

I strongly recommend that rural villages like Milltownpass in Co. Westmeath are given due consideration in this process as such villages have an important part to play in Ireland's future growth over the next 20 years. These rural villages require measures to encourage rural regeneration including carefully targeted policy led investment and innovation in order to prevent further rural decline. We need to make rural villages attractive to live in order to maintain existing populations and support future growth. Rural villages can become viable entities where communities flourish and an excellent quality of life is on offer. The challenge is to achieve the appropriate balance between supporting Ireland's agricultural communities and other traditional rural based economic activity while simultaneously fostering sustainable economic diversification and development in rural areas. We need to look at how urban – rural partnerships can work to the benefit of regions. There are a wide range and quality of resources in rural areas that could be leveraged to support national economic growth, climate action objectives and the development of local communities. It is important we ensure the enormous potential of the rural parts of our community are maximised as otherwise this will be a missed opportunity