



Response to Ireland 2040
National Planning Framework
Public Consultation Document

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Ireland’s National Planning Challenges.....	4
2.1 Population in an All-Island Context.....	4
.....	4
2.2 Population in the North West of the Republic of Ireland	4
2.3 Questions for this chapter of Ireland 2040	5
3. People’s Health & Well-Being	8
4. Place Making Strategy.....	9
5. Ireland’s Unique Environment: Sustainability.....	17
6. Equipping Ireland for Future Development: Infrastructure.....	18
7. Enabling the Vision and Conclusion	19

1. Introduction

This is the response from The Rural Policy Hub to the public consultation document for Ireland 2040.

The response is structured in the same order as the consultation document beginning with Chapter 2, Ireland's National Planning Challenges.

Whilst all areas of Ireland 2040 are important, one of the key elements from the point of view of The Rural Policy Hub is that of energy. This includes renewable energy, associated infrastructure and energy security in light of two of our nation-wide public studies carried out over the period of 2014 and 2015/16 on energy awareness and opinions. The 2015/16

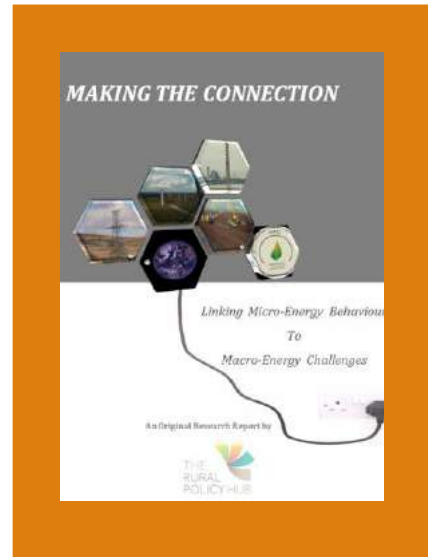
report – Making the Connection: Linking Micro-Energy Behaviour to Macro-Energy Challenges – was Rural Policy Hub research carried out with support from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the 2014 report was carried out for Donegal County Council again supported by SEAI.

The Making the Connection report used as its basis, a paper by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DEPR) on behavioural economics published in October 2014. This paper was recently updated by DEPR in October 2016. The latest report is called 'Applying Behavioural Economics in Irish Policy' and can be found at the following link:

<http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/4.%20Applying%20Behavioural%20Economics%20in%20Irish%20Policy.pdf>

Behavioural economics assumes, unlike historical mainstream economics, that human beings are not rational or at least do not always behave in a rational manner. Therefore it posits that Government policy developed under the assumptions of classical economics cannot be as effective as policy designed using behavioural economics mores. These have been employed in Ireland already in areas such as Revenue and Social Protection. It is therefore suggested that this area of economics be considered – if consideration hasn't already been given – in the development of the new planning framework.

One other element to note regarding this submission is that whilst it will address all issues involved there will be a stronger focus on rural development, and especially so, that of the North West of Ireland. Brexit will be addressed as will the possibility of a united Ireland and the implications of same on Ireland 2040.



This document as much as possible will not repeat what is in the consultation document but will make references as relevant. The consultation document will be referred to as Ireland 2040 throughout.

2. Ireland's National Planning Challenges

2.1 Population in an All-Island Context

Ireland 2040 suggests that the population of the Republic of Ireland could be 6 million. This does not take into consideration the population of Northern Ireland. It is important to take that population into consideration especially given the substantial changes in demographics in the Six Counties.

The latest statistics from the Office for National Statistics in the UK shows that the population of Northern Ireland stood at 1,851,600 in mid-2015. This included an increase of 11,100 since the previous count in mid-2014. Extrapolating from that and rounding the figure off, it is within acceptable limits to state that the current population of Northern Ireland is approximately 1,874,000. By 2020, when the National Planning Strategy comes into play, that number will, by the same extrapolated calculations, be approximately 1.9 million. Simply by rounding out the annual increase to 10,000 per year, by 2040, the population of Northern Ireland could be 2.1 million. Therefore, pending socio-political developments and the strong possibility of a united Ireland, the population of the island of Ireland would be 8.1 million. This figure puts the projections outlined in Ireland 2040 in a new light.

It is accepted that to develop a plan to include a United Ireland would be premature and possibly arrogant, there must be a 'plan B' should the two parts of the Island be united. Based on East

Germany's accession to the EU via unification with West Germany, funding from the EU would be forthcoming. However, if there is no strategy in place to facilitate such unity, any monies issued could be used in a less efficient manner than otherwise would be the case.

A Skills Audit of the Upper Shannon Erne Counties carried out by The Rural Policy Hub in 2014 showed that 16% of the study population is experienced in banking/finance/insurance. This bodes well for the attraction of SMFEs from the City of London to a West Campus of the IFSC.

2.2 Population in the North West of the Republic of Ireland

Since 2011, the population of the counties of Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo and Roscommon in the NW of the country has declined. It is stated in Ireland 2040, that employers are more likely to locate near an available pool of employees/labour. By this assumption, the NW population decrease implies that the likelihood of large employers locating in these counties is very low indeed.

However, based on the results of a skills audit carried out in 2014 by The Rural Policy Hub of the counties in the Upper Shannon Erne region (West

Longford, Leitrim, North Roscommon, West Cavan and to a lesser extent, Fermanagh) there is a pool of employees that is extremely relevant in light of Brexit. The top two skills available in the region, at 16% each, were engineering and banking/finance/insurance. This latter group did not include those working in Bank of America in Carrick on Shannon nor those in employment in Quinn Insurance.

This bodes well for the attraction of small and medium financial enterprises (SMFEs) to the North West Region from the City of London in the wake of Brexit. There is an abundance of commercial buildings available in Longford town and Carrick on Shannon (both Roscommon and Leitrim sides) and an opportunity to lower vacancy levels and increase rates to the relevant local authorities exists.

The Rural Policy Hub has designed an Upper Shannon Erne Brexit econometric study in association with an NUI, Galway international business and finance academic. Funding to carry out this research is being sought but has not as yet been secured. The study will update the skills audit to 2017 numbers, conduct stakeholder consultations both here and in the City of London and finally apply econometrics to ascertain the viability of the IFSC West initiative. This would serve to:

1. Increase population: by attracting skilled workers back and bring new people to the region
2. Increase local authority rates
3. Increase economic development in a region that to date has been left behind from a point of view of population increases and economic recovery

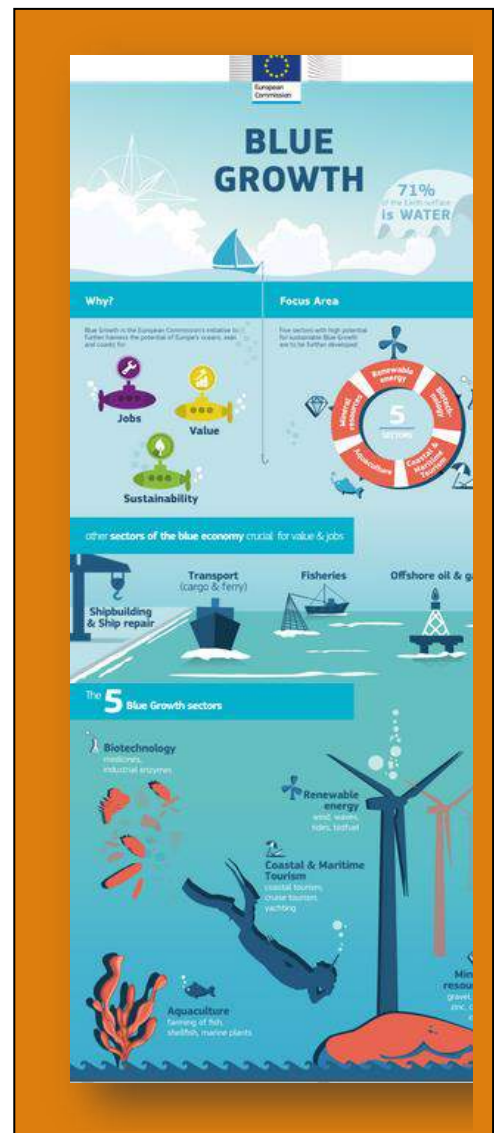
This will be addressed further in later sections of this submission.

2.3 Questions for this chapter of Ireland 2040

1. Where will future additional population live?

Regeneration of large and medium towns in rural Ireland must be addressed in a creative manner.

Again referring to the fact that employers will likely settle where there is a ready labour pool and the encouragement of the population to live closer to where it works, it is suggested that skills audits be carried out in the three Regional Assembly areas. The results of such audits will advise the types of jobs that can be delivered to those towns so, rather than the designation of towns and regions as hubs and gateways (which Ireland 2040 rightly points out was not as effective as it could have been) regions/towns can be categorised by Smart Specialisation Clusters. In other words, if an area has a high level of a given skill set, use that skill set **as a basis** for that community bearing in mind that there may be more than one e.g. Leitrim has food/drink, engineering and finance/banking.



The same could apply to a local resource e.g. Killybegs which could be developed around the Blue Economy: fisheries/food, tourism, renewable energy.

2. How will the needs of an ageing population be accommodated?

It must be remembered that 'ageing population' now (and certainly not in 2040) cannot be characterised in the same manner as it has been in the past. By 2040, it is likely that people will be working into their late 70s and thus will be a contributor to, as opposed to a burden on, the State. What's more, even after retirement at an older age, that demographic will be more physically and mentally able and healthy and will therefore require more leisure activities and community living as opposed to nursing homes. It is suggested therefore that a focus be put on retirement villages with downsizing opportunities for retired people. These should incorporate social/activity elements such as swimming pools, walking / cycling routes, communal allotments, and have close access to medical and transport services.

3. What types of housing will be necessary?

Energy efficient and even passive housing must be a key achievement of the next two decades. Not only will this contribute to our climate change and renewable energy targets, it will also serve to alleviate fuel poverty – especially in the ageing population who tend to self-impose too efficient levels of use.

4. What sorts of communities will be necessary?

As outlined above, communities based on specialised skills/or local resources should be de rigueur. They should be part of a quadruple helix economic structure: Public, Private, Academia, Community. This type of economic development is becoming more and more popular in America's tech regions where retired citizens are being embraced by local employers for their experience and their opinions.

The next questions, regarding jobs have been addressed above as have services and amenities.

5. How will people and goods move around?

People want to be independent so those who can afford it will want to use their cars. However, with electric cars becoming ever-more affordable, and with passive housing, it is likely that private transport on the whole will be renewable energy fuelled. This means that recharging parking points will have to be planned throughout the country. For example in park and ride sites, at train stations, in golf clubs, supermarkets, sports venues: not only the large ones such as Croke Park but also local GAA and other sporting venues, hospitals, schools and universities etc.

From the point of view of goods: road, rail, shipping and air. Shipping will need to undergo radical change in order to ensure mitigation of GHGs. Furthermore with Brexit, Ireland will likely have to develop new shipping routes to mainland Europe and these will have to be serviced at deep sea ports.

6. Infrastructure

6.1 What strategic infrastructure will be required?

To increase the use of public transport, the rail network will need extension, expansion and updating. Express trains to Dublin are necessary. For example on the Sligo line:

Sligo: Carrick on Shannon: Longford: Mullingar: Maynooth: Dublin.

Trains need to be faster so that travel time to the capital can be cut in half. However, neither the routes nor the speeds can be addressed because current infrastructure will not support them. In some cases at the present time, a Dublin – Sligo train has to stop or pull into an aside to allow the Sligo-Dublin train to pass because there is only a single rail. To facilitate express trains additional lines would be necessary.

An extension of the Sligo train line to Donegal would be very useful.

Continuing the focus on the NW: there is an acceptance that Donegal especially has been somewhat isolated in the past. A simple change in the numbers of the road to Letterkenny could alleviate this! The N4 comes to an end in Sligo however the physical infrastructure continues to Letterkenny. By re-naming the route from Sligo via Ballyshannon, Donegal Town, Ballybofey to Letterkenny to the N4 there will be a psychological as well as a physical connection to the rest of Ireland. It is accepted that this route would not be the quickest to Dublin but as it is, it is another disconnect of the NW county from the rest of the RoI.

Currently, ports in Ireland are tiered and it is suggested that this tiering system be reviewed bearing Brexit in mind. This also applies to offshore or blue energy and will be discussed later in this document.

Regional airports should be reviewed with a view to expanding their services. Knock in the North West is an example of best practice – or very near to it – of a regional airport however, Donegal Airport, for example, has similar potential. Road infrastructure to that airport would have to be improved – especially from Killybegs and other blue energy sites. This will be expanded upon in later chapters of this document.

6.2 How will strategic infrastructure be prioritised?

The prioritisation of strategic infrastructure should be based on future smart economic development. Again, with a focus on the NW, Donegal has the potential to be a key player in the blue economy and that needs to be explored further. The Rural Policy Hub carried out work on the development of an innovation centre in Killybegs and this report yielded a variety of opportunities for the town and NW regional benefits. This too will be discussed later in this response paper.

7. How can climate change issues be addressed?

This has been covered somewhat in the subsections above however it will be expanded upon in detail in later sections.

3. People's Health & Well-Being

Four elements of this chapter in Ireland 2040 are:

- Socio-economic status
- Education levels
- Employment
- Housing

The quality of living place is the responsibility of local authorities. The quality of living place must be developed in tandem with public education – especially climate change and energy awareness. The use of fossil fuels for home heating impacts on health and well-being as well as the environment.

The Making the Connection study asked 1,000 members of the public what fuels they used in their secondary heating – defined as stoves and open fires. The majority of people use fossil fuels with peat, in the form of turf or Bord na Mona briquettes, being the most used fuel.

The use of renewable energy in social housing has been embarked upon by some local authorities with mixed results for a variety of reasons for success and failure. However, failures must not lead to status quo continuation. The use of non-fossil fuel district heating must be a strong consideration in future home building which will avoid an issue touched upon earlier: self-imposed energy poverty.

Also referred to earlier is the working age. Should people be obliged to retire at a given age. If they continue to work they not only contribute to the State but their mental health too will be stronger.

Questions for this Chapter

1. What policies can the NPF include to effect improvements to our general health including physical and mental over the next 20 years?

Obligations should be put on local authorities to build passive housing or as close to it as possible as well as district heating units.

2. Are there key priorities the NPF can identify to ensure better health and well-being of people and places?

Again, this should focus on the use of renewable energy and education surrounding this and climate change issues.

3. Are there facilities that the NPF needs to highlight for places in order to enable greater participation in a healthier life-style?

When social housing especially is being planned, sports and leisure facilities should be included for community use. In other words, an emphasis should be put on community provision as opposed to simply house provision. This will be expanded upon in the next section.

4. Place Making Strategy

The first issue that needs to be addressed is that of Brexit outcomes. If there is a hard border, (and given the statement of the former Prime Minister of Belgium and MEP Guy Verhofstadt, that won't be the case) but if it is, the idea of having Derry and Belfast to balance out the five other cities south of the Galway-Dublin divide will have to be ruled out.

Section 4.1.6 of Ireland 2040 states,

“Dublin’s success as a city region is a doubleedged sword. It has enabled Ireland to compete in an international context but such success has also given rise to pressures in areas such as housing, transport, and infrastructural requirements which affect competitiveness.” (P.23)

This is where the aforementioned IFSC Campus West would achieve goals such as alleviation on housing, transport and infrastructural issues. It would also increase the quality of life for people living in rural areas with an abundance of outdoor activities and clean environment. However, with a focus on the North West, the N4 must be upgraded between Mullingar and the border of Leitrim at Rooskey and also the approach to the Sligo dual carriageway. In addition to that, roads from Carrick on Shannon to Roscommon must be improved as north Roscommon would be one of the feeder areas for the financial labour pool.

If the IFSC West was established, the population would increase and therefore a third hospital would be necessary – in addition to Letterkenny and Sligo. The resource is already there in Roscommon and would take very little to reinstate relevant services to suit the population size.

Ireland 2040 discusses ‘next tier’ towns/cities however, this is very similar to the hubs and gateways that have proven inadequate. Therefore it is suggested that a plan be based around the National road network e.g. N4, N5 N6 etc. If the N4 extended to Letterkenny as previously suggested, this would pave the way to bring development to the most north-westerly town.

Reference is made to the ‘Northern Powerhouse Concept’ in the UK: is this viable in the ROI given population levels?

Questions for this Section:

1. What role should the 5 Irish cities have in the NPF?

Similar to the current role but must have some balance north of the Galway Dublin divide.

2. How an one/more strong regional complement to Dublin be developed including interactions between settlements?

This can be addressed by working on the National road network concept.

3. Should administrative Government structures be reformed to enable alliances / collaborations/ actions to build cities and their regions?

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are currently attached to Local Authorities. Some counties are lucky enough to have visionary leaders and therefore reap the benefits. Other counties are not so lucky. Therefore it is suggested that LEOs be replaced by Regional Enterprise Offices (REOs) based in the regional assembly areas. This means therefore that there would be three REOs in the country. However, this should not be done by re-locating current LEO staff to regional-central locations. The Western Development Commission that is currently operating from Ballaghaderreen in Roscommon/Mayo is an example of how these REOs could be structured and operated.

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly should not have Monaghan and East Cavan in its remit. Those counties/areas have different characteristics to the rest of the North West region.

There should be empowered policy liaison directors in each relevant region, department, agency etc to coordinate development and ensure prioritisation is fair and efficient.

4. How should urban policy be developed to distinguish growth within built-up areas and greenfield development?

Concentrate on community provision as opposed to housing provision.

5. How can towns near cities and those not near cities be distinguished?

All Republic of Ireland cities are concentrated south of the Galway Dublin divide – essentially the M6. This must be addressed as Brexit dictates a need for substitute for Derry / Belfast. This is justification for Donegal infrastructural development: 110kV line already in situ, Airport already in situ that serves Scotland twice per week. But Killybegs Port must be elevated to Tier 1 and the rail line extended at least to Donegal town.

Scotland has been first in the world for the development of renewable energy including offshore blue energy. However, Brexit has changed priorities for Scotland and therefore there is a huge opportunity for Ireland to move into a leadership role rather than that of a follower. Killybegs is the nearest deep-sea port to Scotland and it makes perfect sense, since the majority of test sites and construction are in the North Sea and North Atlantic that Killybegs be developed to accommodate relevant requirements. In addition to that there is a natural affiliation between Scotland and Donegal and cooperation would be easily forthcoming.

Key economic drivers would be renewable energy, food/fisheries and tourism – all part of the blue economy. Donegal should become a blue economy lead region. Killybegs has a LYIT campus and development of these three elements of economic activity can be centred on the quadruple helix notion i.e. academia, public, private and community. Unfortunately, Donegal is in grave danger of 'enclave syndrome' as the N.I. border will dictate that connection will be lost. It is therefore vital to incorporate the North West into the RoI from an economic activity point of view and that can be done with the development of the Blue economy there.

Questions for Regional Issues:

1. What are the levers for effective regional development?

Smart regions can be developed by audits of resources: human skills, natural, physical, etc.

2. How can human capital be increased in regions?

Conduct Regional Skills Audits

Human capital is defined as the economic value of a labour pool's skills, education, knowledge, experience etc. In order to increase it, the starting point should be to ascertain the current situation. Armed with that knowledge, it will then be possible to develop a plan not only to increase human capital but to attract relevant businesses to an area in order to assist in that increase.

Skills audits therefore should be carried out across the regions of Ireland in the same fashion as that of The Rural Policy Hub's Skills Audit for the counties in the Upper Shannon Erne region. It should be noted that the reason The Rural Policy Hub won the contract to carry out such an audit was because the lower priced proposal intended to have the desk research carried out in Bangladesh. This of course was contrary to the whole idea of the audit i.e. to bring jobs to the region. The desk research by The Rural Policy Hub was carried out in our base in Drumshanbo, Co Leitrim.

The lesson to be learned and embraced in the new National Planning Framework should be that all work necessary to implement the plan should be carried out as much as possible in and by companies in / from the relevant region and that criteria should be a key deciding factor in any tenders that are submitted as opposed to pricing.

3. What is the regional 'value proposition'?

This has been addressed in above sections.

4. Are there strategic issues (i) across local authority boundaries or (ii) on an inter-regional basis, that the Regional Assemblies can co-ordinate to ensure more effective sub-regional and regional outcomes?

As referred to in an earlier section, this can be addressed by employing **empowered** coordinators from all relevant bodies: local authorities, Government agencies etc. Emphasis has been put on the word *empowered* because in order for these people and the plan in general to be successfully implemented, senior staff with decision making powers and influential stature must be at its centre. There is simply no benefit in having lower level staff attend coordination meetings and reporting back to superiors because this type of 'chain' reporting leads to the lowering of any plan on an organisation's priority list.

5. Are there funding opportunities than can support investment on a regional basis?

All EU funding should be accessed – that should go without saying. However, with key employers setting up in the regions, local authorities' rates will increase and these monies should be ring-fenced to feed back into the plan's implementation.

Rural Ireland Potential

Across the EU rural areas are perceived as being driven by nearby cities. However, in the case of north of the Galway Dublin divide, as has been referred to earlier, this is not an option.

Two quotes from Ireland 2040 drive this home:

“Neither ‘rural areas’ nor the communities that live within particular types of rural area are identical. Growing spatial, social and economic disparities between rural areas are a reflection of the fact that stronger rural areas are not only located in a geographically advantageous place, but also have the human and social capital to identify their needs and effectively engage with emerging strategies.” (p.30)

“Taken as a whole, rural Ireland experienced unprecedented levels of population growth between 1996 and 2011, at a rate and scale that had not been experienced since before the Famine. This level of growth was almost unique in Europe, where the trend has generally been that rural populations have declined, especially where located outside the catchments of large cities.” (p.30)

The NW – as has been acknowledged in Ireland 2040 – is a unique region. The phrase, ‘taken as a whole’ belies that unique situation. Ways in which development issues can be addressed have been outlined in earlier sections. It should be noted however that not all rural towns in the NW are in decline, Drumshanbo for example has a growing food industry with The Food Hub being cited over and over again as best-practice in rural town development. **BUT...** Drumshanbo and The Food Hub have had 100mg broadband connectivity for almost a decade and this has made an enormous impact on decisions to locate food/drink SMEs here.



On page 33 of Ireland 2040 the following statement is made:

“In order to move away from ‘Business As Usual’, it will be necessary for alternatives to consider the following:

...To build on ‘Excellence in Rural’ – i.e. sectorally across agriculture, the marine, renewables, tourism etc.”

Renewable energy in rural areas has been an enormous bone of contention in rural areas. The MUST be addressed in the new plan. The NDP and NSS of 2002 touched upon it but on the whole it was never grasped in light of its vital importance to the State. With Ireland 2040 there is an excellent opportunity to put that to rights.

The first thing that has to be addressed is social acceptance of renewable energy including wind power but also – vitally – the infrastructure that must go hand in hand with that clean energy

generation. This will only grow in the contention stakes with the advent of blue energy unless it is addressed in a creative and visionary and MOST IMPORTANTLY, inclusive, manner.

Key to this, is education but to date all education attempts in this realm have been less than effective. The Rural Policy Hub with the support of SEAI carried out nationwide public research in our 'Making the Connection' report. The overwhelming result of that was that people want to be aware of what's going on; they want to be involved; they want to contribute. Cross-sector, 'outside the box thinking' is what will achieve a more knowledgeable and accepting population. Thirty recommendations were made by The Rural Policy Hub in that report and include:

- Consider examination of urban and rural infrastructure for heating
- Address the 20% of the population who don't understand their utility bills.
- Provide comprehensive climate change information linking it to domestic use.
- Provide more information on electricity demand and security of supply.
- Make people more aware of energy targets: use billboards.
- Increase awareness of energy efficiency grants.
- Consider the use of local credit union low-interest loans for members, allowing them to pay for the Better Energy Homes work before the grant is drawn down.
- Rethink the design of the better energy homes grant application process.
- Create an environment where it will benefit private landlords to apply for energy efficiency grants. This could be done by reducing taxes or property tax on investment properties in the private rental market.
- Hold a free electricity day to remind people of the need to cut back on energy use and carbon emissions. (This should be used in conjunction with other policy initiatives).
- Revisit the use of day/night meters, aligned with the roll-out of smart meters, with climate change and fossil fuel use as a basis as opposed to just security of supply to find out if it would be worthwhile actively promoting off-peak use again. This could be all the more valuable given the increased use of electric cars.
- Alert those with day/night meters as to the difference in cost of the electricity at night time rates i.e. approximately half price
- Examine the domestic fuel market for added context and policy routes.
- SEAI has done a lot of work in the Large Industry Energy Network and Energy Map. These initiatives should be publicised more to let householders know that businesses are making efforts too - in a big way e.g. billboards etc.
- Further research habits and processes of choice-making in Ireland so that behavioural shifts can be achieved. This could be carried out by a third level institute social science or psychology departments.
- If energy use reduction policies are adopted, ensure that the design includes a minimum use caveat before incentives take effect to avoid self-imposed fuel poverty.
- Align policy development financing (Budget 2017/18) with the roll-out of smart meters with a policy cocktail to be ready by 2017/18 to coincide with the CER national roll-out of smart meters project. This will provide planning time for all parties concerned and it would mean that a tangible item – the meter – would be included so would lend physicality to the policy drive.

- Enlist a number of coordinators or coordinating consultants in each region of Ireland (this could be aligned geographically with the Eirgrid regions or regional assemblies for example). This should be built into the cost of the energy efficiency drive.
- Begin to explore a joint Irish British domestic energy efficiency effort – with strong public and media involvement – not just led by utilities and regulation. Both nations face the same issues: security of supply and climate change targets. We share an island, and a language. Use the diaspora in this effort: British energy regulator, TV personalities, International Energy Agency head of energy efficiency amongst others.
- Carry out a cost benefit analysis of the impacts of comprehensive energy efficiency policy expenditure to include the external benefits such as health and tourism.
- Consider the development of the world’s first dedicated interactive state-of-the-art energy museum at Poolbeg in Dublin. With an operational power station and a waste-to-energy plant soon to be complete, this is an ideal location for such a venture. Include history, science, engineering and environmental elements. This would not only raise attention and be an asset for education in Ireland but would also quickly become a must-visit tourism attraction. It could be modelled on the Science Museum in Valencia, Spain and funded under Interreg or Horizon programmes with necessary balances from tech companies and utilities such as ESB and Covanta.

The National Planning Framework can be a potent influencer in our renewable energy strategy and future but the following statement from Ireland 2040 consultation paper will not achieve maximum success:

“At a national level, it may be an option to create Strategic Energy Zones or Corridors, similar to Strategic Development Zones, as areas of national priority for renewable energy investment, as well as to provide a test bed for new technologies and developing solutions for carbon storage and capture.” (p.44)

The words ‘may be’ are too doubtful. There needs to be a much more definitive approach to renewable energy and associated infrastructure if we are to achieve targets and avoid EU fines. It is acknowledged that this is a framework but strategic energy zones and corridors have to be specific and compulsory. There is still a phenomenal amount of work to be done on this to pave the way for blue energy. The opportunity to take up where Scotland is leaving off in the blue energy stakes given Brexit as was mentioned earlier is within Ireland’s grasp but without integrated planning, we, as a nation will not succeed.

It begins and ends with creative education and involvement.

Note: it is acknowledged that responses to public consultations have been less than desirable but that is where the whole area of behavioural economics enters the fray. Inroads have been made by the DPER as has been alluded to earlier and should be reviewed for the next consultation element of Ireland 2040 in September.

Rural Ireland Key Questions:

The majority of these questions have been answered above and in earlier sections of this response paper apart from measures necessary for people “...with a genuine need to live in the

countryside..” The response to that is to keep them connected – technologically and community wise which leads to the closing of rural services such as banks, post offices, garda stations etc. The Rural Policy Hub is about to embark on a study on rural post office usage and this may be useful for the next Ireland 2040 consultation paper.

Regarding the all-island context one element addresses mechanisms necessary for a joined-up approach for cross border infrastructure and investment decisions. A group called the North West Partnership Board NWPB was operational for a relatively short period of time. It was structured with different pillars including one on energy and the environment. (This could be reconvened in the NWRA). It was a cross border initiative and The Rural Policy Hub had a place in the energy pillar. However, in light of Brexit this will need to be re-thought. This is why it is necessary to develop a two or even three-pronged NPF taking into consideration the following scenarios:

1. Hard border
2. Soft border
3. United Ireland

Our Coastline

Ireland’s Blue Economy

There is still some emphasis on oil/gas exploration. Question: would it be more efficient to invest in blue energy?

“Seizing new opportunities in the marine sector such as those in the learning economy and the energy sector will help to deliver sustainable economic growth, attracting and retaining population and supporting services. This is particularly relevant to coastal communities. In terms of skills, the industry in Ireland requires technicians and general operatives as well as highskilled technical staff and professions.” (p.40)

Ireland 2040 states that the highest demand for skills are from seafood, maritime transport and shipbuilding as well as tourism but the NPF is to 2040 so we must look at future skills needs and these most definitely include all elements of blue energy.

Again a north of the Galway Dublin divide issue is raised here. As has previously been stated, Irish ports are tiered. There is no Tier 1 port in the north. It is recommended that this be reviewed with a view to promoting Killybegs to that level. It is a key piece of strategic infrastructure that can and should be championed in the NW. The planned marina will contribute to this but supporting efforts must be made.

Coastline Questions

In thinking about what Ireland might look like in twenty years' time, what is the future for Ireland's coastline, islands and offshore?

The future is in combined thinking around the cohabitation of blue energy, fisheries/food and tourism.

How can coastal and island communities contribute to a national vision for Ireland, as part of the NPF?

Reviews of coastal and island communities in Scotland and Norway should be undertaken in order to achieve best ways forward for similar Irish communities.

How can the goals of the integrated Marine Plan be spatially represented in a National Planning Framework?

By paving the way for infrastructural development of ports and energy system network connections.

What, policies, measures or actions need to be advanced to enable Ireland's marine resource to adapt to the effects of climate change (e.g. coastal erosion, flooding, sea level rise etc.)?

What infrastructure investments need to be made in order to maximise the sustainable potential of our ocean resource?

This has been outline in earlier sections.

NOTE: In The Rural Policy Hub's 2014 report for Donegal Co Council on energy awareness, the type of energy generation that the public felt most safe and secure about was offshore wind, wave and tidal. That report also showed that over 70% of people were willing to pay more in their electricity bills to ensure the undergrounding of electricity cables.

5. Ireland's Unique Environment: Sustainability

The majority of the elements in this section have been addressed in earlier sections. However one the questions is being responded to here and will repeat/revisit already stated issues for emphasis.

What strategic energy infrastructure is needed to support the economy and society and realise the transformation of Ireland's energy system to meet climate change and energy obligations and in what areas should it be located?

- Blue energy is the future.
- Blue energy is supported by the public.
- Ireland is set to replace Scotland as a leader in blue energy.
- North of the Galway Dublin divide is a key element of Ireland's blue energy goals therefore Killybegs port must have enormous additional investment injections.
- To support this, Donegal Airport must have public investment and promotion.
- However, all of this must be done sensitively in order to maintain Donegal's place as a must-see tourist destination: the coolest place on earth!

Above investment and development should be carried out in line with smart specialisation at its core.

6. Equipping Ireland for Future Development: Infrastructure

Again, the majority of issues in this section have already been discussed in earlier sections however some notes are added below.

Reference to dispersed development is made in Ireland 2040 and the undermining of planned strategic growth as well as the fact that people must travel for basic services. The latter point is not necessarily a function of settlement growth or decline for example: Banks closed due to the economic crash. Post offices are closing as a result of decline in business for various reasons including technological innovation. Garda stations closed due to decreased public spending. ESB shops closed due to the opening and restructuring of the electricity market in Ireland.

From the point of view of provision public transport, the mores in EU dictate the generally accepted density figures of 30/hectare but we in Ireland must be creative about this and build on energy and environment issues rather than the mores of provision.

All the questions for this section have been addressed in earlier sections.

7. Enabling the Vision and Conclusion

A number of important statements were made in Ireland 2040 and are included below as an indication of support.

“...geographical and organisational boundaries of the organisations central to achieving the goals of the NPF rarely coincide with everyday patterns of living, working and travelling to access services.” (p.50)

“Learning from experience with the National Spatial Strategy, legislative support, backed up by wider political and institutional commitment is central to ensuring that the NPF will influence public policy across Government, the Regional Assembly and Local Authority administrations. It is therefore intended that the finalisation of the National Planning Framework will be followed up by strong national, regional and local level implementation.” (p.50)

7.2 Key policy considerations is vital especially the element of ‘Real-World’ issues.

Questions for this Section

When it comes to implementation and monitoring of the NPF, are there common goals that can be identified and apply to every place?

This is a very broad area and is being left aside until the second public consultation.

What barriers exist to implementation?

Public acceptance in the energy infrastructure sector and this can only be addressed by awareness and involvement.

How best can sustainable planning outcomes be recognised and rewarded?

Again, a broad area that will need further thought based on the second public consultation.

What levers are needed to deliver greater efficiencies in administration and governance, when it comes to implementing and monitoring the NPF?

As stated earlier, empowered senior coordinators.

7.2 Key Policy Considerations

7.2.1 The key implementation arrangements that are therefore identified at this point of the development of the NPF include the following:- Interdepartmental Drive: Through a National Planning Framework Management Team; Statutory Backing: Through the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016; Administrative Structures to Respond to ‘Real-world’ Issues: Preparation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to co-ordinate across local authority and wider public policy levels in support of the NPF; Implementation programmes developed on a cross-local authority basis within the Regional Assembly structure; Strengthened legislative basis for local authority co-operation on planning; Marine and North-South/East-West dimension. Investment: Capital Programmes of Government Departments and relevant public bodies and the use of ‘bid’ based systems that incentivise cross-authority/agency working in qualifying for targeted funding; Monitoring and Policy Feedback: Establishment of independent monitoring of the NPF to identify and put in place key data gathering systems that will measure NPF effectiveness and outcomes to feed back into further implementation, review and updating in line with the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill proposals. Annual reporting to Government and to the Oireachtas could provide a formal oversight arrangement for the NPF.

What the key indicators for measuring the successful implementation of the NPF?

This again is a broad issue and will be left aside until the second public consultation

This concludes the response of The Rural Policy Hub.

Note: The Rural Policy Hub is headed by Elizabeth Muldowney who has a Masters from NUI, Galway in economic policy focusing on energy and rural development.

