

Cork Greens Submission to National Planning Framework

The Cork Greens are a progressive political party focused on social justice, protection of the living world, grassroots democracy, and peace.

We held a public meeting on 13 March 2017 to consult and work on our submission this National Planning Framework. We had input from a wide range of our members, as well as members of the public who came to the public meeting and worked with us on crafting a submission.

Collating the submissions from the meeting and what we received online, this a submission not just on our behalf but on behalf of 47 people. We have tried to capture the broad range of ideas proposed along the 10 questions suggested in the consultation, **though it should be noted that not everyone in the group will necessarily support each proposal listed here and some may even be mutually exclusive of each other**. These are the views of the people we consulted with and not necessarily the views of the Cork Greens. The purpose of this submission is to highlight the views of the people who wanted their voices to be heard. We hope that this is of use to those planning the Framework and we look forward with interest to the next stage of the process.

Question 1: What should Ireland look like in 20 years?

We can have a more equal, happier, and more prosperous country, a nation where every citizen is empowered to have their voice heard at all levels and where we live at peace with other people and with nature around us. With a fair bit of work, there really is no reason why Ireland shouldn't be the best small country in the world in which to live. In the answers to the questions below, we detail the many different changes that the various different people who participated in our consultation would like to work towards.

Question 2: How do we ensure that every place can reach its potential?

We believe everyone is entitled to a home in this country. That will be the starting point for places to reach their full potential. Strong political will is needed to make significant changes in our decision making structures and land use planning.

Our environment

We believe the land should have the same legal rights as a person.

Land use planning

In order to reach their potential every place will need to be equipped with the necessary amenities such as green spaces, public gardens, public transport. Urban villages will comprise village sized chunks with buildings registered for intended purpose. Using and maximising vacant land will be a starting point for regenerating our city centres.

Sustainable Transport Systems

Greater investment will be needed in Public Transport both in urban and rural areas. This will be necessary for reducing reliance on cars and introducing modal shift to more sustainable mediums. It is envisaged by some members of the group to have a two tier public transport system for city areas and community areas. In addition, electric cars will play a part in reducing the number of diesel cars on our roads.

Decision making structures

There is a need to provide more localised decision making structures. A more participatory planning process is therefore necessary for ensuring equal spread of resources. Stronger Local Government will have a part to play in this with an emphasis on greater taxation autonomy.

Fostering civic spirit and education

Fostering civic spirit is essential for developing a sense of pride of place in people. Education can have a huge impact on attitudes towards the environment. Creating a more just and safe society takes a reform of the whole education system where we believe young people are the key to change.

Community owned resources

This will take the form of locally owned energy resources. A local taxation system will help to facilitate this.

Social Enterprise

Encouraging local indigenous industry is key to developing self-sufficiency. We support the advent of social enterprise schemes as a means of places achieving their potential. Entrepreneurs have a part to play in this and structures such as improving broadband in rural areas as well as Wi-Fi on public transport will help to realise this.

There is a strong emphasis on supporting and encouraging social enterprise. We believe that this is key to ensuring success around the country in both rural and urban areas. It is necessary to ensure equal spread of resources throughout the country. This will be better achieved by providing more localised decision making structures and encouraging a more participatory planning system. Projects like nimble spaces in Callan are examples of collaborative efforts between the residents and the industry.

Competition between urban and rural

In order to ensure equal distribution of resources, there is a need to curb the competition between urban and rural. Having said this a desire for the urban has emerged where more

people will be living in cities. As a result, there will be an emphasis on living over the shop. In order for city centres to reach their potential there will be a need to restore derelict areas as well as imbuing a sense of urban pride in residents incentivising clean up schemes. It is necessary to make cities more accessible and inclusive to people with physical and learning difficulties. Living in city centres also needs to be more affordable.

Question 3: Where will jobs be located and what will jobs be?

Restorative Economy

Jobs will be in natural resources particularly in fishing to curb depletion of fish and forestry management. There will also be a greater emphasis on manual work within farm and food production. Allotments could provide employment for people. Reconnecting with the Earth emerged as a theme from the group meeting.

Information Technology

Jobs will be based in the Information Technology Industry with more diverse options for work. There will be more opportunities for people in financial services where cities like Cork will be in a position to compete with Dublin.

Indigenous home based industry

More online enterprisiers example Etsy where people have the option to work from home. Total overhaul of education. There will be greater reliance on Local tourism and Local market places.

Question 4: Where will we live and what types of housing will be needed?

Housing Type

There is a general consensus that their needs to be a move away from owner occupied housing to renting. This will require renting provisions to made easier coupled with better protection measures to be implemented for tenants. Housing will need to be designed to sustain generations with one group suggesting models for example intergenerational clustered housing. Housing will be designed for users' needs according to background and age groups. There will be a requirement for step down housing for elderly generations to move into this type of this housing.

Housing Design

Housing will be designed to Passive House Standards with low emissions. It is envisaged that Passive House Standards will become a statutory requirement in Development Plans.

Rental security

Long term rental security is required in order to protect renters. Better regulations for renting is also required where landlords are required to maintain minimum standards for accommodation.

Local renewable energy infrastructure

There will be a reliance on local energy structures such as wind turbines and solar panels.

Housing location

Housing will be located in towns and cities with less ribbon development near affordable sustainable public transport systems and green spaces.

Vacant sites

There were suggestions to penalise derelict sites and badly maintained properties.

Question 5: What key services will people need?

Education

All children will be supported in education, whatever their needs.

There will be a variety of schools in terms of ethos and language.

Ongoing education and lifelong learning to be accessible for the purpose of employment, changing personal circumstances, and for general self-development and fulfilment.

Childcare

Childcare to be affordable and physically accessible.

Crèches and pre-schools to be located in or near schools.

Health Service

The emphasis will be on promotion of good health and on prevention and early intervention, not just a focus on ill-health.

Leisure activities will be designed to contribute to good health. There will be an emphasis on sustainable affordable healthy food.

There will be a single-tier health service, free at point of entry.

Mental health service will be available that span the lifespan. It will provide a seamless service based on need. We will have adequate suicide awareness and prevention systems.

Community services, care of elderly and disabled

Elderly citizens will be supported in remaining at home as long as possible.

There will be support for anyone requiring assistance in community living.

We will have a strong homelessness prevention service.

We will provide for a local economy, so that people have the option to buy food and products made locally and support local producers.

We will have well-funded community centres.

Broadband will be available to all.

We will strive for equality in the workplace.

Transport

Ireland must invest in a good subsidised public transport service which is not profit-making. Its purpose is to contribute to the public good.

Public service transport is to be prioritised over private.

Electric cars will be encouraged.

Designated cycle lanes will be provided in urban areas and there will be cycle paths between urban and rural areas.

Public walking spaces will be provided for and encouraged.

Waste Services

There will have to be an end to multiple companies collecting waste. We will have better recycling and composting facilities.

Water

Ireland to have a properly functioning clean water system that promotes conservation.

Energy

Ireland to have sensible and sustainable energy sources.

Q6: Where will Ireland fit in a wider (geographical) context?

Ireland should be neutral and a member of the EU in a strong and stable Europe.

It should be a contributor to Europe, not just a beneficiary. It should also be contributing to stability in Europe.

It will be able to exploit its position as an English-speaking country within Europe, with links with the US, the UK and European countries.

It should be less focused and dependent on the US and be more connected to countries like Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Scotland.

There will be peace in Northern Ireland, maybe even a united Ireland.

Ireland should be a leader in liberal democracy, a leader in social justice and climate

justice.

Ireland will also be contributing to global equality and have strong links with developing countries.

Ireland will be more multi-cultural and have a better immigration policy than at present.

Ireland should have a sense of being progressive and pioneering (as it was in banning workplace smoking and in introducing the plastic bag tax).

Ireland should be a harmonious, green-themed society and should be largely self-sufficient.

It should be an exporter of more than just agricultural products.

Question 7: What are the planning responses to key environmental challenges?

Trees and natural spaces

Forestry needs investment. We need to plant trees and maintain green spaces. We need to restore native species to waterways and woods.

We should plant trees with new developments. We should have a set percentage of trees per hectare in urban areas, as is done in Berlin.

We will need to restore and maintain our bogs and wetlands.

Buildings

There will be no buildings on flood plains, which will be designated in planning law. There will be statutory building standards and passive housing will be the standard model. We will make the best use of existing buildings and build flood-smart buildings.

Population and urban development

We will have increased population densities and will encourage development from suburban sprawl to properly planned urban centres. We will build upwards in towns and cities to deal with population density.

We will have mass planning initiatives with experts in environmental engineering. There will be proper consultation with experts about vulnerable communities around the country.

We must develop a planning mind-set, not a reacting mind-set.

We will apply principles such as "does this development comply with our commitments under the Paris Agreement?"

Transport

We will have reduced reliance on cars and roads and avoid car-based development.

Priority will be given to segregated safe cycle lanes.

There will be recharging-points for electric vehicles widely available.
There will be integrated countrywide public transport, with better connections between rail and other transport systems.
We should have an integrated Cork-Limerick-Galway-Sligo-Letterkenny-Belfast railway.

Waste and pollution

We will have better management of waste and pollution.
We will curb or ban plastics and replace them with biodegradable materials e.g. those made of cornstarch.
We will have better recycling.
Food waste will be eradicated.
We will have good air quality in cities.

We will have clean water, with water metering and penalties for excessive use. Rainwater harvesting will be a norm.
We will have SUDS water efficiency – sustainable urban drainage systems.

Energy

We will have more subsidies for sustainable/renewable technologies e.g. solar panels.
There will be strong penalties for use of fossil fuels. We will cease using fossil fuels and switch to using the right mix of renewables.
We will have smart street lighting and stop lighting unused motorways.
We must incentivise motion-sensors in multi-unit buildings and public areas.

Climate change issues

In cities we will have efficient draining that can handle floods specifically.
Civil engineering experts will engage and advise vulnerable communities around the country.
We must have no River Lee wall.
We will have tidal barriers.
We will have adequate storm defences.
We will build flood-smart buildings.

Question 8: What infrastructure is required – what are the national priorities?

Climate-Proofing

Ireland in 2040 will have to adapt to the impacts of climate change. While the level of adaptation we will have to do will depend on the level of mitigation we take now, it would be prudent when planning infrastructure that we plan for the world and climate we will have in 2040 and beyond. For example, as well as not building on floodplains, we should

take into account the effects climate change is likely to have on flooding.

Flooding

We will need infrastructure to cope with flooding, especially with the impacts of climate change. We believe it is crucial that with rivers, we look at the whole river rather than just parts of it, for example looking at the approach taken in Pickering in the UK.

This would alleviate some need for heavy barriers or walls. Some of us also support examining the feasibility of tidal barriers where appropriate.

Ecosystems and Biodiversity

We believe a priority should be ensuring that we have vibrant and diverse ecosystems. In some places this could be augmented with restoration of native species. While we should treasure our ecosystems for their own sake, restoring and protecting this natural infrastructure also helps make Ireland a better place to live.

In particular, our bogs are vital natural resources and we see the value in them as ecosystems and carbon sinks rather than used for short-term industrial peat production. Therefore, we find it difficult to see any justification for industrial-scale peat infrastructure in Ireland in 2040.

Water Infrastructure

We support water metering infrastructure to help conserve this vital natural resource. Rainwater harvesting should be promoted. We also believe that clean water should be a national priority and we really need to ensure that we have the infrastructure to adequately treat our sewage.

Green Spaces

We support increased and central green spaces. With increased urbanisation it can be difficult for some people growing up in cities to connect to nature and we would argue more trees and green spaces are needed in urban areas. It may be interesting to look at models such as Berlin's in this regard. In both urban and rural areas we have seen great success in greenways and walkways and believe these should be promoted.

Transport

We need smarter transport infrastructure. Public transport should be central and we should plan for sustainable forms of transport rather than assuming everyone having motor cars. While there are certainly some works which need to be done on maintaining roads, we believe society will benefit more from a higher proportion of transport investment being spent on developing cycle and pedestrian infrastructure. For example, in Cork we believe it may be worth looking at the feasibility of a funicular on Patrick's Hill. If implemented this would help open up a lot for of Cork's northside to easier cycling and walking.

We also think it is worth looking at street lighting, with increased use of motion sensors able to save us considerable electricity and money lighting empty roads. This could also be of use in multi-unit buildings.

Energy

We will need appropriate infrastructure to support the renewable energy transition and facilitate increased levels of wind, solar, tidal, and other forms of clean energy.

Broadband

In some parts of the country access to fast broadband connections are taken for granted. It is our hope that well before 2040 this will be the case for all parts of the country.

Health and Education

We believe that we need appropriate infrastructure to support our health and education services. In particular, emergency response must be functional.

Ecovillages

The ecovillage in Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary has been inspiring for many and we support the infrastructure needed to make this and other ecovillages work.

Consultation

We believe in order for this national planning framework, or any long-term plan to be effective, a crucial component is proper, real consultation and empowering communities to plan their future and shape decisions which will affect them.

Miscellaneous

Some other ideas that some members of the group raised were around housing density, increasing the proportion of houses that are owner-occupied, supports for older people, better recycling infrastructure.

Question 9: How should a National Planning Framework be implemented?

We believe that the most important thing which we can do to ensure implementation of the NPF is to make sure that as much of society as possible are included in the drafting process. When people have helped create and feel ownership of a plan they are less likely to want to ignore it and more likely to help ensure that other stick to it. The NPF should be Irish society collectively deciding where we want to be in 20 years' time and the more people are empowered in feeding into the plan, the more likely people will be to defend it when necessary. We need social inclusion in decision-making. Ultimately, the wider and deeper the consultation on any plan is, the wider and deeper the strength of that plan.

Many of us believe that it would be important to have an outside, objective body check on whether the Government is following the plan. It would be useful if the NPF has some defined and achievable goals where the level of success could be measured. Some members also felt that it would be important to have finance for investments needed as part of the plan which would be immune from day-to-day political decisions.

The NPF should cohere with other plans and with individual planning permission decisions, with penalties for developers who breach the plan.

Question 10: What will success look like?

We believe we will have success if we achieve the goals set out in the other sections of this submission. We will inhabit a society living in harmony with nature and with other human beings. We will have a greater quality of life. This may or may not be a higher GDP,

but people will focus on improving our standard of living rather than our GDP scores.

We will have a more humane Ireland, ending the destruction of 20,000 dogs and more cats as "unwanted" pets, instead educating to neuter and control uncontrolled breeding.

We will have a sense of community identity and shared lives, shedding any notion that everything beyond "my" front door is not my problem, with a sense of pride and where throwing our rubbish on the ground, vomiting on doorsteps, or any other mistreatment of public space is unthinkable.

Thank you for taking the time to read our submission.
On behalf of the Cork Greens and the members of the public we consulted with,
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