

DECLAN BREATHNACH, TD
Submission to the 2040 National Planning Framework

I firstly wish to commend the many groupings from the Louth region for making comprehensive submissions and observations. I have read in some detail the overall framework together with the submission from Louth County Council, Drogheda & District Chamber of Commerce, Dundalk Chamber of Commerce and the submission of the Fianna Fáil Party in respect of the overall national approach.

I am strongly of the view that prior to any adoption of such a planning framework that all submissions need to be discussed in regional settings whereby the Local Authority, Oireachtas members and community groups are briefed on the submissions together with having a regional approach to how best our communities can benefit.

To adopt a Framework in advance of any knowledge or information of the National Capital Plan would be foolhardy in the extreme.

There is no mention of a Public Transportation Plan, Social Policy, Education Policy and not to mention Health.

I further believe that in my prior 25 years in Local Government that the powers of the Local Authority continue to be eroded and superseded by National and European policy and as a result local decision makers who act in the best interest of their communities are having the County Development Plans, and Local Area Plans diluted by those who are not aware of local and regional needs.

I wish to specifically refer to the failure of this draft to mention the potential of any form of Brexit in a significant way. While there is a fleeting reference to Brexit in relation to how we deal with our neighbours and in relation to Northern Ireland, it is my view that the effects of Brexit should be explored in more detail and how this could and will affect not alone the border regions but the island generally. Buying into a plan without some idea of the Island's role in Europe would need to be referenced and reviewed and it should be amended in light of Brexit / European development.

Reference has been widely made for City Status for Drogheda which needs to be taken into account in the context of the need to develop the North/South Corridor with Dublin and Belfast at either end of our region. The size of Drogheda and its hinterlands and Dundalk should be afforded a return to a special status in Local Government due to their unique population sizes. According to the 2016 Census the increase of population in Louth was above the state average at 3.7%. There has been a huge growth in the population of the adjoining hinterlands of those towns. The status of Ardee, Dunleer, Collon in close proximity to the M1 Motorway are pivotal as both population growth centres and areas for employment creation.

The development of Greenore as an expanding deep sea port and Drogheda Port likewise needs to be given National Status for Development especially now in the context of Brexit.

The development of Ireland's Ancient East encompassing the Boyne Valley Region together with the Cooley Peninsula, and the legends of the Táin are crucial in our tourism growth as is the continuation of North South co-operation in the many areas of trade and tourism. The critical mass of tourism product in the border region has huge potential and should be explored more.

The reference to individual one-off housing in the countryside which clearly is referenced as for "economic needs" would be a retrograde step. The recognition of "local" and "social" needs in the housing policy is essential to maintain rural communities and services into the future.

Anyone trying to commute to Dublin will tell you how difficult it is no matter where you are coming from (many people are now commuting up to five hours per day). With the roll-out of Broadband, many opportunities should open up to all civil servants in various departments to work from rural bases. This would free up congestion, lessen our carbon imprint and regenerate many communities. A decentralisation programme based on broadband connectivity would reduce the unnecessary pull to the centre of Dublin.

In conclusion the draft and submissions should be re-submitted to the region for a consensus approach to endeavour to have a more cohesive approach to the local issues.

Declan Breathnach, TD
8th November, 2017