
Galway City Community Network

The Public Participation Network in Galway City

**Submission to the
Department of Housing, Planning, Community
& Local Government**

**LECP
Implementation, Monitoring &
Review**

Introduction

Established in 2014, Galway City Community Network is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. It represents over 120 groups and organisations in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City. The twin objectives that GCCN pursues are to

- Advance the values of sustainability, equality, culture, community, empowerment and inclusivity and embed these in the policies, programmes and practice of local government, state organisations, national government and civil society;
- Develop and implement progressive models of and approaches to representation, participation and engagement for civil society in informing and shaping policy development and implementation.

The decision to make a submission on LECP Implementation and Monitoring is led by the GCCN representatives on the Galway City Local Community Development Committee and is informed by the experience and expertise of the other sectors that encompass concerns to ensure social inclusion and equality; quality housing and accommodation; arts and culture, particularly the right to participate, create and express culture; planning and transport.

Submission

Background

Galway City Community Network fully supports the development of the Local Economic and Community Plan to guide the long-term strategic development and integration of local, community and economic development in Galway City. Since the beginning, GCCN has sought to be fully involved in the process to develop the LECP in Galway City. In Galway, the process of developing and approving the LECP was extremely flawed. Consultation was minimal. Despite suggestions and recommendations from GCCN on the process, there were no opportunities to engage in cross-sectoral or interagency identification of issues or strategies to address issues. In agreeing to approve the LECP in time for its inclusion in the bid to become the European City of Culture 2020, GCCN representatives were given assurances that the LECP would be a 'live' document and there would be remedial action to address the lack of consultation.

This did not happen. Agencies were unilaterally asked to develop a set of actions based on the LECP. What emerged as a result was a set of actions that the agencies and partners involved would have carried out anyway. GCCN has consistently expressed disappointment at the lack of ambition for the LECP and its potential.

Over a year later, and only after the GCCN LCDC representatives had reached such a stage of frustration that they decided to withdraw from LCDC engagement, Galway City Council finally agreed to hold a workshop to enable the participation of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors and a range of agencies. This workshop was very fruitful and enabled the range of actors to agree a set of values to underpin the work of the LECP and the identification of issues that the LECP could address collaboratively. It was agreed by participants that a second workshop would be required to agree specific actions but no progress has been made on this to date.

Implementation of Plans

In order to successfully implement a strategy to guide the long-term strategic development and integration of local, community and economic development in Galway City, the following is required;

- Direction from parent departments or agencies at national level to ensure local agencies can progress added value actions;
- A multi-annual action or implementation plan that:
 - Is based on the needs of the City that are collectively identified. The LECP and associated implementation plans must respect the right to participate and engage and should provide for measures that ensure participation, consultation and the right to have a say on all developments that go beyond the current tokenistic approaches. Particular attention must be paid to communities that are marginalised such a Travellers, women, lone parents, asylum seekers, migrants, the LGBTQI community, etc.;
 - Is developed collaboratively by the wide range of actors involved in local, community and economic development;
 - Is based on the values agreed – Creativity, Equality and inclusiveness, Innovation, Wellbeing and Sustainability;
 - Adds value to the work of individual agencies, organisations or groups – we have consistently stated that the implementation plan must be more than a set of actions that would have happen anyway;
 - Is implemented collaboratively – GCCN has consistently stated that actions should not be unilateral for the same reason as outlined above. Rather, they should be collaborative and involve a range of partners;
 - Is strategic and ambitious for the city – not all actions have to be short-term. Some can be seed actions that establish foundations
 - Contains fewer actions. Currently there are 165 actions. There should be fewer but more ambitious actions based on the principles above;
- Resources within agencies and organisations to ensure implementation each objective and its associated actions. Human and financial resources available to the LECP process need to be improved;
- Agreement on lead actors/partners. Lead actors for actions do not necessarily have to be specific agencies. Working groups or other arrangements could play this role;
- Buy-in from agencies and organisations that needs to be enabled through national leadership and could be actively stimulated through future collaborative workshops;
- Champions for the LECP are needed within agencies and organisations to promote involvement in the LECP.

Monitoring and Review

- The LECP was designed to be an integrated plan. The Advisory Group that comprised members of the LCDC, the Economic Development, Enterprise Support & Culture SPC and others needs to be re-established and maintained for the duration of the LCEP. It needs to have a specific focus on the integrated nature of the LECP;

- The LCDC and the SPC need to be enabled to adequately monitor and review the LECP. Currently, in Galway, while the structures are in place, they are not functioning effectively. LCDC meetings are kept to a minimum and the duration is rarely longer than an hour. This is totally inadequate to ensure the task of monitoring the implementation and reviewing the LECP Meetings should be longer and greater priority given to LCDC meetings by Galway City Council;
- The CEO of Galway City Council should attend all LCDC meetings and a full time Chief Officer recruited (with input from all LCDC sectors in the recruitment process);
- The LECP should be on agenda of all LCDC meetings.

Measurement and Reporting Processes

- Monitoring and review processes including using measurable targets need to be developed. This are currently absent. Implementation of actions and the achievement of goals need to be assessed against the values that underpin the LECP.

Conclusion

GCCN would like to thank the Department for the opportunity to engage in this process and we would like to affirm the interest and commitment of GCCN to working collaboratively with all local stakeholders in pursuit of our common goals.