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Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council

12th December 2018

National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF)- Submission December 2018

A Chara,

Galway County Council welcomes the NMPF Baseline Report and the approach taken to the preparation of the draft NMPF. County Galway as a coastal county relies heavily on the Marine Environment and its relationship with the sea is of great significance to the County socially, economically and environmentally. A greater integration between the local terrestrial planning consents & development plans alongside the marine consent & plan process is supported. As highlighted within the report Galway County Council welcomes a reform of legislation to the maritime development consent process to allow greater certainty and transparency of the process. The marine economy is centred in 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 of the city and to the west of the city Ros a Mhil Harbour is located. 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. However, Galway Port is currently severely restricted and planning permission is being sought for a major redevelopment of the 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. It is estimated that over 200 cruise liners, carrying 205,000 passengers visit Ireland each year, an increase of over 200% in the last decade.

The reliance of Island Communities in Galway on the Marine for their livelihoods and the challenges specifically faced by these communities should be identified and planned for within the NMPF.

Fáilte Ireland 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 and in Ireland, which will be necessary to ensure Galway and other locations provide excellent visitor management capabilities and visitor experiences. The Wild Atlantic Way stretches approximately 423 kilometres along the Galway Coastline, it is a significant draw of tourism to the area, its interaction with the marine is vital to its continued success, water based activities and recreational development is vital to the future of the WAW. This should be considered as part of the NMPF.

Ros an Mhil acts as a main base for the Galway and Aran Co-op fishing fleet. As well as 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 an Mhil as a deep sea harbour and there are two objectives (Objective T123 and T124) in the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 which solidifies this support. It is important to recognise, support and develop fisheries and aquaculture in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner. The sea

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has provided an income for local people in the County for centuries and their access and enjoyment of the resource is of significant cultural and social importance and should be safeguarded.

Planning permission for a number of developments related to the port have been permitted over the years, from a deep-water quay 200m of berthage, 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. 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 to 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.

The potential of the marine environment to deliver renewable energy for the domestic and international market is an unexploited resource. Galway County Council proposes to publish a renewable energy strategy as part of the new County Plan and would welcome input and guidance on the potential of marine based technologies as part of the overall strategy. Ireland is currently falling far behind its legal targets for renewable energy, a holistic approach to both terrestrial & marine based technologies is welcomed in order to meet the 2020 target of 16% of energy from renewable sources. Galway County Council regards the sea weed industry as a potential resource that has significant potential, especially along the western coastal area. In 2017 the 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 important, the regulation of supply will be addressed with up-to date legislation and that a mixed industry of seaweed processing will be developed which will allow the seaweed industry to excel.

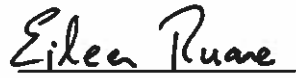
One of the biggest challenges facing the Marine environment is its pollution, both from onshore waste (including plastic), microbeads, fishing nets, waste water discharges and industrial waste. This resource needs to be better protected with stronger legislative support for preventing further degradation of the marine environment and policy strongly focused on protecting and improving this valuable resource and natural habitat.

Vision for Galway's Marine Environment

Galway will be a centre of excellence in relation to maritime facilities. The Marine Institute, the redevelopment of the city port and the expansion and utilisation of Ros a Mhil Harbour will ensure that Galway is open for and good place to do, marine business domestically and internationally and continue to market and promote business opportunities.

Galway County Council looks forward to the publication of the draft Framework and the opportunity to feed into the final document.

Mise le meas,

Handwritten signature of Eileen Ruane in black ink, written in a cursive style.

E. Ruane

Director of Services

Planning and Environment