

Galway Library Development Programme 2016 – 2021

Executive Summary

Profile of Galway

Galway is located on the west coast of Ireland in the province of Connacht and extends to an area of 6,148km². County Mayo is located to its north, Counties Roscommon and Offaly to its east, County Tipperary to its south east and County Clare to its south. Its natural boundaries are Galway Bay to the west, the River Shannon to the east and Lough Derg to the south east. Galway is the second largest county in Ireland and its population is spread out over a wide area. The centre of the county around Galway City has over 100,000 people. The City population is 75,529 according to 2011 Census, with a total County and City population of 250,653. The county is characterised by a diverse, natural landscape that includes the spectacular mountainous Conamara region west of the River Corrib, rich agricultural lands to the east and a more varied limestone area to the south. These topographical attributes combine to give Galway its outstanding and widely varied landscape setting. Galway County has a vibrant and diverse population of over 175,124 persons, which has continued to increase at a steady rate over the last decade. The growth in population has mainly been in the areas closest to Galway City. The 2011 Census highlighted that 75.6% of private households are located in rural areas, that the County had the highest average household size in the State at 2.9, while the largest proportion of people in the County were in the 35-39 age category, with the 60-64 age category seeing the biggest increase since the 2006 Census. These demographics have consequences for the provision of library infrastructure and services across the County into the future.

General Overview of Galway Library Service

Galway public library service was established in 1924 and is funded by Galway City and County Councils. Galway Co Library provides a service to the second largest county in Ireland. Galway County is the lead authority and the City Council pays a subvention. Galway has 29 libraries including branches on 4 islands and a Mobile Library serving rural communities and some house bound readers that do not have access to a library. The Mobile Library visits rural communities and some house bound readers that do not have access to a library on a two week schedule throughout the year. Library HQ is located in Island House, Cathedral Square, Galway and provides the following services/functions.

Libraries have full time and part time staff and every library has public internet access via library computers. Libraries are open to the public on Saturdays but most are closed on Mondays. Many libraries open late during the week. All libraries were set up with a quality book stock and every effort is being made to maintain and refresh the stock, particularly in the children's section.

The Development Programme

Perhaps more than any other function of local government, the public library of today is intimately linked by tradition, by custom, and even by law, with its historic backgrounds. The modern public library descends from an institution solidly bulwarked in tradition. Every public library, no matter where it is situated, is a very worthwhile educational and cultural facility. For the overwhelming majority, the quickest and easiest access to the world's best thought is through their local public library.

Each of our libraries from the largest in Galway City to the smallest rural branch library should be housed in a building whose exterior design and internal layout truly reflects the ideals and purposes of the library service, where all will delight to come, and yet where people who seek quiet will find it thoughtfully provided. In each branch library we want to create an environment that encourages a pattern of life-long learning and reading enjoyment. Each branch library will constitute a resource where individuals are free to learn about any issue, to consider it from any viewpoint, and to arrive at their own decision. There should be a community library, or a mobile library stop, accessible to every reader, and it should connect with the total resources of the county and through a shared Library Management System and other technologies to the wider library world.

This programme/plan sets out the strategy and work plan for the next five years. It will develop in line with the Galway City and Galway County Councils Development Plans recognising those Councils' corporate, economic, community and cultural plans. It will recognise the Library Standards and Benchmarks as issued by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government as part of "Opportunities For Now, A National Strategy for Public Libraries 2013-2017" together with the two previous national public library plans i.e. the two Branching Out Reports. This plan will also be guided by relevant national and international strategies and will strive to incorporate international and national best practice public library standards as outlined by recognized bodies such as IFLA and UNESCO. The relevant service delivery plans will identify with this plan.

Strategic Objectives

Public libraries provide a popular service for everyone, allowing unbiased and unparalleled access to the world's knowledge. Libraries benefit everyone, they stand for intellectual freedom, democratic engagement, community cohesion, social justice and equality of opportunity. Libraries are perceived as being a safe, non-judgemental space with staff that can help.

The following eight priorities areas have been identified for the five year plan. Action Steps will be grouped in relation to these areas.

1. Capital / Infrastructure

The priority is to make the local library the Community/Cultural Hub of each city, town and village.

2. Libraries and Access

The priority is to ensure the democratic and inclusive nature of libraries.

3. Collections and Resources

The priority is to have a quality book collection and ensure access to digital/media-eBooks

4. Local History and Archives

The priority is to ensure that the Galway Libraries will be a repository for all local history and local studies material

5. Children and Libraries

The priority is to make each of our libraries a special place for children.

6. Event Programming and Service Support Resources

The priority is to promote cultural awareness through collections and programmes

7. Workforce

The priority to provide staff and appropriate training

8. Technology

The priority is to update IT and use social media and technology in libraries.

1. Capital/Infrastructure

The Priority is to make the local library the Community/Cultural Hub of each city, town and village. Libraries are welcoming public spaces, places of leisure, education, information and promote a community to have an intellectual and imaginative life, and helps them find their passion

Action:

- **Galway libraries will continue to provide libraries in local communities throughout Galway.**
- **It will review library building requirements and respond to local population needs where possible.**
- **Galway libraries will provide a local library service which is comprehensive and efficient and available to all who wish to use it.**
- **A review of existing facilities will be carried out and ensure that all libraries will be accessible.**
- **A proposal for a new Community Library in Galway City to replace leased premises at Galway City, Hynes Building and Library HQ, Island House will be developed and submitted to the department for approval.**
- **The infrastructure and other requirements for archives will be assessed and addressed where feasible.**

2. Libraries and Access

The Priority is to ensure the democratic and inclusive nature of libraries. Every effort will be made to increase opening hours and move to open libraries. Our services are available to all members of our society but we are also mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society such as the homeless, adults with intellectual disabilities, children, the elderly, travellers and our new communities.

Action:

- **The library will serve both adults and children, will be available to everyone and will endeavour to meet any special needs required by members of the local community.**
- **Galway libraries are changing and with adequate resources will continue to change, to be innovative and make a difference to communities. We must be mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society such as the homeless, adults with intellectual disabilities, children and the elderly.**
- **We will identify the needs of communities and different groups and aspire to respond accordingly.**
- **The library will through local media, local newspapers, social media and through other local promotions attempt to bring its services, particularly its core service, the promotion of reading, to the attention of the public.**
- **We will aim to achieve optimum opening hours (increase where feasible) for individuals and the community.**

3. Collections and Resources

The priority is to continue to develop a quality book collection in each of our libraries, ensure access to digital/media-eBooks and to weave reading into the very fabric of culture, and make it a mainstay of community. Reading promotes wellbeing and it has been demonstrated that a community with high literacy levels has better health and quality of life. Reading for pleasure can increase empathy, improve relationships with others, reduce the symptoms of depression and dementia, and improve wellbeing throughout life

Action:

- **Galway library service will endeavour to increase its book budget throughout the duration of the plan. It will continually refresh and promote its stock.**
- **Galway libraries will work with individuals and communities to develop reading skills and a love of reading for creativity, information and imagination.**
- **Galway libraries will lead the campaign on the Right to Read.**

4. Local History and Archives

A Priority is to ensure that the Galway libraries will be a repository for all local history and local studies material relating to Galway City and County.

Action:

- **Galway libraries will aim to build up its Local History and Archive Section.**
- **An annual programme of exhibitions and events will be organised to promote the local collections.**
- **Promotion and support of local history including study and research**
- **Libraries will engage and encourage local communities to inform and help their local libraries build up local history collections thus ensuring that books, magazines and other local items will be preserved for future generations.**

5. Children and Libraries

A Priority is to make each of our libraries a special place for children. Our libraries are a space for children not only to access literature but also to develop social skills and, for many, learn about technology that they might not have access to in the home.

Action:

- **Each branch library to have a collection of children's books and materials and ensure that these collections are continuously updated.**
- **There is adequate space in every branch library to enable the wonderful tradition of storytelling and other children's activities to expand and grow.**
- **We will link with staff in schools and other groups to promote the library service.**
- **We will establish regular biannual visits by students from all secondary and primary schools to their nearest branch library. During such visits students will be encouraged to join the library**
- **We will aim to supply an agreed range of services to school**
- **We will work with identified early childhood organisations in Galway and supply an agreed range of services to them.**

6. Event Programming and Service Support Resources

A key priority is to promote cultural awareness through collections and programmes that satisfy the desire of our readers and communities and to help those understand and appreciate their own cultural heritage and that of other groups. Whenever possible the Library will promote awareness of other peoples and cultures.

Action:

- **We will plan annual programme of events and activities in our libraries and promote them accordingly.**
- **We will promote the experience of literature and promotion of library collections through author talks, reading groups, storytelling and through imaginative selection and presentation of stock**
- **We will deliver programmes to develop information literacy, ICT proficiency, family and community learning and skills for life**
- **We will continue to network with local community groups, statutory and voluntary bodies**
- **We will promote and support business, enterprise and job seeking**

7. Workforce

A Priority is to provide adequate staff and appropriate training for our libraries to enable staff to be the community's specialists in books and other informational materials. Our staff will be proficient in local knowledge and will be able to choose the right material for the specific needs of their communities.

Action:

- **Galway libraries will prudently recruit and maintain adequate staff numbers**
- **Galway libraries will support and encourage a workforce training and development plan – identifying the skills needed to help the library workforce deliver the service and to take on new roles as part of wider service provision**
- **Implementation of the workforce plan for Galway library service**

8. Technology

A Priority is to provide general information and reference services and collections in print and through technology. Many of these resources are to directly reflect community needs.

Action:

- **Implement the new LMS (Library Management System) in all of our libraries**
- **Extend WI-FI access to all of our libraries.**
- **Provide print and scanning facilities in all our libraries and deploy SurfBox technology in twenty libraries.**
- **Enable at least one of our libraries with 3-D printing.**
- **We will enhance our audio book service to the visually impaired by availing of new technologies in this area i.e. Integrate our lending service to the visually impaired with an e-audiobook service.**
- **We will make Web cameras available on all of our public PCs.**
- **We will make iPads or tablets available to the public in a number of Galway City and County Libraries.**
- **We will seek to make our web site more users friendly and make our site accessible to the visually impaired**
- **We will avail of and use social media.**
- **We will digitise and web enable content, particularly local history material, photographs and old local newspapers.**

Note

All of the above strategies (1-8) will be planned, developed and delivered while being mindful of those benchmarks/recommendations set out in the National document; “Public Library Standards and Benchmarks, A Strategy for Public Libraries 2013-2017”.

Proposed Branch Library Projects Identified 2016-2021

A Community Central Library in Galway

Galway Library houses its main Library-Galway City Library, Hynes Building (leased premises) and its administrative headquarters, Island house- in different leased premises. The leasing costs are very expensive. Galway is one of the few library authorities in the country not to have its main library facility in a building which is owned by the local authority.

Since 1941 various attempts have been made by Galway County Council to provide the county and city of Galway with a proper Central Library and Library Headquarters.

In 2002 the local authority put in place plans for a major extension to the existing County Council offices and it was agreed to make the provision of a new Central Library and Library HQ a part of this development unfortunately the project did not progress post planning.

Action: To secure a suitable site and the necessary funding for A Cultural Community Central Library to include all relevant services (Archiving, Children’s, Local History, etc.) in Galway to service the needs of both the City and County and with the support of, among others the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, to proceed with this project during the period of this plan.

Other Branch Libraries

Following the provision of new library facilities at various locations throughout the lifetime of the existing plan we must now consider the needs of communities throughout the city and county in areas that are not deemed to be adequately served. In considering such developments, we must be mindful of our current budgetary constraints and the impact new branches can have on capital and operational costs. Having said this, it is incumbent upon us to continue to develop our service with the resources we have available therefore we must continue to be visionary and

plan accordingly and appropriately. With this in mind we will continue to explore avenues to extend our services to growing communities such as; Bearna/Knocknacarra, Carna, Claregalway, Kinvara, Mountbellew, Moycullen, etc. While it is important to recognise areas for developing our services we must be prudent in project selection and delivery therefore all considerations will be in line with our budgetary position.

Maintenance of existing buildings and services

The library service will continue to maintain our existing buildings and will endeavour to keep our facilities in the best condition possible within the confines of our budgetary position throughout the life of the plan. Notwithstanding this, we will consider more significant upgrading/refurbishment and extensions to libraries such as Portumna, Oughterard and Athenry among others depending on the level of funding, criticality of situation and community requirements at any particular time.

Conclusion

The public library is for the people and it must always compete strongly when it comes to seek its share of public revenues.

Although there are global challenges within our local government sector, libraries are and will continue to be an integral part of our community and society that touch the lives of people at all ages. It is important therefore that we continue to resource our services and that we continue to push the boundaries in terms of funding to further strengthen our service to our communities.

The implementation of the proposals contained in this project will require

- A capital investment in our built infrastructure in the order of €15m-€20m
- A prudent and considered increase to the operational budget over the life of the plan
- An ongoing commitment to increasing our book-fund across the life of the plan
- The development of and investment in our existing human resources with a strive to strengthen our workforce over the life of the plan
- A commitment to use technology as an enabler to enhance our service
- A commitment to increase our services to the respective local communities