 

**Taoiseach and Minister Coveney launch public consultation for “Ireland 2040 – Our Plan”, the new National Planning Framework**

The Taoiseach and Minister Simon Coveney, today (Thursday 2nd February) launched a major national consultation for the preparation of a strategic planning and development framework for Ireland between now and 2040, in Maynooth University. Today’s event is the first of two public consultation exercises and a series of regional and stakeholder events in preparing *Ireland 2040 – Our Plan.*

Speaking at the launch *,* theTaoiseach Enda Kenny said:

*“*Ireland 2040 – Our Plan is a discussion about how to secure sustained, long-term and regionally balanced progress on social, economic and environmental fronts. Now is the time to think about the longer-term future of all parts of this island – and how to plan for that future. This is important and it is why it was included in our Programme for Government. With the return of stability there are a number of projections and challenges that are likely to be realised that we need to start planning for today. This paper is the start of a major consultation process so that we can avoid the planning mistakes of the past. Every community and every region needs to have their say."

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government Simon Coveney who is leading a high-level cross-Departmental team in developing the Ireland 2040 Plan set out the issues its preparation will address:

*“While we face many challenges presently, we know we need to think ahead for a radically different Ireland of 2040 including;*

* *A national population increase of around 1 million people;*
* *More than one-fifth of Ireland’s total population being over 65;*
* *More than 500,000 additional people at work;*
* *500,000 homes needing locations much closer to services and amenities; and*
* *rebuilding community and commercial life in the hearts of our cities and towns and protecting the many qualities of our rural communities*

*We are now seeking the public’s views on what the issues are and how we can – together – address sprawl and lop-sided development, better utilisation of the potential of both urban and rural areas and avoid congestion and adverse impacts on people’s lives and the environment”*

Damien English, Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal highlighted the public’s opportunity in contributing to and shaping the Plan, saying:

*“Ireland 2040 - Our Plan must be the People’s Plan – formed by the people’s views on the future shape of our country, its urban and rural places both at this initial stage and in the publication of a further draft strategy prior to the Summer, which will be subject to the consideration of the final strategy by the Oireachtas later this year. I anticipate that people will highlight the need to build up and improve existing communities, whether they be rural villages and small towns that have suffered much in recent years or the renewal and enhancement of the inner parts of many of our larger cities and towns, some of which are badly in need of regeneration and re-population which is the part of the Plan I will be focusing on”*

At the conclusion of the launch, the Taoiseach and Ministers thanked the facilitator and the panel for participating in the Q&A forum. They were particularly grateful for the support of the President of Maynooth University, Professor Philip Nolan and the staff of MU. In response, Professor Nolan said “*I warmly commend An Taoiseach and Ministers Coveney and English for providing the people of Ireland with an opportunity to consider the many issues and choices that will have such a significant impact on our country over the next two decades.”*

Full details are available on [www.Ireland2040.ie](http://www.Ireland2040.ie) and the public are invited to contribute initial views by March 16th next. Those views will be used to shape a draft copy of the Plan which is likely to issue for further consultation prior to the Summer. After further incorporation of the public’s views, a final version of the plan is likely to be submitted to Government in the Autumn.

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**ENDS**

**Notes for Editors**

***What Is the National Planning Framework?***

* The National Planning Framework - “Ireland 2040 – Our Plan” - will set a new strategic planning and development context for the Ireland and all its regions in the period between now and 2040, setting a strategic, high-level framework for the co-ordination of a range of national, regional and local authority policies and activities, planning and investment.
* Development of the framework is timely given the need to put in place a long-term plan for sustainable growth, now that we have stabilised the national finances and are making significant progress again in areas of economic and social development, notwithstanding economic headwinds given issues such as Brexit.
* As a successful and dynamic open economy with strong east west and north south links with the UK, EU, US and globally, a new framework is needed to both succeed the National Spatial Strategy, which had a 2002-2020 timeline, and to build on and draw together sectoral Government initiatives in areas such as housing, (Rebuilding Ireland) rural issues (Action Plan for Rural Development) employment (Action Plan for Jobs) and many more.
* At a practical level, the National Planning Framework will, amongst a range of other issues, provide crucial new policy guidance on:
	+ Providing for future trends and growth in relation to employment and housing;
	+ The most effective way to enable all Ireland’s regions to play their full part in overall national development;
	+ Equipping the regions with the right mix of physical and social infrastructure working within available resources in a prioritised manner;
	+ Making our development more sustainable and greener; and
	+ Strengthening the opportunities for an island approach to our development.
* As a strategy, the Framework will identify where, across Government, both central and local, policy co-ordination and prudent investment can combine to deliver the best outcomes for our country as a whole and its regions.
* The National Planning Framework will address emerging trends such as:
	+ A population that could increase by up to 1 million, more than a fifth of whom will be over 65 by 2040;
	+ Over 500,000 more people at work, a lot of which will be high skilled jobs that are increasingly tending to cluster in and around cities;
	+ At least 500,000 extra homes needing to be provided and close to services and amenities; and
	+ Where we plan for future development and how we manage existing development to ensure that we address major environmental challenges such as protecting air, water quality, biodiversity and climate change, transforming our energy and transport systems away from a dependency on fossil fuels towards green energy.
* The National Planning Framework will also address the trends that, unless managed differently, around three quarters of the extra population and homes will happen on the eastern side of the country, much of it clustered around, but not necessarily happening in, our capital city. This will further exacerbate massive and increasingly unmanageable sprawl of housing areas, scattered employment and car-based commuting, presenting major challenges around lop-sided development, under-utilised potential, congestion and adverse impacts on people’s lives and the environment.
* In fact, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that a lop-sided approach to strategic national development would irrevocably harm Ireland’s broader prospects from the economic, social and environmental perspectives. Therefore, the Framework will address the question of the expansion of Dublin as the primary engine for the growth vis-á-vis enabling credible counter-balances to emerge, as well as the following issues;
	+ **Housing:** We will need somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000 new homes provided every year to meet people’s needs for well-located and affordable housing, with increasing demand to cater for one- and two-person and older households. In terms of location, housing is increasingly linked to employment and bringing homes and jobs close together helps to minimise congestion and commuting and makes services and infrastructure much easier to provide.
	+ **Employment:** Jobs will become more high-skilled and people are likely to change jobs more often. There are two million people at work in Ireland and there is evidence to suggest that, notwithstanding wider economic challenges and taking long-run past trends into account, Ireland has the capacity to develop economically such that there could be an extra 500,000 people at work by 2040, with many of these jobs being generated in or close to our cities and towns.
	+ **Infrastructure Services and Amenities:** Ensuring our country’s sustainable development means we must plan for the educational, health and community facilities that increasingly define quality of life and personal well-being as much as the “must-have” traditional physical infrastructure like water services, transport, communications, broadband and energy systems.
	+ **Place:** Place-making is a major part of Ireland’s enterprise policy under the Action Plan for Jobs and is increasingly recognised as the key in creating such economic eco-systems in both urban and rural areas, where people want to live and work, drawing on pools of skilled employees, a wide choice of well-located housing and employment options, as well as a broad range of other ‘lifestyle’ opportunities, including leisure activities and a variety culture and entertainment options. We have seen this in Ireland with the regeneration of parts of our cities such as Dublin’s Docklands and the vibrancy and draw of cities like Galway and Cork as well as successful rural areas of our country as highlighted in the recent Action Plan for Rural Development.
	+ Successful places, large and small, urban and rural, in Ireland and abroad, show that through planning and carefully targeted policy-led investment, under-performing locations can become really successful places that people are drawn towards.
	+ **Delivery:** It will be important to learn from the previous National Spatial Strategy, which launched in 2002 and was a “mixed bag” in terms of achievements. While the NSS brought about planning reforms and triggered capital investment in areas like transport, water services and housing to support it, the lack of its overall implementation coupled with the economic downturn in 2008 and afterwards meant the NSS never fully realised its potential as a framework for development. It is only now after sustained Government actions have stabilised the economic fortunes of our country that we can think about the long-term.
	+ The National Planning Framework will be a *strategic, concise document, with clear actions, responsibilities and timelines* and will be resilient in adapting to economic headwinds, whether due to external factors like Brexit or otherwise.
* **What Will Happen if We Do Nothing?:** If we don’t plan to do anything differently and continue as we have been over the past twenty years, we are almost certain to get more of the same over the next twenty - with congested roads and city centres, ever expanding suburbs and a sense of a country characterised by an over-heating East Coast and under-utilised potential regionally meaning:
	+ Dublin will continue to dominate and potentially overheat drawing in more and more of overall national development, while at the same time sprawling into the surrounding Leinster counties;
	+ Regional cities such as Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford will grow but not at the scale needed to making any ground in relation to Dublin;
	+ We will continue to build our housing further and further away from where the jobs are tending to cluster, due to wider international and economic trends in both urban and urbanising rural “doughnuts” around the cities, leading to rising costs and impacts in terms of commuting, service provision, people’s health and the environment; and
	+ Many smaller rural towns and villages and their wider rural catchments outside the orbit of major cities and towns and tourism hot-spots like the Wild Atlantic Way, will increasingly stagnate and decline.
* ‘Business as usual’ cannot deliver shared national values and goals such as maintaining a competitive and open trading economy and place, ensuring a decent standard of living for all citizens, creating safe, vibrant and inclusive communities, ensuring life-long health and well-being and meeting our environmental obligations and carbon emissions targets.
* **A Different Path:** The National Planning Framework will emerge in draft form for a further round of public consultation after Easter before being finally considered by Government and thereafter by the Oireachtas (a key recommendation of the Mahon Tribunal) later in 2017. Thereafter, the Framework will be the top-level plan for the Irish planning process and in relation to:
	+ Charting a path for the sustainable development of Dublin, not running ahead of, but running in tandem with, the rest of the country;
	+ Identifying mechanisms to tap the considerable levels of under-utilised potential in the regional cities by carefully focused policies and investment as additional national/international level counter-balances to the Greater Dublin Area;
	+ Ensuring that the enormous potential of the rural parts of our country are maximised, including both the terrestrial and marine dimensions.
	+ Moreover, the Framework will be outward looking too, recognising the opportunities for working within a wider Island context (with Northern Ireland), as well as on an east-west basis with the wider UK area, the EU and international context and in tandem with the national planning frameworks in neighbouring administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
* **What Happens Next?** Consultation papers were published on 2nd February for citizens, stakeholder organisations, public bodies, indeed anyone with an interest in our country’s future and willing to share their ideas, to inform and engage in creating this new Framework Plan. This will be followed by a series of regional events and communications activities which will support the development of the process during the course of 2017.
* Further details will be available at ([www.ireland2040.ie](file:///%5C%5Cvm-dubfs01%5CD1%5Cplan_spl%5Ccommon%5CCommon%202%5CNational%20Planning%20Framework%20%28NPF%29%5C008Issues%20papers%5CJan%202017%5Cwww.ireland2040.ie)).

The launch in Maynooth University included a Q&A forum which was moderated by economist and broadcaster David Mc Williams.

The panel consisted of: Anna Marie McHugh, General Secretary of the World Ploughing Organisation; Carole Pollard, President of The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland; Fergal O'Brien, Director of Policy and Chief Economist IBEC; Michael Walsh, Chief Executive Waterford City and County Council; Stephanie Keogh, National Centre for GeoComputation Maynooth University; Tom Arnold, Director General of the Institute of Irish International and European Affairs.

