

From: Peter Heaps [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 November 2017 12:30
To: National Planning Framework
Subject: Ireland 2040 - Our Plan

Dear Sirs,

I only heard of the plan very recently due to contact by Mayo PPN. I attended a meeting last night and gleaned an outline of the plan. I've not had a chance to read it fully. I note that Mayo Co. Co. have made a submission to you.

From what I understand I am concerned that there is too much focus on expanding 5 urban centres, then some of the larger towns and that smaller towns and rural areas are not being sufficiently considered - perhaps practically overlooked. In Mayo there is a feeling that small towns and villages away from the larger towns and the Wild Atlantic Way route are being left behind. Will this continue ?

Concentrating people in large urban areas may feed into the needs of the business world but it often brings with it social disorder due to too many people in close proximity to each other (neighbourly disputes, youths congregating in public places, road rage etc.) and travel problems due to people commuting from outlying areas on routes which are not suitable for such traffic. The latter applies in much of rural Ireland where there is a desperate need to upgrade many roads but there is insufficient money available - in the area where I live the route from Ballinrobe (Co.Mayo) to Galway, which is a daily travel for many people, is poor apart from a short stretch south of Headford. In addition the road to the new motorway at Tuam is very poor and inadequate for articulated vehicles which then has an impact on whether a new business might invest in the area.

Consideration needs to be given to encouraging investment by private industry in smaller towns coupled with good transport connections developed to major routes. Otherwise small towns will die.

If rural Ireland is to be seen as where city dwellers will escape to and as a major tourist attraction rather than a high employment area consideration needs to be given to developing such areas accordingly - or as above the areas will have no appeal to visitors and the areas will die.

Small towns and rural areas are anticipated to see an increasingly ageing population yet services such as buses, banks and post offices are being reduced regularly. It should not be anticipated that elderly people can be left to sit at home on computers or watching television all day. There needs to be proper consideration for their needs. In addition the families of those people need good community facilities within their own areas to maintain the community spirit which is what many visitors to rural Ireland so enjoy.

Dereliction in small towns is a national problem. The politicians need to take serious action within existing regulations, or introduce new regulations, to get owners of such properties to maintain them to a decent standard. In Ballinrobe's case over many many years the Tidy Towns committees have been trying to get the council to take action on such properties. I'm told that some owners pay levies, a couple have improved their properties but overall there is still an air of significant dereliction about the town which is detrimental to the town's economic potential and some owners are basically laughing at the authorities with their properties deteriorating year after year for the last 20 years at least. This applies to many other towns. Will this still be the case in another 10, 20, 30 years ?

Submitted for your consideration and with the hope that rural Ireland will not become forgotten.

Peter Heaps

Ballinrobe Town Management Team