

Simon Musial

From: Richard Webb <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 23 January 2019 14:10
To: RSES
Subject: RSES Submission
Attachments: Wicklow Planning Alliance - Submission on Regional Strategy draft A.docx

Please accept this submission on behalf of the Wicklow Planning Alliance.

Regards

Dr. Richard Webb
Wicklow Planning Alliance

[REDACTED]

Submission
on
Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy
From
Wicklow Planning Alliance

We are very impressed with the Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy, (*“your draft Strategy”*). It is an excellent piece of work; It exhibits a clear understanding of how the measures that we as a people need to take to address Climate Change are exactly the measures that will;

- Drive our economy in a sustainable way;
- Deliver the best value for our taxes and public capital investment;
- Improve the general wellbeing of our people.

We like the way your draft Strategy aims to link funding with policy; we like the aim to promote active land management and the acknowledgement of the importance of urban regeneration; infill development, brownfield development, compact urban growth and evidence-based strategies.

We like the aim of your draft Strategy to align spatial planning with capital investment but we are very sad to say that we have no belief or hope that local planning authorities understand what an evidence-based strategy or plan is.

Our local planners and the people who draft our local or county development plans see themselves simply as administrators; they do not think it is their job to be mindful of the wellbeing of our people; they do not think it is their job to have a vision for the county and they most certainly do not think it is their job to deliver a strategy that they do not understand. They do not understand or else do not want to understand the baseline data and evidence used to prepare the Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy. They do not understand how to measure carbon emissions.

Our local and county development plans are drafted:

- On a one for everyone in the audience basis;
- On the basis that if you zone land for jobs new jobs **will** fall out of the sky;
- On the basis that all growth is good.
- On the basis that necessary infrastructure and funding must follow zoning no matter what row or expense that causes.

In Wicklow our local authority is in debt because it borrowed to buy Claremont School in Rathnew; it had grandiose ideas of converting the school into something called a Centre of Excellence but no

strategy as to how to deliver that. This is not effective land management or a sound business or economic strategy.

We would like to know whether our Local Property Tax, our car-parking fees, our motor taxes and the funding from Central Government are used to fund local authority debt. There is a lack of accountability in local government.

In order to implement your draft Strategy the role and duty of An Bord Pleanála must change, for example, the Bord should not be obliged to grant planning permission simply because

- the land that is the subject of the application or appeal is zoned for development.
- the grounds that the Bord can see for refusal were not raised by an objector when the application was lodged with the local authority.

An Bord Pleanála should be part of the monitoring architecture; it should act as a check on the local authority to ensure implementation of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy.

When local communities come together and draft submissions to the preparation of a local or county development plan and manage to have an objective inserted into the plan then the planners should have no power to disregard that objective as happens in Co Wicklow. The plan should be respected as a contract with the public and the public should be entitled to rely on it without having to monitor every application for planning permission during the lifetime of the plan. So long as a local authority can ignore or breach an objective in the plan the public should be entitled to appeal to the Bord even if the public did not object while the application was with the local authority because the public thought it could rely on the planning authority to observe and perform the objectives in the plan.

Our planners will grant planning permission unless someone objects to the application. It is wrong and unfair that the planners put the responsibility on neighbours and the community to make the objection.

The idea of local government is good in theory but only in theory. We feel the best way to monitor and implement the objectives of the Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy is to take the power to zone land away from local authorities and to give it instead to a national agency that is obliged to work with other national bodies that have budgets to deliver infrastructure.

The power to zone land for development should carry with it consequences for failure to observe and perform the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy. The power to zone land should rest with those that understand the targets set out in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the need to build carbon neutral houses and deploy solar panels on every roof.

The power to zone land for development should carry with it a statutory obligation to be mindful of the wellbeing of the people and the State's duty to protect our people against the effects of Climate Change.

We can decarbonise Ireland and we would love Wicklow to lead the way.

On more specific aspects, we note that Bray and Wicklow are proposed as key growth towns. We feel that Arklow should also be included, as a port town in need of jobs and investment and to spread growth rather than it being concentrated in the two aforementioned towns.

Wicklow badly needs significant improvements to public transport to relieve congestion on the N/M11. The Bray to Wicklow rail line is very underused and has capacity for improved services.

Tourism is a key aspect of Wicklow's economy, yet potential blue/greenways are not mentioned for investment, such as the East Coast greenway and the Blessington greenway.

Signed Richard Webb

For and on behalf of Wicklow Planning Alliance

