

# Ireland 2040 – Our Plan

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While I currently work for Waterford City and County Council as the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Economic Development and Planning, this is a personal submission to the National Planning Framework (NPF), therefore this submission is not to be interpreted in any respect as representing the views of Waterford City and County Council.

I firmly believe for Ireland's future sustainable growth and competitiveness, this National Planning Framework is vitally important and it is with this in mind that I respectfully offer the following suggestions for your consideration.

## Ireland Needs a Strong Capital

*“Dublin must be enabled to grow, but it must grow in a planned and sustainable manner”*

Without doubt Ireland needs a strong capital, therefore Dublin must be enabled to grow, but it must grow in a planned and sustainable manner. This will require the allocation of sufficient capital funding and the implementation of an appropriate Planning Land Use and Transportation Strategy. The

extent of overheating in Dublin is increasing Ireland's cost base nationally and if not tackled and adequately counterbalanced it will ultimately undermine our competitiveness as a country.

## Regional Gateway Cities Must Play a Bigger Role

The National Planning Framework should categorically prioritise the propulsive growth of our regional Gateway Cities. Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway should be enabled to cater for such propulsive growth in a sustainable fashion. I believe it is reasonable to suggest that the minimum target for these cities should be to double their populations over the next twenty to thirty years. To achieve this target, I suggest that a Gateway Capital Programme with an allocation in the order of €100m per year should be created to enable the delivery of strategic infrastructure to cater for the propulsive growth of these cities.

*“a Gateway Capital Programme with an allocation in the order of €100m per year should be created”*

Policy should also be cognisant that people do not locate to a city solely based on housing availability; rather they locate to secure work and to experience a certain quality of life.

Therefore I suggest that it is critically important that employment policy must now target the establishment of jobs in these cities and in tandem with that we concentrate on place making in these centres

*“employment policy must now target the establishment of jobs in these cities”*

to ensure a sustainable high quality lifestyle. An issue that needs particular attention is improvement in the quality of the urban fabric and the absolute need to have people return to live in our city centres. This would counteract the hollowing out that has occurred over the last number of decades and restore vibrancy and purpose. In such a scenario these cities can become the real economic drivers for their regions with entire regional economies greatly improving and as a consequence Ireland’s overall attractiveness and competitiveness will improve.

#### GOVERNANCE OF REGIONAL GATEWAY CITIES

*“it is vitally important that regional Gateway Cities are managed by one local authority only”*

The governance of these regional Gateway Cities is hugely important in achieving their timely, sustainable and now necessary propulsive growth. To achieve this it is vitally important that regional Gateway Cities are managed by one local authority only and not multiple local authorities. It

is interesting to note what the Limerick Local Government Committee said in this regard, “contiguous urban areas, should not be managed by multiple authorities” and if they are, it leads to “uncoordinated policy and competition between local authorities” and instances where “strategies and policies agreed at regional level have not translated into actual decision making at individual local authority level”. As a passionate practitioner of place making for the last twenty six years and a practitioner of city development for seventeen years I fully agree with their observations in this regard.

*“enable the community of the proposed extension area to retain their Kilkenny identity but transfer the administration of the proposed extension area to Waterford City and County Council.”*

Obviously this has implications for the cities of Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway and in effect requires that their administrative boundaries are extended appropriately into neighbouring local authority areas. I welcome the findings of the Report of the Waterford Boundary Committee in that regard and I respectfully request the Minister immediately implements their recommendation. In 2004 Frank Mc Donald of the Irish Times when speaking about

Waterford City said that the lopsided development of Waterford has hampered its growth and it was “like a bird on one wing” due to its current administrative arrangements. I fully understand the Ministers current concerns in this regard and also the current environment and with that in mind, I would respectfully suggest that the Minister would therefore enable the community of the proposed extension area to retain their Kilkenny identity but transfer the administration of the proposed extension area to Waterford City and County Council.

*“different goals, internal competitive influences, vested interests, one hundred years of historical evidence and seventeen years of personal experience confirms to me that cooperation or joined administration simply won’t work.”*

In all my experience to date, I can assure you there is no effective alternative to a boundary extension, it simply won’t work. For cities to grow, they need one clear vision and one clear voice, not two sets of political and executive leadership, not different goals, not internal competitive influences and not vested interests. Kilkenny County Council has proven time and time again that it prioritises the development of Kilkenny City over its land on Waterford’s door step and in truth this is understandable. However, this has severely prevented Waterford from reaching its potential. In nearly one

hundred years, Kilkenny has failed to deliver any development of consequence in the Ferrybank area while the city of Waterford has grown hugely south of the River Suir. It is also interesting to note that nearly every city in the world grows concentrically unless it is physically or politically impeded from doing so and unfortunately Waterford, under the current administrative arrangements, is politically impeded. To conclude this point, different goals, internal competitive influences, vested interests, one hundred years of historical evidence and seventeen years of personal experience confirms to me that cooperation or joint administration simply won’t work.

### CONNECTIVITY

For Gateway Cities to play a greater role, they must also be connected physically with appropriate infrastructure that facilitates their growth and Ireland’s competitiveness. To that end, I suggest rather than building a dedicated motorway between Cork and Limerick, the existing M8 motorway should be utilised, with a further motorway connection constructed between Michelstown and Limerick, and Waterford and Cahir. With this intervention alone you provide motorway connectivity between the Atlantic City Regions of Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway.

*“the existing M8 motorway should be utilised, with a further motorway connection constructed between Michelstown and Limerick, and Waterford and Cahir”*

## Rural Ireland Must be Enabled

Some people have a difficulty defining what is meant by rural Ireland, I consider rural Ireland to include everything outside of the cities mentioned above. I passionately believe that the development of rural Ireland and our rural economy is hugely important for Ireland and I suggest that government should devise a very expansive and

*“government should devise a very expansive and ambitious rural development policy and programme”*

ambitious rural development policy and programme allocating resources accordingly to enable the sustainable development of the entirety of rural Ireland as defined above.

I also appreciate the Minister is anxious to have this National Planning Framework put on a legislative footing to enable its implementation, irrespective of what government happens to be in office in the years ahead. Unfortunately, I believe this approach may lead to much difficulty and it is likely that by the time it emerges from both Houses of the Oireachtas it may be undermined to such an extent with the demands to spread the limited investment, it could be meaningless. One approach that may prevent that truly unfortunate outcome from materialising is to keep the NPF at a very strategic level, restrict it in content to three sections of similar weighting and title those three sections, Irelands Capital, Growth of the Regional Cities (Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway) and Rural Ireland.

Critical to all the suggestions above, the Capital Programme of Irish Water and the Governments Capital Programme must now align to cater for and prioritise the objectives of the NPF. Irish Water must invest appropriately to facilitate the targeted growth of population and employment in the designated centres.

Finally, the following is a list of additional recommendations pertaining to the South East Waterford City Region (I am very conscious other regions will also have similar priorities that will also require such investment). In making these recommendations, I am also conscious some may be more pertinent for the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES's) currently being prepared rather than the NPF, but due to their strategic nature, I believe they warrant mentioning in this submission.

- The recently announced €270m Saudi Investment for a major urban renewal project in Waterford City is absolutely transformational for Waterford and the entire South East Region. This must be fully supported by government and the necessary state capital investment to enable this must be immediately forthcoming.

- The South East Region must be enabled to have its GDP and incomes at or above the national average.
- The South East Region must be enabled to cater for a population of over 700,000.
- Waterford City must be enabled to double its population and to that end the boundary must be extended in accordance with the findings of the recent independent Waterford Boundary Committee.
- The South East Region must be enabled to create an additional 50,000 jobs.
- Employment Policy must be focussed and target the growth of Waterford City (and the other regional Cities as discussed above) together with focussing on the South East Region to redress the current imbalance in FDI investment etc.
- The Technological University of the South East must be delivered and primarily centred in the City of Waterford; this will equip the region to grow economically and facilitate Waterford City's propulsive growth. Of the 29,000 additional college places projected to be required in Ireland in 2029, up to 10,000 of these should be assigned to the Technological University of the South East
- The Waterford Planning Land Use and Transportation Strategy must be delivered and the capital allocated to it.
- The Region must be served with high speed broadband.
- Pertinent rural development programmes will be required to ensure the revival of our towns and villages in the Region.
- University Hospital Waterford must be developed to be a regional hospital appropriate to the South East Region, this in turn frees up capacity in the county hospitals in the Region and Dublin and Cork.
- The Region needs a regional airport of an appropriate scale, capable of handling 300,000 to 400,000 passengers, with routes to the UK and parts of Europe. This requires a €10m investment.
- The development of the strategic ports within the Region.
- The need for improvements to the national road network within the Region.
- The requirement to improve rail services from Waterford to Dublin and Rosslare to Dublin.

- The requirement to retain the Waterford Limerick line if only for freight in the medium term.
- The need for cruise berthing in the Region.
- The development of interconnecting Greenways and Blueways throughout the Region.
- The maximisation of tourism to the Region.

Submitted by:

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