

**NORTHERN & WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**Submission of opinion by Cllr Des Guckian, Co Leitrim**

On Mon 7 January 2019, our Council meeting, at Carrick-on-Shannon, was addressed by your David Minton, Director and Denis Kelly, Asst Director.

Having listened to their presentations, I stated the following re your STRATEGY.

You state that this plan must fit into the broader European and our National Plan. This is a very large and unwieldy Region with little coherence. Our MEPs have informed me that there is a long-term plan in Europe to turn most of the West of Ireland into a large forest park and a play-ground for Europe. In recent years, the EU has become far too centralised and our development needs count for very little. The 1968 Buchanan Plan had, wisely, aimed to limit the dominance of Dublin by developing growth centres all around the country as a counter-balance to Dublin. Buchanan and all subsequent Plans were sidelined.

Our most recent National Plan, Project Ireland 2040, is built around the idea of Urban Hierarchy. This, to me means giving the greatest investment to the already over-developed Dublin Region and, pro rata, trickling down to the smaller towns and villages. I think that is totally disastrous for us in this region as, like in the EU, it is “top-down” rather than “bottom-up”. You admitted yourselves that this is very much a rural region, so how can we get a fair share of investment and real development?

Your plan is about “smart” everything, but, meanwhile, down at the ranch in rural Leitrim etc, we are fast losing all our vital services (POs, shops, garda, schools etc). There is no credible attempt to give us **real rural renewal & regeneration**. To me that means fast broadband, surfacing all rural lanes, and normal planning permissions for local people in all of our rural areas.

Going back to my start, it seems to me that people are being driven out of our rural areas and all are to be crammed into towns/cities, with their bad planning and ghost estates. I am not convinced, nor am I hopeful.

Cllr Des Guckian, Dromod, Co Leitrim. Ph 0874124725.