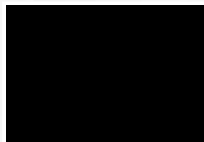


National Planning Framework

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 17 October 2017 11:07
To: National Planning Framework
Subject: reponse to Ireland 2040 Plan
Attachments: IRELAND 2040.odt

I attach a response to Ireland 2040 Our Plan. It makes some recommendations.

Seán Mc Donagh



Seán Mc Donagh

This note is written as a response to IRELAND 2040 –OUR PLAN. It makes some recommendations.

The discussion in the past of National Development, Regional Development and Balanced Regional Development has been characterised by a number of weaknesses. Wishful thinking frequently replaces economic reality. There is a difficulty about a common meaning for words such as "Region", "Rural", "City Region". For example, the Western Region has at least five different meanings as counties are combined in different ways for different purposes. The five cities share names with the counties in which they are located leading to further confusion. For example the word "Galway" is used to mean the City, the county without the city, the county and city combined, the city and its suburbs and the Galway City Region. There is no common understanding of the vital concept - City Region and the fact that it is a region with the City, towns, villages and rural areas.

Furthermore Ireland's local administration is based on counties whose boundaries were completed in medieval times and have little connection with modern economic reality. Indeed two of the second tier cities, Waterford and Limerick are at the corners of their counties and have a number of different local authorities administering their suburbs!

- ❖ **Ireland 2040 should more strongly introduce a common understanding of the nature and importance of City Regions in modern and future economic development. It should more strongly advocate the requirement that local administration and planning be drivers of City Region development.**

City Regions: Dynamic City Regions are the drivers of global economic development. Economists tell us that successful City Regions firstly bring scale to economic development. They possess a strong knowledge infrastructure. They frequently have clusters of high technology enterprises. Their educational and higher educational infrastructure is strong and they have the capacity to provide or attract high level skills. They have a distinctiveness and strong recreational and cultural capacities.

Ireland's second tier cities lack scale. Ireland has the smallest proportion in Europe of its city population living in the (four) second tier cities. This will still be the case in 2040. A City Region sometimes is defined by the commuting time (e.g. 45mins. or 1hr.) to the city. Recently the first motor way linking two second tier cities, Galway and Limerick, was completed bringing the two cities into one another's City Regions. This offers the opportunity for the promotion of a bi-polar i.e. a two city City Region bringing not only scale but the additional enrichment of collaboration of the institutions and enterprises in the present two City Regions.

- ❖ **Ireland 2040 should strongly advocate a bi-polar two-city City Region of Galway/Limerick and it should outline the initial areas and methods of collaboration and promotion. There are many international examples of bi-polar and multi-polar successful City Regions. Those being promoted in England dwarf the Irish regions. Ennis and Athlone, both towns with more than 20,000 population, should provide strong nodes of development in this new Galway/Limerick City Region.**

Major Towns: Ireland 2040 draws attention to the 41 towns with populations greater than 10,000 in the State. Of these five are Major Towns i.e. towns with population greater than 30,000. They are Drogheda (41k.), Swords (39k.), Dundalk (39k.), Bray (32k.) and Navan (30k.). (The next largest town is Kilkenny with 25k. population.)

Four of these Major Towns, significantly, are located north of Dublin City and Dublin Airport on the strategic Dublin/Belfast corridor. The strategic nature of this area will be enhanced post Brexit. Their combined population is 150k. – they bring scale - and they are in close motorway connection to one another and to Dublin. They are close to Newry, Craigavon, Lisburn and Belfast. They are growing. Drogheda, the largest town in the State, is predicted to exceed Waterford City in population by 2040. Co.Louth has the highest density of population of all the counties in the State after Dublin.

- ❖ **Ireland 2040 should seek the designation of the strategic sub-region north of Dublin, on the Dublin/Belfast corridor, as a multi-polar area of special development with strong interlinked nodes of development in the Major Towns of Drogheda, Navan, Dundalk and Swords. This gives recognition to economic reality.**

Enterprise Towns: Ireland 2040 should develop and promote the concept of an Enterprise Town, that is a town with a dynamic twenty first century purpose. Such towns will have strong leadership, including investors and people of enterprise, and a future evolving plan. They will have twenty first century enterprises and plans to develop more. They will have ranked schools, active Further Education and strong links to Higher Education and knowledge infrastructures. They will be networked to other nearby Enterprise Towns and Cities and have modern and green transport arrangements. They will be actively linked to the innovation infrastructure. The status of Enterprise Town should be applied for and earned. When achieved it should merit State investment.

The Major Towns of Drogheda, Navan, Dundalk and Swords should be encouraged to jointly seek Enterprise Town status as part of the development of their sub-region. Athlone and Ennis should be encouraged to seek this status in the context of the Galway/Limerick bi-polar City Region.

Ireland has 11 Large Towns with populations between 20,000 and 25,229 (Kilkenny). None of these towns are in the Connacht and Ulster counties. Three of them are in Co. Kildare. It should be open to these towns, alone or in linked applications, to apply for and earn Enterprise Town status.

- ❖ **Ireland 2040 should introduce the concept of an Enterprise Town, that is a town with a strong twenty first century purpose and planning, active leadership and twenty first century enterprises. The networking of such towns and cities should be encouraged.**

Population Change: In the period 1991 – 2016 when the State's population grew by 35.0% ten counties grew by more than the State's average. Of these nine – all but one – were in the extended Dublin City Region. One of these counties growing under the Dublin City Region influence was Cavan which grew by 44.1%. Three of the counties containing second tier cities grew by less than the State's average. These were Cork, Limerick and Waterford. Ireland's second tier cities are comparatively weak.

More recently in the 2011-2016 period, when the State's population grew by 3.7%, eleven counties grew by more than this average. Of these ten – again all but one – were in the Greater Dublin City Region. Cavan was one of these, growing by 4.0%. Again three counties containing second tier cities

– this time Galway, Limerick and Waterford – grew by less than the State's average. This reality supports the proposal for a Galway/Limerick bi-polar City Region.

The three north western counties in the State, Donegal, Sligo and Mayo, have the most vulnerable population trends. Their growth in the 1991-2016 period was amongst the lowest in the State. Their population in the 2011-2016 period declined. The population of each of the towns on which they strongly rely for economic activity – Letterkenny, Sligo Town, Castlebar and Ballina – declined in the 2011-2016 period. Letterkenny and Sligo Town both have Institutes of Technology since 1971.

- ❖ **The North and Western 'Region' in the Ireland 2040 Plan has little connection as a region with economic reality.**
- ❖ **Cavan is clearly growing as part of the Dublin City Region – it should be in the East and Midland Region. Monaghan's economic activity links it to Louth and to Dublin and Belfast regions. It also should be in the East and Midland Region. Both Cavan and Monaghan should be linked to the Major Town multi-polar sub-region proposed in this document.**
- ❖ **Special measures should be introduced to assist Sligo, Letterkenny, Castlebar/Westport and Ballina in a full analysis of their strengths and weaknesses and in efforts to attract investors, to promote entrepreneurial activity and to apply for and achieve Enterprise Town status. Letterkenny/Derry collaboration should be promoted.**
- ❖ **The southern part of the North and Western Region should be fully promoted as part of the Galway/Limerick bi-polar City Region.**

Population by Age: Ireland has Europe's youngest population. Its population will age in the period to 2040. In 2016 the Mid-East and Midland Regions had the highest proportion of people under 20. The Mid-West and West Regions had the highest proportions over 65. Enabling the talents of this young population and then providing employment and entrepreneurial opportunity is both a major opportunity and challenge. There will have to be a significantly increased reliance on Irish enterprises and entrepreneurs. The national and regional innovation systems will have to significantly increase effectiveness and internationally competitive output.

Europe's population is ageing and so is that of the Irish diaspora. This may offer a major opportunity. The Ireland 2040 Plan should advocate the building of Retirement Villages in attractive locations offering secure accommodation with convenient access to a rich cultural and recreational life and, where appropriate, care and medical attention.

- ❖ **The Ireland 2040 Plan should advocate a major upgrading of the national and regional innovation systems anticipating major employment increase and a greater reliance on internationally competitive Irish enterprise. Multipolar regions should have as a function an enhanced joint innovation system. Enterprise Towns should be selected in large measure through their capacities to promote innovation.**
- ❖ **The ageing of Europe's population and that of the Irish diaspora offers opportunities for a major Irish service industry through the provision of accessible and secure Retirement Villages in attractive locations offering rich cultural and recreational experiences.**

