



30th March 2017

Submission re Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF)

1. Introduction

Waterford is the fifth largest city in Ireland and the largest in the South-East. Within a National Planning Framework, Waterford City and County has the potential to be a strategically placed heart fuelling population growth to facilitate the Region achieving its full potential.

Dublin is currently approaching saturation and stagnation from a living and quality of life point of view. Waterford City and the South Eastern Region can be a strategically planned supporting City and hinterland that will play it's part in ensuring a two tier recovery merged into a single National one and that the citizens of Ireland can enjoy a better quality of life though a Regional City focus that will see the towns, villages and outlying rural areas play their part supporting Regional focused economies and infrastructures.

To achieve this, the City must have the capital investment priority to ensure that it can directly influence the economic growth in tandem with the projected population growth of the Region. In essence, Waterford City can be the economic hub and the primary driver of economic and population growth within the South East but needs to have the infrastructural weight of the NPF to ensure the long term economic and social sustainability of the South East.

2. Planned Land Use & Transportation Study

Building the critical mass in Waterford City as defined in the Planning Land Use & Transportation Study (PLUTS) Report adapted by Waterford Council needs to be implemented. This needs the support of a pedestrian bridge and second vehicular river crossing on the Eastern side of the City to plan for the city centre housing, retail, office space, education requirements and the supporting cultural, commercial and leisure activities required.

3. Road Infrastructure

In this role, Waterford in addition to the Motorway linkage to Dublin must have enhanced road linkages between the city and the other Cities of Cork, Limerick and Galway. Basically East West improved transport connectivity must be a

priority on a National scale. The rural hinterland of Waterford City must be linked by a Regional Planning Transportation Infrastructure which can ensure that the towns and villages in the Region can then support local business, retail and housing needs by an expansion of the small to medium enterprise sector from the Cities into the towns and villages ensuring population and capacity to sustain development and improve the quality of life on offer in these towns and villages. Basically, a good regional transportation infrastructure feeding into an economic heart will ensure that the economic success of the region can flow from a successful City into the Regional Rural towns and villages.

4. Waterford City poised for Full Potential

Waterford City must aspire to be no longer the second smallest of the six Irish cities but rise to the opportunity of being the fastest growing City in Ireland and be the primary City of the Region and increase its urban population by 20,000 within the next twenty years plus.

The retail offering weaknesses within the City Centre are ready to be rectified through the imminent development of the Applemarket Shopping Centre by Saudi Company Alhokair. Through the confirmed proposed investment of €270m by the Saudi Company Alhokair to Waterford City Centre, the North Quays mixed used development currently undergoing the Strategic Development Zone process combined with the Boundary Committee's Report for an Extension of the Waterford City Northern boundary into South Kilkenny has the potential to ensure the City doubles in size, strategically, over the next twenty years.

Government support of this investment is needed in the following areas;

- a. Infrastructural capital investment of approximately €70M which will ensure
 - a. A Pedestrian/Public Transport Bridge ensuring City Centre Connectivity.
 - b. An improved relocation of the City's Train Station and City accessibility by public transport from the Region.
 - c. The necessary road and tertiary services provision for the growth of the City through economic sustainability of a mixed use development.
 - d. Infrastructural infrastructures for the development of sustainable communities into the North Waterford City Area.
- b. The recommendation of the Boundary Committee recommendation for Waterford Boundary Extension be approved which will ensure a sustainable and viable community planned development for large scale residential and community expansion to the North of the City in a balanced manner.

5. Boundary Committee Report

As an elected representative of Waterford, I was privileged to represent Waterford Council, during several interactions and presentations to this Committee. It was an extremely professional and fair process, with every representations being made, supported by factual evidence. I have no doubt that the recommendations, of the Review Committee, incorporate the best possible future administrative plans, which will ensure the fairest social, community and economic infrastructure for the people living and working in the immediate environs.

At no time in the process, has the deep rooted culture of South Kilkenny ever been questioned, doubted or disputed. The history of Waterford and South Kilkenny are so closely entwined. We as politicians must plan for an improved, better future for the people of this area. It should be noted that contrary to the many outbursts, in relation to the sporting links, between clubs in South Kilkenny and Waterford, in GAA and soccer. These bonds already exist and are, in reality, quite strong and prove that sporting and cultural borders are not barriers, but non-binding transient flexible indicators.

Waterford Council has been consistently investing heavily into the Ferrybank area of the City in South Kilkenny despite the boundaries and now wishes to invest even more. It was emphasised to the Review Committee, on fact based evidence, how Waterford would prepare, develop and implement an appropriate Urban Design Framework and give this community all necessary resources to develop the area.

The redevelopment of the North Quays, as a Strategic Development Zone, was solely initiated by Waterford Council. This is a clear indicator of the intent of the Council to integrate Ferrybank into the very heart of the City. The plans for the Ferrybank area include the delivery of circa 3,000, retail, service and high paid jobs, for the people of the environs, with minimum 300 residential units. Approval of the boundary extension would ensure substantially more residential units into the 1000s within a planned sustainable and viable new City extension infrastructure.

The boundary extension would ensure about proper and structured future proof planning, development and investment to the area ensuring the people of Ferrybank and South Kilkenny, have the best quality of life possible. Investment and infrastructural planning that will give the very best education and community supports. With improved road networks that will ensure efficient access to the regions health services and the region's main employment opportunities. A boundary extension, will improve the quality of life for the residents of the City, surrounding environs and particularly those in South Kilkenny. On a wider regional note this will also benefit all citizens of the South East, by enabling the region's biggest urban area to maximise its potential as an economic driver and Gateway City.

6. Government Investment to support Regionally Administered Development

This Government and foreign investment would ensure a catalyst that will see Waterford and the South East Region's underperformance in recent decades be reversed as Waterford City reaches its true potential through combined Government and International buy in to a National City leader in terms of population, industry, retail, tourism and recreation.

International models and experience proves successful regions are driven by successful cities. Therefore there is a strong case for developing Waterford City as the main administrative centre for the Region into the future and that collaborative arrangements at a Regional level must be developed between Waterford City, Kilkenny City, Clonmel Town, Wexford Town and Carlow town and in turn through the villages in their respective counties. Regional collaboration is the way forward for the half million plus people of the South East. This will also ensure that the region can benefit in tourism terms from a greater destination offering, pooled resources used more efficiently, greater strength for more resources at National and EU level including driving forward the University of the South East necessity and effectively a better educated and trained workforce. The improved road network and linkage between the main Cities, towns and villages of the region ensure one reinforced and readily available labour market.

7. Waterford Airport & Future Airport of the South East

Waterford has an excellent infrastructure from a roads, port, water, wastewater, sewage and broadband. However, lack of international connections at Waterford Airport is a challenge that restricts the International development of the Airport and must be faced head on. A planned forced doubling of the population of Waterford City and the County over the next twenty years will require increased International movement of our citizens and an airport of the future must be invested in now. The sustainability of the Airport is closely linked to a runway extension and the minimum seats that will make the routes viable. In the aftermath of Brexit, a viable route to London is a necessity with the South East having the potential to be the Gateway to Europe.

8. Third Level Education and University of the South East

Since the last census in 2011, whilst Waterford's population has seen a growth of 2.3% or 2,606 people, the figures show a net migration of minus 496 for the City and minus 1,145 for the County, giving a total of 1,641 people who have left the City and County. With our third level attainment also unbelievably low, compared to the national average, it is no wonder that our sons and daughters are having to seek opportunities abroad. This brain drain must be stopped.

Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) is one of Ireland's most highly regarded third level institutes with approximately 10,000 students. It has a number of

strong research support activities, most notably Telecommunications Software & Systems Group (TSSG) and Arc Labs and there are a number of examples of collaboration with local businesses and successful spin-off companies, the most notable being the relatively recent Feed Henry success.

The process of upgrading the merged WIT and Carlow Institute of Technology (CIT) to a Technological University of the South East is underway with a sense of lethargy, political unwillingness and non progress that is unacceptable. Waterford has traditionally been a workforce engaged in manufacturing and encouragement of a higher uptake of 3rd level education in the Region is vital. Investment in a University of the South East will help stop the 'brain drain' and ensure that the high level of unemployment within the under 25s is tackled.

Developing a bespoke human resource capital for the South East with Waterford City as the economic hub and provider, the establishment of a Regional Technological University is vital. The presence of a strong University is a necessity for any core City and Regional development. This was proven in the role that TSSG played in ensuring the West Pharma Pharmaceutical related industry located in Waterford City providing up to 300 high quality and high paid jobs. The political differences that are slowing the merger of WIT with CIT to develop the Regional Technological University of the South East must be terminated at National level and the NPF is a suitable platform for this. The Technological University of the South East must be driven through with a force such as the NPF because being referenced in the Programme for Government is obviously not enough to ensure the necessary fast tracked priority to drive it to fruition.

9. Planning for Census driven projected Population Growth

Early 2016 Census figures indicate a further acceleration of the population over the coming years. Ireland's population could grow by as much as 30% over the next 25 years as is readily and frequently quoted in media and if current trends persist, the population of the island of Ireland as a whole will reach 10 million in less than 50 years. Waterford City and the South East are in prime position to compete for global investment, and with Government support we can unlock the full economic potential of the region emanating from the main urban City outwards

The population of the South East grew by 13.5% between 2006 to 2011. Preliminary 2016 Census indications of an increase in Waterford's population of 2.3% or 2,606 people since the last Census in 2011 cannot be called a strategic success nor can the empty premises accounting for 7,742 dwellings or a vacancy rate of 14.6%. However as Dublin reaches saturation, our citizens of Ireland and particularly the South East have an opportunity for a planned better quality of life through a NPF strategy that would see doubling the urban population of Waterford City as a priority. The City through focused Government investment in the City's infrastructure can ensure that the Region plays its role in a successful Ireland of the future.

10. Broadband Rollout vital for a smart & efficient Workforce of the Future

High speed broadband roll-out needs to be completed in the South East by investing now! Investment by private industry sector in those areas where it is not commercially viable will not happen without state support and or intervention. All premises, either domestic or commercial must have top class broadband connectivity no matter how rural or remote they are in the Region.

In addition to consistently reported high unemployment rates we also have one of counties lowest disposable incomes per household due to the relatively lower wages we see across the South East. The January 2016 the Central Statistic Office's Gross Added Value (GAV) statistics, which details the "value" of an employee/job, shows the South East at circa €23,600, Dublin at circa €51,800 and the national average at circa €34,300. Clearly our salary levels are much lower than some parts of Ireland and this is in part due to the type of jobs we are in fact creating. We need more "high-end" and "better paid" jobs across the South East and this will in turn boost our economy as quite simply people will have more income to spend!

With average Irish incomes hovering in the region of €35k per annum, the South East economy requires a smart, highly educated and efficient workforce to ensure these income expectations are achieved in the Region. The shortfall in the volume of graduates available to the labour market in the South East has been addressed under Education and is holding back the economic development of a region with high levels of youth unemployment and low levels of third level education take up. The roll out of high speed broadband can ensure that we can deliver private investment from the City as a hub right out into the towns, villages and rural communities through better information technology connection ensuring the communities have a potential viable economic future

11. Waterford needs Action

As the main urban centre in the South East, we, the people of Waterford, are fed up of all the constant talk, talk and more talking and more paper work. It is time for action! Waterford, Ireland's oldest City, has been persistently underfunded, from an infrastructural view point. Despite all the numerous reports and plans, stating the obvious of what is desperately needed.

For example, The South East Economic Development Strategy, steered by Waterford's own David Cullinane TD, has been sitting on a shelf, gathering dust, since it was penned and subsequently published. We are four years into this ten year strategy and some of the high level interventions, such as a Regional Technological University of the South East, investment in the roll out of Dark Fibre Network (Broadband) in the area and investment in the extension of the runway at Waterford Airport have not received any significant funding. We all know that action and funding, for the aforementioned, is urgently needed.

Whilst, the Minister talks about a new “National Planning Framework”, that will attempt to ensure that the likes of Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Galway, as well as a potential new city in the midlands, see greater population growth, with more jobs and increased investment in transport links. He needs to look at what hasn’t been achieved, to date, for these Regional Cities and this submission specifically references on what Waterford has quite clearly missed out on to date in ensuring that we are a City of the Future.

12. Public Transport

Waterford is seeing public transport links continue to receive more and more reduced investment. For example, the Waterford to Limerick rail link has seen an ever increasing number of services cancelled, in last quarter 2016, despite the recently released rail strategy document recommending investment in Plunkett Station Waterford. Whilst less than 1% of people working in County Waterford are commuting by rail, figures of 2 % are quoted for overall use of Public Transport! Our public transport system needs investment and incentives to get members of the public using it.

13. Healthcare

As we develop a National Planning Framework for the future, it is vital that the health care set up is also spoken about in the context of future planning. As we plan a Region, with a City as the main economic driver for the hinterland, accordingly a health care plan for our citizens must take this future planning for population growth into account also in its strategic planning.

A need will exist upon completion of the NPF document for each hospital group to review their strategic plans on how they will provide more efficient and effective patient services from a primary care and community care point of view.

In fact the Grouping responsibility for the South East may have to be reviewed in relation to the co-ordinated approach to the planning and delivery of services within and across the South East.

The Oireachtas All-Party Committee established to develop a single long-term vision for healthcare over a 10 year period must take into account the new National Planning Framework and in fact give due consideration to the efficiency and infrastructural needs of an appropriate Hospital Grouping for the South East.

The Higgins Report 2013 in relation to Hospital Groupings be reviewed and updated in the aftermath of the publication of the new National Planning Framework Document.

14. A Regional City of the Future

Our City and region needs immediate action. Action that will, at the very least, instil a sense of confidence that Waterford will be championed as the lead City of the South East region. Political heavy weights, positioning Cork to be the most important City in the South of Ireland cannot allowed happen and The National Planning Framework must ensure that it doesn't designate Cork as the main beneficiary, due to positioning political pressure, to the detriment of Waterford City & County. A Waterford City of the future must ensure a Regional aspect incorporating Waterford City as the economic hub of a South East Region that includes Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary and Waterford. An administrative control Headquarters of Local Government based in Waterford City must also be a Regional Government consideration of the future.

15. Summary of Key Recommendations for the NPF

1. The two tier economy recovery must be ended by the National Planning Framework (NPF)
2. Waterford City and the South East Region can be a population growth Centre supporting Dublin and Ireland delivering a better quality of life for our citizens.
3. The Planning Land Use and Transportation Study adopted by Waterford Council needs to be reviewed and given weight and credence by the NPF.
4. A vehicular bridge for the East side of Waterford City must be considered a necessity and priority by the NPF.
5. In support of the Waterford/Kilkenny/Carlow Motorway linkage to Dublin, the South East must have enhanced road linkages on an East West basis to the other Cities of Cork, Limerick and Galway. Basically East West improved transport connectivity must be a priority on a National scale.
6. The rural hinterland of Waterford City must be linked by a Regional Planning Transportation Infrastructure which can ensure that the towns and villages in the Region can then support local business, retail and housing needs by an expansion of the small to medium enterprise sector from the Cities into the towns and villages ensuring population and capacity to sustain development and improve the quality of life on offer.
7. The Government must support a €70 million euro investment needed in planned infrastructure to support the proposed North Quays mixed use development and investment of €270 million euro by the Alhokair Company. This investment would also support Community and residential growth into the North of the City of Waterford.
8. The recommendation of the Independent Waterford Kilkenny Boundary Committee must be implemented to ensure that housing and housing infrastructural needs can be planned into the hinterland or Waterford City North.
9. International models prove successful regions are driven by successful cities. Waterford City must be developed as the main administrative centre for the Region into the future and that statutorily collaborative arrangements at a Regional level must be developed between Waterford City, Kilkenny City, Clonmel Town, Wexford Town and Carlow town and in turn through the villages in their respective counties. Regional

collaboration is the way forward for the half million plus people of the South East.

10. Waterford Airport runway extension needs to be a part of ensuring the South East plans for sustainable and viable International travel for the citizens of the South East and is driven forward as a Gateway to Europe in the aftermath of Brexit.
11. Developing a bespoke human resource capital for the South East with Waterford City as the economic hub and provider, the establishment of a Regional Technological University is vital. The presence of a strong University is a necessity for any core City and Regional development and must be delivered as a priority over localised educational politics.
12. The roll out of high speed broadband can ensure that we can deliver private investment from the City as a hub right out into the towns, villages and rural communities through better information technology connection ensuring the communities have a potential viable economic future through a smarter and more efficient available workforce.
13. Whilst, the Minister talks about a new "National Planning Framework", that will attempt to ensure that the likes of Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Galway, as well as a potential new city in the midlands, see greater population growth, with more jobs and increased investment in transport links we need to look at what hasn't been achieved to date and more specifically the reasons that have caused Waterford City and the South East to underperform.
14. The public Transport system in Waterford is the most severely underutilised with a usage figure of 2% of population regularly quoted. A public transport Infrastructure and Network that will be used by the citizens of the future must be planned for as a priority and in the immediate future, incentives to produce a culture of use implemented as a priority.
15. The Oireachtas All-Party Committee established to develop a single long-term vision for healthcare over a 10 year period must take into account the new National Planning Framework and in fact give due consideration to the efficiency and infrastructural needs of an appropriate Hospital Grouping for the South East in the aftermath of the new NPF. It is recommended that in the aftermath of the NPF publication, The Higgins Report 2013 in relation to Hospital Groupings be reviewed and updated.
16. Political positioning cannot be allowed hinder the development of a South East Region with Waterford City as the economic heart. The region must include the area of Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary and Waterford with a statutory administrative control Headquarters of Local Government based in Waterford City. Local Government answerable to a Regional Government control answerable to Central Government is the way of an Ireland of the future.

Submitted for Consideration

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