



Galway City Community Network
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Galway City Community Network CLG

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

Salthill Cycleway

GCCN Submission

January 2022

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 role of the 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 Galway City Community Network 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.

Context

GCCN makes this submission on the Salthill Cycleway (Proposed Temporary Cycle Lane/ Traffic Calming Measures on the R336 Seapoint Promenade, R336 Salthill Road Upper and the R336 Knocknacarra Road) after holding a workshop with GCCN members of the appropriate GCCN linkage groups.

GCCN Policy and Positions

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 city where all policies, plans and processes are future proofed, inclusive and participatory ... A city of universal accessibility where all people can access services and facilities. A city with a pedestrian-friendly, cycling friendly, disability friendly and child friendly infrastructure.

- GCCN policy on transport is based on a Hierarchy of Road Users in the following order:
 1. Pedestrians and disabled people
 2. Cyclists
 3. Public transport and
 4. Private motor transport.
- GCCN believes that all projects, initiatives, policies, programmes and services in Galway City should be universally accessible enabling the full and equal participation of all people, regardless of disability, age, literacy or linguistic considerations.
- All land use planning is accessibility and equality proofed.
- GCCN also proposes that all public participation structures and processes designed to facilitate and enable community participation and the outcomes from such structures and processes are reviewed and evaluated.
- GCCN endorses the European Charter of Pedestrian Rights and the Road Danger Reduction Charter.
- GCCN notes that documents such as the National Cycle Policy Framework, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the NTA Permeability Best Practice Guide seek to address inappropriate and unsuitable roads management and town planning practices. The network endorses the overall approach advocated in these documents.
- Speed limits of 30km/h or lower are the default option for all non-arterial roads in the city.
- The Galway-to-Dublin Cycle Greenway and the Galway City-to-Clifden Greenway are developed;
- Safe travelling routes to amenities and recreational grounds are provided including for example, bike routes away from traffic, pedestrian crossings, traffic calming systems, lowering of speed limits and addressing 'rat-runs'.
- Safe areas are established in residential areas which; favour pedestrians and children's play areas over traffic, have speed limits of walking speed and separate roads with access for bicycles, buses and pedestrians from those open to motor vehicles.

Submission

GCCN welcomes active travel infrastructure that is inclusive and accessible and supports a modal shift away from cars. It is vital that there is safe dedicated road space for cyclists through segregated cycling facilities rather than the prioritisation of road space for cars. Members agreed that the status quo was not acceptable, and change was needed to develop sustainable transport solutions for Salthill. However, the current designs do not prioritise other vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, disabled people and those who rely on bus transport to get around. This submission will outline concerns with the current designs and issues related to the lack of meaningful public participation.

Public Participation

GCCN believe that the participation of people and communities benefits and improves decision-making and policy development. This participation should commence early in any decision-making process. In this case meaningful public participation on the project did not happen. A community engagement process should be based on input from key stakeholders and partners, including the GCCN, that will have an understanding of how best to access and involve those people who are most affected by or interested in a potential decision or policy change. Proposals to address concerns related to universal accessibility could have been developed early on in the process which could have led to designs which meet the varied needs of different communities.

Proper public participation that allows for meaningful engagement takes time. A two-week consultation period is too short for meaningful public engagement and participation. Under normal circumstances, a minimum of six to ten weeks is needed for groups and organisations in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors. Scheduling engagement and public participation activities at times when the ability to respond is limited should be avoided if at all possible – this would include times such as Christmas and school holidays. For more guidance see [GCCN's Guidelines for Successful Community Engagement](#).

Hierarchy of Road Users

Whilst the Galway Transport Strategy subscribes to a hierarchy of road users which places disabled people and pedestrians at the top the proposed designs do not reflect this hierarchy;

- Both designs move Blue Badge Parking to the opposite side of the road without providing pedestrian crossings.
- The published designs remove the traffic islands from the roundabout at Blackrock implying a reduction in convenience and safety for pedestrians crossing.
- If pedestrians were prioritised then this should be evident in the designs, for example, accessible zebra crossings placed a maximum distance of 50m apart, in suitable locations.
- Pedestrians (including wheelchair users) need to be given adequate footpath space to pass each other, without having to go out on to the busy road (as is the current situation) or a cycle path.
- The diversion of bus services needs to be considered in terms of universal accessibility as many disabled people rely on public transport.

All transport projects should be assessed and proofed using this framework however current designs do not align with this hierarchy. Transport infrastructure should also align with the European Charter of Pedestrian Rights and the Road Danger Reduction Charter.

Universal Accessibility

The designs should align with universal design principles and ensure universal accessibility enabling the full and equal participation of all people, regardless of disability or age.

With the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) by the Irish state in 2018, there is an obligation to deliver civil and political rights to people with disabilities, and to the progressive realisation of social and economic rights. Galway City Council has a responsibility to ensure plans adhere to their obligations under the UNCRPD.

Article 9 of the UNCRPD states people with disabilities must have equal access to the physical environment and transportation. Article 19 states that appropriate measures should be taken to ensure full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the community.

All plans should be accessibility and equality proofed to ensure accessibility for all road users, including people with disabilities, older people and children. Universal design should be at the core of design for all transport infrastructure. The Public Realm Strategy 2019 states that it will 'promote universal design' however the current designs do not ensure universal accessibility.

GCCN calls on Galway City Council to engage widely and meaningfully with key stakeholders to address the deficits in the current designs to ensure designs adhere to obligations under the UNCRPD and align with commitments within Galway City Council's own policies namely the Galway Transport Strategy and Public Realm Strategy.