




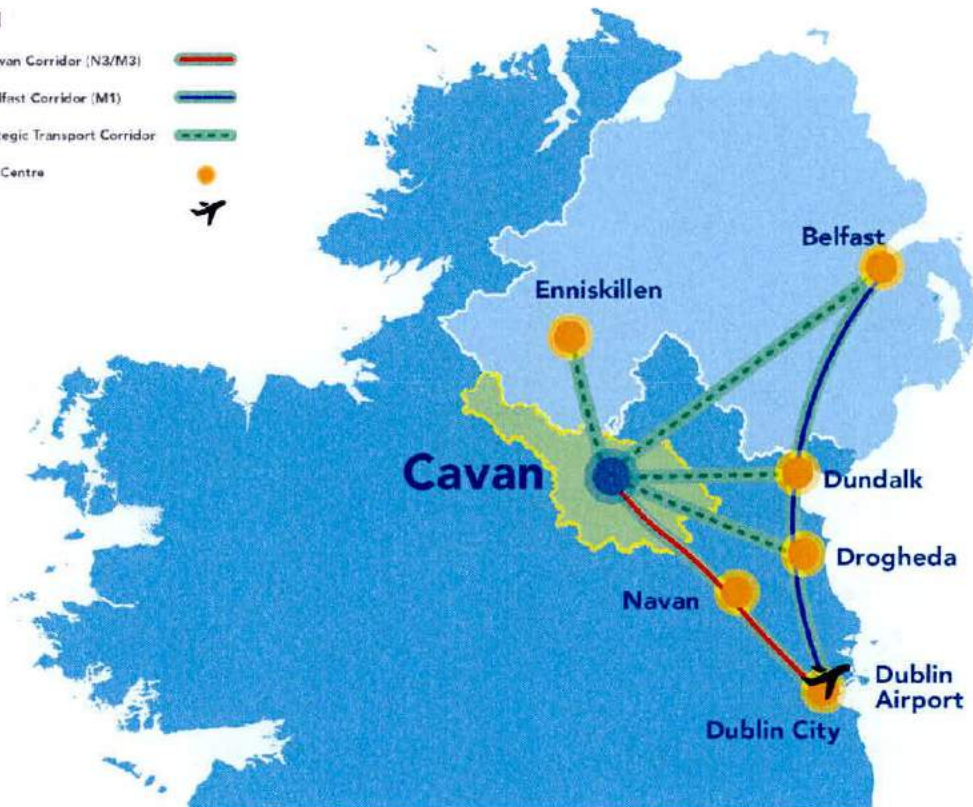


Submission by Cavan County Council
National Planning Framework Consultation

Legend

- Dublin - Cavan Corridor (N3/M3) 
- Dublin - Belfast Corridor (M1) 
- Other Strategic Transport Corridor 
- Key Urban Centre 
- Airport 



March 2017

Chief Executive

Bo Doyle

Cathaoirleach

Paddy Mc Donald

Introduction

Cavan County Council welcomes the publication of the consultation documents from the National Planning Framework and the opportunity to make a submission. Having considered the consultation documents, Cavan County Council highlight the following key strategic aspects to be considered as part of the National Planning Framework preparation.

Role within Region

There are a number of different functional areas within the Northern and Western Region. It is important that the National Planning Framework recognises such functional areas and the unique role that each functional area plays within the wider economy. The Cavan/Monaghan sub-region is one such function area. Each functional area needs to have a designation primary urban centre and Cavan Town is positioned to act as the principal town in this regard in terms of housing, job and education delivery. In addition to being the largest population centre in the region by a notable distance, it contains strategic facilities such as a hospital, Cavan Institute, Agricultural College, Cathedral and Sports Stadium, essential for sustainable growth. Cavan's strategic significance is further evident as within a 60-minute drive, a total population of approximately 1.3 million is within its catchment with an active workforce exceeding 500,000 persons.

Economic Growth

There is opportunity to build on traditional sectors of the economy in Cavan such as agribusiness, food and engineering to assist in the future economic success of the Region. It is anticipated that these sectors will remain steadfast and strong in the future but that they will expand into key growth areas such as agri-tech, value added food production and the digital knowledge economy. Furthermore, while uncertainty remains following the UK's decision to leave the EU, there may be exploitable opportunities for Cavan due to its adjacency to Northern Ireland. Fishing and Food Tourism are areas with significant potential for growth. The National Planning Framework needs to provide the platform and capital investment for strategic towns within the region such as Cavan to fulfil their potential.

Investment

The region has suffered investment imbalance in the past in key areas such as broadband, energy, accessibility and education. It is important that this imbalance is corrected in the National Planning Framework. Investment in Cavan is crucial to maximise the Region's economic potential and the following investment priorities are put forward for inclusion in the National Planning Framework:

- N3/A509 strategic route upgrade
- Dundalk/Cavan/Sligo East West strategic route upgrade
- Cavan Institute to become an Institute of Technology to serve the sub-region.
- Funding for the purchasing and servicing of economic lands by Cavan County Council

Green/ Sustainability

The region has the potential to be a truly Green Region which should form the basis for branding the region in the future. A goal of the National Planning Framework could be that the region becomes carbon neutral by 2040.

Placemaking

The National Planning Framework needs to be focused on Placemaking and its importance in the planning function. The importance of strong towns and villages needs to be a key tenet as well as recognising the different types of rural areas. The economic growth of recent years has led to rapid suburbanisation and to the development of rural areas around cities and larger towns. Other parts of the country are suffering depopulation.

Population

Population in 2016

Preliminary results of the 2016 census indicate that the population of County Cavan reached 76,092 in the same year. This represents an increase of 44.1% – 23,296 – since 1991. By comparison, the population of the State during this same period increased by less than this, 35.0%. The County's urban centres have grown robustly with the nine largest settlements growing by a total of 12,945, effectively doubling in size from 13,518 between 1991 and 2016. Cavan Town, the primary urban centre, grew by an estimated 100.4% to 10,531.

By 2026, it is anticipated that the population of County Cavan will reach nearly 85,000, an 11.5% increase on 2016. For the State, the estimated growth is 11.6%, bringing the national population to over 5.3 million people. The similar rate of growth for Cavan is a positive sign of the County's strengths and of its young population. By 2040, it is anticipated that the population of County Cavan will increase by approximately 20% on 2026 figures, thus 34% on 2016. This will bring it to approximately 100,000 persons

A key issue for the future will be to retain the population and provide employment opportunities, allowing them to live *and* work in the County.

The Catchment of County Cavan

Within a 60-minute drive of the nine major towns of County Cavan, there is a total population of approximately 1.3 million. Importantly it includes areas within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The majority lived in the former. Reflective of the larger population, the labour force of the catchment was approximately 740,000 in the Republic of Ireland and 160,000 in Northern Ireland, equating to a total potential labour force of some 900,000. The Republic of Ireland accounted for 82% of the population and the labour force in 2011.

Location	Population	Percentage of Total	Labour Force	Percentage of Total	Labour Force Proportion
Republic of Ireland	1,100,000	82%	740,000	82%	67.3%
Northern Ireland	244,000	18%	160,000	18%	65.6%
Total	1,344,000	100%	900,000	100%	67.0%

Table 1: Population and labour force within 60 minutes of the Cavan's nine major towns.

Industry of Employment

The active workforce exceeded 500,000 in 2011, including workers in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. 87% of the workforce were found to be in the former and 13% in the latter. As displayed in Figure 1, the proportion for the active workforce employed in 'commerce and trade' and 'transport and communications' across the catchment is greater than in Cavan alone. Figure 1 also demonstrates that the industries of 'agriculture, forestry and fishing' and 'manufacturing' employ proportionally more people in Cavan than in the catchment. This reflects the importance of these two industries to the county and the strengths that they bestow upon it.

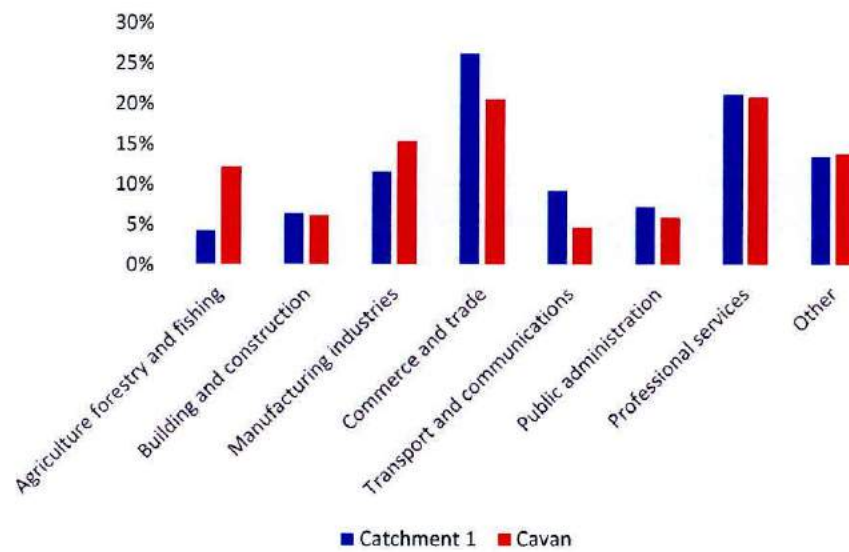


Figure 1: Proportional employment by industry, Cavan and the catchment within 60 minutes of the Cavan's nine major towns.

Strategic Location:

There are a number of definitive sub-regions within the Northern and Western Region. The Cavan/Monaghan/Leitrim (part of) sub-region is one such functional area, along with a number of Atlantic Corridor sub-regions. It is important that the National Planning Framework recognises each sub-region and designates a primary urban centre and economic driver within each.

County Cavan is a strategic, accessible location. The county benefits from a strategic location in which it has key corridors connecting with Dublin City and Dublin Airport (via Navan). Dublin and Cavan are connected by the N3/M3 road, and except for Virginia, this route bypasses or does not pass through any towns or villages. The road continues north, extending to the A509 over the border, reaching Enniskillen. Cavan's strategic location and connectivity is displayed in Figure 2.

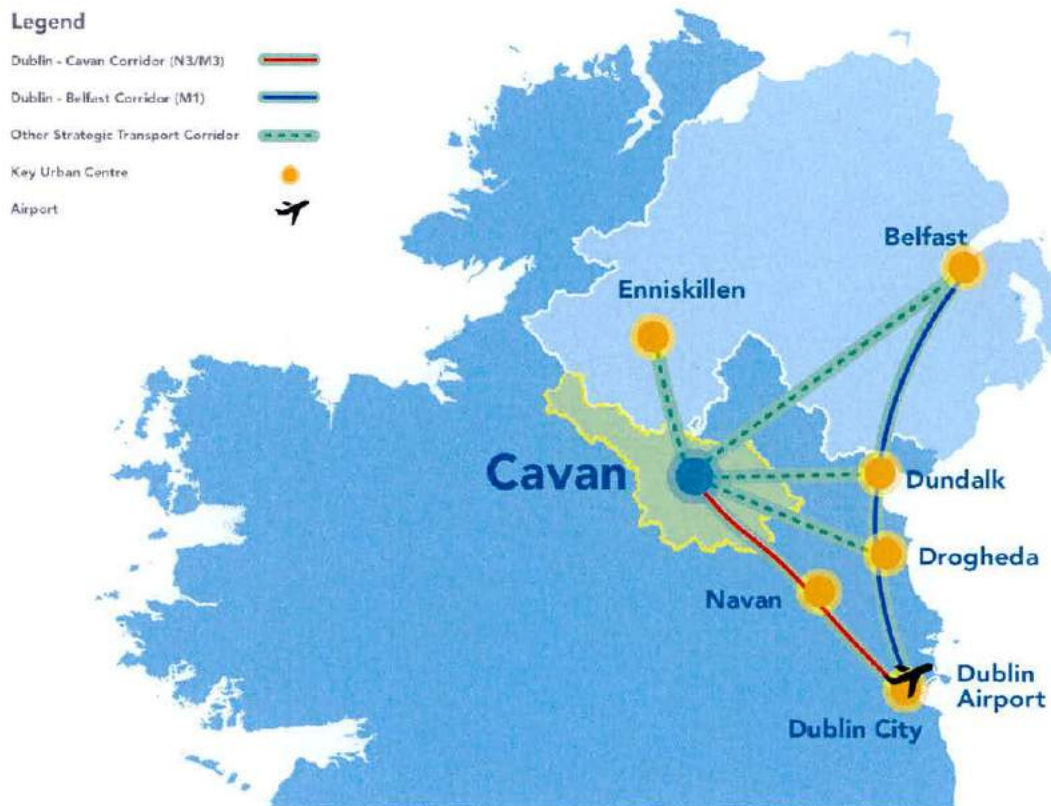


Figure 2: Strategic location and connectivity of County Cavan.

Cavan is bound by County Fermanagh to the north and its abutment with the Northern Irish border supports transport and trade corridors to Belfast and Enniskillen. Just west of the M1 motorway, Cavan is also in close proximity of the Dublin-Belfast corridor and the towns of Dundalk and Drogheda. Both towns are easily reached from Cavan as centres of enterprise and employment with large labour forces. Dundalk Institute of Technology produces a supply of local graduates each year.

County Cavan has a unique function within the Northern and Western Region, being under the strong influence of Dublin and only 45 minutes from the M50. In this regard Cavan Town and east Cavan offer something no other part of the region can offer. With appropriate serviced and zoned land in this area, Cavan County Council will be in a position to attract businesses who want easy access to Dublin and talent, together with the benefits such a location offers (work-life balance, reasonable accommodation costs etc). The Northern and Western Region needs to have as broad an economic offer as possible and this is one real option to include as a counter-balance to Dublin and to tap into the benefits that Brexit may offer.

Cavan town performs a regional function, being the largest town within the sub-region (Cavan/Monaghan/Leitrim) and being the town which experienced the largest growth within the past 10 years. It has strategic facilities such as a hospital, Cavan Institute, Agricultural College, Cathedrals and Sports Stadium. It is well positioned to deliver the principal strategic function within the sub-region in terms of housing, job delivery and education. The result of increased enterprise activity and employment in the county will see a reduction in the need for inter-county commuting and the resulting strain that this puts on social ties, transport infrastructure and the environment; all leading to a better quality of life.

The Ireland 2040 Issues and Choices Paper discusses the important interaction between Cavan and Enniskillen and the number of car trips that cross the border at this location. Important to the success of this part of the Northern and Western Region is connectivity to the Dublin Region. It is crucial to the economic growth of the region that the N3/A509 strategic route is an investment priority in the National Planning Framework. In practical terms, if you consider that with Virginia Town by-passed, you could drive from the M50 to the Border at Enniskillen (120 km) without having to pass through a town.

The upgrade of the Dundalk/Cavan/Sligo East West strategic route is also very important to the border region. This is currently a heavily trafficked poorly aligned route serving significant FDI and indigenous businesses moving goods to Dundalk, ports and Northern Ireland. Previous studies and policy documents have highlighted the need for improved road infrastructure in the border area as being vital for future economic development and the Cavan to Dundalk route in particular has been identified as strategically important in this regard. Without the upgrade of this strategic route economic growth in the region will be stifled.

Education:

Of those people living in County Cavan that have completed their education, 28% have attained a third level education. By way of comparison, this figure stands at 35% for the State. A slightly higher proportion have no formal education or only attained a primary education in County Cavan than in the State, 19% and 15% respective totals. A breakdown is displayed in Figure 3.

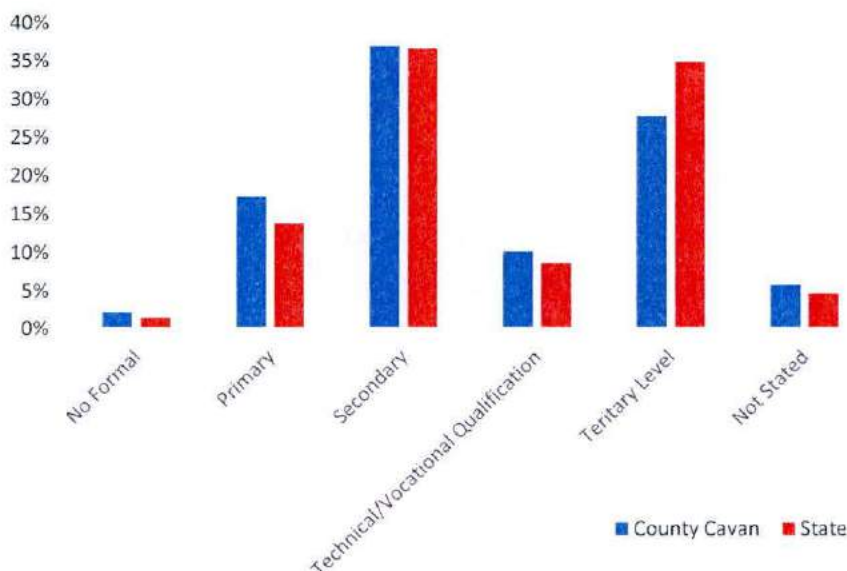


Figure 3: Level of educational attainment in County Cavan and the State, 2011 (Source: CSO, 2011).

Graduates in the 'social sciences, business and law' and 'engineering, manufacturing and construction' are the most numerous in Cavan (c. 10% for both) (see Figure 4). 5% of Cavan's graduates were in 'agriculture and veterinary', compared with 3% for the State. This is reflective of the number of businesses and levels of employment in the agricultural sector in County Cavan.

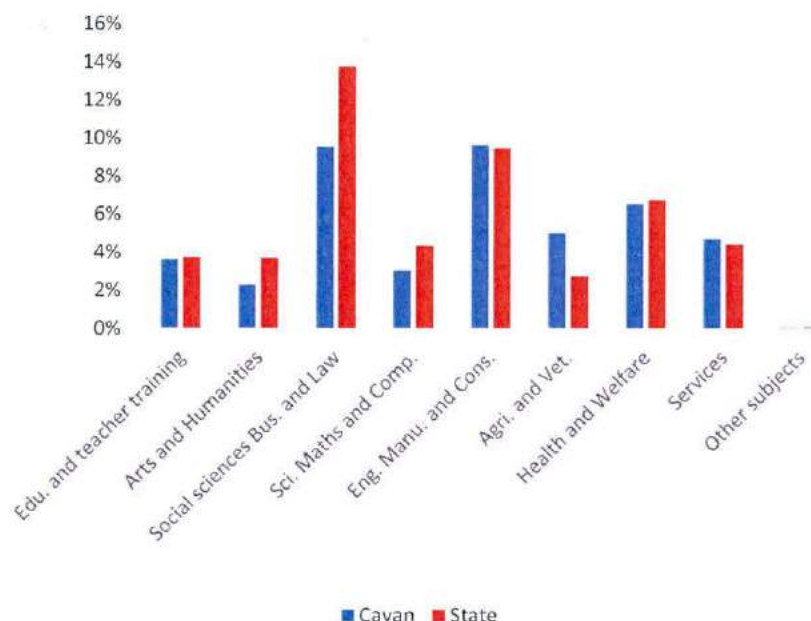


Figure 4: Proportion of graduates completed education by field of study, 2011 (excluding 'Not Stated') (Source: CSO, 2011).

The educational talent base is fundamental to ensuring a supply of skilled individuals and a broad ranging talent pool, however, the lack of a third level institution in the county and the employment opportunities available in the larger cities for graduates is a significant challenge for the retention of skilled people in the county and region. To mitigate this, there has to be an innovative, strategic and collaborative approach to harnessing the current educational institutions in the region to develop the provision of blended education across the region (eg Connacht-Ulster Alliance GMIT, ITS and LIT).

For over 25 years, Cavan Institute has provided the highest quality education and service to the people of Cavan and beyond. The Institute has been at the cutting edge of developments in Further Education through innovative course development. To address the lower level of third level qualifications in the area and enhancing the talent base, there is a clear opportunity to build on Cavan Institute foundations to establish an Institute of Technology in the town to serve this sub-region. There is also opportunity to link with existing third level institutes such as the Connaught-Ulster Alliance, Dundalk IT or universities within the catchment.

Economic Growth

In 2016, an estimated 6,904 businesses were active in County Cavan. The primary industries of agriculture, forestry, fishing and aquaculture were the most numerous in the county at 3,608; equating to 52% of the total. 'Wholesale, retail, vehicle repair and transportation' were the second largest group of sectors, with 779 businesses, accounting for 11% of the total in County Cavan.

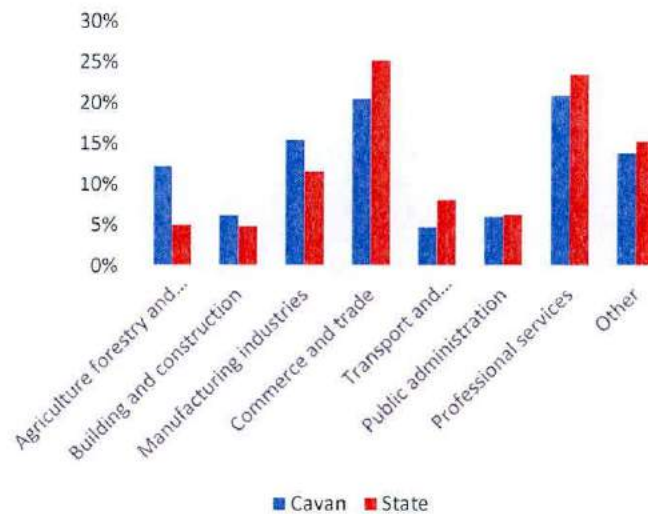


Figure 5: Industry of employment in Cavan and the State, 2011 (Source: CSO, 2011).

- Agriculture; Forestry; Fishing and Aquaculture
- Mining and Quarrying/Construction
- Manufacturing
- Electricity,gas,steam and aircon supply/Sewerage,Water Supply
- Wholesale and Retail trade;Repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles;Transportation and Storage
- Accomodation and Food Storage Activities/Arts,Entertainment and Recreation
- Financial and Insurance Activities/Real Estate Activities
- Information and Communication/Professional,Scientific and Technical Activities
- Other service activities
- Administrative and Support Service Activities/Education/Human Health and Social Work Activities
- Unknown business type

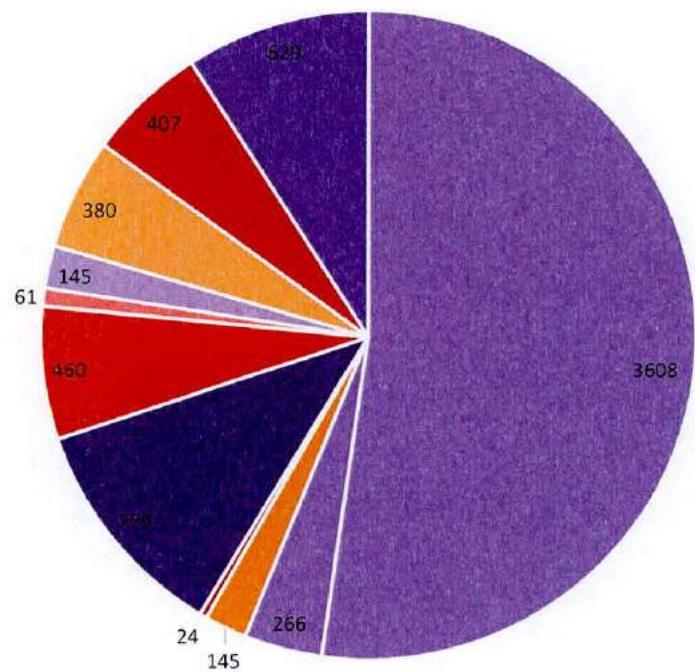


Figure 6: The number of businesses by type in Cavan, 2016 (Source: GeoDirectory).

Cavan County Council is committed to enterprise and employment creation, recognising both the improvements in the national economy and the uncertainties of Brexit. The County's Local Economic and Community Plan acknowledges the entrepreneurial culture of the population as well as the strengths in indigenous manufacturing industries and agri-related industries. The LECP commits Cavan County Council to improving the county's economic performance, outlining eight key economic goals:

- Goal 1: We will promote Cavan as an attractive investment location;
- Goal 2: We will invest in Strategic Infrastructural Developments;
- Goal 3: We will promote and develop indigenous enterprise
- Goal 4: We will encourage innovation/research & development;
- Goal 5: We will support businesses to expand and internationalise;
- Goal 6: We will concentrate on the development of key niche areas;
- Goal 7: We will provide quality employment, education & training services; and
- Goal 8: We will stimulate town renewal and help revive the retail sector.

Of note is the 'Action A' under Objective 6.1 of Goal 6, which is to: *"Develop and implement a Food Strategy for the County which will facilitate a more co-ordinated and collaborative approach to the promotion and development of the 'Cavan Food Product' and which builds on the Taste of Cavan"*. As indicated above, the County has a large number of businesses and people employed and educated in agriculture and with the industry evolving there may opportunities for Cavan food branding and the promotion of food-tourism.

From a county perspective we are focussed on traditional sectors of the economy such as agribusiness, food, engineering, building materials and financial services. It is anticipated that this industrial sectors will remain steadfast and strong in the future but that they will expand into key growth areas such as agritech, value added food production and the digital knowledge economy. We are reliant, to a large part, on indigenous enterprise, reflecting a strong enterprise and employment base, which can be attributed to a strong entrepreneurial culture within our county.

Brexit will have consequences for the economies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, however, there is little doubt that the counties immediately north and south of the border will be most significantly affected. The impacts have already been witnessed in the agri-foods sector. The National Planning Framework will need to examine such risks and present a clear strategy to insulate the already peripheral border region for possible negative impacts.

While uncertainty remains following the UK's decision to leave the EU, there may also be exploitable opportunities for Cavan due to its adjacency to Northern Ireland. With regards to the possible tightening and formation of border controls between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the immediacy of the town to the latter may make it an attractive location in which to invest with the prospect of targeting rapid cross-border trade. Businesses in Northern Ireland may wish to relocate or create a secondary presence in the EU but wish to remain close to their existing catchment. The National Planning Framework much provide border counties such as Cavan with the investment needed to make the most of such an opportunity.

As we encourage and support our local businesses to scale and internationalise and increase jobs in our county, we do however have to factor in the implications of such growth in terms of the demands on infrastructure, the provision of services, the physical attributes of the county from a quality of life perspective, amenities, schools etc. The location and future development of employment zones, and/or the clustering of certain businesses is critically important to establishing an attractive economic profile of the county. The investment programme to deliver the National Planning Framework should include for the purchasing and servicing of economic lands by Local Authorities removing a significant risk for investors seeking to locate in a region.

Whilst we must continue to focus on investment and supports for our indigenous businesses, we must also ensure that we are in position to support potential foreign direct investment into our county and region. There are two key factors that will determine our attractiveness as a location for FDI – facilities and talent. The other determining factor is that, historically and evidentially, successful investment and industrial activity is driven by a key town or city within the county or region. From a future national planning and investment

perspective there must be a focus on the provision of the physical and digital connectivity to such key towns or cities to drive an economic strategy at a county and regional level.

The recent commitment by IDA Ireland to a greater dispersal of investments throughout the State should be recognised in the National Planning Framework; a minimum increase in investment of 30% to 40% is being sought in each region outside Dublin, with Dublin continuing to attract similar high investment levels as before. While foreign direct investment is still likely to be attracted to the main urban centres, there is considerable scope for promoting indigenous enterprises in smaller towns. It is important that IDA regions are the same as regions and sub-regions identified as part of the National Planning Framework, which is currently not the case. This will ensure that jobs are appropriately distributed through-out all parts of the country.

The costs of living and purchasing or renting accommodation are substantially lower than in the counties of the GDA. To illustrate this, the average residential property prices and monthly cost of renting in Cavan and six other areas are illustrated in Tables 2 and 3. This is a notable benefit to attracting a business to an area.

County	Average Property Price	Compared with Cavan
Cavan	€139,236	N/A
Dublin City Centre	€261,479	88%
South County Dublin	€532,662	283%
North County Dublin	€276,329	98%
Meath	€225,165	62%
Kildare	€229,427	65%
Louth	€184,511	33%

Table 2: Average property price in Cavan and 6 other areas, Q4 2016¹

County	Average Rental Cost	Compared with Cavan
Cavan	€608	N/A
Dublin City Centre	€1,655	172%
South County Dublin	€1,763	190%
North County Dublin	€1,375	126%
Meath	€1,050	73%
Kildare	€1,105	82%
Louth	€952	57%

Table 3: Average monthly rents in Cavan and 6 other areas, Q4 2016²

¹ Daft.ie (2017) *The Daft.ie House Price Report: An analysis of recent trends in the Irish residential sales market. 2016 in Review.*

² Daft.ie (2017) *An analysis of recent trends in the Irish rental market. 2016 in Review.*

Tourism in County Cavan

Tourism has been an important industry in County Cavan for decades, with angling being of particular significance since the late 1970's, when coarse anglers from Northern England began to visit Cavan in large numbers.

The hotel accommodation sector in County Cavan is strong and has seen significant private sector investment in recent years. There are 1600 hotel beds in Cavan, which is good compared with neighbouring counties but still some way behind counties such as Meath (2600) and Westmeath (3200). Food tourism in Cavan is growing and the county is home to number of nationally acclaimed chefs and restaurants.

An industry of rural B&B's and self-catering properties developed to cater for visiting anglers, many of whom are still in existence today, play an important role in the local economy. Thirty percent of UK visitors to Cavan come to fish and stay in rural B&Bs and self-catering accommodations across towns in rural Cavan such as Arvagh, Cootehill, Killeshandra, Belturbet and Gowna. Anglers typically stay for one week to two weeks and tend to spend an average of €1000 per week - a direct financial injection into the rural economy. In addition, the county hosts 12 angling festivals per year across the county, all of which attract anglers from overseas.

County Cavan has much potential to grow its angling tourism numbers by investing in a tired angling product and reducing our dependence on coarse angling. This can be achieved by diversifying Cavan's angling offering and promoting pike and trout angling to mainland European markets such as France and Belgium.

County Cavan continues to punch above its weight relative to surrounding counties, but continues to underperform in attracting overseas visitors and domestic mid-week holiday-makers. In order to increase visitor numbers, grow spend and expand dwell time, we urgently need investment in propositions of scale. We need to create authentic, engaging and memorable experiences, delivered in a number of languages. This could be achieved by investing in enhancing the visitor experience in existing attractions such as Cavan Burren Park, Castle Saunderson, Killykeen Forest Park, Dún na Rí Forest Park, Cavan Museum and the World War 1 Trench Experience. These attractions are currently attracting over 20,000 visitors annually but investment and marketing is required to grow these numbers to fifty-thousand and above. The county's proximity to Dublin is an advantage, as is the fact that the county is in *Ireland's Ancient East* and en-route to the West and the *Wild Atlantic Way*.

Cavan County Council has recently embarked on the development of a new tourism strategy which has outlined a vision to 2021. The strategy has identified the need to create 'clusters' of tourism attractions including the development of a signature tourism attraction in the County.

Cavan is part of Fáilte Ireland's '*Ireland's Ancient East*' proposition and perfectly suits and meets the criteria for promotion. The county is historic and has many heritage assets, many of which remain underdeveloped for visitors. Future funding opportunities through Fáilte Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland, LEADER, Peace, Rural Towns & Village Initiatives and so forth should be approached with an awareness of the importance of tourism, the overall vision for Cavan as a destination, and the role tourism can play in creating jobs and contributing to the local economy.

Issues that could negatively affect the county's growth as a tourism destination include lack of investment in tourism product, under-investment in angling, poor access to waterways, litter and fly-tipping and a lack of cohesion in our approach to the regeneration of rural towns and villages.

In summary, County Cavan has much potential to grow its tourism industry. The waterways, food tourism, angling, the promotion of Cavan's hotels and resorts, investment in things to do and the enhancement of heritage assets in line with *Ireland's Ancient East* are all prospective areas of growth which could drive the rural economy. The county has seen soft growth in recent years in spite of little public sector investment in tourism product and limited marketing spend. With investment in tourism product and marketing, including the maximising of opportunities within *Ireland's Ancient East*, the county could see strong growth and job creation in the tourism industry into the future.

Green/Renewable

The transition to a decarbonised society and adaption to the effects of climate change must be the primary objective of the National Planning Framework. Climate change is the defining issue of our time and breaking local dependence on fossil fuels, eliminating the region's contribution to global warming and developing a region that will adapt to climate uncertainty and thrive under these circumstances is imperative and cannot be understated. It is imperative that a strategy is prepared, which will ensure that the energy needs of the region are met with renewable sources. The NPF must be integrated with the National Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans currently being prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, which aims to reduce transport generation and energy demand. This should underpin all strategic decisions, both locally and nationally.

A review of local transport plans and land use must be core objectives going forward. Any transport policy must align with current Smarter Travel Policy, and must set out clear objectives as to how Smarter Travel policy will be achieved locally and translated into coherent action. The NPF must set out clear and measurable actions which will reduce transport demand by creating compact walkable settlement patterns and include detailed policies on walking and cycling, and improve upon any existing policies which are focused on changing individual behaviour and integrate existing and future local and central government policies. Any of these efforts towards a reduction in transport demand must include way-finding studies to identify existing and future walking and cycling routes which must be a paramount condition when selecting land zoned for any new development.

The policy recommendations of the National Biodiversity Plan should be fully incorporated into the NPF and should encourage a Green Infrastructure approach. The National Planning Framework must align with The National Biodiversity Plan which will be finalised by the end of 2017. Any development within the region must also support the EU Biodiversity Strategy and its specific targets.

The region has the potential to be a truly Green Region which should form the basis for branding the region in the future. For example, a goal of the National Planning Framework could be that the region becomes carbon neutral by 2040. Having and delivering such a goal would be a significant attracter for businesses into the region, particularly FDI. Cavan County Councils role in delivering Green Energy should be recognised in the National Planning Framework, being the largest non-coastal county producer of wind energy in the country.

In delivering Green Energy, a consistent approach throughout the region and country is important which should include consideration for community buy-in initiatives and use of the co-op model to deliver renewable energy in a community. Synergies between traditional agricultural industries and other forms of renewable energy such as bioenergy should also be explored as part of the National Planning Framework process.

Quality of Life/Placemaking

Cavan County Council believes that a focus of the National Planning Framework needs to be on Placemaking and its importance in the planning function. Good placemaking capitalises on local community's assets and potential and creates public spaces that promotes people's health, happiness and well being. Good placemaking needs to promote housing that suits the needs of each region, county and the communities within. In terms of the provision of housing, it is considered that one size does not fit all and the constraints and needs of each county needs to be developed.

Facilities need to be provided that allows planning, health, education, economic development, transport and infrastructure to be planned in a meaningful way. This will allow the creation of sustainable communities within our towns and villages. The maintenance and development of the towns and villages of this region is the key to future sustainable development and need to be the core message in the new National Planning Framework. Investment needs to be made in these towns and villages to ensure this sustainability. The careful planning of same will provide employment opportunities, suitable housing and leisure facilities within the towns and villages and this in turn provides for the creation of communities in the region. The building up of communities and their role in the development of Ireland 2040 is crucial. This is required for social interaction and their involvement in the development of villages, towns, cities and regions is critical.

Placemaking needs to address quality of life. This needs to ensure the provision of adequate sporting and leisure in communities and the development of these need to be supported. This in turn also aids the build up of communities and helps sustain same. Quality of life also needs to be addressed in the provision of other services such as housing and infrastructure. Housing provision needs to address that populations are changing and the needs for same need to be catered for. The provision of Lifetime Adoptable Homes, Smart Houses and specifically designed homes for aging populations and downsizing, need to be provided for and invested in.

The importance of strong towns and villages needs to be a key tenet as well as recognising the different types of rural areas. The economic growth of recent years has led to rapid suburbanisation and to the development of rural areas around cities and larger towns. Other parts of the country are suffering depopulation. The National Planning Framework needs to provide a clear approach in managing development in these very differing rural types. Structurally weak areas need to be strengthened and supported. Delivering broadband throughout the country will allow people to live and work in rural areas as digital links and opportunities for remote working and new enterprises continue to grow, thus reducing the level of out-migration of young people from rural areas. The clustering of housing around an existing village or town can help reduce the problem of rural isolation. Getting people back to living in or around towns and villages is more sustainable and will bring about more sustainable communities.

Providing clear direction to protect our rural areas should be provided as part of the National Planning Framework. In this regard, guidance is provided in key areas such as protected sites, landscapes, views and so forth. However, such guidance is at times compromised by for example large scale forestry which often falls outside the requirement for planning permission.

Concluding Remarks

The region has suffered investment imbalance in the past in key areas such as broadband, energy, accessibility and education. It is important that this imbalance is corrected in the National Planning Framework. The National Planning Framework in this regard will need to clearly recognise that there will be a need to provide infrastructure at locations beyond which certain levels of demand might suggest. If this is not recognised then the region will fall further behind and will not be in a position to act as a counter balance to the congested Dublin Region and will not be in a position to fulfil its potential.

What has been illustrated in this report is that Cavan benefits from a strategic location, acting as a fulcrum between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and functions as the main urban area within the sub-region (Cavan/Monaghan/Leitrim). It is positioned to act as the principle town in the sub-region in terms of housing, job and education delivery. In addition to being the largest population centre in the region, it contains strategic facilities such as a hospital, Agricultural College, Cavan Institute, Cathedrals and Sports Stadium, essential for sustainable growth. Cavan's strategic significance is further evident as within a 60-minute drive, a total population of approximately 1.3 million is within its catchment with an active workforce exceeding 500,000 persons.

'Agriculture, forestry, fishing and aquaculture' are the most numerous at 3,608; equating to 52% of the total number of businesses in County Cavan. From a county perspective we are focussed on traditional sectors of the economy such as agribusiness, food, engineering, financial services and building materials. It is anticipated that these sectors will remain steadfast and strong in the future but that they will expand into key growth areas such as agritech, value added food production and the digital knowledge economy. While uncertainty remains following the UK's decision to leave the EU, there may be exploitable opportunities for Cavan due to its adjacency to Northern Ireland. With regards to the possible tightening and formation of border controls between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the immediacy of the town to the latter may make it an attractive location in which to invest with the prospect of targeting rapid cross-border trade.

Fishing and Food Tourism are areas with significant potential for growth in addition to existing attractions such as Cavan Burren Park, Castle Saunderson, Killykeen Forest Park, Dún na Rí Forest Park, Cavan Museum and the World War 1 Trench Experience.

Investment in Cavan is crucial to maximise the Region's economic potential and the following investment priorities are put forward for inclusion in the National Planning Framework:

- N3/A509 strategic route
- Dundalk/Cavan/Sligo East West strategic route
- Cavan Institute to become an Institute of Technology to serve the sub-region.
- The purchasing and servicing of economic lands by Cavan County Council

The region has the potential to be a truly Green Region which should form the basis for branding the region in the future. For example, a goal of the National Planning Framework could be that the region becomes carbon neutral by 2040.

The importance of strong towns and villages needs to be a key tenet as well as recognising the different types of rural areas. The economic growth of recent years has led to rapid suburbanisation and to the development of rural areas around cities and larger towns. Other parts of the country are suffering depopulation. The National Planning Framework needs to provide a clear approach in managing development in these very differing rural types.

Cavan has a significant role to play in 'Effective Regional Development' by performing the primary strategic sub-regional function in delivering jobs, housing and education to counter-balance the pressures the Dublin Region is experiencing and reducing the need for inter-county commuting and out-migrating and resulting strain that this puts on social ties, transport infrastructure and the environment, all leading to a better quality of life.