



**Galway
Chamber**
Ag cothú gnó le chéile

Submission Defence Forces Review



Introduction

Galway Chamber is pleased to make this submission in respect of the Defence Forces Review being carried out by the Commission on the Defence Forces.

Galway Chamber is the largest business representative organisation in the West of Ireland. We currently represent approximately 500 companies, employing over 27,000 employees. We are a privately constituted organisation, that works for the interests of businesses, and for the economic development of the City and Region.

Our Vision Statement: **'Galway at the leading edge'**

We are a proud member of the Chambers Ireland network and one of the five members of the policy forum 'City Regions Ireland'.

We have long been supporters of Galway Port, and its strategic development being led by the Galway Harbour Company.

The Port of Galway and the Irish Defence Forces

The Port of Galway has a longstanding relationship with the Irish Defence Forces.

The Port is the home port of LÉ William Butler Yeats and they regularly host other Navy ships at the port. As a result of this Galway Chamber has had the honour and privilege of hosting a number of events onboard various naval vessels over the years.

In addition to the provision of port facilities, the Port of Galway has engaged with the defence forces in many ways over the years across a number of projects. These include the following:

- In 2020, Covid 19 testing was carried out by the Defence Forces on port lands.
- The Defence Forces played a key role in the success of the Seafest festival which was held in Galway for 3 years, 2016 to 2018.
- The Defence Forces were integral to the Volvo Ocean Race stopover in 2009 and the hosting of the final leg of the same race in 2012.

The Port of Galway has lodged a planning application to relocate and expand its port facilities. Galway Chamber supports and has lobbied for this development. A new port will enable the Port of Galway to:

- Provide enhanced port facilities to existing customers and businesses in the West of Ireland.
- Better facilitate the deployment of onshore and offshore wind. The development of floating offshore wind off Ireland's Atlantic Coast represents a "once in a generation" economic opportunity for our region and a relocated and expanded Port of Galway can play a key role in this effort.

- A relocated and expanded port would enable the regeneration of 17 acres of prime inner-city lands and provides an opportunity to develop a vibrant new neighbourhood in the heart of Galway.
- A relocated port would enable the reconfiguration of the current dock gates and dock basin to flood gates and a flood basin and provide a key element of Galway's overall flood defence solution.
- Provide enhanced facilities to Ireland's and foreign research ships.

In addition to the above, a relocated and expanded Port of Galway could significantly enhance facilities for the Irish Navy.

In our view, the Port of Galway is ideally situated for the establishment of a permanent naval base for several reasons. These are detailed below:

Connectivity

The Port of Galway is situated at the centre of Galway City and is the most central port on the West Coast of Ireland. The Port is located approximately 1 km from both the train and Coach Station, making it very accessible to other cities and towns in Ireland. Expressway bus services depart the Coach Station to the Airport every 30 minutes. The Port also has good access to the motorway network which allows for speedy and comfortable access to Dublin, Limerick, Shannon and further afield.

Quality of Life

Famed for music, food and festivals as well as its stunning location on the Wild Atlantic Way, Galway is the ideal destination for those who want to enjoy the quality-of-life benefits available in the West of Ireland while still being able to access all the attractions of a multicultural city. Sitting in the centre of the Wild Atlantic Way, Galway's outdoor life and activities make the most of its dramatic countryside. Six of Galway's secondary schools rank in the top fifty in Ireland when it comes to university admissions and NUI Galway has moved steadily up the world university rankings over the past number of years. Galway Mayo Institute of Technology's evolving status to that of the Connaught Ulster Technological University will see significant investment in their campus situated within 1km of the Port.



Further Education/ Upskilling

The Irish Defence Forces have a long tradition of encouraging and enabling their personnel to improve their skillset through the provision of training. The proximity of the Port of Galway to NUIG, GMIT and other educational institutions should facilitate the training of personnel based at a new base in Galway. To the extent that well trained personnel leave the Navy, the skills acquired during their time with the Defence Forces typically enables them to contribute strongly to economic life after they leave the Defence Forces.

The West Regional Skills Forum is also available to support and facilitate in the identification, development and delivery of skills required for Galway which includes skills gaps that exist in the Defence Forces.

Navy Recruitment

The establishment of a permanent base at Galway is likely to prove very attractive to people from the West of Ireland who are interested in a career with the Navy and, as such, better enable the Navy to recruit new personnel.

Additional personnel at a new base in Galway could be housed at Renmore Army Barracks which is adjacent to the Port of Galway and currently has capacity – this represents an excellent use of an underutilised Defence Forces Asset.

Health & Wellbeing

Galway is fortunate to be serviced by two public and two private hospitals which allows for 24/7 access to emergency care due to injury or illness. Galway University Hospitals, comprising of University Hospital Galway (UHG) and Merlin Park University Hospital (MPUH), provide a comprehensive range of services to emergency and elective patients on an inpatient, outpatient and day care basis across the two sites.

They also provide a wide range of speciality care and is the regional centre for cancer and cardiac services.

The Galway Clinic and Bon Secours Hospitals provide private health care, surgical and medical services to Galway.

The Renmore Army Barracks is located beside Galway's only 24 hour gym for both physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Economic Impact

Galway is the urban centre for the North Western region of Ireland. The region has been downgraded now to one in transition, the only region in Ireland to hold such a status, our region lags behind the other regions of Ireland in terms of economic activity.

The establishment of a new naval base in Galway will serve as a major contributor to the economy in Galway and the region in the form of permanent jobs, demand for housing and associated consumer spending, as well as operations support services and supplies. Both the direct and indirect jobs created by a new naval base will have a significant positive effect on the economy and will provide more opportunities for Galway's workforce.

Summary

Galway Chamber believes the Defence Forces will not find another location as compelling as Galway to establish a new naval base. As outlined in this document, Galway is unique. It offers the quality of life benefits available in the West of Ireland while still being able to access all the attractions of a multicultural city.

Living in Galway means you belong to a community, a diverse City with a thriving social scene and a holistic outlook on life. Galway is a cultural hub and is a bilingual and multicultural city. It is strategically connected through public transport, as well as being an education centre of excellence.

