**Supplementary Information**

**PQ 30131 24**

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1. **What is in the NPF in this context?**
* The National Planning Framework (NPF), 2018 is the long-term, 20-year strategy for the spatial development of Ireland to promote a better quality of life for all, with sustainable economic growth and an environment of the highest quality as key underlying principles. The NPF informs a spatial hierarchy of plans that cascade to regional and local levels, through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly area and the city and county development plans for each of the 31 local authorities[[1]](#footnote-2).
* The NPF has set out to achieve a new region-focused strategy for managing Ireland’s growth, linking it to the National Development Plan.
* The Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor is recognised in both the 2018 NPF and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region as an internationally-important spine connecting the two largest settlements on the island of Ireland (Dublin and Belfast) via the regional growth centres of Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry and as a driver for economic development within the Region.
1. **What work is currently underway in respect of the NPF revision?**
* The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published the draft revision for public consultation on 10th July 2024. Engagement with the Joint Oireachtas Committee (JOC) on the draft took place on 11th July 2024 during the public consultation phase.
* The draft revised NPF and accompanying technical assessments were published for a nine week period for national public consultation which ran from 10th July 2024 to 12th September 2024. The next stage will be Amendment Stage which will review and consider in excess of 270 submissions and apply any relevant amendments before moving to the Final Stage for publication in October 2024.
1. **National Policy Objective 44 and the Dublin Belfast Corridor**
* National Policy Objective 44 National Planning Framework, (which is re-numbered as NPO 58 in the draft First Revision) specifies co-operation with relevant Departments and Local Authorities in Northern Ireland, to support and develop the economic potential of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and in particular the core Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network and to promote its international visibility.
* As part of the National Planning Framework, the Government will continue to capitalise upon and further support and promote the inherent economic potential of the corridor, building upon existing strengths. To do this, there will be a focus on developing the corridor as a distinct spatial area with international visibility through a number of concrete steps:
	+ Effectively planning and developing large centres of population and employment along the main economic corridor, including in particular the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk
	+ Improving and protecting key transport corridors and the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast road network from unnecessary development and sprawl
	+ Introducing an hourly-frequency rail service between Dublin and Belfast, examining electrification of the route and investment in a new sustainable Enterprise train fleet, with funding under the PEACEPLUS programme and from the Government and Northern Ireland Executive.
	+ Examining the feasibility of a higher-speed rail connection between Belfast and Dublin and Cork, as identified in the All-Island Strategic Rail Review
	+ Protecting distinctive landscapes and rural activities which act as key green spaces and food producing areas between settlements
	+ Building the landmark Narrow Water Bridge to link the Mourne Mountains and Cooley peninsula, providing tourism and connectivity boosts in the region, and enabling improved cross-border active travel including greenways, walking trails and park amenities.
1. **Drogheda’s role as Regional Driver in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**
* The primary statutory objective of the Eastern and Midland RSES is to support implementation of Project Ireland 2040 - which links planning and investment through the National Planning Framework (NPF) and ten-year National Development Plan (NDP) - and the economic and climate policies of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the Region.
* The RSES identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. At this strategic level it provides a policy framework for investment to meet current and future needs in the Region. The RSES is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) to address Employment, Retail, Housing, Transport, Water services, Energy and communications, Waste management, Education, health, sports and community facilities, Environment and heritage, Landscape, Sustainable development and climate change.
* The Strategy recognises the strong links between our Region and Northern Ireland. The Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor is the largest economic agglomeration and national entry point to the island of Ireland, connecting Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry, with major airports and ports in Dublin and Belfast.
* EMRA recognises the need for cross boundary collaboration in areas such as economic development, transport, tourism and the environment and to progress key energy projects including north-south interconnection of electricity grids, gas pipeline and enhanced East-West interconnection and full interconnection between fibre communications networks in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
1. **Sectoral Enterprise Hubs funding to Fingal County Council**
* As part of the Shared Island initiative and working on behalf of the Department of the Taoiseach, the Local Government division of DHLGH last year allocated €150,000 in funding for a Fingal County Council project relating to sectoral enterprise hubs in the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor. The project ran from 1 January to 30 November 2023 and produced a feasibility study in line with the funding guidelines and within the relevant deadlines.
1. **All-Island Rail Review**
* The Final Report of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, developed in collaboration with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland was published by the Department of Transport on the 31st of July.
* The intention of both Governments is to use the All-Island Strategic Rail Review as a high-level strategic vision to inform future investment in the inter-urban and inter-regional railway network out to 2050, noting that investment in commuter rail networks will be guided by relevant metropolitan area transport strategies.
* The Final Report of the Strategic Rail Review and its recommendations are consistent with and aligned to the vision and strategy for the development of Ireland to 2040 set by the National Planning Framework.
* Their implementation has the potential to bring transformational improvements in the quality, speed, frequency and availability of rail services on the island of Ireland, improving inter-urban and inter-regional connectivity, accessibility and the sustainability of travel.

1. **TOD- Transport Orientated Development**
* The Department of Housing, Local Government and Housing and the Department of Transport (DoT) jointly established a working group in December 2021 under ‘Housing for All’ to consider opportunities for Transport Orientated Development (TOD) in major urban centres. The group comprises membership from DHLGH, DoT, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and the Land Development Agency (LDA).
* Transport Orientated Development (TOD) seeks to maximise the provision of housing, employment, public services and leisure space in close proximity to high quality transport services, including Bus Connects, DART, Luas and Metro Link in Dublin.
* The first report from this Working Group, which looked at Transport Orientated Development Opportunities in Dublin, was published on the 23 of June 2023.
* The Working Group is now focussing on TOD opportunities in the Eastern Region (outside the four Dublin local authorities) and in Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford in 2024.  It is intended that when this assessment process is concluded, a similar report(s) to that published in respect of the four Dublin authorities will be published.
* The outputs from this work will also help to inform Government policy and initiatives in support of the National Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework (NPF), in particular outcomes relating to Compact Growth, Sustainable Mobility and Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society.
* This will include consideration of legislative and policy provisions, institutional arrangements, capacity-building measures and funding and resources required to facilitate the delivery of such plan-led development in a timely manner.
* The outputs from this work will also support spatial equity principles promoted through the NPF by providing increased opportunities to develop new and expanded communities at scale, including in areas of greater need thereby maximising the opportunity to provide the strategic co-ordinated plan-led development of housing (including social and affordable housing), employment, public services and leisure space facilities for communities in close proximity to frequent, high quality transport services.
* Engagement with local authorities, the LDA, the NTA and infrastructure providers, such as Uisce Éireann, will also continue in order to identify further opportunities and to accelerate TOD delivery.
1. **DART+ Coastal North**
* The PBC for the DART+ Coastal North project was submitted to Government in May 2024 and received consent under Approval Gate 1 of the Infrastructure Guidelines. A Railway Order for DART+ Coastal North was thereafter lodged by Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ) to An Bord Pleanála in July 2024. The application is currently the subject of (extended) public consultation until **23rd October 2024.**
* DART+ Coastal North forms part of part of a comprehensive upgrade to the existing DART and commuter rail lines within the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). DART+ Coastal North West includes an extensions of the existing overhead electric wires on the Northern rail line between Dublin city centre and Malahide, to Drogheda in Co. Louth, a distance of circa 37km, along with other upgrades on the route between Dublin city and Howth, Malahide and Drogheda. This will enable the operation of fully electrified DART trains between Dublin city centre and Drogheda and significantly increase train capacity/frequency on the Northern line
* DART+ Coastal North will improve accessibility within the GDA and provide a further step towards a metropolitan wide electrified rail system. DART+ Coastal North will also improve the quality and frequency of services along the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor to the regional growth centre of Drogheda and will facilitate a significant increase in sustainable mobility within the region, linking a large population base with key areas of employment for day-to-day commuting and international travel.
* Subject to DART+ Coastal North receiving planning approval, and there being no successful legal challenge to this decision, and funding availability, the project will advance through the subsequent Approval Gates as required under the Infrastructure Guidelines. This will require a review of the project's Final Business Case by the NTA and the Department of Transport, and submission to Government for final consent for approval. If approved construction of DART+ Coastal North will commence and it is anticipated that construction will commence in 2025/26.
1. **MetroLink**
* In July 2022, the Minister for Transport secured approval for the project from the Cabinet under Approval Gate 1 of the Public Spending Code. This approval enabled the project to move to the planning application stage, and in September 2022 TII submitted a Railway Order application to An Bord Pleanála. The application was the subject of an oral hearing was held before An Bord Pleanála (the Board) from 19 February 2024 – 28 March 2024. Over the course of the Oral Hearing, additional information was presented by TII to the Board. The further information is now the subject of public consultation from 19 August 2024 to 8 October 2024:
* The MetroLink consists of a fully segregated railway with 15 stations on its route, serving multiple residential communities in north Dublin, the City Centre, Dublin Airport, and major employment, transport and other facilities. It will also connect directly to Irish Rail, DART and DART+ services (at Tara Street and Glasnevin train stations), Luas services (at the Charlemont stop), bus and BusConnects services, as well as to Dublin Airport.
* As identified within the National Planning Framework MetroLink is a key future growth enabler for Dublin that will support more sustainable and compact forms of development along a number key sites. MetroLink will also provide a direct, high capacity and convenient link to Dublin freeing up capacity for surrounding public transport and road networks as well as providing key areas of employment for day-to-day commuting and improved access to Dublin Airport by enabling commuters arriving on Irish Rail to interchange at Glasnevin and Tara Street via MetroLink stations.
* Subject to securing planning approval, and no successful legal challenges, TII will prepare submit a Detailed Project Brief and Procurement Strategy for consideration at Approval Gate 2, in line with the Infrastructure Guidelines. Dependent on the outcome of the planning process, construction of MetroLink is earmarked to commence over the coming years with a view to operation by the mid-2030s.
1. **Planning and Development Bill 2023**
* The Planning and Development Bill completed Committee Stage in the Seanad on 17th July and Report Stage will commence when the Seanad resumes in September. The Bill was substantially completed before the summer recess and amendments at Seanad Report Stage are of primarily of a technical nature, largely related to transitional and consequential provisions.
* National Planning Statements will replace the current section 28 guidelines and section 29 ministerial policy directives under the Act of 2000. A National Planning Statement will contain two separate parts that have a different status in terms of the obligations attaching to each part and the particular planning function being exercised. The first part is a high-level statement of national planning policies and measures to be integrated into regional and local plan making. The second part is a more granular practical guidance that affords flexibility to planning authorities as to how to implement the principles of national planning policy and measures.
* All plans will be required to align to the National Planning Framework and National Planning Statements, ensuring consistency of implementation nationwide.
* Development plans will have a 10-year lifespan rather than the current 6 year lifespan. An interim review of the development plan will occur at year 5 of the development plan so as to ensure effective alignment between the development plan and the Census, the National Planning Framework and the relevant regional spatial and economic strategy. This will provide for more up-to-date plans; providing greater certainty that there is sufficient zoned land available at all times to align with the needs of the housing development strategy and the economic development strategy; and, provide greater certainty over a longer period for all stakeholders.
* The content of development plans will be more strategic in nature than under the Act of 2000. The development plan will include an integrated overall strategy for the area and six thematic strategies. The thematic strategies consolidate mandatory and discretionary objectives under the Act of 2000 to provide a coherent and focussed framework for balanced regional development, the sustainable growth of urban areas, the vitality of rural areas, the protection and enhancement of the environment and natural and heritage assets, and the incorporation of design standards.
* The 10 year cycle, with 5 year review means that every elected member will be involved, at minimum, either the making of the Development Plan or the review and possible amendment of a Development Plan via the Interim report on implementation of development plan.
1. **City Status for Drogheda**
* The question of city status for Drogheda is not being considered at the moment.
* Local government areas are specified in primary legislation. The Local Government Act 2001 currently provides for three cities, namely Cork, Dublin and Galway, and for each of these to have a city council.
* If an additional city council was to be established, it would have significant implications for the county in which the area concerned is situated, particularly around loss of functions of the relevant county council.  Creation of a “Drogheda city” local authority would have a major impact on Co Louth, leaving the county council with much reduced territorial jurisdiction, population, and resources.  This would be further complicated by the fact the geographical location of a proposed City of Drogheda might include part of County Meath.
* For a city council to be established, provision would have to be made for this and other consequential matters in the relevant legislation.  There are no plans for legislation in this regard.
1. **URDF Investment in the Region**
* Established under the National Development Plan 2018 – 2027, the URDF programme was launched in 2018 to primarily support the National Planning Framework’s growth enablers for the five cities and other large urban centres.
* To date, there have been three rounds of funding provided under the URDF, with almost €1.9 billion allocated so far. Under Call 1 and Call 2, 132 proposals comprising of approximately 400 individual projects, were approved for funding. Under Call 3 a €150 million revolving fund was established to support a programme of acquisitions in each local authority to address vacancy and dereliction in their URDF eligible areas.
* For those local authorities within the Dublin Belfast Corridor, approximately €55 million in URDF support has been allocated to support 12 successful applications, comprising of 29 individual projects. A further €25 million has been allocated to support a programme of acquisitions to address vacancy and dereliction in these areas under Call 3.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sponsoring Authority** | **No. of Proposals** | **Total No. of Projects** | **Current Estimated Project Costs Calls 1 & 2** | **URDF Allocation** | **Call 3 Allocation** | **Total URDF Allocation** | **Funding Provided to Date** |
| Fingal County Council | 4 | **12** |  50,094,042  |  28,542,277  |  10,000,000  |  **38,542,277**  | **8,199,866** |
| Louth County Council | 3 | **4** |  11,352,141  |  8,628,823  |  7,000,000  |  **15,628,823**  | **2,545,626** |
| Meath County Council | 5 | **13** |  23,966,150  |  17,982,800  |  8,000,000  |  **25,982,800**  | **9,153,430** |
| **Totals** | **12** | **29** |  **85,412,333**  |  **55,153,900**  |  **25,000,000**  |  **80,153,900**  | **19,898,922** |

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| **Call 1 and 2 Allocations per URDF Area** |
| **Urban Areas(as per NPF in Call 2)** | **No. of Proposals** | **No of Projects** | **Total Allocations** |
|  ***-- City and Metropolitan Area*** |  |  |  |
| Dublin City (Fingal) | 1 | 2 | 41,250 |
|  ***-- Key Drivers*** |   |   |  |
| Drogheda | 1 | 1 | 608,052 |
| Dundalk | 2 | 3 | 8,020,771 |
|  ***-- Towns >10,000 Pop.*** |   |   |  |
| Ashbourne | 1 | 2 | 6,376,050 |
| Balbriggan | 2 | 9 | 28,126,027 |
| Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Malahide | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Navan | 4 | 11 | 11,606,750 |
| Skerries | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Swords | 1 | 1 | 375,000 |
| **Totals** | **12** | **29** | **55,153,900** |

1. Dublin City Council, Dublin Fingal, Meath and Louth [↑](#footnote-ref-2)