



Galway City Community Network  
Lionra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

## Galway City Community Network CLG

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

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## Expanding Ireland's Marine Protected Area Network GCCN Submission

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July 2021

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## 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.

### GCCN Role

The role of GCCN is to:

- **Facilitate representation** of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors on relevant local government, local development bodies and any local, regional, national or international structures deemed appropriate by GCCN.
- Act as a platform for the community, voluntary and environmental sectors to **develop policy and positions** on issues of common concern and to advocate for these policies and positions to be implemented.
- **Strengthen capacity** of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors, including to represent GCCN on all relevant structures.
- **Provide information** relevant to the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors and act as a hub around which information is received and disseminated.

GCCN welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the consultation on Expanding Ireland's Marine Protected Area Network and welcomes the report of the expert advisory group.

## Context

In developing this submission, GCCN has drawn on its Policies and Positions document, the relevant sections of which state:

- The GCCN goal is the development of Galway as a clean, pollution free, post carbon city, with preserved, enhanced and protected biodiversity, where our waterways are protected, there is wise sustainable use of resources with a well implemented Zero Waste Policy and widespread public and schools based environmental education.
- A project to monitor and protect the health of key sites such as Lough Corrib, Merlin Woods and Barna Woods is established as part of the sustainable management of all designated and sensitive ecological sites in and surrounding the city;
- A strategy is developed that recognises ... A strategy is developed that recognises the crucial role of public green spaces such as parks, forests, meadows, seashores, rivers and wetlands in the area of personal and community health;
- An inventory database of habitats, fauna and flora using the Galway City Habitats Inventory 2006 as a baseline is established monitored and regularly updated with the addition of a status/risk assessment element

## Recommendations

### Stakeholder Engagement

GCCN supports the report recommendation ‘Early and sustained stakeholder engagement throughout the MPA designation and management processes’. Best practice in terms of stakeholder engagement is outlined in the GCCN resource ‘Guidelines for Successful Community Engagement’.<sup>1</sup>

Recent guidance issued by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Tool for a Consultative Approach,<sup>2</sup> are also useful. While these focus on consultation in relation to the application of the Public Sector Duty, they provide a useful framework, based as they are on the following:

- Appropriate – the approach pursued is suited to the particular task involved
- Participative – the approach pursued is inclusive in engaging the voice of those most impacted particularly those experiencing marginalisation and inequality
- Accountable – the approach pursued is open and transparent
- Enabling – the approach pursued support the effective participation by stakeholders
- Accessible – the approach pursued involves identifying and addressing barriers to participation that arise for stakeholders.

### Climate and Biodiversity Crises

The twin climate and biodiversity crises must be recognised and measures put in place which reflects the severity of these crises. The need for urgent action is clear with the Habitats Directive Article 17 report clearly illustrating that most marine habitats in Ireland’s SACs are deteriorating<sup>3</sup> due to poor water quality, fishing and aquaculture. GCCN calls for immediate action to protect existing Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas, for example the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA.

### Phased Implementation

GCCN welcomes the report as a significant achievement towards the establishment of an MPA network in Ireland. GCCN supports the Irish Wildlife Trust’s call<sup>4</sup> for phased implementation with a target of 10% of the Irish marine region be protected by 2025 and 30% as the minimum target for 2030.

### Just Transition

GCCN supports the report recommendation; ‘Develop funding pathways for a just transition for those sectors negatively impacted by the MPA network, e.g. through the new European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund’ and calls for this work to begin urgently in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> [GCCN, Guidelines for Successful Community Engagement](#)

<sup>2</sup> [IHREC-Tool-for-a-Consultative-Approach.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Article 17 Reports 2019 | National Parks & Wildlife Service \(npws.ie\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [IWT submission to Expanding Ireland's Marine Protected Area Network.docx](#)