

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK IN THE FIRING LINE

The regional targets outlined in the draft of the National Planning Framework has been welcomed by the Western Development Commission (WDC), but it says the report is limited on how targets can be achieved in northern and western regions. The WDC claims that no information has been provided on how the plan's objectives will be implemented.

The draft National Planning Framework (NPF) – *Ireland 2040 Our Plan* needs to address regional growth in a more focused way, according to the Western Development Commission (WDC).

In its submission on the draft Framework, which was published by the Government in September, the WDC says it would have hoped for “a more focused document with clearer commitments”.

The WDC, which was set up in 1998 to promote social and economic development in the western region, has supported more than 2,500 jobs in the west over the past five years.

Covering Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo, the statutory body has directed almost €13 million in investment capital to enable regional growth.

In its submission, the WDC says there is no information as to how the plan's 70 ‘National Policy Objectives’ will be implemented, enacted or put into policy. “*The draft is general and aspirational and the real detail is in the target population growth and jobs growth and in details of planning mechanisms,*” reads the WDC submission.

The WDC pointed out that, apart from the cities, Dundalk is the only large town mentioned in the draft NPF, adding that there is no specific strategy given for any place outside the country's five cities.

MAIN SUBMISSION POINTS

Ian Brannigan, Acting CEO of the Western Development Commission (WDC), has said that while there is recognition of the weak urban structure of the North West, “no place there is named as being key to the development of the region as a whole”. He added that without such a focus it seemed likely that the North West would find it more difficult to realise its potential.

The WDC submission points out:

- The Draft NPF implies that the objective of spatial balance



should occur only after economic growth rates converge with those of other countries.

- It is assumed that growth of the cities will lead to growth of their ‘city region’ but there is no explanation of how this will happen.
- The NPF does not address specific development challenges facing regions such as the accessibility and urban structure of the North West.
- There is no discussion as to how developing urban areas will benefit rural ones.

The WDC submission also points out that since the North West does not have a city, a single regional centre needs to be identified to perform these functions for the region.

Deirdre Frost, Policy Analyst with the WDC said: “This needs to be done in the NPF document and not left solely to the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies (RSESs). Sligo is the best located centre to serve the wider region and it needs to be very clearly identified and prioritised for investment, if there is to be any chance of meeting the NPF targets.”

For the full WDC statement visit <http://www.wdc.ie/publications/submissions/>