

# North and West Cork Strategic Plan 2002 to 2020



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## Overview

If North and West Cork is to escape from the syndrome of decline, which is strongly entrenched in some areas, strategic action will have to be taken to make the Area an attractive place for young adults to live in. Making North and West Cork attractive to a young population is not a strategy that ignores or dismisses the needs and potential of the older population. Therefore, encouraging inward migration should be an essential element of a future strategy for North and West Cork. This would bring with it also new skills, knowledge and ideas. In addition, retention of a higher proportion of the natural population increase is needed. This outcome is essential if the overarching goal of this strategy, reversing population loss and rural decline, is to be attained.

To reflect communities' values future strategy should contain an increased appreciation of the unique qualities – environmental, heritage and cultural - of each part of North and West Cork.

In shaping a strategy to achieve the objectives of development for North and West Cork in the future it is important that an appropriate analytical model of rural development should be articulated and pursued. The success of industrial policy in attracting multinational companies to certain towns and counties has critically altered the productive capacity of these locations and altered the composition of employment and sources of economic growth, which they experience. The impetus for economic growth has shifted spatially to towns and cities and away from rural hinterlands. In general, the employment creation associated with industrial expansion has been associated with increasing urbanisation, although the greater availability of employment has also supported rural based living in the vicinity of these towns to some degree. However, as a model for rural development the process outlined above is deficient in a number of important respects. In essence a successful model must build on the strengths of the

existing paradigm, while addressing the shortcomings. In effect this means incorporating a greater emphasis on increasing consumption possibilities, through better provision of infrastructure and supporting services, while protecting the environment and the cultural heritage of the Area.

If the core development issue of falling population and decline in rural living is to be redressed and the fundamental objectives, as expressed by communities, are to be realised a comprehensive Plan must be put in place which:

- £ **Raises the productive potential of the economy;**
- £ **Optimises spatial development patterns as an essential requirement for infrastructure development;**
- £ **Improves access and communications and increases infrastructure provision and resources;**
- £ **Incorporates environmental sustainability;**
- £ **Promotes access to social, recreational and cultural facilities; and**
- £ **Contains effective implementation procedures.**

This Report contains such a Plan and articulates a comprehensive set of recommendations required for its realisation. A brief overview of some of the principal recommendations is contained below.

As regards expanding the productive potential of the economy, some of the key proposals include **focussing industrial development geographically in a number of areas. For example, it is proposed that Clonakilty should be designated as a centre for technology industries. It is recommended that a development corridor should be designated and promoted along the N20 from Cork to Limerick in the section between Mallow and Charleville. Similarly, it is proposed that steps should be undertaken to strengthen the Cork / Macroom / Killarney route, as a potential**

**development corridor. It is considered that Macroom has the capacity to act as a pivotal focus for industrial development and for providing linkage between the West and the North of the Area.** Through associated spin-off effects, it is considered that the approach proposed above and the recommendations made, offer the best prospect for development in more remote settlements such as Kanturk, Newmarket and Millstreet. **The Plan contains many other recommendations in relation to Tourism, Agriculture and other key economic sectors and human resources development.**

In a period when young populations are strongly attracted to the employment and social advantages of larger urban areas, the weakness of the county's urban fabric represents a threat to the future

sustainability of communities in the Area. It must be recognised also that where there are low-density settlement patterns the cost of providing infrastructure and public services becomes very expensive and threatens competitiveness. The trend to a larger ageing population, living in isolated, scattered housing and dependent totally on car use for even basic shopping and social contact presents a serious challenge for the future. Rural isolation and lack of public transport are the two principal disadvantages of rural dwelling reported by older people. **Therefore, securing optimal spatial development in rural settings is extremely important. The key spatial development measures recommended are to support and enable a significant increase in town and village populations across the Area, whilst**



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stabilising and sustaining the populations based in agricultural areas, as far as practicable. Fiscal and other monetary incentives have a major role to play in securing this outcome. So too do Local Action Plans.

It is proposed that a major programme of town and village renewal and development should be undertaken and that a much greater proportion of overall new housing should be located in villages. In order to achieve community goals for the economy, services and for population profile, a significant increase in town populations is essential. Based on today's projections and some distributive shift in favour of towns, the scope for consolidation and growth would appear insufficient, without proactive policies. If towns are to achieve their goals and secure this growth, they will need to target additional population, based on inward migration and on successful economic and environmental strategies. **A target of 50 per cent and 30 per cent of all new houses in towns and villages respectively is recommended.**

Without good infrastructure and supporting services, or without easy access to them, it will be difficult to sustain vibrant rural communities. As regards access key recommendations include:

- £ Providing the planned upgrading of the N22 from Cork to Killarney, incorporating a two-lane bypass of Macroom as a first priority.
- £ Providing a quality standard improved two-lane carriageway from Bandon and Dunmanway to Bantry (incorporating the Bandon Relief Road).
- £ Providing a quality standard improved two-lane carriageway from Bandon to Clonakilty.
- £ Providing a quality standard, consistent improved two-lane carriageway between Tallow (West Waterford), via Mallow (incorporating a Northern Relief Road) and Fermoy to Rathmore (County Kerry).
- £ Continuing improvements of the N73 between Mallow and Mitchelstown.
- £ Providing a safe efficient route of consistent design between Skibbereen and Bantry.
- £ Providing a safe efficient route of consistent design linking Clonakilty and Dunmanway with Millstreet via Macroom (to be bypassed).

**In addition, the Plan contains many other recommendations in relation to rural public transport initiatives and broadband telecommunications services development.**

The environmental profile of the Area highlights a number of areas of pressure. Many actions and policy initiatives are underway, which will have positive environmental effects in the North and West Cork Area. **These should be incorporated within the Plan. In addition, certain additional actions are proposed, under the following headings:**

- £ **Water quality;**
- £ **Coastal Zone Management;**
- £ **Waste; and**
- £ **Energy and Transport.**

The provision of improved public services and infrastructure and the creation of improved employment opportunities will

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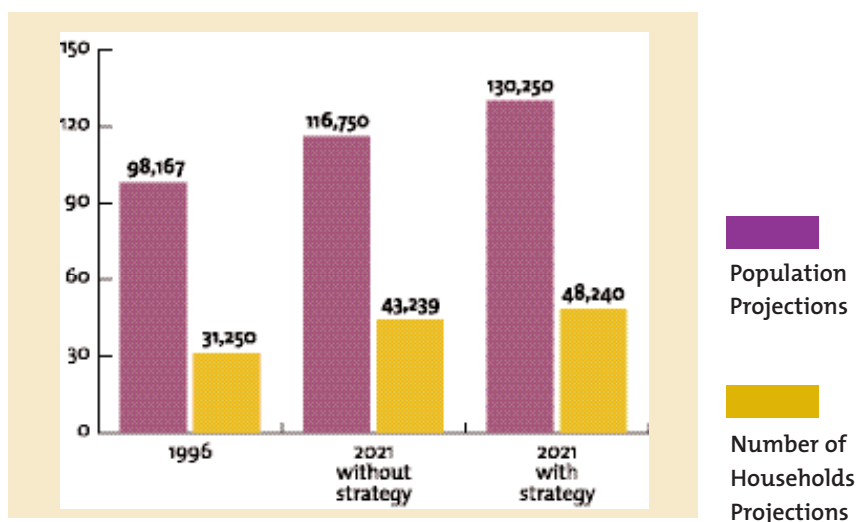
greatly assist in reducing many aspects of social exclusion and deprivation.

However, in addition, it is considered that measures to promote greater access and availability of social, recreational and cultural facilities and services should be incorporated into a strategy for future development. **As a first step and in order to determine precise criteria for establishing supports and indeed the character and nature of support, which would be provided to initiatives in this area, it is proposed that a forum should be convened. This should comprise the relevant stakeholders such as the VEC, schools, youth services, youth organisations, community groups, local development agencies, Macra na Feirme, sports organisations and business and tourism sectors, under the chairmanship of the County Council. Following its deliberation it is recommended that a detailed action plan should be proposed as regards the facilities that should be supported, the geographical catchment to be covered and the means and substance of support that would be provided.**

Successful implementation of the Plan will require political commitment to the proposed strategy and the recommendations proposed to attain its objectives. In the first instance this must come from locally elected Members of the Council. However, the scope of the recommendations contained in this Report is far reaching and their implementation would require a more broadly based commitment to the Plan, than the Council. **Therefore, it is recommended that support from national political level should be sought. The Council should, therefore, take steps to ensure that all relevant Government Departments support the Plan, possibly through involvement in an appropriate Steering Committee.**

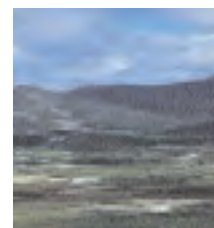
It is expected that implementation of the proposed strategy would lead to a much better outlook for North and West Cork than the prospect on the basis of recent and current trends described at the outset. For example, it is projected

**Projections for Population and Number of Households in North and West Cork**



that the total population would expand to approximately 130,250 people, against 116,750 without the strategy and compared with 98,167 in 1996. This would mean that there would be about 48,240 households in the Area, compared with 31,250 in 1996. Implementation of the proposed policies in relation to settlement patterns would have a significant impact on the geographical distribution of these households. It is projected that half the population would reside still in rural hinterlands, about 64,600 people, representing some 23,910 households. This compares with 65,770 people and 20,315 households living in rural hinterlands in 1996. About a third of the population would be living in towns with a further 17 per cent in villages. This compares with 25 per cent and 10 per cent respectively in 1996.

This projected expansion of population and the geographical redistribution of new household formation would facilitate the reversing and overcoming of obstacles being faced currently by many of those living in the Area. In addition, it would be much more consistent with sustainability. At the same time, the rural population would be about maintained at its current level.

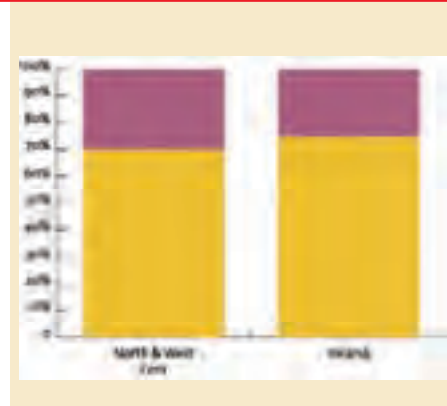


## Executive Summary

### The Core Development Issue: Reversing Population Loss and Rural Decline

#### 1.

Many trends are impacting on the quality of rural living in North and West Cork. The key ones appear to be an ageing population; migration of the young; increased commuting to urban areas for employment, with associated pressures on transport infrastructure and environmental quality; growing relative affluence of urban living, loss of services delivered locally, such as pubs, schools, post offices, health care, etc.



**% of population over 50**

**% of population under 50**

#### 2.

Rural decline and loss of population are inextricably related. The main reasons for outward migration amongst the young people have been found to be lack of education and employment opportunities, challenge of a different environment, opportunities for a vibrant and varied social life and, increasingly, access to independent housing away from family.

#### 4.

Population projections for North and West Cork to 2021 show positive growth in the North and West Cork Area under a number of scenarios. However, the growth is less than is projected at the national level. They also indicate considerable sensitivity of the population of the Area to developments at national level. Growth varies considerably between different areas and even with the most optimistic projection there are many parts of the Area that continue to experience decline.

#### 3.

As a result of adverse population dynamics, North and West County Cork has an older and ageing population compared with the County as a whole or nationally. In particular, there has been a significant decline in the proportion of the population aged 20-29 years, especially so in the case of females. A result is that the active population is smaller in North and West County Cork. Thus, nationally 24.6 per cent of the population is aged 50+ compared with 29.7 per cent in North and West County Cork. Another result is a higher age dependency ratio. This stands at 0.84 compared with 0.79 for County Cork and 0.80 nationally. A consequence of these relatively high age dependency ratios, when added to the fact that females are more likely to leave the Area in their 20s is that the proportion of females of child-bearing age is reduced. This will have an impact on fertility in the region and will adversely affect the future growth and structure of the population.

#### 5.

There are a number of other important issues emerging. The first relates to the projection that the Coastal region will experience population growth of over 20 per cent up to 2011. This has important implications for housing and infrastructure in the Area.

#### 6.

Projections for the West and East show a quite different picture. Although it remains positive over the whole period, the rate of growth has fallen for the longer period under the less optimistic assumptions. This means that there is a fall in the period 2001 to 2011 under these assumptions. This means a return to the trend of recent years, although it was assumed that the underlying trend weakens over time.

Many trends are impacting on the quality of rural living in North and West Cork. The key ones appear to be an ageing population; migration of the young; increased commuting to urban areas for employment, with associated pressures on transport infrastructure and environmental quality; growing relative affluence of urban living, loss of services delivered locally, such as pubs, schools, post offices and health care.





**7.** In other words, these projections indicate that unless there is a continuing strong performance at national level or a sharp change in the local trend, these regions will continue to lose population in the future. Furthermore, given the age analysis above, this loss is most likely to continue to occur in the 20 to 30 age group.

**8.** If North and West Cork is to escape from the syndrome of decline, which is strongly entrenched in some areas, the primary focus of strategic action should be to make the Area an attractive place for young adults to live in. Making North and West Cork attractive to a young population is not a strategy that ignores or dismisses the needs and potential of the older population. Therefore, encouraging inward migration should be an essential element of a future strategy for North and West Cork. This would bring with it also new skills, knowledge and ideas. In addition, retention of a higher proportion of the natural population increase is also needed.

### Meeting the Goals and Aspirations of the People of North and West Cork

**9.** A clear vision is required of the kind of society towards which strategic actions should aim. The goals and aspirations, which emerged from the process of community consultation which was undertaken as part of the formulation of this Plan provide such a vision. The outcome is summarised in the statement below, which is drawn from careful identification of the top priority goals indicated through community appraisal and Future Search, undertaken as part of the formulation of this Plan.

### “How we will live in 2021”

**“We shall be an inclusive Area with a high level of community involvement: we shall make many local decisions for ourselves. We will have good working partnerships with public bodies. We will manage our environment in a sustainable way. Our Area will provide a good quality life for young and old, with a thriving, mixed local economy and strong links to the land and sea.**

**Our Area will have developed its own well-balanced network of distinctive, growing towns and villages in prosperous rural areas, with good quality housing linked by excellent public transport networks.**

**We shall have a culture of learning and skills, with a wide range of local training and education.**

**We shall preserve and enjoy our heritage and customs and celebrate the growing diversity of our population. We will have a strong communications network within our own area, across the region and world-wide.”**



**10.** If the vision of the future, is to be attained a number of goals must be achieved, namely:

- A. Self-Reliant, Inclusive Communities, with a High Level of Community Involvement and Local Decision-Making.
- B. Sustainable Management of the Environment - Land and Sea
- C. Good Quality, Well -located Housing
- D. Varied, Quality Employment - Maintaining Livelihoods on the Land and at Sea
- E. Improved Infrastructure - Sustainable Public Transport Options
- F. Thriving, Balanced Growth of Towns, Rural Areas and their Villages
- G. No Need for Emigration - Maintaining the Populations And Cultures of all Areas.
- H. Wider Local Training and Education Opportunities
- I. Good Facilities for Young People
- J. Preserving our Local Heritage and Customs for the Future
- K. A “High Tech” Society
- L. Wise Development of Coastal Resources
- M. Rapid Responses



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### 11.

With the attainment of these goals the possibility would be created for vibrant sustainable communities with a range in age, income and occupational groups that would be able to fulfil the economic, social and cultural potential of people living in them and in a manner that overcomes marginalisation and isolation.

### The Need to Incorporate Environmental, Heritage and Cultural Dimensions in Future Strategy

### 12.

The principal outcome from the consultation process with communities and the public in the Area is a general consensus that the environment, natural amenity sites, scenic areas, wildlife, nature etc., the many terms used to describe the environment around us, forms one of the main assets of rural County Cork. However, there is some concern that certain main waterways are polluted to some extent and many areas are identified as being under some kind of pressure from either agriculture, forestry or development. Fish stocks, both inland and off-shore, are perceived to be in decline. The biggest issue arising is the need for an upgrading of the water supply and the sewage treatment works throughout the North and West of the county, including for example, provision of sewage treatment to best practice standards in the coastal towns.

### 13.

The need has been identified for a specific rural waste management strategy. There are numerous requests for recycling facilities and for steps to achieve waste reduction to be put in place. Habitat destruction and the consequent loss of biodiversity is seen as a threat, as is the dominance of monocultural sitka forestry in some areas. The reduction in bird species in many areas was also recorded. There also exists a very widespread demand for safe foods, identified as organic food and non-genetically engineered food. Support for

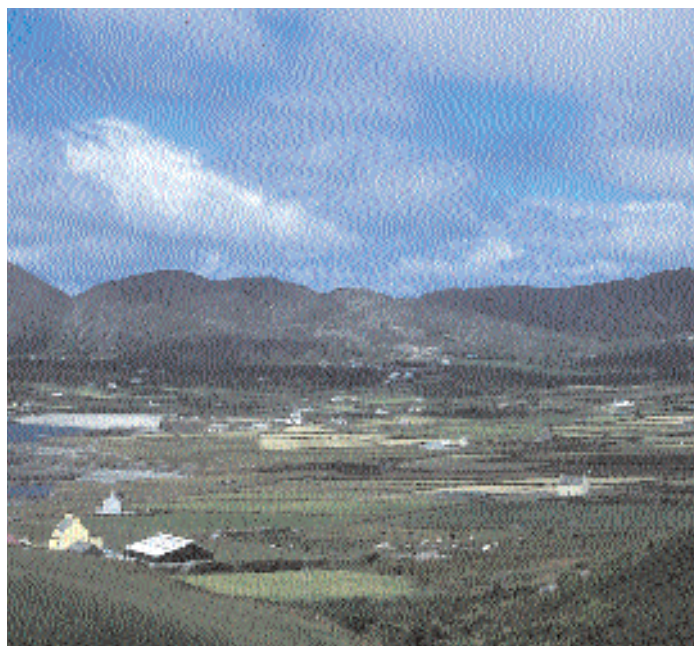
the development of renewable energy sources is strong. The current wind farm developments are generally viewed as positive and listed on the asset side. There is considerable concern about forestry practices, including planting close to housing and schools, impacts of fertiliser on watercourses and aerial spraying.

### 14.

The communities of the Area wish to build up the viability of their villages and towns to support social and economic sustainability. It is also a priority goal to maintain local heritage and traditions, including the built and natural heritage of each part of the Area. "Bringing the best of the past into the future", with successful integration of new residents, has been identified as a priority by the population of the Area.

### 15.

Local culture emerged as an important component of social cohesion of the Area. Local distinctiveness, traditions and pastimes contribute to the sense of identity of the people of North and West Cork. Pride of place and local uniqueness can be determining factors in the success of any area.



16. On the basis of these reflections of communities' values it is appropriate that future strategy should contain an increased appreciation of the unique qualities –environmental, heritage and cultural - of each part of North and West Cork.

### A Strategic Model of Inclusive Sustainable Development

17. In shaping a strategy to achieve the objectives of development for North and West Cork in the future it is important that an appropriate analytical model of rural development should be articulated and pursued. The success of industrial policy in attracting multinational companies to certain towns and counties has critically altered the productive capacity of these locations and altered the composition of employment and sources of economic growth, which they experience. The impetus for economic growth has shifted spatially to towns and cities and away from rural hinterlands. In general, the employment creation associated with industrial expansion has been associated with increasing urbanisation, although the greater availability of employment has also supported rural based living in the vicinity of these towns to some degree.

18. However, as a model for rural development the process outlined above is deficient in a number of important respects.

f In the first place, industrial expansion and foreign direct investment has been very uneven geographically so that many towns and counties have not experienced any significant stimulus from investment in new industries or services. North and West County Cork falls into this category. At the same time, contraction in numbers engaged and migration



from rural settlements have accompanied weakness of income growth in the agriculture sector. Therefore, some counties, including North and West Cork, have experienced continuing high dependence on agriculture – almost 50% of the labour force in North and West County Cork is engaged in or dependent on this sector – which has been static or contracting, without experiencing any significant offsetting impetus from investment in non-agricultural activity.

- f Secondly, where counties and towns have experienced significant investment in new industries and international service provision, the impact on rural development is not always assured. Inward investment boosts the productive capacity and spending power of those engaged in new industries. Undoubtedly, this contributes to sustaining of rural communities in the hinterland of these investments. However, unless there is accompanying improvement in access to and development of public infrastructure and services across a broad spectrum - including, transport, education, health, social and recreational – the potential for vibrant rural development will be difficult to realise in full. In effect, the achievement of rural development, in the sense of vibrant, inclusive communities with stable or expanding populations requires expansion of both productive capacity and opportunities and expansion of access to and availability of consumption opportunities.
- f Thirdly, there have been ‘spill-over’ effects on some areas and their rural communities, including parts of West Cork, from congestion and lack of access to Cork City. This has resulted in significant increases in housing demand and development, especially in South West Cork, along the coast. There is a positive economic effect

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associated with this trend, in terms of increased construction activity and local employment generation in this sector. In addition, there is likely to be some longer enduring effects through the ongoing spending of these households in the local area. However, this kind of development also poses significant challenges to rural development. Part time residences can make it difficult to establish roots and social contacts within the local community or any significant sense of being part of the local community. Barriers to integration become significant and the result can be stratification and the emergence of enclaves.

- f Fourthly, without proactive policies and effective measures it appears that the current process of adjustment and consolidation which is occurring in the agriculture sector could be more attenuated and painful than need be the case. If so, viable alternative opportunities may be missed and the creation of a more commercially viable farm sector could be forestalled. In either event sustainable rural development will be more difficult to promote.

19.

In essence a successful model must build on the strengths of the existing paradigm, while addressing the shortcomings outlined above.

20.

The productive potential of the North and West Cork economy is weak. Uneven sector development and very high dependence on agriculture is a key competitive feature of the economy of North and West Cork. As regards human resources, there are a number of striking features in relation to educational attainment in the Area. First, it is lower than in the county as a whole - it is weighted towards the 'primary only' category. Second, the educational attainment of males is lower than females. This is particularly noticeable in



the more rural areas of the west and coastal areas. Third, the west and north west lags other parts of the Area in terms of the education of its residents. Therefore, measures to improve this situation must be at the heart of any strategy for development of the Area. The approach and measures for overcoming present weaknesses and threats are set out in Chapter 6 below. The key recommendations are as follows:

- f A central thrust of the Plan should be to pursue all potential avenues for expanding productive potential i.e. Foreign Direct Investment, Indigenous Industry, Tourism and Decentralisation of Public Service Provision and Administration. In relation to the first two, IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, respectively hold direct responsibility. In terms of this Plan, therefore, it is recommended that the aim should be to secure the commitment from these two organisations to incorporate the objectives for North and West Cork into their operational targets. In addition, it is considered important that both of these organisations should be represented on any Steering Group established to monitor implementation and progress in respect of the Plan.

A central thrust of the Plan should be to pursue all potential avenues for expanding productive potential i.e. Foreign Direct Investment, Indigenous Industry, Tourism and Decentralisation of Public Service Provision and Administration.

- As regards industrial development it is recommended that this should be focussed geographically in a number of areas. Firstly, it is proposed that Clonakilty should be designated as a centre for technology industries. A nucleus has been formed there already. The objective should be to capitalise on the initiatives that have been taken there and reinforce them by ensuring that there is adequate broadband telecommunications infrastructure and that other improvements to physical infrastructure, such as improved access are commenced.
  - It is recommended that a development corridor should be designated and promoted along the N20 from Cork to Limerick in the section between Mallow and Charleville. Appropriate zonings for industrial development should be incorporated in the Development Plan and necessary infrastructure improvements in terms of water and sewerage should be commenced. Consideration should be given to designating the area as a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) as provided in the Planning and Development Act 2000
  - Similarly, it is proposed that steps along the line proposed above should be undertaken to strengthen the Cork / Macroom / Killarney route as a potential development corridor. It is considered that Macroom has the capacity to act as a pivotal focus for industrial development and for providing linkage between the West and the North of the Area. Therefore it would be worthwhile designating Macroom as an SDZ.
  - Through associated spin-off effects, it is considered that the approach proposed above and the recommendations made, offer the best prospect for development in more remote settlements such as Kanturk, Newmarket and Millstreet.
- 21.
- As regards tourism, it is recommended that:
- Unified linked websites of tourism information for Cork City and County should be developed
  - Unified marketing should be promoted
  - Initiatives to promote and develop the likes of eco tourism and cultural and educational tourism should be supported
- 22.
- With respect to human resources, the NDP has a vast range of programmes, so that a willingness to push programmes for local development is necessary. Hence the importance of getting agencies to commit to the concept of local development and to consider the range of potential programmes available. The County Development Board is the natural vehicle for this, but there may be a need to involve private agencies, e.g. schools, local Chambers of Commerce, ICA, Macra na Feirme in this process. It is recommended that these various organisations should undertake initiatives and provide supports across a range of areas including initiatives which:
- Develop and foster a culture of learning and expertise;
  - Improve access to “second chance” learning;
  - Extend and vary literacy programmes and make them available to peripheral areas;
  - Develop niche third level education (international quality) including fine arts – traditional culture – Irish language and culture – and business studies;
  - Encourage private third level initiatives;
  - Provide virtual access to Universities;
  - Provide “non-standard”, innovative

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agricultural and farm training - organic, permaculture, horticulture etc.

- £ Make I.T. literacy available to a wide population – e.g. internet access for all through libraries and schools;
- £ Increase use and distribution of I.T. to facilitate learning, and communication; and
- £ Make home and village-based education through I.T. available.

### Optimising Spatial Development Patterns: A Requirement for Infrastructure Development

#### 23.

Much of the NDP is about the provision of public infrastructure and support services. These raise the consumption possibilities of communities who can access them. Without these services, or without easy access to them, it will be difficult to sustain vibrant rural communities. In a period when young populations are strongly attracted to the employment and social advantages of larger urban areas, the weakness of the county's urban fabric represents a threat to the future sustainability of communities in the Area. However, it must be recognised also that where there are low-density settlement patterns the cost of providing infrastructure and public services becomes very expensive and threatens competitiveness. The trend to a larger ageing population, living in

isolated, scattered housing and dependent totally on car use for even basic shopping and social contact presents a serious challenge for the future. Rural isolation and lack of public transport are the two principal disadvantages of rural dwelling reported by older people. Therefore, securing optimal spatial development in rural settings is extremely important. The key spatial development measures recommended are to support and enable a significant increase in town and village populations across the Area, whilst stabilising and sustaining the populations based in agricultural areas, as far as practicable. Fiscal and other monetary incentives have a major role to play in securing this outcome. So too do Local Action Plans.

#### 24.

There are two groups of towns, which lend themselves to closely linked and complementary development. One group is in North Cork and comprises Charleville, Fermoy, Kanturk, Macroom, Mallow, Millstreet, Mitchelstown and Newmarket. For development purposes it is recommended that Kanturk, Millstreet and Newmarket should be viewed together in order to provide a focus for strategic development in the North West of the Area. The other group is in the South and South-west and comprises Bandon, Bantry, Castletownbere, Clonakilty, Dunmanway, and Skibereen..

#### 25.

These two groups of towns could be characterised as 'urban development nodes', capable of (or with the potential in the future) of carrying an important range of services and employment so as to sustain their immediate population and the rural-based population in their hinterlands. A focused and co-ordinated approach to the development and enhancement of these towns will be required.

**It is recommended that a target to double the household numbers of each of the above towns by 2020, on average, in a planned, incremental fashion, should be considered.**





A suggested target of 50% and 30% of all new houses in towns and villages respectively is recommended.

**26.**

It is recommended that a target to double the household numbers of each of the above towns by 2020, on average, in a planned, incremental fashion, should be considered.

**27.**

It is proposed that a major programme of town and village renewal and development should be undertaken and that a much greater proportion of overall new housing should be located in towns and villages. In order to achieve community goals for the economy, services and for population profile, a significant increase in town and village populations is essential. Based on today's projections and some distributive shift in favour of towns, the scope for consolidation and growth would appear insufficient, without proactive policies. If towns are to achieve their goals and secure this growth, they will need to target additional population, based on inward migration and on successful economic and environmental strategies. A suggested target of 50 per cent and 30 per cent of all new houses in towns and villages respectively is recommended.

**28.**

Through town and village development, the overall rural population would be sustained at around 67 per cent of total population. The total population living in towns, which is at present very small, would double if the targets proposed above were met in full. Town development as suggested will involve determined and energetic local efforts to revitalise and extend attractive urban centres, to develop local third level education and training, to attract decentralised posts, develop e:business and to increase tourism-based livelihoods and other inward investment. These measures are considered essential if a young, educated population is to remain living in the Area and if local services and employment are to be sustained.

**29.**

Village development should be promoted not only in existing villages with populations of over 140, but also in smaller settlements with development potential. The Area has many potential village nuclei with schools, churches, public houses and other facilities. These locations would benefit from additional housing: village development programmes should be initiated where there is local demand for housing with a view to land release for development. In these locations indicative village plans should be prepared to provide for in-depth mixed development in character with the Area.

**30.**

The County Development Plan and its associated planning policies is considered to be an appropriate instrument to develop existing settlements, capable of supporting community development and more effective provision of public infrastructure and services. It is proposed that the recommendations above should be incorporated as objectives and policies into the forthcoming Development Plan.

### **Increasing Rural Access and Provision of Public Infrastructure and Resources**

**31.**

Even accepting the need for an external stimulus, North and West County Cork requires a range of public infrastructure, support services, and improved access to these, if rural communities are to thrive. The Area includes the most extensive territory within Ireland which is 45 kilometres or more distant from the nearest town of 5,000 or more population. The urban structure of the Area, with no towns of 4,000+ population, is very weak: consolidation and growth of key settlements is virtually unachievable without improved access.

Through town and village development, the overall rural population would be sustained at around 67% of total population.

## Executive Summary

### 32.

Therefore, the following recommendations are made:  
In order to improve arterial roads network:

- € Provide the planned upgrading of the N22 from Cork to Killarney, incorporating a two-lane bypass of Macroom as a first priority.
- € Provide a quality standard improved two-lane carriageway from Bandon and Dunmanway to Bantry (incorporating the Bandon Relief Road).
- € Provide a quality standard improved two-lane carriageway from Bandon to Clonakilty.
- € Provide a quality standard, consistent improved two-lane carriageway between Tallow (West Waterford), via Mallow (incorporating a Northern Relief Road) and Fermoy to Rathmore (County Kerry); N72.
- € Continue improvements of the N73 between Mallow and Mitchelstown.

In order to improve concentric transport routes within the Area:

- € Provide a safe efficient route of consistent design between Skibbereen and Bantry.
- € Provide a safe efficient route of consistent design linking Clonakilty and Dunmanway with Millstreet via Macroom (to be bypassed).

### 33.

It is recommended that priority should be attached to securing improvements in the arterial routes ahead of the proposed improvements in concentric routes.

### 34.

As a first step it is considered important that the County Development Plan should contain as an objective a statement of the recommendations above, or an alternative set, which is approved by the Council. This would allow planning policies in relation to zoning

and development to be pursued within the context of an explicit access development framework. For example, spatial planning should encourage the location of additional development of villages and towns to one side of national and regional roads. In addition, it would be extremely important that the proposed access improvement framework should be contained as a high priority within the forthcoming County Development Strategy, being formulated by the County Development Board.

### 35.

The Roads Programme of the County Council should be framed in the context of the proposed objective above and should set out the manner in which it is proposed to attain this objective.

### 36.

Evidently, the recommendations above amount to a programme of considerable capital expenditure. As such it will have to compete with many other proposals for roads improvements that will be decided by the National Roads Authority (NRA). In this regard it will be necessary to engage with the NRA to explain the key role which improved access has to play in the strategic development of North and West Cork.





Even accepting the need for an external stimulus, North and West County Cork requires a range of public infrastructure, support services, and improved access to these, if rural communities are to thrive. The Area includes the most extensive territory within Ireland which is 45 kilometres or more distant from the nearest town of 5,000 or more population.

**37.** The National Development Plan does not contain significant budgetary provision for development of rural public transport services. Against this background the proposed approach revolves around the development of Pilot projects. To this end it is recommended that:

£ **In the light of results from current initiatives, the establishment of A Public Transport Development Task Force comprising representatives of Bus Eireann, Private Bus Operators, School Bus Operators, Iaranród Eireann, Local Development Agencies and local communities should be considered by the County Council.**

£ **The objective of the task force could be to:**

- Review timetabling/schedules of existing public transport services with a view to achieving greater integration and overall improvement of services; and
- Bring forward proposals for practical pilot assistance for the promotion of new services, linking into the existing system.

£ **The County Development Plan should support the development of public transport systems by articulating clear policies in relation to development along public transport corridors.**

**38.** Several initiatives are underway by a number of telecommunications service providers, which have the capacity to improve broadband infrastructure and services in the Area. These are being supported under the National Development Plan. In addition, an initiative is being undertaken to establish the current status and adequacy of broadband infrastructure in the Area and to recommend the best course for redressing identified deficiencies. However, public information as regards these developments and their implications is poor. Therefore, it is recommended that:

£ **The County Development Board should produce an information and promotional booklet (in conjunction, say, with local Chambers of Commerce and Development Agencies such as IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland and Service Providers) which would set out:**

- An inventory of investment in broadband infrastructure and services undertaken and approved for financial support under the NDP in the North and West Cork Area;
- The impact of this investment in terms of the services that are available currently, will be available in the future, when they will be available and the cost at which they will be available;

£ **A Broadband Telecommunications Task Force comprising service providers, user representatives and local Development Agencies should be considered to monitor the roll out of broadband infrastructure and services and to monitor and evaluate the competitiveness of service availability compared with the rest of the Country.**

## Executive Summary

### Incorporating Environmental Sustainability

39.

In Chapter 4 an environmental profile of the Area is presented, which highlights a number of areas of pressure. Clearly, any strategy for development needs to incorporate environmental sustainability and improvement. As is discussed in Chapter 9, many actions and policy initiatives are underway, which will have positive environmental effects in the North and West Cork Area. These should be incorporated within the present proposed approach. In addition, certain additional actions are proposed, as follows:

40.

In relation to water, it is recommended that:

- ƒ Quality should be protected and improved from both commercial and domestic sewage inputs by implementing effective effluent treatment facilities in line with the Urban Waste Water Directive, which demands more secondary and tertiary treatments to effectively remove a large percentage of nutrients from the waste water stream.
- ƒ Sustainable flow regimes should be maintained through control of water abstractions.
- ƒ All natural water-courses within towns should be maintained and improved as open waterways, and they should be included as features of any urban development.
- ƒ The forthcoming River Catchment Management Plan should be incorporated into the County Development Plan.
- ƒ A groundwater protection scheme should be adopted for the whole county as the most effective way to protect groundwater quality.
- ƒ Efforts to encourage farmers to apply Nutrient Management Plans should continue and be strengthened.

41.

In relation to coastal zone management, it is recommended that:

- ƒ **Management responsibilities between the different bodies, namely Cork County Council, the Department of the Marine and Dúchas should be co-ordinated more closely.**
- ƒ **The needs and environmental obligations of different users, i.e. the off shore fishermen, the on shore fishermen, the fish farmers and shellfish producers and the recreational user of the coastal zone, should be acknowledged and these should be co-ordinated if the response is to be coherent.**
- ƒ **A system of Marine Environment Protection Schemes (MEPS) should be implemented to encourage fishermen and fish farmers to develop voluntary environmentally sound techniques aimed at promoting stock improvements at local, national and trans-national level. Such schemes would be analogous to the Rural Environmental Protection Schemes.**
- ƒ **A monitoring programme for all uses of the coastal zone should be initiated to establish baseline data on environmental changes.**

42.

In relation to waste it is recommended that:

- ƒ **The Sludge Management Plan dealing with over 700,000 tonnes of sludge generated annually in the county should be endorsed.**
- ƒ **New initiatives to increase the rate of packaging recovery should be promoted and supported.**

43.

In relation to energy and transport it is recommended that:

- ƒ **The work of the Renewable Energy Project in Mallow should be further supported with more resources and**

more area coverage in line with suggestions for sub regions as mentioned under the waste, and water sections in this report.

- ƒ Energy requirements should be integrated into development plans, i.e. a mandatory energy audit to assess energy implications of various projects.
- ƒ Major industrial proposals should be assessed as to their requirements for sustainable energy.
- ƒ Initiatives to support alternative fuels and new technologies should be promoted and supported.

### Promoting Access to Social Recreational and Cultural Facilities

#### 44.

The problems of poverty and social exclusion in rural areas have distinct features. Economic dependency, isolation, unequal opportunity and participation are compounded by the problems of distance from services and amenities. Furthermore, the absence of an adequate transport service and affordable child care services in many areas make it especially difficult for women to avail of training and education or to enter the labour force and retain employment.

#### 45.

The provision of improved public services and infrastructure and the creation of improved employment opportunities will greatly assist in reducing many aspects of social exclusion and deprivation. However, in addition, it is considered that measures to promote greater access and availability of social, recreational and cultural facilities and services should be incorporated into a strategy for future development. As discussed in Chapter 4, there are many unique and distinctive cultural characteristics which form an integral part of the people of North and West Cork and which are highly valued. In addition, it is evident that access to a variety of social and recreational services is a key factor to retaining a higher proportion of young people in the Area.

Therefore, specific proposals are contained in Chapter 10 below, in relation to this aspect, which is an integral element in the overall development Plan.

#### 46.

As a first step and in order to determine precise criteria for establishing supports and indeed the character and nature of support, which would be provided to initiatives in this area it is proposed that a forum should be convened. This should comprise the relevant stakeholders such as the VEC, schools, youth services, youth organisations, community groups, local development agencies, Macra na Feirme, sports organisations and business and tourism sectors, under the chairmanship of the County Council.

#### 47.

It is recommended that this forum should consider an agenda regarding the provision of facilities for young people comprising such issues as:

- ƒ Support for new and existing youth clubs
- ƒ Support for active adventure sports facilities through tourism development
- ƒ All-weather activities/sports facilities
- ƒ Improve and diversify sports facilities/female participation in sports
- ƒ Ensure that indoor recreational spaces are available to youths
- ƒ Provide/encourage provision of performance venues; facilitate festivals
- ƒ Seek to provide evening transport to recreational/entertainment facilities
- ƒ Support internet cafes and clubs.

Following its deliberation it is recommended that a detailed action plan should be proposed as regards the facilities that should be supported, the geographical catchment to be covered and the means and substance of support that would be provided.

## Executive Summary

### 48.

As regards local heritage and customs it is recommended that the following approach to preservation and development should be pursued:

- £ **Foster and celebrate all forms of local culture**
- £ **Promote high quality festivals reflecting local and international culture**
- £ **Promote knowledge of local traditions and pastimes**
- £ **Protect the natural and built heritage of the Area**
- £ **Promote accreditation of traditional skills.**
- £ **In addition, the uniqueness of islands needs to be recognised and distinct policies are required in relation to the cultural heritage contained in them.**

### Securing Wider Community Participation and Effective Implementation

### 49.

It is recommended that local electoral areas should comprise an important “delivery” module for area implementation purposes at sub-county level. These areas have a democratic mandate and are building through expanded area committees a partnership approach to local service delivery. Delivery within these areas should be informed by understanding of the different socio-economic areas, which in some cases are dissected by electoral area boundaries. These latter areas broadly encompass cohesive geographical and social entities. Cork has ten expanded area committees.

### 50.

Another key implementation area is the self-defined local community. Communities should be encouraged and supported in undertaking local development projects that support the strategy. Communities that put their





own local action plans in place can act at local level as the co-ordinators of funding and other supports from a variety of agencies. At sector level, important stakeholder groups have their own local organisations (particularly farming and fishing), which can play an important role in implementing goals. Their involvement should be encouraged both at local level for implementation purposes and at County Development Board level for policy development and liaison.

**51.** Successful implementation of the Plan will require political commitment to the proposed strategy and the recommendations proposed to attain its objectives. In the first instance this must come from locally elected Members of the Council. However, the scope of the recommendations contained in this Report is far reaching and their implementation would require a more broadly based commitment to the Plan, than the Council. Therefore, it is recommended that support from national political level should be sought. The Council should, therefore, take steps to ensure that all relevant Government Departments support the Plan, possibly through involvement in an appropriate Steering Committee.

### Expected Principal Outcome

**52.** It is expected that implementation of the proposed strategy would lead to a much better outlook for North and West Cork than the prospect on the basis of recent and current trends described at the outset. For example, it is projected that the total population would expand to approximately 130,250 people, against 116,750 without the strategy and compared with 98,167 in 1996, the latest year for which Census of Population data is available. This would mean that there would be about 48,240 households in the Area, compared with 31,250 in 1996. Implementation of the proposed policies in relation to settlement patterns would have a significant impact on the geographical distribution of these households. It is projected that half the population would reside still in rural hinterlands, about 64,600 people, representing some 23,910 households. This compares with 65,770 people and 20,315 households living in rural hinterlands in 1996. About a third of the population would be living in towns with a further 17 per cent in villages. This compares with 25 per cent and 10 per cent respectively in 1996.

**53.** This projected expansion of population and the geographical redistribution of new household formation would facilitate the reversing and overcoming of obstacles being faced currently by many of those living in the Area. In addition, it would be much more consistent with sustainability. At the same time, the rural population would be about maintained at its current level.

## Introduction

This Plan was prepared by Peter Bacon and Associates Economic Consultants, on behalf of Cork County Council. The Plan is based on material contained in the North and West Cork Strategic Study 2001-2020 undertaken by a consortium of consultants led by New Ground, also on behalf of Cork County Council.

The consultants wish to acknowledge with gratitude the guidance of the Steering Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr John Deasy, Assistant County Manager.