

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION TO

AN BORD PLEANÁLA

FOR APPROVAL OF (I) THE N6 GALWAY CITY RING ROAD
PURSUANT TO SECTION 51 OF THE ROADS ACT 1993 (AS
AMENDED); (II) THE N6 GALWAY CITY RING ROAD
MOTORWAY SCHEME 2018; and (III) THE N6 GALWAY CITY
RING ROAD PROTECTED ROAD SCHEME 2018

ABP Ref. ABP-302848-18 and ABP-302885-18

ORAL HEARING

STATEMENT of Evidence

Responses to Language Impact Assessment

Objection/Submissions

by

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1 Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1 My name is John Cronin and I work with John Cronin & Associates. I hold a degree in Archaeology and Geography (BA (Hons.), University College Cork, 1991) and a post-graduate degree in Urban and Regional Planning (MRUP, University College Dublin, 1993). I specialise in cultural heritage management and assessment. My colleague Tomás Ó Caoimh, who peer reviewed my work on this project is a former member of the Heritage Council and has a special interest in community heritage and the Irish language. Since 2006 John Cronin & Associates have prepared numerous language impact assessments of various private and public sector developments throughout Ireland.

2 Role in Proposed Road Development

- 2.1 I undertook the Irish Language Impact Assessment of the proposed road development and this assessment was peer reviewed by my colleague Tomás Ó Caoimh. The language impact assessment was based on (a) inspection of the associated environmental studies and project documentation, (b) consideration of national legislation and policy documents and the Galway County, City and Gaeltacht Development Plans and local area plans (LAPs), (c) review of relevant submissions made during the public consultation phase, (d) consultation with Údarás na Gaeltachta and (e) consideration of previous case work experience.

3 Key issues in relation to Irish Language

3.1 Executive Summary

- 3.1.1 Chapter 18 of the EIAR is to be taken as read in its entirety and is not replicated here. To assist the Board in its consideration of these applications for Approval and for the convenience of all participants at this hearing and to set the context for responding to the objections and submissions, the key items pertaining to the Irish Language impact assessment of the proposed N6 GCRR detailed in Chapter 18 of the EIAR are summarised briefly below.
- 3.1.2 The Galway Gaeltacht is the most populous of the country's Gaeltacht areas. It stretches for approximately 100km from Baile Clár, east of Galway City to Cloch na Rois in West Connemara.
- 3.1.3 The proposed road development traverses the following Electoral Divisions (EDs):
- Bearna (part) (County Galway)
 - Bearna (Galway City)
 - Ragoon
 - Dangan (Galway City)

- Galway Rural (Part Rural)
- Mionlach
- An Caisleán Gearr
- Baile an Teampaill (Part Rural)
- Baile an Bhriotaihg
- Ballybaan

3.1.4 Of these, the EDs of Ragoon, Dangan, Galway Rural (Part Rural) and Ballybaan are not within Gaeltacht district, while the western portion of Baile an Teampaill (Ballintemple) is within the Gaeltacht. The proposed road development extends through an area of the Galway Gaeltacht which abuts and surrounds Galway City. Since the 1980s, this the area has experienced rapid population growth and urban expansion. Critically the majority of the population is not of Gaeltacht origin and the use of Irish as the “family” language has continued to decline.

3.1.5 Census data for daily Irish use in 2011 and 2016 was reviewed to inform the assessment process. Daily usage is defined by the number of people (a) speaking Irish daily within and daily outside the education system and (b) those speaking Irish daily outside the education system daily. The available data indicates that the daily usage of Irish (outside of the education system) within the study area varies from just less than 2% to less than 8% (though the highest percentage was recorded within the least populated Electoral Division (Galway Rural ED)). It is fair to say that while Irish is a community language within the study area, it is far from being a dominant or significant one.

3.1.6 During construction, the Local Authority, shall ensure that all public notifications and all public project updates are provided in both Irish and English.

3.1.7 While it is expected that day-to-day communications involved in the project will be through the English language, the Main Contractor shall have the capacity to communicate and correspond through the use of the Irish language and to devote adequate and proportionate staff resources to dealing with any individual wishing to correspond and communicate through the Irish language.

3.1.8 Placenames will be cited in accordance with the relevant Placename Order issued under the Official Languages Act 2003.

3.1.9 It is expected that the proposed development will have a moderate positive, residual impact on the status of Irish as a community language within the Galway Gaeltacht area.

4 Responses to Submissions/Objections

4.1 Two of the 296 submissions and objections made to An Bórd Pleanála (ABP) in respect of the N6 Galway City Ring Road (GCRR) Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), Natura Impact Statement (NIS), Motorway Scheme (MS) and Protected Road Scheme (PRS) include observations relevant to the Irish Language. One of the 17 submissions and objections made to ABP in respect of the Request for Further Information (RFI) Response submitted on 30 August 2019 also include observations relevant to the Irish Language. The items raised in these submissions are:

- A suggestion that CSO statistics to demonstrate Irish language use were misused in the assessment
- Positive submissions stating that the proposed road development will help sustain the Irish Language

4.1 Use of CSO Statistics

Issue

4.1.1 One submission/objection, Ob_610, expressed a concern that CSO statistics had been misused in the Irish Language Impact Assessment as the Electoral Districts (EDs) included highly urbanised areas “*in the southern portion of the ED data presented*”.

Response

4.1.2 The CSO data was correctly used to inform the assessment of potential impacts on the Irish Language and to gain an understanding of language usage within the study area. The Electoral Divisions (EDs) are the smallest legally defined administrative areas in the state for which Small Area Population Statistics are published by the Census, and as such the data presented from these EDs is the most precise available and has not been subject to any manipulation.

4.2 Benefits of the proposed road development in sustaining the Irish Language

Issue

4.2.1 Two submissions made by Údarás na Gaeltachta, S_073.1 and S_073.2 indicated that they are in favour of the development of the N6 GCRR around Galway City as it will “give more efficient access to the Gaeltacht area and the Connemara area west of the city”. Údarás na Gaeltachta stated that the new road would have a “very beneficial impact effect” on attracting new industries to the Gaeltacht and Connemara area, encouraging existing business to expand and would support existing businesses to have a more efficient access to their markets and personnel.

This in turn will enable Irish speaking people currently living in Connemara to continue to do so and sustain the Irish Language in this area.

Response

- 4.2.2 I note the submissions from Údarás na Gaeltachta and agree with their observation that the proposed road development will support measures to foster, support and expand economic activity within the Galway Gaeltacht.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 It is noted that that there is a low-level of daily Irish usage among the population of the area directly affected by the proposed road development, and where it exists, the use of Irish is particularly concentrated in an education context. While population is increasing; the use of Irish-language is not growing in parallel. The proposed road development will not have any significant impact on the use of Irish into the future. However, it is noted that an improved road network may facilitate further migration and economic growth into the wider Galway Gaeltacht and as the west of County Galway have higher levels of unemployment than the areas around Galway City, the proposed road development, by improving access to employment opportunities to the east of the city, will facilitate Irish speakers to commute more easily from their own communities and lessen the need to re-locate for economic reasons. Equally the proposed road development will make Gaeltacht areas to the west of Galway City more attractive for residential and commercial development as a result of a greatly improved road network. In this context, it will be the responsibility of Galway County Council, Galway City Council and Údarás na Gaeilge among others to ensure that the use of the Irish language is promoted and encouraged among new residents.
- 5.2 The issues and observations raised in the submissions and objections in relation to potential impacts on the Irish Language have been reviewed, and having considered these issues and observations, the conclusions of the Irish Language impact appraisal as set out in the EIAR, that the proposed road development will have a Moderate Positive Impact on the status of Irish as a community language within the Galway Gaeltacht area remains.