

1. Introduction

The National Planning Framework (NPF) aims to ensure the Country's future growth to 2040 by:

- adapting to the global and national change dynamics that drive international and national innovation, investment and infrastructural development.
- changing the patterns of development that are within our capacity and which best assure a quality life for all our people.

A number of observations on the current pattern of change indicate that we cannot pursue a 'business as usual' approach and must learn from our experiences in order:

1. To avoid overdevelopment and sprawl in our settlement patterns.
2. To close the distance between employment and residence.
3. To increase regional employment growth.
4. To encourage rural and urban regeneration in order to address decline.
5. To ensure environmental quality, including carbon emissions reduction and increased use of renewable energy by, inter alia, harnessing the planning system.
6. To manage the planning/development process to ensure 'right development' in the 'right location', at the 'right time'.

Key spatial, sectoral, infrastructural, service and institutional decisions need to be made in terms of:

- a) Location and quantity of accommodation for a population increase of 1 Million people
- b) Location and type of jobs for an additional ½ Million workers
- c) Providing for almost three times as many people 65+ (from current 12% of total pop to 22%)
- d) Enhancing and creating communities to meet the social, cultural, political and economic requirements of the macro and micro changes that challenge existing and emerging communities.

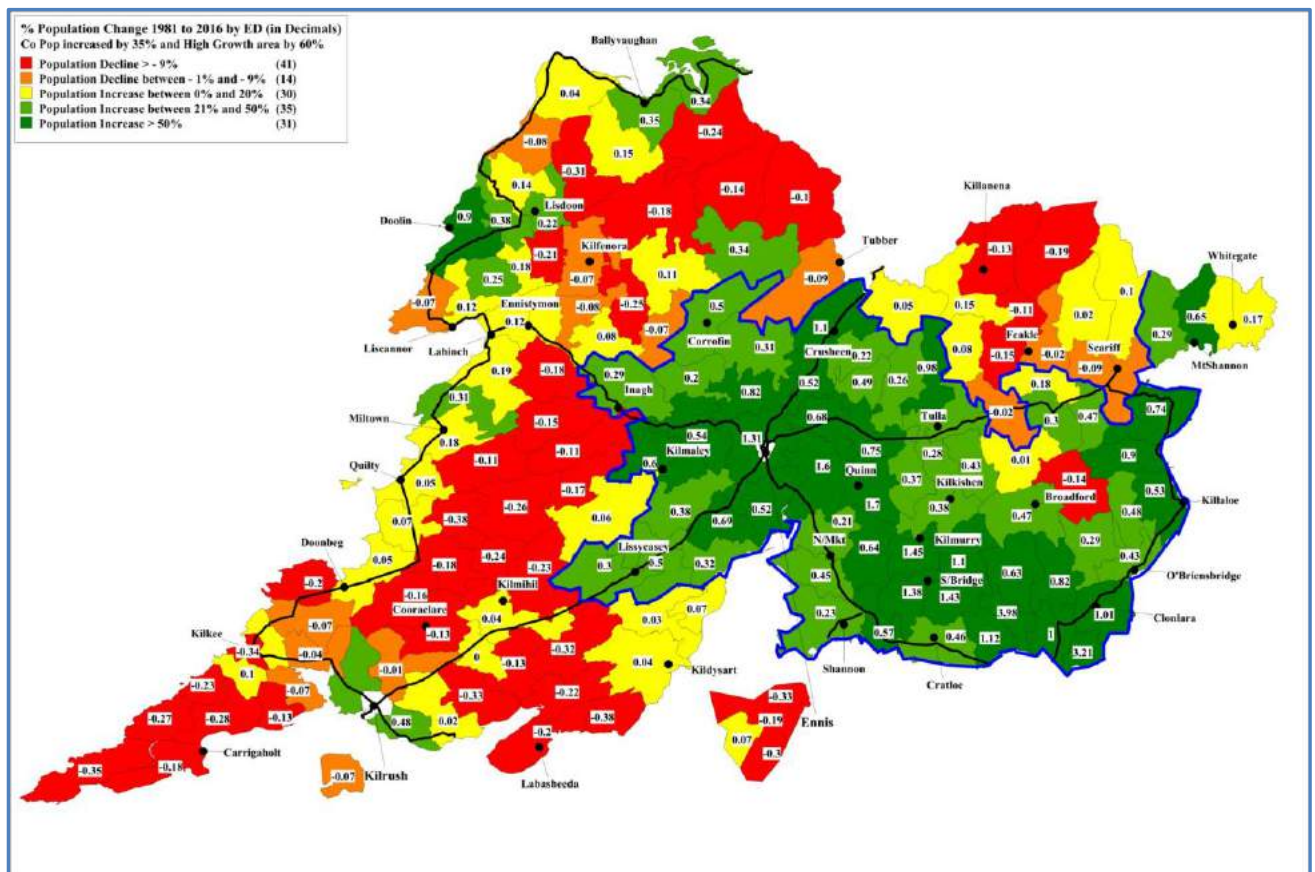
This submission is set out, in the context of the County's profile and the 'Ireland 2040 Issues Paper', under the following headings:

- People's Health and Well-Being,
- Place Making,
- Environmental Sustainability,
- Infrastructure,
- Implementation of the Framework

2. Profile of County Clare

Map 1 shows the percentage population change (expressed in decimal form) for each Electoral Division (ED) in the County. A Blue boundary separates a 'Decline Area' and a 'Growth Area'.

Map 1. Population Change in Clare 1981 – 2016 by ED



Source: Census Population 1981 and 2016 (Preliminary)

The four urban EDs of Ennis and the one of Kilrush are shown outside the map area in order to improve their visibility. In order to maintain the integrity of Villages and their hinterlands, the Decline area does not include the decline ED East of Broadford, which is in the Growth area. For a similar reason, the Growth ED to the North-East of Corofin is included in the Decline area because it forms part of the hinterland of the Village of Tubber which is in the Decline area.

While the decline area contained 9 EDs that experienced population growth, only one (Doolin) had growth in excess of 50% compared with 30 in the Growth area.

2.1 Demographic and Social Profile

Population

Between 1981 and 2016, the County’s population grew by 35%. However, while the Growth Area experienced population growth of **61%**, the Decline Area experienced population decline of **-3%** and it’s share of the County population declined from 40% to 29% over the period. The population decline in the three Carr Urban EDs in the Town of Ennis is noted.

Settlement Populations

In 2011, the settlements in the Decline area, with populations of more than 500, were Kilrush and Environs (2,695), Kilkee and Environs (1,139), Ennistymon (957), Scariff (816), Milltown Malbay (777), Lisdoonvarna (739) and Lahinch (642).

Kilrush/Kilkee (3,834) as well as Ennistymon/Lahinch (1,599) have potential to achieve significant scale and to act as mutually supportive clusters on the basis of the complementary opportunities they offer.

Age Structure

In 2011, the Decline Area accounted for **29.4%** of the County's population (30% of Males and 29% of Females). However, it only accounted for 26% of the County's young people (<15 Yrs) and well above average at 40% of people 65+. In addition, only 63% of the population of the Decline area was of Working Age compared to 66% in the Growth area. In summary, the Decline Area had a less than average number of young people and a well above average number of Older People and less than 2 in 3 of its Population was working age.

Household Size and Persons per Room

In 2011, 29% of the County's Population lived in the Decline Area and occupied 30% of the County's houses and had an average Household size of 2.59 compared to 2.76 in the Growth Area. The decline area had a 'person per room' rate of 0.46 compared to 0.48 for the Growth Area. However, while containing only 29% of the County's population, the Decline Area contained:

- 40% of the County Males 65+ and 38% of the County Females 65+,
- 45% of the County's 'one-person 65+' Households;
- 36% of the County's 'two-person 65+' Households.

In summary, the Decline Area contained an extremely high percentage of the County's: Older People both Male and Female; Older People living alone; Older People living together.

Lone parent Families

In 2011, the Decline Area contained 25.5% of all families in the County with 'at least one child < 15 yrs', and 24.8% of all 'Lone Parent' families in the County. Contrary to what might be expected, the Decline Area had a share of the County's Lone Parents that was only slightly less than its share of the County's Families with 'at least one child < 15 yrs'.

Education

In 2011, the Decline Area contained 31% of those in the County, whose education had ceased but only 26% of those in the County with 3rd. Level. While expecting rural areas to contain slightly above average numbers with lower education (Lower Sec or Less), the Decline area accounted for **38%** of the County's total in this category. It might be expected that the areas' Class structure would follow their Educational profile with 26% in the Higher Social Class and 38% in the Lower Social Class.

Class

While the Decline area's share of the County's Higher Class (26%) was exactly the same as its share of the County's Population with 3rd. Level Education (26%), its share of the County's Lower Class (31%) was far less than its share of the County Population with Lower Education (38%).

Sectors

The sectoral employment of the workers residing in the Decline area (not to be mistaken with the number of jobs in the decline area as residents may travel out of the Decline area) accounted for 28% of all County employment. However, the Decline area accounted for well above average of the County's 'Agricultural', 'Construction' and 'Other Services' sectors, at 58%, 32%, 33%, respectively. On the other hand, the Decline area only accounted for 27%, 25%, 24%, 19% and 18% of the County employment in 'Professional Services', 'Public Administration', 'Commerce', 'Manufacturing' and 'Transport', respectively. The sectoral employment of the workers residing in the Decline area shows a strong dependency on 'traditional' sectors

2.3 Jobs

Commuting patterns of Workers

The number of jobs in the Decline area as distinct from the number of workers residing there can be derived from the 'Travel to Work' data. While accounting for 28% of the County's resident workers, the Decline area only accounted for 25% of all jobs in the County and only 19% of those who 'commuted to work'. While 74% of all workers residing in the Decline area found employment within it, only 55% of the area's 'commuters' found employment within it. Those who commuted outside the decline area had an average travel time of 33 minutes compared to 13 minutes for those who commuted within it.

Sectoral Jobs

Because agricultural and construction workers did not display net movement out of the Decline area, jobs in these sectors accounted for 58% and 32%, respectively, of the County's 'Agriculture' and 'Construction' jobs. Again this indicates a high dependence on traditional sectors. The decline area only accounted for 12% and 13%, respectively, of the County's Manufacturing and ICT/Professional Services/Real Estate jobs. This suggests an economy with weak modern sectors.

Socio-Economic Groups occupying Jobs

Only 14% and 21%, respectively, of the County's jobs occupied by Higher and Lower Professionals were located in the Decline Area. These low percentages were not in line with the fact that the area accounted for 26% of the residents in the County's Upper Class (Higher and Lower Professionals, Managerial, Technical). This suggests that the Decline area was home to Upper Class residents who either retired into it and/or 'commuted' to work outside it.

Housing of those occupying Jobs

In terms of the age of housing occupied by those working in the Decline area, 45%, 43%, 34%, respectively of the County's houses that were built pre-1919, 1919-1945, and 1946-1969, were in the Decline Area and only 19% and 22% of the County's houses built in the periods 2001-2006 and 2006+. The age of housing and of single occupancy of those working in the Decline area was much older than the County average and the high single occupancy indicates isolated living as the Decline area has few settlements of scale.

Education of those occupying Jobs

In terms of the education of those occupying the jobs in the Decline area, only 19% had 3rd. Level Education. Only 19% and 21%, respectively, of the county's younger workforce (25-34 yrs and 34 -45 yrs) were represented. However, 32% and 44%, respectively, of the county's older workforce (55-64 yrs and 65+ yrs) were represented in the Decline area.

Transport used by those occupying Jobs

High dependence on private transport to get to work is expected in rural areas and was reflected in the fact that workers with 'no car/van' represented only 22% of those in the county. Similarly, the need for individual members of the household to have their own car was reflected in the fact that 29% of the county's workers, who had 4+ cars in their households were in the Decline area. Average travel time for those working in the Decline Area was 29 minutes. compared to 20 minutes for those working in the Growth Area.

Working At/From Home

The practice of working from home (more recently described as 'e-working' in certain sectors) is becoming more prevalent. A small percentage (but currently unquantifiable), are people returning from outside the county to work from home in the more ICT-related sectors.

An interesting anomaly arises in the case of those working from home in the Agriculture/Fishing sector. In the Decline area, there were 1,992 resident farmers but only 1,083 (54%) reported working from home. Many of the others reported 'travelling' to work. This suggests that additional employment is necessary in the case of many farmers. In the Growth area there were 1,385 resident farmers and a similar percentage (53%) reported working from home. This suggests that a significant proportion of those who reported that they were 'farmers', travelled to work in an occupation other than farming-most likely construction.

Of those working at home, the 'retail/wholesale/transport/food and catering' sector accounted for 14% in both the Decline and Growth areas. The 'ICT/Finance/Real/Estate/Prof Services' sector is the one that most people returning to Clare to work 'from home' are engaged in. It is interesting that it accounted for only 6% (107) of all those working 'from home' in the Decline area compared to 18% (344) in the Growth area.

2.4 Employment and Unemployment.

In 2011, the Decline Area contained 30% of the Male labourforce in line with its share of the Male population (30%) but 33% of the County's male unemployed. The area contained 27% of the Female labourforce (slightly less than its share of the Female population - 29% and 28% of the County's female unemployed. The Male and Female Unemployment Rates were 24% and 16%, respectively, compared to 21% and 15% for the Growth Area.

3. Submission Detail

3.1 People's Health and Well-Being

The Regional City of Limerick/Shannon is the main driver of International and National Innovation and Investment in the Mid-West Region and the spin-off from it, in terms of employment, education and retail is felt across the Growth Area especially. The National Planning Framework needs to place particular emphasis on this regional city cluster. The County Town of Ennis has displayed strong growth that has been dispersed into its hinterland, albeit that three of its inner urban EDs display population decline. The NPF needs to plan for the regeneration of Town Centres if such Towns are to continue their role as conduits for the dispersal of the benefits of regional cities into their more remote rural hinterlands. The Regional City of Limerick/Shannon and the County Town of Ennis will need to be supported to accommodate their share of the projected population and employment growth of the NPF. There is a particular need to ensure that employment and social incomes allow people to enjoy the opportunities that are seen as the norm in society.

The NPF needs to pay particular attention to the Action plan for Rural Development as it addresses the particular needs of the identified Decline Area, specifically the need to ensure people's 'Health and Well-being' and communities' need to actively engage in 'Place-Making'.

Clare will have to provide housing for current numbers on the Housing list and an additional 25,000 to 30,000 people (at trend population growth). The vast majority of these will be accommodated in the County's Towns and villages but consideration will have to be given to the tradition of one-off rural living that sets apart Ireland's settlement patterns from those of most European countries. Particular attention will need to be paid to the provision of facilities and amenities that provide opportunities for recreational, sporting, social and cultural activities. All development will be to stringent environmental and aesthetic principles and standards which will need to be closely monitored. Passive, carbon neutral and solar- powered housing should become the norm. Particular attention needs to be given to the regeneration of brownfield housing stock to ensure it is restored to passive housing standards.

Each of our Towns and Villages should have a plan for its future design and enhancement, keeping in mind the importance of; addressing socially disadvantaged communities in urban and rural areas as the social and physical conditions of such areas are highly correlated with the health and well-being outcomes of their people. There is also a need to keep in mind: the aesthetics of streetscapes, shopfronts, open spaces, public sculpture, heritage, architecture; the ease of movement on foot and by cycle, for young and older; the combination of places of activity and tranquillity; the environmental quality, including quality housing, public transport, clean air and water; the generation and use of low carbon and/or renewable energy. Particular attention needs to be given to the degree to which town and village renewal is linked to an active community-based participation in 'place-making'. Finally, special account needs to be taken of the tripling in the number of people 65+ by 2040.

The provision of a range of rural transport options need to be funded as people's health and well-being in rural areas, in particular, is related to their ease of movement and ease of access to a wide range of opportunities for economic, cultural and social action and interaction.

3.2 Place Making

The city of Limerick/Shannon, supported by the County Town of Ennis, will be shortly linked to the City of Galway by a motorway, allowing ease of inter-city movement that will, with its international connectivity, offer the necessary scale to provide the engine room for continued innovation, investment and employment. The growth in net employment that is projected nationally (0.5 million) reflects a growth in the numbers at work in Clare of between 12,500 and 15,000 (in line with current trends). It will be vital that the additional workers reside close to their work place so that environmental impact is minimised, leisure time increased and a greater range of opportunities for leisure, recreational and cultural activity can be accessed. This will see increased spatial density of residents, many of whom will be new to the community. Consequently particular attention will need to be given to 'place-making' or more correctly 'community-building', 'neighbourhood development' and 'community development'. While many of the county's towns are located in the hinterland of the Galway/Shannon/Limerick corridor, there are others well outside the sphere of influence of this economic corridor as indicated in our profile.

Building sustainable communities in both urban and rural contexts is best assured by first addressing the regeneration needs of deprived communities in order to facilitate their traditional capacity for hospitality and social contribution, thus increasing their contribution to the life of the broader community. The future of the Decline area is dependent on the creative and symbiotic relationship of the principal town clusters and their hinterland including the villages located therein. These are the clustered towns of Kilrush/Kilkee (3,834), Ennistymon/Lahinch (1,599) and Scariff/Mountshannon/Whitegate (1,150). Most of the villages in the decline area are within easy commute of these Towns. This hierarchy should guide the scale and sequence of the provision of public investment in:

- physical infrastructure for public and communities facilities (schools, hospitals, care centres, public water, sewerage treatment, connecting transport networks, sport and leisure facilities etc.)
- social provision of services (social enterprise, test beds, carbon neutral and sustainable towns/villages, etc.)
- enterprise support (incubation space, hot desks, marketing supports, etc.)

While these town clusters and their hinterlands offer desirable communities in which to live because of their unique aesthetic, social and cultural experiences of community ethos, engagement and voluntary action, they also offer opportunities for the exploitation of comparative advantage in the areas of: environment and heritage; agri and marine food; sustainable and renewable energy (on shore and off shore); tourism (inland and marine including the islands); remote/home/e-working; small-scale technology 'test-bed operations'. These opportunities exist at both individual, household and community level.

The economic, aesthetic, social and cultural features of rural living may explain its attraction to those who move there. Such population dynamics of inward migration need to be supported by appropriate planning policies (one-off housing accounted for 45% of all planning permissions in the period 2009 -2015, compared to 30% in the previous 6 years). Proper planning would help offset the

outward migration of the younger cohort and provide additional human and social capital to strengthen the vibrancy, leadership and stewardship of such communities.

Village renewal/regeneration will offer increased quality of experience to those living in, holidaying in, occasionally returning to and those who may wish to move permanently to them. It will also improve their attractiveness to older people who may wish to move from their more rural and perhaps more remote hinterlands. They will offer social opportunities as well as improved access to services (retail, health and transport), while allowing older people retain their personal and community identity (sense of place) as well as their social/familial networks. Investment in such hinterland villages must have a clear strategic focus in the context of their role in the rural settlement hierarchy.

The development of 'cluster-parish' identities will assist the long-term survival of those rural areas facing more extreme demographic dynamics. This will need to be assisted by specific programmes of training, capacity-building and funding and will require the development of corporate status in order to become competent agents of change with adequate governance structures.

3.3 Environmental Sustainability

Clare's built heritage and physical environment (landscape, habitats, flora, fauna) is particularly sensitive and often subject to damaging pressures from economic activity, human settlement and tourism and, more recently and in some instances more significantly, climate change. These pressures have negative impacts on people's lives not only physically (poor air and poor water quality) but also aesthetically (loss of heritage, habitat, biodiversity, heritage). The failure to treat waste water and the failure to implement measures that provide flood defence and mitigate coastal erosion need to be addressed in all relevant towns and villages in the lifetime of this plan. So also does the need to achieve self-sufficiency in renewable energy production. Reference has already been made to the need to improve housing standards.

In its transition to a low carbon, sustainable economy and society, Clare will be seen as a 'Clean, Green' county which, in turn, will motivate communities, businesses and individuals to adopt production and consumption patterns that reduce their impact on the environment as well as their carbon footprint, including a reduction in human and food travel distances. The development of heritage awareness, low carbon living, renewable energy generation and 'district heating' programmes will be essential components of quality communities and neighbourhoods in the future.

3.4 Infrastructure,

Consistent with the hierarchy of settlements proposed in the earlier part of the submission, infrastructural investment needs to be prioritised, accordingly, in housing, education, utilities, health, transport, sport and recreation. Investment in regional road infrastructure needs to be balanced by investment in radial roads, connecting the satellite villages to their associated cluster town.

3.5 Implementation of the Framework

For this future to be realised it is important that the NPF:

- a) Has made 'hard choices' by avoiding 'unrealistically seeking to treat all parts of the Country equally';
- b) Has a statutory basis;
- c) Has an appointed 'accountable' officer in each Regional Assembly and Local Authority;
- d) Is being delivered through other plans and strategies at National, Regional and Local level;
- e) Guides public and acts as a beacon for private investment;
- f) Has executive and Cross-Departmental and Cross-Agency support;
- g) Is adequately monitored and regularly reported on.