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To: National Planning Framework
Subject: Ireland 2040 Submission

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I would like to include the following submission.

I think the final plan has to protect against further rural depopulation. In particular, I am concerned that the County Donegal will continue to experience from the effects from emigration, migration and third level students not returning to work in their native county after their studies. The preliminary Census 2016 statistics show that Donegal experienced the highest level of a reduction as a result of migration.

Donegal is one from furthest counties from Dublin. Also, it has a higher population than counties such as Mayo or Kerry, which also are of similar distance from the Dublin. Kerry benefits from its proximity to Cork and Mayo benefits from its proximity to Galway. Donegal does not benefit from being close to a large urban city in the Republic of Ireland and the economic activity that this proximity can drive. In fact, Donegal is as isolated as ever since partition. Unlike Mayo and Kerry, there is no rail link to Donegal from Dublin and also there is no motorway. The airport in Carrickfin services the Donegal Gaeltacht area but is not as advantageous to the rest of the county.

Donegal taxpayers have funded Irish Rail and yet have not benefited from the rail network. Therefore, in the interest of fairness, the rail lines to other counties, such as Mayo and Kerry, that are not profitable or self sufficient and are not commuter lines, should not be reliant on funding from taxpayers to survive.

Previous Governments have used the excuse of cross border co-operation to drive economic activity in the border counties. Northern Ireland is a different jurisdiction and will no longer be in the EU. Donegal citizens and those of other border counties deserve the same attention as other Irish counties and our problems should not be lumped in with those of another jurisdiction that will have to fight for survival outside the EU. BREXIT poses the greatest threat to the economy of Donegal and its development prospects. In reality, our EU partners are not going to agree to no border control, given the UK's current stance on the freedom of movement of people, custom union etc. Therefore, Donegal being the county with the longest border, is most at risk as being disadvantaged from the effects from BREXIT.

Planning controls need to be more rigorous, with the need for housing and greener energy sources not destroying the landscape. The number of wind farms needs to be restricted and new ones developed in consultation with communities. A scheme should be initiated to re-develop derelict or vacant houses in rural towns and villages. Donegal has been blighted by the lack of control of holiday homes being built in scenic areas of the county, by residents of other jurisdictions that benefited from currency exchange rates such as sterling to euro. Planning permission needs to consider if the applicant will reside and contribute to the local community.

Health: With an ageing population, more support is required from home care for the elderly where possible, without the need to be admitted into a nursing home. A Government assistance scheme, should not be dependent on being a resident in a nursing home for an elderly person to be eligible for assistance. There is no easily accessible Cancer centre of excellence in the

North West region. Cancer patients should not have to travel to Galway, Dublin or other jurisdictions for treatment of common cancers. Tax payers in the North West have the same rights as those in other counties and deserve an accessible centre of excellence in the region for cancer treatment and not any satellite service. Similar our hospitals and health care facilities need to be able to service the needs of the local population.

Education: the number of third level institutions in the country seems too large given our population. Letterkenny IT and Sligo IT should be merged into being part of University College Galway, maintaining the same courses the IT's currently offer (i.e certificate and diploma programmes) but also allow students attend university programmes in the Sligo or Letterkenny campus. This would eliminate the need for students that want to study university level programmes having to leave the region. Also, an university can stimulate research and development and economic activity. Parents needs to have more a say in the ethos and patronage of primary schools.

Government agencies need prioritize new companies investing and locating in Donegal and North West region. Donegal has not benefited from any large scale new company locating in Donegal than other counties. A reliable broadband service and accessible transport network is pivotal to the development of Donegal. A motorway is required for fast access to the region.

Donegal is the county in the North West with the highest population. Yet, Sligo is seen as hub for many Government developmental programmes for the region. In fact Donegal has a higher population than Sligo and Leitrim combined. Letterkenny and its environs has a higher population than Sligo town and its environs. Therefore, Donegal should be the hub for government programmes in the North West region.

The parts of Donegal that were placed in to the Sligo/Leitrim electoral area needs to be put back into the Donegal electoral area. As this hampers the economic planning for this part of the county.

Rural communities needs to survive and the Government needs to revitalize towns and villages that have been blighted with shop closures etc as as result of our economic downturn.

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