

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

SENT VIA EMAIL

30 March 2017

Dear Sir or Madam

**RE: IRELAND 2040 NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK
Issues and Choices**

The Royal Town Planning Institute Northern Ireland (RTPI NI) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government first stage Choices and Issues paper of the National Planning Framework Ireland 20140.

The Institute is the largest professional body in Europe representing spatial planning and represents over 23,000 professional planners in the public and private sectors. Almost 600 of our members are in Northern Ireland, many of whom are actively involved in planning across a wide range of sectors with an extensive scope of experience and practice.

This RTPI NI response to this consultation has been contributed to by the RTPI NI Policy and Research Forum, a group of RTPI NI members from a range of spatial planning backgrounds. The understanding, knowledge and skill set of the forum make it well placed and qualified to make comment on the National Planning Framework.

RTPI NI welcomes the production of the National Planning Framework process and the emphasis it places on an all island context. RTPI NI considers the NPF a legible and user friendly document that shows ambition while learning from mistakes and experiences from previous strategic planning documents.

RTPI NI welcomes the approach of the paper in considering the all-island approach to its place making strategy and considers this proactive approach something that could complement the approach taken both North and South of the border in creating a picture of growth while beginning to address the issues being faced by the local councils either side of the border and indeed by the areas impacted by the Belfast/ Dublin corridor and associated linkages.

In order for the NPF to facilitate co-ordination between settlements and economic opportunities within both jurisdictions it is necessary for high level cooperation to be established, maintained and nurtured between the Government Departments and local councils . . . Mechanisms for encouraging cross-governmental working should be developed, including a cross border dimension, to embed this.

The RTPI produced a research paper in January 2015 entitled 'Strategic Planning: Effective Cooperation for Planning Across Boundaries'. The paper considers strategic planning as a solution to issues such as the management of housing markets, transport networks, river basins, energy supplies and investment in skills needed to co-ordinate across an area wider than a single local council.

Through the research for the report and the experience drawn from the wider RTPI membership various general principles which strategic planning should follow irrespective of where it is practised have been developed. Strategic planning should:

- Have focus – being efficient in the use of resources and clear about its purpose;
- Be genuinely strategic – dealing only with matters which require resolution across boundaries;
- Be spatial – i.e. it should make choices between places, not simply establish general criteria for later decision making;
- Be collaborative – meaning that partners work together to see how they can deliver each other's agendas;
- Have strong leadership – so that negotiations between places are productive and not protracted; and
- Be accountable to local electorates.

A full copy of the report can be found on the RTPI website or accessed via this link:

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1230885/RTPI-Strategic%20Planning-Brochure%20FINAL%20web%20PDF.pdf>

The level of political uncertainty in Northern Ireland during this time, in relation to Government structure and Brexit make the questions being asked within the NPF in relation to cross border infrastructure and common environmental challenges even more pertinent. There is role for the planning profession, north and south of the border to come together to discuss these significant issues further. Given the placement of members across the island of Ireland RTPI is well placed to develop further discussions around the cross border strategic spatial planning on a regional and local level. It is encouraging that the National Planning Framework is placing emphasis on the linkages and relationships in this context.

The NPF has the opportunity to be an ambitious document that is opening areas for discussion within an all island spatial context. It is important to remember the wider cross border implications of the UK leaving the EU that will impact across the island, such as the movement of people, the impact on health and educational services along the border regions, impact on retail and consumer spending, energy and infrastructure.

RTPI NI welcomes and supports the approach of the National Planning Framework for Ireland and also supports the comments made by our colleagues and members in RTPI Ireland.

We trust you will find these comments useful. If you require any clarification or further comment do not hesitate to make contact.

Yours faithfully

CLAIRE WILLIAMSON

RTPI NI Policy Officer

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