



Galway City Community Network
Lionra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

Galway City Community Network CLG

Address: Westside Community Resource Centre
Seamus Quirke Road, Galway
Phone: +353 (0) 87 9326467 / (0) 87 4328489
Email: info@galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie
Website: www.galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie

Galway City Community Network, The Public Participation Network in Galway City

National Recovery and Resilience Plan

GCCN Submission

February 2021

Preface

Established in 2014, **Galway City Community Network (GCCN)** is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. It represents 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.

GCCN was an active member of the Community Response Forum in Galway City, established to co-ordinate the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the city. As part of this engagement, GCCN supported the identification and development of referral pathways, convened an NGO Forum to identify the issues emerging for marginalised groups and supported Galway City Council to develop the interactive map of services. This collaborative approach needs to be maintained and have the ability to increase its capacity to respond to needs as restriction levels increase.

GCCN welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the development of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and does so after consulting with GCCN members.

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan

Galway City Community Network welcomes the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility and the opportunity to engage with the development of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which we do having consulted with GCCN members.

General comments

The COVID-19 has highlighted that when deemed necessary for the universal good, governments, including the Irish government, can draw on levels of resources that would be generally regarded as impossible. The learning from this – that investment in interventions at the earliest possible stage saves resources in the medium and long-term – should permeate the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

The Plan needs to be developed in a way that ensures social inclusion and social cohesion. In practical terms, this means using the Public Sector Duty, which is a legal obligation, as a starting point.

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan should not be about returning to ‘normal’. Rather it should be regarded as an opportunity to be transformative of our society, our environment and our economy.

The minimum spend on climate action is welcome. The lack of any reference to the equivalent, at least, existential threat of biodiversity loss is a concern. There must be a minimum spend on protecting and restoring biodiversity and on addressing social issues, many of which have been exacerbated by COVID-19, and a similar principle of ‘do no harm’ must apply. This means biodiversity, equality and poverty-proofing all initiatives.

The Plan needs to invest in:

- Social and permanently affordable housing, built on public land, and accessible to all that need it.
- Large scale climate initiatives that will truly facilitate a Green Transition for all.
- Urgent initiatives to halt biodiversity loss and recover, restore and renew biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Ensuring policies and objectives in Local Authority development plans to achieve Biodiversity Net Gains, not just No Net Loss.
- Better land use planning to deliver good quality homes in sustainable communities in proximity to places of employment, the services and amenities that people need thus reducing the need to travel.
- Planning better places in an attractive public realm to encourage people to live in more dense compact developments.
- The public realm in existing communities in cities, towns and villages to make them more attractive to people to live in rather than them being attracted to live in the countryside instead.
- Sustainable transport systems such as a Light Rail system for Galway City and a safe network of cycle and walking routes that will make the city accessible.
- A Just Transition must accompany the Green Transition, in acknowledgement that the climate, biodiversity and environmental crises disproportionately effect marginalized communities, and they have the least ability to mitigate against the worst effects and the least ability to adapt.
- The COVID-19 pandemic brought a new acknowledgement of the importance of the community sector, both in terms of the ability of the sector to mobilise and respond to the needs of the communities and in building long-term resilience in communities. There needs to be significant investment in this sector to ensure the ability to maintain and scale-up this response when necessary and to ensure the capacity to support communities to recover and ultimately thrive.
- The expansion of public services, on which so many people relied.
- Increasing the minimum wage to at least the living wage levels and tackling poverty once and for all.
- An audit and funding of the assets that facilitate people and communities to adhere to public health restrictions, ensuring that particularly marginalised individuals, families and communities have the ability to:
 - Work and study from home
 - Access recreational and green/blue spaces within a 5Km or 10Km radius of their homes. Specifically, in the case of Galway, invest in the network of parks that span the city but that are under-resourced and under-supported and investment in simple programmes that encourage people to use these and other amenities.
 - Self-isolate or quarantine where necessary.
- The epidemiological infrastructure that could be vital to our national ability to respond to the increasing likelihood of similar pandemics in the future.
- More meaningful public engagement and in the wisdom of the collective in a structured and meaningful way.