

Chapter 13

# **The Galway Gaeltacht and Islands**

*The Galway Gaeltacht and Islands are unique and special places, with their distinctive cultural heritage and natural beauty. The needs and aspiration of residents and visitors will be to the forefront of future developments within this unique and vibrant setting.*

## **13.1 Introduction**

The Galway Gaeltacht and Islands covers extensive parts of County Galway. The Gaeltacht stretches from Baile Chláir, to the east of the city to Cloch na Rón in west Conamara, a distance of approx. 100km and from Oileáin Árann northwards to Dúiche Sheoigheach which borders County Mayo. The Gaeltacht area also spans townlands that are within Galway City boundary.

The Council recognises the significance the Galway Gaeltacht particularly having regard to the county containing the largest and most populous Gaeltacht in the country. The language and culture of An Ghaeltacht is a unique and precious inheritance, which it is a national aim to preserve and protect. This aim is enshrined in the *Planning and Development Act, 2000* (as amended). In addition to the importance of the Gaeltacht, the islands also play a significant role in the economic and tourism potential and the social and cultural heritage of the county.

There are currently four inhabited islands which includes the three islands of Oileáin Árann and Inishbofin. This plan also aims to support the uninhabited islands as appropriate particularly with regard to the potential for tourism development.

## **13.2 Strategic Aims**

Galway County Council shall work with the appropriate agencies and state bodies to protect and enhance the Galway Gaeltacht and Islands with the following strategic aims:

- To promote and facilitate sustainable development that is appropriate to the character, heritage, amenity and strategic role of the Gaeltacht and Island communities in County Galway;

- Support an appropriate level of services and infrastructure to provide for existing and future growth and sustainable development in a manner that protects and is complementary to the environment, heritage, character and amenities of the Gaeltacht villages and islands;
- Support the implementation of language plans in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns, Irish Language Networks and on Oileáin Árann;
- Promote and support the Blue Flag, Green Coast FLAG and other related initiatives;
- To adhere to the aims of the Government's "20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030" including the preservation and promotion of Irish in the Gaeltacht, conserving and protecting the heritage, culture and richness of the language as well as strengthening the position of the Irish Language in the home, workplace and community;
- Promote a strong sense of community spirit, civic pride, local identity and social inclusiveness, and promoting the status of the Irish language in the area and its contribution to the linguistic heritage of An Ghaeltacht;
- Provide for the consolidation and coherent growth of settlements and rural areas within Galway Gaeltacht and Islands;
- Provide for the improvement of community and sporting infrastructure programmes within the Galway Gaeltacht and Islands;
- Support the transport network access to Oileáin Árann and Inishbofin in terms of air and sea routes as appropriate.

## 13.3 Strategic Context

This chapter is prepared in the context of the following National and Regional Plans, Policies and Guidelines:

National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040
National Development Plan 2018-2027
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032
The Gaeltacht Act 2012
20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030 (Dept of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media)
Islands Policy Consultation Paper (Dept of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht)
Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage, 2018 – 2027
Údarás na Gaeltachta Strategic Plan 2021-2025

### 13.3.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) has highlighted the importance of Gaeltacht regions and inhabited offshore islands which contains much of Ireland’s natural resources, biodiversity, environmental qualities and landscape and contributes in a unique way to Ireland’s culture.

The NPF emphasises the importance of the language planning process, prescribed in the Gaeltacht Act 2012, which represents the primary driver in support of the Government’s commitment to the achievement of the objectives set out in the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010- 2030. The NPF support the implementation of language plans in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht

Service Towns and Irish Language Networks. The importance of the Irish language as the vernacular of the Gaeltacht and for the promotion of the language outside the Gaeltacht has been emphasised. The NPF also details that the ongoing supports be provided for the language planning process and support for the Gaeltacht development authority, Údarás na Gaeltachta, be strengthened.

The NPF has acknowledged the importance of our islands and coastal areas stating they ‘contain some of our most vibrant and culturally distinctive communities’ and ‘are an integral part of the State’s heritage and have a special significance in Irish Culture’. The NPF has specified the importance of tourism, agriculture and fishing to island communities and the requirement to continue to support enhanced access to offshore islands to support the sustainability of island communities.

### **13.3.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) recognises the importance of our Gaeltacht and Islands which contain some of our most vibrant and culturally distinctive communities. The RSES references the importance of the community language as outlined in RPO 3.13 and re-affirms the commitments in the NPF in relation to Irish Language Plans.

The RSES has acknowledged the need to support rural employment within the fishing, agriculture and tourism sectors within our coastal and island communities and the necessity to support for improved transports networks for the islands including improved pier infrastructure on Inis Oír and Inis Meáin on Oileáin Árann.

## **13.4 Climate Change**

This plan aims to protect and enhance the Galway Gaeltacht and Islands over the life of this plan while also ensuring these communities can be developed in a way to ensure the county’s transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society.

In supporting Gaeltacht and Island communities, consideration must be given to the impact of the pattern of development associated with the Gaeltacht and Islands including within settlements and the wider rural areas on the climate and environment. Due to the dispersed nature of settlements within the Gaeltacht and the

absence of substantial numbers of serviced area there has been a demand for one off rural housing and rural enterprises which has resulted in an over-dependence on the car, with limited opportunities for people to walk, cycle or utilise public transport due to the distance between homes, schools, work and local services. This plan has included a suite of measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change and to ensure future development patterns reduce our carbon footprint and promotes more sustainable ways of living. It is considered that the settlement hierarchy in *Chapter 2 Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and Housing Strategy* promotes a sustainable pattern of development where growth is identified in accordance with several key parameters.

*Chapter 14 Climate Change, Energy and Renewable Resource* will also address in more detail Climate Change and the interrelationship between the policy objectives of this chapter and the transition to a resilient society.

## **13.5 An Ghaeltacht**

The County contains the largest and most populous Gaeltacht in the country which extends over a significant area of County Galway as detailed in the introduction above. The Gaeltacht consists of a number of different communities and the Council recognises that the Irish language is stronger in some communities than in others. The Council recognises that the Irish language is a living language and also the importance of preserving the language while also creating an environment to enable the language to grow within these communities. The islands of Oileáin Árann are located within An Ghaeltacht and is included within the six Galway Gaeltacht districts.

Several towns and villages that are located in the Gaeltacht have their own settlement plans and zoning maps as per the settlement hierarchy contained in *Chapter 2 Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and Housing Strategy*. Bearna and Baile Chláir are located in the new Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan, Maigh Cuilinn is located in the Small Growth Town category and An Cheathrú Rua and An Spidéal are located in Small Growth Villages. All of these towns and villages are contained in Volume 2 of the plan. The towns in the MASP and the Small Growth Town category have an important role in the services they provide adjacent to Galway city. The

settlements identified in the small growth villages are considered predominately rural in nature, they however are an important service to the local community through their existing facilities including schools, shops, pubs and post offices.

There are a number of other small villages in the Gaeltacht and these are categorised under the “Rural Settlement” category.

The following are the six districts of the Galway Gaeltacht:

- Iorras Aithneach/Camas/Ros Muc;
- Dúiche Sheoigheach;
- Ceantar na nOileán/An Cromptán;
- Cois Fharráige;
- Oileáin Árann;
- Imeall na Cathrach.

### **13.5.1 District A: Iorras Aithneach/Camas/Ros Muc**

This is the District of South West Connemara from Doire Iorrais westwards through Cill Chiaráin, Carna, Glinsce, Bun na hAbhann, Caiseal and Inis Ní. This district also includes the Electoral Divisions of An Turlach (Ros Muc), Camas and Cill Chuimín with Iorras Aithneach. The combined district is very dispersed in nature.

There are a number of third level outreach education/marine research facilities in operation within this district. In operation since the 1950's, National University of Ireland Galway's Carna Research Station (CRS) is Ireland's leading facility for aquaculture research and development on a diverse range of marine finfish, shellfish and seaweed species. Based in south-west Connemara, CRS is the Ryan Institute's off-campus marine laboratory and specialises in large scale, exploratory aquatic investigations with a tradition of carrying out both applied and basic research on existing and novel species for aquaculture. Within this region there are a diverse range of activities including traditional industries (such as the sea-weed industries), service employment and a number of coláistí samhraidh which bring significant number of young people to the district every summer. In relation to tourist attractions, *Ionad Cultúrtha an Phiarsaigh* is located in Ros Muc; on a site where

Patrick Pearse, writer, educator and leader of the 1916 Rising built a cottage on the shores of Loch Oiriúlach in 1909. The development comprises four elements, including a new visitor centre, Cosán Chonamara (which includes 10 acres and a looped walk), *Slí na Coille* (an interpretive space focussing on Patrick Pearse himself) and Pearse's Cottage. Ionad Cuimhneacháin na Imirceach Cuideachta faoi Theorainn Ráthaíochta is a new Emigration Interpretative Centre in Carna which is a valuable asset in attracting visitors to this area and to link together the people of this region and their descendants.

### **13.5.2 District B: Duiche Sheoigheach**

This District comprises most of North Conamara, stretching from Cong to Leenane and northwards. It is predominantly a mountainous area dominated by Sléibhte Mhám Toirc and includes two of the great wild fishing lakes of Western Europe in Loch Coirib and the southern portion of Loch Measca.

The Electoral Divisions comprising District B are as follows:

- An Chorr;
- An Ros;
- Leitir Breacáin;
- Conga;
- An Fhairche;
- Binn an Choire.

The upper Loch Coirib and Lower Loch Measca as well as Loch na Fuaiche are precious resources both from an environmental and heritage context and as an income generator. The topography of the area lends itself to outdoor pursuits such as walking and cycling and the lakes are valuable fishing commodity. Cong situated on the Mayo/Galway border is an important tourism attraction with its heritage buildings, the river and its Quiet Man connection.

### **13.5.3 District C: Ceantar na nOiléan/An Crompán**

This district includes the Electoral Divisions of An Crompán, Leitir Móir and Leitir Mealláin and contains the village of An Cheathrú Rua, which the County Development Plan designates as "Other Villages" and is a service hub for southwest

Conamara. Five islands make up Ceantar na nOileán – Eanach Mheáin, Leitir Móir, Garmna, Leitir Mealláin and Foinnis. There are also several smaller islands but only accessible by boat.

The description of “Small Growth Villages” as outlined in the County Development Plan is that of villages that have strong settlement structures and have the potential to support additional growth offering an alternative for people to live in these villages rather than the rural countryside. A settlement plan for An Cheathrú Rua is included within this category of small growth villages. The District, apart from the An Cromptán peninsula, is composed of an interlinked series of islands which are connected by bridges which were constructed by the Congested Districts Board a century ago. There are numerous other small islands in Ceantar na nOileán which are uninhabited. The land is of poor agricultural quality with extensive outcropping of granite bedrock.

While almost all of the district is free from SAC designation, the surrounding coastal waters of Cill Chiaráin Bay and many of the smaller islands are designated cSAC. The landscape sensitivity ratings are generally 3 in Cromptán and 4 in Leitir Móir and Leitir Mealláin. In relation to community facilities, Sportlann Naomh Anna in Leitir Móir opened in 2007 which is a premier sports and recreation centre within the Gaeltacht area and provides facilities to a large section of the Gaeltacht community. Hidden along Europe’s last Atlantic frontier is Ceantar na nOileán, the Island region of Connemara. The island of Eanach Mheáin is home to the Connemara Isles Golf Club. Connemara Isles is a 9 hole links golf course and is a renowned golf course. The Colaistí Samhraidh, Spleodar in Leitir Móir and Colaiste na nOileán Tír An Fhia provides a valuable resource for students and teachers in improving their Irish language proficiency. The organisation Muintearas is located in Tír an Fhia, Leitir Móir and provides a supportive role to the Gaeltacht community in order to achieve equal opportunities in terms of education and employment for people in the Gaeltacht; to provide personal development opportunities for men and women; to improve the quality of life for those who experience disadvantage; to facilitate full participation of parents in the education of their children; and to support the use of the Irish language in all aspects of community life in the Gaeltacht.

In addition, Radio na Gaeltachta is located in Casla in the heart of the Gaeltacht community and provides a valuable source of information from a local, national and international perspective and at the same time the use of the Irish language is promoted through the radio station.

There are several tourism and heritage facilities that have been developed in District C. Ionad Oidhreachta Leitir Mealláin & Gharmna - the building exhibits the rich heritage of the area and attracts a significant number of tourists to the area.

### **13.5.4 District D: Cois Fharráige**

The Cois Fharráige district of Conamara stretches from the western fringe of Galway City westwards along the northern coast of Galway Bay to Baile na hAbhann and Ros a Mhíl.

For the purpose of this plan the district is composed of the following Electoral Districts:

- Cill Chuimín;
- Sailearna;
- Cill Aithnín;
- An Spidéal;
- Sliabh an Aonaigh;
- Na Forbacha

The following villages are also located in these settlements:

- An Tulaigh/Baile na hAbhann
- Na Forbacha
- An Cnoc
- Ros a Mhíl
- Na Mine

The land in general is undulating with a thin layer of low-fertility soil overlaying granite bedrock.

The Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 designates An Spidéal in the same category as An Cheathrú Rua as “Small Growth Villages” in the settlement hierarchy. Of the districts listed above An Spidéal, has a separate settlement plan contained in Volume 2 of this plan.

The pattern of development in this area is generally orientated towards the sea. There are also a number of local clusters of housing in the area.

The R336 is the major transportation route which serves the South Conamara area. It is fed by a large number of minor local roads which run north/south, linking the housing and lands to the main route and to the sea. The Conamara Regional Airport which is located at Na Mine 10km eastwards from An Cheathrú Rua gives a rapid connection to Oileáin Árann. In 1996, Teilifís na Gaeilge was established in Baile na hAbhann and has developed as a key resource in the promotion of the Irish language and keeping residents of the Gaeltacht informed of local, national and international news events. Established in 1980, Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority located in Na Forbacha responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations. The fishing industries are concentrated along the Gaeltacht coastline and Ros a Mhíl Port which is a key part of marine infrastructure is supported in this plan with specific policy objectives in *Chapter 6 Transport & Movement* (Policy Objectives PH1 and PH2) and *Chapter 9 Marine and Coastal Management* (SMT 1 and SMT 2). There are a significant number of beaches in the area with a wealth of marine sporting activity including sailing, fishing, diving and kayaking festivals.

### **13.5.5 District E: Oileáin Árann:**

The main group of islands of the coast of County Galway are referred to as the Oileáin Árann. The largest island is Inis Mór, the middle and second largest is Inis Meáin and the smallest and most eastern is Inis Oírr which is only 25km off the county Clare coastline.

The three islands of Oileáin Árann are formed of limestone. The geology of the islands are mainly karst limestone, an extension of the karstic region of the Burren. The landscape is dominated by Karstified terraces.

They have been inhabited since the Stone Age, as evidenced by the forts and megalithic tombs. Successive millennia has seen the evolution of Christian Settlements of worship and devout study in early medieval times. The remnants of this age lie in the ruins of churches, graveyards and holy wells which are scattered throughout the Islands contributing to the unique heritage and landscapes of Oileáin Árann and attracting visitors from a global tourist market.

This unique heritage of geology, archaeology, biodiversity and agricultural systems, when added to the language and folk culture of these islands on the western outpost of Europe leaves a rare and distinctive living environment which enriches the country.

Transport services have improved access to these Islands for both locals and visitors, the ferry companies and Aer Árann has made access available to mainland facilities, including national and international travel routes, though the service can be restricted in severe weather conditions.

The decline of the traditional occupations of fishing and agriculture, and the rise in year-round tourism have been the significant factors influencing the lives of the island communities in recent years.

Inis Mór is the largest of na hOileáin Árann, it has a land mass of 31 km<sup>2</sup>. The main settlement of Cill Ronáin is contains all the main facilities and services for the island. The Island has a bank, supermarkets, medical clinic, bars, restaurants, guesthouses, hotels etc. The island attracts thousands of visitors daily during the peak season, as well as tourism the island economy relies on cottage industry and traditional industries, of agriculture and fishing.

Housing is located primarily along existing roads traversing the island. The island has a rich cultural heritage and maintains a high percentage of the population

speaking Irish. Inis Mór has a wealth of pre-Christian and Christian sites including Dún Aonghasa which can be found at the edge of a 100m high cliff/Na Seacht dTeampaill (The seven churches) and Dún Eochla.

Inis Meáin, is the second largest of na hOileáin Árann, with a land mass 9km<sup>2</sup>, houses are built in linear type development along the main routes which traverse the Island. The island has maintained its distinctive traditional field pattern, giving it a unique visual character. There are a number of amenities on the island which include, a local shop & post office, bike hire, a pub, Catholic Church, restaurants, B&Bs and a co- operative. The Inis Meain Suites which is located on the island is an award winning restaurant which is included in the Michelin Guide and is a significant tourism attraction on the island. The island also benefits from the presence of both a primary and secondary school. There is also the knitwear factory shop and a craft shop. Culture and heritage are highly valued by the close knit local community and remain a strong focus of the community. There are two very important stone forts on the island. Teach Synge, restored cottage of where the writer John Millington Synge stayed. Dún Chonchúir which date to pre-Christian times and Dún Fearbhaí which date to the 4th Century.

Inis Oirr, which is the smallest of na hOileáin Árann consists of houses are built in clusters on the north side of the island which is sheltered from elements. There are five villages: An Baile Thiar, Baile an Lorgáin, Baile an tSéipéil, Baile an Chaisleáin and Baile an Fhormna. The amenities on the island include an arts and cultural centre, a local shop, post office, campsite, bike hire, health clinic, library, pubs, Catholic Church, cafes and restaurants, a hotel, hostel, B&Bs, two schools and a co- operative. There is also a heritage and craft centre. Culture and heritage are valued by the local community and remain a strong focus of the community, 86% of the Islanders are Irish speaking.

### **13.5.6 District F: Imeall Na Cathrach**

This is the part of the Gaeltacht which borders Galway City, some of it extending inside the City's administrative boundaries. This District is the most significant area

that is under the greatest pressure from the growth of the city and must cope not only with the changes to its language and culture but with the constant demand for infrastructure and services.

The District is composed of Ten Electoral Divisions:

- Bearna;
- Eanach Dhúin;
- Maigh Cuilinn;
- Baile Chláir;
- Tulaigh Mhic Aodháin;
- Baile an Teampaill;
- Ceathrú an Bhrúnaigh;
- Leacach;
- An Carn Mór;
- Lisín an Bhealaigh.

Of the districts listed above Bearna, Baile Chláir and Maigh Cuilinn have separate settlement plans and are contained in Volume 2 of this plan.

### **13.6 Preserving and Promoting An Ghaeltacht in the Planning Process**

The Council is mindful that the county contains the largest and most populous Gaeltacht in the country which is of immense importance and requires careful consideration to ensure it is both preserved and promoted at every opportunity to ensure the long term growth and vibrancy of An Ghaeltacht. The Council will seek to support An Ghaeltacht by considering favourably appropriate development within the Gaeltacht area. Any development proposals, which in the opinion of the Planning Authority would have a significant negative impact on the Irish language and An Ghaeltacht, will not be permitted. It is considered that this approach will help to address population decline in certain areas of An Ghaeltacht whilst also ensuring the consolidation and strengthening of the Irish language and culture of An Ghaeltacht. The Gaeltacht Districts listed above will complement the Language Planning Areas as outlined in the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 and agreed with the relevant statutory agencies.

Galway Gaeltacht is divided in 10 LPAs: Dúiche Sheoigheach and Tuar Mhic Éadaigh LPA, Central Connemara LPA, An Cheathrú Rua LPA, Ceantar na nOileán LPA, Oileáin Árann LPA, Cois Fharráige LPA, Maigh Cuilinn LPA, Bearna LPA and Cnoc na Cathrach LPA, East of Galway City LPA and An Eachréidh LPA.

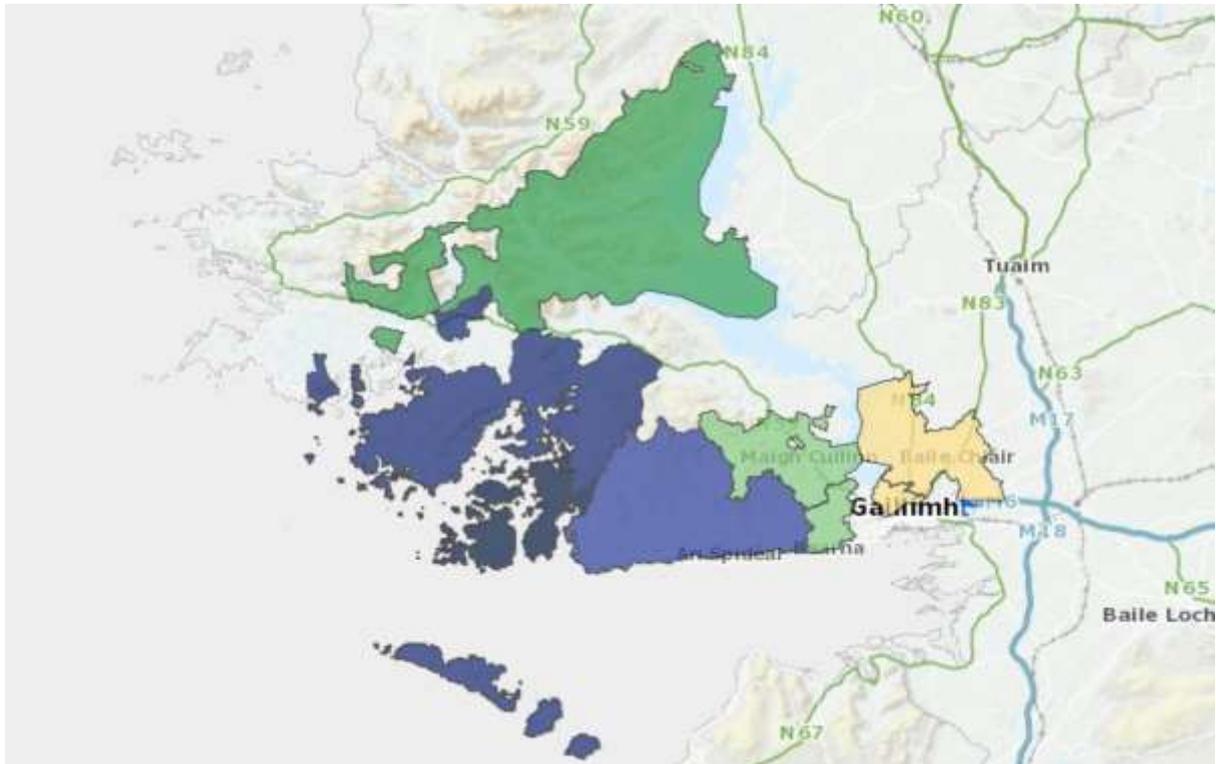


Fig 13.1 – Galway Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas

### Policy Objectives An Ghaeltacht

**GA 1 Linguistic and Cultural Heritage of An Ghaeltacht**

It shall be a policy objective of the Planning Authority to promote, enhance and protect the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht and to promote Irish as the community language.

**GA 2 Development of Language Plans**

Support the development and implementation of language plans in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks.

**GA 3 Support the Statutory Development Agencies**

Support all of the statutory development agencies, especially Údarás na Gaeltachta, to achieve sustainable development in the Galway Gaeltacht while protecting and promoting the Irish language as the first community language of the area.

**GA 4 Language Enurement Clause**

a) A Language Enurement Clause will be applied on a portion of residential units in developments of two or more units in District D Cois Fharráige. The proportion of homes to which a language enurement clause will be a minimum of 80% or to the proportion of persons using Irish Language on a daily basis, in accordance with the latest published Census whichever is greater. A Language Enurement of 15 years duration will apply to approved developments in this category.

b) A Language Enurement Clause will be applied on a portion of residential units in developments of two or more units in the remaining Gaeltacht Districts excluding District D Cois Fharráige. The proportion of homes to which a language enurement clause will be a minimum of 20% or to the proportion of persons using Irish Language on a daily basis, in accordance with the latest published Census whichever is greater. A Language Enurement of 15 years duration.

**GA 5 Linguistic Impacts Statements**

Galway County Council shall require the submission of the Linguistic Impact Statement for housing proposal for two or more houses in the Gaeltacht area in order to protect and strengthen the Irish language and cultural heritage of the Galway Gaeltacht areas. A Language Inurement Clause of 15 years duration shall apply to approved development, of two or more units.

**GA 6 Signage within An Ghaeltacht**

All signs in An Ghaeltacht including finger post signs, shop-fronts and roadside signs, business/community signage shall be in Irish. In all instances where new signage on shopfronts in An Ghaeltacht are proposed, the profession/type of business shall be in Irish.

**GA 7 Rural Housing in the Gaeltacht**

All proposals for rural housing in the Gaeltacht countryside shall comply with Chapter 4 Rural Living and Development.

## **13.7 Islands**

In the context of this plan islands are defined as islands which are cut off daily by the tide, are not connected to the mainland by a bridge, have permanent populations and are not in private ownership.

The unique group of Islands off the coast of County Galway are an important part of the culture, heritage, ecology, economy and tourist appeal of the County.

A number of the islands have European/national designations in the form of SAC's, SPA's and NHA's and are also located with sensitive landscape within the Landscape Character Assessment contained in Appendix 4 of the plan. It is essential that any proposed development would take cognisance of these designations to ensure that development would not have an adverse impact on the islands and their characteristics. A visual impact assessment is normally required due to the environmental and landscape sensitivities. It is essential that applicants/agents liaise with the Planning Authority in the form of pre-planning prior to submitting a planning application for any form of development on the islands. In addition to these islands, there are several islands which are not permanently inhabited along the Galway coastline, namely Inishturk, Inis Eirc, Turbot Island, Cruagh and Crump Island.

### **13.7.1 Inishbofin**

Inshbofin lies seven miles off the Galway coast. The island is 5.7km by 4km. It is estimated that Inishbofin was inhabited as far back as 8000–4000 B.C. The first documented history of the island dates from early Christian times. The main activities on the island today are tourism, farming and fishing.

The islands of Inishbofin is composed almost entirely of Silurian slates and shales and rise to heights of 89 m. Two-thirds of the island is commonage where the main habitat type is heath, represented by both dry and wet heath communities. There are also several small oligotrophic lakes located on the island. The largest waterbody is Lough Bofin which is classified as a lagoon. On the eastern side of the island a small area sand dune occurs. The remainder of the island is under cultivation, with most of the area under grass for pasture and to a lesser degree hay, a small proportion remains where potatoes, and grain-crops are planted. The amenities on

the island include, a local shop, community centre, bike hire, restaurants, hotel, and a primary school. Inishbofin has a number of official [looped walks](#) of varying difficulties which provide spectacular views of the islands wild Atlantic scenery. The islands off the Galway coast are an important part of the cultural and unique heritage of the County and are a valuable tourist attraction; therefore, the Council will positively encourage development that complies with the policy objectives of the plan and with the proper planning and development of the area.

## Policy Objectives Islands

### **IS 1 Economic and Tourism Development on the Islands**

Support the economic and tourism development of the islands for the benefit of island communities generally and to encourage the development of speciality or niche economic sectors that might be appropriate to different islands.

### **IS 2 Development Proposals on the Islands**

- a) Support sustainable development proposals that contribute to the long term economic and social development of the islands;
- b) Priority shall be given to development that contributes to retention of the year-round population on the islands, that has a clear and identifiable economic and social benefit and that is compatible with the capacity of the local community to accommodate it;
- c) Ensure that new development of any kind is sympathetic to the individual form and character of the islands landscapes and traditional building patterns.

### **IS 3 Development of Pier Infrastructure**

Support the enhancement and development of new pier infrastructure to the islands that shall provide for safe access by sea and include but shall not be limited to improved pier infrastructure on Inis Oír and Inis Meáin on the Oileáin Árann.

### **IS 4 Rural Housing on the Islands**

Support permanent rural housing on the islands for applicants who can demonstrate that they have permanently lived on the island for a substantial and sustained period of time and can contribute to the long-term viability of the islands. An Enurement condition shall apply for a period of 7 years, after the date that the house is first occupied by the person or persons to whom the enurement clause applies.

## 13.8 Economic Development of Gaeltacht and Islands

The Districts in the Galway Gaeltacht and islands have a number of distinct characteristics that are present in the villages and settlements throughout this expansive Gaeltacht area. The factors that make settlements/villages economically viable and attractive to investors and visitors alike are numerous and sometimes hard to predict. A vibrant economy is necessary so that the indigenous population has adequate opportunity to remain within Gaeltacht areas. This plan endeavours to provide a balance to ensure that this can be achieved by supporting all forms of employment/tourism generation which are appropriate to the Gaeltacht area and the Islands (subject to environmental and other relevant planning considerations) and at the same time protecting the unique cultural tradition of the Irish language.

To ensure the continued vibrancy and life of these areas, the provision of a mix of residential, business and cultural uses will be encouraged subject to the proper planning and development of the area and in accordance with the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan. There are a number of niche businesses in operation in the Gaeltacht area, namely in District D Cois Fharráige where Údarás na Gaeltachta and other state agencies have supported the creation and expansion of industries such as Med Tech in na Forbaha.

The Council acknowledge the significant investment that has been made by Údarás na Gaeltachta in Gaeltacht areas of Galway in recent years from an economic and social perspective. Facilities such as the Gaeltacht digital network (gteic) will be centres of innovation and creativity to inspire new business, especially; to attract high potential start-ups and distance workers back to their native area. The Council will continue to support Údarás na Gaeltachta in fulfilling its role as a Development Agency of this region.

The Council recognises the importance of the “gteic” national network. This infrastructure facilities people in business or working remotely from the Gaeltacht and for developing new businesses. The Council consider these hubs to be essential in aiding the future development of the Gaeltacht communities.

The Council recognises the importance of the marine economy to communities within the Gaeltacht and the Islands in terms of creating employment opportunities. *Chapter 5 Economic, Enterprise and Retail and Chapter 9 Marine and Coastal Management* will address these important issues.

## **Policy Objectives An Gaeltacht and Islands Economic Development**

### **GIED 1 Economic Development in An Gaeltacht and the Islands**

To promote and support developments that contribute to the economic development of the Gaeltacht and Islands in a sustainable manner at suitable locations.

### **GIED 2 Development of Brownfield sites within Gaeltacht settlements**

Encourage the redevelopment of existing brownfield sites within established villages in the Gaeltacht area in order to maximise the sustainable regeneration of underutilised/vacant lands and/or buildings for potential commercial, cultural, retail, community and residential developments.

### **GIED 3 Development of Infrastructure within An Gaeltacht and Islands**

Promote the sustainable development of infrastructure projects and the improvement of the infrastructure network in the Galway Gaeltacht and Islands with close co-operation with the relevant stakeholders;

### **GIED 4 Development of Marine and Aquaculture within An Gaeltacht and Islands**

Promote and facilitate the sustainable development in the marine/aquaculture industry in suitable locations in the Gaeltacht and on the islands.

### **GIED 5 Development of Digital Hubs within An Gaeltacht and Islands**

Support the provision of digital hubs including the expansion of the “gteic” network in the Gaeltacht and the Islands.

### **GIED 6 Bus Services and Rural Transport Programme within An Gaeltacht and Islands**

Support the rural transport programme where appropriate, to provide for enhanced and more connected provision of public transport.

## 13.9 Culture and Tourism within the Gaeltacht and Islands

The tourism industry plays an extremely important role in Gaeltacht and Islands communities. The area has attracted a large number of visitors due to its unique landscape and facilities in relation to water-based activities, outdoor pursuits and cultural activities. The Wild Atlantic Way has developed over the years with increased signage and facilities along the route to attract and retain visitors to the area. The Colaisti Samhraidh in a number of Gaeltacht Districts have provided a valuable asset in terms of the cultural, economic and social activity which attracts students/teachers from all over the country.

The Council recognises that there are a number of uninhabited islands which are currently engaged in tourism activity in terms of visitors to these islands. The Council supports the continued sustainable development of this sector.

### Policy Objectives An Ghaeltacht and Islands Culture and Tourism

#### **GICT 1                      Development of Creative Industry**

Promote and facilitate the sustainable development of creative industry centres and artistic initiatives in suitable locations in the Gaeltacht area and on the islands.

#### **GICT 2                      Development of Water-Based Leisure Sector**

Support the development of the water-based leisure sector in a sustainable manner making the best use of existing and planned infrastructure and resources, in a manner that is sensitive to the natural and cultural heritage resources.

#### **GICT 3                      Tourism Development within An Ghaeltacht and Islands**

(a) Encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism potential of the Gaeltacht and Islands in a manner that respects, builds on, protects and enhances the cultural, built and natural heritage and local amenities of the area;

(b) Provide where feasible and support the provision of tourism infrastructure and services including, walking, cycling and water-based infrastructure and short-term guest accommodation facilities throughout the Gaeltacht area in appropriate locations. Such infrastructure and services shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance and ensuring that any new projects, such as greenways are developed at suitable locations.

**GICT 4            The Connemara Coast & Aran Islands Visitor Experience  
Development Plan**

To support the implementation of *The Connemara Coast & Aran Islands Visitor Experience Development Plans* which recognises the natural and cultural assets of the area.

**GICT 5            Development of the Colaisti Samhraidh**

Promote and facilitate the sustainable development the Colaístí Samhraidh in suitable locations in the Gaeltacht area and on the islands.