

Submission on relevant planning issues for the National Planning Framework

First objective of NPF

As a national plan to guide and shape the spatial development of Ireland the first objective of the NPF must be to ensure balanced development nationwide and to avoid a situation evolving whereby Dublin ends up “eating” the rest of the country. To ensure balanced development nationwide the following must be central to the NPF; The Unification of Ireland, Constituency Reform, Electoral Register Maintenance and Voting Arrangements and Motorways.

The Unification of Ireland

The establishment of a 32-county Republic is the first objective of the people of rural Ireland and all who desire balanced development nationwide. Consider the population of Dublin relative to the rest of the country;

Pop. Dublin = 1.3 m

Pop. 26 counties = 4.7 m of which Pop. Dublin = 28%

Pop. 32 counties = 6.6 m of which Pop. Dublin = 19.7%

A 32-county Republic would be significantly less Dublin-centric than the existing 26-county State and therefore would be significantly more conducive to achieving balanced development nationwide.

The following should be done in this regard;

- The North must be designated Special Status within the EU and this must become official policy of the Irish government
- Getting rid of the border must become official policy of the Irish government
- The Irish government and the Dáil must be accountable to all Irish citizens throughout the 32 counties, therefore Irish citizens in all 32 counties must have representation in the Dáil

Constituency reform

In order for there to be balanced development there must be balanced public representation. All Dáil constituencies must have the same number of registered electors (approx. 100,000) and elect the same number of TDs (Five). Constituency boundaries should not necessarily

adhere to traditional county boundaries but should in the first instance reflect current population distribution patterns, urbanisation patterns, the true rural hinterland of urban centres and transport infrastructure usage patterns, particularly commuter usage.

Electoral register maintenance and voting arrangements

If there is to be balanced development nationwide, then TDs in every constituency must be accountable to a similar electorate age profile. Rural constituencies lose a greater portion of their younger citizens to internal migration and emigration and so end up being more heavily dominated by older citizens. The following should be done to counter this effect;

- Routine mass registration on the Electoral Register of all second-level pupils at school so that when they turn 18 they are registered to vote in their home constituency
- Make necessary arrangements for remote voting so that young adults who are away from home (within Ireland) for college or work can cast their vote for their home constituency. Polling stations for this purpose should be set up on every third-level campus and in every local authority office.
- Make necessary arrangements for remote voting so that young adults who are abroad can vote in their home constituency. Polling stations for this purpose should be set up in every Irish embassy and consulate abroad.

Motorways

- All motorways must be nationalised with no tolls and no barriers.
- A comprehensive network of motorways must be constructed nationwide with no part of the country excluded.