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HELPING SLIGO GROW

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National Planning Framework,
Department of Housing, Planning,
Community and Local Government
Custom House
Dublin 1

Date: 29th March 2017.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please see the enclosed submission to the National Planning Framework from Sligo Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Kind Regards,

Aidan Doyle
CEO
Sligo Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Ireland
2040
Our Plan



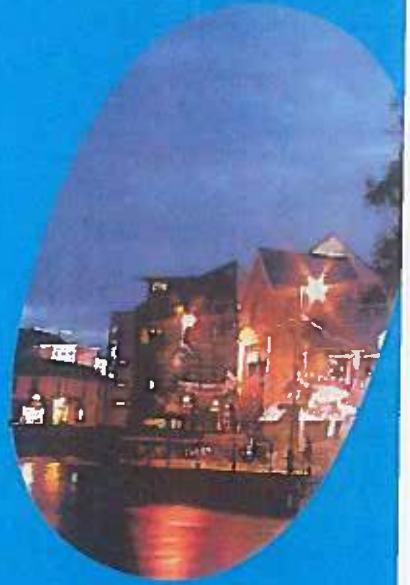
NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

SLIGO

LEADING THE NORTH WEST
INTO A MODERN IRELAND

Submission to
The National Planning
Framework

By SLIGO CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY



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CHAMBER
IN BUSINESS FOR BUSINESS

**“SLIGO – Leading the North West into a Modern
Ireland”**

Submission to the National Planning Framework

By

Sligo Chamber

of

Commerce and Industry



THE SLIGO CHAMBER VISION

Sligo Chamber of Commerce, its 260 businesses and 7,000 employees set out the Vision for the development of Sligo and the North West to 2040:

1. Sligo is the major regional centre in the North West serving 400,000 people and driving regional and rural growth.
2. Sligo's urban centre has a population of 80,000 people.
3. Sligo's Technological University campus together with its NUIG campuses is hosting 12,000 full time students at the college plus another 25,000 who are using its on-line remote learning facilities. Courses are tailored to meet the needs of industry and the tourism sector in the North West.
4. There are 24,000 additional new jobs in industry and support services in the North West Economic Zone.
5. Sligo and the North West Economic Zone's phenomenal array of iconic adventure, culture and food experiences are attracting 2 million visitors annually to the northern part of the Wild Atlantic Way.
6. The North West Economic Zone is leading the country in the development and production of indigenous energy. Sligo is the pivotal hub for the North West Economic Zone in a Modern Ireland and this has been achieved, through road, gas and other infrastructural investment that is on par with all other regions in Ireland.
7. Enhanced road interconnectivity with Dublin, Galway, Belfast, Donegal and North Mayo extending radially from Sligo.
8. National Rail network fully electrified and fuelled from the North West.
9. Collooney to Claremorris rail line re-opened and a freight depot developed at Collooney with access to Foynes, Waterford and Dublin.
10. Killybegs is the leading commercial port of the North West for fisheries, tourism, freight and servicing the off-shore energy sector. Sligo port plays a pivotal role in the transportation of locally grown bioenergy crops.

1. SLIGO – THE CENTRE OF REGIONAL GROWTH FOR THE NORTH WEST ECONOMIC ZONE

The Vision

By 2040, Sligo will be the major regional centre in the North West serving 400,000 people and driving regional and rural growth. Sligo will be the centre of regional economic growth so as to serve an area loosely defined as County Sligo, County Leitrim, North Mayo, South Donegal, North Roscommon and North West Cavan. For the purposes of this submission, this area will be designated the "North West Economic Zone".

What we Have

Sligo's functional area extends far beyond the county boundaries, as demonstrated by the thousands of people who travel daily for work from North East Mayo, South Donegal, North Roscommon and County Leitrim.

The current population of the North West Economic Zone is estimated at 210,000 based on the 2016 Census. It is a zone that has the potential to grow at a faster rate than many other parts of Ireland. Sligo, with its prime geographical location, is the pivotal hub for the region and is best placed to be the vibrant Regional Growth Centre to lead the North West into a Modern Ireland.

What is Needed

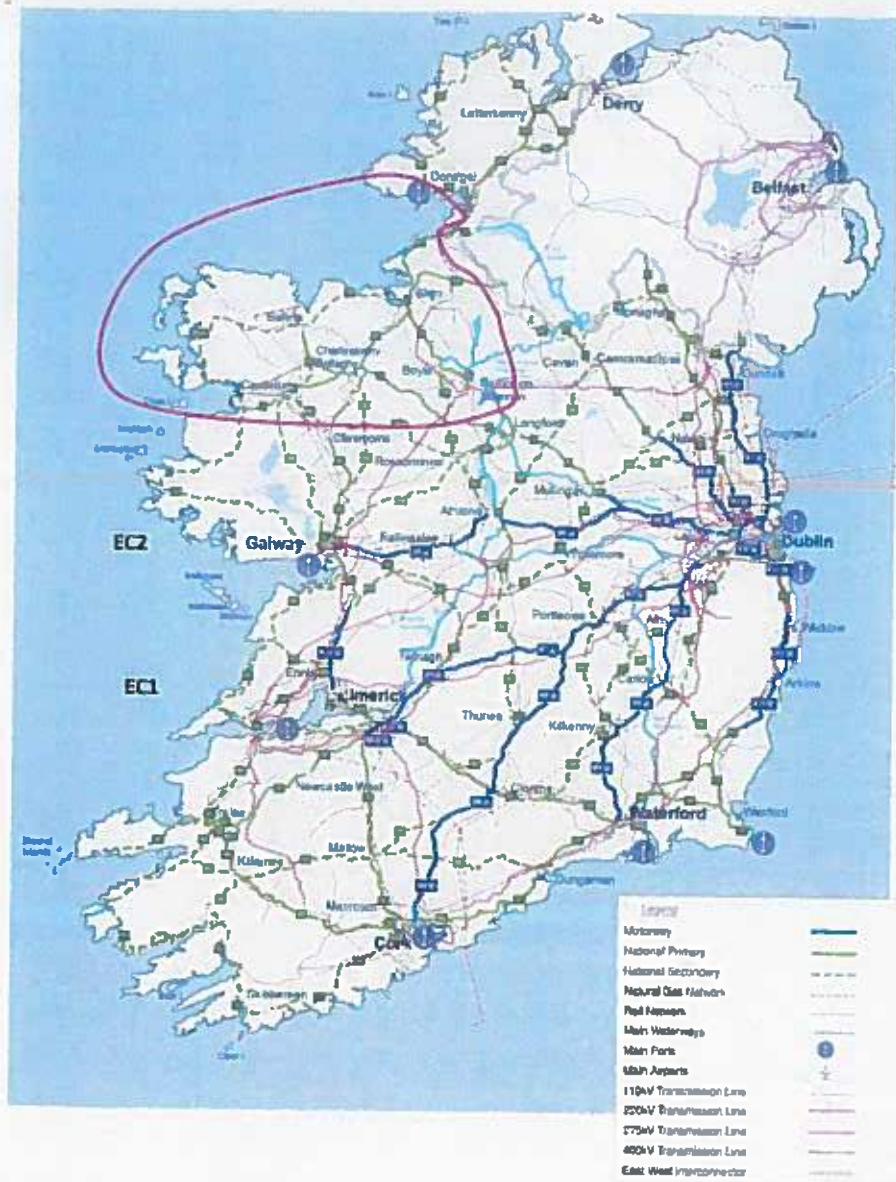
A primary focus of the National Planning Framework must be to facilitate and support the effective and sustainable economic growth of Ireland's regions so as to facilitate population growth and the harnessing of economic opportunities.

The idea that the entire country can grow at the same rate is unrealistic, but we can work towards a framework that plans effectively how those areas experiencing the most concentrated growth can feed into and benefit their wider regions. We must recognise the interdependence and connectedness of Ireland's villages, towns and cities, while acknowledging that the same plans will not work across the board and specialisation and differentiation should be reflected in the National Planning Framework.

Ireland's city regions are drivers of growth and Sligo Chamber, together with Chambers Ireland, takes the view that these areas must be adequately supported and enabled to grow in a way that benefits the regions.

The North West Economic Zone is part of the North West Regional Assembly Area (Sligo & Environs and Mayo) and is part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC).

As such, its linkages radially southwards to Galway and to Dublin; westwards cross border to Enniskillen and Belfast; and northwards to Letterkenny and Derry are crucial to the success of the National Planning Framework in the context of the development of a strong and vibrant North West Economic Zone.



Note: Notional Boundary Only

Figure 1: North West Economic Zone

By 2040, the North West Economic Zone can grow to a population in excess of 400,000.

Within the National Planning Framework, Sligo should be identified as the major urban centre to be developed in an accelerated manner, to drive and sustain regional and rural development in the North West region.

What this will mean for Sligo Urban Centre

The agglomeration of Sligo comprises the historical borough boundary central core (1mile circle from centre) together with the Urban Area outside the circle and the various satellite towns within 10km (Collooney, Ballisodare, Carrowroe, Strandhill, Rosses Point, Rathcormack, Drumcliff, Hazelwood/Ballinode and Cafr).

Sligo Chamber contends that the current CSO boundary is out of date and needs to be revised.

There is an approximate population of 20,000 people living in the Sligo Town historic borough area, with another 6,000 within the urban area outside the circle and a further 14,000 living within 10 km of the Town, giving the Sligo agglomeration a sizeable total population of 40,000.

Growth will occur in the Urban Core as well as in the adjacent satellite areas.

Following Sligo's NSS Gateway designation in 2002, the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2004 identified five areas for growth, with a capacity to house an additional population of 27,800.

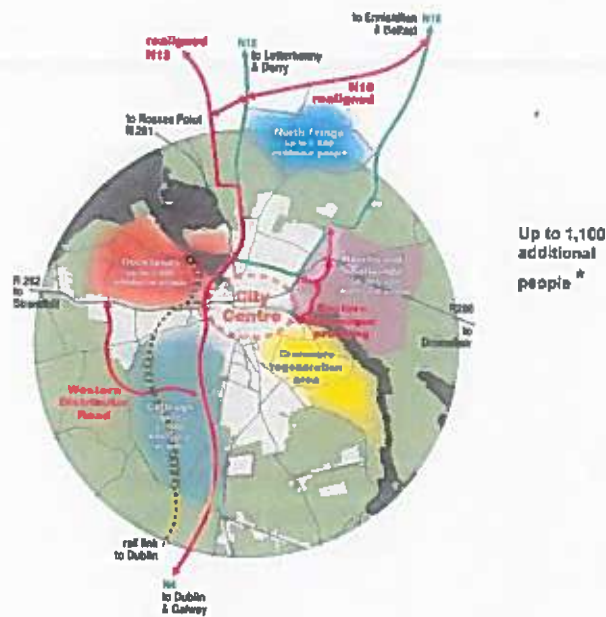


Figure 2: Growth potential – Capacity for up to 27,800 additional population in Urban Core*

The Urban Core area has capacity to grow from 26,000 to 55,000 while the satellites can grow from 14,000 to 30,000 which would give a total of 85,000. It is therefore not unrealistic that the Sligo Urban Centre could have a population of 80,000 by 2040.

2. EDUCATING A SKILLED WORKFORCE

The Vision

By 2040, Sligo's Technological University campus together with its NUIG campuses will host 12,000 full time students and another 25,000 by on-line remote learning all tailored to meeting the needs of industry and tourism in the North West.

What we Have

Sligo IT, Letterkenny IT and Galway-Mayo IT are jointly pursuing the creation of a Technological University within the North Western Region. IT Sligo will be the hub.

Two campuses (the current IT Sligo and the Castlebar campus of GMT) will service the North West Economic Zone. These are augmented by two campuses of NUIG viz St. Angela's College of Further Education (based in Sligo) and Sligo University Hospital. These offer a wide range of courses in business, engineering, humanities, science, nursing, health studies, home economics and education to a combined student population in excess of 7,000 of which 5,000 are based in Sligo. IT Sligo is the National Centre of Excellence for Toolmaking. IT Sligo, together with Fermanagh College currently run the CREST programme for Bioenergy and promote cross-border co-operation in the development of these sources of renewable energy. The four Sligo campuses have capacity to expand in response to the demands of industry and society.

What is Needed

Sligo Chamber recommends that the setting up and development of the Technological University should proceed at the earliest possible date.

What this will mean for Sligo and the North West Economic Zone

University status will attract more of our indigenous young people to study in the North West and remain in the region. This will contribute to the provision of a skilled workforce to meet the needs of industry and tourism. It will also facilitate research and promote innovation.

It is acknowledged that our offshore marine resources offer unlimited potential, for example, The National Test Wave Centre off Belmullet. The Technological University at Sligo together with NUIG also has the potential to lead innovation in unlocking these resources thereby facilitating the development of new enterprise and industry.

Sligo's Technological University campus together with its NUIG campuses will host 12,000 full time students and another 25,000 by on-line remote learning all tailored to meeting the needs of industry and tourism in the North West.

3. INDUSTRY – PROVIDING JOBS FOR A MODERN IRELAND

The Vision

There will be an additional 24,000 jobs in industry and support services in the North West Economic Zone by 2040.

What we Have

Sligo, together with Castlebar, Westport and Ballina has a vibrant healthcare and pharmaceutical sector. While FDI is to the fore, these industries are supported by indigenous firms who provide goods and services to a number of these plants. These collective industries provide an anchor for further clustering and development.

Historical industry in Sligo centres around precision engineering and tool making.

Food sector industry is well developed and offers scope for high value enhancement. Examples include Aurivo and Good4U Foods.

The presence of 220kV power lines and sub-stations at Sligo and Carrick-on-Shannon, the presence of the new AEConnect sub-sea cable between Killala (from Shirley, New York, USA) and the presence of high speed fibre broadband (e.g. SIRO) offers opportunity for data processing, data storage (data centres), I.T. related industry and global financial services from Sligo, Carrick-on-Shannon, North Mayo and Knock Airport. This will be a game-changer for the North West Economic Zone.

What is Needed

For Sligo, the early completion of the Western Distributor Road and the development of new FDI on the resultant 32ha campus at IDA Oakfield Park offers potential to double current FDI employment. Support industry can be developed at Cleveragh, Collooney, Ballymote and by the repurposing of existing industrial premises.

Improved road access through the upgrading of the N4 and the provision of a natural gas pipeline to Sligo will facilitate the increase in industrial development.

The additional FDI will create economic momentum in the North West Economic Zone.

The early implementation of the Western Distributor Road together with existing 220kV electricity, high speed fibre broadband and AEConnect Cable to USA will allow FDI and supporting indigenous industry to double.

What this will mean for Sligo and the North West Economic Zone

It is envisaged that an extra 6,000 FDI jobs will be created in IDA Finisklin Business Park and the new IDA Oakfield Park, plus another 6,000 FDI jobs in the North West Economic Zone, together with an extra 12,000 in Enterprise Ireland and local support services.

INDUSTRY – The early implementation of the Western Distributor Road together with existing 220kV electricity, high speed fibre broadband and AEConnect Cable to USA will allow FDI and supporting indigenous industry to double.

4. TOURISM

The Vision

By 2040, Sligo and the North West Economic Zone's phenomenal array of iconic adventure, culture and food experiences will attract 2 million visitors annually to the northern part of the Wild Atlantic Way.

What we Have

The North West Economic Zone has outstanding Wild Atlantic Way coastline with a complete range of water based activity on offer including some of the best surfing areas in the world. The North West is rich in cultural and historical experiences, from lively music to enchanting local stories, from Yeats' poetry to ancient historical sites at Ceide Fields, Carrowkeel and Carrowmore. Lissadell House, former homestead of Countess Markievicz is a key attractor and continues to grow and develop.

The Wild Atlantic Way's Surf Coast and Golf Links Zone stretches west from Donegal Town to Erris, recently voted Ireland's 'Best Place to Go Wild'. The stretch includes Bundoran and nearby Mullaghmore Head, renowned for drawing surfers from all over the world for giant 'prowlers' and international events. Outdoor adventure is huge including golf, hikes up Knocknarea Mountain to the huge flat-topped cairn, believed to be the Neolithic passage tomb of the legendary Queen Maeve of Connacht, to tracks and trails in the Ox Mountains, around Lough Gill, Slieve League in Donegal, iconic Benbulbin, to name only a very few. There is a rich literary heritage from William Butler Yeats to John McGahern and a vibrant traditional music heritage following in the footsteps of Coleman and Morrison.

The Wild Atlantic Way has brought huge benefits and new businesses within the adventure and food sectors are opening year on year and are reaping the benefits.

What is Needed

- Increased bed capacity.
- Improved access by road rail and air to the region including Strategic Development Zone at Ireland West Airport Knock.
- Upskilling and up staffing our tourism sector, to be able to attract international tourists.
- World-class standards on all infrastructural amenities and tourism products.
- Increase regional tourism performance in terms of the amount of visits and length of stay in the North West, which is currently underperforming compared to all other regions.
- Increase the dispersal and volume of visitors along the Wild Atlantic Way to the North West Economic Zone.
- Develop major flagship projects so that they become key attractors for the Zone including a Yeats Cultural Centre; Coolaney Mountain Bike Park and a multi-activity indoor centre capable of being expanded to accommodate 5,000 people.

What this will mean for Sligo and the North West Economic Zone

As the North West Economic Zone develops, tourism is one of the sectors which has the potential to increase at an enhanced rate so as to catch up with the rest of the Wild Atlantic Way. This will disperse international visitors throughout the country; meet the Government's target of increasing visitor numbers while at the same time ensuring regional dispersal and sustainability of all destinations.

**2 million visitors annually to the North West
Economic Zone**

5. ENERGY

The Vision

The North West Economic Zone is leading the country in the development and production of indigenous energy.

What we Have

The largest wind farm in Ireland, Meenadreen (near Laghey) Co. Donegal, went into production in January 2017 with an installed capacity of 96MW.

Counties Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon and Leitrim had some 690MW of wind energy installations at end 2016 which was 25% of the national total at that date. Since then, Meenadreen has gone into production, the 56MW wind farm at Sliabh Bawn, Co. Roscommon is being commissioned and Oweninney, Bellacorrick, Co. Mayo (180MW) is starting construction. Another 25MW is nearing completion at Tullynamoyle, Co. Leitrim.

The Corrib Gas Field, off the coast of North Mayo went into production in late December 2015. At peak production, it is estimated that this source can meet 60% of Ireland's gas needs.

The 2005 Ocean Energy strategy from the DCMNR, cites Ireland as having huge Ocean Energy potential most particularly with regard to its wave resources.

It estimates that the practical wave energy resource offshore is greater than 6,000 MW or 59 TWh per annum as per the public consultation document options for the development of wave energy in Ireland.

The potential is there for wave energy to be a crucial contributor towards Ireland's future energy requirements in the medium to long term.

The national wave energy test centre is located off Belmullet.

What is Needed

- A replacement mechanism to the REFIT Renewable Energy Feed in Tariffs which expires at the end of 2019.
- A new system for processing Grid Connection Applications from Renewable Sources.
- Extension of the Natural Gas Network into the North West Economic Zone.
- Increased use of compressed National Gas (CNG) for HGV's.
- Electrification of Rail.
- All HGV's either CNG or Electricity (diesel phased out).
- Majority of cars running on electricity by 2040.

Sligo Chamber recommends that an updated study be carried out to consider the viability of extending the Natural Gas network from Mullingar to Edgeworthstown, Longford, Dromod/Roosky, Carrick-On-Shannon, Boyle, Collooney and Sligo.

It is also recommended that the viability of a connection from Enniskillen to Ballyshannon be considered together with a spur southwards to Bundoran and Sligo and a spur northwards to Donegal Town and then to Killybegs.

It is recommended that the viability of CNG networks be examined within large urban areas such as Sligo until such time as a connection to the natural gas network is available.

What this will mean for Sligo and the North West Economic Zone

Sligo Chamber contends that the North West Economic Zone has the potential to be self-sufficient in energy and to be a nett exporter of energy to other parts of Ireland. This can be achieved by high penetration of renewables assisted by peaking plants fed by natural gas. This will facilitate the vision to create an additional 24,000 jobs in industry and support services in the North West Economic Zone by 2040.

North West Economic Zone can be a nett exporter of indigenous energy where all transport will be from "green" electricity.

Natural Gas Network expansion to Sligo by 2025. Interim Compressed Natural Gas Network by 2019.

6. ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE

The Vision

To support the vision for Sligo as the pivotal hub for the North West Economic Zone in a Modern Ireland, interconnectivity by means of suitable roads infrastructure is a fundamental component.

What we Have

The N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin will proceed towards construction early in 2018. The West/North West Region is part of the Comprehensive Network for which 5% of TEN-T funding is reserved for completion by 2050, in order to support the TEN-T Core Network.

What is Needed

Linkages radially extending out from Sligo:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Dublin | – | Upgrade of existing N4 (Sligo to Mullingar) to M4 Motor Way |
| Galway | – | Upgrade of N17 Dual Carriage Way (Collooney to Tuam) including access to Ireland West Airport Knock |
| Belfast | – | Upgrade of N16 to Enniskillen |
| Donegal | – | Upgrade of N15 |
| North Mayo | – | Upgrade of N56 |

The upgrading of the N4, N5, N16 and N17 have all been identified in the TEN-T policy as being of strategic importance and these projects can benefit from EU structural funding under the “Connecting Europe Facility” (CEF). It is imperative that the “suspended” status of Transport Infrastructure Ireland’s roads programmes be lifted as a matter of urgency as there is a long lead in time to construction (5-8 years) for these projects.

What this will mean for Sligo and the North West Economic Zone

90% of visitors that come to Ireland travel by car and therefore proper Road Infrastructure is essential for the North West Economic Zone.

The implementation of these projects to enhance connectivity to the North West Region will allow for more tourism access into the North West, assist the further development of Ireland West Knock Airport and promote expansion and efficiency for business in terms of movement of goods, exportation and access to Dublin and Europe.

Interconnectivity extending radially out from Sligo

7. OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE - RAIL AND PORTS

Rail

Currently Ballina is a hub for freight with increasing tonnages annually.

Re-opening three railway lines namely

- Collooney to Claremorris
- Claremorris to Athenry
- Limerick to Foynes

would allow direct access to either Foynes Port or Waterford Port and thereby allow further increases in rail freight. This would facilitate a reduction in HGV's for freight traffic. For Sligo, with the opening of the line from Collooney to Claremorris, a rail freight depot could be developed at Collooney which is also at the junction of the Sligo/Dublin line.



Sligo Chamber recommends that a national freight strategy and action plan be urgently progressed so as to evaluate what is viable in the short-term. A likely requirement is the construction of freight-capacity passing loops on all single track regional railway at 15km intervals

Our rail rolling stock is ageing and will need to be replaced post 2025. Diesel, as a fuel, may be banned at that stage and it would be opportune to electrify our railway system. This could be powered by wind power from North Mayo (150 turbines) and backed up by peaking plants fuelled by natural gas (also based in North Mayo).

Rail system electrified and fuelled from North West. Collooney to Claremorris line re-opened and a freight depot developed at Collooney.

Ports

Killybegs is the major port of the North West Economic Zone. It is a designated Fishery Harbour Centre and accounts for 50-60% of Ireland's Fish Landings.

The harbour is also employed as the main port in the North West for transportation of commercial cargos, such as timber, grain and wind turbines.

The service base activity at Killybegs is also expanding to cater for Cruise Liners with 15 large vessels scheduled to call in 2017 and some 18 Cruise Liners already scheduled to visit in 2018. The port has the capacity for expansion and diversification and for servicing the offshore energy sector.

Sligo Port can play a role in the development of the North West Economic Zone through increased tourism and leisure uses and as a port for the transportation of bioenergy related crops. Sligo Chamber recommends that a Development Plan be prepared so as to elicit the most effective use of the Sligo Port. A possible option is the shipping of biomass products from indigenous forestry/bioenergy crops to other parts of Ireland.

Killybegs – leading port in North West Servicing Fisheries, Commercial Freight and Tourism interests