



NPF Submissions
Forward Planning Section
Department of Housing
Planning, Community and Local Government
Custom House
Dublin D01 W6X0

By email: npf@housing.gov.ie

29 March 2017

Ireland 2040 Our Plan, National Planning Framework First Stage Submission

Dear Sir / Madam

I write to make the following first stage submission. I am a husband, a father of three, a brother to five, a son, an uncle a business owner and chartered consulting engineer.

Seeking observations is commendable. I hope such observations have effect. I have split my submission into a number of headings as follows:

Timeframe and Implementation

Planning for the next 40 years is good however we as a country should also have parallel longer term plans over say 100, 200 and 500 years. The world is a much smaller place than it was once considered, with limited resources, and it is not possible to make widespread change for good without implementing long-term goals today and into the future. Shortening the planning periods only causes us to 'firefight' on issues as a country and makes our spending very wasteful.

Europe, Stability & Society

I would like for Ireland to shift its focus more towards Europe, with more influence and business connections coming from Europe. I think we should look towards Europe on social and human issues and how we structure our society for its people. We should look away more from America and the UK on such issues, as they are not as developed in these matters as many of the European countries.

It seems that the boom-bust cycle destroys economies, communities, families and people. It is not a case of boom good, bust bad. The boom also has its very negative aspects that undermine our society. We should be planning for long-term slow and steady growth in conjunction with the other countries in Europe that attempt this well. We should promote and encourage such business in Ireland and particularly ethical businesses which are known to be more stable and sustainable. We should aim towards an ethical and sustainable economy.

We should aim towards a much fairer society than has exists in Ireland. All aspects of the business of the state should be working together in a coordinated way to achieve the above aims.

The divide between public sector and private sector should be broken down and rates of public pay should be in accordance with adopted statistical procedure rather than the current unnecessarily disruptive arrangement. The unfair burden on the self-employed who get no pension, no guaranteed income and no support if they become sick should be addressed. This is not just about rates of pay but also about parity of quality of life and security.

The current economic experiment of trickle-down economics has proved that it creates significant unfairness in society. I would like to see this experiment ending in the short term and the country being developed for all of its people in a consultative way.

A Tax Return for All (Your annual financial declaration to the state)

Every adult in the state over eighteen should have to do a yearly tax return. This should be simple enough to do one's self. It would declare all tax related issued as well as allowances received. It is not good to have a society in which part of the population does a tax return and part do not. Allowances would be paid out in conjunction with the taxing system, simplifying the system and the individual's contact with the state.

No more Medical Cards

I would like to see medical cards abolished and replaced with a system whereby the needs of the patient are met as required. They create perceived and real inequality in society.

Children and Young Adults

I would like to see the pattern of investment into the young being inverted from the current arrangement where investment increases with age. We have learned now that the greatest impact for good in adults can be made when the person (and their families) is young. Dealing with personal, family and developmental issues at a young age through small interventions or investment can save hugely on much greater costs that are expended when problems have become part of the person at an older age. We should be world leaders in the understanding and implementation of this principle.

Society and the state should recognise that young adults need support when having children and in the early years. Handing out children's allowance in a blanket manner should be stopped and this should be replaced with focused intelligence based assistance to parents of young families.

Health Provision

I would like to see health provision in Ireland completely deconstructed and reconstructed. At present, we seem to have many well-intentioned individuals in the health service but very poor functionality of the system. There is great inequality in income and control over the system between medical consultants in particular and others. This inequality within hospitals and in society generally is damaging to society.

Value

I would like to see a reassessment of some of the values we have in society and on the value we place on different professions. It should be recognised that as individuals we all only have 24 hours in every day and that we are all needed to create our varied society. I would like to see society organised more like John Lewis Partnership in the UK in its profit sharing, capping of max. pay and other strategies.

Recognition of the Value of Creating Good Places

I would like to see far more time and effort put into the design and creation of new development and I would like us to put more value on this. I would like us to take some of the love of literature and other arts that we have in abundance in Ireland and convert some of this into a love of place and an appreciation of quality of place and materials. We have incredible designers in this country and many work on an international stage but we do not use them to create and repair our own places. I would like this to change.

I would like us to recognise that when we are building and repairing our towns and cities, we are building the country so it needs a restraint, and consideration. In this sense we should be turning away from the

influence of America and towards Europe. America creates very fractured places in its development and in turn a fractured and harsh society.

Repair and Quality

Ireland has a poor history of maintenance and repair. This can be seen in our cities and in our buildings. I would like to see this change. A culture of maintenance and repair and taking ownership for our places and buildings is very healthy and good for us as people.

Recognition of the Value of our Built Heritage to future Generations

I would like that in the future the extensive built heritage that we have in Ireland would be better valued, looked after and repaired for the economic benefit of all of the citizens. In this I include all of the small terraced Georgian houses and public spaces that make up our towns, villages and cities all over the country. I would like to see the country benefit economically in this way as described in the World Bank Document 'The Economics of Uniqueness'.

Planning Major Projects

Where a public or other major project is considered, there should firstly be real and meaningful consultation with the people of the country or place. Every attempt should be made to reach the opinion of all people, even those who might not get out much or may be more introverted within society. This is how projects should commence. This consultation should allow meaningful steering or change in the project or stop it from happening or making it happen in a completely different way. This method of managing meaningful development of projects in developed societies is known and carried out in other countries and produces the best results for citizens. In Ireland however people of my own profession, government organisations and local authorities still try to push through poorly considered crude projects that are not good for the country. We have reached a point in time where it is no longer appropriate to allow engineers to lead, design and implement projects without meaningful input of a multi-disciplinary team of other specialists and designers.

The ESB, OPW and other government organisations who are considered to look after the public good should have their processes opened up to transparency to prevent the 'behind closed doors' view that exists of them. This is not good for society.

Planning for the future in terms of how to manage and invest in water, electricity, gas, oil resources should all be opened up to meaningful consultation processes where the public have first input to decision making processes. This kind of planning can be seen on other European countries. Ireland should become an exemplar in this.

Planning for Population Increase

Dublin should remain the capital city however the trend of permitting it to grow disproportionately relative to the rest of the country should be stopped. This continual expansion and internal investment was allowed to happen with London in the UK and it only led to an imbalance in society that ultimately led to Brexit. It had many other negative impacts also such as housing problems and lack of affordability of homes for native London people. Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford and other urban centres should be invested in and allowed to grow in a planned and sustainable manner to counterbalance the gravitational effect of Dublin.

Building and property development should be encouraged in small plots rather than being carried out by large developers only, as we see today. The infrastructure and landscape of places should be planned in detail by multi-disciplinary creative people, then allowing small developers or families to develop their plot or plots within the development rules or constraints. All of this would help towards a fairer society and would assist in people taking ownership of their place. Public housing should be fully integrated with private and they should be indistinguishable. The separation of public housing from other housing in the

20th century caused very significant problems for families. People in private housing should accept this as it is something that society needs.

Information

There should only be one or a few website for navigating all things government and local authority related. Today in society it is very difficult to find out the information on what you are entitled to or other information. Local authorities and the government should have people within them that are experts in connecting the issues in the different departments and can assist people outside.

Government and local authority departments should be broken down to better serve the citizens.

Cork City Council

Cork is a city with incredible potential and people love it and this is not new. Unfortunately, Cork City Council seems to be ineffective. It can be seen clearly in the condition of the city in terms of:

- the lack of maintenance of the public realm.
- the poor quality of maintenance or repair where any is carried out.
- the poor quality of repair of a vast stock of Georgian historic buildings (most of the historic core).
- the allowing of overly large development within the historic core over the last forty years (in particular Merchant's Quay, Opera Lane, Lavitt's Quay and Capital Cinema).

The Council's coordination with the OPW on a very poor and potentially extremely damaging concrete wall proposal for flooring in Cork in my view is the final nail in the coffin for Cork.

In the future I would like to see:

- investment in understanding in how to repair and maintain our historic public realm using best practices.
- repair and maintenance of our public realm including historic elements using best practices.
- full support within the council for decisions that are based on the principles of proper planning within our environment in Cork and elsewhere (restricting the bulk of new developments in historic environments and restricting ownership size of developments and development plot size).
- All floors in historic centre buildings being utilised. This would take work by the Local Authorities' fire engineers to allow residential uses on upper floors as we see throughout Europe. Our fire engineers work on British fire regulations rather than looking towards Europe which I would like to see.
- Identification in detail of what is special about Cork's public spaces (including the river), public realm and built details and protection, reinstatement and repair of these. Policies should be created for long-term future maintenance and repair.
- Our physical environment in Cork is a hodgepodge of different materials, lighting and other physical elements with blatant disregard of the historic environment. Every time works are carried out they make the place more suburban, lowering the quality of the place. I would like to see this change for the benefit of citizens and to benefit tourism and desirability as a place to invest. Cork City Council seems to be controlled by engineers in terms of the physical environment and this should change. I know from personal experience that engineers are not educated in urban design and it is often not what they want to do. I do not understand why in Ireland we keep asking them to look after so many things that affect the human aspects of our physical environment. I would like this to change in the future. Engineers and architects should be working together.

Cork City Flooding

I am a chartered consulting engineer and am in business in Cork and live in Cork City. I also own building that has flooded in Cork City. While I very much welcome proposals to deal with flooding, I am extremely concerned about the nature of the proposals that have been prepared by the Office of Public Works for Cork. The proposal has clearly been very poorly conceived and very poorly executed, without the necessary fundamental input of a historic urban designer or quantification of the amount of damage and loss that would be permanently be caused to the City.

The consideration, design and detailing presented is of a type that would suit to a low-quality out of town retail park and not the historic Georgian centre of Ireland's second city, which is defined by its subtle relationships with the river. This scheme, in its brutality and lack of consideration for the historic environment would put Cork at risk as an economically sustainable city. It would hamper business and devalue property indefinitely. It would result in a severe lack of investment in the city for generations. There would be far less interest in living and investing in Cork City if this scheme were carried out. I can say this factually as I have lived and worked in other cities, I am interested in urbanism and its dynamics, and I can read drawings.

The proposals are outdated and I question the process and brief that led to such misguided attempts to tackle what is a very serious issue for all of us in Cork. Alternatives that respect the built heritage of Cork need to be considered and a revolution of thinking is required as well as ingenuity on a national level. I don't believe in building extensive walls in Cork as a solution for flood defences. I find it perplexing that the OPW would give this serious consideration. Economic losses for Cork from this kind of solution in the long term may reach the billions, and the OPW may be wasting millions that could be used for a real solution to this issue

I would not see this scheme built but a scheme with a barrage or barrier to the river/harbour at little island to regulate tidal flooding and upstream attenuation and other flow reducing measures.

How Should Success be Measured

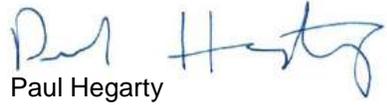
In the future I would like to see success measured against achievement factors such as:

- Fairness in Society Factor
- Happiness of Citizens Factor
- Contribution of the Country to the Rest of the World Factor
- Health (mental and physical) of Population Factor
- Protection of the Natural Environment for Future Generations Factor
- Quality of the Built Environment for Future Generations Factor
- Stability of Economy Factor
- Ethical Business Factor.

All of the above factors exist in some form, perhaps with different names. These could be key factors which the CSO could publish at intervals and which the political parties could quote. It is known that when such factors are performing well that the more traditional indices also perform well.

We have a small country of very educated people and we should be able to plan and implement the above. Some cultural change and adjustment would be needed however we are used to this.

Faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Hegarty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Paul Hegarty

BE CEng MStructE MIEI
Chartered Consulting Engineer