

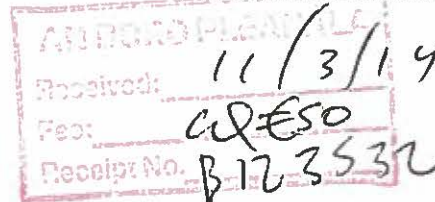
Liam Mellows GAA Club, Galway City

CLG Liam Uí Mhaoilíosa, Cathair na Gaillimhe



Tony Callanan,
Liam Mellows GAA Club –
Clubhouse & Grounds Committee Chairman
Oranswell,
Bushypark,
Galway

An Bord Pleanála,
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1



PL61 .PA0033 - Galway Harbour Extension

9th March 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

Liam Mellows GAA Club is making this submission to support the application by Galway Harbour Company for the proposed extension to Galway Harbour. The proposals for the extension to Galway Harbour was discussed at a meeting of the club's executive committee on Tuesday 4th March, and the committee decided to unanimously support the proposals and make its views known to An Bord Pleanála by way of this submission.

Please find enclosed a cheque for the submission fee of €50.

Club Background

Liam Mellows GAA Club was formed in Galway City in 1933 and is the only City club playing in the 'Senior' grade in the Galway County Hurling Championship. A club with a proud and successful history, Liam Mellows GAA Club has played a pivotal part in the development of Gaelic Games and sport in general in Galway City, and continues to do so up to the present day, nurturing juveniles and supplying players for numerous county teams.

Liam Mellows currently fields 25 teams in all grades and age-groups, with 5 adult hurling teams, 10 juvenile hurling teams, and eight juvenile camogie teams. The club plays over 200 competitive games every year, drawing players from across Galway City and boasts an active membership of over 550 members.

Location

The club's clubhouse and grounds are located in Ballyloughane, Renmore, on the east side of Galway City and on a coastal site adjacent to Galway Bay and overlooking the site of the proposed extension to Galway Harbour. The club currently owns approximately 15 acres of land at this location, and has agreed to purchase a further 4.2 acres from Galway City Council, the sale of which is expected to close in Q2 of 2014.

See below maps showing location of club grounds east of the existing Galway Harbour Enterprise Park.

Clubhouse & Grounds: Ballyloughane, Renmore, Galway

Adult Secretary:
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Club Facilities and Development Plans

Liam Mellows GAA Club is well advanced with a multi-phase grounds development masterplan that is aimed at transforming the club's grounds into an inter-county standard GAA facility by mid-2015.



2007 Aerial Photo



2015 Completed Masterplan

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In the mid 2000's, Liam Mellows GAA Club drafted a development masterplan for the expansion and development of the club grounds in Ballyloughane, Renmore. The club accepted the challenge of choosing to cater for its growing membership and number of teams by acquiring additional adjoining land to become fully self-sufficient for its long-term grounds and facilities requirements in Ballyloughane.

In the last seven years, Liam Mellows GAA Club has invested over €900,000 in the redevelopment and expansion of its grounds. With the completion of its Phase 3 and Phase 4 developments in the next 18 months, the total club expenditure on capital works will have exceeded €2 million. This is a significant undertaking for a voluntary, grassroots organisation.

Support for Galway Harbour Extension Proposals

Liam Mellows GAA Club has a number of reasons for supporting the proposal to extend Galway Harbour.

The Liam Mellows GAA Club grounds in Ballyloughane fronts on to Galway Bay, and although located in one of the more sheltered areas of the Bay, there is a significant eroding cliff face extending up to eight metres in height, at the southern side of the club grounds. The grounds are on a coastal drumlin, similar to those at Silver Strand and Blake's Hill on the west side of Galway City. The continued erosion of the cliff face and southern extent of the club grounds could pose a long term threat to the club.



View of eroding cliff face from foreshore

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Another view of eroding cliff face from foreshore

With the construction of the Mutton Island wastewater treatment plant and causeway in the late 1990's, erosion in the Ballyloughane area noticeably slowed. The Mutton Island causeway was a welcome addition to the Bay from Liam Mellows GAA Club's perspective, as it prevented strong westerly and south-westerly ocean swells scouring the Ballyloughane cliff face further. It would be anticipated that the proposed reclamation of land as part of the Galway Harbour extension, and construction of a deep water port, would further reduce wave action in the inner bay and would therefore further protect the Liam Mellows GAA Club grounds from further erosion.

The prospects of Liam Mellows GAA Club ever being able to protect its grounds on its own from further coastal erosion are slim. The club is volunteer-driven, and all club activities are supported by fundraising and voluntary initiatives. The club would simply not have the financial means to consider proposing a large scale erosion protection project. The State's budget for such coastal defence works is paltry, and it is not known if the Local Authority even has a budget for such works. Therefore, we must look to the likes of the Galway Harbour Extension as being the only realistic means of slowing the further erosion of our property.

Even if financial resources were not a constraint, the foreshore bordering the club's grounds and eroding cliff face in Ballyloughane are designated as part of the Galway Bay Special Area of Conservation. The chances of the club ever being able to fund and navigate the

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planning, Natura 2000, NIS, IROPI, etc. processes, and achieve planning consent for a coastal defence scheme would not be good. We only have to look at the to-date unsuccessful efforts of Galway City Council to protect the highly prized amenity areas around Silver Strand from further coastal erosion, as an example of what our club would be facing in to if we were to take on this significant, and likely insurmountable challenge.

The need to protect certain species and habitats such as those found in the Galway Bay Special Area of Conservation is accepted. However, the need to add to, enhance or protect facilities and infrastructure that contribute to an important part of the social fabric of Galway City must also be recognised. All too often, the balance of conservation and legal protection seems to be tipped in favour of habitats and species, and not necessarily the needs of people. The best local example of this is the famous Salthill Promenade. Had it not been developed in the early 1900's, and instead proposed in the present, post-SAC-designation days, it would surely have faced significant legal hurdles to prove its value and worth to Galway City. It is contended that the likes of the Salthill promenade is a priceless asset of the City, given the health, amenity, recreation, social, tourism, cultural, sporting and many other benefits it has afforded to the citizens of Galway since it was first built. One wonders whether, if it had been proposed in the present day, could it have successfully navigated the planning process and the requirements of the Habitats Directive? If not, it would be an indictment of the imbalances in the current nature conservation directives and other legislative instruments.

The proposed extension of Galway Harbour would also offer greater opportunities for recreation and amenity access to the Galway Bay coastline for the general public, and this is to be welcomed. It would assist in at least partially delivering on a long term objective of multiple City Development Plan to develop a coastal walkway from Galway Docks to Roscam Point. Such a walkway would pass through the Liam Mellows GAA Club grounds and has already been provided for in the most recently permitted planning permission for development of the Liam Mellows GAA Club grounds. While the western suburbs of Galway City enjoy good access to the Galway Bay coastline through developments such as the Salthill Promenade and Silver Strand Beach and Promenade, the City Centre and eastern suburbs do not have the same access to the Galway Bay coastline as an amenity. On the east side of the City, coastal access is limited to Ballyloughane Beach and some limited amenity areas in the immediate environs of our GAA club's clubhouse and grounds in Ballyloughane.

Conclusion

Liam Mellows GAA Club supports the application for the extension of Galway Harbour, and encourages An Bord Pleanála to grant planning permission for the proposed development.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Callanan

Liam Mellows GAA Club - Clubhouse & Grounds Committee Chairman

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