

Submission to National Planning Framework

This submission is prepared based on the ten questions posed in relation to preparation of the above plan as follows.

1 What should Ireland look like in 20 years?

It should look like a prosperous country that has attractive towns and cities and a landscape and environment which had been protected and conserved while allowing rural areas to develop and prosper. The country should display much greater regional balance with the inevitable, continued growth of Dublin counter balanced by the growth of Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Sligo as well as the larger towns previously designated as growth hubs. Smaller towns and villages should be focal points for rural dwellers and sufficient local services should be provided to encourage people to reside in them while commuting, if necessary, to larger urban centres for employment.

2. How do we ensure that every place can realise its potential?

There should be incentives provided for industries and services to locate in regional cities and towns. Lower levels of corporation tax and higher levels of grant aid should apply on a sliding scale basis depending on how far they locate from Dublin. Towns and cities must be serviced by high quality broadband, power supply, water and sewage services etc. to make them more attractive for industries and services. Tourism should continue to be developed and promoted especially in the more remote regional locations. Activity holidays offer excellent potential for further development and walking/cycling, angling and water sports should be developed to their full potential. The Wild Atlantic Way has been very successful in attracting more tourists to the more remote parts of the west and further investment should be made in developing attracting attractions and facilities along the route.

3. Where will jobs be located and what will these jobs be?

Most jobs will continue to be provided in cities but incentives, as proposed above, must be increased to encourage more job creation in regional locations. Road access to regional towns and cities must continue to be improved, especially to the Mayo/Sligo area which is not served by a motorway. Jobs will be similar in nature to those available at present with increasing emphasis on modern technologies/communications. There will be an increasing number of jobs in tourism and in the leisure sector.

4. Where will we live and what type of housing will be needed?

The worldwide trend towards urbanisation will continue and planning must take account of this. However, in Ireland, steps must be taken to ensure that Dublin does not continue to grow at the present rate at the expense of other urban centres. While many rural dwellers will still want to live in one-off houses, they should, where possible, be encouraged to live in villages where services can be provided more cost effectively and where they can contribute more effectively to community activities thereby providing a boost such communities many of which are in decline. In towns, greater incentives should be provided to convert disused, former shops another commercial premises into residential accommodation as many of these

units will never again be used commercially and are becoming a significant eyesore as well as being a waste of potential residential accommodation at a time of housing shortage.

5. What are the key services people will need?

For job creation, the most important service requirement in rural areas is top quality broadband, power and water supply as well as good road, rail and air access. Obviously, services such as water, sewage services etc must be provided and these should be put in place in good time rather than long after they become necessary as is often the case at present. With an aging population, health services will be crucial in all areas, including primary care, hospital and nursing homes. The need for hospital and nursing home beds could be greatly reduced by the provision of a more professional and greatly expanded home care service. Obviously, schools and sports facilities will be needed in all areas based on population projections.

6. Where will Ireland fit in a wider (geographical) context?

Despite Brexit and the advent of Trump, Ireland will continue to be an important link between Europe and the USA and must continue to take advantage of its location in this regard. As (probably) the only English speaking country in the EU, its position may become even more important. However, its peripheral position on the western extremity of Europe could be massively transformed through the provision of one major, albeit extremely expensive, piece of infrastructure i.e. a tunnel link to the UK which would facilitate direct road and rail transport not only to the UK but, via the existing channel tunnel, to all of Europe. The feasibility of such a link should now be seriously considered having regard to the huge, long term potential it would offer for industry, trade and tourism. While it is appreciated that the cost would be enormous, such a link would be part funded by the UK and, perhaps, mainly by the EU. Such a vital piece of infrastructure could form part of Ireland's stance in the Brexit negotiations in view of the potential losses for Ireland arising from Brexit and the need to provide a compensating link from Ireland to Europe albeit through the UK.

7. What are the planning responses to key environmental challenges?

Key environmental challenges are protection of water quality, the natural landscape and, on a wider front, global warming. Water must be protected by stricter enforcement of water pollution laws, controls on development which adversely affect water quality and upgrading of the supply system to eliminate leakage and waste. The landscape must be protected as this is vital for the future of tourism. Ireland must play its part regarding global warming/greenhouse gas emissions by honouring its international commitments. Emphasis on energy conservation must continue. Wind energy should continue to be encouraged but subject to strict control in terms of impact on landscape and on private dwellings. The potential of the west coast for tidal and wave energy should continue to be pursued as should the feasibility of and for conversion of animal slurry to gas as this would have the added benefit of reducing potential for pollution of water supplies.

8. What infrastructure is required – what are the national priorities?

See above re housing and road infrastructure and the possibility of a tunnel link to the UK. As well as improved road access to the Mayo/Sligo area, the western road corridor from Cork

to Donegal must continue to be developed and good quality link roads provided from this to the major towns in the west and north west. Knock Airport should be further developed in view of the massive potential it offers for expansion of industry and tourism in the west/north west. The national rail network should be developed and maintained and transport of freight by rail should be encouraged to reduce pressure on roads and increase revenue for the rail system.

9. How should a National Planning Framework be implemented?

There should be regional planning authorities comprising representatives of local authorities together with planning experts and a small number of other people with experience of regional deployment, to oversee and coordinate implementation of plans at regional level under the guidance of a national steering group chaired by the relevant Dept. Regional plans should not be constrained by county boundaries as these are irrelevant to proper planning. For example, Ballina, the largest town in Mayo, is just three miles from the border with Co. Sligo and a large part of its natural hinterland in in Co. Sligo. Yet, traditionally it has been seen only as part of Mayo e.g. for tourism purposes etc. whereas it should be considered as a town for both Mayo and Sligo. The same can be said for many town and cities e.g. Athlone and Waterford both of which are in the news in this regard at present.

10. What will success look like?

Success will have been achieved when there is geographically balanced development with jobs available in regional centres for all who seek them, when all areas have the services they require, when the current dereliction in towns is no longer evident, when everyone has somewhere to live, people have ready access to the services they require, the countryside remains unspoiled and our towns and cities are attractive and vibrant places to live and work.

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