

From: Cllr Malcolm Noonan [REDACTED]
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To Whom it may concern

Please see below some observations in relation to the draft NPF.

Best wishes with the ongoing work

Malcolm

Observations on the National Planning Framework

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March 30th 2017

Critical Mass in Towns and Villages

With a projected doubling of Ireland's population up to 2020 one of the most important issues that the NPF could address is imposing restrictions on one off rural housing. Many areas in the Country have already reached capacity in terms of density of housing in the countryside. With this brings many challenges; provision of services, sustainable transport, ageing population and isolation, maintenance of the roads network and ecological damage caused to hedgerows, habitats and watercourses.

The NPF can address this by focusing future housing needs clustered around existing towns and villages and by getting village and town centres back into productive use as habitable spaces. Making our urban spaces more attractive and reducing car dependency through modal shift can make our towns much more attractive prospects than one off rural housing. Our towns can cater for many family sizes and offer a viable alternative to new build.

Giving capacity to towns and villages will help rural shops, post offices, schools and the wider local economy.

The NPF can pull together a strategy for the conservation and retention of as many heritage buildings as is practicable. Heritage has a value that is timeless. In an Ireland of 2040 many of today's buildings will be heritage buildings. It is important to retain stock from every decade. A robust set of policies and supports must be in place in order to achieve this goal.

A Radical Shift in Transportation Policy

The increase in Ireland's population can rightly justify significant and sustained investment in public transport, cycling and walking over private car travel. Investment in any new additional road infrastructure other than that already committed to must cease. As well as investment in sustainable electric or biogas fleets in our larger urban centres, the NPF must address integrated rural public transport connected to urban centres via single ticketing and park and ride.

Cycling and walking must become the default means of urban mobility within the lifetime of the plan. Ambitious targets for cycling must be adopted, funded and implemented. Physical infrastructure, cycle parking, cycle lanes and cycling networks are important but equally important will be reducing HGV traffic and general traffic in urban areas to make spaces more cycle friendly.

Creating safer routes to schools and locating schools within urban centres rather than on the periphery will help achieve targets.

National Landscape Plan

The NPF should be the overarching document for developing a comprehensive landscape management plan for Ireland. Such a plan would set out the sustainable management of forestry, water resources, habitats, biodiversity and govern all land use decisions made by planning authorities. This is an important body of work that can ensure the conservation of our natural resources.

It is important over coming months that the planning team working on the NPF engage in a meaningful way with as many groups as possible. In particular, young people, children, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities including the Travelling Community, older people and seldom heard groups in such processes should be included. Such engagement will require the use of more participative methodologies of engagement than linear consultation. Gathering information from all groups will ultimately make for a stronger plan that is inclusive and reflective of our diverse society.

Transition to a low carbon economy

The Plan must be ambitious in going beyond internationally agreed targets for reduction in energy consumption and share of energy from renewables. The plan can lead the transition towards a low carbon economy and must do so if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. It will also make our economy more competitive, address fuel poverty and create thousands of local jobs in communities around the Country.

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Oifigeach Poiblí Ainmnithe faoin Acht um Brústocaireacht a Rialáil 2015

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