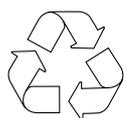


National Spatial Strategy for Ireland

2002 - 2020

People, Places and Potential



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MESSAGE FROM THE TAOISEACH

Ireland has experienced enormous change in its recent history. We have developed into a vibrant modern economy, with a growing, well-educated population; and we enjoy the fourth highest level of Gross Domestic Product per head in the European Union.

But in common with many successful economies, Ireland's development has also been marked by spatial imbalance. The Greater Dublin Area is facing problems of congestion, while a number of regions suffer from under-utilisation of their potential and resources.

The Government determined when launching the National Development Plan in 1999 that more balanced regional development should be a priority for the country. This National Spatial Strategy, which has been assisted by wide public consultation, is our considered and systematic response to this commitment to promote balanced regional development.

The National Spatial Strategy will bring

- a better spread of job opportunities
- a better quality of life for all, and
- better places to live in.

The National Spatial Strategy is a 20-year strategy designed to enable every place in the country to reach its potential, no matter what its size or location. It recognises that the various regions of the country have different roles. It seeks to organise and co-ordinate these roles in a complementary, win win way. It is about making regions competitive according to their strengths and not against one another; about ensuring a high quality urban environment, as well as vibrant rural areas.

In order to achieve more balanced regional development, a greater share of economic activity must take place outside the Greater Dublin Area. To achieve that the National Spatial Strategy sets out a framework for gateways, hubs and other urban and rural areas to act together. This framework will open up new opportunities in the regions and give people greater choice in relation to where they work and live.

The National Spatial Strategy will enable all sectors of the economy to plan future investment in a better-informed way. This more coherent planning will benefit all of us. The Government will ensure that its own policies are implemented in a manner that is consistent with the National Spatial Strategy. Regional and local authorities, along with the State agencies, also have major roles to play in implementing the Strategy. Continuing public participation and support will be key to ensuring the success of the National Spatial Strategy, just as this has assisted its preparation.

At the start of the 21st century, the National Spatial Strategy gives us a strategic vision for the spatial development of Ireland so that we can continue to develop economically, while ensuring a high quality of life for all of our people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bertie Ahern'.

Bertie Ahern, T.D.,
Taoiseach



FOREWORD BY THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This National Spatial Strategy (NSS) sets out an ambitious but realistic vision for the future development of Ireland. It is the outcome of extensive public consultations as well as teamwork between public authorities.

We have also had the benefit of advice from a panel of national and international experts, whose assistance I gratefully acknowledge.

Ireland's development over the past decade has been remarkable. This performance gives us the confidence to plan for the next 20 years, so that development will have a better spatial distribution and balance, and people throughout the country will have a choice of high quality job opportunities, housing and leisure activities.

This can only be achieved by increasing economic activity in all regions. The NSS is an integrated package which recognises that to be successful, and achieve more balanced regional development, we need a range of measures that act at the international, national, regional, county and local level.

These actions must be at the appropriate scale. Dublin is our capital and our main player internationally. The NSS will ensure its continued competitiveness.

Gateways, both existing and new, offer the opportunity for developing national and regional scale activities to provide additional choices to Dublin. Hubs will provide regional and county scale opportunities. County towns and other urban areas with their surrounding rural areas provide opportunities to meet county and local scale needs. All areas will have the opportunity to contribute to the creation of a more prosperous Ireland. And it will be through the combined operation of all the elements of the NSS that we will realise balanced regional development.

Sustainable development is at the heart of the NSS. We need to make best use of natural resources, bring jobs closer to where people live, and ensure a high quality natural and built environment.

The NSS provides the framework for all sectors of society, national government, regional and local authorities, State agencies and all of the other social partners, whether employer, trade union or community and voluntary, to come together to achieve a better Ireland.

As Minister for the Environment and Local Government, I will have overall responsibility for leading implementation of the NSS. I pledge my full commitment and that of my Department to this task.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Cullen'.

Martin Cullen, T.D.,
Minister for the Environment and
Local Government

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