

Galway City Community Network

The Public Participation Network in Galway City

Street Performance & BUSKING in Galway



Note of the meeting April 18th, 2017

Galway City Community Network is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. It represents groups and organisations in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors. There are three GCCN representatives on the Environment, Recreation and Amenity Strategic Policy Committee (SPC), the Galway City Council Committee that is currently working on new Byelaws on Street Performance and Busking in Galway City. One of these representatives is on the Working Group established to draft the Byelaws.

GCCN was concerned to ensure that those affected most significantly by the Byelaws, the Buskers and Street Performers, were informed and organised an open meeting on April 18th, attended by almost 60 people, mainly Buskers and Street Performers themselves.

The meeting was address by Councillor Peter Keane, a member of the SPC and the working Group and currently drafting the Byelaws.

The current draft of the Byelaws was summarised by the GCCN representative (see summary below). Initial feedback included reference to the following:

- The strong and passionate view that busking and street performance makes Galway unique. It adds to the atmosphere and the creative tone of the city. It a feature that attracts many – residents and visitors alike. It is a characteristic that must be protected and nurtured;
- There was unanimous agreement that the public or shop entrances should not be obstructed;

- There was agreement that there needs to be some restriction on the noise levels/volume, though there was further agreement the approach identified in the current draft of the Byelaws (restricting the size of the amp) is not the best method;
- However, there was consensus that there is no requirement for Byelaws. Meeting participants strongly suggested that the best approach is to update and formalise the Code of Conduct that was developed in 2015;
- There was specific opposition to the following:
 - The suggested permit system. Considerable opposition was expressed. Many of those present had experiences of cities around the world where a permit system had been introduced and there was consensus that this is very damaging. In cities where this is the case, busking and street performance has diminished or disappeared. Others noted the cost of permits, suggesting this would not be affordable to many. The particular difficulties for visiting buskers and street performers, and those that busk in other areas where permits are required was also noted;
 - The proposal of limiting performances to one hour. While a number of participants suggested this might be reasonable, others suggested that 2 hours would be far more reasonable. From their experiences, participants stated that they need a 2-hour slot in order to make a reasonable income from busking;
 - Selling of merchandise. The proposed prohibition on the selling of merchandise was believed to be unfair and unwarranted and should not be included;
 - The prohibition on drum kits
- Reference was made to the fact that the Byelaws do not differentiate between the different types of act and that they need to be treated differently. The different types of act identified include:
 - Single acts - one person;
 - Small groups – of between 2 and 5 people;
 - Big group acts – more than 5 people;
 - Circle acts – that form a circle before performing
 - Acts around which a circle spontaneously gathers.
 - Music and other performance such as dance.
- It was noted that there is a lack of clarity in relation to a number of issues, such as what constitutes a ‘drum kit’ and ‘major event or festival’, times when a derogation from the provisions in the Byelaws can be issued.

Councillor Peter Keane sought to clarify a number of issues. He stated that the current draft is to be presented to a special meeting of the SPC, after which it will go to the Galway City Council. After that the Byelaws will go out for full public consultation. He stated that he noted a number of the points that were being raised. He also stated that if the consensus was that Byelaws are not needed, there won't be any Byelaws.

It was agreed:

- That there is a need for buskers and street performers to organise and to seek to influence the Byelaws;
- In order for that to happen, buskers and street performers will co-organise a workshop to be facilitated by Galway City Community Network;

Draft Galway City Council (Street Performance and Busking) Bye-Laws 2017 - Summary

1. The draft Byelaws refer to the “**Protected Street Scape**” - Quay Street, High Street, Mainguard Street, Shop Street, William Street, Middle Street and Williamsgate Street;
2. A new permit system that will be valid for 12 months. Each and every performer must have a valid Street Performance Permit;
3. After 1 hour, the performer will have to relocate to a different place not within 35 meters of the previous place and not return until the following day;
4. Performers won't be allowed to obstruct the public or shop entrances;
5. A Street Performer shall not engage in the selling of any Merchandise associated with their performance or otherwise
6. Circle Acts will be prohibited from performing on the Protected Street Scape up to 18:00 hours daily except where they have permission;
7. There will be restrictions on amps and drums on the Protected Street Scape. Amps will be restricted to a battery powered Amplifier with a maximum power output of 50 watts and measuring 415mm x 295mm x 250 in depth weighing no more than 6kgs. The use of Drum Kits is expressly prohibited on the Protected Street Scape;
8. A charge of €75 will apply for any breaches of the Byelaws