Irish Rural Link

31st March 2017

**Irish Rural Link Makes Submission to new National Planning Framework Ireland 2040 – Our Plan**

Irish Rural Link – the national network representing the interest of rural communities has today, 31st March 2017, made a submission to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government on the new National Planning Framework Ireland 2040 – Our Plan.

Irish Rural Link welcomes the decision by the Government to develop such a plan. Rural Ireland has not experienced the same level of economic growth as in the Capital and surrounding areas over the past few years. The current housing crisis in the capital is now spreading to commuter counties and is a warning sign that a more balanced regional based development plan is needed.

IRL have always highlighted its concern about the decline of rural areas due to migration of younger people to cities, the ageing population of rural areas and the decline of services as a result and have continuously called for a revision to rural development.

IRL are recommending in their submission, a Collective Approach to Regional Development whereby, Local Authorities within each region come together to form Regional Development Groups. This will enable them to look at the macro barriers to setting up enterprises or preventing companies locating in their region such as planning, cost of rates, investment in infrastructure etc.

The BMW and South East regions of the country are still experiencing higher rates of unemployment than the national average. SME’s and Micro-Enterprises are the back bone of rural communities and are the main employers. We are calling for better quality jobs are created in regions outside of the capital and better supports be put in place for SME’s and start ups so they can expand and grow.

This plan needs to tie in with the Action Plan for Rural Development to ensure the development of sustainable communities and that smaller towns and villages will also reap the benefits of growth. Better public services, such as transport, health and education need to be implemented and access available to all. No person should be excluded from opportunities or services due to a disability, ethnic minority, and vulnerable group or because of where they live.

IRL support our colleagues in Disability Federation Ireland in their ask for proper incorporation of and provision for people with disabilities in the Ireland 2040 Plan, in line with the UN CRPD to ensure that people with disabilities are treated as equal members of the community, and provided with equal access to services and the environment.

This Framework needs the full support of Government, all political parties and all Government Departments to ensure that all actions will be fully implemented during the lifetime of the Plan.

IRL are happy to work with Government in the development of this plan.

Ends

**For further information, please contact (anytime):**

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**About Irish Rural Link:**

Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of nearly 500 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level