Clare County Council.

- Ballyvaughan Community Development Group
- Clare Care
- Clare Haven Services
- Clare Local Development Company
- Clare Women’s Network
- Irish Red Cross – Clare
- Killaloe Ballina FRC
- Lisdoonvarna Failte CLG
- Love Shannon Group
- Mounshannon Community Council
- New Quay Community Development
- Newmarket on Fergus GAA
- North West Clare Family Resource Centre
- Obair Newmarket on Fergus CLG
- Ogonnelloe Community Centre CLG
- Scariff Community Council
- Scarriff Bay Radio
- Shannon Family Resource Centre
- Tuamgraney Development Association
- Tulla Reaching Out Heritage Group
- West Clare Family Resource Centre.

Council welcomes establishment of Tourism Recovery Taskforce

Clare County Council has welcomed the establishment of the Tourism Recovery Taskforce announced by Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Shane Ross, and Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Brendan Griffin.

The Mayor of Clare, Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy, said: “The taskforce is critical to ensuring that the tourism sector survives and emerges from this crisis ready for business. Tourism in Clare will be a key instrument to aid the economic recovery of our county.”

Chief Executive of Clare County Council, Pat Dowling, said the scale of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Clare and on all of Ireland is going to require a concerted ‘Ireland’ response. Clare County Council is working to help inform the support responses, and will play an active role in their delivery in whatever way possible.

In recent weeks, Clare County Council has supported the ‘An Bhoireann’ TG4 television series, which takes viewers on a journey through the austere beauty of the Burren. In light of the 2020 Dubai Duty Free Irish Open not proceeding, the four days of the 2019 Dubai Duty Free Irish Open hosted in Lahinch were re-run on The Golf Channel (May 28-31). Iconic imagery of Clare was beamed across North America.

Commenting on the work of Clare County Council and Clare Tourism to promote Clare at a time when people are being asked not to travel, Deirdre O’Shea, Head of Tourism (Acting), said: “Because people cannot travel to Clare at this time, we want to bring Clare to them.

“Conscious of the negative impact that this crisis is having on the Clare tourism industry, Clare County Council and Clare Tourism have produced a video titled ‘Dream of Clare’ encouraging everyone in the county to remind people around the globe of why Clare is amazing. We want people to dream of Clare for now, and to travel to see us when it is safe to do so. This initiative

is titled 'Lets Share Clare with the World'."

In addition to the video production, Clare Tourism has developed a trade blog on the Visit Clare website, with free resources and promotional collateral for the tourism industry to share on their own websites and social media platforms. Deirdre O'Shea added that Clare Tourism is also developing a virtual tour of Loophead Lighthouse, which is especially symbolic given that the lighthouse is a beacon of hope.

In recognition of the requirement for enhanced tourism products within the county, there are three significant capital projects continuing, including renovations to Loophead Lighthouse, Vandeleur Walled Gardens and design plans for the visitor experience for the Council-owned Inis Cealtra (Holy Island). Reflecting the virtual world that we are now accustomed to, a Zoom background image capturing the monastic beauty of Inis Cealtra (Holy Island) on Lough Derg in East Clare is among the resources available at: <https://www.clare.ie/claretradeblog>

Once travel resumes, the message from Clare Tourism will



change to newly themed 'Visit Clare' advertisements. Clare County Council and Clare Tourism will continue to work with lead tourism agencies, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, as well as Clare's tourism industry to bring about the recovery of tourism in the county.

In the meantime, the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030, which is being led by Clare County Council in conjunction with Shannon Heritage, has been reviewed in light of the Covid-19 impact to the tourism industry. It is now at an advanced stage of development and will be finalised and released before year end.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme to help communities respond to Covid-19

Community groups across County Clare are being encouraged to apply for funding under the 2020 Town and Village Renewal Scheme. A total of €15m has been allocated to this year's scheme, which is one element of a €30 million package of integrated supports announced by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring.

The 2020 scheme will, in particular, support projects and strategic interventions that place a particular emphasis on the economic and social recovery of towns and villages in response to Covid-19. This might include public realm projects to make towns and villages more accessible in the context of Covid-19 public health requirements, or supports for projects with a direct economic component such as enterprise hubs or remote working solutions.

The Mayor of Clare, Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy, welcomed the announcement of the scheme at a time when the county's towns and villages need to increase footfall and adapt to Covid-19.

Clare County Council's Chief Executive, Pat Dowling, said: "Towns and villages in Clare are at the heart of our economic and social activity and will play a pivotal role once again in providing safe spaces for people to meet and do business as the current restrictions are eased in line with the Government's *Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business*." Mr Dowling particularly welcomed the scheme's new standalone measure which he said "will provide accelerated support for Clare's towns and villages to enable them to quickly adapt to public health requirements such as social distancing in the short term, and to encourage increased footfall. The sort of initiatives that could be supported include projects to temporarily repurpose or pedestrianise public areas to facilitate street trading; the development of an online platform to promote retailers and small scale events that attract people back into town centres safely."



Chief Executive of Clare County Council, Pat Dowling, pictured in December 2019 with Leonard Cleary, Director of Service, Clare County Council, and Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring.

Grant funding of €20,000 up to €200,000 is available under the standard scheme while maximum grants of €25,000 are available under the new Accelerated Measure element of the scheme, with the possibility to increase to €40,000 for a small number of high-impact projects.

Community groups who have identified projects are being invited to submit an Expression of Interest to Clare County Council. Expressions of Interest received will be assessed based on the priorities as contained in the scheme outlines (normal and Accelerated Measure). A total of 16 proposals can then be put forward for submission to the Department of Rural and Community Development. Selection of projects under the scheme will be by means of a competitive process.

An Expression of Interest Form for both the Accelerated Measures and standard Town and Village Renewal Scheme can be downloaded from Council's website: <http://www.clarecoco.ie/services/community/grants/town-and-village-renewal-scheme/> or telephone 065-6846471.

The deadline for receipt of applications is:

- Round 1 Accelerated Measure – 4pm, Friday, 19th June, 2020
- Round 2 Accelerated Measure – 4pm, Tuesday, 30th June, 2020
- Standard Town & Village Renewal Scheme – 4pm, Tuesday, 30th June, 2020.

CLÁR 2020 Funding Programme

The CLÁR 2020 funding programme has been launched by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring. CLÁR is one element of a €30 million package of co-ordinated and complementary supports that is being launched by the Minister as part of his Department's Rural Development Investment Programme.

CLÁR provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in rural areas that have suffered significant levels of population decline. The supports provided through CLÁR have been tailored this year to help rural communities to respond to the new Covid-19 environment. The CLÁR programme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and is delivered, for the most part, by the Local Authorities in consultation with local communities.

The measures being funded under the 2020 CLÁR programme are:

- Measure 1 (operated by Clare County Council): Schools/Community Safety measures – Open to Schools, Community Groups, Local Development Companies and Local Authorities to apply.

Schools and Community Safety Measure, which funds items such as pedestrian crossings and footpaths to provide safe access to schools, has been broadened to allow additional investments to adapt areas around schools and community facilities to help meet new public health requirements arising from Covid-19.

- Measure 2 (operated by Clare County Council): Community Recreation – Open to Community Groups, Local Development Companies and Local Authorities to apply.

Up to 10 applications in total may be selected by Clare County Council in respect of Measures 1 and 2. The maximum grant funding for projects under Measures 1 and 2 is €50,000.

Funding will be provided under a new measure for community recreational areas where friends and families can socialise outdoors in safe, accessible, community spaces while respecting public health guidelines. This measure will include support for items such as picnic benches/tables, outdoor covered seating or BBQ areas, public lighting, bicycle stands, bandstand/stage areas, etc. These recreational areas will be particularly important for community social interaction in the coming months, in line with the Government's *Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business*.

- Measure 3 of the scheme will be operated directly by the Department of Rural and Community Development to support Community Wellbeing, comprising:
 - Meals on Wheels and linked services (new in 2020) – Open to established community groups/organisations to apply
 - Mobility and Cancer Care Transport – Open to established voluntary organisations/groups to apply.

Community organisations providing meals on wheels and other community services will also be supported to purchase kitchen or food delivery equipment. They can also access funds for any adaptations that may be necessary to their existing vehicles as a result of new public health guidelines. The Department will also separately continue to fund vehicles for those vital voluntary organisations that provide free transport for people with mobility issues and for those attending cancer treatments. Applications under Measure 3 should be submitted directly to the Department at CLAR@DRCD.gov.ie by 28th August, 2020.

The closing date for receipt of applications under Measure 1 and 2 to the Rural Development Directorate is 30th June, 2020, to enable the assessment and approval of up to 10 projects by the Working Group for the Action Plan for Rural Ireland for onward recommendation to the Department.

Further details are available at: www.clarecoco.ie/services/community/grants/

'Call back' service

In addition to the freephone community response helpline (1800 203600) which is operational from 8:00am to 8:00pm seven days a week, selected helpline staff are doing a 'call back' service to people that have previously rang the helpline.

The purpose of the call back is to tease out whether they require any further supports that are available through partnering agencies.

For instance, if someone is looking for a befriending service the caller is referred to either ClareCare or Alone, which both offer this service on a long-term basis and county-wide.

The helpline is the main referral centre to connect people with the supports they need.

TidyTowns Funding 2020

Mayor Clare Colleran Molloy has welcomed the announcement on 20th May, 2020, by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Mr Michael Ring, which confirmed that the funding allocated to TidyTowns groups to assist in the preparations for the 2020 SuperValu TidyTowns competition would remain available to groups despite the fact that the 2020 competition has been cancelled.

In welcoming the announcement the Mayor stated that “this funding will enable TidyTowns committees to undertake some work when it is safe to do so and in a way that is manageable later in the year. While it is disappointing that the annual TidyTowns competition will not be taking place, the confirmation that funding will continue to be available will help to sustain and maintain the spirit and ethos of the TidyTowns during these difficult times”.

Clare County Council answers the ‘Community Call’



(L-r) John Kerin, Bernie Haugh, Sharon Meaney and Leonard Cleary, pictured following a meeting of the Community and Voluntary sub-committee of the Clare Covid-19 Community Response Forum.

Following the announcement by the Minister of the national Community Call initiative on 27th March 2020, the Clare Community Response Helpline went live on 31st March 2020. Under the management of the Rural and Community Directorate the helpline is focused primarily on ensuring that vulnerable members of the community or those living alone can access deliveries of groceries, medicine and fuels.

The freephone community response helpline is open from 8:00am to 8:00pm seven days a week and an information leaflet advising members of the public of the freephone number (1800 203 600) was distributed to over 36,000 homes around the county via An Post.

In conjunction with the helpline, the National Framework sought the establishment of the Clare Covid-19 Community Response Forum, which includes over 20 agencies and organisations, fully supporting the helpline through a network of local volunteers. Chaired by the Chief Executive Pat Dowling, the role of the Forum is to ensure there is a co-ordinated community response and to enable all voluntary statutory agencies to collaborate



The Clare Community Response Helpline went live on 31st March.

in support of our communities and particularly our most vulnerable members.

Two sub-committees were also established as a mechanism to structure the work of the Forum: an Inter-Agency sub-committee chaired by Leonard Cleary, Director of Service, and a Community and Voluntary sub-committee chaired by former Chief Superintendent, John Kerin.

Four meetings of the Forum structure have taken place to date with the agenda focused on the identification of vulnerable members of the community, purchase and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to registered community groups/volunteers, the Covid-19 Emergency Fund and formation of an agreement to protect community groups/agencies in the sharing/processing of information in accordance with GDPR requirements associated with the Community Call initiative.

Since its establishment the Helpline has addressed over 535 calls and has a directory of scenarios and appropriate responses based on the collaborative engagement from the agencies and community/voluntary sector.

| Nature of calls received | Number of calls |
|--|-----------------|
| Collection and Delivery Service – Food, Fuel, Meds | 140 |
| Meals and Delivery Service | 25 |
| Other Medical and Health Needs | 71 |
| All Other Requests | 271 |
| Garda Síochána Service | 10 |
| Social Isolation Service | 18 |
| Total | 535 |

Table 1: Nature of calls received from 31st March to 27th April 2020.

Anthony Daly announced as ‘Community Champion’



Anthony Daly has been announced as Community Champion for County Clare. He has committed his energy to support the work programme of the Community Response Forum and the Community and Voluntary sub-committee. Pictured (l-r) are Pat Dowling, Anthony Daly, Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy and Michael Neylon, Clare County Council.

Helpline trends nationally

Clare County Council is compiling daily returns to the Department of Housing, Environment and Local Government, which in turn is updating the Taoiseach’s office on the statistics from around the country. Following three weeks in operation, helplines around the country have responded to 20,524 calls, with Clare’s call statistics in terms of call volume/type similar to that of our counterparts in other Local Authorities around the country. A breakdown of the type of calls is outlined hereunder, with “Other Requests” accounting for the highest volume of calls with these relating to:

- Offers of help/volunteering;
- Related to other LA services;
- Related to other government services/services provided by other government agencies; and
- Totally unrelated to LA services (for example, cold calls trying to sell something).

Of the overall calls statistics, Wexford accounts for the highest percentage of calls nationally at 12%, with Cork County at 10%, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown at 8%, Cork City, Roscommon at 6%, Dublin, Fingal, Kilkenny, Limerick at 3% and Clare at 2%, similar to many other counties, i.e. Wicklow, Galway County, Kildare, Mayo, Meath and Waterford.

Nationally, calls to the helpline at the weekend remain significantly quieter than weekdays in terms of call volumes which is aligned with our experience in County Clare.

Covid-19 Emergency Fund

Clare’s local community and voluntary sector has taken centre stage in responding to the needs of our communities during the Covid-19 crisis. To support the continued efforts of those

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Calls received 20,524 | | Forum meetings 176 |
| Collection and Delivery Calls 5,945 | Social Isolation Calls 3,467 | Meals Services Calls 1,354 |
| Other Health Service Calls 1,042 | Follow-up Calls 9,383 | Other Requests Calls 8,398 |

directly involved in the Covid-19 community response, the Department of Rural and Community Development has put in place a national €2.5m Covid-19 Emergency Fund.

The Rural and Community Directorate has received an allocation for County Clare of €73,704 and, in consultation with the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), funding will be targeted at those groups participating in the ‘Community Call’ initiative. There are 40+ registered groups (insured via PPN and BHP, Garda vetted specifically for the role, etc.) reflected on Clare County Council’s webpage map which will be invited to apply for the small scale current/capital grant funding of €1,000 or less, with larger capital projects greater than €1,000 invited through a closed call to members of the Community and Voluntary Forum.

The closing date for receipt of applications was Thursday, 30th April, 2020, and thereafter all applications will be referred to the LCDC for consideration and approval of the available funding.

ABC Nutrition donates food pots to Clare Community Response Forum



The Mayor of Clare, Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy, accepting a generous offering of 'Fitfork' food pots donated by Willie Wixted of ABC Nutrition to the Clare Community Response Forum. Also pictured is Noel Carmody of Clare Civil Defence, whose team have distributed these food pots to registered local community groups that are working under the umbrella of the Forum, as well as Sinead Devanny, NPD manager, ABC Nutrition.

ABC Nutrition, a Shannon-based manufacturer of sports nutrition, weight management and lifestyle nutrition products, has made a donation of almost 2,000 ready-to-eat food pots to the Clare Covid-19 Community Response Forum.

The 'Fitfork' food pots are distributed to vulnerable members of the community in County Clare during the current public health emergency. Clare Civil Defence allocates the food pots to registered local community groups working under the umbrella of the Forum.

The Mayor of Clare, Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy, accepted the

generous offering from Willie Wixted and Sinead Devanny of ABC Nutrition on Friday, 17th April, 2020.

"Clare Community Response Forum, via these community groups, will distribute these food pots onwards to the vulnerable in our communities during the Covid-19 crisis. The community groups, which are already providing collection/delivery of groceries in response to calls to the community response helpline, will add these to the bag of groceries as an additional light lunch or generous snack for those who might need it most," Cllr Colleran Molloy said.

The donation from ABC Nutrition includes high-protein porridge/rice in individual meal pots that are ready to eat. New Product Development Manager Sinead Devanny, who developed the range, advises that, in its single-serve format, "our food is hygienic and nutritious in any frontline situation and ideal for vulnerable and isolated elderly people who may not be able to fend for themselves."

ABC Nutrition is working closely with the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) in Clare. Available nationally in Applegreen and Supervalu, the pots in which the meals are packaged are also produced locally by Cup Print in Ennis.

Clare Community Response Forum is chaired by Clare County Council's Chief Executive, Pat Dowling. Mr Dowling welcomed the donation by ABC Nutrition, which has enabled this partnership between this food supplier, the local authority and local registered community groups.

The Community Response Helpline was established in Clare County Council to assist at-risk members of the public in accessing non-emergency and non-medical supports and advice during the current public health emergency. Lines are open from 8:00am to 8:00pm seven days a week. Call freephone 1800 203 600 or email covidsupport@clarecoco.ie

Comhairle na nÓg presentation to SPC

Comhairle Na nÓg is a voice for young people and represents the youth of County Clare. Comhairle is the preferred consultative option for national and local governmental and administrative bodies such as Clare County Council.

It attends workshops, hold meetings and promotes its Work Plan Actions through events and is funded by DCYA through Clare County Council and facilitated by Clare Youth Service.

Two members of Comhairle go to Clare County Council to meet with members of the Steering Committee to discuss plans and progress for the upcoming year. This includes picking the topics for the year, which starts at the two AGMs in October.

In 2019, links were developed with the Clare Public Participation Network and the Clare Children and Young People's Services Committee who now sit on the Steering Committee.

Members of Comhairle listed topics that were chosen for 2019 as follows:

- Mental health including cyber safety;
- Discrimination;
- Teen friendship club for young people with autism;
- Alternative to mainstream sports;
- 5-a-day for positive mental health; and
- Age Action project.



Extension to Illaunmanagh Burial Ground, Shannon



A contract was signed by Clare County Council and Custy Construction Ltd on Tuesday, 10th March, 2020 for the construction of an extension to the existing burial ground at Illaunamanagh, Shannon, County Clare.

Illaunamanagh means “Monk’s Island” and is a former island which arose from the mudflats. The town shares a graveyard with the village of Newmarket-on-Fergus and now needs an extension.

The site for the extension measures 1.75 acres and will be developed in two phases. The contract with Custy Construction has been signed for the first phase of development which will involve site clearance and site preparation works for the entire site along with the development of the site to facilitate 594 single burial plots.

The works will also include footpaths, plinths, composting area, shed, composting area, drainage works, landscaping, and a number of benches. Based on current demand, phase 1 will meet the needs of the community for at least 16 years. Provision will be made for the construction of a columbarium wall should there be demand for same into the future. Works are set to begin at the end of March and will take approximately eight months to complete. The expansion is very welcome as the current burial ground is nearing capacity.

Mr Pat Dowling, Chief Executive of Clare County Council, confirmed that the extension to the burial ground consolidates Clare County Council’s commitment to providing burial space for the people of Clare in an environmentally and ecologically sustainable manner.



Clare Joint Policing Committee

The Clare Joint Policing Committee (JPC) held its first meeting of 2020 on 17th February, 2020. The Chief Superintendent, Sean Colleran, provided a comparison of crime statistics from 2018 to 2019, highlighting the increases and decreases per category over the 12-month period. John Tracey, Clare County Council, gave a presentation to the JPC on the Property Marking Scheme. He outlined the benefits of marking property with a unique identifier, which is etched onto the item, and how this can help the Gardai return stolen property to its rightful owner. A demonstration was provided to the Committee. The machine was purchased by the Rural Directorate and is available free of charge to the Gardai and community to promote its use.



Clare Garda Youth Awards.

Members of the JPC also represented Clare County Council at the recent Clare Garda Youth Awards on 22nd February. This is an annual event, which recognises the achievements of young people, both individually and/or as part of a community group.

Ennistymon River Walk

Works have been completed on the Ennistymon River Walk which received funding of €69k under the Outdoor Recreation and Infrastructure Scheme. The works involved upgrade and resurfacing works along with repairs to bridges and the inclusion of safety rails/fencing along the existing trail. The trail is approximately 3km in length and follows a path alongside the River Inagh. The walkway is an attractive amenity for both the local community and visitors to the town. The works were delivered by the Ennistymon District Community Organisation (EDCO) with assistance from the Rural Development Directorate.

Cragg Looped Trail, Tulla

Tulla United AFC received €75k under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme to develop a looped trail through the woods at their soccer grounds in Tulla. The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme is a national funding scheme which forms part of the Government’s Project Ireland 2040 programme for rural regeneration and is administered locally by the Rural Development Directorate. The overall objective of Tulla project has been to create a fully-comprehensive amenity park where

all members of the community and surrounding communities, irrespective of age, would be able to participate in physical activity. The club are formally launching the walk at their 50th anniversary celebrations in July of this year.

Aviation Museum Shannon

Work has been completed on the construction of a new extension to the Shannon Aviation Museum. The extension greatly increases the indoor exhibition area making the entire museum an all-weather and all-season attraction in an exciting aviation-themed environment. In addition, a small retail and food offering has been provided. The works were made possible from a grant of €160k received under the Town and Village Scheme which is part of the Government's Project 2040 programme that is administered locally by the Rural Development Directorate.

Shannon is synonymous with the airport and the expansion of the museum reinforces its aviation-related connections and history. The expansion of the Museum creates opportunities for cultivating an environment that encourages, empowers and incentivises people to consider, engage with and participate in aviation-related learning opportunities, regardless of their age - via school tours, birthday parties, summer camps and other groups and individuals with an interest in aviation.

Building Healthy Minds: Healthy Ireland and CYPSC bring Imagination Playgrounds to Clare schools and preschools

Healthy Ireland has funded an Imagination Playground initiative in County Clare schools, which has been introduced in response to concerning trends in childhood obesity and cognitive development.

The Imagination Playground is a modern resource that assists in the development of children's motor and cognitive skills. A recent Dublin City University (DCU) study entitled 'Moving Well, Being Well', reported that a large proportion of children under 10 had not mastered essential fundamental movement skills. In an age of childhood obesity and children tethered to electronic



consoles, playgrounds have rarely been more important.

Imagination Playground contains a wide variety of giant-sized loose parts, including cubes, bricks, cogs, curves, and cylinders. They have holes and shapes that fit together in ways that allow the continuation of a child's idea. Stored in large specialised containers, the playgrounds are mobile and can be transferred to create both indoor and outdoor play spaces.

Schools with on-site preschools, were invited to apply for an Imagination Playground and each application was assessed on its merits by an independent appraisal group. The most recent delivery of seven units, which arrived in Clare on 26th February, 2020, brings the number of children accessing an Imagination Playground in the county to over 7,000.

"In order for children to thrive and learn we need to provide them with opportunities to play and to engage their imaginations. The Imagination Playground is a wonderful example of how children can be supported creatively and practically to do this. Tusla is grateful for the time that the County Clare CYPSC has invested in this project and for the funding provided through Healthy Ireland," said Dr Caroline Cullen, Area Manager, Tusla Mid-West.

"The Clare Local Community Development Committee is delighted to support the Imagination Playground initiative. The Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021 has prioritised two key themes of Physical Activity and Mental Health and Wellbeing for Clare. The Imagination Playground allows children to develop their fundamental movement skills and social connectedness through play which is a wonderful concept," said Karen Fennessy, Healthy Clare Co-ordinator, Clare County Council.

Maintenance work continues at Cliffs of Moher

Work continues on the maintenance of the facility by Cliffs of Moher staff.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

We are all adjusting to the realities of Covid-19 and, with most of the Directorate staff working remotely the office is a very strange place.

The reality of Covid-19 truly hit with the untimely passing of our friend and colleague, Colm O'Mahony. We have not as yet had an opportunity to come together to remember Colm, that said he is remembered every day by his friends in Clare County Council. Ár dheis Dé do raibh a anam dilis.



Colm O'Mahony.

Covid-19

Clare County Council continues to deliver housing services despite the offices being closed to the public. Staff are available and are responding to customer complaints and queries.

In particular, the Covid-19 response has focused on protocols to protect vulnerable groups and in this regard we have developed Covid-19 response protocols to address accommodation and isolation requirements in Traveller accommodation and Homeless services. We are working closely with the HSE in the development of these protocols and in relation to Traveller accommodation we are working with the Irish Traveller Movement and the HSE Traveller Health Unit to address public health concerns.

Housing Options Information Workshop

On 5th March, 2020, Clare County Council hosted its second Housing Options Information Workshop in the Buttermarket Building in Ennis. Despite the emerging Covid-19 scenario the event was greatly supported with significant interest in the event and many enquiries on housing options. The event was drop-in style with personnel from the Bank of Ireland, AIB, PTSB, EBS, Ulster Bank, MABS, Threshold, Revenue and Clare County Council available to answer queries on the night.

We hope to complete this series of workshops later in the year.



Housing Options Information Workshop.

Housing in numbers:

Breakdown of tenancies by municipal district (including RAS and leasing):

| | Social Housing* | HAP |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Ennis | 1,137 | 624 |
| Shannon | 625 | 138 |
| West Clare | 898 | 384 |
| Killaloe | 338 | 171 |
| Inter Authority HAP | | 37 |
| Total | 2,998 | 1,354 |

2,496
LA tenancies

1,354
HAP tenancies

228
RAS tenancies

284
leased
properties

2,620
LA properties

3,113
Rent accounts

Summary of activity during March, April and May

Activity in relation to housing allocations, returning voids and inspections for private house grants and private rented inspections were impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions. Current restrictions are necessary to protect staff and in this regard we have had to alter our work practices to deliver services in this new reality. All services areas are impacted by the reduced interface with customers and this is reflected in the numbers hereunder.

Housing allocations

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Offers issued | 29 |
| Offers refused | 14 |
| AHB nominations | 8 |
| Tenancies signed up | 36 |
| Tenancies terminated | 14 |

Voids work programme

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Voids/casual vacancies | 46 |
| Acquired properties | 22 |
| Average vacancy period | 140 days |
| Number voids returned to stock | 3 |
| Average spend | €31,258 |

Position at the end of May.

Housing maintenance calls

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| March | 378 |
| April | 217 |
| May (to 26/05/2020) | 236 |

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Private rented inspections

Inspections of occupied properties are suspended due to COVID restrictions.

| | |
|-------|----|
| March | 20 |
| April | 0 |
| May | 0 |

Housing grants

| Grant type | Number of approvals | Value of works € |
|---|---------------------|------------------|
| Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability | 15 | 186,230 |
| Housing Aid for Older People | 14 | 55,685 |
| Mobility Aids Grant | 11 | 51,125 |
| Total | 29 | 293,040 |

Rebuilding Ireland home loan



Homeless

The Clare Homeless Action Team (HAT) provides services to anyone who is homeless or at risk of losing their home. The HAT office is currently closed to the public but staff are available during office hours and can be contacted on 065 684 6291. Due to the volume of calls it may be necessary to leave a message and one of the team will return the call.

Clare HAT continues our focus on exits and pathways from homeless services and over the period 1st January to 25th May, 2020, 18 households have exited from homeless services to tenancies with Approved Housing Bodies, HAP private rental tenancies, leased properties and LA tenancies. The interagency Homeless Action Team continues to support clients in the transition from homeless services to accommodation.

Status as of 24nd May, 2020:

| | Families | Adults | Dependents | Providers |
|----------------|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Laurel Lodge | 0 | 11 | 0 | 1 |
| Cusack Lodge | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Westbrooke | 0 | 13 | 0 | 1 |
| EA Families | 5 | 6 | 15 | 5 |
| EA Individuals | 0 | 9 | 0 | 8 |
| Total | 7 | 41 | 19 | 16 |

| | Presentations | Entry | Exit |
|-------|---------------|-------|------|
| March | 62 | 3 | 8 |
| April | 96 | 3 | 9 |
| May | 78* | 5 | 8 |

*Presentations week ending 22nd May, 2020

Update on capital programme



Social Housing in Roslevan.



Construction work has recommenced on all social housing construction sites in the county, having suspended works on 27th March, 2020. All contractors are required to comply with HSE and Government guidelines with regard to physical distancing and other Covid-19 measures. Contractors must also comply with the National Return to Work Safely Protocol, "Covid-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers". The delivery timeline for all projects has been impacted by the closure of sites and revised construction programmes are been established in consideration of Covid-19 measures.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

| SHIP Capital | No. approved | Current stage | Start Date | Completion Date |
|--|--------------|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Quilty | 18 | Constuction recommenced 18.05.20 | Q2 2019 | Q4 2020 |
| Roslevan, Ennis | 8 | Constuction recommenced 18.05.20 | Q2 2019 | Q3 2020 |
| Sixmilebridge | 2 | Constuction recommenced 18.05.20 | Q1 2020 | Q4 2020 |
| Kilmihil | 2 | Constuction recommenced 18.05.20 | Q1 2020 | Q4 2020 |
| Shannon PPP | 51 | Constuction recommenced 18.05.20 | Q4 2019 | Q2 2021 |
| Ashline, Ennis | 40 | Stage 3 approved by DHPLG. Tender process nearing completion. | Q3 2020 | Q4 2021 |
| Milltown Malbay | 27 | Stage 3 approved by DHPLG. Tender process commenced. | Q3 2020 | Q1 2022 |
| Tulla | 25 | Stage 2 approved by DHPLG. Tender process commenced. | Q3 2020 | Q1 2022 |
| Newmarket on Fergus | 18 | Stage 2 approved by DHPLG. About to commence tender process. | Q3 2020 | Q1 2022 |
| Scarriff | 18 | Stage 1 approved by DHPLG. Design Team Appointed. | Q4 2020 | Q1 2022 |
| Roslevan, Tulla Rd. | 8 | Stage 1 approved by DHPLG. Design Team Appointed. | Q4 2020 | Q1 2022 |
| Doonbeg Lands | 8 | Stage 1 approved by DHPLG. Procuring Design Team. | Q4 2020 | Q1 2022 |
| Clarecastle | 2 | Single Stage approved. Tender process commenced. | Q3 2020 | Q1 2021 |
| Ballaghboy TAU | 5 | Design Stage | Q4 2020 | Q2 2022 |
| Subtotal | 232 | | | |
| CAS - Cahercalla Phase 2 (Cuan an Chlair) | 15 | CAS Construction. Constuction recommenced 18.5.2020 | Sept 2019 | Q4 2020 |
| Bruachlan, Westbury (CoOperative Housing Ireland) | 22 | CALF - Property transfer complete, CHI to commence procurement of design team. | Q3 2019 | Q4 2021 |
| Gleann Cora, Newmarket on Fergus (CoOperative Housing Ireland) | 31 | CALF acquisition approved, Construction recommenced 18.5.2020 | Q1 2020 | Q4 2020 |
| Edenvale (Newgrove Housing Association) | 3 | CAS – Stage 2 to be submitted to DHPLG | Q3 2020 | Q2 2021 |
| Sycamore Drive, Ennis (Cluid) | 2 | Part V | Q4 2019 | Q4 2020 |
| Ballymacaula, Ennis (Cluid) | 2 2 | Part V Part V | Q4 2019 Q3 2020 | Q4 2020 Q3 2021 |
| Crusheen (Cluid) | 2 | Part V; 2 delivered in April 2020 | Q4 2019 | Q4 2020 |
| Subtotal | 79 | AHB delivery | | |
| Total | 311 | | | |

Sports & Recreation



Active Ennis John O'Sullivan Park, Lee's Road

The park is now open to those who reside within 5km as per phase 1 of the *Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business*. The original exercise limit was 2km up to 18th May, 2020. Throughout the park there is signage to remind users to adhere to social distancing guidelines. The reduction in activity in the park has led to a noticeable increase in visible wildlife activity.

It is our experience that generally people are adhering to social distancing guidelines, however there have been instances where it has been necessary to disperse groups and remind users of social distancing guidelines. To this end, staff have been redeployed to act as 'Covid Marshals' during peak usage times to ensure Covid-19 guideline are being adhered to.

To continue to ensure the safety of all users of the park we request the following:

- Cyclists – please use cycle ways and do not cycle in the woodland walk areas
- Cars – the park is open to those who reside within 5km of the facility. The car park is open (reduced capacity) and patrons are reminded that parking on the public road at the entrance is prohibited.

The car park reopened on 18th May, 2020, with the number of spaces reduced with 125 of the 250 spaces available for use. The bus parking areas and toilet facilities remain closed at this time. Please refer to www.activeennis.ie for up-to-date information on the phased reopening of facilities in the park.

Active Ennis Leisure Complex

Active Ennis pool and gym are currently closed to the public in line with Government restrictions. Routine maintenance is being undertaken to ensure the premises can reopen once restrictions are lifted. While the bottle banks on site are open Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm the public are reminded to ensure no rubbish is left on site.

Clare Local Sport Partnership Activities

Clare Sport Partnership offices remain closed to the public, however staff are working to support people to actively participate in sport with many services now offered on line on social media platforms including on the website, www.claresports.ie Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Exercise from home

We have been busy working with tutors and staff to bring you a variety of exercise opportunities and ideas that can be completed at home. Full details on the available programmes can be found on the dedicated page on the Clare Sports Partnership website: <http://www.claresports.ie/get-active/covid19exercise/>

Here is a snapshot of the programmes we have developed.

3k Walk to Jog programme

You may have noticed the surge in people out walking throughout the county during this pandemic. While it is fantastic to see so many out walking our Sports Development Officer, Pat Sexton, felt that many people may be ready to increase their walk to a jog; so, with that in mind, he designed an eight-week walk-to-jog programme suitable for complete beginners and designed to fit within the current government 5k radius restrictions of their homes. It can even be completed indoors or in the garden by jogging on the spot.

This programme is free and once people register on: <https://register.primoevents.com/ps/event/Couchto3kmWalktoJogProgramme>

People receive their first podcast to follow at their leisure. Each week (for eight weeks) participants will receive three podcasts to follow, bringing them from the couch to being able to jog 3k in just eight weeks. The programme has proved hugely popular with currently 351 participants registered. The added beauty of this programme is that it can be started at any time. Feedback to date has been extremely positive.

Active Story Time

Our Sports development officer Marian has developed two active stories that take you and your children on adventures with Buddy the Dog. Two further stories are currently being created.

Outdoor Active Adventure

There are resources to download to enable families to complete a treasure hunt at home, or alternatively a blank template can be downloaded for families to create a treasure hunt of their own. There is also an indoor version for when the weather isn't quite so good.

Older adult activities

We have worked with tutor John Conroy, Fitness4Fun to develop seated exercises for older adults to do from the comfort of their homes.

Activities for people with a disability

Suitable for people with disabilities, Tracy Guilfoyle brings you gentle exercises to be completed in your sitting room. There will be further video for wheelchair users uploaded this week gentle exercises to be completed in your sitting room. There will be further video for wheelchair users uploaded.

Further detail and exercise tips can be found on Clare Sport Partnership website: www.claresports.ie.

Cultural Services – Library, Arts, Museum, Archives

Clare County Library

The Library service is in preparation for opening in Phase 2 of the Government roadmap (8th June) – this will consist of an 'order and collect' service from eight branches to members of the public, the cocooning delivery service for older citizens will continue and e-resources and online learning programmes are continuing to compensate for lack of a complete library service. Clare County library supported and participated in the Ennis Bookclub Festival in March through staff volunteering and supporting a number of events, including Caroline Foran, who spoke on anxiety.

Seachtain na Gaeilge, World Book Day and Teen Week were all celebrated by the library service in March with several events taking place throughout the branch network. Galway author Patricia Forde visited Ennis and Shannon libraries to discuss her new novel, *Ar Strae*, for children in the Irish language. Through her latest book children from Gaelscoileanna in Ennis and Shannon had an opportunity to talk about the challenges faced by young Syrian children arriving in Ireland to begin a new life. Library staff member, Aidan Courtney, visited libraries all over the county entertaining children with his illustration workshops delivered through Irish. Aidan's drawings were based on popular books for children, the names of which the children had to guess through Irish. Maire Faisey delivered four Seachtain na Gaeilge storytime sessions for young children in the libraries in West Clare: Kilrush, Kilkee, Kildysart and Kilmihil.

World Book Day was marked by a visit from one of Ireland's most successful authors, Judi Curtin, to Kildysart and Shannon libraries. Judi's presentation at Kildysart library was a collaboration with St John Bosco Community College for the school's literacy week. Students had read many of Judi's books before her visit and were excited and delighted to meet the best-selling, award-winning writer. Judi also visited Shannon Library and met with fifth and sixth class children from St Conaire's National School. Kilrush Library hosted a start your own business session, "Ideas to reality", with Dianne Hassett as part of Work Matters at the library.

The library's annual Teen Week in collaboration with the Ennis Book Club Festival in Ennis and Scariff libraries began with an unforgettable presentation by Everest summiteer John Burke at De Valera Library on 3rd March, 2020. John left his Transition Year audience with many memorable stories of his physical and emotional journey to the top of the world's highest mountain and advised on the simplest of coping mechanisms for life's everyday challenges for young adults. Teenage author Brian Conaghan visited Ennis and Scariff libraries on 4th March. This was another excellent event perfectly pitched at secondary school audiences. Through his award-winning novels Brian illustrated to school audiences how he copes with living with Tourette's syndrome and shared his experiences of writing and the resilience necessary to become a published author.

Sarah Webb visited Scariff Library on 6th March, where she delivered an inspiring writing workshop to teenagers from Scariff Community College. Sarah is the author of many books for children, teenagers and adults.



Work Matters at Kilrush Library.

Book Club Festival in March: The Clare FM bookclub read *A Very English Scandal* by John Preston – a number of book, film, children's clubs and computer classes were held in Clare libraries.

Usage of Clare County Library online services has been very active throughout April while the libraries remain closed. Many members of the public have accessed e-resources including ebooks, e-magazines, e-newspapers, language courses and training courses. Clare County library has also provided information services, story time sessions and virtual competitions through social media channels.

The usage of library e-resources has had a big increase since the closure of library branches in mid-March:

- 382% increase in e-learning courses
- 218% increase in ebook borrowings
- 95% increase in e-magazine usage
- 76% increase in e-audiobook borrowings
- 52% increase in new users of ebooks and e-audiobooks service.

Stock of e-audiobooks has increased by 30% between January and April to 26,477 items, and the stock of ebooks has increased by 21% to 35,586 items.

Staff have also created 40 online story times, craft sessions and drawing sessions for younger members.

Marketing

Clare County Library had the following activity on social media in April.

| | Posts | Likes | Shares/retweets | Comments |
|----------|-------|-------|-----------------|----------|
| Facebook | 260 | 2196 | 859 | 171 |
| Twitter | 285 | 534 | 445 | 7 |

Clare County Library Photographic Archive has uploaded photos to the Graveyard Inscriptions Collection for Drumcliff Graveyard (Section B). This photo collection has been fully catalogued and transcribed. A War of Independence exhibition is in development – researching Clare events of 1920 for an upcoming library exhibition. The Creative Ireland Portal is being updated with details of proposed events scheduled for the latter half of 2020 including Project Awards and liaising with CI staff

on plans for Cruinniú na nÓg, which is scheduled for Saturday, 13th June, and which may proceed in an online format.

The National Right to Read “Spring into Storytime” is accessible to families all over County Clare despite the current closure of branch libraries. The stories can all be accessed from the library website, young children can listen to local librarians as they bring story times into their homes. Libraries may be closed but in partnership with a range of writers and publishers we can celebrate the joy of storytelling online instead of at the local branch. Librarians from the Clare library branch network have created story videos, arts and craft demos, nature walk trails and step-by-step cartoon drawing guidelines to keep children entertained while schools are closed.

In addition, Clare County Library in collaboration with the LCETB’s Local Creative Youth Partnership has compiled an activity booklet for parents to download in its entirety or as individual pages for children to work on at home. Each themed page of activities is based on places of interest in County Clare. Clare County Library Service is grateful for their generous permission and that of publishers O’Brien Press for allowing us to share it with our readers.

Covid-19 wellbeing response

Clare library service co-ordinated a cross-directorate wellbeing response aimed at supporting the public in the areas of staying physically active, staying connected and supporting mental health. Clare Sports Partnership and the community helpline were also integral to the success of the initiative. Aspects of the initiative included the introduction of a book delivery service to cocooning members of the public in May. By the week of 18th May, 324 deliveries had been enacted comprising 2,340 items of stock. Other initiatives included the collation and distribution of wellness packs to members of the public, physical fitness podcasts, participation on the Gavin Grace Morning Focus programme on Clare FM covering topics such as physical fitness and exercise, genealogy and family history, the dawn chorus and online business support to the arts community. Three articles appeared in *The Clare Champion* and all initiatives were advertised on the Clare County Council webpage and through social media.



Library van driver, John Murphy, delivering books.

Clare Library co-ordinated Clare County Council’s wellness packs for those who cannot access information resources online. They include different information and resources from the following organisations:

- Clare Sports partnership information resources
- Clare Library (e-resources and genealogical services leaflets and chocolate)
- Age Friendly Officer, Clare County Council (Age Friendly

newsletters and Age Action help sheets)

- Healthy Ireland co-coordinator (torch keyrings)
- Clare Arts Office (Riches of Clare CD)
- Clare Heritage Officer (Biodiversity Gardening book).

They have been distributed to the following groups.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Clare Libraries: | 100 |
| Covid-19 helpline: | 50 |
| Clare Care: | 90 |
| Alzheimer’s Society – Clare Branch: | 80 |



Library staff preparing wellness packs.

Library Capital Programme

Due to Government shutdown of building sites, Keatings halted work on the library building on 28th March and came back on site on 18th May. During this “down time” work continued on the value engineering package and updating drawings. Piling recommenced once Keatings were back on site and was completed by 26th May. A Clare County Council resident engineer was appointed to the project on 25th May as work commences on the sub-structure and super-structure of the build.

Clare Arts Office

A site meeting for artists took place at Cuan an Chláir Housing Scheme in Ennis as part of the commissioning process through the Per Cent for Art Scheme. Three exhibitions took place countywide – Henry Butler in the County Museum, Philip Brennan in Scariff and Astrid Adler in Kilkee – all were cut short due to the onset of Covid-19.

Filming of “Smother” continued in Lahinch until mid-March and assistance is currently being provided to a German film looking to shoot in Kilkee, Bunratty and Shannon. “Calm with Horses”, supported by the WRAP FUND and shot in Kilkee, was released nationwide.



‘Calm with Horses’.



An artist residency had begun in Bodyke NS in March before being discontinued while a further six were paused countywide. Nine residencies with disability organisations were also paused throughout the county. Clare Youth Theatre performed at the Ennis Book Club Festival and the “spoken word” project, with five secondary schools in the County, “New Word Order”, also took place as part of the festival. A public celebration of the Gaining Ground Shannon project, Clout 9 by Godknows, took place in Hope Cafe in Shannon. The Gaining Ground International Public Art Symposium was re-scheduled to take place in September. Throughout April, some programming has continued with St Joseph’s Hospital in Ennis and with Clare Youth Theatre. The Arts Office is presently reviewing how it can work with artists in building capacity and in particular in supporting older artists.

Forty artists participated in a pilot series of digital workshops for artists followed by a remote digital course, supported by the Local Enterprise Office (LEO). A similar course is in preparation for the festivals sector. This has been an initiative of the Covid-19 wellbeing response programme of the Council.

A large number of arts events and opportunities were uploaded to the Council website and CDs were distributed through the Libraries wellness packs. A specific arts wellness pack was distributed to the residents of St Joseph’s Hospital, who continue to enjoy their weekly hospital radio arts show through the residency there. The residency also featured on RTÉ with a virtual concert taking place in the church. Clare Youth Theatre engaged their young members through Zoom as they prepare for “Cruinniú na nÓg” in June. The Arts Office has been working with a number of artists and arts organisations to facilitate an online offering for Cruinniú and in preparation for Culture Night in September 2020.

Ongoing advice is being offered to individual artists and organisations in respect of rescheduling/rethinking of events and projects. The Arts Office has started online virtual exhibitions on the Facebook page to assist artists, whose exhibitions in Council venues have been cancelled, in promoting the works they had been creating over the past number of months.

Clare Museum

The curator has invited members of the public to record their experiences of this historic pandemic period for posterity and to submit any photographs, or items they may have, to the museum. Other duties carried out in April included; proofreading the 2017

Accession Register, updating the museum’s Disaster Plan, and researching the museum’s new Strategic Management Plan. Co-ordination of essential maintenance visits by service providers has also been taking place. The curator is putting in place a plan to ensure the security and environmental monitoring of the collection is maintained during this period. This will require a presence in the museum on Mondays and Thursdays going forward.

The museum’s social media presence has been increased by posting regular images and videos and information on items in the collection on the museum’s Facebook page and is increasing its online audience. The museum has promoted a project as part of International Museum’s Day, to collect photographs and experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic from the Clare public, with some success. This will be an ongoing project going forward. Significant progress has been made in cataloguing the collection since the closure of the museum in March and as a result the curator is putting a plan in place to photograph the museum to provide more material for the museum’s website and social media.

A canonball from a find site in Ballycar, Newmarket on Fergus, was collected following contact from the National Museum of Ireland. This item has been claimed for the state under the National Monuments Act (1994) and will be stored at the museum under the National Cultural Institutions Act. Research connects the canonball to a Cromwellian army garrison which was located at the site in 1654. A Report of Discovery form and supporting documentation is being prepared for the National Museum. An implementation plan for reopening procedures is being worked on. Research has been conducted on the value of the collection for insurance purposes.

Clare Archives

Archives is now part of Cultural Services since March. A new archives@clarecoco.ie email has been setup to reflect this. Any historical archive queries will now be dealt with by staff of the Local Studies Centre. Any queries for Clare County Council records can be emailed to records@clarecoco.ie.

The county library/county archives processed the “Dysert National School” roll books and daily attendance registers 1875-1970 for deposit in Clare County Archives. The Dysert material joins a growing county archive of national school records held in Ennis.

Killaloe Municipal District

Lough Derg Blueway Amenity Trail and Looped Walk Project

With design work complete, a 1km section of the Lough Derg Blueway Amenity Trail went to tender in April 2020. Tender adjudication is complete and the Municipal District (MD) team hopes to begin works in late June/early July. It is envisaged that this work will help to create a link between Tuamgraney and Killaloe as part of the wider Lough Derg Blueway Project. This project is funded by the Department of Community and Rural Affairs via the Outdoor Recreation Project.

Covid-19

The Killaloe MD office in Scarriff remains closed to the public. The team are delivering essential services in the area and are providing support to reinforce Covid-19 advice, in this regard we have installed large Covid-19 signs at each large living cluster and large amenity area in the district. This signing is to raise public awareness and ensure adherence to guidelines throughout this crisis.

Roadworks programme

May 18th marked the start of Phase 1 of the Government *Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business*. It also marks the beginning of the roadworks programme for 2020 in the MD which has had a delayed start due to Covid-19.

Roadworks amounting to approximately €5 million will be managed and delivered by area staff over the coming six months.

Amenities

Amenity areas such as Ballycuggeran and Mountshannon reopened to the public on May 18th. The MD is monitoring both areas and, in conjunction with the Environment section, has completed a programme of footpath/road stenciling and signage at these locations to promote social distancing.

Flood response – Springfield

Staff of Killaloe MD were involved in the pre-flood planning and the operational management of flooding at Springfield Clonlara, where heavy rainfall and river surges resulted in widespread flooding of lands in the area.

It also involved data gathering to assist in potential future events by feeding data back to the EU Copernicus project via the Fire Service.

Killaloe MD engineers and staff working with other agencies such as Civil Defence, soldiers from the Sarsfield Barracks in Limerick and ESB sought to protect up to 17 homes from flooding during the course of a two to three week period.

Killaloe MD worked with the local Springfield Community to ensure agricultural businesses could continue to operate and the local community could access and egress safely from their homes.

The response included the building of sandbag protection walls, a pumping plan and the use of specialist access vehicles.



The Covid-19 pandemic has been sweeping through our world indiscriminately. In Ireland, due to the cooperation of the majority and the excellent work of our medical people, we are managing our way through this crisis and local government is playing its part. In the weeks and months ahead, our economy will be depressed because demand will stay low and people will spend more conservatively; that is, until our scientists make the Covid-19 vaccine.

The reopening of our economy is now the focus. The reopening of the construction sector, due to the industry's large size, labour intensity and importance in supplying inputs to downstream industries, is creating substantial economic benefits. The construction sector is reliant on a functioning planning system and on May 25th this Council commenced the reopening of the planning system.

In Clare County Council, remote working has become normal and fortunately we have the resources to allow us to be productive in this way. The Economic Development Directorate staff have approached this change in work circumstances in a pragmatic and flexible way and I thank them for that.

The Economic Development Directorate is working with the Finance department in the distribution of the Government's business Restart Grants.

The day-to-day work of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) has increased significantly as businesses plan for the recovery. The National Business Continuity Support Scheme has a high take-up rate, as do the Trading Online Vouchers. Currently, we are conducting a survey of our business clients to ascertain their trading capability and, due to the popularity of online training, we continue to add more courses. In total, 500 have participated to date and 80 applications for free business mentoring have been received.

Looking towards the future, work on the preparation of a Clare Economic Recovery Plan has commenced and as this work progresses, I will keep elected members informed.

Change to staff structures

Work on a number of strategic economic projects for the county is continuing and in order to have a singular focus on the delivery of a number of strategic projects. Brian McCarthy, Senior Planner, has been tasked to lead this work area while Helen Quinn has been promoted to the Acting Senior Planner position in the Planning Department.

Strategic economic projects

Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Plan

Work continues on the drafting of the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Plan with the initial draft of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) provided in early April 2020. On completion of the Ennis 2040 Flood Risk Assessment and SEA/Appropriate Assessment the Plan can move forward to finalisation. A draft Plan is expected in June 2020.

UL/SDZ

The Council's law agent is at an advanced stage in legal negotiations on the setting up of a designated activity company

(DAC) for the purpose of the SDZ application and the Planning Scheme (Masterplan) design. B McCarthy SP has been charged to lead this project.

Data Centre

The Art Data Centre Company behind the Ennis Data Centre is in the process of preparing a planning application for the development. The Council continues to work with the company to market the Ennis Data Centre especially to US Data Centre developers. This work is being done in partnership with the IDA. The power generation component of the project is also being progressed.

Spatial and Economic Masterplan for Shannon Town Centre

The preparation of this Masterplan is funded under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) and Clare County Council. In February 2020, an Integrated Design Team (IDT) of Spatial and Economic Consultants (BDP and McCabe Durney Barnes) were appointed for the preparation of an Economic & Spatial Masterplan for Shannon Town.

The purpose of the Masterplan is to plan for the economic future and spatial pattern for the centre of Shannon Town. On completion later this year, the Masterplan will unlock the Town's development potential and guide and market/stimulate its development into the future. The Masterplan will plan Shannon Town's growth potential, the use of under-used, derelict and vacant sites in the area, and development potential of key sites at the entrance points to the town. Crucially, the Masterplan will be based on an Economic Viability Assessment.

Roche Masterplan

The Council will continue to work with Roche Management to masterplan the future use of the Clarecastle site. This forward planning work will continue in parallel with Roche's proposals to clean the site.

Killaloe-Ballina Town Enhancement and Mobility Plan

The Covid-19 virus has resulted in this plan being 'paused'. Meanwhile, background desktop work is underway until the consultant's appointment is activated.

Forward planning

Potential Variation (No. 2) to the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) and upcoming Review of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023

The Planning Authority is reviewing whether a Variation is required to the existing County Development Plan in order to achieve the objectives of the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region. Consideration is also being given to bringing forward the commencement of the full review of the County Development Plan (which would normally have had to commence in December 2020). Early commencement of the CDP review would negate the need for a Variation at this point. Should a review of the County Development Plan be decided on, it is likely that this process will commence in September 2020 and would conclude in September 2022.

Cappa Enhancement Strategy

The Planning Section and Helena McElmeel Architects are preparing an Enhancement Strategy for Cappa, Kilrush, focusing on its connection to the sea, the pier and the beach. A presentation to the West Clare Municipal District elected members was made on 3rd March, 2020, in Ennistymon. It is anticipated that the strategy will be finalised in the coming weeks.

Development management

The table below summarises the activity in relation to planning applications and enforcement during the months of March, April and May and also gives the year-to-date totals

| Development Management | March 2020 | April 2020 | May 2020 | Year to date 2020 |
|--|------------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Planning applications | | | | |
| No. of planning applications received | 80 | 63 | 55 | 345 |
| No. of pre-planning enquiries received | 20 | 15 | 14 | 100 |
| No. of Section 5 applications | 3 | 4 | 3 | 17 |
| Planning Enforcement | | | | |
| No. of new complaints received | 7 | 9 | 11 | 60 |
| No of files opened | 7 | 7 | 11 | 47 |
| No. of warning letters issued | 4 | 7 | 26 | 55 |
| No. of enforcement notices served | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| No. of enforcement files closed | 12 | 1 | 4 | 17 |

Taking in charge

The Taking in Charge Team is continuing to progress remedial works contracts on a number of housing estates, as outlined in the table below. It is planned that all these contracts will be completed before the end of the year. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, site works on these projects were temporarily suspended. These works are due to recommence in June 2020.

| Estate | Update regarding Remedial Works |
|---|---|
| Mount Clare, Claremount, Clarecastle | A contractor was appointed on 22nd April, 2020 |
| Craglands/Crag Ard, Ballynacally | A contractor was appointed on 24th March, 2020 |
| Manor Grove, Ardnacrusha | A contractor was appointed on 24th March, 2020 |
| Boheraroan, Newmarket on Fergus | Closing date for receipt of tender documents was 6th March, 2020. An assessment of tenders is still ongoing |
| Gort na mBláth/Rathban/Lios Ard, Tulla Rd, Ennis | Closing date for receipt of tender documents was 3rd April, 2020. A contractor was appointed on 18th May, 2020, works commenced on 21st May, 2020 |
| Dun Aras/Cluain Alainn/Dun Aras Ave/Ballycasey Ave, Shannon | Closing date for receipt of tender documents was 15th May, 2020. Tenders have been received and are currently being assessed |

Heritage and biodiversity

Irish Community Archive Network (iCAN)

- The planned launch of the Clare iCAN in collaboration with Shannon, Clarecastle, Kilkee and Scattery Island heritage groups and with support from the National Museum that was scheduled for 24th March in Clarecastle was postponed due to Covid-19.
- The students from the 'Reading Your Local Landscape' course (including participants from Miltown Malbay, Kilrush, Scarriff and Killaloe) have also prepared their course material to go onto the Clare iCAN website to be made available to their relevant communities.
- The National Museum has commissioned Garry Kelly of GK Media Ltd to undertake an online social media training course via workshop/webinar and this is being offered to all the Clare iCAN participants.
- The first iCAN National Network meeting was hosted by the Shannon Historical Society and Dúchas na Sionna, at Treacys Oakwood Hotel, Shannon. Olive Carey and John O'Brien spoke about their work to preserve and share the history and heritage of the Shannon region, with a focus on the Hastings Farmhouse preservation project. The meeting was followed by a site visit to Hastings Farmhouse and the Shannon Town Community Wetlands.
- Heritage and Biodiversity pop-up banners are being printed and we are at present working with Clare iCAN communities to assist in the production of pop up banners for their individual projects.
- The Clare iCAN groups in Shannon, Clarecastle, Kilkee and Scattery Island heritage groups continue to develop their websites and remain active on social media. The website may be viewed on <https://heritage.clareheritage.org/>.

All Ireland Pollinator Plan

The Heritage Officer continues work to implement the Pollinator Plan within the Council and assist with biodiversity initiatives. In this regard, Pollinator Plan resource material and Gardening for Biodiversity publications are being made available to the public on request. The latter publication was included in the wellness packs sent out to people ‘cocooning’ as part of the Clare County Council Wellbeing Initiative.

Funding applications to the Heritage Council under the Clare Heritage Plan 2017-2023

An allocation of €23,000 has been approved from the Heritage Council to implement the following Clare County Heritage Plan projects in 2020:

1. Clare Holy Wells Audit

Michael Houlihan was successful in this tender and has commenced the County Clare Holy Wells Audit which will survey, compile data, gather information and document the location and condition of Holy Wells in Clare with a focus on the less well known or un-recorded Holy Wells or those not in present use. The audit will raise awareness and knowledge of the rich heritage associated with Holy Wells and their settings.

2. Demonstration Sites for Biodiversity Management

Frances Giaquinto was successful in this tender and is undertaking plans for implementation of best practice in biodiversity management in Clare County Council owned public sites throughout County Clare. Site survey and habitat mapping is underway in consultation with the Municipal Districts.

The County Clare Swift Survey

This survey is underway, including finding, recording and mapping Swift nesting sites. BirdWatch Ireland and Clare County Council want to get local communities and residents involved by recording and reporting the presence of Swifts in local urban areas. More information may be found at: [http://www.clarecoco.ie/your-council/\[news\]/clare-swift-survey-2020-to-take-place-this-summer.html](http://www.clarecoco.ie/your-council/[news]/clare-swift-survey-2020-to-take-place-this-summer.html).

Biodiversity Resource Manual for all Local Authority Staff

A draft gap analysis has been written up and is currently under review. The Biodiversity Resource Manual is at present being drafted, with anticipated roll-out of staff training in the autumn.

KnowYour5k

KnowYour5k is a partnership project between the National

Museum and the Heritage Council through the iCAN platform and is well promoted and utilised at the moment. KnowYour5k is asking the public to look at what is in their 5k area and upload information onto the website, any aspect of heritage can feature from letters and documents, to natural and built heritage, to intangible heritage such as field names, songs and stories. There are guides as to where to look provided as well. Visit the website www.ouririshheritage.org or alternatively Google KnowYour5k. Join in on social media and share with KnowYour5k, and tag @NMIreland @HeritageHubIRE and @CreativeIreland.

Reading Your Local Landscape courses

Covid-19 has resulted in the ‘Reading Your Local Landscape’ courses in both the Burren and Kilkishen being ‘paused’. The situation will be reviewed in the autumn as to how to proceed and to finalise the training.

Building space for nature: wildlife and buildings – video

This project aims to create a link between our built and natural heritage, to raise awareness of the importance of buildings for wildlife, to safeguard sensitive species and encourage the provision of space for nature. A range of wildlife nest and roost on buildings in the Irish countryside, including several species of conservation priority such as Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Barn Owl and Swift. However, wildlife often goes unnoticed and therefore are vulnerable to disturbance during works or renovations. This is a joint project between Clare, Tipperary and Laois County Councils.

Biodiversity Week

Biodiversity Week ran from 22nd to 29th May, 2020. This year, Clare FM assisted the Council and the Clare local branch of Birdwatch Ireland to highlight the Dawn Bird Chorus as part of the Council’s wellbeing initiative. In addition, advertising to promote biodiversity and pollinators was run over the course of Biodiversity Week on Clare FM.

The raptor workbooks and video for primary schools produced by Clare, Galway and Tipperary County Councils formed part of the National Wellness response from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and may be downloaded as follows:

- https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=raptor+birdwatch+ireland
- <http://www.clarecoco.ie/services/planning/publications/raptor-workbook-1st-2nd-3rd-classes-24673.pdf>
- <http://www.clarecoco.ie/services/planning/publications/raptor-workbook-4th-5th-6th-classes-24674.pdf>

Local Enterprise Office

Covid-19 Supports

LEO Clare continues to support our local businesses through what is an unprecedented economic challenge. Supports include:

- A Business Continuity Voucher, aimed at providing consultancy to the value of €2,500 to struggling businesses. These businesses can use the voucher to hire a consultant to assist with business continuity planning, implementing remote working practices and assessing their current financial

health, among other options. This option is available to all businesses employing less than 50. Almost 400 applications were received by the LEO for the Business Continuity Voucher. This scheme closed for applications on Friday, 15th May. To date, funding of over €380,000 has been approved to assist over 260 businesses.

- A new Trading Online Voucher scheme was launched on 17th April, 2020, to assist businesses enhance their capacity to sell online and/or develop a new online platform. Businesses

that employ less than 10 and have a turnover of less than €2m can avail of 90% funding up to a maximum €2,500. Over 140 applications were received for the Trading Online Voucher Scheme, which provides grant support to small businesses to develop an ecommerce website.

- A new range of online webinars and training courses, including information on remote working and getting paid online, are on offer from LEO Clare and are provided free of charge to applicants. Almost 500 clients registered in the month of May to partake in our range of online webinars and training courses, including webinars on digital marketing and steps to take to reopen cafes, restaurants and retail outlets. All of these webinars were provided free of charge to applicants.
- A free three-hour mentoring session, where a member of the LEO Clare mentoring panel is assigned to an applicant to mentor them in areas ranging from financial review to starting a food business to digital marketing, among others. Over 80 applications were received in the month of May for the free three-hour mentoring session.
- A special Covid-19 support loan from Micro Finance Ireland. MFI are providing loans of up to €50,000 to businesses affected by the current crisis. These loans are interest free for the first six months and businesses who apply through LEO Clare can avail of an interest rate of 4.5% for the remaining duration of the loan. To date LEO Clare have received eight applications (two approved and six pending) for this special Covid-19 support loan.
- We continue to provide our range of grant supports (including Feasibility, Priming and Business Expansion and our TAME grant for micro-exporters) remain available to eligible businesses to apply.

As new supports are announced, these will be advised through our social media channels, website and local media.

Training programmes

The restrictions placed on public gatherings led to a significant change in our planned training schedule. LEO Clare reacted positively to the new restrictions placed on the general public by the Covid-19 crisis, reorganising courses and moving them online. We also added extra courses to assist struggling businesses to upskill. Since 31st March, LEO Clare has run 15 online events up to the end of April with a number of more planned for the month of May. Demand has exceeded expectations with many courses being sold out in a short period of time. This programme of free online webinars and training for the foreseeable future will continue into the future.

Local Enterprise Week

Prior to the implementation of restricted movements, Local Enterprise Week took place from March 2nd to 6th, 2020, and included 17 events across the county. Events included 'Start Your Own Business Programme', Website Grant Information Evening (Ennistymon), Business Advice Clinic (Killaloe) and the launch of our 2020 LEAN Programme. We also collaborated with Ennis Chamber, Shannon Chamber, Clare Local Development Company and Intreo to provide a wider range of events with topics of interest to many different groups and individuals.

The week also included the finals of our Student Enterprise Awards, which took place in Treacys West County Hotel.



Pictured (l-r) are: Emre Uzun, Sean Torpey, Áine Gleeson, Padraic McElwee, Anke and Eugene McKernan.



Pictured (l-r) are: Liam Conneally, Mayor of Clare Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy, Áine Gleeson and Minister of State Pat Breen.

Local Enterprise Week 2020 concluded with a gala event of the County Final for the National Enterprise Awards on Friday evening. Áine Gleeson of Wowwee was the overall winner of this event and will represent Clare at the National Finals in Dublin.

Submit.com

LEO Clare successfully launched its new online grant acceptance portal, powered by Submit.com, in May. This new online application system replaces the previous paper-based application process. It also allows for the secure sharing of information and the system can be modified to allow us to issue surveys and questionnaires to clients. Early feedback from clients has been positive as the system is user-friendly and streamlines the application process.

May Evaluation Committee Meeting

Our Evaluation Committee (EVAC) met on Tuesday, 5th May, for their second meeting of the year. This marked the first time the committee had met remotely and the process was a success. The May EVAC approved €206,753 in funding for four projects. This included €132,000 in funding support for one company working on research and development in the wind energy sector.

Student Enterprise Programme

The National Final of the Student Enterprise Programme took place on Wednesday, 27th May, 2020. This year, 11 schools

competed via 50 different teams in the competition. After two very successful county final days on 4th and 5th March, 2020, the following students and teams went on to represent Clare in the National Finals:

The Junior Category was represented by Darragh Walsh from 'Banner Locker Accessories' at St Joseph's Secondary School, Tulla.

In the Intermediate Category, Alanna Hayes of 'Rainbows of the World' from Scoil Mhuire, Ennistymon, flew the flag for Clare.

In the Senior Category of the competition, Clare was well represented by Rachel Guinene, Eabha Greene, Ava Burke and Ellen Flanagan from 'Atlantic Beauty' at St Joseph's Secondary School, Spanish Point.

Property Management

Quin Road Campus

The substantial completion of Phase 1 of this project would be a time for celebration for Clare Civil Defence and the wider Council but due to the current restrictions, the fit-out of the completed area has been delayed. Every effort will be made to progress the fit out so that the Civil Defence offices, meeting rooms etc can be occupied over the coming months. Construction work on the remainder of the project will re-commence when the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted with a view to having all of the Civil Defence operations on site as soon as possible. The photos show the building at nighttime and the new signage that was erected at the end of May.



Refurbishment of beach huts at Kilkee

A contract was entered into for the refurbishment of the three beach huts at Kilkee, one of which is used as the lifeguard station.

The work includes the refurbishment of the hut beside the Lifeguard Station for the provision of toilet facilities and the improvement of the hut at the west end which is licensed to a water sport activity provider. While the works were suspended due to the Covid-19 restrictions, they have now recommenced since May 18th and are progressing well with the brilliant weather.



Casual trading

The Economic Development Department of Clare County Council regulates casual trading under the Casual Trading Act 1995 and the Council's bye-laws thereunder. Due to Government guidelines for Covid-19, all casual traders were requested to cease trading in March 2020. Under Phase 1 of the *Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business* on May 18th, casual trading was allowed to recommence within the guidelines and will be monitored. No new casual trading licences have been issued during this time.

Property transactions

The table below shows the number of property transactions completed by the Property Management Unit in March, April and May this year, together with the totals for 2020 to date.

| Transaction | March 2020 | April 2020 | May 2020 | Year to date 2020 |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Lease of property / building | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Licence to use property / building | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Grazing agreement for lands | 6 | 1 | 0 | 18 |
| Deed of transfer signed | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| Deed of rectification signed | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

Site acquisition at Kilrush

Contracts have now been signed for the acquisition of lands in Kilrush for a permanent site for Gaelscoil Uí Choimín. The Council is liaising with the Department of Education under the terms of the Service Level Agreement to progress the design of the school on this site.

Facilities management

Work has concentrated in this period on the arrangements for Áras Contae an Chláir in order to prepare for the re-opening of the Planning Department (by appointment) from 25th May. A review of workplaces is being conducted in order to establish what arrangements need to be put in place for staff in Áras Contae an Chláir and Waterpark Campus, to include physical distancing measures, signage, meeting rooms and canteen arrangements and cleaning. This will be done in line with the Council's response plan, national and HSE guidance.

New allotments in Shannon

Work was completed on the rotavation of the new allotment plots. This had been delayed due to the heavy rainfall last winter and spring. The water connection is now live and the fencing of individual allotments is currently being completed



and will facilitate social distancing in the allotment site. This has tied in well with the re-opening of the allotments on 18th May to allow the allotment holders to start their planting. The level of planting activity on the site in the pleasant weather is great to see.

The Chairperson of the Shannon Municipal District, Cllr Gerry Flynn, and the Director of Economic Development, Liam

Conneally, visited the site at the end of May, to mark the start of activity on the site. The project team of Murach Shannon, Ailish McMahon and Carmel Greene were also present with John Walsh, Chairperson of the Allotment Association.

Depending on the roadmap for lifting of restrictions under Covid-19, it is intended that an official launch event will be planned for later in the year.

Shannon Municipal District

In March 2020, the operating structure of Clare County Council was amended with regard to Municipal District (MD) structures. The structure has been adjusted with each MD Office now reporting directly into one of the four Directors of Service. The Shannon MD office and all staff now report to the Director of Economic Development, Liam Conneally.

To further strengthen the structure, a Senior Executive Officer has been assigned to the MD structure with the objective of identifying and delivering new strategic opportunities within each MD and beyond. In this regard, Jason Murphy has been assigned to the Shannon Municipal District and has been delegated the role of Meetings Administrator.

The impact of the pandemic has been severe across the country and the operations of the MD Office have been impacted. Further to guidance through the Crisis Management Team of Clare County Council, the Shannon MD Offices closed to the public on 9th March but service continues to be delivered within the parameters of that guidance.

The team in the MD have taken steps to close the public playground in Shannon and have placed Covid-19 notices across

the district relating to social distancing and the risk to public health. We appreciate the support of our elected members and the public in this work. We have also engaged with our partner organisations such as the Shannon Leisure facility, Shannon Group, Coillte and the various community groups across the MD to assist in meeting the challenge.

The flood defence works at Gort Na nUll, Sixmilebridge and civil works for the installation of public lighting at Cratloe are substantially completed. The contract for 'Regional and local roads overlay project 2020' is due to go out to tender shortly – this tender for the County is being managed through the Shannon MD office this year. On 10th March the Municipal District adopted the 2020 Schedule of Municipal District Works.

The outdoor team continue to provide essential public realm maintenance works in line with national guidance, including the repair of potholes and road damage, collection and maintenance of public bins and the clean-up of illegal dumping.

We continue to attend to all queries, including those from our Elected Members, through the phone line and to our e-mail address (shannonmunicipaldistrict@clarecoco.ie).

Transportation

Roadworks Programme and Operations

The Roadworks Programme for 2020 was adopted as part of the SMDW for 2020 by each of the Municipal Districts in March and went before the full Council for information in April.

Up to 18th May roadworks were not deemed an essential service in the advice which issued from the Government regarding Covid-19 restrictions, however Clare County Council continued to prepare for the delivery of the roadworks programme by procuring stone, preparing tenders, etc. as well as carrying out essential works.

From 18th May there will be a measured steady increase in outdoor roadworks activity on a phased basis applying a cautious approach.

Work activities include:

- Preparatory work including road repair, edging, drainage and junctions safety work
- Regulating, leveling and bitumen sealing
- Commencement of the surface dressing work – weather dependent.

This measured phased basis is in advance of a full resumption of roadworks activities from 8th June. Strict Covid-19 protocols will be followed at all times.

The Department of Rural and Community Development has just approved 12 projects for which they for it made a grant allocation available of €480,811. Letters of approval are now issuing to the successful applicants.

Strategic Transportation

Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy

The Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS) is being developed at present by the NTA and the Strategy is to cover all modes of land transport from 2018 to 2040. A number of meetings have been held with the consultants, NTA, TII and Limerick City and County Council.

The Draft LSMATS Document was presented to the NTA board on 1st May, 2020. They are now in the process of finalising the draft report and executive summary, the SEA ER and AA NIS, and the outstanding background documents – Options Development and Modelling.

The Physical Development SPC met on 19th February to specifically discuss the draft LSMATS in advance it going on public display. It has been further agreed with the NTA that a workshop with the SPC will be held (post-Covid-19 restrictions) when the draft strategy is prepared and that all Clare County Council Elected Members be invited to attend same. Following on from this it is anticipated that the public consultation phase will commence.

Public lighting

At the April meeting of Clare County Council the Members approved a Section 85 (of the Local Government Act 2001) Agreement between Clare County Council and Cork County Council for the Public Energy Efficiency project. This will entail

Cork County Council managing the relevant statutory procedures, procuring the necessary design, and managing the carrying out of the construction works for the project within County Clare.

Also at the at the April meeting of Clare County Council the members approved the raising of a loan facility to fund the Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project in County Clare.

Regarding the contract itself, the RMO is close to having the contract documents for Region 1 completed and it is presently proposed to publish the tender by the end of May with a contractor to be appointed and on site before the end of the year.

For the benefit of councillors, the following are the options available to facilitate reporting of public lighting faults:

- Internet: direct reporting on our website – www.airtricitysolutions.com;
- Phone: Airtricity Utility Solutions dedicated call centre – 1850 372 772;
- Local Authority Identification – via Local Authority’s website or contact number.

Road Design Office

Current projects – monthly update

It should be noted that this monthly project update is relevant only to the current period and the milestone progressions during that period.

In response to Covid-19 the Road Design office, in conjunction with the Management Team, has acknowledged that fundamental changes to working practices are necessary to combat Covid-19. New operating procedures have been put in place which enable staff to work from home. A Return to Work Protocol and Covid-19 Response Plan has been prepared which incorporates recent Government guidance while facilitating transition to a changing working office environment.

In addition, a new risk assessment has been prepared for site visits which is required for surveying and all work related to journeys out of County buildings. This risk assessment has been prepared, and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, while taking on board the latest advice from hse.ie or gov.ie/health-covid-19 along with guidance issued by the Clare County Council Crisis Management Team.

| Project | Update |
|------------|---|
| EuroVelo 1 | An Action Plan has been completed as per European Cyclist Federation/EuroVelo Requirements. Priority road resurfacing works to be identified along the route. Liaising with Limerick and Galway Local Authorities is required. Funding source to be established urgently now in order to procure signage/services for the route. Tender to be prepared when funding source is identified. |

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Knockanean NS | Road Improvement scheme – design drawing and land maps prepared and issued to Ennis MD. Cost estimate prepared. Knockanean NS draft Mobility Management Plan 2020 has been reviewed and comments issued to the Planning Section. |
| TII HD 17 Sites | For the N68: 1. Priority list is prepared. 2. Conceptual design commenced in April. For the N67: 1. Design and Feasibility Report for phase 1 progressing, i.e. Galway border to Ballyvaughan. |
| N85 Clareabbey Roundabout | Design and road safety audit discussions ongoing, during March and April, with the TII. |
| Bunratty Castle Junction | Pedestrian options have being reviewed in conjunction with the District Engineer in April. |
| TII HD 17 Sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority list is prepared. Conceptual design commenced in April. |
| N85 Shanaway Rd Junction, Ennis | Manual traffic turning count is completed. Topographical survey completed. Drawing completed and issued to TII Road Safety Engineer. Awaiting TII input in relation to access to the filling station/One Mile Inn property. Feasibility Report completed but cost estimate to be finalised. Landowner meetings have taken place. Awaiting feedback from landowners before feasibility report is issued to TII. A draft roundabout design has been prepared and alternative options are been considered. |

| | |
|--|---|
| L2034/L2032 Moanmore Crossroads on the Kilrush to Doonbeg road | Topographical survey completed & initial contact with land owners initiated. Hedge clearance identified in order to improve sight distance. Final design to be completed once hedge clearance is completed. |
| Bridge CL R483 -003.00 and approaches in Cree village | Topographical survey completed and initial contact with land owners initiated. Hedge clearance identified in order to improve sight distance. Final design to be completed once hedge clearance is completed. |

Other Projects – Monthly Update

| Project | Update |
|---|---|
| Larkins Cross/ Gillogue Bridge Specific improvement works | <p>Traffic signals at Larkins Cross and Gillogue Bridges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design is progressing and is at an advanced stage. Once completed will be sent to TII for comment. AA screening is completed. It is anticipated that this Part 8 will go before the elected members at the July meeting. This is dependent on concluding the consultation periods in advance. Land owner discussions have commenced. Limerick City and County Council have agreed to carry out a Road Safety Audit. |
| Round 4 Clare Noise Action Plan | Traffic surveys for Round 4 local roads have been completed. A number of Regional roads, not completed, will be carried out at a later date subject to Covid-19 restrictions being in place. GIS boundary shape files have been sent to the EPA and also Limerick County Council for roads in South East Clare. |
| Roche API Site – Traffic and Transport aspects | Liaison/meetings with Roche and their Consultants, Aecom, are ongoing. Construction traffic management proposals issued by Aecom and are currently under review. |
| Liaison with NTA regarding bus stops | <p>Wheelchair accessible bus stop on Bothar Linne, Shannon Town:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The design is completed and has received NTA approval. Costing and Application forwarded to NTA. NTA have assessed and funding has been granted for this project (€30,733.01) A Preliminary Safety and Health Plan is being prepared. |
| Liaison with NTA regarding bus shelters | List of proposed locations has been forwarded to NTA. Further to recent communications the NTA are assessing proposed locations |

Low Cost Safety Schemes – Monthly Progress

| Project | Update |
|---------------------------|---|
| R463 junction at Westbury | <p>Proposal to upgrad the existing signalised junction to MOVA system and add additional exit lane from the Westbury estate. The draft design is completed and is awaiting approval from the TII. AA screening is completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is anticipated that this Part 8 will go before the Elected Members at the July meeting. This is dependent on concluding the consultation periods in advance. Design submitted to Shannon MD for comment. Limerick City and County Council have agreed to carry out a Road Safety Audit. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Road Schedule & Queries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uploading the Shannon and Kilrush 2020 road works programme (surface dressing and overlays) onto the PMS. Nearly 90 sections in total on regional and local roads. • Dealing with requests from Municipal Districts for searches through old road schedule paper mapping to establish if certain roads are/were in public ownership – ongoing basis. • Update the roads schedule with roads taken in charge over the last number of years. |
| Cycle Lanes | Identification and mapping of all cycle lanes in County Clare – commenced. |
| Clare Noise Action Plan 2018 | Clare County Council Noise Action Plan Annual Report for 2019 has been submitted to the EPA. |
| N19 extension | Liaison with consultants – ongoing |
| N68 investigation of provision of pull in areas | Initial approach made to TII – ongoing |

2020 Bridge Rehabilitation – Progress

- Carrownisha Bridge: Contractor appointed and the repair works had commenced, however these works were suspended due to Covid-19. The contractor returned to work week commencing 18/05/2020.
- Sixmilebridge Bridge: Consultant appointed and the design is progressing.
- Bunratty Bridge: Consultant appointed and the design had commenced, however its completion is delayed awaiting survey information. Survey work suspended due to Covid-19. Survey work rescheduled for 22/05/2020.
- Gilloge Bridge: Tenders returned and the contractor has been appointed. Construction works are programmed to commence in early July 2020.
- Breaghva Bridge: Tenders returned and the contractor has been appointed. Construction works are programmed to commence on the 20/05/2020.
- Stonepark Bridge: Design ongoing.
- Kilmacduane East Bridge: Tenders returned and the contractor has been appointed. Construction works are programmed to commence mid June 2020.
- Carron Bridge: AA screening completed. Emergency repair works due to commence on 21st May 2020.
- AA Screening tender issued for 2020 grant funded bridges: The consultant is appointed. Bridge inspections will progress when Covid-19 restrictions permit.
- New Bridge (Scarriff): To be completed when water levels allow and when Covid-19 restrictions permit.
- Sixmilebridge Bridge: Consultant appointed, design of repair works commenced
- Breaghva Bridge: Contractor to be appointed (Letter of Intent on hold).

General Design Office

Quin Road Campus

Phase 1, containing the new Civil Defence administration offices, briefing and training facilities, is now practically completed.



Entrance Lobby and Office Area

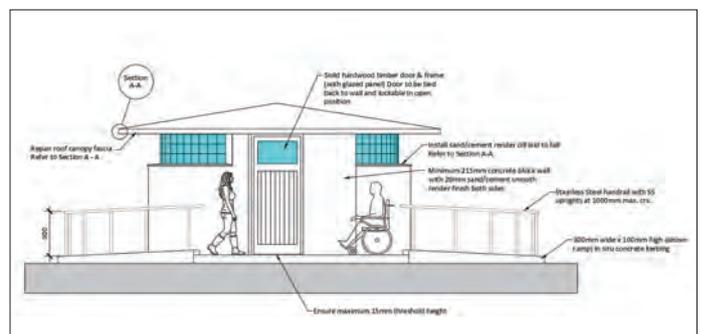
Phase 2 has recommenced on site and will contain the Civil Defence garage and technical and welfare facilities, along with Environment Section storage and a Records Management Centre.



Civil Defence garage area.

Kilkee lifeguard and changing huts

Following Covid-19 Government and CIF guidelines, construction works on the Kilkee Beach Huts resumed on Monday, 18th May, 2020.



Health and Safety

Since March 2020, the Health and Safety section falls under the remit of Transportation. During the past few months the Health and Safety Team continued to provide support and guidance in the format of Covid-19 risk assessments to the Crisis Management Team and all Departments of Clare County Council in the delivery of essential services and in accordance with the Government phased re-opening plan.

In addition, the Health and Safety Team reviewed and assessed National, Sectoral and Operational Covid-19 Guidance Documents and assisted in the Development of a Covid-19 Induction Pack for all staff including a Covid-19 Response Plan.

Fire and Building Control Section

Recent training courses

The following brigade training courses were held during March and April:

- Community First Responder (CFR) for all personnel in Killaloe Fire Brigade;
- Emergency First Responder (EFR) for all personnel in Killaloe and Shannon Fire Brigades;
- Compartment Fire Behaviour course in Sligo; and
- Briefing provided to all Line Managers on the updates to the 2020 Safety Management System.

Recent funeral of Tom Stack R.I.P. – former Chief Fire Officer (1954-1986)

Tom, a proud Kerryman from Moyvane, joined Clare County Council in 1954, and served as County/Chief Fire Officer until his retirement 32 years later in 1986. During his career, Tom was instrumental in the modernisation of the Fire Service in County Clare. In the early 1960s, Clare County Fire Service carried out a construction programme that included the completion of Ennistymon Fire Station, and construction of stations at Kilkee and Kilrush for the sum of £10,000. Towards the end of the 1960s all of Clare's Fire Stations were re-equipped with new purpose-built firefighting appliances at a total cost of £50,000. Throughout the 1970s there was substantial investment in training and the workforce.

Under CFO Stack's leadership, by the 1980s, there were seven fire stations in Clare, in Ennis, Shannon, Ennistymon, Scarriff, Killaloe, Kilrush and Kilkee, with three full-time personnel and 74 Retained Firefighters. Each station was manned by Retained Fire Personnel, with the crew comprising of a Station Officer, Sub-Station Officer, Driver Mechanic and between seven and nine firefighters. Personnel were notified by phone, pager and siren in the event of an emergency call-out occurring.

Training had improved since the 1960s, and included regular instruction in the use of breathing apparatus and cutting equipment. Much of the specialised training was carried out at Ennis Fire Station, with individual Brigades training regularly at their own Fire Stations.

Messages of condolences have come from various part of the country, from former colleagues and currently serving Chiefs that would have gotten to know Tom and Joan over the years. Tom was also a regular at Fire Service HQ at Ennis Fire Station,



The Fire Service paid tribute to Tom Stack by holding a Guard of Honour at Ennis Fire Station.

imparting his considerable knowledge and history of the Fire Service in Clare, of which he played a large part, to the current cohort of officers.

Tom passed away in his home in Ennis on Tuesday, 12th May, 2020. The Fire Service paid tribute to Tom by holding a Guard of Honour at Ennis Fire Station. Former colleagues, retired and serving Fire Officers from other Counties as well as members of Clare Civil Defence also attended to pay their respects. The 'final bell' was rung in a time-honoured tradition of fire services around the world. A bell was used to signal an alarm, to mark the beginning of a shift and a crews return to the Fire Station. It is also rung to mark a firefighter's final journey. The bell was rung by Dennis O'Connell, ASCFO, once for each of the seven stations in Clare of which Tom was Chief Fire Officer.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilís.

Ennis Fire Station Redevelopment Works

Contracts were signed on 25th March, 2020, for the construction of a new maintenance facility and spare appliance storage building at Ennis Fire Station. Gildoc Limited was appointed as the main contractor and the expected contract duration is 10 months. Stertil Koni, MAHA, PF Fallon and Top Part have been appointed to supply the garage equipment. Gildoc Limited has recommenced work on the construction following the shutdown period for Covid-19.

Covid-19 – Operational Control Measures for the Fire Service

All seven stations have been provided with PPE, equipment and training in order to minimise their exposure to Covid-19. Specific risk assessments have been carried out in conjunction with the latest advice from the HSE and Local Authority Crisis Management Team. All personnel have been provided with the latest advisory notices and posters from the HSE advising on Covid-19 public health advice on social distancing, hand hygiene, etc.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

| Fire & Building Control Section | April 2020 | May 2020 (Up to 20.05.20) | Year to date |
|---|------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Main Activities | | | |
| Number of Emergency Calls Attended | 69 | 38 | 393 |
| Number of Fire Safety Certificates Received | 13 | 6 | 42 |
| Number of Fire Safety Certificates Granted | 4 | 2 | 34 |
| Number of Fire Safety Certificates Invalidated | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Number of Disability Access Certificates Received | 10 | 4 | 32 |
| Number of Disability Access Certificates Granted | 2 | 2 | 22 |
| Number of Commencement Notices Received | 18 | 26 | 142 |
| Number of Dangerous Structures/Places Complaints | 0 | 0 | 12 |

(Note: In the May Monthly report, the April figures related to 1st-21st April 2020 due to timing of report.)

Clare Civil Defence

Operational duties

Civil Defence provided the following operational duties:

- Members are currently providing transport for patients to clinic and hospital appointments.
- Members also provided transport for a frontline worker from her home to her place of work.
- Members travelled to Naas, Co. Kildare, to collect PPE from the OGP for distribution to Local Authorities in Clare, Limerick and Kerry.
- Members distributed PPE packs to volunteers of Clare County Council's Community Response Forum at sites in Shannon, Scarriff, Kilrush, Ennis, Killaloe, Kilkee and the Cliffs of Moher.
- Members delivered meals to elderly and vulnerable persons in the Shannon area. They also delivered medicine and groceries as part of an initiative supported by both the HSE and An Garda Síochána.
- Members delivered food to frontline workers in six centres in Limerick, Shannon and Ennis.
- The Swiftwater Team were deployed at the request of Clare Animal Welfare (CAW) to rescue a duck which was entangled in fishing wire on the River Fergus and in extreme stress. The duck was rescued successfully and handed over to CAW to be transported to a vet for treatment.
- Members assisted Clare County Council staff with patrols in Ennis, Killaloe, Kilkee, Spanish Point and Lahinch over the May Bank Holiday Weekend.
- Civil Defence provided transport facilities and medical cover for residents and Clare County Council staff in Springfield, Clonlara during severe flooding in March. Members transported residents to and from their homes to work, college, etc. They also transported food, fresh water, fuel and fodder for livestock into and out of the flooded areas.

Transport was also provided to Clare County Council staff into and out of the area to inspect and operate pumps and deliver sand bags.

- Members of the Search and Rescue Team, Drone Team and Swiftwater Rescue Team assisted An Garda Síochána with a search for two members of the public who were lost in Dromore Woods in an area surrounded by flood waters. Both missing persons were successfully rescued and medically assessed.
- Members of the Swiftwater Rescue Team and the Drone Team provided assistance to An Garda Síochána with the retrieval of evidence from the River Fergus.
- Members participated in a joint initiative between Clare County Council and An Garda Síochána at Lahinch and Kilkee beaches issuing leaflets to members of the public in line with Government/HSE recommendations during the Covid-19 crisis.
- Each Monday and Wednesday, members deliver meals to elderly and vulnerable persons in the Shannon area. They also deliver medicine and groceries as part of an initiative supported by both the HSE and An Garda Síochána.
- Members assisted the Irish Blood Transfusion Board with their blood donation clinics in Ennis.
- Members are currently providing transport for patients to clinic and hospital appointments.
- As part of Clare County Council's Community Response Forum, members delivered boxes of information leaflets to An Post Distribution Centres in Kilrush and Shannon for delivery to Clare homes.

Civil Defence also provided medical cover for the Clare vs Dublin National Hurling League match in Cusack Park.

Members' training and professional development

- Various members successfully completed a Swiftwater Instructors Re-certification course in Galway.
- Members attended a HSE training day in Limerick and were trained as swab testers for HSE swab testing clinics.



Above: CD members assembling PPE packs for CCC's Community Forum Volunteers.



Capital Delivery/Project Management Office update

Project Management Office update

Despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, significant progress was made through the months of March, April and May on a number of our main capital projects. These include the following:

- **Access to and from UL** – The legal agreement which will enable us to carry out the enhancement works to the tow path along the Errinagh Canal was drafted and forwarded to the landowner for signing.

- **Ennis South Flood Relief Scheme** – On 27th March, 2020, the Government announced public health measures to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic and as a result of these measures the site was closed on Monday, 30th March. The contractor made safe and secured the works areas at St Flannan's, the Fergus embankment and the site compound on the Quin Road. The site was visited daily to monitor the embankments, check security and inspect the site and Emergency contact numbers were provided to Clare County Council to deal with any issues that may have arisen during the closure. The St Flannan's section was 75% completed and two weeks from completion of pipe work on the public roadway. On 18th May, the Contractor, Ward and Burke reopened the site in accordance with Phase 1 of the Government's Roadmap published on 1st May, 2020 and the National Protocol (Return to Work Safely Protocol) issued on 9th May, 2020. The road closure at College View has been extended and it is expected to have the pipework completed on this road in two weeks. The closure of St Flannan's College to students and the cancellation of the State Exams will make the remainder of these works easier to carry out. Work has also recommenced on the embankment section of the works from Doora Bridge to the N85.

- **Ennistymon Inner Relief Road and Bridge Crossing (Blake's Corner)** – Weekly virtual meetings have taken place over the past few months to finalise the suite of documentation required which includes the Schedule, Deposit Maps, Landowner and Public Notices, Certificates, etc. in preparation for the publishing of the compulsory purchase order (CPO). This work has now been completed by Clare County Council in conjunction with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), Mid-West Regional Road Design Office and ROD Consulting Engineers. Given the statutory requirement for public engagement in the process, we intend to publish the CPO in mid-June.

- **Killaloe Bridge and By-Pass** – The Project Steering Group led by Clare County Council and comprising representatives from Tipperary County Council, RPS Consulting Engineers and the Department of Transport Inspector met via video conference in late April and again in late May. A number of advance works contracts have now been identified which will address and de-risk some seasonal constraint elements identified within the main contract works. These will be carried out as part of separate advance works contracts in the coming year. A number of technical and procurement issues have now been finalised which will allow for the prequalification and shortlisting of suitable contractors to tender for the works in late summer 2020. Following receipt and evaluation of tenders,

we would expect to award the contract early in 2021 subject to Department approval. The main construction period is expected to take three years thereafter. Concurrently, work is continuing on finalising the various landowner agreements where possible by letter and phone given the current restrictions on face-to-face meetings. In line with the Government's return to work protocols, advance works in relation to bat box erection and bat roost construction is expected to commence in the coming weeks.

- **Kilkee Flood Relief Scheme** – A briefing was given by the Senior Engineer to the West Clare MD Members at their meeting in early March. Since then, a number of project team meetings have taken place with work continuing in the preparation of the draft Constraints Study; the draft Hydrology Method Statement; the draft CCTV Survey tender documents and the draft Topographical Survey tender documents for review. A hydrology workshop took place in late April and an enhanced social and print media campaign of public engagement is being prepared due to us not being in a position to host a Public Consultation Day currently due to Covid-19 restrictions. Stage 1 is progressing and we are nearing the award of both the CCTV Survey and the topographical survey contracts. The Hydrology method statement has been revised and issued for final review. The Constraints Study has been reviewed by the CCC/OPW steering group. The report was also issued to the CCC Environment Section and the Planning Section for their inputs. The consultant has produced draft documents for use in the adapted Public Consultation Day. These have been issued to an external videographer to be used in a video type presentation to communicate the information with interested parties and key stakeholders.

- **Limerick Northern Distributor Road (LNDR)** – Following consultation with key stakeholders on the LNDR (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and National Transport Authority) a number of key areas were highlighted in relation to the appraisal of the LNDR project that required further analysis in order to close out the Phase 2 (Option Selection) Preliminary Business Case for the scheme. Members will be aware that Traffic Counts and Surveys took place in late February and following analysis and processing of the collected data, the Project Team comprising of Clare County Council, Limerick City and County Council and ROD/AECOM met in mid-May and are now in a position to progress the outstanding tasks which include carrying out the necessary modelling and appraisal exercise. This work is expected to be completed in July.

- **Liscannor Bay** – Clare County Council has submitted a revised Coastal Flooding and Erosion Risk Management Study to the Office of Public Works (OPW). The study comprehensively addresses issues highlighted by the OPW in its response to the draft study. The issues relate mainly to benefit-to-cost ratios, rates of erosion, flood damages and technical issues around the preferred option. Clare County Council consulted with stakeholders and property owners prior to the submission.

- **Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF)** – With the re-opening of the public counter in the Planning Department

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

on 25th May, it is intended to submit the Part 8 Planning Application for the Road element in the coming week or so. In regard to the Housing element, with Department Officials in February this year, a number of meetings have been held which will determine the appropriate housing mix and density for the site.

• **Asbestos Remediation Programme** – Our specialist Consultants RPS have now completed the final draft of the Phase 2 Report. Clare County Council is going to review this document which details what permanent remediation measures may or may not be required and will thereafter be submitted to the EPA for their consideration and approval. Following which, the necessary measures will be implemented at Phase 3. This information will also be communicated to the relevant stakeholders.

• **N19 Shannon Airport Access Road** – The Project Team of Clare County Council, Midwest Regional Road Design Office, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Shannon Airport Authority, Fehily Timoney and Associates and Clandillon Civil Consulting held a number of virtual Meetings in March, April and May. Work continues in compiling the Options information required and works has now progressed to Phase 2 – Options Selection to determine the Preferred Option. In parallel, discussion continued with representatives of the Shannon Group (Airport and Commercial Properties) regarding the lands necessary and the identification of services impacted. Procurement of the Traffic Survey specialist has been put on hold due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Once completed, the project will provide a high-quality road improvement scheme on the N19 National Primary Road between Drumgeely Roundabout and Knockbeagh Point Roundabout.

• **Shannon Town and Environs Flood Relief Scheme** – The standstill period expired in mid-March and we submitted the Tender Assessment Report to the OPW for approval to appoint RPS Consulting Engineers as Technical advisors for the scheme. At our Project Team Meeting in late April, the OPW sought some additional clarification which we have now returned. Following discussion with the OPW and the Airport Authorities, we have agreed apportionment of the fees involved. CCC have now received formal approval from the OPW to appoint RPS as Technical advisors for the scheme. In line with current central guidance, CCC will seek confirmation that RPS have an acceptable Covid-19 Business Continuity Plan and Return to Work Safely protocols in place. Following this, the Letter of Acceptance will be issued and the start-up meeting organised within four weeks of thereafter.

• **Spanish Point Minor Works Scheme** – In recent weeks, the OPW assessed the application for a minor coastal protection scheme at Spanish Point submitted by Clare County Council. They have sought clarification regarding the methodology used to calculate the benefits to costs ratio and have asked us to reassess this aspect of the submission. Our consultants are currently examining this matter with a view to responding at the earliest juncture.

• **Springfield, Clonlara** – The final Stage 1 report has been amended following observations and recommendations made by Clare County Council and the OPW by consultants Byrne Looby & Partners. All drawings and documents with regard to the planning process are now complete. All environmental assessments have been carried out and reports completed. Affected landowners are currently being consulted with regard to the preferred option and we would expect to submit the planning application in mid-June.

• **West Clare Railway Greenway** – In March, we ran a tender competition for the appointment of Consultants to carry out Phases 0 and 1 (Scope and Pre-Appraisal/Concept & Feasibility) of the entire West Clare Railway Greenway (Section 1 Kilrush to Kilkee and Section 2 Ennis to Moyasta). The Project Phases are in accordance with the Project Management Guidelines produced by the TII and are in accordance with our requirements under the Public Spending Code and associated documents. Adhering to these phases will ensure that we comply with the requirements of prospective funding authorities (NTA/DDTAS) and statutory bodies such as An Bord Pleanála. AECOM were the successful tenderers for both sections and were appointed in late March/early April. Their commission will take 12 weeks to complete and as a significant portion of the works is desktop, it can proceed despite the Covid-19 restrictions. To this end, a virtual start-up team meeting took place in May and Clare County Council is providing the necessary information required by Aecom to complete these phases. Works include the preparation of a Project Brief, Project Appraisal Plan, a Desktop Ecological Assessment as well as a suite of drawings of the proposed route. Following completion of Phases 0 and 1, it is hoped to initiate the next phases of Section 1 (Kilrush to Kilkee) which involve the statutory consents phase of development, namely Planning Permission, Environmental Impact Assessment and detailed design. However, this will depend on receiving a favourable response to our recent funding applications (RRDF and Carbon Tax Fund). Landowner meetings have been temporarily suspended until the Covid-19 situation improves.

Environment

Covid-19

In Mid-March the Coronavirus Covid-19 spread to County Clare and since then has affected the services provided by the Environment Section. Early in the outbreak the Environment Section developed a Business Continuity Plan that would enable us to continue to provide the community with essential services such as Waste Management, Pollution Incident Management, Monitoring and Sampling, where required, of Water and

Wastewater systems. A list of essential services was identified and appropriate resources allocated to ensure continuity.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Clare Green Festival Initiative

The EPA Local Authority Prevention Network has approved funding of €15,000 for the development and provision of a Green Festival kit for the festivals participating in the Clare

Green Festival initiative. Our Environmental Awareness Officer is currently working with the Green Festival Network coordinator on the development of this kit. The Green Festival kit will include reusable cups, plates and cutlery as well as reusable signage that can be shared by festivals and events. This ties in to the philosophy of eliminating the use of Single Use Plastics.

An Taisce Green Schools Programme

During May, 30 schools were awarded the An Taisce Green Schools flag. This includes 26 primary schools and 4 secondary schools from across Co. Clare. We had four schools, including three secondary schools that were awarded the An Taisce Green Flag (Litter and Waste) for the first time. Renewal Green Flags were awarded to the remaining 26 schools for activities and projects they undertook, for their relevant theme, in the areas of Energy, Biodiversity, Travel, Water and the Marine Environment.

National Tree Week

National Tree Week was due to place this year from 21st to 27th March, 2020. The Tree Council of Ireland in partnership with Coillte made the decision to postpone National Tree Week until further notice. The provision of free native trees to voluntary community will be reviewed in September 2020 by the Gardening Section.

An Taisce National Spring Clean 2020

Due to Covid-19 the National Spring Clean activities, due to take place during May, have been postponed until 8th June, 2020. Clare County Council continues to support voluntary groups that are carrying out community litter picks, during this period, through the provision of free passes to Clare County Council Recycling Centre and Transfer Stations.

The Clare Echo Green Page initiative

The beginning of March saw the publication of a Repair My Stuff.ie advert and an article by Cian O Broin on the circular economy. Due to Covid-19 the printing of *The Clare Echo* ceased during March 2020. A second advert and article on managing Green Waste was advertised online on *The Clare Echo*. It was agreed that the Green Page would be deferred and the initiative reviewed at a later date.

Community Waste Prevention Grant

Through our Greener Clare programme funding was awarded to 35 community waste prevention projects from an available fund of €18,000. This year saw a 100% increase in the number of applications received from across the county under this Waste Prevention Grant Scheme.

Successful applicants included festival organisers, TidyTowns groups, environmental groups as well as primary schools and secondary schools.

Covid-19 Waste Management Campaign

Clare County Council continue to link in with the national www.mywaste.ie campaign, funded through Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. Using Clare County Council and Greener Clare social media channels the "Household Waste Services are operating normally" campaign was promoted throughout May in conjunction with local and national radio adverts.



Covid-19 Illegal dumping and littering

During the month of May a social media campaign promoting good environmental practice continued. This month focused on raising awareness of littering of single use plastic gloves, facemasks and wipes at retail outlets, dog owner responsibility and management of green waste.



Greener Clare social media campaign

Greener Clare social media channels remain active (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). In addition to promoting good waste management the following was also promoted in May:

- Green Schools #GreenSchoolsStayHome initiative
- Local Authority Waters Programme – National Storytelling Competition
- Plastic Waste Partnership (PWP) photo competition
- EPA Stop Food Waste campaign
- Helpful Hints on Preventing and Recycling household waste.

Atlantic Blue School

An Erasmus Plus application was made for the Atlantic Blue School project. Clare County Council are partners on this project and inputted into the application, which was made by the Atlantic Youth Project. Together with St Joseph's Community College (Kilkee), Galway Atlantaquaria and Headford Presentation College (Galway) we will be representing Ireland on this project. Throughout May our Environmental Awareness Officer participated in online focus group meetings for co-creating the Network of European Blue Schools.

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM CRITERIA FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INSPECTIONS (RMCEI)

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the effects it has had on routine inspections and operations it has been agreed that

allowances will be provided for completion of 2020 RMCEI plan. The EPA have confirmed that “all good plans are made to change” and they expect to see many changes and innovations in how the RMCEI plans evolve over the year. As of May, we are on target with our inspection plan.

LABORATORY AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

General

To ensure continuity of business and continued operation of laboratory services during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Laboratory and Technical Support team has been split into two groups with no direct physical contact. The two sub-teams coordinate and schedule work so as to maintain social distancing as per Government advice. The Laboratory and Technical staff have developed protocols for sampling so as to protect staff and limit the possibility of being an agent for spreading the Covid-19 virus. This process will continue as long as is required.

River Monitoring Programme 2020

Clare County Council is required to collect 295 river water samples in 2020. The calendar for sampling was agreed with the EPA in December last with the sampling spread evenly over the 12 months. After the suspension of sampling in April due to Covid-19, the river sampling program resumed in May after the necessary risk assessments were completed.

IW SLA

Clare County Council is required to sample and analyse all public water supplies. The level of monitoring required is agreed with Irish Water and is based on the population served. Monitoring had previously been limited to essential operational and investigative analysis only. Compliance monitoring has now been added with changes in practices to ensure social distancing as per Government guidelines.

Group Water Schemes (GWS) and Small Private Supplies

Clare County Council is the Competent Authority for regulating private water supplies and undertakes in excess of 270 samples from these supplies each year. Monitoring is spread throughout the year.

Wastewater treatment plants

Laboratory Staff in conjunction with Area based Technicians monitor all Licensed and Certified discharges for compliance with their discharge limits. In Clare monitoring varies from monthly to twice yearly, based on population served. Full monitoring of discharges has resumed with the shortfall from April to be made up from May until the end of the year. There will be no allowance made for reduced sampling due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Bathing waters

The bathing water sampling calendar was previously submitted to the EPA, with sampling programmed to commence in mid-May and running through to September. In 2020, 14 designated bathing areas will be monitored for compliance with the Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008. Notice boards have been erected and are receiving cleaning and maintenance in preparation for sampling commencement on 25th May.

Unregulated historic landfills

In preparation for application to the EPA for a Certificate of Authorisation (COA), a full suite of analysis of surface waters adjoining the old Kilrush landfill was undertaken in mid-May by our in house laboratory staff. Further sampling will take place in due course.

WATER AND SCIENTIFIC SERVICES

Water pollution complaints

A total of 45 complaints (Section 4 licenced sites, wastewater and agriculture) have been received to date in 2020. They included two oil spillage incidents. Enforcement notices/letters were issued where required under the Water Pollution Acts and the Good Agriculture Practice Regulations 2017 as amended. Further inspections will be carried to ensure that actions recommended in the notices are carried out.

National Inspection Programme of Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (DWWTS-Septic Tanks)

39 inspections are required in 2020. Of those, five inspections have been carried out in Ballycullinan catchment and the other inspections are now suspended until future phases of the Government Covid-19 restrictions are implemented.



Planning referrals from Planning Department

Compliance with the EPA Code of Practice for Single Houses 2009 is achieved through inter department referrals of planning reports. To date in 2020, 52 reports have been prepared and submitted by environmental staff to the planning section. Assessment and recommendations were made in order to minimise potential water pollution. In addition, six forestry applications have been processed.

Lake Sampling Programme 2020

TMS Environmental have re-commenced the lake monitoring programme in May.

Shannon Estuary Anti-Pollution (SEA-PT) Training

Clare County Council was due to host the annual training exercise with the first inter agency meeting to have been completed by now. This has now been deferred until later in the year.

Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan

The EPA have sent findings of water quality status of each county from the Water Quality Report 2015 to 2018 for assessment and comments in order for the third cycle characterisation process to proceed. Clare County Council environment staff will be examining data and answering EPA queries in May.

BallyduffBeg Waste Landfill Licence Monitoring Requirements

Comprehensive reports have been collated of monitoring results of hydrocarbons over the last 10 years at the closed landfill site. The reports have been sent to the licensing section of the EPA. Based on the data collated a request has been made to reduce number of monitoring locations and frequency of monitoring for each parameter at the site. If the EPA give approval for the reduced monitoring request it will significantly reduce monitoring costs at the site.

A weekly update on green waste processing at the Central Waste management Facility (CWMF) was submitted to Cré (Composting Association of Ireland). This feeds back to the Government on how Covid-19 is affecting processing.

GARDENING

Staff from the Gardening Team presented to a number of community groups at a Council-hosted workshop in early March at the Vandeleur Gardens, Kilrush. The event was organised by Rural Development, to provide advice and assistance to community and development groups in West Clare on techniques to enhance public spaces through gardening and selecting plant species to promote local biodiversity and encourage pollinating insects.

Springtime is traditionally a busy time for the Gardening Section, with works well underway to prepare and plant early flowering plants such as tulips, daffodils and primroses. However, with the arrival of Covid-19 and the widespread disruption that ensued, the baskets were not installed at their usual locations around the town, and remain in the gardening depot.

With this unforeseen obstacle, the Garden Section has reviewed its seasonal work plan and focused all current efforts on preparing for the summer planting regime. The planting and care for these young plants began in mid-March, and continues

throughout April. The Gardening Team will continue this work for the coming weeks, with the aim to begin planting of summer flowers in late May and early June.

To assist the Council in continuing to provide the essential services, we have re-assigned since early April most of the gardening team to provide support to our five Civic Amenity Sites. This will continue until normal service resumes

The month of May always proves to be a very busy time for the Gardening Team, with preparation well under way for the summer season. While Covid-19 restrictions created some challenges for the team, the main portion of summer planting commenced in earnest on 18th May. This phase of works involves the planting of colourful summer bedding flowers such as begonias, geraniums and petunias. Despite the temporary restrictions in place, the recent spell of fine weather has ensured that young plants planted in early spring have thrived and flower beds, planters and baskets will look impressive throughout the summer.

In conjunction with our colleagues in Planning we are developing a plan for the implementation of biodiversity enhancement measures including pollinator friendly open spaces in public areas in each of the four Municipal Districts of Clare County Council.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Bring banks

Bring banks were operating at normal levels in early March. However, since various restrictions were imposed due to Covid-19, bring bank sites around the county have seen a large increase in the amount of glass bottles being recycled in particular.

Glass collection rates are now equal to or above Christmas period levels which would normally be the busiest time of year. An extra weekly collection has been necessary for the Tesco bring bank site in Ennis. Unfortunately, the increase in glass recycling has also coincided with an increase in illegal dumping at these sites also.



Seasonal bring banks have been put in place at White Strand, Doonbeg and White Strand, Miltown Malbay. These will remain in place until September.

Textile banks over the last number of weeks have seen very high levels of usage across the county, with approximately 25 tonnes of textiles recycled at Clare County Council sites.

Civic Amenity Sites

Civic Amenity Sites continue to be well used at this time. Green waste, timber, metals and hard plastics are being brought to the sites in increased volumes. We have experienced an increase of up to 80% for some recyclable material in May.

Doora Landfill

The Ennis Men's Shed group have engaged a contractor and works to install a prefab unit and container supplied by Roche Ireland began in May. Works required involve connection to water supply, ESB connection and waste water connection. All works are being funded by the Men's Shed Group and Roche Ireland.

WASTE ENFORCEMENT

Dog fouling

Again this month the trend of increased dog walking continues. The Waste Enforcement Team are continuing to use the dog-fouling stencils to promote the issue and encourage dog owners to dispose of dog waste in a responsible manner. In addition, temporary signage has been erected at Ballyalla Lake, Ennis promoting responsible dog ownership. The wardens have increased their presence in areas where dog-fouling is known to be a problem.

The print and social media campaign continued on promoting good owner responsibility. The local Dog Warden, Frankie Coote, highlighted the issue of Dog Fouling on his weekly slot on Clare FM and *The Clare Champion* also featured an advertisement.



Waste Enforcement roadside checkpoints.



Environmental Monitoring (Illegal Dumping/Litter)

The Waste Enforcement Team continues to respond to waste and litter-related complaints with a total of 232 complaints received in March and 158 complaints received up to 20th April, of these complaints 217 have been closed.

The scheduled inspection and monitoring of authorised waste facilities within the county have not taken place due to Covid-19 restrictions. Once the restrictions are relaxed, it is planned to resume these inspections.

The Waste Enforcement Team continues to investigate ongoing illegal dumping in various locations throughout the county and to put measures in place to combat this. The Environment Team would like to acknowledge the work of the Municipal Districts through their assistance in clean-ups and the removal of larger waste items. The nature of these larger dumping incidents requires machinery and additional resources.

A total of 25 litter fines were issued in March, of which five have been paid. The remaining litter fines are still within the allotted timeframe for payment and we will continue to monitor this to ensure compliance.

The Environmental Wardens assisted the Municipal Districts on the Bank Holiday weekend in monitoring and adhering to HSE social distancing guidelines at beaches and lakes throughout the county.

In May, the Waste Enforcement Team continued to respond to waste and litter-related complaints. Clare County Council linked in with An Garda Síochána to set up a series of Waste Enforcement Roadside Checkpoints in South East Clare. Further Inter Agency checkpoints will be carried out in each Municipal District in the coming months.

Spot checks were also carried out at Bottle Banks and led to fines being issued for not disposing of packaging and related litter.

Anti-dumping initiative

The application for Anti-Dumping Initiative Funding 2020 was submitted and approved in May. A total of €58,121 has been approved for various projects under this initiative. This application includes a number of projects which are targeted to eliminate illegal dumping at particular black-spots.

Notifications of controlled burning

The Enforcement Team have received 17 notifications of controlled burning from farmers so far in May. Wardens will carry out an inspection on foot of the notification and issue a Notification Number, which is then used in correspondence with the Fire Service.

CLIMATE CHANGE

A climate change workshop was held on 25th February with management team to progress the various objectives outlined in the climate change adaptation strategy.

The workshop was facilitated by the Climate Adaptation Regional Office (CARO).

Water Services

Annual Service Plan

The Covid-19 emergency has proved a challenging time for the delivery of the essential front-line water services sector across the county. Additional vans have been hired to ensure social distancing can be maintained when travelling to worksites. Personnel have also been issued with the required personal protective equipment (PPE) to allow them work in close proximity to each other when carrying out repairs. A suite of risk assessments has also been developed to address the challenges posed by Covid-19 and ensure the health and safety of staff.

We have also developed business continuity plans to ensure our water and wastewater treatment plants will continue to operate across the county during the current pandemic.

The Water Services Department of Clare County Council continues to deliver the water services function as per the Service Level Agreement with Irish Water. The monthly key performance indicators (KPIs) continue to be monitored by all of the water services teams to achieve required targets. We are currently on budget under our Annual Service Plan with Irish Water.

Water conservation

- Irish Water initially suspended water conservation work in order to protect water services staff and the public in general due to Covid-19.
- However, on 7th April, the Tulla Reservoir experienced headroom issues. The Water Conservation Find and Fix crews were redeployed to the Tulla District Metering Area (DMA). Four leaks were found and repaired in Tulla in advance of the Easter bank holiday. Capacity in the Tulla Reservoir is now fully restored.
- The Water Conservation crews have been deployed again by Irish Water to ensure continuity of service across the network and in particular to Drumcharley in Tulla to resolve a pressure issue.

Water and waste water operations

The following statistics provide an indication of the level of activity/work being carried out by the water and waste water teams throughout the county from 1st March, 2020, up to and including 16th April 2020. The figures do not, however, reflect the time invested by the teams which is required to resolve each complaint/issue.

- 25 customer complaints were dealt with to date;
- Two Emergency Work Orders during the timeframe;
- 402 Reactive Maintenance Work Orders were dealt with and closed out;
- Three Customer Asset Flooding Work Orders were received;
- 172 Service Requests (SRs) were raised for Field Requests and Follow-On Work Orders for Reactive Maintenance work;
- 46 Outage Notices were placed on the IW portal during the period.

The main issues relating to water were as follows:

- A plant outage at the Montpelier/O'Briensbridge Water Supply Zone which was related to the increased water levels in the area following high rainfall. A number of customers were without water for periods during the interruption which lasted

approximately three days and an alternative water supply was put in place by means of tankers in Bridgetown and Broadford which were serviced as required.

- A large watermain burst on the 375mm main in Ennis on Palm Sunday morning, 5th April. An alternative supply was put in place via the 450mm main. The Barefield/Crusheen area experienced a loss of supply for approximately two hours prior to provision of the re-routed supply. The supply was restored to all customers by 6pm.
- A watermain burst also on the 300mm main in Ennis in the Tobertaiscain area on Thursday morning 19th March. A crew was mobilised and the pipe repaired by 4pm.
- A number of significant outages due to watermain bursts occurred in East Clare and in the Shannon area also during the period.

The following statistics provide an indication of the level of activity/work being carried out by the water and waste water teams throughout the county from 17th April, 2020, up to and including 12th May, 2020. The figures do not, however, reflect the time invested by the teams which is required to resolve each complaint/issue.

- 17 customer complaints were dealt with to date;
- 0 Emergency Work Orders during the timeframe;
- 226 Reactive Maintenance Work Orders were dealt with and closed out;
- One Customer Asset Flooding Work Orders were received;
- 88 Service Requests (SRs) were raised for Field Requests and Follow-On Work Orders for Reactive Maintenance work;
- 32 Outage Notices were placed on the IW portal during the period.
- The desludging programme for WWTPs and pumping stations is now underway.
- An oil pollution incident at Ballycannon WWTP on the 16th May was quickly dealt with by staff and averted a more serious environmental issue.
- The rising main in Kilkee ruptured again on Saturday 25th April but the break was quickly isolated and repaired.

Capital programme

Although physical works have been suspended on a number of sites across the county there is still active engagement with the various capital programmes in conjunction with Irish Water and its consultants. By utilising a variety of IT solutions such as video team meetings and conference calls etc we have continued to progress the projects which are still in their design phases.

Non-service level agreement works

We have completed our review of the design options for our remediation works for the old Ennis Water treatment works at Gortaganniv. The preferred option is to remove a section of the 140-year-old dam to prevent further deterioration of the structure and works have now commenced. To date, the old filter beds have been in-filled, which has now made them safe. Work has resumed following the suspension due to COVID 19 and the majority of the earthworks are now complete. Works to the new bypass channel will commence in the coming week.

Ennis Municipal District

In response to the Government's *Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business*, Ennis Municipal District, in consultation with a stakeholder group comprising representatives from businesses, the community, and the wider public sector, is endeavouring to support residents, the business community and all citizens to access the town safely during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, Ennis MD with its stakeholders has prepared a Mobility Plan for the town which will evolve in line with the Government roadmap.

Under Stage 1 of the temporary Covid-19 Ennis Town Centre Mobility Plan, traffic re-routing and other measures came into effect in Ennis Town Centre from Wednesday, 20th May, 2020. This initial stage put in place measures to ensure street space can be shared safely by pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and cars, in order to ensure physical distancing can be adhered to by those coming into the town centre. The plan incorporates traffic re-routing measures, amendments to delivery times and locations, and changes to car parking provision. Some of the key initial measures as follows apply from Wednesday, 20th May, 2020:

Traffic re-routing measures

Measures apply from 7:00am to 6:00pm (Monday-Saturday) and affect the following areas:

- Abbey Street at the entrance to Abbey Street carpark
- Frances Street at the entrance to Abbey Street
- O'Connell Street
- Bank Place to the exit from Abbey Street carpark
- Salt House Lane and High Street
- Cabey's Lane at Market Place
- Lower Parnell Street from Carmody Street to Cabey's Lane
- Woodquay can be accessed from the carpark side

Summerhill is altered to a two-way traffic system, with access to River Lane from the river side and Fahy's Lane from Summerhill.

Deliveries

Deliveries will be able to access the restricted area from 7:00am to 11:00am and additional loading bays will be provided in Templegate carpark and Abbey Street carpark to assist unloading outside these hours.

Parking

To meet the 2m wide social distancing Government requirements, it is necessary to adjust existing parking and street layouts to provide additional width on Market Street, removing the parking on Bank Place from the AIB to the Post Office, adjusting the perpendicular parking on Woodquay from Parnell Street to the car park access road. Traffic re-routing measures also impact the on-street car parking in those areas.

Clare County Council has notified the public of the temporary new arrangements through its communications channels. Clare County Council is continuing to work with our stakeholders on the further refinement of the plan over the coming weeks and months. The plan is a living document subject to regular review.

Covid-19

Ennis MD has continued to carry out essential works during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Ennis MD crews installed social distancing 2m apart stencilling around the town in several key



locations in the town, including at Lees Road and Tim Smythe Park. The Ennis MD crews are also assisting in patrolling the parks and gently reminding patrons about social distancing. Ennis MD assisted with the installation of the Covid-19 testing facility at Cusack park.

Removal of tree in front of St Flannan's College

As part of the programme of on-going assessment of mature trees by Ennis Municipal District through a qualified arborist, a single mature beech tree located in front of St Flannan's College (Clare Road R458), Ennis, was deemed to require immediate removal on public health and safety grounds. Contact was made, and agreement reached, with the National Parks and Wildlife Service for the immediate removal of the tree.

Clean-up of illegal dumping

Ennis MD continue to respond to complaints in relation to illegal dumping. One such complaint in relation to severe littering on the "bog road" Kilbreckan involved a major clean-up operation. Traffic management was put in place and an extensive litter pick and road sweep was arranged. A collection of tyres adjacent to the N85 was identified to the MD office and due to their proximity to overhead cables and the potential fire hazard, they have been removed.

Repair of fencing

The repair/replacement of fencing along the farm roads associated with the motorway network has been continuing. The repair/maintenance of these fences by Clare County Council was a condition of the land agreements which were made prior to the construction of the motorway.

Securing Council Land

Ennis MD were alerted that attempts were made to establish an illegal encampment in the vicinity of Fíoruisce/St Clare's school. Existing defences in the area were reinforced.

Footpath completion

Ennis MD completed, through contractor Syl O'Connor, a new section of footpath at Cahercalla Road. The house owner conceded the ground for the footpath in return for setback of the existing front boundary wall.

Street cleaning

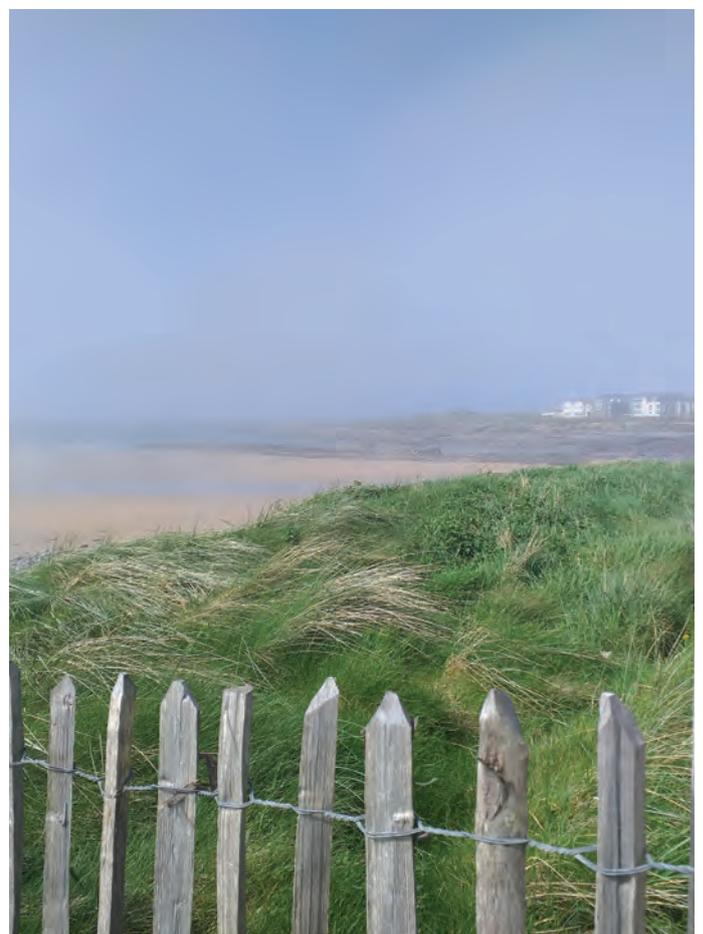
Ennis MD street-cleaning teams continue to work each day including weekends.

Social distancing in Clare

Well done to all



The vast majority of the public have complied with public health measures introduced to minimise the spread of Covid-19. Pictured are three Traffic Wardens who were working in Kilkee over the Easter weekend making sure all was ok: (l-r) Frank Gormley, JJ Counihan and Malty McDonagh. Additional photos from around the county provided by Gerry Murphy.





Coronavirus
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