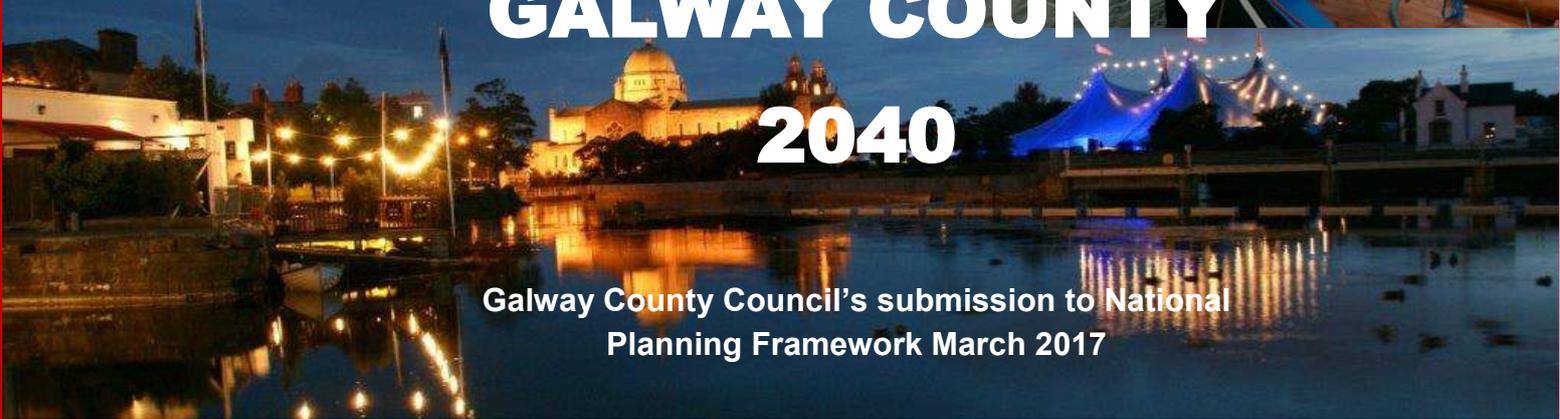




# GALWAY COUNTY 2040



Galway County Council's submission to National  
Planning Framework March 2017





## Table of contents

## Page

Executive summary	4
1. Galway City and Metropolitan Area and Key Towns	5-7
2. Economic Development and Diversity	8-12
3. Tourism & Heritage- Our Unique Natural Resource	13-17
4. Education and Innovation- The Way Forward	18-19
5. Our Maritime Heritage- Developing an Untapped Potential	20-21
6. Delivery of our vision	22

County Galway is the second largest county in Ireland with an area of 6,148 square kilometres and a coastline of 689 kilometres with many off shore islands. It borders five counties and forms part of the area under the jurisdiction of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly. Galway City and County has an overall population of 258,552 (Census 2016), with the county area containing 179,048 people.

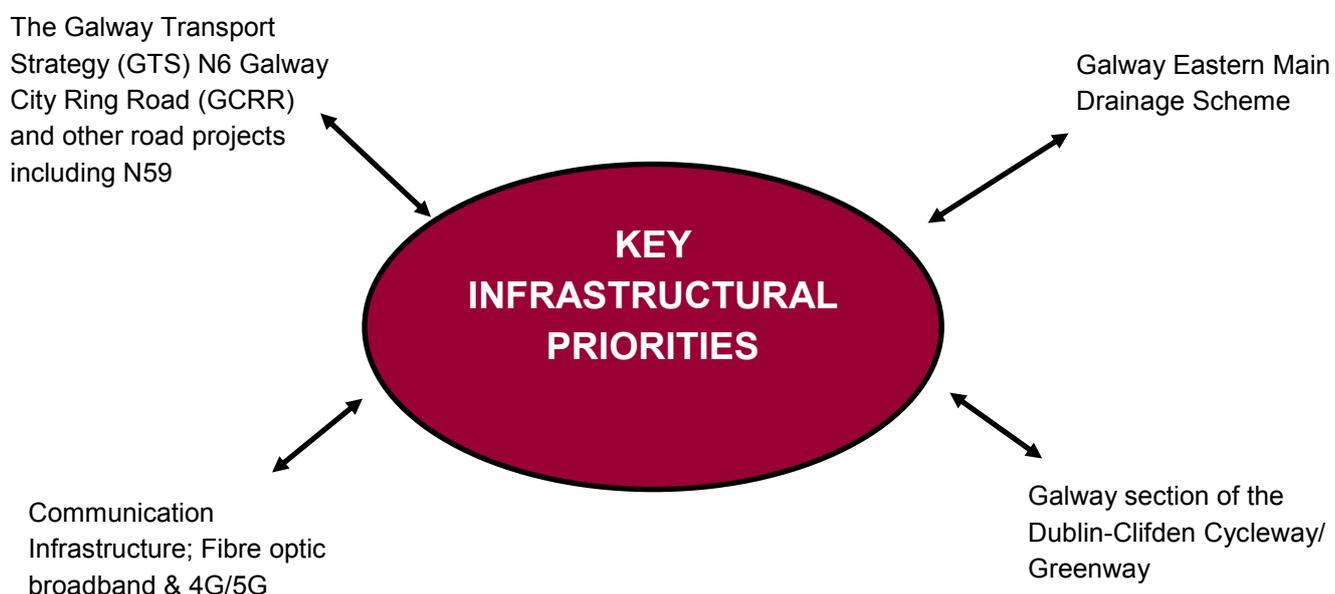
Galway County is located at the heart of the Western Region. It is an attractive location as a key tourism destination with a unique natural environment and a rich cultural heritage including the Irish language, but it is also a county with internationally recognised industrial clusters in medical devices and ICT, and a centre for marine research and development.

The diversity of the county is extensive with Galway city as the key economic driver and the county providing a rich and diverse supporting hinterland of strong county towns and villages. Galway County Council is tasked with providing a vision for the development of the County and fulfils this role by creating a cohesive suite of objectives and policies through the various strategies and plans over a wide number of disciplines.

***This vision seeks to enhance the quality of life of the people of Galway and maintain the County as a uniquely attractive place in which to live, work, invest and visit, harnessing the potential of the County's competitive advantages in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner.***

The overarching planning strategies for the county are the Galway County Development Plan, 2015-2021, and the Local Economic Community Plan 2015-2021, which are supported by a series of local area plans and other plans and programmes to provide effective regional development.

Galway County Council are fully committed to achieve our vision for Galway and welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the draft National Planning Framework to ensure this vision is realised to the period of 2040 and beyond. Galway's strategic location, vibrant cultural diversity, outstanding physical, natural beauty and the strong linkages created between the educational institutions and the multinational & indigenous companies have ensured that Galway is a place people want to live, work, invest and visit. To safeguard and building on the strengths and successes of Galway for the future requires cross-departmental commitment at Government level to deliver the key infrastructural priorities, outlined in this submission, and to guarantee effective regional development for Galway in 2040.



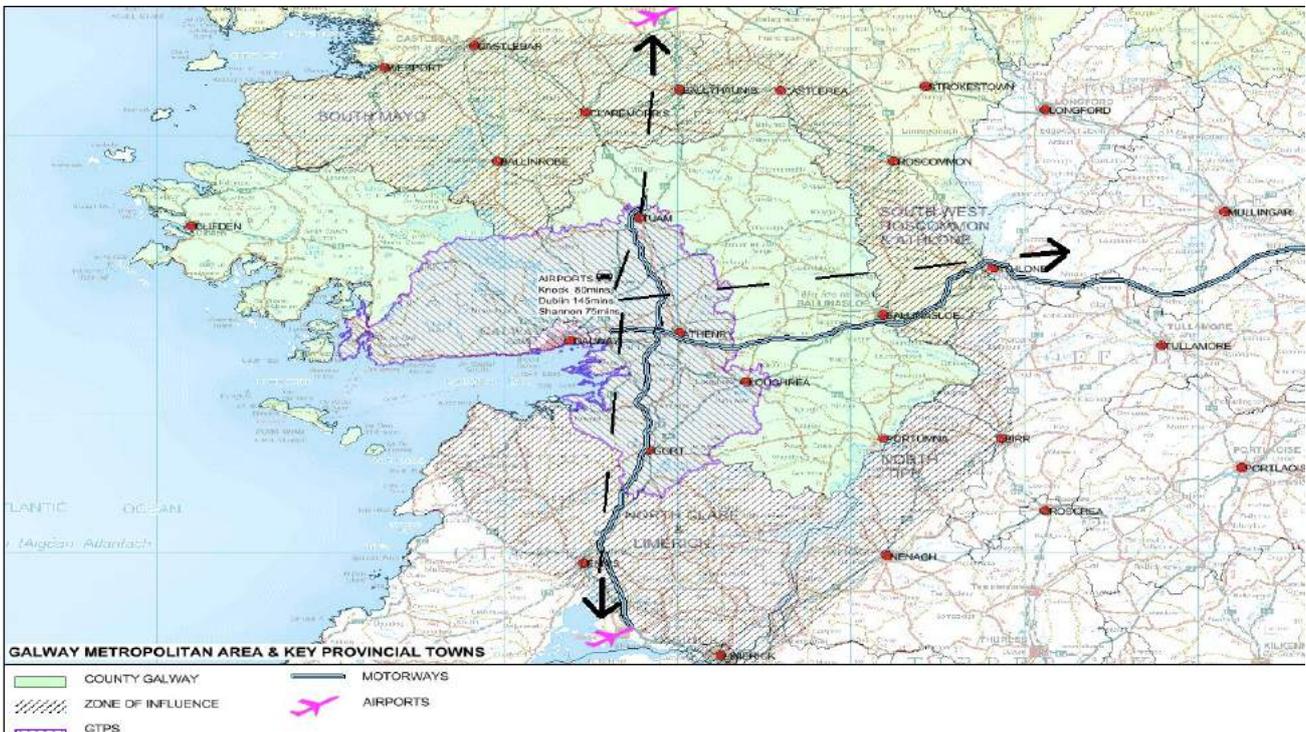
# 1. Galway City and Metropolitan Area and Key Towns – Driving Effective Regional Development

*Vision for Galway by 2028/2040*

*“Galway County will support and complement the growth of Galway city as a tier 2 city and the county will grow in a sustainable manner with communities being identified as key assets through successful place making.”*

## Regional Development

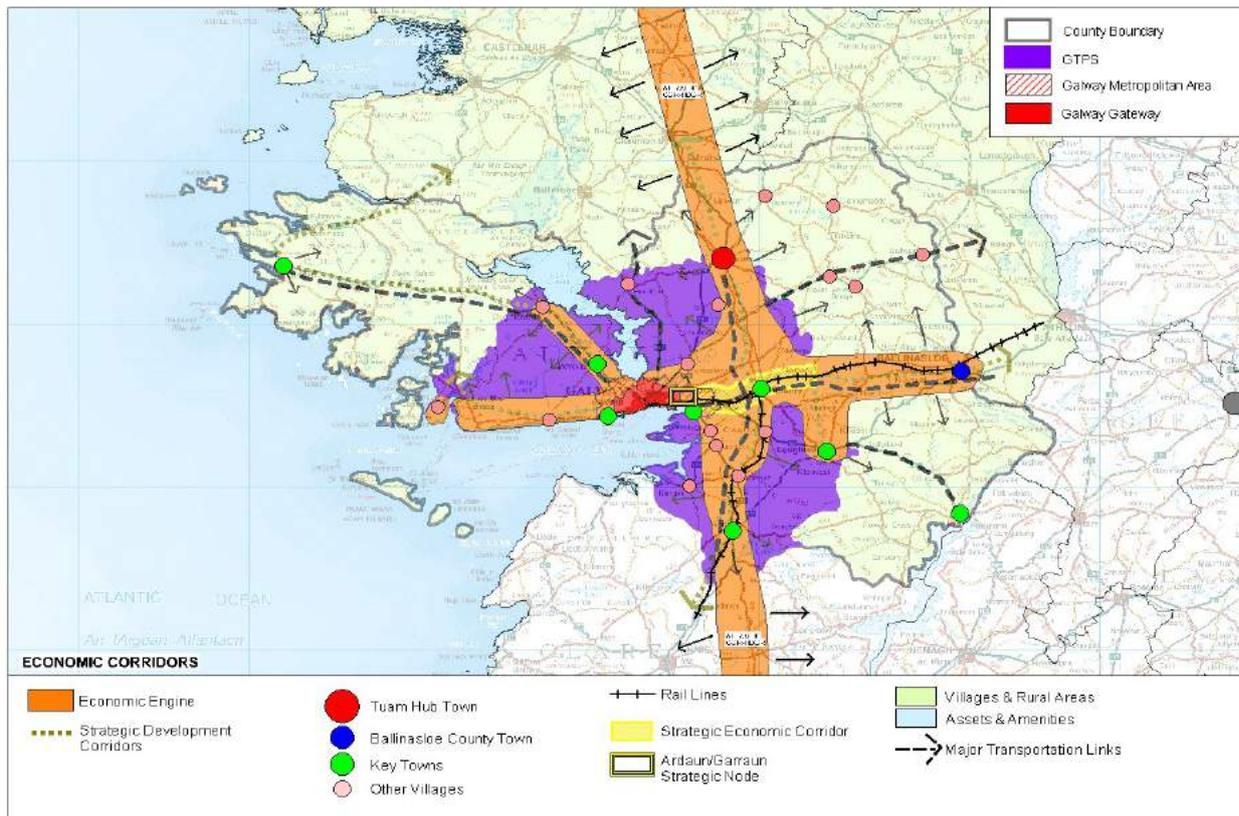
The role of cities in driving competitiveness and innovation at national and regional level is widely recognised. They drive competitive regions, by promoting growth and employment, and by joining up separate business hubs to expand existing markets and create new ones. Galway City and Metropolitan Area is the main economic engine for regional development in the North-West Region. The Galway city and Metropolitan Area includes the adjoining county areas and satellite settlements of Oranmore and Berna, which are inextricably linked to and function as part of a greater Galway City Region. However, the influence of the Galway City and Metropolitan Area extends much further than its geographical area, as this city region is highly dependent on its hinterland and rural area, along



with our key towns and villages, to drive effective regional development.

In terms of regional connectivity within and outside of the region, the Galway City and Metropolitan Area is strategically located along the Atlantic Economic Corridor. The Atlantic Economic Corridor is an initiative of the Chambers of Commerce of Limerick, Shannon, Ennis, Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo, and the American Chamber of Commerce for developing the western half of Ireland. The Atlantic Economic Corridor seeks to contribute to effective regional development by creating sufficient scale





along the western part of Ireland to attract Irish and multinational investment, growing jobs and supporting vibrant local communities.

The Galway City and Metropolitan Area is also strategically located along the Galway/Dublin Strategic Economic Corridor to the east of the County. The Strategic Economic Corridor includes the lands approximately two kilometres to the north and the south of the Dublin-Galway rail line. This designation was based on a framework plan commissioned to address the need to accommodate Regionally Strategic Industrial sites. Objective EDT 1 of the Galway County Development Plan, 2015-2021, sets out the economic objectives for the Strategic Economic Corridor. This Economic Corridor is attractive for industry providers due to the level of infrastructure/services that converge at this location which include fibre optic Broadband, Gas, electricity, Train-lines, Motorway, wastewater and water services.

It is of critical importance to Galway County Council that the Galway City and Metropolitan Area has the necessary Government support, including interdepartmental, capital investment, alongside private investment to provide the infrastructure necessary to enable the greater city region to continue to develop, attract businesses and people, and be competitive up to 2040 (and beyond). The Galway City and Metropolitan Area, including its supporting catchment, needs to attain the necessary critical mass in order to compete effectively with the Eastern Region.

One of the key infrastructural requirements that will enable the Galway City and Metropolitan Area to achieve the critical mass necessary to deliver effective regional development is the East Galway Main Drainage Scheme. The East Galway Main Drainage Scheme is a wastewater infrastructural project of strategic importance to Galway, which will act as a catalyst and allow the future development and expansion of the satellite settlements and economic corridor(s) to the east of Galway City, which include Ardaun and Garraun residential zoned lands and business zoned lands in Oranmore, Athenry and the potential redevelopment of the former Galway Airport site. Galway County Council require that this key infrastructural development is included as a priority infrastructural development in the NPF.

Another key infrastructural development required to enable the Galway Metropolitan Area to achieve the critical mass is the delivery of the N6 Galway City Ring Road, as part of the Galway Transport Strategy. At present traffic levels during peak hours within the Galway City and Metropolitan Area have far exceeded the capacity of the existing transport network, resulting in severe traffic congestion at peak times. Traffic congestion has increased travel times along the east-west axis of the city, adversely impacting on the existing businesses within the city region, as well as businesses in Connemara. These traffic problems could jeopardise the attractiveness of the region for future investment. Therefore, the provision of the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road project and the implementation of the Galway City Transport Strategy is crucial to secure the long-term economic development and success of the City and its wider region. In this context the N6 Galway City Ring Road should be included as a priority infrastructural development in the NPF.

The N6 Galway City Ring Road will not only reduce congestion within Galway but will also improve connectivity with other towns and cities within and outside of the North-West Region. The delivery of the N6 Galway City Ring Road, the completion of M17/M18 road projects, as well as the realisation of the Western Rail Corridor, will enable the Galway and Metropolitan Area to continue to be a key driver for effective regional development for the North-West region. The completion of these infrastructural projects will also shorten travel times to Shannon Airport and Ireland West Airport Knock, which will be of significant importance to the continued attractiveness of the Galway region to anchor and retain inward investment.

The Galway City and Metropolitan area is highly dependent on its hinterland and rural area. Galway County Council acknowledges the key role our towns and villages have in contributing to the socio-economic of the rural hinterlands. The small and medium sized provincial towns and their rural hinterlands have the capacity to develop and can be active and dynamic parts of the productive economy at their own scale, both in the rural hinterlands and within their larger sub-catchment areas which traverse county boundaries. Our provincial towns help attract businesses and create employment for their rural hinterlands and also help combat unsustainable and undesirable commuting patterns contributing to a better quality of life. To ensure the future growth and attractiveness of our key provincial towns requires the existing infrastructural deficits to be resolved and urban improvement schemes to be implemented.

#### Achieving our vision

- ⇒ Galway has a strategic location on the west coast of Europe that offers access to significant marine resources.
- ⇒ The Galway City and Metropolitan Area is the main economic engine for regional development in the North-West Region.
- ⇒ The Galway City and Metropolitan Area is strategically located along the Atlantic Economic Corridor.
- ⇒ The Galway City and Metropolitan Area is strategically located along the Galway/Dublin Strategic Economic Corridor to the east of the County.
- ⇒ Galway County surrounds Galway City which is an award winning micro city and affluent and growing marketplace of 80,000 persons.
- ⇒ Land appropriately zoned for large scale developments in our key towns approximately 300ha

## 2. Economic Development and Diversity

### Vision for Galway by 2028/2040

*“Galway County will drive economic vitality through the delivery of key infrastructure projects supporting growth and innovation across a diverse range of industries.”*

The West Region has a strong network of both multinational and indigenous companies operating across a diverse range of sectors, with particular strengths in the medical device/Bio Med and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) sectors. Since the 1960s, multinational companies have played a significant role in the economic development of Galway and have helped lay the foundations for the development of complementary indigenous companies in the region. The region is the hub of a globally recognised Med Tech cluster, employing the highest per capita of medical technology (Med-Tech) personnel in Europe. Galway is also becoming a major technology hub, particularly around internet and collaborative working technologies. The success of Galway is reflected in Galway City being named as the top micro-city in Europe in 2014/2015 by the Financial Times fDi magazine (for cities less than 100,000 people) and the top microcity in Europe in 2016/2017 for both business friendliness and economic potential. In addition to the medical device/Bio Med and ICT business clusters in Galway, economic potential also exists in the rural areas through the development of the food and agri-food sectors.

### Medical Devices Sector

The Medical Devices Sector is a significant contributor to employment and economic activity in Galway. The establishment of Boston Scientific and Medtronic in Galway in the 1990s contributed to the growth of this sector in Ireland, specifically in Galway. Galway is now one of five global hubs in the medtech sector. The clustering effect of the medical devices cluster in Galway occurs through university-industry linkages, a continuous development of a skilled labour pool, international reputation through the success of Boston Scientific and Medtronic, the growth of supplier firms and knowledge transfers



Source : Medtech

establishing new start-ups. Due to the influential presence of Boston Scientific and Medtronic in Galway, many local companies are involved in cardiology-related devices, particularly drug-eluting stents and their components, such as guide wires, balloon catheters, hypo-tubes and filters. This has resulted in Galway becoming recognised for its specialisation in coronary devices.

The medical device companies within this cluster are supported by such organisations as Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Local Enterprise Office Galway, National University of Ireland Galway (NUI Galway) and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), providing business development support, finance, access to markets and new customers, leadership development, access to a skilled workforce, knowledge and research facilities. The creation of the National Centre for Medical Devices (CURAM), led by NUI Galway, provides an important source of future research & development to support the scaling and diversification of the medical devices sector in Galway across all firm sizes. CURAM includes approximately 40 industry partners, supporting product development and the establishment of new start-up firms. This new research centre in Galway will help grow Galway’s profile as a hub for some of the world’s largest multinationals, as well as developing research from biomaterials, stem cells and drug delivery.

In addition to NUI Galway’s contribution to the medical devices sector, GMIT’s Galway Medical Technology Centre (GMedTech) has a recognised capacity for designing and developing advanced pre-clinically relevant in vitro simulators replicating various parts of the human anatomy. These simulators accelerate the development of the next generation of medical devices and training platforms for clinicians as well as aiding in surgical planning. It is of critical importance to Galway County Council that the 3<sup>rd</sup> level institutions are continued to be supported by Government in the provision of research and development to ensure the long-term success of the medical device sector in Galway. There is also a need to ensure that there is an alignment between future skills requirements in this sector and provision of educational and training offerings.



Source: NWRA

## Information and Communications Technology

An integrated ICT industry helps the competitiveness and creativity of economies. Converged ICT technologies bring such advantages as smart devices and cloud services, improving e-government models, e-commerce, e-learning, online medical services as well as other web-based intelligent services. The convergence between information technology (IT) and communications technology (CT) is a major driver behind the rapid development of the ICT industry. Galway is the “Top Micro European City of the Future” and home to a multitude of long established and early stage ICT companies. Knowledge and skills intensive companies are drawn to Galway due to the talent pool and business, science, engineering, multilingual and managerial expertise, and create synergies in the Galway ICT cluster.

According to Geodirectory figures for 2014, there are 196 ICT organisations in Galway, 90 ICT companies based in Galway City and the remaining 106 ICT companies based in the keys towns throughout the County. Significantly, Galway is home to four of the top five ICT (Information and Communications Technology) sectors companies including IBM, SAP, Oracle and Cisco. Other multinational companies with sizeable operations in Galway include HP, Avaya, Cisco, Schneider Electric and EA Games. Galway now has a foothold in the growing cloud computing market through HP and SAP, and some indigenous companies such as Cloud Strong and SourceDogg. At present, the cloud computing investment being made by HP, combined with start-ups in the space and supported by existing third level teaching and research programmes, means that Galway has the potential to become a significant location for cloud computing. With the combination of top tier multinational companies, indigenous ICT firms, a growing start-up culture and significant research capability in the third level sectors, Galway has the potential to be an international niche ICT hub.

The ICT companies in Galway are being attracted and fuelled by a highly skilled talent pool available through graduates from both NUI Galway and GMIT, who offer a wide range of ICT courses in Galway, as well as through PhDs from the Insight Centre for Data Analytics and LERO. The Insight Centre for Data Analytics is one of Europe’s largest data analytics research organisations, and is made up of four main university centres around the country, including NUI Galway. LERO is an Irish software research centre which brings together leading software research teams from Universities and Institutes of Technology in a coordinated centre of research excellence with a strong industry focus. There is a need to ensure that there is a continued alignment between future skills requirement and provision of educational and training offerings. There is a need to deepen the collaboration between the ICT sector and the third level institutions with respect to research and development, technology transfer, talent development and skills enhancement. The completion of the national broadband roll-out of will be a significant catalyst for the future growth of the ICT sector across Galway and the North-West Region.

ICT companies are also supported by ITAG (Information Technology Association Galway) and the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Galway. ITAG is a network of over 50 multinational and indigenous IT companies involved in the IT sector in the Galway area. The goal of ITAG is to promote, strengthen and grow the information technology industry in Galway City and County. LEO Galway provides information, support and advice for start-up or expanding businesses for all business sectors. In the Gaeltacht area of Galway, Údarás na Gaeltachta offers qualifying businesses and companies from various sectors a range of incentives and supports to start up, develop, expand or locate in a Gaeltacht region. The organisation supports businesses in developing new markets, technologies, products and strategic alliances through research and development including companies spanning across a range of commercial sectors like ICT, tourism, audio and digital media. Support is provided to ICT businesses in the Gaeltacht region in the form of telecommunications infrastructure like a competitive high-speed broadband service. ÉireComposites Teoranta, is an example of a Gaeltacht-based firm supported by Údarás na Gaeltachta developing new technologies for the space industry sector, including space launchers and satellites.

While there is a very active tech ecosystem in and around the environs of Galway, there is no downtown innovation district in Galway City. Innovation districts consist of an amalgamation of entrepreneurs and educational institutions, start-ups and schools, mixed-use development and medical innovations. A large number of organisations such as the Galway Chamber of Commerce, Galway Harbour, Startup Galway, WestBIC and NUI Galway have collaborated to kickstart a new innovation hub called the '**Galway City Innovation District**'. The vision is to replicate other city centre innovation hubs in an attempt to attract young technology companies with strong growth potential to Galway's city centre, thus creating a cluster. The first phase of the proposed Innovation District, the Portershed, adjacent to Eyre Square. Ten companies employing more than 30 people, have already based themselves at the PorterShed. The companies span various fields including software, film development, customer service, language education, contactless payment, fashion and training. Galway County Council believe that this model could be replicated in other locations in the county and region, and also, for other sectors. It is a model that can be used for creating synergies between sectors and supports for firms at different stages of growth.

#### Slow Food Movement:

The slow food movement was created as a reaction to the growth of fast-food outlets in the late 1980s in Italy. The slow food movement is a low volume high quality food production, which promotes locally sourced foods grown in an environmentally friendly manner, which taste good. Their core ethos is that food is good, clean and fair. Consequently, this has seen the growth of organic farming, farmers markets, food festivals and artisan cafes & restaurants throughout Galway. The success of the slow food movement in Galway is also evidenced by Galway being awarded as the European Region of Gastronomy in 2018.



## EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

Galway, West of Ireland-Candidate European Region of Gastronomy 2018

There are 19 farmers' markets in County Galway and 4 farmers' markets in Galway City. There are also 16 food festivals held in Galway City and County annually. The first state backed organic farm is located in Athenry, it is 110 hectares in size and it provides opportunities to support the development of organic food producers. Galway County Council, in partnership with Teagasc and SCULL enterprises, are progressing the development of a Strategic Food Hub at the Teagasc Campus in Athenry.

In conjunction with Bord Bia, training programmes, grants and the development of a strong food infrastructure and culture within Galway supports the development and success of new food producers. With the scale and diversity of primary agriculture, the growth of farmer's markets and increasing customer demand for quality and artisan foods, consideration should be given to creating a master food brand which includes primary producers. The Fuschia Brand in West Cork is an exemplar of this concept. Furthermore, the Connemara Food Trail model could be replicated in other parts of the City and County to support primary production, food producers and restaurants.

#### Agri-Food:

The agri-food sector is a very important potential growth sector for County Galway and the North-West Region, accounting for almost 36% of the national agricultural output. The agri-food sector includes primary production (agriculture or farming), forestry, fishing, food, drink and wood-processing. Galway has the highest number of farms in the West of Ireland with an average farm size of 25.8 hectares. 65% of these farms are involved in beef production, with a marked decrease in specialist dairy farms since the abolition of the milk quotas. A number of other farms have diversified into cereal and spring barley

production. The diversity of cereal production farms presents opportunities to be explored in relation to the development of value added products for industrial and consumer markets. Galway has the sixth largest number of dairy cows in the country presenting an opportunity for higher levels of milk production and for the use of milk in developing new food products. Galway also has the second largest number of sheep in the country and the most goats in the State. Given the size and number of cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and poultry, real opportunities exist to create and support the development of added value production to the primary production within Galway.

A major challenge to the primary producers in the agri-food sector in Galway is the age profile of farmers and the economic viability of the farm holding. At present the largest cohort of farm holders are over 65 years old and 34% of farm enterprises do not generate sufficient income. Support needs to be given to new farm holders and those considering leaving farming to ensure long-term sustainability and viability of farm holdings. Development of specialised skills and early adoption of new technologies need to be continuously encouraged and supported for primary producers. The development of more knowledge transfer networks among and between the primary producers and food producers is also required to ensure supply and demand is met for targeted markets. The location of educational training (Mountbellew) and state sectoral support and research (Teagasc Athenry) in Galway is a significant asset to the sector within the County and opportunities for more embedded collaboration between these institutions, primary producers and food companies require support through formal and informal sectoral networks.

#### Achieving Our Vision

- ⇒ Galway has existing internationally recognised clusters in Medical Devices and ICT.
- ⇒ Galway is also becoming a major technology hub, particularly around internet and collaborative working technologies.
- ⇒ Galway City and County are home to 9 of the top 10 ICT companies-IBM,SAP, Oracle and Cisco.
- ⇒ County Galway has a well-educated and young workforce.
- ⇒ There is a tradition of entrepreneurial culture within the indigenous industry in County Galway.
- ⇒ Galway has an extensive agricultural and marine resource base.
- ⇒ The Teagasc Rural Economy Research Centre is based in County Galway.

### 3. Tourism & Heritage- Our Unique Natural Resource

#### Vision for Galway by 2028/2040

*“Galway will be a renowned world-class destination, offering exciting and unexpected experiences from the Wild Atlantic Way to its Lakelands – a great place to live, explore and immerse oneself; and wish to return to!”*

Tourism is one of Ireland's most important economic sectors. To ensure the sector continues to grow in a sustainable manner for the North-West Region, it is essential that a clear policy framework and targeted infrastructural priorities are included in the new National Planning Framework for the Region. A sustainable tourism sector is of critical importance for effective regional development for the North-West region. The West of Ireland, and in particular County Galway, is one of the most unique parts of Ireland. Galway is the regional capital for the North-West Region and has a very successful brand domestically, although it is relatively unknown at an International level.

Galway now has a great opportunity to present itself to an international audience as the **European Region of Gastronomy in 2018** and **European Capital of Culture in 2020**. Galway City has already achieved significant accolades such as the **UNESCO City of Film** (Creative Cities Network), the **fDi Micro City 2014**, the **Travel + Leisure World's Best Award for Friendliest City**, the **European Green Leaf 2017**, and the **Academy of Urbanism's Great Town Award 2013**.



Source: WildAtlanticWay.com

The Wild Atlantic Way has been a successful tourism initiative for the counties along the Atlantic seaboard. The Wild Atlantic Way stretches almost 2,500km from Donegal to Cork, and includes almost 700km of Galway's coastline. This tourism initiative has been very effective in marketing and promoting domestic and overseas tourists to visit Galway, in particular for Galway City, Connemara, including the Aran Islands and Inishbofin, resulting in tourist numbers increasing annually.

Looking towards 2040, there are existing infrastructural and tourism facilities deficits, which could prevent Galway from building on its impressive reputation and reaching its full potential. Galway County Council requires the Government's commitment to provide the key infrastructure and necessary facilities to create a sustainable tourism sector in Galway, particularly in the towns and villages along the Wild Atlantic Way. Many of these towns and villages do not have adequate water and wastewater

infrastructure. Town enhancement schemes and tax incentives are also required to improve existing streetscapes, tackle urban decay and provide a catalyst for investment and development.

**ROUTE**

- 91km adjacent to Royal Canal
- 45km located on corridor of disused railway line from Mullingar to Athlone
- 140km of new build Cycleway from Athlone to Galway with new bridges across the rivers Shannon and Suck



- Route adjacent to Royal Canal (cycleway at various stages of development, refer to Project Status section for details)
- Route located on disused railway line (cycleway under construction – opening Summer 2015)
- Route selection process underway.



Source: [www.galwaytodublincycle.ie](http://www.galwaytodublincycle.ie)

Ballinasloe to Clifden Greenway/Cycleway.

One of the key tourism infrastructural development for Galway County Council is the delivery of the Dublin to Clifden Cycleway. The realisation of the Dublin/Clifden Cycleway will eventually provide over 200km of uninterrupted cycle and walk ways between the cities of Dublin and Galway with an onward connect to Clifden. Cycle way spurs branching off the Dublin–Clifden Cycleway in the county could also be developed to provide a wider network of cycleways. The Connemara Greenway, which is a section of the cycleway between Ballinalsoe and Clifden, extends to an overall distance of approximately 84 kilometres. This greenway will for the most part utilise the old disused Clifden to Galway rail line which closed in 1935. Galway County Council has progressed planning permission of the first stage of the route from Clifden to Oughterard covering a distance of 52 kilometres. The realisation of the Connemara Greenway, along with the upgrade of the existing N59, National Secondary Road, would have significant impact towards creating a sustainable tourism sector in Galway.

It is of critical importance to Galway County Council that Clifden continues to develop as the key tourism hub in the heart of Connemara to 2040 and beyond, and potential synergies exist between

Clifden and Westport (66km northeast) along the Wild Atlantic Way. Clifden town is regarded as the “Capital of Connemara” and boasts a thriving tourism industry attracting thousands of visitors annually. In spite of this its has the suffered a population decline in the inter census period from 2011-2016. The town has a unique and picturesque setting between the foothills of the Twelve Bens and the Atlantic Ocean in the heart of Connemara. Clifden is located along the main route (N59) though Connemara, in close proximity to Kylemore Abbey, and the Wild Atlantic Way’s Signature Discovery Points of Killary



Harbour (South) and the Alcock and Browne landing site/Marconi Wireless Radio Station at Derrigimlagh, Ballyconnelly.

Clifden is known domestically and internationally for its annual Connemara Pony Festival and Clifden Arts Festival. The Connemara Pony Festival attracts breeders and enthusiasts from around the globe to the famous agricultural show each August, while the Clifden Arts Festival is the longest running community arts festival in Ireland and is held every September, since 1977.

In order to capitalise on the existing tourism benefitting the area, the infrastructure and facilities required to sustain and enable growth must be realised to ensure its continued success and development as a key tourism hub.

Galway has the largest Gaeltacht in the Country and opportunities exists for oversea visitors to come to the Connemara Gaeltacht and Aran Islands, to spend time learning this unique traditional Irish culture, and in particular link could be established with oversea colleges to learn the Irish



Source: [www.wikiwand.com](http://www.wikiwand.com)

language, for example Canada contains the largest Gaeltacht outside Ireland. This will required targeted marketing and promotion. Investment is also required to increase the existing capacity of the main settlements in the Gaeltacht and the Islands, in terms of infrastructure and facilities, including the provision of adequate accommodation.

Connemara is also a very popular destination for outdoor activities, whether its hill walking in the Twelve Bens, angling on Lough Corrib, cycling in the Tour de Connemara, mountain biking at the Derroura Mountain Bike Trail or running in the Connemara International Marathon. The Connemara International Marathon is an event that has running for the last 16 years and has seen its numbers increase steadily over the years from 73 runners, initially, to over 3,000 runners in 2016. This running event in North Connemara includes a half marathon, full marathon and ultra-marathon, and can be regarded as one of the world’s most scenic road races. In recent years, adventure racing has been

growing in popularity with events like Gael Force, Connemara Adventure Challenge, Turf Warrior Challenge and Connemara Triathlon increasing the profile of Connemara as a destination for adventure sports, which should be supported within the NPF, while balancing environmental considerations.

While the west of the county is recognised nationally and internationally as a strong tourist destination, the East of the county has untapped potential from a natural, built and cultural heritage perspective to develop as a tourism destination. Galway County Council promotes balanced regional development and seeks to exploit the latent tourism potential that exists in East Galway. The NPF should recognise and support Galway's Ancient East.

The NPF should promote and help deliver on the Lakelands brand, which is currently being developed by Fáilte Ireland. The Lakelands comprise of Lough Derg and an interconnected lake system on the Shannon, which have the potential to develop a sustainable tourism product for Galway and the North-West Region. The Lakelands brand offers a great opportunity for the town of Portumna to become the sustainable tourism hub for East Galway, targeting 100,000 tourists per year.



Source: www.eastgalway.com

Towns on The Shannon



Source: www.silverlinecruisers.com

Portumna is strategically positioned on the northwest shore of Lough Derg and has the potential to develop as a sustainable tourism destination, building on the existing marine facilities in the town, including marine businesses like Emerald Star, who are a member of Le Boat, Europe's largest operator of boating holidays with boats across Europe. The town is also a key destination along the Lough Derg Blueway, a network of walking, cycling, heritage, food and canoe trails. The town also offers a diverse range of tourism activities, including a forest park, Portumna Castle and Gardens and the Irish Workhouse Centre. Galway County Council in collaboration with Waterways Ireland are rolling out a local initiative to provide overnight campervan facilities at the Marina.

The successful marketing and development of the Lakelands brand would be the catalyst to developing the latent tourism potential of the east of the county, which contains a rich variety of architectural and archaeological heritage, including the Ballinasloe Horse Fair, Aughrim Battle Site, Ireland's bloodiest battle, with associated Interpretative Centre. Furthermore, Coole Park, Athenry medieval town and walls, Clonfert Cathedral and Dungaigue Castle are some of the other important tourism assets in the east of the County, which would also benefit from this catalyst. Galway County Council want East Galway to be promoted as Galway's Ancient East to capitalise on our diverse built and cultural heritage. Tourism opportunities also exists for East Galway through the realisation of the Dublin-Clifden greenway, which will eventually provide over 200km of uninterrupted cycle and walk ways between Dublin and Clifden.

### Achieving our vision

- ⇒ County Galway has a long tradition as a tourism destination.
- ⇒ Galway City and County is the European Capital of Culture in 2020
- ⇒ Galway City and County is the European Region of Gastronomy in 2018
- ⇒ Galway City won the Travel + Leisure World's Best Award for Friendliest City
- ⇒ Galway City is an UNESCO City of Film (Creative Cities Network)
- ⇒ Galway City won the Academy of Urbanism's Great Town Award 2013.
- ⇒ Galway is a world class cultural destination capable of hosting international events. (Volvo Ocean Race/Tall Ships/European Capital of Culture/Galway International Arts Festival/World Free-Diving Championships (Aran Islands).
- ⇒ Local festivals including Clifden, Loughrea, Kinvara, Athenry and Ballinasloe
- ⇒ In excess of 400km of Galway's coastline forms part of the Wild Atlantic Way
- ⇒ The County has a rich cultural heritage (arts/Irish language/sport).
- ⇒ Galway has an increasingly multicultural population.
- ⇒ Galway has the largest population of inhabited off shore islands in the Country and these are unique communities with strong amenities, traditions and heritage.
- ⇒ Galway has vibrant communities with extensive activities across community, economic, cultural and social services.
- ⇒ County Galway has the largest Gaeltacht population in Ireland.
- ⇒ There are currently 5 blue flag beaches in Galway, 2 within the city.

## 4. Education and Innovation- The Way Forward

### Vision for Galway by 2028/2040

*“The need, growth and opportunities for the future development of Galway will be achieved by the Education sector which will reflect the collaboration between industry and education providers, retaining the best talent within Galway.”*

Education is a foundational component of human development, as well as being a key enabler of economic, social and cultural progress. Third level education in Ireland is provided mainly by 7 no. universities, 14 no. Institutes of Technology and 7 no. college of Education. In the North-West Region, third level education is provided primarily by the National University of Galway (NUIG), St. Angela's College Sligo (which has a strategic partnership with NUI Galway) and by the 3 no. Institutes of Technologies: Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), Sligo Institute of Technology (SIT) and Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LIT). NUIG and GMIT are Galway's most important educational and research resources with close links to the many indigenous and multinational industries in the software and medical device sectors. Galway County Council is fully supportive of the ever increasing collaboration and close association with the educational sphere and business/medical industries that are evident in Galway.

NUI Galway is a renowned research-led university and collaborates extensively with industry in areas of strategic importance both nationally and regionally. NUIG, with a student population of over 17,000, is Ireland's leading university for knowledge transfer, with more spin out companies, licences and patents created in the last few years than any other University in Ireland. GMIT, with a student population of over 7,000 students, has developed two research centres; the Marine and Freshwater Research Centre and the Galway Medical Technology Centre. The Marine and Freshwater Research Centre is strongly networked with the marine and freshwater sectors in the region, which compliments the work that is being carried out by the Marine Institute based in Oranmore. Whilst the Galway Medical Technology Centre, is strongly embedded in the medical technology cluster, particularly in the

In terms of collaboration and moving in a more strategic manner, the Institutes of Technology in the North-West Region have signed a strategic alliance in 2012, called the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (CUA). This alliance aims to deliver on a range of strategic objectives that meet the higher educational service needs of the business and wider communities in the Connacht-Ulster region. In 2015 the CUA submitted an Expression of Interest for re-designation as a Technology University. This expression of Interest signals the ambition of the

CUA to become a Technological University in order to better serve the needs of the students and the region. A Technological University for the North-West Region will have a focus on building a vibrant and sustainable economic, social, cultural and multi-campus environment that will promote and retain their graduates in the region. It is envisioned that the Connacht-Ulster Technological University will be a leader and stabilising factor in the communities it serves. The university will be the key producer of work-ready-graduates in collaboration with businesses in the region, a key partner and driver of research and innovation, a key attractor of investment to the region, and a key partner in the retention of such investment.



Although strong educational linkages are established between Galway and Mayo through the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Galway's educational centres have a large catchment which extends within and outside of the North-West Region. However, the education centres in Galway are competing with those in Athlone, Limerick and beyond. There is a challenge to continue to attract students and retain graduates in Galway to match the growth and opportunities within the sector. A retention strategy should also be put in place, in collaboration between industry and education providers, to retain graduates within Galway.

The education sector is a significant contributor to the local economy. It has moved direction substantially from being solely educational and academic base to having an increased level of collaboration between third level educational centres and industries, by providing on-job training and courses specifically designed for industries. By 2028 Galway County Council would envisage that level of collaboration between all sized firms in different industry sectors and the third level sector should be increased, with respect to job placement, joint research programmes and participation in national and European public funding programmes, such as Horizon 2020 and Irish Research Council Employment Based Schemes.

#### Achieving our Vision

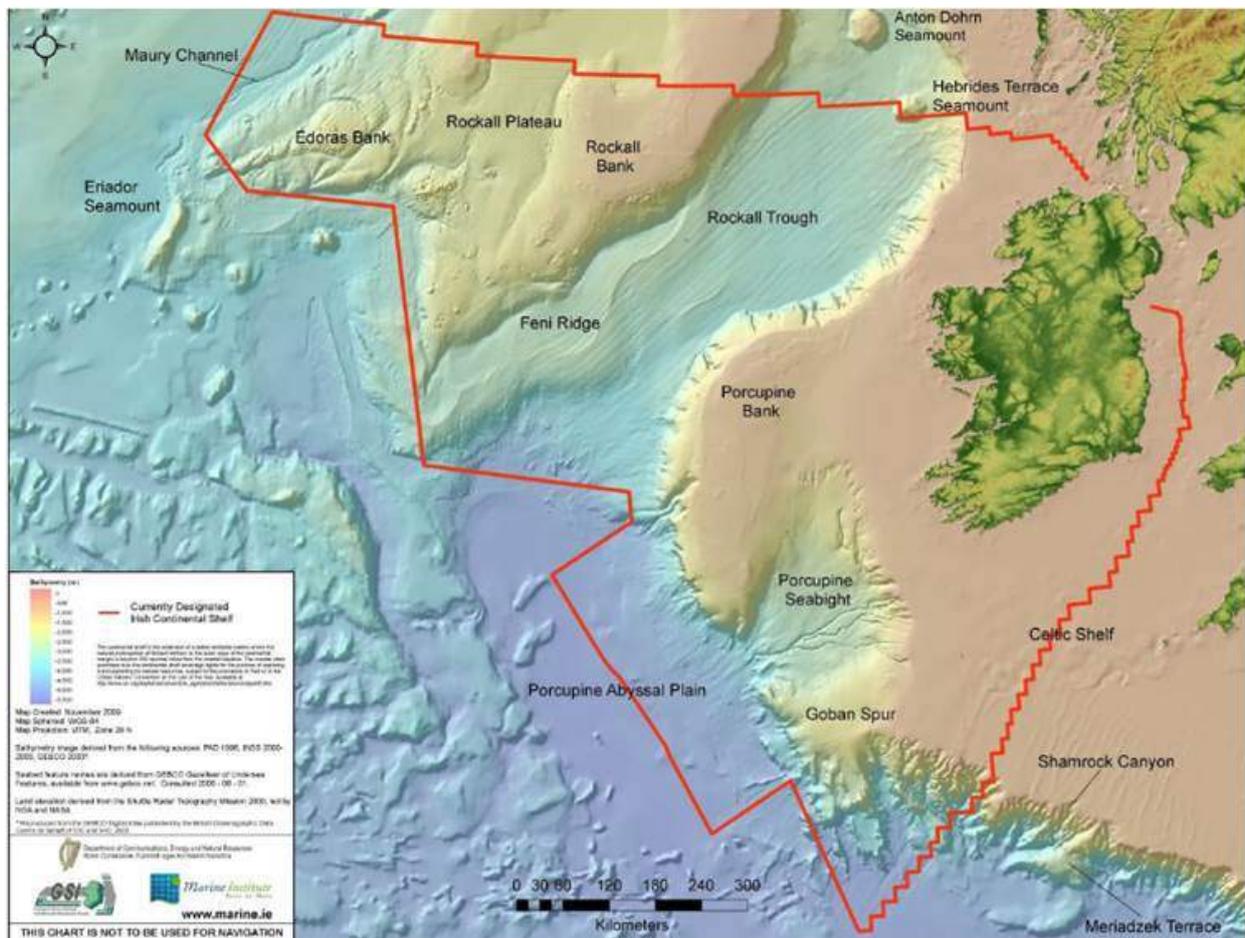
- ⇒ County Galway contains high quality outreach facilities of Third Level Educational institutions, such as GMIT campuses at Letterfrack and Mountbellew and NUI Galway campuses at An Cheathrú Rua and Carna.
- ⇒ In Galway, 57% of the third level students were in a university, which is 4.6% higher than the national average.
- ⇒ NUI Galway in 2014/2015 was the only Irish University to have increased its position in the QS World University Rankings rising four places to 280<sup>th</sup>
- ⇒ GMIT's Galway Medical Technology Centre (GMedTech)
- ⇒ The creation of the National Centre for Medical Devices (CURAM), led by NUI Galway,

## 5. Our Maritime Heritage- Developing an Untapped Potential

### Vision for Galway by 2028/2040

*“The Marine Institute, the redevelopment of the city port the expansion and utilisation of Ros a Mhil Harbour, will ensure that Galway is a centre of excellence and open for and good place to do, marine business domestically and internationally.”*

In 2017 the marine economy is centred on a range of activities including shipping and transport, water-based tourism, fishing, seafood processing, offshore energy and marine technology/biotechnology. The Galway City Port is located in the centre and Ros a Mhil Harbour is located approximately 32km west of the city. Currently Galway Port provides for marinas, berthing facilities for general cargo vessels, oil tankers, passenger vessels on a reduced scale, fishing vessels and container vessels. In 2017, Galway Port is severely restricted and planning permission is being sought for a major redevelopment of Galway Harbour, which among other benefits is expected to attract large cruise ships and foster a



growth in marine tourism in the region. Galway County Council is committed to the development of Marine Tourism in the region. In 2010 it was estimated that over 200 cruise liners, carrying 205,000 passengers visited Ireland, an increase of over 200% in the last decade. Fáilte Ireland is preparing a national cruise tourism strategy to provide insights and direction in this area. Their projections (FI) are that marine and coastal tourism and leisure (including cruise tourism) will reach an annual turnover of €1,500 million by 2020. By 2028, Galway will be a prime locator for these cruise liners, and the region will benefit greatly from the development of Galway Harbour. It is envisaged that there will be increased levels of interaction and collaboration with the service and tourism providers in the city, in relation to the development of **cruise tourism** in the West, which will be necessary to ensure Galway and other locations provide excellent visitor management capabilities and visitor experiences.

Ros a Mhil acts as a main base for the Galway and Aran Co-op fishing fleet. As well as a being a busy

fishing port, a large amount of fish processing takes place in the area and Ros an Mhil is one of Irelands six fishery harbour centres(FHC). Galway County Council is supportive of Ros A Mhil as a deep sea harbour and there are two objectives (Objective TI23 and TI24) in the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 that coperfastens this support. Planning permission for a number of developments in relation to the port has been permitted over the years, from a deep water quay 200m of berthage to the construction of a new small craft harbour and associated works, in order to accommodate and facilitate these marine developments. It is envisaged that by 2028 Ros an Mhil will be a deep water quay, with small craft harbour to accommodate the increased level of marine activity.

The Marine Institute was established to undertake, co-ordinate, promote and assist in marine research and development and to provide services related to research and development that will promote economic development and create employment and protect the marine environment. The Institute is based in Oranmore and conducts a broad range of marine based research with commercial as well as academic value. It provides a range of services to ensure the aquaculture industry operates to international best practice standards and in accordance with national and European legislation. The Galway Bay Marine and Renewable Energy Test, operated by SmartBay Ireland and the Marine Institute presents a unique wave climate site has been in operation since 2006 and is currently licensed to operate until 19th March 2017. In line with the Government's Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan, the Marine Institute applied in April 2016 for a new foreshore lease to allow testing of a wider range of marine renewable energy devices. This will provide researchers and those involved in developing ocean energy devices with a world class permitted area in which to safely test and demonstrate quarter-scale prototype ocean energy converters and related technologies. No determination on this application has been received from the licensing authority to date.

Galway County Council regards the sea weed industry as a resource that has significant potential, especially along the western coastal area. In 2017, Irish seaweed is mostly used in high volume, low value products such as animal feeds, fertilisers and agriculture products. The vast bulk of seaweed harvested in Ireland currently is naturally grown and manually harvested. The seaweed industry, to the extent that it has been developed is closely linked with the Gaeltacht (particularly Galway, Mayo and Donegal). According to analysis undertaken by NUI Galway the value of the industry is approximately €18 million per annum, about €6 million of which goes to exports, with employment of 185 full-time equivalents. Approximately 40,000 tons of seaweed is harvested in Ireland each year, with over 95% naturally grown. Currently a Canadian company Acadian Seaplants ltd is the main processor with approximately 25,000 to 30,000 wet tonnes of seaweed per annum.

It is considered that the seaweed industry is in its infancy, however it is envisaged by 2028, the regulation of supply will be addressed with up-to date legislation and that a mixed industry of seaweed processing will have been developed which will allow the full exploitation of the seaweed industry.

#### Achieving Our Vision

- ⇒ Ros a Mhil is the main port in the Western Region and was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the top 20 Irish ports in terms of monetary value of yearly haul.
- ⇒ Bord Iacaigh Mhara lists 18 seafood processors in Galway
- ⇒ Centre of excellence based in Oranmore-The Marine Institute
- ⇒ 5 Blue Flag beaches, 2 in the city
- ⇒ On target to achieve 500mw of renewable energy generated from Wind energy progressing full carbon neutral status for the County
- ⇒ Strong seaweed industry which is continuing to grow
- ⇒ Potential resource for off-shore renewable wind and wave energy production

## 6. Delivery of Our Vision

