

We welcome the proposed National Planning Framework as an essential tool in implementing a national strategy for considered and reasoned planning for the future development of our country.

We submit the following:

- The framework should somehow include a methodology to protect it from parish-pump politics as was evidence by the ludicrous decentralization policies that made a mockery of the previous National Spatial Strategy.
- A critical consideration of the framework should be resistance to the construction of a hard- border between N.I. and the R.O.I. following the UK's departure from the EU. This would likely have a catastrophic effect on the border regions.
- The construction of a motorway network from Dublin to serve Donegal via Sligo should be included, particularly in light of the likelihood of border tariffs and duties post-Brexit re-directing commercial traffic to the North West via Sligo away from the traditional routes through N.I.
- We support the designation of Sligo, Letterkenny and Castlebar as regional urban centres or Gateways, in which commercial, industrial, healthcare and tourist developments for the North West should be focused, to counter-balance the draw of investment and development towards the east and (to a lesser extent) south coasts.
- The development of a best quality digital infrastructure with fibre broadband etc. nationally shall contribute to a lesser draw to larger east coast urban centres as remote working can be supported and encouraged.
- The Wild Atlantic Way campaign has demonstrated that a concerted unified approach to tourism can reap substantial benefits. One of our least developed resources with significant economic and employment potential lies in the waters of our Atlantic coast. Our infrastructure to cater for tourist boats is tiny compared to that of the Scottish Highland and Island coast, where touring international and local boats contribute substantially to remote rural maritime economies. A thought out and planned necklace of marinas and associated services along our coast would open up great opportunities for developing this resource with resultant opportunities for supporting businesses.
- Continued support and development of Knock airport is critical to the economy of the north west succeeding and growing, particularly as ease of access is critical for multi-nationals locating in the west.
- Cycle trails, greenways, mountain biking facilities and other low-impact environmental tourist attractions should be encouraged, which have a substantial impact on local economies for little outlay (eg. The Western Greenway in Mayo an the Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Centre in Limerick).
- Continued promotion of green energy production initiatives must be included (wind, wave, tidal etc) with a planned decommissioning of carbon emitting energy plants.
- The national housing crisis has been predicated in part by the cessation of local authority housing construction. A national programme for social housing construction is required.

Regards,

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