

Mayor of the County of Cork, Lord Mayor of Cork City, Elected Members of Cork County Council, Chief Executive of Cork County Council, Garda Chief Superintendent, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honoured to be here this evening to speak on behalf of the Cork County Public Participation Network. It is lovely to be able to be here in person this year, following two years of online awards, it is so nice to be getting back to normal.

May I, in the first instance, on behalf of the secretariat of your network, congratulate all 32 of the nominees for tonight's awards. All of us who volunteer in the community do so because we are interested in our community, be it in the arts, the sporting sector, all facets of our heritage, or our concern for the less advantaged in our society. We don't roll up our sleeves to do work in our community because someone might recognise what we do with an award, but because we want to improve our lives and the lives of those around us. However, it is nice to have someone say thank you for doing that job for us, so each one of you nominated for an award tonight should be proud of your achievement being here tonight. Your community is proud of you and thank you for the work you do in your community. Thankfully I didn't have to judge the submissions, but I did ask some of the judges for comment, and each of them commented that it was a difficult job as each nominee was as deserving and hard working as the next. The scoring was very close.

The reforms of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 saw the creation of a Public Participation Network in each Local Authority area. The Cork County PPN is your network. The network supports you in creating networks, locally where your common interest is your local community, or across the county where your common interest may be based in the arts, or sports, or heritage. At a county level the network allows local community groups access to the policy making committees through your representatives on the SPCs, JPC and other council committees as well as some other bodies across other local authority, government, and state bodies. Our next plenary is scheduled for Thursday the 5th of May 7-9 pm. Sadly this event will be an online event. If you want to get involved, and I would encourage you to do so, you can contact our resource worker by emailing ppn@corkcoco.ie

Lastly, I would like to thank the Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Gillian Coughlan, and the mayor's office for hosting this evening's event, and for promoting these awards. I wish all the Nominees the best of luck for this evening and for the future. I would also thank all the members of the PPN for the work you do for all of us in your community.