

## **IRELAND 2040**

I consider myself well qualified to contribute to this debate.

I worked for more than four decades in the service of regional tourism in Ireland, latterly for 18 years as regional tourism manager in the south east region.

I retired in February, 2009, from the then public service post of General Manager - Failte Ireland South East. [I would have met Taoiseach Kenny frequently enough during his term as Minister for Tourism]

One of my greatest frustrations – and constant impediments to my work, I felt – was the focus on local issues by our local government structures, influenced by our historic GAA loyalties and minimal geographic political catchments.

My earnest proposal would be that political constituencies be continually re-drawn over the coming decades to gradually remove the emphasis on county boundaries. In parallel, I would wish [but not expect] that our local authorities be **required** to work much more closely together, with a long-term focus on regional amalgamation ideally.

One has only to cite the example of the outstanding success of the Wild Atlantic Way to realise what can be done when we take a broader, more imaginative view of Ireland's true potential. While many may regard this merely as an innovative brand concept, the true reality is that it could never have been achieved without the total commitment to a bigger picture by the local authorities concerned, masterminded by Failte Ireland.

Finally, I venture to forecast that Ireland 2040 will be a very unpleasant country for its citizens if the over-development of Dublin is permitted to continue at its present rate. For that reason, we urgently need the development of the Atlantic Corridor linking the west to Rosslare, not least because of this port's vital future in a post Brexit-era.

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***Joe Palmer***

