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Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Ireland 2040

Although this plan into 2040 is very much welcomed, it is essential that we ensure that once the plan is finalised, it is costed and that the European fiscal policy allows us to borrow money to implement the plan. This year we will hopefully balance our budget but as a nation, we are heavily indebted and will be beyond 2040. Brexit and other uncertainties could see a lot of what will be envisaged here getting put on the back burner, unless we negotiate with our European partners to ensure that Ireland remains a first world, highly developed country that continues to punch well above its weight long into the future.

Ageing population

The retirement age must be increased to 70 years in a timely manner. People are living longer, healthier lives. As our population ages, strains on public services will grow, putting added pressure on the public purse. We must take positive action and ensure that those that can and want to continue to contribute are welcome to. Civil servants including An Garda Síochána should also be given incentives and be allowed to continue in their employment. The days of early retirement are numbered. If we have a vision for 2040, it must include an overhaul of work practices. Pensions also need to be fair, sustainable and allow the elderly to live out their lives with dignity. The national pension reserve fund must be reinstated.

Housing

Although some efforts have been made to build social housing throughout the state, affordable rental accommodation needs to be supplied to those that cannot afford the market rate currently. This should and can be provided by the state. The knock on effect will be seen in the local economy where citizens would have further spending power. This would also reduce people's dependency on the state by not having to get assistance to top up their contributions when paying rent.

Retirement villages or communes should also make up part of future planning. These need to be close to town centres beside primary care centres, doctors, pharmacies, post offices, shops, libraries etc. If done properly, they could provide for more vibrant town and village centres. They would also afford older people choices like down sizing. We could then create a culture where people in their 20's start out in an apartment, move toward 3,4,5 bed semis depending on family size and need and then down size to a retirement village after retirement or when their children have headed out of the family home.

Health

Political influence can and does mean that our health services suffer. We should have all our hospitals specialising in various types of care; this makes them viable into the future. It is not right that one county's HSE standard is different from another's. We need to standardise care and all patients should be treated equally. Elderly care must be world class. Elderly citizens have contributed their whole lives to this state, the least we can do is ensure that they have the very best of care in their final years. Currently we do not do this; care services are abysmal and nursing shortages are at crisis point. Nurses and health care professionals need to be looked after and their up-skilling paid for by the state.

Green Space

Many new towns along the East Coast were developer-led initiatives. Some councils allowed developers to build housing but not the associated facilities like sports halls, theatre spaces, libraries or playing fields and park land. This deficit must be part of any plan. The importance of outdoor space on people's mental health and well being cannot be underestimated.

Water

Water and waste water problems are estimated to cost in the region of €8b. Without a water charge the exchequer must now come up with this money. Considering we cannot borrow the money, development into the future could suffer if we do not invest in our potable and waste water infrastructure.

Renewable energy

We must remove the planning obstacles when trying to introduce renewable energy. Wind turbines are a necessary evil. We must reach a stage where this country has some sort of energy independence. Energy supply is vital for industry, if proper infrastructure is not in place especially in rural areas, then rural clusters with adequate infrastructure must be the way forward.

One-off housing

We must stop this crazy practice. We cannot have broadband, water, waste water and all other modern services for all and any expense. New cluster type developments would ease the burden on the state trying to provide these services that some see a rights. It would also encourage community lead development and local needs would be satisfied.

Ports/Airports

Deep sea port plan made for Balbriggan needs to be implemented.

Foynes developed as an international port for goods coming in from the states; this can then get transported to Dublin and Rosslare ports by rail and on to mainland Europe.

Dublin airports new runway and third terminal must be built ASAP.

Gormanston army camp has an under utilised airfield. This could be used as a regional feeder to Dublin airport. Rail freight should be encouraged in particular in relation to helping lower our carbon output.

Climate change

Councils and state bodies need to be leaders when it comes to climate change. We cannot lecture people expecting them to do their part or expect them to be penalised through taxation and other carbon taxes when local authorities, schools and other public buildings are sub standard or no imagination is used to harness solar potential. The use of living walls encourages wildlife and helps to insulate buildings. Our bogs and hillsides should be utilised for solar power generation and wind turbines. Group power generation and heating schemes also need to be investigated.

Public transport

Electric light rail must be rolled out along the commuter belt around our capital. Bus monopolies need to be broken up and competition allowed into the market place. Rural areas must be served and that burden needs to be shared by both private and state operators. The days of Bus Eireann, Iaroid Eireann and Dublin bus competing against one another on the same route should not be allowed. This is an historical problem going back to the formation of the state. Public transport should be subsidised to a degree and affordable. State transport companies need to continue to find efficiencies and remain as competitive as the possibly can be.

Roads infrastructure

The eagerly awaited outer orbital route needs serious consideration. Freight cannot be allowed to get caught up on the M50 due to over capacity. HGV's and passenger transport vehicles should not be tolled on any motorways. Once this is done weight restrictions should be implemented in larger towns and villages throughout the country. The N2/M2 Dublin - Derry road must be prioritised. This will open up the North west and should include links to Sligo, Donegal and Letterkenny.

Agriculture and Food

If we are serious about our green image, farming needs to modernise, deep ploughing must be banned or restricted and modern practices put in place. Deep ploughing reduces soils ability to store carbon.

Thanks and regards

Councillor Alan Tobin Fine Gael

Peace Commissioner

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