



Draft National Planning Framework
Ireland 2040

Submission from Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce

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Toni Forrester
Chief Executive
Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce
Grand Central Complex, Canal Road, Letterkenny



Introduction

Letterkenny Chamber is making this submission to the Draft Plan in the context of the earlier submission that was made as part of the initial phase of consultation associated with the Issues & Choices paper and it reinforces the key considerations for the North West as set out in that document.

The challenges facing the Donegal and the wider North West are great and have become even more heightened in light of Brexit which are yet to be fully understood. As a border town and County, we believe that businesses located here will feel the effects of Brexit much more acutely and as a result will need to see that strategic investment is made if the region is to become economically sustainable.

The main theme of this submission is to ensure that the strategic approach to regional growth being developed through The North West Strategic Growth Partnership is recognised nationally and that this approach can deliver strategic investment in the region in a way that benefits the population and the state.

Our organisation and our members are fully behind this approach to the economic future of the region. The North West City Region needs to be fully recognised within the NPF as a strategic metropolitan area. We believe the approach in your plan for effective regional development could finally deliver economic benefit to the region and result in it becoming a net contributor to the whole country.

Core Messages

Recognition of the North West City Region as a Metropolitan Area of national Scale

The North West City Region offers a unique region in that it crosses two jurisdictions. If this region, with Derry City as its economic driver, is supported and enabled to grow it will offer unique opportunities to Ireland as a whole and to the North West in particular. Developing this North West City Region and recognising it as such in the NPF cannot be understated. The NW City Region can achieve a critical mass of population to deliver sustainable growth for the island as a whole.

The effects of Brexit are not yet fully known therefore it is crucial that an all-island approach is taken to recognise the North West City Region as an economic driver nationally.

Development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor

The document at present recognises the weakness of peripheral regions such as the North West with a focus on improving connectivity northwards. We strongly recommend that there is a clear identification of the North West City Region that would provide for the development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor on a north to south as well as a south to north basis.

Key infrastructure priorities

The Chamber strongly supports the objective cited in the *Draft NPF, National policy Objective 47 (page 102), Working together for Economic Advantage*. Taking this approach has the potential to deliver the infrastructure required for the North West and specifically the Derry – Letterkenny Corridor.

The NPF needs to be adjusted to recognise the Strategic Metropolitan Area potential of the North West City Region through providing for the development of strategic routes and electricity network improvements in county Donegal.

Priority projects for the North West Region should be expressed as National Priorities in the National Planning Framework including:

- The Ten-T Strategic Roads projects (N13, N14, N15)
- N2/A5 & A6 roads projects linking the region
- N4 upgrade
- Continued support of Donegal Airport & City of Derry Airport and for the strategic ports of Greencastle & Killybegs.

It cannot be underestimated how important these infrastructure projects are to the development of Letterkenny and the region as a whole. Time and again FDI businesses located here, employing in excess of 2500 people, are citing the issue of roads infrastructure as an impediment to doing business and attracting further investment. In addition, the high growth potential businesses that are locating here as well as many small businesses have roads infrastructure as their top priority.

In the Draft NPF we were very disappointed to see no mention of any strategic infrastructure projects for the North West Region inferring that these will be dealt with by the Regional Assembly. The North West City Region needs to be considered as a Metropolitan Area of Value and given the status it deserves in the plan.

Conclusion

The Challenges that Brexit will bring will be acutely felt in this border county and in the wider North West Region and therefore we urge everyone to look upon these challenges with creativity. A one size fits all approach will not work to deliver success and prosperity to citizens across the Island of Ireland.

The unique challenges and issues identified in this cross border region should be seen as an opportunity to deliver a sustainable regional economy that will ensure that each citizen can play their part in creating an Ireland that offers opportunities for all, in a vibrant region that is an attractive place in which to live and work.