

# Ireland 2040 Our Plan

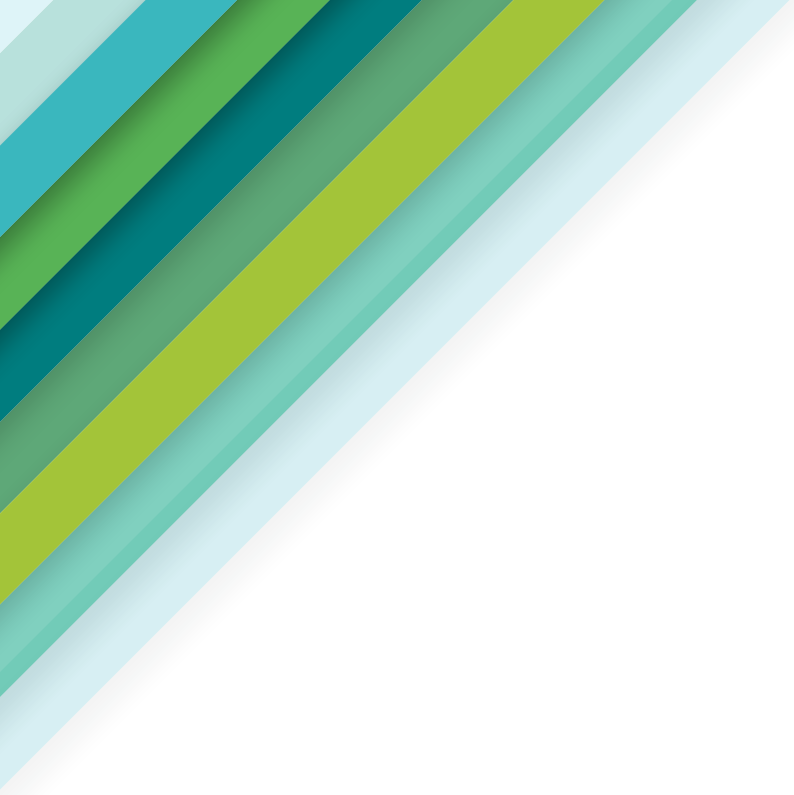


NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK



**Summary Report of Pre Draft Public Consultation  
Process and Submissions on Ireland 2040  
Our Plan National Planning Framework**

## **Consultation Review**



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this Report:

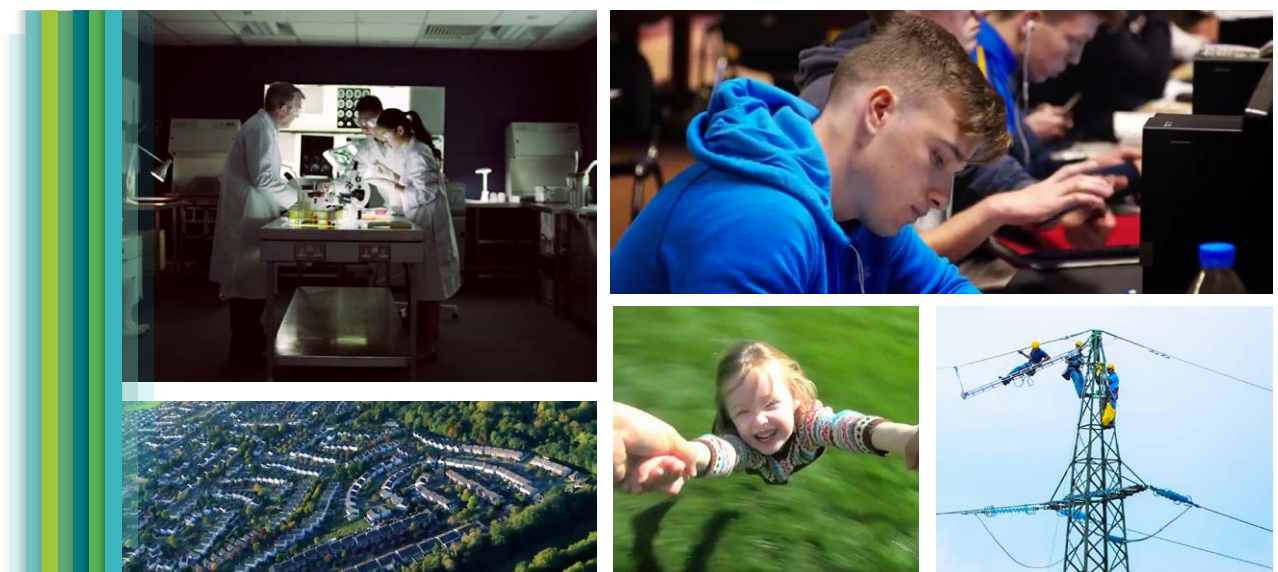
The purpose of this document is to report on the National Planning Framework pre draft public consultation process. From the outset the consultation process has been a fundamental part of the preparation of the National Planning Framework and a range of events, platforms and strategies were used to promote discourse. This included stakeholder events, conferences, a dedicated website, an online submission system, dedicated email and land addresses, and promotional video. The consultation process sought to prompt national debate in relation to the future spatial development of Ireland and in so doing to create a shared sense of ownership to shape the delivery of our national spatial plan. In doing so, over 3,300 submissions were received. Details of submissions received are published on our website – [www.npf.ie](http://www.npf.ie).

This report documents the range of submissions received, the contributors and the themes arising and sets out the next steps in the plan preparation and consultation process.

## 1.2 Background to the NPF and approach

Work on the development of a new National Planning Framework (NPF) to succeed the National Spatial Strategy commenced in 2015 with the preparation and publication of the Roadmap document. The Roadmap set out the arrangements for the preparation of the NPF as well as the various stages which will lead into the publication of a draft.

Since that time, work has been ongoing in preparation for a framework document which will set the strategic agenda for planning in Ireland, taking account of our wider island, European and global contexts and will coordinate policies and investment decisions in areas such as regional competitiveness, urban and rural development, transport, energy and communications, natural resource development, well-being, climate change and environmental quality. It will represent the Government's policy on how nationally significant planning matters should be addressed by relevant Government Departments and Agencies and inform Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies together with City and County Development Plans.



1 Towards a National Planning Framework: A Roadmap for the Delivery of the National Planning Framework De 2015 - [http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/towards\\_a\\_national\\_planning\\_framework\\_december\\_2015.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/towards_a_national_planning_framework_december_2015.pdf)

## 2 | SEA/AA/SFRA

The National Planning Framework will take full account of relevant EU and national legislation requirements in relation to matters such as Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and other related EU Directives. Under Article 3 of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC), an environmental assessment shall be carried out for plans and programmes, including those related to land use planning.

Strategic Environmental Assessment is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental consequences of implementing plan/programme initiatives prepared by authorities at a national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative means. The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of plans and programmes are assessed both during their preparation and prior to adoption.

The SEA process also gives interested parties an opportunity to comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed plan or programme and to be kept informed during the decision making process.

An SEA Scoping Report was published as part of the pre-draft consultation process and prescribed authorities and agencies notified. This process also offers the wider public an opportunity to make comment specifically on SEA and related issues, alongside wider environmental planning policy. An Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will also inform the NPF.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental consequences of implementing plan/programme initiatives**



## 3 | Public Consultation

### 3.1 | Aims of Consultation

The development process for the NPF is cross sectoral and subject to cross-departmental governance (chaired by the Minister and consisting of senior officials from relevant government departments and public bodies) to ensure that it is closely aligned with and supports government policy across all relevant departments. A national level advisory group, regional consultative forums and technical working groups have been established to facilitate input from a broad cross sector of society, professional bodies and technical experts whose core work areas are directly related to the NPF themes. However, it was also considered that wider stakeholder and public consultation at national, regional and local level would be critical to ensure that the NPF is informed by the views of all citizens. The consultation strategy has sought to prompt national debate in relation to the future spatial development of Ireland and in doing to create a shared sense of ownership to shape the delivery of our national spatial plan

#### THE KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS HAVE BEEN

- i To address the broadest views possible across society, as it is important to get views and inputs from all stakeholders.
- ii To empower all stakeholders to participate in NPF consultation processes and to bring together the views and aspirations of a representative sample of citizens and interest groups.
- iii To prompt contributors to think strategically and spatially and to form thoughts and opinions in relation to future national development scenarios, including the likely economic, social and environmental consequences of each scenario.

### 3.2 | Importance of Consultation

Consultation supports greater transparency, which is an important principle of good governance. It helps to ensure that the operations of the Government and public sector bodies are conducted with greater clarity and openness. It recognises that public policy-making can be enhanced through the active involvement and contribution of all stakeholders with an interest in particular policy developments. By ensuring that interested parties can express their views about a particular proposal, the decision-making process becomes better informed, more rigorous and more accountable.

### 3.3 | Summary of Key Consultation Events

#### Preliminary Consultation

Preliminary consultation with key stakeholders took place over three events in June 2016. This was a tailored consultation programme prepared specifically for identified stakeholders involved in formulating and implementing national, regional and local policy, delivering services and generally representing the main sectors of Irish society and economy. This preliminary consultation was valuable in establishing both the remit and the reach of the National Planning Framework through its preparation and implementation. Full details are contained within the '*Report on Preliminary Stakeholder Consultation*' available on our website [www.npf.ie](http://www.npf.ie).

## Pre-Draft Public Consultation

### Issues and Choices

On 2nd February 2017, the pre-draft consultation process for Ireland 2040 – Our Plan National Planning Framework was launched by the Taoiseach and Minister Simon Coveney. The launch event received national media coverage and was the first in a series of national and regional events. The phase of consultation also included the publication of an ‘Issues and Choices’ paper to inform and assist discussion on how to plan for our future.

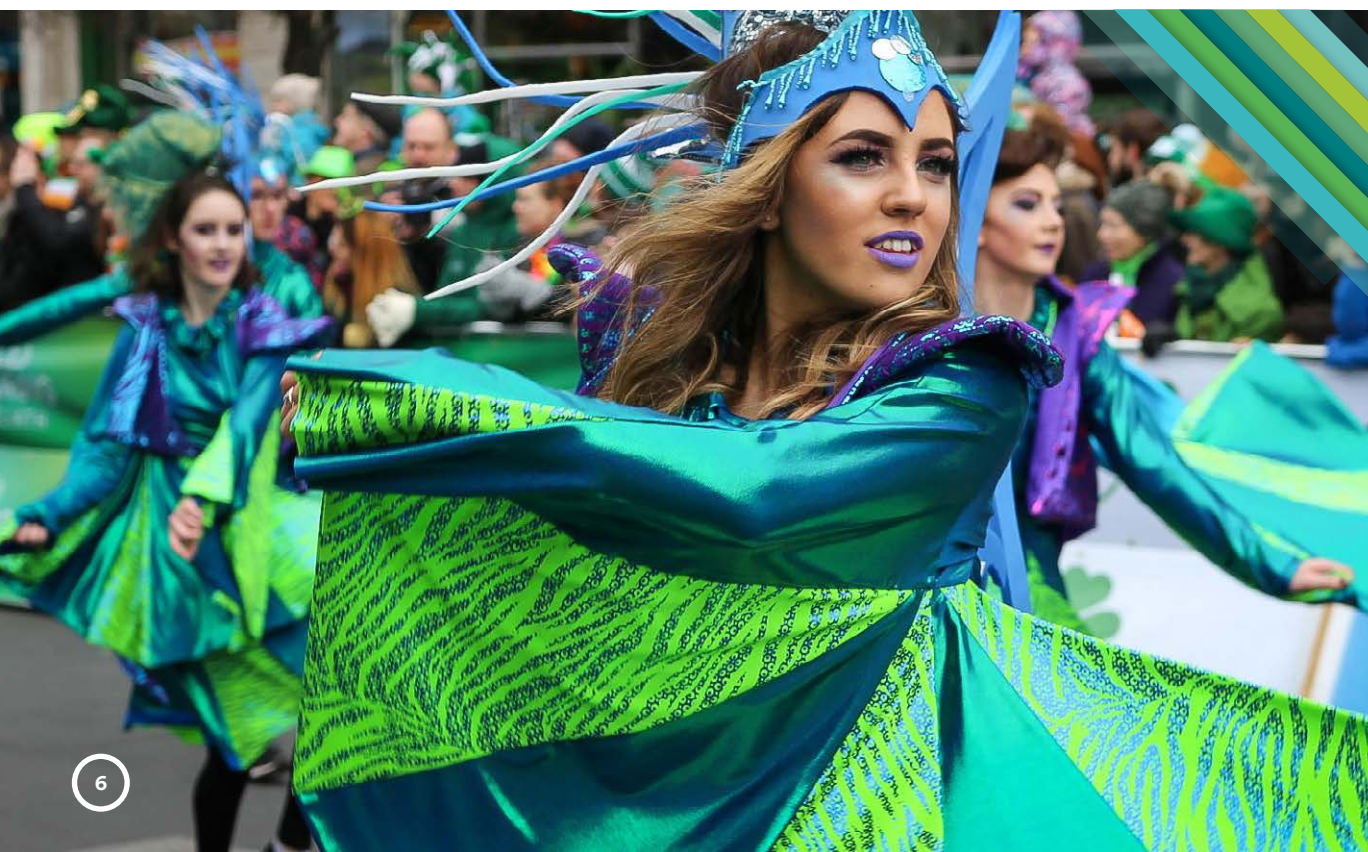
The Issues and Choices paper was designed to provide members of the public and all interested parties an overview of some of the main national planning issues that affect Ireland today. It also provided the opportunity to submit comments and suggestions on the issues raised and other topics that are considered relevant to the National Planning Framework.

The public’s views were sought on what they perceived as the issues and how they could be addressed, how our urban and rural areas could be utilised and how to prevent the mistakes of the past which adversely impacted on people’s lives and the environment.

Amongst the key challenges raised in the Issues and Choices paper were how to plan for an ageing and growing population, another half million people at work, the requirement for over 500,000 homes close to services and amenities, aligning employment with where people live, rebuilding community and commercial life in the hearts of our cities and towns and protecting the many qualities of our rural communities and environment.

The submission process was launched on 2nd February 2017 and ended on 31 March 2017 (consequent of a two week extension to meet public interest). Over that time, in excess of 3,300 submissions were received, 660 of which addressed issues specifically relating to the NPF.

Appendix 1 details a list of all public consultation meetings and workshops held as part of the consultation process.



## 3.4 | Key Themes and Messages

The submissions received have played a central role in the preparation of the draft NPF for a number of reasons.

**1** They provide a clear sense of what is important to people and organisations making submissions.



**2** In-depth knowledge from the business community, infrastructure agencies, environmental bodies and community groups provides further insight and a new perspectives and creates scope for follow-up discussions.



**3** Submissions offer another layer of information which can be used to identify gaps in previous research.



**4** Submissions reflect innovative ideas and best practice exemplars.



### Governance

A recurring message amongst submissions highlights the need for consistency and collaboration across all levels of Government, including Government Departments, Local Authorities and Regional Assemblies, as well as cross-boundary coordination, in the implementation of the NPF.

### Regional Development

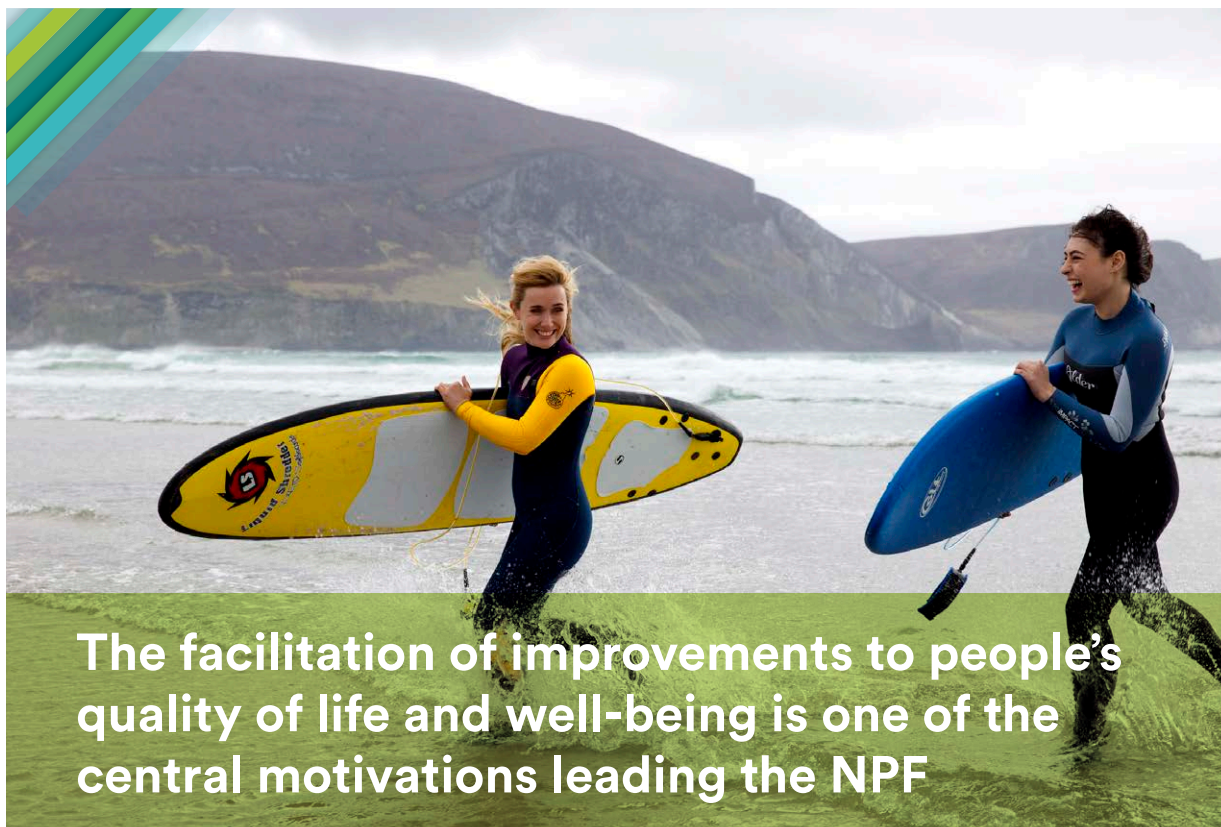
Many submissions recognise the importance of cities for regional development along with the role and towns and villages for areas outside cities. There was a general consensus amongst submissions that the role of towns within hinterlands should complement, not compete, with cities. The importance of polycentric regional development through the advancement of regions outside Dublin in order to alleviate some of the pressure on the capital also featured regularly.

### Rural Development

A large number of submissions addressed rural issues, including calls to promote cluster development in rural areas, to protect against further rural depopulation, to limit rural housing outside villages/towns, and to limit the construction of one-off houses in rural areas.

### Infrastructure

High-quality infrastructure is an important element of a modern society and economy. Infrastructure forms the basis on which an economy functions and includes various elements such as roads, transport networks, internet connections and water provision. Submissions highlighted the development of high-speed broadband networks across the country, as well as the advancement of a balanced, all-island approach to infrastructure that links regions and makes the nation work as a whole rather than a collection of individual regions.



**The facilitation of improvements to people's quality of life and well-being is one of the central motivations leading the NPF**

### Planning

At a policy level, planning means ensuring that the right development takes place in the right locations and at the right time. Analysis of submissions indicates that a plan-led, prescriptive planning system is favoured over a developer-led system.

### Health & Quality of life

The facilitation of improvements to people's quality of life and well-being is one of the central motivations leading the NPF. Submissions cover a wide range of issues in relation to health, including the importance of access to green infrastructure, the facilitation of increased tele-working and tele-commuting, and how to deal with an ageing population. It is noted that very few references are made to the rising obesity epidemic and mental health issues in Ireland.

### Economy & Jobs

Many submissions placed importance on regional employment and economic growth and the promotion of sustainable development through employment. Other suggestions include measures to support enterprise and employment in local, more rural areas in order to prevent rural Ireland being 'left behind', as well as increased job creation along the M1 corridor.

### Urban Regeneration, Public Realm & Design

Calls to increase building density in urban areas by 'building up rather than out' featured extensively throughout submissions. The recognition of town centres as key local hubs was a common suggestion with calls to incentivise development in town centres featuring regularly. Government investment in housing, services and new facilities concentrated in city/town/village centres is encouraged through initiatives such as the regeneration of abandoned houses and apartments in towns and urban areas.



## Community & Recreation

Community encompasses a wide range of concepts but can broadly be defined as an interacting population of various kinds of individuals (such as species) in a common location. Submissions suggest investment in safe, well maintained public amenities, green spaces, recreational zones as well as provisions for the inclusion of specific cohorts and minorities such as the elderly and the Traveller/Roma community in society.

### Housing

Key messages from submissions in the housing area include addressing current housing challenges, the issue of sustainability in the rental sector and particular housing needs such as Traveller accommodation.

### Traffic & Transport

A recurring proposal amongst submissions highlights the importance of preserving high frequency intercity rail services whilst expanding public transport networks particularly in cities. Other proposals include expanding the light rail system to other cities such as Galway, improving rural public transport, and reducing car dependency by investing in cycle infrastructure and moving away from motorway-based development.

## Heritage & Tourism

There were numerous calls to develop the tourism potential of the Irish coast, waterways and lakes, parks and forests. Proposals have been made to improve access to inland waterways, coastlines, islands and marine waterways through the development of more blueways and greenways, along with the establishment of a network of forest parks as a national trust.

### Environment & SEA/AA

It is suggested that the NPF should recognise the value that Ireland's natural capital holds and multiple submissions echo the need for a full SEA to be carried out on the Framework. Several proposals suggest that Ireland's native woodland should be expanded and protected in order to improve biodiversity, recreation, eco-tourism, health and climate mitigation.



## Marine

Ireland boasts a vast and diverse marine resource where our seabed territory covers more than ten times our land mass. An integrated approach to land and marine development features regularly amongst submissions, with calls for a marine strategy that defines an optimal relationship with sea, coastal zones, foreshore and interaction with the land.

## Energy

There is a strong consensus amongst submissions that alternative power generation options, such as wind, tidal, solar and biogas need to be researched and developed. Other proposals include exploring options for offshore renewable energy rather than on land.



## All-Island/Northern Ireland

Several submissions suggest a collaborative all-island approach to development, infrastructure and environmental challenges post-Brexit. It is proposed that specific structures be put in place in order to manage the impacts of Brexit in the contexts of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the border area.

## Education & Training

The provision of education was frequently highlighted as an important challenge to address in a regional development context as demand for places in third level education in Ireland is expected to peak in the mid-late 2020s. A frequent proposal was to enable strong Technical Universities whilst addressing infrastructural requirements of other Higher Education Institutions. Some also advise that public policy should place a greater value on non-academic training in order to alleviate the pressures on Third Level Institutions.

## Implementation

Several useful suggestions regarding the implementation of the NPF have been received such as the inclusion of timelines for priority actions along with defining a clear means of delivery.

## 4 | Stakeholder Analysis

Submissions were received from a wide range of stakeholders from the public, private and non-profit sectors.

A list of organisations, agencies and individuals who made submissions can be found on our website.

The following chart demonstrates the breakdown of submissions by stakeholder type.



## Engaging Children and Young People:

## Green Schools Initiative



In tandem with the pre-draft public consultation a separate consultation process was devised and aimed specifically for children and young people to engage in the consultation around the development of Ireland 2040 – Our Plan. This was in the form of an art competition run by the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce in partnership with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Over 3,000 students from 255 schools representing every county in Ireland responded to the challenge of creating a poster to share their thoughts and ideas on how they would like Ireland to look in the future.

Winners of the ‘Green-Schools Ireland 2040 – Our Plan’ National Poster Competition were presented with their prizes by Minister Simon Coveney at an Awards Ceremony at the Custom House in Dublin on 3rd May 2017.



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## 5 | Concluding Remarks

The submissions received as part of the pre-draft consultation have been an invaluable resource to inform and assist in the preparation of the National Planning Framework. It is clear from the submissions received that there is an expectancy that the National Planning Framework is not confined to the remit of the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government but that its success will be based on its support and delivery across Government, Local Authorities and wider public sector bodies in tandem with the private sector, voluntary and environmental groups and with research from our Universities and ITs.

The proposals and suggestions from a range of agencies, organisations and the wider public clearly indicate an increased awareness and understanding of the changing dynamics of place making – in particular the increasingly dominant role of cities now and in the future as key drivers for regional development. It is also clear that towns are important to people and that their role should be recognised at a national level when we refer to place making. Interestingly, in relation to rural dynamics, the focus of submissions is on the need to sustain rural communities and enterprise and there appears to be a growing recognition that rural housing is not a placebo for rural resilience.

Broadband provision was one of the most dominant issues regarding rural resilience and wider regional enhancement, when referring to national infrastructure requirements. The alignment of place making with investment has also been highlighted as being essential to the success of the NPF, however there is limited consideration of nationally important projects or indeed national packages as they relate to planning for growth up to 2040 – almost every part of the country is requesting a series of infrastructure investments at a variety of scales. From a regional perspective, provision of national infrastructure networks linking the Northwest of Ireland with its main cities was also highlighted as a deficit that needs to be addressed as part of a tailored approach to regional development.

There was wide acceptance and acknowledgement of the need to enhance our renewable capacities as we plan into the future and seek to transition to a low carbon society – but no single clear solution or preferred power option is apparent. There is also no lucid message about how best to reflect these needs in the National Planning Framework. Similarly the integration of environmental considerations, biodiversity and heritage with our plans for growth were also notable including the use of instruments such as Green Infrastructure Planning. This highlights the complexity of policy integration and the need to strengthen national actions to address cross-cutting policy challenges.

## Next Steps

It is anticipated that the Government approved draft National Planning Framework will be published in September 2017 for public consultation where the consultation period will run until November 3rd 2017.

The public consultation period will offer all stakeholders, interested parties and the wider public the opportunity to have their say.

At this point, it is anticipated that the process around preparation of Ireland 2040 including consideration by the Oireachtas will conclude by the end of 2017.

# Appendix 1

## Public Consultation Meetings and Workshops

Meeting/workshop	Location	Date
<b>Preliminary Consultation</b>		<b>09/06/2017 - 22/09/2016</b>
Consultation Day for Stakeholders	Aisling Hotel, Dublin	09/06/2016
Consultation Day for Stakeholders	Aisling Hotel, Dublin	10/06/2016
Consultation Day for Stakeholders	Aisling Hotel, Dublin	14/06/2016
National Ploughing Championships	Tullamore, Offaly	20/09/2016-22/09/2016
<b>Pre Draft Public Consultation</b>		<b>02/02/2017 - 31/03/2017</b>
An Taisce Green Schools Competition	National	23/01/2017-03/03/2017
Public Consultation Launch	Maynooth, Kildare	02/02/2017
Presentation at the Association of Irish Local Government	Cavan	07/02/2017
Presentation at the Association of Irish Local Government	Waterford	11/02/2017
Presentation at the Association of Irish Local Government	Athlone	16/02/2017
Northwest Regional Launch	Sligo Town	17/02/2017
Eastern and Midlands Regional Launch	Ballymun, Dublin	21/02/2017
University Consultation	UCC Cork	24/02/2017
Southern Regional Launch	Waterford City	27/02/2017
University Consultation	UCD, Dublin	28/02/2017
University Consultation	NUIG, Galway	03/03/2017
University Consultation	Athlone IT	08/03/2017
Northern Ireland Consultation	Derry, Northern Ireland	10/03/2017
University Consultation	University of Limerick	14/03/2017
University Consultation	Dundalk IT	15/03/2017