

A Vision for Ireland 2040

In planning for the future of our nation, we must be cognisant of the many, sometimes conflicting, goals we wish to attain. We must hope to increase our island's population while protecting and preserving the landscape and environment in which we live. We must strive to increase the population density in our cities while maintaining and improving the quality of built environment and public realm spaces that make those cities liveable. We must uphold the services provided to our rural areas to protect the fabric of those communities while adjusting our land usage to take account of our environmental responsibilities, from mitigating climate change to preserving biodiversity.

The membership of Waterford Branch of the Green Party wish to make the following submission to the National Planning Framework 2040. As a local branch, our submission deals with suggestions specifically regarding Waterford's future, but also a number more national in reach.

Energy:

Ireland is far from achieving the emissions targets set for itself under international agreements, with the goal of decarbonising by 2050 becoming ever more distant as we experience policy drift in the area. Renewable energy generation must become a core policy for this and future governments.

Ireland's electricity grid must undergo sustained and extensive upgrade to become fit for purpose, including the roll out of smart metering to allow householders to maximise the benefit of microgeneration.

The installation of small scale solar capacity should be heavily incentivised. Larger roof spaces, on schools, supermarkets, etc., should be available for rental to solar installers, with connection to the national grid facilitated wherever possible.

A fair feed-in tariff is essential in the promotion of microgeneration installations.

Anaerobic digestion facilities should be developed where appropriate, ideally in tandem with waste water treatment plants. As well as providing biogas and district heating, these facilities would have the added benefit of reducing harmful methane emissions.

Ireland should invest heavily in the development of renewable technologies to capitalise on the rich wind, wave and tidal resources that so abound in our country.

Transport & Transport Infrastructure

Roadsides need to provide safe spaces for alternative transport to cars in all towns and villages, ie bikes and pedestrians, to enable people to move more easily without cars, leading to a healthier fitter population.

Roadside verges should be planted where possible to clean the air and help mitigate against flash flooding from impermeable surfaces. Every car-park at ground level should be required to allocate more unpaved space for planting, for the same purpose. Those that cannot plant due to underground or levels, should sponsor planting in a nearby urban area, to counteract the air pollution caused by cars.

Funding for cycling infrastructure must be drastically increased to promote the further development of cycling culture in our cities and towns in particular.

A motorway should be constructed from Waterford to Limerick to intersect with the Cork-Dublin motorway. This would in effect provide motorway transport between four of the islands largest urban centres.

A high speed rail corridor should be built along the same axes – Dublin to Cork, Limerick to Waterford. In the same way, this would provide high speed quality interconnectivity between our urban centres, rather than the radial effect centred on Dublin in our current infrastructural network.

A range of additional measures must be considered to promote the adoption of electric cars into our national fleet. Not least of these measures would be the significant expansion and upgrade of charging points available to EV drivers.

Housing

We need to ensure that all housing is built to very high sustainability standards, and support people further in retrofitting the existing housing stock to drastically cut our energy usage.

Every housing estate will have allotment areas assigned along with green space for playing. In addition communal compost bins will be provided for grass clippings. A percentage of road tax will be used to plant five native trees every year for each car.

Public Spaces

We need to ensure safe public places are available for people of all ages to use for recreation in our communities, from green spaces for sports and games, to sheltered community areas indoor for teenagers to hang out, areas for games tables for people of all ages to pull up a seat for a game of chess, backgammon or cards, and gardens. Gardens where under supervision families can claim a square or two for growing food, flowers or medicinal herbs. These community spaces, are essential to create shared experiences and values to enable people to share responsibility and live together well.

All public buildings will be retrofitted to passive standards, and be powered primarily by solar panels, Any excess energy will be stored through charging of vehicle batteries for electric vehicles for staff transport.

Cherishing our Landscape and Heritage

Natural capital will be thoroughly and fairly assessed through the country and all ecosystem services duly accounted for in planning and policies. A natural capital officer will be appointed to each council district responsible for auditing the natural elements of value in the landscape in the area, facilitated by emergent remote sensing technologies and sharing of Corrine and Copernicus (EU satellite) open data.

Ireland will have evolved to adopt a "right to roam" code for access to green spaces and watersides, akin to the Swedish model. People will be widely aware of the benefits of access to green natural spaces, for wellbeing.

As climate change impacts gather in force, and sea and water levels rise, the management of hydrological features in particular, rivers and lakes will be of increasing importance. All natural flood plains will need to be restored to function as overflow areas, and buildings and homes sites there will have been fairly exchanged for safer protected spaces elsewhere. A myriad of natural upstream buffering through well designed planting schemes, will be planted and prioritised as superior solution over hard expensive flood relief construction works.

Native woodland and suitable habitats will be planted as buffers between agricultural land and waterways to protect this important resource from nutrient pollution, and to support the nutrient recycling of nitrogen and phosphorous which will become more expensive to purchase and therefore we will need to plan to manage to recapture this essential elements for life before they escape to cause toxic algae blooms and settle on the bottom of the ocean. We will monitor our coastal areas for erosion from rising seas, and prepare plans for moving homes in danger from extreme storm surges.

Water is one of our great natural resources, both fresh and marine. Our waste water services must be invested in, and it should be our goal that all waste water treatment plants treat water to a tertiary degree before discharge into the wider environment.

Ireland will continue to cherish its culture in music, art, film, theatre, food and language. We will also have grown new blends of Irishness by welcoming people and refugees from other countries and being enriched by their cultural heritage too.

We will support families and friends who look after sick or elderly people, and people of different abilities, and needs to enable them to live with dignity and joy. We will provide equal access to education for those with different abilities in every community.

Over 40% of the Irish coast will be assigned to Marine Protection Areas, to shelter ocean lifeforms, and provide potential for increasing capacity for shorter sustainable harvesting of fish from the oceans in the future. People who depend on fishing for their livelihood will be provided with support to learn about and invest in more sustainable forms for ocean farming.

We will not permit the planting of any GM seed or crops which may threaten non-GM plants by cross-pollination. We will employ more people in rural areas farming more

diverse food produce in smaller farms. There will be a move away from dairy and beef, as vegetarianism becomes more widespread.

Growing Waterford

Waterford City should be a key economic driver of the southeast region. We strongly urge that the proposed boundary extension go ahead to allow the city the room to expand its housing stock and thereby increase its population.

Waterford's national transport links are generally good, with a high quality motorway to Dublin and an outstanding deep water port. The Waterford – Limerick motorway proposed above would further provide connectivity to Limerick (and thereby Galway) and Cork. A high speed rail corridor would discharge a similar function. These infrastructural links would also benefit freight travel from the Port of Waterford.

With an increased population and bolstered economic activity, the case for a university in Waterford to serve the students of the Southeast Region would become all the more compelling.