

North & West Clare

Contact The Editor at editor@clarechampion.ie
or call 065-6864141



Windfarm walkways proposed

Active Travel seminar attended by Transport Minister discussed possibility of trail amenities on turbine lands

Fiona McGarry

PUTTING in walking and cycling trails at the sites of Clare windfarms was among the ideas mooted at a recent Active Travel briefing for the county, attended by Transport Minister Eamon Ryan.

The well-attended event, organised by Green Senator Róisín Garvey, highlighted cycling and walking projects in the county

and looked at how funding and staffing resources might be capitalised upon for Clare.

Acknowledging that the issue could be controversial, Senator Garvey noted that there are a number of windfarms already in Clare and several other developers looking for planning permission.

"Even retrospectively, they could make good cycling and walking trails, it's been put to me by a number of people," she said.

"Can recreational trails be incorporated into windfarm planning? It might be something to think about," mused the senator.

"I know they give some money to communities for things, but there's a lot of land around windfarms, they do take up a lot of space and maybe it's something we should look at.

"I know the new draft wind farm document hasn't come out yet and maybe that's something to look at - putting the onus on

the windfarm developers to put in some trails, because they build roads to bring in trucks and then they close it all off, but we'd love to be out there on our bikes and walking maybe."

Responding to Senator Garvey's question, Minister Ryan noted the sensitivity around developing windfarms and said that adding additional trails might be tricky in some scenarios.

"I think that if it's not on a sensitive peatland or ecosystem, by

all means," he said. "There is an example that could be considered from Galway County Council. Part of the greenway there, the Connemara Greenway, would come in by Moycullen, right through Galway City, when it's built, which better be soon, and then out through Salthill, out by Barna," said the minister.

"One of the ideas I saw in discussion was to head back to Moycullen and that route goes through a very large windfarm.

They have an idea to use it in that way, so perhaps look at the Moycullen greenway as an example."

Currently, the Galway Wind Way is a series of recreational trails at a cluster of four windfarms close to the Cloosha Valley.

To date a total of six routes along 48km of recreational trail are available to the public. The trails have four gradings, ranging from 'access for all' - which are wheelchair and buggy accessible - to 'strenuous'.



Using the land around windfarms as amenities was mooted



Nationwide presenter Anne Cassin is brought foraging on the Flaggy Shore by Oonagh O'Dwyer from Wild Kitchen and treated to a seaweed picnic. Just one of the items on a Nationwide feature next Monday.

RTÉ's Nationwide puts spotlight on the Burren

Fiona McGarry

RTÉ'S hugely popular 'Nationwide' will put the spotlight on the Burren next Monday.

The television show follows on the heels of Neven Maguire's 'Irish Seafood Trails' on RTÉ One and Channel 5's 'Coastal Ireland' which both featured the region last week.

Monday nights 'Nationwide', which airs on RTÉ One at 7pm, will feature members of the Burren Ecotourism Network, which recently won the Lonely Planet's

'Best in Travel 2021' accolade for community tourism.

Presenter Anne Cassin visited the area in late January and met three members of the Burren Ecotourism Network.

Nuala Mulqueeny, Acting Managing Director of the Ailwee Cave and Birds of Prey Centre in Ballyvaughan gave the crew a tour of the cave.

The subterranean ramble was followed by a bird of prey display, where Anne had the opportunity of handling Jess, the barn owl. Nuala also told the presenter

how regular Zoom meetings with members of the tourism network have been vital in maintaining spirits and connections during the lockdowns.

On the Flaggy Shore near Newquay, Oonagh O'Dwyer from Wild Kitchen brought Anne foraging to explain the many types of seaweed which are available along Irish shores and their nutritional benefits.

Oonagh then treated Anne to a seaweed picnic which included Dilisk tea and laver bread made out of a seaweed called nori.

Also featured in the programme are Cathal and Bronagh O'Rourke on their farm in Boston. The couple diversified into tourism recently and show visitors their traditional farming methods and the diverse natural landscape of the Burren.

This year, the O'Rourkes are launching Burren to Camp, a new accommodation product which includes the hire of bell tents and teardrop camper trailers.

In Ennistymon, the film crew met other local business people, including Jarlath O'Dwyer, CEO

of the Burren Ecotourism Network, who has an office in the Digital Hub in Parliament Street.

"We were delighted to welcome the Nationwide crew to North Clare," he said.

"While many tourism businesses look forward to opening again in 2021, the main questions that they all have are 'When?' and 'Will we be able to stay open and avoid another lockdown?'"

"We are all being realistic and know that we will be dependent on the Irish market again this summer. Coverage like this on

RTÉ will help to create awareness of all of what we have to offer Irish people.

"We just hope that the pandemic can be brought under control and that we can get on with our businesses as soon as possible."

Media coverage for the Burren Ecotourism Network has been at an all-time high, since the Lonely Planet award in November, with articles appearing in over 40 different publications, both in Ireland and internationally.

Last week, Birgitta Hedin Cur-

tin of the Burren Smokehouse and Viv Kelly of Russell's Fish Shop at Fiddle and Bow were featured in the second series of Neven Maguire's 'Irish Seafood Trails'.

In December, another Nationwide programme, featured father and son Bill and Liam O'Brien of Doolin Ferries, who celebrated 50 years in business in 2020. That programme also included interviews and music sessions with Christy Barry and Sheila Quinn at their Doolin Music House.

Snap to it for cancer centre's fundraiser

Dan Danaher

GORT Cancer Support Centre is holding a virtual Valentine's fundraising competition to raise vital funds for the centre, as most of its planned fundraisers had to be cancelled last year.

After purchasing the building adjoining the centre, this allowed the operators to reopen safely after the first Covid-19 lockdown thanks to the additional space it provided for social distancing.

A number of excellent prizes have been donated by local businesses for this competition.

To participate in the competition, send in a photograph of your "Lockdown Valentine's Celebration" and make any donation through www.idonate.ie/VirtualValentinesDay.

Photos will be judged in terms of effort, cuteness, originality, sentimentality and humour.

Photographs can be sent to info@gortcancersupport.ie or WhatsApp 086 1724500. Terms and conditions apply.

Gort Cancer Support offers a home from home environment, a place where cancer patients will be made feel relaxed and welcome.

No solution yet in sight for Kildysart Cemetery flooding

Fiona McGarry

LAND acquisition issues stand in the way of a long-term solution to flooding at the cemetery at Kildysart, members of the West Clare Municipal District have been told.

At the most recent meeting of the district committee, Councillor PJ Kelly tabled a motion calling on the council to draw up a plan to solve the ongoing issue. The council's official response, however, has cast doubt on the possibility of a solution.

A written reply from Steve Lahiffe, Senior Executive Engineer (SEE) at the Project Management Office, outlined how lands required to build an embankment currently stand in the way of a successful outcome.

"This is very sad situation," Councillor Kelly said. "It's very upsetting for people because the graveyard is prone to flooding. People go there to pay their respects to their relatives and it's very emotional for people to find that graves are under water. I would like if the council could be more humane and do something to alleviate the pressure that's on people."

In response to the motion, which was seconded by Cathaoirleach of the West Clare Municipal District, Councillor Joe Garrihy, the Senior Executive Engineer outlined how some works had been carried out in the area in recent times.

"Clare County Council have been repairing and upgrading various sections of embankment and sluices all along the Shannon Estuary over the last number of years," Mr Lahiffe's reply outlined.

"This included repairs in Ballycorick, Ballynally, Iniscorker and Lacknashannagh. Consultants RPS were engaged by Clare County Council to carry out this work. The flooding at Kildysart graveyard is included in this scheme. RPS examined the causes of flooding in the area and identified and ex-



Councillor PJ Kelly: 'Very upsetting for people because the graveyard is prone to flooding'.

amined a number of different solutions. They had concerns that some of the proposed solutions may have implications to land and property downstream of the site.

"A preferred option was identified that eliminated this risk. This option is technically and environmentally possible and economically viable. This involves the construction of a flood embankment. However the land required for the works is in private ownership currently and Clare County Council are not in a position to acquire the lands."

Councillor Garrihy noted that a county-wide review of burial grounds is under way. "Hopefully, it might look at some of these issues, and deal with them," he said.

Flooding along the estuary in the area of the cemetery in Kildysart is a long-standing problem. Following severe storms early in 2014, up to 1,000 acres of land in the area of Kildysart flooded, with waters encroaching on the local cemetery.

West Clare roads in running for improvement this year

Fiona McGarry

A NUMBER of roads in West Clare are to be considered for inclusion in the schedule of works for this year, following representations to the local district committee.

At their most recent meeting, councillors heard an appeal for action on a route described as "the gateway to Doonbeg".

Councillor Gabriel Keating asked that issues with a section of the R484 from Knockalough Crossroads to Kilmihil be addressed as a matter of urgency.

"That particular roadway from Knockalough to Doonbeg was on the three-year programme that ends this year," he said.

"It's in a bad state, there's no doubt about that. Everybody's asking me. There's one really bad bend on the road at Michael Ryan's and all it needs is something that drivers can see as they approach the bend.

"Mr Ryan has lost two or three piers and had to replace them himself. This road is the gateway to Doonbeg and to facilities like the golf club and it's a fairly small job."

The Fine Gael member also highlighted concerns about flooding along the road at Kilkrona burial ground on the L2006 in Carrigaholt.



Councillor Gabriel Keating highlighted roads with issues.

"The parish, with the help of Clare County Council, put on an extension to the burial ground, and put a small bit of carparking in," he noted.

"The majority of the cars park on the roadside, and there's nothing as bad as to get out and walk into a pool of water, or a pothole. I'll be insisting that we do this on the next programme. It's only a small area, but it badly needs to be done. I also want to raise the issue of the R484 from Knockalough to Knockerra which is badly in need of resurfacing. I noted that Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) got an 18% increase in funding, so I think we should be pushing for more for Clare."

Both motions were seconded by Councillor Ian Lynch. A writ-

ten reply from Alan Kennelly, Senior Executive Engineer (SEE) noted that the Schedule of Municipal District Works (or Roadworks Programme) has not been finalised for 2021. Mr Kennelly said that both the R484 and the L2006 will be considered for inclusion on the completed schedule.

Meanwhile, Councillor Bill Chambers proposed that the L2048 from Cree Village to Cahermurphy be included in the works scheme for this year; as well as a stretch of road from the L6162 to the junction with N67 to Brisla.

In a written reply, Mr Kennelly said both areas will be considered for inclusion on the completed roadworks schedule.

Lynch's pledge on Kilrush lighting

Fiona McGarry

A KILRUSH-based councillor is to make efforts to extend street lighting between the Shanakyle Road and St Senan's Graveyard.

Independent member of the West Clare Municipal District, Ian Lynch, tabled a motion calling for the extension and seeking details on options and costs for new lights.

"St Senan's Graveyard Group contacted me to see if they could get the lights extended out about 200 metres," Councillor Lynch told the January meeting of the district committee.

"The isolation that people are experiencing through Covid is prompting many to get some bit of comfort out of visiting the graveyard to see their loved ones. Sometimes people have gotten caught in the evening times, on the short evenings.

"The group asked me to put in this notice of motion. Pre-empting the response, I was trying to get a feel for the cost of putting up these lights. It's a motion that's come up several times throughout the municipal district, especially around schools, and there's not funding there for them."

A written response from Pat Lynch, Executive Engineer in the Transportation Section outlined a lack of funding in the maintenance budget and said it was up to the district to provide additional lighting through their funds.

In response to a question from Councillor Lynch on the national project to retrofit public light with LED bulbs said it will be 2022 before works begin in Clare.

In answer to a question the cost of various options for new lighting, Mr Lynch's response stated that this can vary significantly depending on specific circumstances including the wattage of the lights, the condition of poles, the ground and other factors.

Commenting on the replies, Councillor Lynch said he would like to spend some of his General Municipal Allowance (GMA) on the lighting.

"If I had a rough idea of how much the cost would be, I could plan it out," he said.

"Perhaps this is something that I could discuss with Pat over the phone. What I'd have to do is identify the poles and get someone to come out to look at it. If I could get a rough idea, I'd gather the GMA over a couple of years to get some of this stuff done."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Shane Talty, who said he too would have welcomed some detail on the cost of the poles.

"I had submitted motions last year about potential new lighting," he said.

"They were each, more or less, dismissed and what we're not getting here again are details of what kind of figures we're talking about.

"Again, the GMA might have a role to play. I know each pole is different and unique, but I'm pretty sure we could estimate it to the nearest €1,000."



Councillor Ian Lynch.