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Submission on NPF 2040

Dear Secretary,

Please see the following short submission on the draft NPF.

One of the key challenges facing Ireland and the world in the coming years relates to Climate Change. An ongoing permissive approach to planning in Ireland is contributing to a sprawling distribution of development across the state. Significant ongoing costs are becoming locked in for society across insurance, commuting times, water delivery/standards, electricity etc. This undermines competitiveness for Ireland compared with other states in Europe and further afield.

As a member of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, I found it somewhat disappointing to hear much of the discussion on the draft NPF in Granard, Co. Longford to hear proposals to water down possible restrictions on rural one-off builds. It is arguable that the costs associated with the rates of sprawl will continue to outpace the capacity of the state to invest in urban areas. The related implications for carbon emissions should be taken account of in any decisions that permit rural one-offs where there is a minimal sustainable economic and environmental benefit to an area.

Somewhat related, the transport investment costs to the state, along with the carbon costs, must be addressed. Recent public discourse on the frustrations associated with traffic congestion and commuting to work is a symptom of poor outcomes from current approaches.

The addition of road lanes is proven the world over to give the impression of freedom to move and to undermine the capacity to invest in more sustainable rail services. There should be a study done to establish what movement costs will be when we are post the carbon fuel era. The energy demand will shift to the electricity network and will not offer the same levels of mobility.

Planning for that era should have already started. It is not inconceivable that in years to come there will be calls to transition motorway networks to shared or replacing rail routes.

Yours sincerely,

Pádraig

