Irish Rural Link

02nd February 2017

**Irish Rural Link Welcome the Launch of the First Stage of a Spatial Plan for Ireland**

Irish Rural Link – the national network representing the interest of rural communities welcomes the launch today, 2nd February, by the Taoiseach and Minister Simon Coveney, of the first stage of the new National Planning Framework.

The report that the capital and surrounding counties will ‘overheat’ in the coming years means action needs to be taken now to prevent this from happening. Rural Ireland has not experienced the same level of economic growth and will be further left behind if no plan is implemented.

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.

The proposed city status of a Midlands town is welcome but should not come at the detriment of other towns in the region and the town councils need to work together to ensure the region grows in tandem. There also needs to be equal focus on the North West Region of the country.

This plan needs to tie in with the Action Plan for Rural Development to ensure that smaller towns and villages will develop also and that the benefit from regional growth and the necessary infrastructure in place to attract companies to these locations.

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

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**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