



**Submission to the Public Consultation on
'Ireland 2040 – Our Plan'
National Planning Framework**

Introduction

Carlow Public Participation (PPN) was established in October 2014 under the Directive of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and in accordance with legislation in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (Section 46).

Carlow PPN is an independent organisation and is a framework for public engagement and participation with sustainability and wellbeing at its core. The aim of this structure is to facilitate and enable public organisations operating within the wider community to articulate and give voice to a diverse range of views, issues and interests within the local government system.

Carlow PPN currently represents 370 registered community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental groups across the county.

Due to late notice and timeframe given for this submission; Carlow PPN was unable to conduct meaningful consultation with its members and therefore Carlow PPN Secretariat will make this submission on their behalf.

Answers to questions set out in order of priority.

What are the key services people will need?

- Primary Health Care Centres in rural and urban areas for physical and mental wellbeing. Such centres will give a community focus and support at local level.
- Hospital Specialties are moving towards Centres of Excellence Models. Whilst we accept the bona fides of same; there are currently little or no infrastructural supports available to patients accessing these services from some distances. Community based care for patients in distant rural areas needs to be developed.
- Return some services to rural communities i.e. Post Office and Garda Stations. Rural isolation is a big issue which leads to higher rates of mental health issues and suicide. Returning local services gives back the human contact.
- Education for children with disabilities/learning needs to be locally based.
- Community Information/IT Zone Centres required. Lack of IT skills can lead to further isolation as technology takes over. Educate all citizens, all ages, in these centres as technology has become a new language.
- Home care supports older adults are and will continue to be essential services. This service is particularly important given the aging population. Familial support is restricted given the employment and childcare commitments of family members. A strong home care support which offers older adults the choice to continue living in their own home and community are essential for the wellbeing of the individual and their family.
- Increasing childcare support for pre-school children is important. Whilst we recognise the strides made in this area in recent years, the current provision is insufficient in particular in rural areas.
- Public transport continues to be a critical service for all people in rural and urban areas. The absence of suitable public transport provision can lead to isolation, inability to access public services and impede access to employment. There is a need at national level to recognise the important role that public transport plays in promoting the well-being of individuals and communities. Public transport is essential in ensuring that citizens can play an active role in their community, can access services and become fully engaged members of society.

Where will we live and what types of housing will we need?

In considering this question, the Secretariat considered this question from a couple of viewpoints. We believe the guiding principal of housing strategies going forward should be on creating communities with all the necessary amenities and supports required for different populations.

- **Environmental** – Every effort should be made for new builds to move towards passive housing, given the environmental benefits of same. In addition, the continued support of green energies in homes in either new builds or retrofitting e.g. improved window glazing, solar panels, insulation etc.
- **Affordability & Sustainability** - Available and affordable long term sustainable rental properties close to amenities and employment. In relation to urban areas we need to consider higher density development similar to European models.
- **Integration** – It is important that we learn from the mistakes of the past by developing more integrated communities through housing development. Promoting and supporting developments with a combination of affordable/social housing within private developments. Integration also needs to be considered in terms of age and disability, social inclusion. Housing needs to respond to individuals – disability, mental health, older persons. All individuals regardless of age or disability should have their choice of residence respected with appropriate infrastructural and human resources provided. When choosing housing types, consideration is to be given to the integration of new communities.
- **Geographic Locations** – Consideration should be given to urban renewal developments in town centre locations. Traditional retail spaces are now vacant or underutilised. Incentives to restore residential development in these locations will act as stimulus and help generate community spirit.

What Infrastructure is required? What are the national priorities?

- All local transport services to be improved which can give rise to town and village revitalisation. Consideration should be given to the expansion of the current School Bus Services – to enable other individuals in the community to access same. Current Local Link Services working well but is demand led and greater funding of same would increase knowledge of the service.
- Broadband Services required for all. Broadband will be an increasingly important tool for individuals to actively participation in their community be it through education, employment, community action. Broadband services should be akin to the telephone services. Individuals should have equity of access and quality regardless of where one lives.

Where are jobs located and what will these jobs be?

- SME's
- Publicly funded bodies i.e. public sector –Local Authority, Education, i.e. ETB, IT, Carlow College, Health Services
- Agriculture & Agri Diversity
- Manufacturing i.e. Autocyl, Burnside,
- Retail – Grocery, Clothing other
- Foreign Direct Investment - Merck Sharpe Dohme, Unum

- Tourism – Hospitality – Accommodation & Food, SME with Tourism Focus i.e. Bike Trails, Hiking, Aqua Tourism.
- We fore see Carlow continuing to be the primary location of employment for most employees and enterprises over the next 20 years.
- We believe that there will continue to be strong commuter population to larger urban centres i.e. Dublin/Waterford.
- We would encourage government policy to consider incentivising Working from Home practises where appropriate given environmental and congestion benefits. In addition, this would help in building more vibrant communities.
- We would encourage government policy to facilitate greater consultation with Employers/Industry experts with regard to their labour market skills needs and future industry demands.

What are the planning responses to key environmental challenges?

- Planning decisions are primarily informed by planners, engineers and environmental experts.
- The need for sustainable developments with a move towards passive construction across all infrastructures public and private.
- Greater consideration of flood plains in relation to planning decisions, particularly given the cost of flood wall defences etc.

Where will Ireland fit in a wider geographical context?

Currently this is a very difficult question to answer given the pending Brexit negotiations and the unknown impact that they will have on the relationships between our two countries. This is framed in a wider context of a currently weakened EU which itself is facing in to a period of uncertainty.

How do we ensure that every place can realise its potential? / What will success look like?

- Need to create communities – communities already exist. Applying a business model we need to assess our assets and liabilities in the community. Assets can include people, SME's, schools, and community activism. Liabilities can include absence of key resources i.e. transport, economic and social exclusion, health services and education for children with disabilities. Inclusive education system to accommodate all.
- In order to ensure every place can realise its potential we need to have a shared vision of what that community can achieve – maximise resources i.e. schools, sports clubs.
- We need to maximise resources i.e. school transport expanded to other service users, school facilities made available to the wider community. Sports club facilities being made available to others.
- Ensure that every place can realise its potential we must first and foremost ensure that every individual within that community is supported to maximise their own potential and to play an active part in their own community. In essence this means that a child on the autism spectrum disorder can access child care facilities in their own community; it means that a refugee is supported to access the appropriate services that they require; it means that an older person has access to transport to enable them to participate fully in their community and access health services according to their needs; it means that a person experiencing mental ill health has the appropriate services available to them in their community and it means that a working parent is supported with appropriate, affordable and quality childcare.

What will Ireland look like in 20 years?

In considering this question Carlow PPN Secretariat referred to their Mission and Wellbeing Statements: -

Carlow PPN Mission Statement

‘To facilitate public participation and engagement by communities in decision making at local level contributing to wellness and sustainability.’

Carlow PPN Wellbeing Statement

‘Carlow PPN strives to promote a positive sustainable community with wellbeing at its core and where people can participate and are valued.’

Conclusion

It is essential that all decisions be made locally with meaningful consultation to promote citizen engagement and ensure no voice is left unheard. There is a need to clearly and effectively communicate the rationale for the proposed strategy. When people are heard, they feel valued which increases well-being and leads to a better quality of life. Quality of life should be paramount for all citizens.