

# Project Ireland 2040

## Building Ireland's Future

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### INTRODUCTION

Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all of us, a country that reflects the best of who we are and what we aspire to be.

*Project Ireland 2040* is informed by the *Programme for a Partnership Government 2016*, which recognises that economic and social progress go hand in hand, and is made up of the National Planning Framework to 2040 and the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

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### BACKGROUND

Almost a century ago we asserted our political and economic independence. It was no accident that we did so in the aftermath of a cultural revolution in which a generation of writers, artists and thinkers reimagined Ireland as a culturally and politically distinct sovereign state but simultaneously an equal participant in the international community of nations.

In the subsequent years, with little means at our disposal, we created infrastructure for education, health, energy and transport. We developed our cultural institutions. We provided housing for our people. We discharged our international responsibilities through the United Nations.

We have recovered from the recent economic crisis to the point where our economy is now the fastest growing in the European Union. The bonds of our society held together at a moment of severe economic stress. Businesses were rebuilt. Individuals and communities worked to strengthen the fabric of our towns and villages. We remembered the Easter Rising of 1916 not as an assertion of separatism but as a celebration of our culture, our sense of citizenship and our multiple identities on this island.

Perhaps our greatest asset is, in fact, our social cohesion built on shared values and a belief in ourselves as the authors of our own destiny.

We have won again our economic ability to invest in our future and put the plan and the actions in place to assure our future at a time of unprecedented change.

As we approach the end of our first 100 years of sovereignty it is time, therefore, to take stock – to reset our policy objectives and begin to deliver the actions that will prepare us and sustain us for a future that is very different to the past or even the present.

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## VISION

Project Ireland 2040 emphasises social outcomes and values consistent with prudent economic and budgetary policy. It prioritises the wellbeing of all of our people, wherever they live and whatever their background.

Wellbeing, equality and opportunity represent the core, interdependent themes of Project Ireland 2040. Without equality we cannot have wellbeing: without opportunity we cannot have equality. The objective of Project Ireland 2040 is to provide a comprehensive social, economic and cultural infrastructure for all our people to flourish, so that together we can create a better society.

- Better for children and families
- Better for learning and innovating
- A more creative and innovative society
- A place where we have more opportunity to enjoy our cultural heritage, our language and our landscape
- A cleaner and healthier environment to bequeath to future generations
- A more equal and balanced society in which we all share increasing prosperity, wherever we choose to live and work
- A society where individual wellbeing is the cornerstone of all public policy

In short a society in which every person counts, and in which all our people are served by the advances of science and technology – a creative and just society in which the human dimension is always paramount.

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## THE PLANNING CONTEXT

By 2040 we expect that an additional one million people will live in Ireland, an additional two-thirds of a million people will work here. These are huge increases: more people will be travelling to work, school and universities, more buildings will be needed to accommodate them, clean water will be needed for homes, farms and industry, more and better care facilities will be required for the elderly.

An ageing population and smaller family size mean that we will need an additional half a million homes to accommodate this growth.

Without proper planning, growth will be haphazard and uneven. Without the required infrastructure, our potential for economic growth will stall.

Project Ireland 2040 therefore consists of the National Planning Framework which sets out a spatial strategy for Ireland, to accommodate in a sustainable and balanced fashion this significant demographic changes. Learning from past experience, the National Planning Framework is backed up by an infrastructure investment programme, the National Development Plan.

In short, the State's infrastructure investment – the money – is guided by and follows the Plan. That is what makes Project Ireland 2040 different and a significant innovation in Irish public policy.

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Project Ireland 2040 is about enabling all parts of Ireland to achieve their full potential. It seeks to move away from the current, developer-led, business as usual pattern of development, to one informed by the needs and requirements of society. This means seeking to disrupt trends that have been apparent over the last fifty years and have accelerated over the past twenty.

It seeks to ensure that rather than have excessive population growth focused on Dublin – as is the current trend - that 75% of all population growth occurs in the rest of the country.

It targets a combined level of growth in the Northern, Western, and Southern Regions to at least match that projected for the East and Midland Region.

It will support the future growth of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale, by better managing Ireland's growth to ensure that more of it can be accommodated within and close to the city.

It supports ambitious growth targets to enable the four cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford to each grow by at least 50% to 2040 and to enhance their significant potential to become cities of scale.

It recognises the extent to which Sligo in the North West and Athlone in the Midlands fulfil the role of regional centres. It recognises Letterkenny in the context of the North-West Gateway Initiative and Drogheda-Dundalk in the context of the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor.

It seeks to strengthen our rural fabric, by reversing town/village and rural population decline, by encouraging new roles and functions for buildings, streets and sites, and by supporting the sustainable growth of rural communities, to include development in rural areas.

It targets a greater proportion (40%) of future housing development to be within and close to the existing 'footprint' of built-up areas.

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## FUNDING THE INVESTMENT

Project Ireland 2040 involves investment in infrastructure of almost €116 billion in the ten years to 2027. This combines €91 billion directly from the Exchequer, as well as nearly €25 billion by State-owned commercial companies.

Public capital investment will therefore move from relatively low levels in recent years as a result of the economic crisis, to being amongst the highest in the EU (as a percentage of national income). This will allow us respond to the obvious deficits in our infrastructure, as well as the needs of a fast-growing population.

This increased investment is being done in a prudent and measured way. It takes account of the external uncertainties facing the Irish economy, as well as the risks of overheating.

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## TEN STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

Project Ireland 2040 seeks to achieve ten strategic outcomes, building around the overarching themes of *wellbeing, equality and opportunity*. *These ten shared*

*priorities will ensure a consistent approach between planning objectives under the National Planning Framework and investment commitments under the National Development Plan. They are:*

1. Compact Growth
2. Enhanced Regional Accessibility
3. Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
4. Sustainable Mobility
5. A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
6. High-Quality International Connectivity
7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
8. Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society
9. Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources
10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

### **1. Compact Growth**

Compact and smart urban growth will be pursued to ensure sustainable growth of more compact urban and rural settlements, supported by jobs, houses, services and amenities, rather than continued sprawl and unplanned, uneconomic growth.

The immediate priority is to increase overall housing supply to a baseline level of 25,000 homes a year by 2020, and then a likely level of 30-35,000 annually up to 2027.

Within this output, 112,000 households are expected to have their housing needs met in a social housing home over the next decade. The government is also making state lands available for the affordable homes.

A new €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund will aim to achieve sustainable growth in Ireland's five cities and other large urban centres, incentivising collaborative approaches to development by public and private sectors.

We want to secure at least 40% of our future housing needs by building and renewing within our existing built-up areas, whether they be in the many villages and towns in need of regeneration or in our cities and larger towns where there are also huge opportunities for city and town centre regeneration.

A National Regeneration and Development Agency will therefore be established to ensure more effective co-ordination and management of the development of lands, in particular publicly-owned lands within and throughout urban centres across a range of scales, delivering more compact and sustainable growth.

## **2. Enhanced Regional Accessibility**

Investment will enhance roads network across the regions, with a particular focus on enhancing accessibility to the Northwest. Substantial progress has been made since 2000 in improving road linkage between Dublin and most other urban areas and regions. The objective is now to complete those linkages, particularly to the North West which has been comparatively neglected until recently.

The other major objective is to make substantial progress in linking our regions and urban areas, not just to Dublin, but to each other. A particular priority is substantially delivering the Atlantic Corridor with a high quality road network linking Cork, Limerick, Galway and Sligo.

There will also be significant investment in maintenance and safety of the inter-urban rail network, in support for our bus services, which will benefit from roads investment, as well as examining opportunities to enhance regional connectivity, particularly in an all-island context.

## **3. Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities**

Investment will be directed to a more equal balance of growth between Ireland's three regions – the Northern and Western; Southern; and Eastern and Midland (which includes Dublin). The objective is that all three regions should grow at broadly comparable rates as opposed to a continuation of the current long-term trend in which growth and opportunity in Dublin and the wider Eastern and Midland area far exceeds the rest of the country. 75% of future population growth will be outside Dublin across the regions and including rural areas.

A new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund of €1 billion will be established to invest in rural renewal to allow towns, villages and outlying rural areas to grow sustainably.

Fast, secure, high capacity and reliable digital connectivity is imperative, not just for economic competitiveness but also for sustainable living in all parts of the country. A key short-term action, therefore, will be delivery of the National Broadband Plan ensuring coverage in villages, rural areas and islands.

Other investment priorities include regional and local roads, tourism development, Greenways, agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and the Gaeltacht and the Islands.

#### **4. Sustainable Mobility**

An environmentally sustainable public transport system will enable economic growth and meet significant increases in travel demand while contributing to our national policy of a low-carbon economy.

We will see a decisive shift away from polluting and carbon-intensive propulsion systems and investment in public transport will include the Metro Link in Dublin, priority elements of DART expansion, and BusConnects programme to overhaul the current bus system in Ireland's cities.

The expansion of attractive and sustainable public transport alternatives to private based car transport will reduce congestion and emissions.

There will be a special focus on the provision of safe alternative active travel options increasingly being chosen by people such as segregated cycling and walking facilities and networks, especially in our cities and towns, which will also alleviate congestion and help to meet climate action objectives.

#### **5. A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills**

A competitive, innovative and resilient enterprise base is essential to provide the jobs and employment opportunities for people to live and prosper in all regions. An extra 660,000 people are expected to be employed in Ireland by 2040. The goal is to achieve sustainable full employment, to bring unemployment rates in all regions down to within 1% of the national average, and to achieve regional productivity convergence.

Ireland has been outstandingly successful in attracting major foreign investment, generating high quality, large-scale employment. While aiming to retain our competitiveness for mobile international investment that can locate in any part of the country, we will now give equal priority to a local enterprise economy.

Investment in enterprise will focus on boosting regional growth potential, increasing research, development and innovation, and investment in higher education and further education and training. A new €500m Disruptive

Technologies Innovation Fund will drive collaboration between the research, education and enterprise sectors.

Our rural resources are among our most important assets. The agriculture, food, forestry, tourism and renewable energy sectors can sustain local employment and contribute substantially to the national economy. As digital links and opportunities for remote working and new forms of enterprise continue to grow, our rural areas will increasingly have the capacity to accommodate employment focused on ICT based industries, multi-media and creative sectors.

## **6. High-Quality International Connectivity**

Continued investment in our ports and airports is crucial, particularly in the post-Brexit environment. There will be a particular focus on cooperation and joint development of border areas that open up potential for an all-island economy.

Key actions for international connectivity will include a new runway for Dublin Airport, continued development of Cork and Shannon Airports, investment in Ireland West Airport Knock, and for smaller airports under the Regional Airports Programme. There will also be major development of Dublin, Cork, Shannon-Foynes and other Ports, as well as investment in transport connectivity to ports.

## **7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage**

Cultural heritage is a key contributor to the sustainability of our cities, towns, villages and rural areas. Living space, including streets, public areas, built heritage and natural amenity areas, cultural and sporting opportunities, sustainable transport networks, all play a central part in defining the character and attractiveness of places. Plans for investment in culture and heritage recognise that high quality infrastructure is critical for a vibrant culture and heritage sector and that urban living spaces must have the cultural, civic, recreational, sporting and other amenities that will make them self-sustaining centres of social cohesion.

The ambition outlined in the Creative Ireland Programme will be pursued and supported with targeted investment.

In an increasingly diverse and multicultural society we need cultural underpinnings that celebrate not just our local or national distinctiveness but also our shared cultural values and our shared humanity. This requires



imaginative consideration of how we can best deliver appropriate cultural and heritage infrastructure in the future, in all parts of the country.

A key action will be a major national cultural infrastructure plan for the next ten years, ensuring that all major urban centres as well as smaller towns have cultural and creative facilities that support the aims and ambitions of the Creative Ireland Programme.

There will also be investment through the Sport Capital Programme in the coming years.

## **8. Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society**

The capital investment priorities will represent a step-change in Ireland's delivery of climate-action objectives, providing a significant reduction in carbon emissions over the period to 2030.

Investment priorities will include upgrading of 45,000 homes per annum from 2021, an additional 3,000-4,500 MW of renewable energy, full rollout of the Renewable Heat Support Scheme, transition to low emission, including electric, buses for the urban bus fleet, and a target of just under half of our vehicle fleet to be fully electric.

Among the major infrastructural projects over the next ten years will be the North-South and the Celtic interconnectors, the conversion of Moneypoint to electricity and continued development of gas infrastructure to support regional and rural development.

A new €500m Climate Action Fund will leverage further investment by public and private bodies, with a strong focus on interventions in the transport sector. There will also be substantial further investment in flood relief schemes to minimise the impact of river and coastal flooding.

## **9. Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources**

Investment in water infrastructure is critical to our environmental and economic wellbeing into the future. Water and wastewater projects will be speedily progressed across the country. A major priority is a new water supply source for the Eastern and Midland Region.

Capacity will continue to be built in waste facilities, including anaerobic digestion, hazardous waste treatment, plastics processing, recycling, waste to energy, and landfill and landfill remediation, to meet future waste objectives.

Waste efficiency will deliver economic benefits and will lower the environmental impact of food production and consumption.

## **10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services**

Access to quality primary education, health services and childcare, relative to the scale of a region, city, town, neighbourhood or community is a defining characteristic of attractive, successful and competitive places.

Good public policy choices in education over the past fifty years have allowed us to achieve a position of prosperity in the information age. We are now moving into a different age – an age of widespread automation, robotics and artificial intelligence – when new policy choices will call for new investment priorities.

Knowledge and specialist expertise will continue to be important in the new economy but even more important will be the ability to apply that knowledge and expertise in previously unimagined ways: to be creative and inventive, to solve problems, to work collaboratively and experimentally, to think conceptually and imaginatively.

Immediate actions in education, to respond to a growing population, will include 50 large scale schools projects annually to 2021, increasing the number of permanent school places by an average of 20,000 annually over the medium term, expansion of capacity across the Institutes of Technology, increases in post graduate and post-doctoral provision, and sustained capital investment across the school system responding to curriculum change and technological developments.

A major programme of investment in health infrastructure will be guided by a recognition that the best health outcomes can be achieved by reorienting our health services towards primary and community care where people's health needs can for the most part be met locally, with high quality acute and emergency care provided in the appropriate acute hospital settings. This will include completion of national hospital projects already underway, as well as reflecting the outcome of the Health Capacity Review.

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## CONCLUSION

Project Ireland 2040 represents a radically different approach to planning for our future.

- First, it is different because we are starting with a set of social objectives and values that are also consistent with prudent economic and budgetary decision-making. It is designed primarily to enhance the wellbeing of everyone who lives here, and to build a fairer, more equal society where everyone has the opportunity to realise her or his full human potential.
- Second, it is different because it intervenes proactively – investing in and planning for our country’s future in a sustainable and balanced way. This prevents uncontrolled gravitation of economic and social advantage to places that already have those advantages. Project Ireland 2040 enables all parts of Ireland to achieve their full potential.
- Third, it is different because it is a *framework* – it enables proper long-run sectoral planning for areas like housing, transport and other infrastructures for the next 10 years and while it envisages certain major national projects, crucially, further national, regional and local projects will be prioritised, designed and delivered at the relevant levels..

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