



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

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Forward Planning Section  
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government  
Custom House  
Dublin  
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**By email only**

Date: 27 March 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Submission to National Planning Framework Consultation**

I write with reference to the above subject. This letter is a submission by Mid Ulster District Council to the first stage of the National Planning Framework.

While Mid Ulster District falls outwith the jurisdiction of the National Planning Framework the opportunity to comment on this first stage in its preparation is welcomed given the position of our District in Northern Ireland and at a key gateway on the border between the two jurisdictions. The economic strengths and regional identity of Mid Ulster and the neighbouring counties of Fermanagh, Monaghan and Cavan deserves recognition. Mid Ulster has been a growth centre because of the success of its agri-food industry, and in relation to mineral extraction, quarry products and related engineering, all of which provide export revenue and employment income around Mid Ulster. A key strength of Mid Ulster is its central position and its relationship with industry in Fermanagh, Monaghan and Cavan. Road linkages and infrastructure has an important role in this.

The inclusion of a section within the NPF Paper entitled 'Ireland in an All-Island Context' is welcomed. In an all-island context the Paper states that the following issues (relevant to Northern Ireland) may need to be considered:

- The strategic potential of the Dublin-Belfast (eastern seaboard) corridor and how it can be developed to better influence planning decisions between the two Capital cities on the island of Ireland;
- The need to look beyond administrative boundaries for effective development of regions by working together through structures such as the North West Gateway

Initiative and the North West Strategic Growth Partnership in partnership with local government (Donegal-Derry/Londonderry & Strabane);

- Greater alignment of infrastructure planning which underpins the objectives of both the NPF and Regional Development Strategy in Northern Ireland to address mutual cross border spatial challenges;
- The potential for cross-border or all-island clustering of economic activity and how best the NPF can help build the long term economic resilience of areas along our borders;
- Joint thinking and management approaches to environmental management and protection.

At the end of the section entitled 'Ireland in an All-Island Context' a number of questions are posed and the answers to them are set out below. The key question in the view of this Council is where growth should be accommodated. It is the Council's view that population needs to be linked to economic growth and social provision in order to provide sustainable communities. In doing so an attempt should be made to balance growth across the island and attention should be given to existing resources and economic opportunities that exist in Midland and border regions rather than the driver being the motor car and commuter distance.

**1. How can the NPF facilitate co-ordination between settlements that share connections across the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland and how should this be reflected in the document?**

Road linkages and infrastructure are key to facilitating co-ordination and to ensuring that connections between Ireland and the 'north-west' are continued and utilised to mutual advantage. The upgrade of the N2/A5 corridor is key to this and Mid Ulster District Council consider that a commitment to its upgrade should be firmly reflected in the future NPF. In addition, within Mid Ulster the A29 is a very important north-south road corridor within the district and its upgrade to allow for the 3 towns (Dungannon, Cookstown, and Magherafelt) within our district to act as a cluster is considered to be a strategic issue which should be addressed in a joined up manner by central government in Northern Ireland. The upgrade of the entire length of the A29 would allow important linkages to Armagh, Newry and beyond to Dundalk to be further enhanced. Connecting our towns and cities and ports in an all island context has mutual economic benefits to both jurisdictions.

**2. What economic opportunities and sectoral clusters exist that can benefit economies within both jurisdictions and how can this be best captured and supported in the NPF?**

In preparing a new Local Development Plan for Mid Ulster this council see the challenges facing us as: accommodating growth and creating quality places; creating jobs and enhancing prosperity and enhancing our environment and improving our infrastructure. In Mid Ulster our engineering businesses are considered global leaders in high growth export sectors, especially in material handling. We are the top area in the region for enterprise development and entrepreneurship and we have three growing vibrant and economically active towns that have the potential to facilitate a urban cluster hub within the district. Development cross border cooperation for economic growth is an important action within our draft Community Plan. As with the answer to question 1 above,

enhanced and improved road linkages and infrastructure are key to the success of this and to allow for mutual benefit between both jurisdictions.

**3. What mechanisms are needed to ensure a joined-up approach to strategic infrastructure and investment decisions that have a cross-border dimension and are there examples of best practice?**

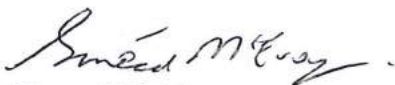
Mid Ulster District Council consider that the future NPF should state a firm commitment to the N2/A5 corridor both for the mutual economic benefits it will bring to both jurisdictions but also for the well-publicised road safety reasons. The detail of this has been set out in the submission by ICBAN to this consultation and Mid Ulster Council as members of ICBAN endorse the comments made in that submission.

**4. How do we co-ordinate mutually beneficial ways to address common environmental challenges across shared catchments?**

One of the facets of the vision shared between the draft Mid Ulster Community Plan and the forthcoming Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030 is that our environment and heritage are sustained. The preparation of a new LDP for Mid Ulster is at an early stage and in the recent Preferred Options Paper consultation document the Council has recognised the need to protect open space and river corridors, archaeology and built heritage, historic parks and Demenses and international and national natural heritage designations and species. Mid Ulster share some important river corridors, landscapes and natural heritage designations with the border regions and their appropriate protection is considered to be of mutual importance. Mid Ulster Council intends to shortly invite Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to a forum to discuss common/shared cross boundary/border issues. The council would value recognition being given to collaboration between councils and across borders to protect environmental assets.

Should you wish to discuss this please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Sinead McEvoy**  
**Principal Planning Officer**  
**Head of Development Plan and Enforcement**

**On behalf of Dr Chris Boomer, Planning Manager**