



Shannon Chamber Submission on The National Planning Framework IRELAND 2040

While Chamber Ireland, in its submission to the NPF Framework, has referenced the need to redress ‘unevenly distributed economic activity across the country’, Shannon Chamber would separately suggest that, when preparing the NPF Framework, consideration should be given to the work being undertaken by the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) – an initiative of the Chambers of Commerce of Shannon, Ennis, Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Limerick, Tralee and the American Chamber of Commerce.

As recently as March 2017, the Government decided to progress the potential for the Atlantic Economic Corridor and has now set up an Atlantic Economic Taskforce to progress the concept, which is a strong endorsement of the work that has been undertaken over the past two years. This taskforce is being chaired by the Minister of State for Regional Economic Development, Michael Ring, T.D.

The first taskforce meeting, chaired by Minister Ring and attended by An Taoiseach, was held in Castlebar, Co Mayo on Monday, 6 March. The outcome from this meeting is that the AEC concept has received very strong political and government support and the Chambers’ leadership, which has led to the formation of the Task Force, is fully recognised.

It is accepted that the AEC is about providing a foundation for 2030, 2040 and has potential to make a very important contribution to the next iteration of National Planning Framework.

While specific proposals for redressing the current economic imbalance in Ireland are outlined in a separate submission being submitted by the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) - an initiative of the Chambers of Commerce of Shannon, Ennis, Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Limerick, Tralee and the American Chamber of Commerce – Shannon Chamber would like to reinforce some pertinent issues, contained in their submission, which, if implemented, will positively reverse the depopulation of western regions and significantly increase employment within these regions.

- Regarding **Infrastructure**, the provision of enabling infrastructure is critical to the successful development of Second Tier cities. It is essential in any future planning scenario that adequate funding be allocated to ensure rapid delivery of the level of infrastructure required to support the expansion of key urban areas...for example, In the Limerick Shannon area – there is an obvious and stated demand for the completion of the M20 motorway to provide easy and fast access for the business and tourism traveller between Cork and Limerick and onwards to the western seaboard. Similarly, the requirement to upgrade the N69 between Limerick and Foynes Port has been well documented and the subject of a separate economic impact study. Without access of this nature, locations such as Limerick and Clare and the western corridor are at a serious disadvantage when it comes to infrastructural adequacy. The completion of a primary and combined road and rail backbone along the AEC should therefore be given priority.
- Regarding **broadband** access, high-speed access is not solely a requirement of cities and urban towns but also rural locations where upload and download speeds do not equate to current technological advances where cloud storage is the norm. People operating a business from home, or seeking to ‘remote work’ for their multinational employer, are more concerned with being able to work with similar broadband speeds as are available to their city-based co-worker. The reliance, in many instances, on Eir phone lines to supply broadband connectivity to rural homes is a prohibitor; alternative wireless options delivering fast speeds at cost competitive prices are essential in areas where a fibre-driven option may never be feasible.
- As pointed out in the AEC submission, attracting investment to the western seaboard requires the delivery of a network of fit-for-purpose property solutions for business of all types and sizes and in all locations. This will require a focus on the renewal and re-purposing of **Enterprise Property Capacity**, with consideration given to the state/local government acquiring and transforming underutilised capacity and utilising these, in conjunction with brown field sites and identifiable enterprise hub capacity, to provide a significant capacity opportunity.
- Regarding **air connectivity**, Shannon Chamber would highlight the need to align the National Aviation Policy (NAP) with the National Planning Framework to ensure that the provision of air connectivity in Ireland supports effective regional development outside Dublin.

While passenger traffic to Ireland has grown in recent years, this growth has primarily been at Dublin Airport. Continued, unregulated growth in market share at Dublin Airport will not be in the broader national interest, will impair the western regions' (particularly Shannon Airport) ability to win its share of inbound tourism and FDI and will weaken the region's indigenous businesses ability to compete globally.

- Maintaining adequate sea port connectivity into Ireland for both passenger and freight movements will become a greater priority with the onset of Brexit; this should also be factored in when framing the NPF.

ENDS

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