

Rural Policy: A Coherent Approach or Mis-mash!

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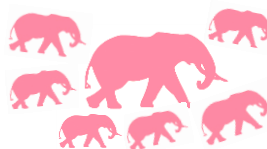
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dundalk

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Rural Policy: A Coherent approach or Mis-mash

Rural Society in Transition! – to where?

- Have we a *Coherent Approach*?
- Or is it a *Mis-mash*?
- Many potential challenges
- Herds of **Elephant(s)** in the Countryside!
- Do we continue to go backwards
- Or is it forward with a *plan* – what *plan*?







A Coherent Approach

Overview of NPF Strategy


- Reversing town/village and rural population decline
- Development in rural areas
- Identifying and meeting housing needs in countryside
- Connectivity: broadband, energy, transport and water / waste water networks
- Innovation: energy, food tourism (Linking)






A Coherent Approach – cont'd

- Regional Action Plan(s) for Jobs
- LECP, LEADER, SICAP, LCDC
- Town & Village Renewal
- REDZ, CLÁR etc, etc
- Fáilte Ireland – 4th Brand – “Ireland's Hidden Heartlands” – everyone included - *at last* 
- Greenways, Blueways, Peatways
- RSES
- Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 
- NDP





Mis-Mash ?

- Political System – Democracy
- Democracy = People = East of Country
- NDF = Regional Infrastructure = easier to get to the Dublin?
- Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES)
- Town & Village Renewal / Growth
 - More People
 - More jobs
- One-off housing  – Political influence – not enough people for towns.

Mis-Mash ? – cont'd

- Local Government Reform Act (2014)
- PPN – community engagement – volunteerism – energising communities – increased capacity
- A lot expected from communities! – a lot given **but we expect too much** 
- Town Centre Planning / Renewal
 - Where are the **Plans** 
 - Where are the **Resources** 

Mis-mash ? – cont'd

- Wind Energy Guidelines 
- Solar Energy Policy
- Audits, audits, more audits
 - Process more important than outcome?
- Town & Village Renewal Funding
 - ***To be spent tomorrow*** (or the day after at the latest)
- Community Planning V^s Spatial Planning
- Broadband 
- City dominance 
- Local Government Funding Model 

Coherent Approach or Mis-mash ?

- Overall there is very definitely a coherent approach and whereas it cannot be specifically defined in a singular legislative context, it is for the most part there
- Major alignment and realignment
- NPF aligned with NDP
- Action Plans for Jobs
- LEOs – very successful – with much success to follow
- PPN – Community activity
- LEADER, Government Funding
- RSES – all very positive, **but**




Challenges – cont'd

- Building / Creating community capacity
- New focus of Local Authorities – Community and Enterprise Development
- Tourism Development
 - Mid Ireland neglected in the past
 - Ireland's Hidden Heartlands
- Roll out of greenways and blueways
- Town centre decay
 - New uses for commercial outlets
- New mindset from all



Challenges

- Town Centre Renewal
- Vacant Properties
- To encourage more people to live in Towns
- RSES not yet developed
- Job Creation
- Broadband
- Wind (Green energy policy)
- One-off housing 
- To create a more appropriate Government funding model

Our biggest Challenge



How are we going to get rid of them?

(The elephants that is)

1. Urgently develop **Integrated Town Plans** encompassing all aspects of local culture, creativity, leisure, greenway, blueway
2. Local Authority Community & Enterprise Units need to be completely redefined / redesigned
 - Local Authorities must get more involved *in all aspects* of Community Development
 - A much more *“hands-on”* approach
 - A **Developmental Role** in every sense
 - Develop community schemes
 - More active role in Fairs & Festivals
 - Assist Communities to apply for grants
 - Help to prepare BoQs etc, etc



3. Dedicated Community Personnel to include Engineers and Architects
 - To plan and design public realm schemes
 - To plan cycle routes
 - To develop access points to fishing, walking etc
 - The supervision of works
 - Health & Safety – we cannot expect our communities to have this expertise or indeed understanding
 - Risk management and project management
 - Guidance and hand-holding (where necessary)



- Communities
 - Deliver a lot
 - Have changed significantly
 - Significant but limited capacity strengths
 - We sometimes make them feel isolated
- But we (Local Authorities) expect far too much from them
 - They cannot be expected to design realms
 - Complicated application forms
 - Health & Safety
 - Governance
- They need **a lot** more help
 - They need to see **a lot** more of us



Communities

- Let them do what they are good at
 - Tidy Towns
 - Pride of Place
 - Story Telling
 - Pubs, restaurants, craft shops
 - Food, crafts, heritage outlets
 - B&B's, tours – “fáilte”
 - To be there – living and working
 - To nurture well-being and sense of family
 - To say hello or sing a song



- Governance becoming an issue
 - Municipal District structures need to be strengthened
 - Stringent Accounting Procedures need to be adhered to
 - Bureaucracy needs to be accepted rather than resisted
 - The governance of **Town Team** becoming an issue
 - There comes a point in time when the town team have their work done – time for developers and investors to move in – with oversight / framework by LA
 - MD Structure must get more involved in **development**
 - Greater Administrative Support for Elected Members
 - The pre-eminent role of the Elected Member to be embedded in Community Development

Priorities

- Continue to improve our Towns & Villages
- Continue to nurture and develop **Pride in every Place**
- Support Litter Control
- Public Realm
- Town Centre Renewal
- Greenways, Blueways, Peatways
- Continue to improve Visitor Experience
- More Local Jobs, Less Travelling

Key Messages

- The **Developmental Role** of the Local Authority to be fully developed, resourced and *accepted*
- Local Authorities must get more involved in all aspects of Community Development – *far* more *hands-on*
- **Governance** must be strengthened MDs to be the centres of administration – Town Team Model to be absorbed into the MD Governance Structure and Administration
 - If Governance is not fully perfected and adhered to we will all end up doing nothing else other than defending one legal challenge after another
- **Local Government Funding Model** (must be revisited)

Key Messages – cont'd

- **Town Centre Development Units** – to be established in LAs
- **One-off Rural Housing** – will have to be controlled
 - Not sustainable – damage in many respects
- **Town and Village Water and Waste Water Infrastructure** to be improved so as to more adequately allow for rural regeneration (in a sustainable and controlled way)
- **LEO Supports** to be enhanced (especially in rural counties so as to make them even more successful than they already are)
- **Broadband** – will it ever be delivered?
- **Green Energy** – sound Guidelines



Thank You

