

Katie Wright

From: Michelle Mulherin <Michelle.Mulherin@oireachtas.ie>
Sent: Friday 8 February 2019 11:13
To: rses
Subject: Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy submission

Dear Sir/Madam,

I believe that for Mayo the objective should be to grow and promote the 3 main towns Ballina, Castlebar and Westport in tandem as a linked hub to structurally reinforce the County from the point of view of economic and social growth. This specifically should be stated in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. This would also support the development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

The National Planning Framework envisages Sligo town and Galway city as major urban growth centres. However unless we develop Ballina, Castlebar and Westport together and make it a priority to connect all 3 towns the County will be split in half with the northern half pulled towards Sligo and the southern towards Galway.

This is important because even though the aspiration is that there will be trickle down benefits to Mayo from Sligo and Galway there is no empirical evidence of this. Look at Galway city for example, Ballinrobe one of most southerly towns in Mayo is in need of serious regeneration with many people living there simply commuting daily to Galway for work. This is a problem also for Ballinsloe which is just outside Galway. So the increased emphasis on and no doubt resources which will be given to Galway and Sligo can undermine the social and economic fabric of Mayo unless we come up with a proper plan to counter this.

Mayo has a good established tradition of foreign direct investment having established in the County for the most part in the 3 main towns. The jobs announcement last week by the IDA and Meissner for Castlebar adds to this complement.

Over 4,000 workers commute daily to and from our three major towns, Ballina, Castlebar and Westport to work in multi-national companies alone. Also freight traffic is taken from Castlebar by road to the freight train in Ballina. People from Ballina travel to Castlebar to the hospital and GMIT and other County public services. Multi-nationals in Ballina avail of state of the art warehousing facilities provided in Castlebar.

This substantial volume of daily traffic between the towns is substantiated by traffic counts conducted by TII and Mayo County Council.

In fact the main obstacle in providing connectivity between Ballina and Castlebar and ultimately Westport is the poor condition of the N58 road through Straide.

An upgrade of the road would address that. In fact as part of the work done to find a new route for the N26 with the yearly funding I secured through TII since Budget 2012 it was identified that a new major road scheme for the N26/N58/N5 would be desirable and now stands as a line on a map to be developed. This should also tie in with access to Ireland West Airport Knock.

East West connectivity for the County is important. The new N5 Westport to Turlough will address this in the South. However prioritisation is needed for the N26 from Swinford to Ballina servicing North Mayo to bring it to a standard worthy of its categorisation as a national primary route on the national roads network. Progress on the road has been seriously impeded by environmental designation and constraints pursuant to the Habitats and Birds Directives although the recent decision by An Bord Pleanala to grant planning permission for a new bridge at Cloongullane on the N26 is most welcome and a long awaited step in the right direction. In fact more work is required on the part of

the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other stakeholders to get a better balance between conservation objectives for wildlife and habitats and desirable socio-economic objectives of the people which require the building of infrastructure. This is a real problem on account of the significant amount of environmentally designated land in Mayo and indeed along the Western seaboard.

Improvement of North South connectivity would be achieved by further development of the N17 and the Western Rail Corridor which I support.

I request that each of the foregoing development objectives be included in the RSES.

Finally I wish to add I am not at all in agreement and am very disappointed with Mayo County Council's latest move to develop a master plan to create a linked hub between Castlebar and Westport alone disregarding Ballina. If this course of action is pursued it will split the County and is totally counterintuitive to what the local authority should be about.

Yours faithfully,

Senator Michelle Mulherin

Oireachtas email policy and disclaimer.

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/about/oireachtasemailpolicyanddisclaimer/>

Beartas ríomhphoist an Oireachtais agus séanadh.

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/ga/eolas/beartasriomhphoistanoireachtaisagusseanadh/>