

## PPAN ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

I made the following comments at the conclusion of today's conference (organised by the Public Policy Advisors Network: [www.ppan.ie](http://www.ppan.ie) in the Policy Institute, Trinity College) on the theme of the challenges facing Ireland to delivery Project 2040 (the National Development Plan) and the National Strategic Framework.



### Positives

1. For the first time, Ireland has a **clear, co-ordinated, and ambitious NDP/NSF based on an evidenced based policy framework.**
2. An **'activist'** approach to delivery is the goal.
3. An indicative budget is agreed; **€116 billion** to 2040 with the expectation that private investment and lending will leverage much investment.
4. There is a **climate change** dimension to planning and project identification as articulated through the National Mitigation and Adaptation Plans and the Energy White Paper.
5. **Delivery challenges have been acknowledged;** the setting up of the Public Sector Training Academy is an example.
6. **A Delivery Board** at Secretary General level is pro-actively monitoring progress and a Construction Sector Forum has been set up; key stakeholders are now engaged.

7. DPER has set up a **Project Office**.
8. DPER's **Project Tracker** identifies 271 projects/ Programmes at various stages of development.
9. All significant projects have to pass a **Public Spending Code Test** before they proceed to procurement.
10. **Competitive Funds** have been set up to facilitate bottom up projects by way of competitive tendering.

## Negatives

1. **More strategies** (MASPs etc.) are needed before many projects can proceed to development. Decisions on priority investments will be postponed until these Plans are approved at regional at national level several years hence.
2. There is stony silence about the **user charges needed to pay for new investments**. The cost of new renewable energy, energy efficiency, environment, local services, public transport, and some housing, education and health projects, should be passed on to consumers by way of tolls, higher residential property tax and user charges whenever possible.
3. **Procurement** is not addressed in NDP. The CWMF (the framework used to procure capital works) is not 'fit for purpose' and is not compliant with EU Procurement Directives. Reform is proposed; needs radical overhaul. More use should be made of the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation to secure VfM on works projects. OGP should re-deploy its procurement expertise to help public bodies tender priority projects.
4. There are serious **capacity issues**. For example, some 40,000 houses could be built on sites owned by the public sector within the Dublin canals. Even if DCC had the skilled personnel to fast track this project and budget (which it has), is it a priority against competing projects and programmes?
5. The **senior decision-makers** responsible for all significant projects should be identified in the DPER Project Tracker.
6. NDP/NSF are **not Brexit proofed**. Also there is a need to start planning for common and adjoining infrastructure services in anticipation of a **border poll**.
7. With a revised remit, **NAMA** (or the Housing Agency) could have fulfilled the role of Land Development Agency.
8. Funding constraints have not gone away. An increase of **carbon tax** to €80/tonne would generate some €1.5 billion a year. But revenue should be hypothecated and spent on climate action investments only. Government should have strategy to access some €1.5 billion from the post-2020 EU's **Connecting Europe Facility** (that co-finances public transport, energy and ICT projects).
9. Projected demographic forecasts suggests that the **scale of ambition is already off target**, in particular as regards housing provision.
10. The Delivery Board should consider a **Risk Register** for Project 2040 as this would alert decision-makers to issues such as price inflation, project bottlenecks, inadequacy of the planning arrangements etc.

## Questions

1. When will current (and well acknowledged) disconnects between the scale of the ambition and capacity to deliver be honestly addressed with investment in public sector skills made and legislation enacted to remove all known **bottlenecks**?
2. When will we see a heightened sense of **urgency**? When will the 40,000 DCC houses capable of being built within the canals go into procurement?
3. Within thirty years how can the **island of Ireland** sustain affordable and sustainable public services for a population of 10 million?
4. Do we need a separate **Department for National Investment and Sustainable Regional Development** to deliver a whole of Government approach?
5. Should more of 340,000 **public sector employees be re-deployed** away from services delivery to capital works delivery?

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