

**Policies  
of the  
Galway City Forum**

**9<sup>th</sup> April 2001**

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# Housing and Accommodation Policy

## Preamble

This policy is being put forward in the context of a housing crisis. At this time there are

- 1300 families and individuals on the Galway city waiting list.
- There are 144 people homeless.
- There is an affordability crisis.
- Rents are rising well ahead of wages.
- At the same time there are many empty houses in Galway City.
- The Local Authority stock is not being maintained.
- Galway City housing policy is in effect being set by property developers.

## **Vision Statement**

*We believe that there is a basic human right to secure, affordable, well-planned, good quality housing and accommodation. It should be lifetime adaptable (allowing people to remain within their community for their lifetime) in an environment which contributes to a high quality of life. We believe that a home is a basic need for the development and quality of life of the individual.*

## **Rights**

We support a rights based approach to housing for homeless people and a right to adequate and affordable housing for all, in line with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 (both signed by Ireland).

While the discussion on housing rights has mainly taken place around access to housing, there is a significant area of rights around the actual provision of housing, especially for people with disabilities, homeless people and older people. There have been many instances in Ireland of abuse in residential care of vulnerable people and children.

The users of housing services should have rights too, and there is a need to promote an awareness of rights of residents of housing projects whether provided by the State or Voluntary sector.

It is recommended that Galway Corporation adopt and promote a rights based approach to housing, as outlined in international instruments, and adopt Charters of Rights for tenants and residents of housing projects in the City, whether housing on estates or shared or supported housing.

## **Land**

Land should be bought by the city at fair value prices and then rezoned for housing and accommodation. The Local Authority should ensure through the Planning and Development Act that it has sufficient land to address the housing and amenity needs of the following five years as identified in a bi-annual assessment of housing need.

The land banks should provide for a mixture of all types of housing, namely private, public, affordable and social housing.

### ***Spatial Planning***

Spatial Planning must be a priority in the future development of the city and should happen in the context of proper and comprehensive research of housing and amenity needs. A City Architects Office, adequately staffed with trained professionals should be set up to oversee housing design and standards, housing estate design, the provision of facilities and amenities and the planning of infrastructure.

### ***Housing and Land Use***

Housing and land are an essential and valuable resource and should be utilised to its full potential. Every effort should be made to ensure that houses are occupied at all times with the minimum void time. Rates should be introduced on empty houses and a levy should be placed upon undeveloped sites.

### ***Diversity/Housing Mix***

The Housing Mix should reflect the needs and requirements of the wider population of Galway City. There is a need for a wider range of housing options in the city and consideration should be given within the housing strategy to new models of housing for older people, special needs groups, lifetime homes, co-operatives and other new approaches. The design and types of units to be developed should reflect the needs of those in need and the conventional one bed/two bed/three bed units must be reconsidered in the light of modern living and family arrangements.

### ***Social Housing***

There should be a commitment to provide housing for those in housing need and the homeless. Galway Corporation should assist voluntary housing associations and co-operatives to reach the level of capacity at which they can operate effectively, by having sufficient stock to employ housing management workers. There must be sustainable development of associations and a continuous support in the form of sites and approvals for schemes. It is important to ensure that a range of associations are supported, encouraging diversity in size, tenant group and styles of management. Associations which address the needs of minority groups and which provide special services should be supported. This is particularly important in the light of the Equal Status Act where minority groups are now entitled to be treated in a non discriminatory way in Ireland and Galway.

### ***Affordable Housing***

An adequate number of affordable houses must be provided to meet the demand. Both the Affordable Housing Schemes and the Shared ownership schemes must be reviewed due to concern about their operation. Only potential homeowners who have a relatively high income should be considered, as there may be difficulty in keeping up repayments. There are serious concerns about the Shared ownership scheme as the tenant is fully liable for maintenance and repairs.

### ***Owner Occupation Housing***

The supply of housing should reflect the demand and Galway Corporation should require a certificate of reasonable value before grants are given.

### ***Private Rented Housing***

There must be proper regulation and enforcement to ensure security of tenure, affordability and proper standards. Sufficient staff and finance must be allocated by the city to ensure minimum standards.

### ***Housing for the Elderly***

The planning, design and provision of housing should be undertaken, ensuring that the needs of the elderly be provided for. Subsidised land should be provided so that the potential homeowners can plan and design their own environment. The Corporation should support innovative schemes.

### ***Local Authority Housing***

There should be a proper supply to address the waiting list. There must be an open, transparent and accountable scheme of letting priority. There should be a comprehensive and properly resourced maintenance programme for the management of the housing stock. Tenant participation strategies need to be developed using innovative and creative models of working to increase participation and promote inclusion. The needs of disabled, older, special needs should be integrated. Adequate staff must be provided and management training must be given.

Private Sector Leasing where the Local Authority or Housing Association takes long-term leases on private property should also be considered.

### ***Special Needs Housing***

There should be an extensive programme for special needs housing. Both the building and the ongoing revenue costs should be planned and provided. Housing in this category includes residential centres, group housing clusters and group homes. We should strive for proper integration of marginalised groups into the community.

### ***Halting Sites***

In continuous consultation with Traveller families, permanent and transient sites should be provided rapidly and simultaneously in accordance with the recommendations of the 1995 Task Force on the Travelling Community, and the Local Traveller accommodation Consultative Committee. Proper management structures, particularly for the transient sites (which require 24 hour caretaking) be established immediately.

### ***Refugees and Asylum Seekers***

A comprehensive range of temporary accommodation to adequately provide for the needs of Asylum Seekers. Although the housing needs of refugees are similar to those on the Local Authority housing waiting list, it must be recognised that their circumstances are different and that their integration into the community is a priority.

### ***Homelessness***

Galway Corporation must make adequate provision for homeless people in the City identified in its assessments. The report *Homelessness in Galway* in 1998 showed that there is flow of homelessness between emergency need to long term housing need and that almost 1000 men women and children experience homelessness in the course of a year in the City. The main recommendation of the report was that Galway Corporation develops a clear and accountable applications procedure for appraising a

homeless person's status including leave to appeal. At present and in all future plans there is no provision role envisaged for Galway Corporation in relation to homeless people, except to the few who are on the waiting list. In any case these may not be able to live in independent housing and may even require supported or shared housing, a type of housing not provided by the local authority. A second recommendation from the report was the provision of an open and accountable out of hours and emergency service for homeless people by Galway Corporation.

It is recommended that Galway Corporation opens the Homeless Forum to minority groups and organisations who work with minority groups who experience homelessness and that the Equality Authority be requested to carry out a review of the operation and structure of the homeless Forum immediately so that appropriate structures and procedures can be put in place.

### **Healthy Cities**

There is a great need for training on Healthy Cities approaches to planning and development, and it is recommended that Galway City adopt and become part of the Healthy Cities approach of World Health Organisation. *“A Healthy City is one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential.”* The goal of the WHO project is improved health and quality of life for all, and there is an acceptance that health status is often determined more by the conditions of the “settings” where people live than anything else.

Criteria defined for a healthy City are :- city officials and leaders make a commitment to a participatory approach and settings strategy ; the city develops a city or municipal health plan which is often a component of its development plan and a vision for the city.

### **Consultation**

There should be widespread and detailed consultation in the preparation of the Housing Strategy with housing associations, and all groups who work with those in housing need. Galway Corporation must recognise the independence and the values of the voluntary housing sector, and the White Paper on the relationship of the State and the Voluntary and Community sector should inform the nature of relations. Attempts to control and influence voluntary housing associations and conflict of interest situations must be prevented.

Please note that comprehensive supporting submissions are available from the Office of the Director of Community and Enterprise via email or hard copy.

# Environment and Waste Policy

## *The Eco-Principles for Galway City*

1. A City that has a ‘Gaelic’ Soul & ‘Multi-Ethnic’ Heart  
by  
Promoting the historical *international* heritage of Galway city(its trading & cultural links with Spain, France...)  
Promoting the concept of an annual *Inter-Cultural Festival*(s) with involvement from the wide range of traditions that reflect the current ethnic & social diversity of the city  
Preserving & developing the *medieval* fabric of the inner city  
Continuation of the ‘*gaelicisation*’ of the city with particular emphasis on the Gaeltacht regions within the city boundaries.
2. A Celtic ‘Venice’(the Arteries)  
Developing the city’s large-scale *waterways* as active living environmental *arteries* with recreational, wildlife habitats & aesthetic features e.g.  
Recognising & developing a network of interlocking *riverine & marine parks* across the entire breath of the city (Barna Woods-Rusheen Bay-Salthill Pier-Claddagh South Park-Canals-River Corrib(both sides) &  
—Woodquay-Dyke Road-Terryland River-Ballindooley-Menlo  
—Dangan-Killeen  
—Lough Atalia-Roscam-Oranmore Bay)  
Developing the *Nun’s Island ‘Lake’* (between NUIG Engineering & Island House) as an active leisure boating amenity  
Preserving & developing the city’s remaining *wetlands* as wildlife habitats (Jordan’s Island, Dyke Road  
Preserving the Ballindooley & Illaunacorra *Lakes*  
Increasing the public accessibility to the city *docklands*
3. A City of *Green* landscapes(*the Lungs*)  
Developing a city-wide series of large-scale urban **Forest** Parks with recreational, wildlife habitats & aesthetic features such as is planned for the Terryland Forest Park.  
Conserving critical areas of *agricultural* land within the city boundaries e.g. Castlegar
4. A City that gives ample living space to its *wildlife* inhabitants  
Conserving the upper banks of the *Corrib River* as a *nature reserve*  
Prioritising the *Terryland Forest Park* as a nature reserve including the re-introduction of former fauna e.g. otter
5. A City that acts as a model for inclusivity (i.e. accessible to all), *pro-pedestrian, pro-cycling & public transport* development (*the Limbs*)  
where everyone can safely, & without interruption, travel by foot or by bike from one end of the city to the other.  
where an efficient system of public transport provides a network of connections between the main educational, shopping, employment and residential areas of the city.

6. A City of that is recognised internationally as a centre of excellence for *Waste Management 'Reduction, Re-Use & Recycling' (the 'Guts')*

7. A City of '*Urban Villages' (the Vertebrae)*

Each region & suburb of the city will have its own geographical *heartland* with a minimum level of infra-structural facilities contributing to a sense of social cohesion and community cohesion.

Facilities would include:

A *central park* with active & passive amenity facilities for all age groups

An adjacent *commercial* sector including pub, shop, community garda office etc.

A *Community & leisure centre*

Pedestrian & Cycling paths

Installation of *traffic-calming devices* in all suburban estates

*Leisure* amenities including citizen parks & fenced 'children playgrounds' in *all estates*

Formal *community managerial involvement* in all parks & associated recreational amenities.

**The Community Forum also recommended:**

The construction of an indoor skateboard & BMX facility in Galway city

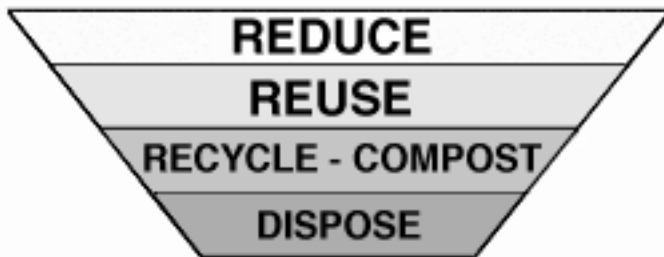
All main public signs to use the internationally recognised symbols

## ***Draft Waste Management Plan for Galway***

### **Statement**

We must ensure that our environment is handed on to future generations intact and enhanced, therefore our waste management plan must be sustainable both from an environmental and financial point of view. Waste is a resource. Therefore it should be valued.

The waste hierarchy should be our guide



with most effort and resources put into the higher most desirable options.

### **Reduction**

A Clear waste reduction goal needs to be set. Create a waste reduction office with sufficient personnel and financial resources to achieve this goal. Reduction of waste can only be effective if backed up by Government policy.

### **Reuse**

The current charity shops who are already doing this work should be encouraged to continue doing so and given the resources to expand if needed. Other types of reuse should also be encouraged, such as personal reuse.

### **Recycling**

Source-Separation / Kerbside - recycling collection should be made available to all households in Galway City and County, backed up by an extensive educational programme.

### **Composting**

Introduce composting of all organics as a first step. Back yard composting to start immediately and larger scale composting using either an open aerobic or closed anaerobic system be designed and built as soon as possible.

### **Disposal**

Landfill should only be used as an interim disposal solution, but it must be designed and engineered to the highest technical and environmental standards. Landfills should only be sited in areas that will have the least impact on people.

## Planning

A partnership between the public and their elected councillors and appointed officials must be immediately set up to deal with waste management and the drafting of a new sustainable alternative plan.

Partnerships with the different sectors should be set up by the Waste Reduction Office to facilitate the goal of waste reduction.

## Siting of facilities

Proximity - Each community must learn to deal with its own waste, locally, as a principle. Local Communities need to be involved in the siting of storage, recycling, composting and disposal facilities.

## Funding

Polluter Pay principle to be applied to all sectors. Collection costs in rural areas are higher than in urban areas. As waste management is a public service it should be provided in an equitable manner therefore funding be provided through general taxes.

To allow recycling to get started immediately, credits could be given to those who recycle with recognised schemes. These could then be deducted from future waste bills.

## Sewage sludge

Sewage sludge should be considered as a resource, which can be composted and used as fertilizer.

## Climate - culture - built environment

The waste management system needs to be designed specifically for the Galway region, recognizing the challenges posed by climate, culture and built environment. Recycling is labour intensive, and creates new job opportunities, which should be fostered.

Travellers have a long cultural history of involvement in recycling and should be recognised as having a particular role to play in this renewed economic field of activity.

## Monitoring

All waste facilities must be independently monitored by the local community with funding provided out of the general waste budget.

## Legislation

Implement legislation to discourage the production of waste, particularly packaging.

There should be mandatory separation at source by all generators to facilitate recycling of materials.

## Conclusion

The ultimate goal should be the elimination of waste entirely through the creation of closed material loops of production. However considerable education of the manufacturing, corporate and retail sectors will be required to reach this goal.

Footnote: This basic underlying tenet of this January 2001 document was the unanimous decision of Galway City Council in July 2000 to (a) exclude Incineration as a method of waste management and (b) to develop a Galway city-county waste management strategy as an alternative to a Connacht Regional Plan.

### Proposed Amendments to Draft Waste Management Plan

As a result of the vote taken by Galway Corporation on February 5, 2001, the Environment & Waste sub-committee will therefore be re-presenting this policy document to the next meeting of the Community Forum with the following amendments:

that *incineration* should be *excluded* as a method of waste disposal as Incineration is the most expensive, least sustainable method of waste control. It has a long history of polluting the environment, especially the food chain. Therefore the precautionary principle should be used to eliminate it entirely as an option for dealing with waste in Galway.

With regard to the *importing of waste* from other Connacht counties, if any of these do not meet the reduction, reuse or recycling and composting targets, their waste will not be accepted for disposal in Galway.

A Clear waste reduction goal: *Zero Waste* by 2020.

# Older People Policy

## **Vision Statement**

*We believe that people have a right to be heard and to be independent for as long as possible throughout their lives. This is achievable through the provision of information, facilities and resources to people commensurate with their requirements at each stage of their development. This is expressed through the rights of all people to participate in decision-making which affects them. It is the responsibility of all people, organisations and agencies to engage in a process of listening to affirm those rights.*

If the youth are our future, Older People are our present. The foundations laid today for Older People will be of benefit to all Galway's citizens in the future. Older people assert, for themselves and for everyone who lives in Galway, the right to:

- Contribute to society according to their abilities;
- Receive sufficient for their needs;
- Be secure in the home and Be safe on the streets;
- Receive civility in shops and public places;
- Have social contact;
- Be set free from exploitation;
- Have space for spiritual, educational and physical growth.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Information**

- The creation of a dedicated information service for older people via a lo-call telephone number.
- More extensive use should be made of resources such as post offices and the local media for information delivery.
- Information regarding services and facilities should be available to all older people whether they choose to use them or not.
- There should be a dedicated Information Officer at the Citizens Information Office with particular responsibility for older people.
- To counter the isolation and vulnerability that many older people experience, each service provider should have an advocate for older people and their concerns.
- A co-ordinated approach to information and service delivery with an emphasis on training of front-line staff in different agencies in order to ensure accurate information.

### **Health, Welfare and Services**

- Establishment of a register of older people living alone.
- Medical personnel treating older patients should enquire about general health as well as about the specific reasons for a particular appointment.
- All patients on hospital waiting lists should receive written confirmation of their position on lists and a clear indication of the waiting time expected.
- Older patients should not be discharged from hospital until their comprehensive after-care is arranged, particularly those living alone or with other older people.

- Flexible approaches in relation to eligibility criteria for medical services, medical cards, fuel allowances etc. so as not to discourage or be overly stringent to older people who may be entitled to the service.
- There is a great need for respite care services including recognising the needs of carers of adult dependent children.
- There must be a continuum of services to provide a model of care. This could be researched as a pilot project between agencies including the Western Health Board and the community and voluntary sector.
- All the needs of people in care must be catered for; these include their social and intellectual needs as well as their physical well-being.

### ***Housing & Infrastructure***

- To promote integration and independence, “Villages of Sheltered Housing” for older people, irrespective of income levels, based in the communities in which they have lived their lives should be established in all local areas. These would allow for: (1) Older people to remain in their communities, (2) New families to join and renew existing communities in the previously occupied houses and (3) Older people not to be institutionalised in homes away from family, friends and neighbours.
- To treat all Senior Citizens equally. To provide shelter and accommodation to older people on the Corporation’s Housing List, while providing the same for older people in Private accommodation.
- Targeting of fire prevention information to Older People by the Fire Service.
- Extension of Refuse Charge Waiver Scheme to all old age pensioners.

### ***Recreation, leisure, amenity and education***

- Publicly-funded Resource Premises to encourage older people in healthy activities to be made available for creative, sporting, educational and leisure activities.
- Existing sporting, leisure and recreation facilities to be equipped appropriately to needs of older users (Indoor bowling mats, benches in public places with backs.)
- Available resources and facilities to be well-publicised and accessible at nominal charges at off-peak times to older people and active retired groups.
- A comfortable, welcoming city centre location where older people can drop-in and get a hot meal at subsidised cost.
- Under the title: “We’re never too old to learn”, increased opportunities in education and learning at subsidised rates including courses from the VEC.
- Extension of the library service to local areas around the city, possibly through the use of a mobile library.

### ***Transport***

- General improvements to the city bus service with an increased number of routes and increased frequency of service particularly at weekends to allow older people to visit family and friends across the city.
- Subsidised car-parking for older people to encourage older people to use and visit the city-centre.
- Elder Access Parking (similar to Disabled Access) spots at various locations including car-parks and shopping centres.
- Proper monitoring of those allocated spaces to ensure their use is restricted to older people and people with disabilities.

- Provision of adequate public lighting and pedestrian access everywhere in the city.
- Holding registered post and parcels by An Post on the Tuam Road is a major inconvenience for many older people and should revert to the city centre.

# **Social Inclusion Policy**

## **Vision Statement**

*The development of Galway City must ensure the creation of economic, social, political and cultural conditions that will achieve the realisation of equal opportunities – equal rights, equal access, equal participation and equality of outcome – for all people giving priority to those most excluded.*

*The excluded are those people who experience all forms of discrimination, who have their basic human rights ignored, who are disadvantaged economically, educationally, politically, socially and culturally and who are not enabled or facilitated to participate in decision making.*

*Exclusion from the decision making process impacts negatively on all people who are excluded in their everyday lives.*

## **Mission Statement**

All barriers to economic, social, political and cultural participation must be removed in order to achieve equal opportunities for the excluded who must play an active and equal part in policy development and decision making.

There must be a commitment to equality and poverty proofing of all plans and policies subject to ongoing reviews of their impact and effectiveness in eliminating the day to day experience of exclusion.

Adequate resources need to be put in place and creative approaches to the way we work must be adopted so that participation of the excluded is possible, meaningful and effective.

Existing power imbalances that have created and maintain inequality must be challenged and corrected.

## **Our Role**

The implementation of all policies, codes of practice and any other measures adopted to combat exclusion and achieve inclusion in Galway City must be monitored and evaluated with the equal and active participation of the Community Forum Social Inclusion sub group. Adequate resources to make this possible need to be put in place.

## **Initial Policy Statements**

The function of policy must be to address and resolve the issues of the excluded satisfactorily.

It is the intention of the Social Inclusion sub group of the Community Forum to bring to the City Development Board and other organisations as necessary the issues of exclusion as identified by the excluded.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- All plans, policies and measures for the development of Galway City including those of the Community Forum and the City Development Board must include the setting of achievable targets so that outcomes can be measured and delivered for all excluded groups.
- All sub groups of these structures need to have social inclusion built in to their activities and plans.
- Any SWOT analysis of existing and new plans must address the issues of the excluded in consultation with them.
- Equality training and supports are necessary for all stakeholders in order to ensure that the social inclusion agenda is realised.
- All processes must be consultative and emancipatory.
- Clear policy guidelines need to be drawn up in line with current equality legislation.
- Service provision in Galway City must be culturally appropriate.
- All resource materials and information relating to the work of the Community Forum and the City Development Board regarding the future development of the city must be available in accessible formats eg. braille, disk.

It is the intention of Galway Community Forum, Social Inclusion sub group to explore and invite the Community and Voluntary Sector to make policy submissions in relation to the needs of the following groups,

People with disabilities, Older People, Asylum Seekers and refugees, The Traveller Community, The homeless and those in housing need, Unemployed, Educationally disadvantaged, Youth at risk, Gay and Lesbian, Lone Parents, Families at risk – women, men and children.

# Planning and Transport Policy

## *Towards a Quality Public Transport system for Galway City.*

### Introduction

Galway City is badly in need of a Quality Public Transport system, which enables people to commute from the outlying residential areas of Oranmore and Knocknacarra into the industrial and commercial area stretching from Ballybritt to the City Centre. A dedicated light rail line is the obvious preferred choice for a City the size of Galway. Such systems are commonplace in continental Europe and are becoming increasingly popular in Britain. The need for such a system is becoming increasingly urgent due to the fact that the existing roads network is failing to cope with the rapid expansion of Galway City. This system should become part of an integrated regional public transport network.

### What is a Quality Public Transport System?

A Quality Public Transport system is one, which is frequently available and also reliable. To achieve these aims, the route or routes in question must be dedicated to public transport. The main options available are Light Rail, Guided Busways or Quality Bus Corridors. The frequency of the services should not be greater than six minutes apart at peak times. Real time systems, which electronically display the number of minutes until the next tram or bus comes, are also a popular feature of Quality Public Transport systems.

### What is Light Rail Transit?

Light Rail Transit or "LRT" is a modern electrically powered tram system. The growing world-wide popularity of LRT is due to its ability to transport large numbers of people in an urban environment in an efficient, safe and environmentally friendly manner.

### Light Rail Vehicles

The modern Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) is designed to operate like a train on its own tracks and to run on the street alongside other traffic and pedestrians. It is designed to run in its own lanes so that it will not be delayed by other traffic. The average LRV will measure 30 metres long by 2.4 metres wide and will be articulated so that it can negotiate tight curves. It can carry 200 passengers, 60 seated and 140 standing.

### What is a Guided Busway?

It is a dedicated bus route, which allows busses with a special guiding mechanism to travel along a narrow corridor. The route is not open to other vehicles, which is a distinct advantage. Measures can be taken to give busses priority over other traffic at junctions.

### What is a Quality Bus Corridor?

Bus corridors use special dedicated bus/cycle lanes. They give these transport modes unobstructed passage in congested traffic conditions. Measures can also be taken to

give the bus traffic priority over other traffic at junctions. They can be segregated from the main section of road by using a kerb.

### A Proposed Quality Public Transport Route for Galway City

A single line from Oranmore to Knocknacarra and Barna stopping at GMT, Ballybritt / Liosban industrial Estates, Galway Shopping Centre, Woodquay, the University and the Hospital would cater for the transport needs of a substantial number of people.

### Transport for All

A Quality Public Transport system would meet the needs of all citizens. At present the transport needs of children, physically handicapped people, the elderly, those who don't drive and those who choose not to are not being adequately met in Galway City. As the size of the City increases this group will become increasingly disadvantaged unless a proper public transport system is introduced.

### Forward Planning

The commercial future of Galway is being put at risk by relying solely on oil powered transport solutions. The future availability of reasonably priced petrol and diesel is not guaranteed. Therefore a mixed transport system incorporating an electrically powered light rail system would help reduce the risk of a future transport crisis for the City.

### Benefits of a Dedicated Quality Public Transport System

- Fast and consistent travel times.
- Frequent services.
- Reliability.
- Comfort.
- Easy access.
- Less congestion.
- Less pollution.
- Fewer accidents.
- Reduced urban noise levels.
- Improved urban environment.

### Where to from here?

Plans should be put in place for a Quality Public Transport system for Galway City as soon as possible. Galway City is rapidly expanding and the need for such a system is becoming ever more urgent. We are also faced with the fact that the price of land is increasing all the time, while the availability of land is reducing.

The first step forward, is to identify the primary route or routes required. The required land should then be purchased by the local-authority as soon as possible.

Initially it may be prudent to implement one or more QBC's along the chosen routes. Planning for Light Rail and/or a guided busway on a phased basis should then be advanced. The plans should then be implemented.

Note: Proper public consultation should take place at all stages.

## What about the cyclists and pedestrians?

The Gaway City Community Forum aims towards a people friendly roads infrastructure for Galway City. The immediate establishment of a safe citywide pedestrian and cycling infrastructure requires:

- The installation of permanent pedestrian crossings around all roundabouts
- The Galway City Community Forum also declares uncontrolled, high capacity roundabouts to be hostile to the wider needs of the community.
- The installation of permanent pedestrian crossings along all major roadways adjacent to schools, shopping centres/retail areas, major centres of employment, major places of worship and logical crossings points leading into housing estates.
- The reduction of the speed limit to 20 M.P.H. in residential areas.

The Galway City Community Forum promotes, protects and celebrates walking as the most important form of transport in Galway and will hold a ‘day of action’ to highlight the issue of pedestrian access to the city.

## ***Proposals for a Western Rail Link in Ireland.***

### **Introduction**

This is a proposal to link the second, third and fourth largest cities in the Republic of Ireland with each other and with the second largest city in Northern Ireland. The fact that there is no passenger rail link between Cork, Limerick, Galway and Derry along the Western coast of the island of Ireland in a corridor serving up to 2 million people is a situation, which needs to be remedied. The project should bring major commercial, tourism, social and environmental benefits to the areas along the West coast of Ireland.

### **The Current Situation**

At present there is no scheduled rail link between Cork, Limerick and Galway despite the fact that there is an existing railway line in place. The line is of a quality to carry passengers from Cork to Ennis but no line currently exists to Shannon Airport. A new spur would need to be constructed. From Ennis to Athenry, the line is used as a freight line only and would need to be upgraded. From Athenry to Galway the line is part of the main line from Dublin. A freight line continues as far as Tuam. From Tuam to Claremorris a track remains in place but is unused. Claremorris to Ballina is part of an existing passenger line. There is also an old line connecting to Sligo via Tubbercurry. From Sligo to Derry, the old narrow gauge track that did exist is no longer in place and would need to be reengineered.

### **The Proposed Route**

Cork – Mallow – Limerick – Shannon Airport – Ennis – Gort – Oranmore – Athenry – Galway – Tuam – Claremorris – Castlebar – Ballina – Sligo – Donegal – Letterkenny – Derry.

### **Viability**

The existing population of the Western corridor is significant and if tourists are included in the equation the overall population is even more significant. Allowances should also be made for the fact that the population of the major towns and cities along the proposed route, have expanded considerably in recent years. The upgraded lines could also be used for local commuter services to the bigger towns and cities along the route, such as Gort, Athenry and Tuam to Galway City. This would increase the overall viability of the project.

### **Potential Service Providers**

Iarnrod Eireann and Northern Ireland Rail the state railway companies would be the front runners in terms of providing this service. However, private operators should also be considered.

### **Funding**

The section between Galway and Cork has been costed at the relatively modest sum of £50million Irish punts. Some of the funds needed would be available from the EU. The rest would have to come from the Irish Government. From Galway to Derry however, we are talking about a major project in terms of cross border co-operation.

Funds should be available from the Irish & UK governments, the EU and the various international funds for Ireland.

### **The Benefits**

The route would enhance the commercial & tourism corridor between four of the island of Irelands big six cities. Currently these cities are very much in the shadow of the big two, Dublin and Belfast. Indeed the only way to get from Derry to Galway by rail is via Belfast and Dublin. The environmental benefits of this project should also be significant, as there should be a substantial decline in the number of car journeys between the various towns and cities. The line could be used for freight too. It would also be possible to build a long distance cycle track along the length of the railway. A high-speed rail link between Galway, Shannon Airport and Limerick could provide enormous commercial benefits.

### **Conclusion**

This proposal should certainly merit further consideration.

# ***Galway: A Suitable Case for the Introduction of Serious Public Transport Alternatives***

***Policy Document presented by An Taisce; Galway Association***

*Prologue:*

*“Ireland needs a vision for the future if the country is to be able to face up to the challenges facing it over the next 15 to 20 years. The environment, transport and plans for regional growth have all suffered from the short term vision and complete lack of sustainable planning.”*  
*So said Michael Smith, National Chairman, An Taisce.*

It is our belief that complaints about the proposed roads programme for Galway, City & County will probably be made to the European Environment Commission; as it is felt that the routes chosen would be in contravention of a number of important EU Directives. Principally those concerned with promoting ‘Sustainable Development’ and the protection of Ireland’s precious natural & built environments. (The Habitats, EIA and SAC Directives would probably be breached if current proposals were to proceed unchanged). It is felt by the membership of an Taisce that the current roads and bridge proposals will in many peoples view contribute to a further significant rise in air and noise pollution, which will, in itself, be in contravention of the Kyoto Protocols.

## **Public Transport seen as an Alternative to the Car**

“It is generally accepted that transport is a major contributor to environmental problems at the local, regional as well as at global levels. It is certainly the fastest-growing source of greenhouse-gas emissions. We have seen all too recently just how global warming is affecting our traditional weather patterns, and we do not have to look across the Irish sea to note the effects that too much development is having on our tendency towards flooding. So analysis of how better to manage these and other environmental effects needs to be closely integrated with work on studying climate change.” (OECD publications, Climate Change & Environmentally Sustainable Transport).

It is worth noting that Galway has the newly established National Environmental Change Institute, based at NUIG. This facility will house 70 new postdoctoral and postgraduate researchers. It will bring together and streamline the work of more than 50 existing NUI Galway researchers in five research centres and 26 separate departments. The Institute will have as it’s Director Prof. Emer Colleran, and will be funded for the next 3 years to the tune of £6.7 millions.

## **European Funding now Available for Urban Transport Initiatives**

The European Commission has earmarked £40 million to support Cities pioneering the development of urban transport. The new initiative, known as CIVITAS (City - VITALity - Sustainability), will support the integrated and innovative proposals for the development of urban transport put forward by European cities. The Commission says it wants to encourage competitive alternatives to the use of cars in city centres and

combat the growing congestion and pollution of European cities. The Commission has been supporting research into energy and the promotion of clean urban transport technologies through a variety of programmes. It is now trying to adopt an integrated approach and focus its efforts through CIVITAS.

Cities wishing to participate in CIVITAS will be asked to implement integrated measures, possibly including access restrictions for polluting vehicles, charging for urban roads, encouraging new types of mobility, and promoting clean and efficient urban public transport. Additional measures, such as innovative mobility management, logistics and information technology schemes will also be included. Projects supported by CIVITAS will include a mix of technology and policy-based measures. Drawing on funding from EU research and development programmes, CIVITAS will focus on flagship projects in pioneering cities. If Galway is not already participating, and I am not aware that they are! We should immediately seek information from the DOE, or failing them, our European Commissioners. This innovative programme is the very thing that we need to know about if Galway is to progress from being a traditional, bus only city, to becoming a progressive vital leader in transport policy for the new millennium.

### Galway's Unique Setting

The City Planning Office & the National Roads Authorities seem to be blissfully unaware that Galway and its unique geographical setting between Lough Corrib and the Sea, with its unrivalled environmental setting, represents a 'special' situation which calls for 'special' and possibly innovative traffic solutions. That the old standard 'cure-all' of throwing a motorway-style outer bypass around the City will simply not do on this occasion. While we should be concerned to note the views of business organisation's like the Galway Chamber of Commerce, who have recently said that..... "the City needs to prepare for a projected growth greater than that estimated by City Planners to avoid infrastructural deficits" - An Taisce in Galway believe, that while we need to be prepared for growth greater than that which is currently being planned for; we also need to see growth balanced with the provision of vastly improved transport infrastructure. We also need to look at properly structured initiatives (which should include consideration of 'Light Rail' and 'Guided Bus Routes' in Galway) combined with better roads planning, which is a principle need of this city, rather than slavishly following the NRA's proposals which are to simply to build bigger and faster roads. Seemingly heedless of the environmental consequences.

It is the view of An Taisce, that, making transport more environmentally sustainable represents a key challenge for the future development of transport activity, especially as some important trends are moving away, rather than towards environmental sustainability. However, work on meeting this challenge within a number of countries indicates that....

- Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) is achievable within the next thirty years., but only if action is taken now to initiate and support the necessary changes.
- As much of the effort to achieve EST will come from changes in the patterns, nature and level of transport activity as from technology-based solutions.

- Decision-makers have a wide range of options and instruments available to them for achieving EST
- “Business as usual” will cause greater local, regional and global environmental degradation and losses in welfare on a global scale.

### Public transport - the solution

It has always been the view of the Galway Association of An Taisce that good, accessible public transport is a fundamental requirement for the continued quality of every one's life in our region. But as the demand for transport continues to rise and is - mostly - being met by increased use of private cars, greater strain is being put on existing roads and transport systems, resulting in more pollution, many tragic accidents and of course increasing traffic congestion.

It is our view that present land-use and transport policies in OECD/ECMT countries, as well as here in Galway, are leading to excessive travel by car in cities and their immediate surroundings. Such policies are the cause of growing congestion, air pollution, noise, acid rain and the risk of global warming. These trends are increasingly seen as unacceptable by Member Governments, but not, seemingly, the National Roads Authority? So far, we see no sign that Galway's elected representatives are doing any better at seeking any change to public attitudes.

Some European governments and municipalities have recognised the need for change, and are aiming to reduce car travel for trips to city centres and ensure accessibility by other means. Finding ways to reduce dependency on cars for travel in suburban and outer parts of metropolitan regions is more difficult and work on it is only beginning. It would seem that in Ireland, we are only yet thinking about beginning. Large scale road investment is no longer seen by An Taisce as being a solution to the problem of congestion. OECD/ECMT studies underline that strategies to bring about such changes are necessary and that the benefits - economic, environmental and social - will greatly outweigh their costs.

Car dependency in cities like Galway can only be reduced by the combined effect of land-use and transport policies. The goals of such policies will need to be openly stated. Their implementation will need to be steady and long term. An integrated policy approach is therefore essential; three main strands of such a policy package can be identified.

**Best Practice.** Raise the effectiveness of current land-use planning and traffic management measures, including parking control and provision/encouragement of other means of transport, to the level of those in the best managed cities. This strand is a necessary part of a coherent strategy, but will be insufficient to bring major benefits on its own.

**Innovations.** Develop new policies to shape urban developments into less car dependent forms and apply congestion pricing to traffic management, with the objective of bringing demand for car travel into balance with road capacity.

**Sustainable Development.** Introduce repeated annual increases in motor fuel taxation to promote more economical vehicles, a shift away from solo driving and greater use of environmentally friendly modes. All three strands of the policy package are considered necessary to reduce car travel, and to achieve sustainable urban development, especially in cities like Galway. Together they could cut the economic, environmental and social costs of travel in cities by the equivalent of as much as 2% of GDP. Any policy which seeks to improve on the current poor transport situation in

Galway should surely be based on ensuring the convenient, economic and safe movement of people not cars. An integrated approach is therefore essential - and, in our view, must include a strategy for increasing the use of public transport. If public transport is made more attractive by improving standards of service and organisation, and is made more accessible to people whose mobility is limited, larger numbers of people will be encouraged to use it.

Public passenger transport is also more sustainable in environmental terms. Data on air pollution shows that emissions of the main urban air pollutants per passenger km are between four and eight times less for public transport and use five times less energy per passenger than cars, as well as causing less noise and pollution. In terms of land-use, public transport again demonstrates advantages. For example, per passenger, buses require only 5% of the road space required for cars carrying the equivalent number of people. Studies indicate that public transport is also safer for the travelling public, particularly in the case of rail transport. Although the UK's privatised rail-services are, seemingly, going through a bad patch though statistically, there are still many fewer deaths and injuries than on the roads.

### Specific types of bus/tram systems

We believe that consideration needs to be given to deciding which kinds of mass-transport system would be suitable in the Galway context. Information is needed on the advantages to be accrued in developing such systems, which could have a considerable effect in reducing private car use in the city thus relieving congestion. We make the following suggestions for consideration:-

#### Guided Bus

Guided buses are ordinary buses fitted with special guide wheels which run along a special track to get around congested junctions. Two such busways are currently running in the UK.

\*Ipswich: the 'Superoute 66' route has a section of guideway linking two housing developments and making buses faster than cars to the town centre. New buses, improved services and real-time information resulted in 43% growth over the first sixteen months of operation.

\*Leeds: a 450 metre guideway system, opened in 1995, allows buses to bypass a section of usually congested road, saving around 3 minutes, and gives them a priority at traffic lights. The guideway was accompanied by high profile marketing, driver training, house-to-house timetable distribution along the route and, after a period, new vehicles and more frequent services. Further sections of guideway have since been introduced. Passenger use grew 46% in 16 months, compared with a 4% fall in Leeds bus use generally. A further 9 km bus way scheme is to be built in Edinburgh, linking the airport and the city and including park-n-ride and rail interchange.

All three of these city schemes should be investigated to see if they could be successfully applied in Galway. We have no doubts that there could be most interesting developments for situations like - Knocknacarra to city, and Ballybane to city schemes. Access to Galway's industrial areas would also be obvious targets for such innovations. It is to be noted that Buchanan has proposed a specific 'Bus only Corridor' through the new suburb of Ardaun. This is undoubtedly the way forward and has to be replicated in other locations around Galway.

We suggest that perhaps taking away the unused cycle paths on the Quincentennial bridge could provide plenty of room for Dedicated Bus-Lanes all the way from Knocknacarra to Ballybane/Parkmore, serving all stops on the way.

### Use of existing rail network, also seen as a solution:

The use of what is left of the Rail-Network as an effective means of transport in the west of Ireland, is now limited to the Dublin-Galway and Dublin-Westport lines. Now at long last being upgraded with continuous welded rail, and improved signalling equipment. However. There is a lobby developing a 'head of steam' which is in favour of reviving the fortunes of the old extant rail network, both within the city and in the county, which has sadly been in decline.

It is the view of many that improvement of existing services in the county and the introduction of a Light-Rail Commuter Service (LRCS) leading into, and away from Galway city, would create an alternative to the car. Introduction of such a service, in our opinion, would:-

- Improve the image of the region abroad.
- Assist the new Oranmore Airport to develop as the regional airport.
- Help reduce car-parking pressures on population centres by the introduction of park-and-ride facilities.
- Help in alleviating traffic chaos and gridlock.
- Minimise negative impacts on towns with proposed road bypasses.
- Assist in bringing life back into town centres like Gort, Loughrea, Tuam, Ballinasloe, Athenry, Oranmore and others).
- Would attract more tourism into the west.

It should be noted that it is now European Policy to open-up rail infrastructure to 'third party' operators, as suggested in Council Directive 91/440/EEC. The Irish government have recently introduced proposals to transpose these regulations into Irish law, which will allow private operators use the national rail-network.

There are currently no discussions taking place in Galway on any of the above suggestions. Perhaps now is the time for a combined City/County Transport Committee, or the City Development Board itself to fast-forward these proposals to government for inclusion in the NDP.

### Conclusions

An Taisce is not an organisation that is normally against the building of new roads, or indeed new bridges, if it can be shown that these are necessary - we admire excellent infrastructural development which serves the common good and is environmentally and socially sustainable. But we are fully convinced that the whole process of moving people and freight has to be looked at in an entirely new way. We cannot simply go on blindly building new super-highways and filling them with new cars (at a rate of over 6000 per month) - that way leads us towards environmental disaster and certainly does not constitute good planning. But then in Ireland we are not noted for the quality of our infrastructural planning. Are we! "Ireland's future development needs are reflected in the Government's National Development Plan

2000-2006. It identifies sustainable economic growth as the key element in Ireland's overall development strategy."

The NDP (National Development Plan) specifically points to "infrastructural deficits especially in transport" yet while it proposes to spend 5 billions on new public transport systems in Dublin (LUAS, LIGHT RAIL, METRO, BUS CORRIDORS etc., etc., and much more on upgrading national roads around the country. It will only invest a pittance on Public Transport and road improvements in the B.M.W. region. £50 million for instance, is to be divided between Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford, to be spent on public transport provision. In relation to infrastructural investment in Galway 'Colin Buchanan & Partners' 'Land Use & Transport Study' itself stated, in para 2.2.7 that:- "a massive road building programme would inevitably destroy much of the city's fabric and be highly unlikely to achieve its objective of eliminating traffic congestion and that most significant impacts will be derived from a radical enhancement of public transport services".

Since the publication of the Buchanan report. Jointly commissioned by Galway County Council and Galway Corporation over a year ago; there has been almost no public discussion by elected members of either local authority, and neither has there yet been any serious public debate about adopting any of Buchanan's findings.

In fact many of its recommendations, it seems to us, have yet to be put forward as forming part of any subsequent plan; while bits and pieces of Buchanan have been selectively implemented to satisfy the needs of private developers. These are principally aimed at meeting the governments current house building targets, (the development of the Ardaun Corridor and the provision of another river crossing are but two elements being currently pursued to achieve this).

While yet another Buchanan recommendation, the removal of Carnmore Airstrip, to a new location in Oranmore, is now seemingly bogged down in a bureaucratic and planning quagmire. There has not been one piece of public transport infrastructure added which would yet help motivate or encourage the public into transferring from their own cars and using it (Public Transport). The addition of some swanky new low-floor 'wheelchair accessible' vehicles to replace an ageing bus fleet is in itself insufficient incentive!

There have also been some limited additions to the private bus services now coming into service in the city. But the establishment of this Imp style bus (Joyce's) has been far too limited in servicing only the Salthill/Knocknacarra route, and is far too little, and far too restricted in the areas covered to make a difference.

Despite the obvious need for a change of attitude, developers are still being encouraged by the planners, to build housing estates into which no bus service can ever enter - because of the lack of proper planning to include adequate road widths, access difficulties and insufficient thought given to vehicle turning arrangements. It is a fact that right across the county, there is mounting unease over the environmental, social and heritage impacts of the proposed

### Galway City Bypass

Much debate surrounds the view being taken by some, who believe that this is not really about a Bypass. But is more to do with government wanting to maintain the snowballing private house building programme currently being enjoyed by

profiteering developers. Places like Knocknacarra/Rahoon in the west of the City, and Doughiska/Castlegar/Oranmore in the east are rapidly having their natural environments decimated.

Such explosive City development, if it continues, would inevitably swamp, change and ultimately destroy the special character, the social values, quality of life, heritage and the amenity of many unique communities along the banks of the Corrib, as well as in the last remaining areas of beautiful, typical Connemara landscape which is to be found directly to the West and North West of the City. It would replace traditional village and rural life and related human values with tarmac, concrete, noise, fumes, pollution, stress, street crime and drugs, i.e. all undesirable hallmarks of present day city life.

Everybody understands that the development of roads and sanitary services are prime needs for any house building programmes in order that they might continue. The fact that 'living' communities sometimes get in the way seems to be of little import. It seems that Greed for development land is still alive and well in Galway.

It also seems to be a fact, that there is little by way of policy existing in Galway on the need to create, or to preserve, any form of 'Green-Belt' around the urban area; outside of the much to be welcomed Terryland Forestry Park. There also appears to be no attempt being made to have green separation zones included, between substantial housing estate developments.

The fact that Galway Corporation created 'Village Envelopes' around both Menlo & Castlegar when they published the 1999 'City Development Plan' does not seem to in itself guarantee any protection against such massive projects either. Projects like the proposed Bypass, or, the building of yet another bridge over the Corrib.

## Recommendations

It is our view that the following actions need to be taken before any new roads are allowed to be built.

That all interested parties to this development should be called to be represented on, or communicated with, by the joint Management and Technical Committee of Galway County & City Councils, as recommended by Buchanan. That this committee should be tasked to set out a work programme for the introduction of a comprehensive new public transport system before any consideration is given to any new roads projects.

That the introduction of a complete new bus system be speeded up to operate both within the city and in the county. That a strategy be set in place to encourage the public's use of this new public transport system.

That, as a consequence of improving public transport, there should be adopted, an entire new parking regime aimed at discouraging the use of private cars within the City centre itself with introduction of park-n-ride systems allowing easy access as an alternative.

That a full investigation be carried out on the possible reintroduction of the redundant rail network, that this be integrated into the existing usable rail structures

with new stations built at new settlement nodes. Improved commuter lines should integrate the satellite towns of Galway (e.g. Athenry, Oranmore, Gort, Loughrea, Ballinasloe, Tuam and others).

That arrangements be put in place which allow the County and City authorities to jointly manage the provision of transport services, either by commissioning operators to run services for them, or by jointly running such services themselves.

That there be a full investigation carried out into the actual impacts that any roads development would have on the cultural heritage, and the economic and environmental well-being of the residents to be affected by any new roads.

It is a shared belief that An Taisce has with many other concerned citizens, that the solution about to be imposed on the populace of Galway City is likely to cause more not less social, cultural, economic and environmental problems. Problems which could be better solved by employing other means.

For these and other reasons referred to in this document, An Taisce in Galway will for the present oppose the building of a Galway City Outer Bypass and new bridge. We urge that all organisations should devote their energies into finding more socially, and environmentally isustainable ways of solving what is fast becoming a serious traffic congestion problem in Galway. We urge all local and national representatives to do the same!

In our view, the uncontrolled expansion of what once was a fine medieval city, into an even worse nightmare of urban sprawl and self-induced social division, which ultimately benefits nobody; has to be resisted.

Our policy supports the establishment of a Galway Corporation/County Council 'Joint Planning and Transport Committee' as suggested in Buchanan (9-1-5).

# The Arts

## **Introduction**

Historically and contemporarily Art and artistic expression defines how we see ourselves and helps us to understand who we are. Equally, it expresses our hopes, aspirations and a vision of what we might become.

It logically follows that art has and will continue to play a key role in how we live as a society and in defining our economic, social and cultural structures.

## **Economic, Social and Cultural Benefits of Arts**

The arts have played and can play a more influential role in the economic, social and cultural life of Galway City. From the experience of arts projects which have already taken place in the city and elsewhere we have learned the value of a rich cultural and artistic life to a city and its people. The arts act as an *Economic* driver creating employment directly and indirectly, promoting tourism and stimulating an entrepreneurial culture. The arts and artistic creativity stimulate and maintain the image of a friendly and welcoming city, providing a quality of lifestyle for its people. They create an attractive place to work and live and as a consequence attract business, industry and investment.

Arts are a vital element in the celebration of cultural diversity within the city and therefore, will play a key role in the maintenance of a harmonious multi-cultural society for the future. Through making participation in the arts and cultural facilities accessible to all sectors of society, the arts effectively combat social exclusion. Arts activities bring communities together in a meaningful way and thus have a major role to play in community development.

Architecture is an art form and the practice of promoting good architecture and design and public art influence the aesthetics and enhance the quality of life within the city.

Arts effectively humanise environments, in turn stimulating people's pride in their locality and therefore community well-being.

Other areas where the impact of the arts needs to be explored and developed further are health, industry, business and education both in the arts and through arts. (e.g. For young people and children, art is an invaluable outlet for their imagination and creativity. In structured learning environments, young people and children are healthy, safe, organised and engaged. As traditional structures break down, arts programmes and events can help to give this sector of our community a sense of shared identity and kinship with their contemporaries and their society. It is claimed that approximately 30% of our young people are involved in sporting activities, leaving 70% of our young people needing an alternative. Why not Arts ?)

The following are quotes from “Building the City of Light” , Galway Corporation Arts Policy 1997.

*“ Galway Corporation appreciates the role of the creative artist in society. In particular the Corporation recognises and applauds the work in various disciplines of the city’s considerable population of professional artists.”*

*“Galway Corporation particularly acknowledges the work being accomplished by the city’s myriad of arts organisations and arts amateurs, in the programming and promotion of the arts within the city as well as regionally, nationally and internationally. Their work has established Galway as a place of artistic repute, Galway Corporation honours and applauds their enormous contribution to the city’s reputation as Ireland’s leading cultural centre. The Corporation also recognises its artists’ status as stakeholders in Galway’s cultural development.”*

It is duly recognised by Galway Corporation that the contribution of artists and arts organisations to the cultural development of the city is of significant import. The activities of artists and arts organisations contributed with equal significance to economic growth and social development. The fact that this has been achieved with limited resources is testament to the dedication, sacrifice and selflessness with which artists and arts organisations of Galway have applied themselves to improving the quality and aesthetics of life within the city.

Artists and Arts organisations will continue this work and in co-operation and partnership with all the stakeholders in Galway’s future can create a city that cherishes equality, freedom of expression and a quality of life for all its people.

## Conclusion

The Arts are a fundamental and essential element in the formation, development and evolution of a culture. The arts also impact significantly (directly and indirectly) on economic and social development. Therefore it is imperative that forward planning in all three spheres would recognise the importance of the arts and its development.

## **Galway City of Culture**

Cultural theorist Francois Matarasso, author of *Use or Ornament – The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*, attempted a definition of both culture and community:

Arts + Landscape + Architecture + Memory + Tradition + Practice + Identity = Culture

Community is a shared geography, demography or interest or any combination thereof.

The culture of the city and region resides in the imagination and creativity of its people that in turn needs to be nurtured, facilitated and developed through artistic activity.

Arts and artists have always and should continue to play an important role in giving expression to the imagination, creativity and ideas of the society in which they live and equally in addressing and challenging that society, becoming a force for positive change, innovation and the evolution of that society.

Arts and artists show us new ways of seeing and understanding. Art helps us to understand who we are and how we are changing.

Our culture and our imagination, our sense of place not only geographically but also imaginatively, are all expressed through the arts. Music, films, theatre, literature, the visual arts to name but a few, give voice to the identity not only of the artists but also of the community in which they live. Art celebrates our rich traditions in many different forms and explores our diversity.

Thus, Art is for everyone. It can be created and appreciated by everyone. It can become part of our everyday lives.

The Arts can have a powerful and positive influence in the myriad aspects of our lives in terms of the environment, education, health, social inclusion, community development, economic growth etc.

The notion must be dispelled that the arts are simply a decorative or ornamental accessory to life. It must be established that the arts and artistic expression are an essential and vital element in human development and living.

The importance of the arts for the reasons outlined above is what informs the following vision for Galway.

### **Vision**

*Galway will be a city in which the arts, building on its rich historic tradition, will fulfil its vital role in informing, enlightening, enhancing and enriching the lives of its people. That the arts as a true reflection of the imagination and creativity of its people, will have a tangible and positive influence on every aspect of their lives and in moulding their future environment.*

### **Mission**

To translate this vision, the following objectives will be achieved:  
Galway will be a city of the arts where the rights of everyone to have meaningful access to and participation in the arts is ensured.

Galway will be a city in which the arts play an important and productive role in the lives of all of its people.

Galway will be recognised as having a unique cultural voice, evocative and reflective of the imagination, creativity and innovation of the people of the city and its hinterland, while emphasising Irish linguistic arts and traditional arts as one of its greatest natural resources.

Galway will be acknowledged globally as a major centre of excellence in the arts and will be developed and promoted as such.

Galway will be a city in which the development of the arts is prioritised, cognisant of the significant role the arts play in the economic, social, cultural and psychological wellbeing of its people.

Galway will value the arts and artists as an important resource and ensure that its people invest in this resource for future generations.

Galway will encourage and develop the framework within which artists can work and develop.

## **Strategy**

To achieve the objectives the following strategy will be put in place:

The creation of a new arts and culture plan for the city, reflective of the needs and ambitions of the community. This plan should be drafted by the Galway Corporation Arts Office in consultation with artists, arts organisations and groups operating in the city and in liaison with the S.P.C's and the Corporation Directorate of Community and Enterprise.

The resultant plan will be reviewed and evaluated on an on-going systematic basis, involving consultation of the stakeholders and arts organisations etc.

The plan would be designed with pragmatic and specific targets and goals attached to a definite timeframe, against which effectiveness and progress can be measured. While the plan should reflect the aspirations of the sector, it should primarily be an implementation strategy.

The implementation of this plan would be made feasible by the provision of adequate funding resources and the putting in place of the necessary infrastructure and opportunities.

Arts planning will be integrated with community, social, economic, physical and spatial planning. All such planning will reflect the historic fabric and character of the city, placing special emphasis on the culture and heritage of the region.

# Sports and Recreation

The Galway City Community Forum is committed to the formation of a Sports and Recreation Forum.