



Submission to the Clare County Development Plan(2023-2029)

Submission by The North Clare Strategic Planning Group, March 2022

1. Introduction

This submission to the Clare County Development Planning process is made by the North Clare Strategic Planning Group, acting collectively on behalf of the communities of New Quay, Ballyvaughan, Fanore, Carron, Doolin, Lisdoonvarna, Kilfenora and Kilshanny in North Clare. We have come together since 2021 with the backing of Lisdoonvarna Fáilte CLG and Clare Local Development Company (CLDC) to create a shared strategy that will:

- addresses significant regional challenges, as identified and expressed by participating local communities; and
- maximise local community-based skills, assets and expertise for the benefit of the region and all its residents.

Our ambition in developing a multiyear, cross-community strategy is to contribute to the vibrancy, inclusivity and sustainability of North Clare, particularly in terms of attracting inward investment, business growth, economic diversity and population balance while simultaneously protecting and enhancing the environmental and cultural uniqueness of this region that we call home. This introduction is important in contextualising the primary content of our submission below, which is presented under six key themes:

- North Clare as a *viable* region
- North Clare as a *sustainable* region
- North Clare as an *inclusive* region
- North Clare as an *affordable* region
- North Clare as a *connected* region
- North Clare as a *contributing* region

2. Vision, Goals and Outcomes

- 2.1 We welcome the vision articulated in the County Development Plan for County Clare and share a similar vision for the North Clare region.



2.2 We appreciate the goals of the County Development Plan, particularly the commitments to Goals:

- II (local and regional sustainable growth);
- VI (viable and vibrant town and village centres);
- VII (diverse and strong rural communities and economy);
- VIII (tourism growth);
- IX (healthy and sustainable communities);
- XIII (living landscapes);
- XIV and XV (protection and conservation).

2.3 We share commitment to the expressed Strategic Development Plan Principles of Quality of life; Sustainability; Climate Action, Resilience and Inclusivity.

3. Vibrancy

3.1 Addressing population decline and ensuring population balance are key priorities of the North Clare Strategic Planning Group. We welcome commitments within Section 4 of the strategy (Urban and Rural Settlement Strategy) to incremental and balanced growth; small towns acting as local service centres; investment in holistic infrastructure; centre-out growth and investment in the sustainable development of new homes in small towns and villages.

3.2 We recognise the complexity of projecting population growth and housing needs across the county and that this is the first instance in which Clare County Council has applied the Housing Need Demand Assessment Tool. However, we view projections for population growth in the North Clare region as conservative, particularly in light of post-Covid remote working opportunities.

3.3 We highlight the importance of investment in high quality infrastructure in towns and villages across North Clare, to accommodate a growing population, increased visitor numbers and vibrant, health communities. In particular, we share the view of other local stakeholders, most notably the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, that the development of an integrated traffic and transport strategy for North Clare be included as an objective under the County Development Plan. This would have far reaching impacts related to CDP objectives under rural development, tourism, sustainable communities, retail and physical development.



- 3.4 We appreciate commitments within Chapter 17 of the plan to town and village renewal, especially with regard to re-use and regeneration of vacant dwellings for accommodation, business and community purposes. We also welcome Development Plan Objective CDP5.3 which, though associated with housing provision, is critical to the vibrancy of towns and villages whose centres have fallen into dereliction and disuse.
- 3.5 We also wish to highlight the importance of CDP17.8, which expresses Clare County Council's commitment to working in coordination with local communities in towns and villages to address barriers to revitalisation and growth in these areas. We wish to point out that the North Clare Strategic Planning Group provides a collaborative representative structure on behalf of a compatible catchment of towns, villages and communities across North Clare.

4. Sustainability

- 4.1 We appreciate commitments in the plan to the pursuit of quality of life and wellbeing for all. We highlight the importance of physical recreation facilities and opportunities across all towns and villages in North Clare in respect of health, wellness and wellbeing.
- 4.2 We also appreciate the prioritisation of economic wellbeing across the county. Recognising the importance of Tourism to North Clare communities, we welcome commitments in the plan to the promotion and branding of County Clare as a tourist destination. We agree with the growth market visitor groups identified in the plan.
- 4.3 However, commitment to the sustainability of the rural communities that surround visitor attractions must be at the heart of all tourism-related promotion. In the context of North Clare, we stress that the County Development Plan must recognise the importance of:
- enhanced economic benefits from all visitors to the wider North Clare region, emphasising in particular overnight visitors and facilitating investment back into the local economy;
 - addressing negative issues that currently arise to the local area from tourism, particularly road safety and traffic management;
 - increasing links across tourist attractions in the region, not just those that are more nationally and internationally celebrated (e.g. the Cliffs of Moher)
- 4.4 We raise substantial concerns in respect of Development Plan Objective CDP7.19, which refers to Clare County Council's intention to encourage and facilitate the delivery of

sustainable tourism-related retail developments and initiatives, of appropriate scale, located in the vicinity of established tourism attractions. We believe that this flies in the face of commitments to rural towns and villages. We emphasise that tourism-related enterprises should:

- support, not compete with, the local business community;
- not establish commercial opportunities in direct competition with local family businesses; and
- not threaten existing local employment that has been created by local business operators.

4.5 We appreciate commitments to road safety throughout the County Development Plan. Within the context of North Clare, however, we see inadequate reference in the plan to the importance of adequate traffic management and road safety infrastructure in a region that accommodates significant tourist numbers. We repeat the assertion made in 3.3 above that the development of an integrated traffic and transport strategy for North Clare be included as an objective under the County Development Plan.

4.6 We welcome reference in the plan to developments in farm-based rural enterprise and to sustainable and economically efficient agricultural development, whilst maintaining and protecting the environment, the natural landscape and built heritage.

4.7 We welcome Clare County Council's commitment in Development Objective CDP6.23 to maximising home-based economic activity and remote working opportunities. These are key to population growth in North Clare. While acknowledging the Clare Digital Hub Network, we stress the importance of greater commitment to the roll out of the National Broadband plan, particularly in a region where broadband coverage is currently sketchy.

5. Inclusivity

5.1 We welcome the many references in the County Development Plan to sustainable and inclusive communities across County Clare and the references to a diverse and socially inclusive society. We highlight the commitment of the North Clare Strategic Planning Group to welcoming, accommodating and catering to the diverse needs, interests, concerns and abilities of current and emerging residents, and visitors.

5.2 We welcome reference within the plan to new social and affordable housing developments being designed and constructed on the principles of universal design and life-long adaptability. There is a notable, vulnerable ageing population in North Clare



and there is a need for stepped accommodation and associated services for ageing and older people in the North Clare region.

6. Affordability

- 6.1 We acknowledge the commitments expressed in Development Plan Objective CDP5.5 with regard to increased availability of social and affordable housing. Affordability of housing – for rent or purchase – remains a major concern for individuals and families in the region. Detail on how CDP5.5 will be achieved is notably absent from the plan.

7. Connectivity

- 7.1 The County Development Plan makes frequent reference to its commitment to the roll out of the National Broadband Plan in County Clare. Apart from Clare County Council's Digital Hub programme, the plan is sketchy on detail regarding local access to high-speed broadband. We welcome the location of open Wi-Fi broadband connection points in some North Clare communities, while highlighting that access to broadband is an immediate need for households and communities across the region.
- 7.2 We welcome commitments to enhanced public transport within the plan while highlighting significant deficits in public transport in the North Clare region. Efforts to address public transport deficits, especially in North Clare, should be aligned to the proposed integrated traffic and transport strategy for the region.

8. Contribution

- 8.1 We welcome the prioritisation of climate action within the County Development Plan and highlight the shared commitment of the North Clare Strategic Planning Group, and the communities it represents, to contributing to energy reduction as a sustainable energy community.
- 8.2 We welcome commitments within Goals XIV and XV of the plan to protection and conservation. These commitments align to the priorities of communities across North Clare in which the preservation and enhancement of the environmental and cultural uniqueness of the region is considered sacred.

Ends/



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