

# What rural communities want from planners



*Irish Rural Link*  
*Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann*

A VOICE FOR RURAL IRELAND

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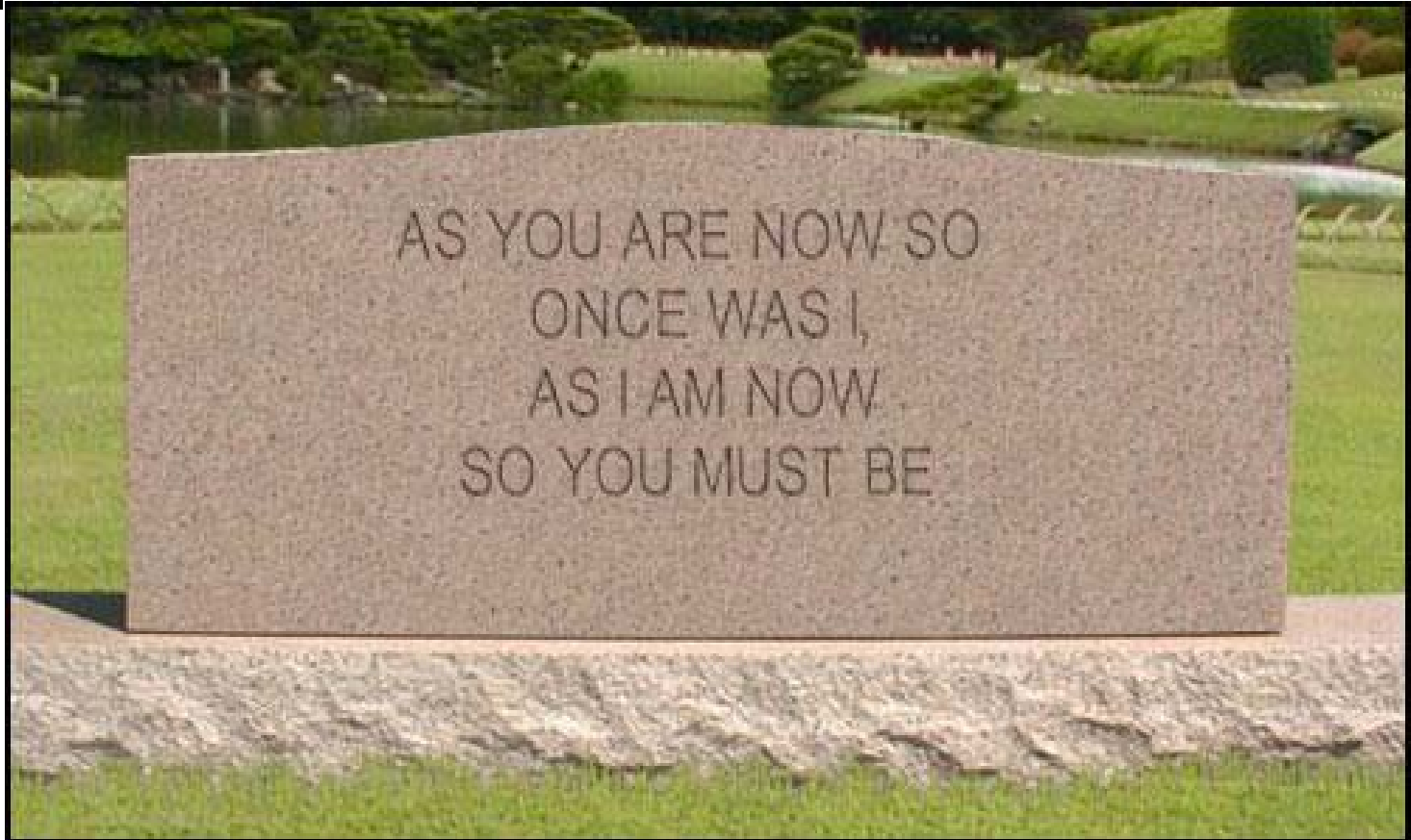
16<sup>th</sup> April 2010

# Opportunity



*Irish Rural Link*  
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# Presentation Outline

- About Irish Rural Link
- Whither rural areas?
- Strategic planning
- Engaging rural communities
- What communities want from planners: Social
- What communities want from planners: Environmental
- What communities want from planners: Economic
- Conclusions

# Irish Rural Link

- Founded in 1991
- An umbrella body that is a voice for rural Ireland
- Represents the interests of locally based groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice.
- Membership of over 350 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development
- Represents rural communities at a national and international level

# Irish Rural Link

- Our vision is of vibrant, inclusive and sustainable rural communities that contribute to an equitable and just society
- Main focus is advocacy and policy influence, also
  - Research
  - Training
- Represents rural communities in Social Partnership, NESC and other fora

**“As the economy does start to pick up, future growth will be based in cities...Multinationals are overwhelmingly coming to cities rather than rural areas. Now we will start to look more European and less Mediterranean” - NIB Chief Economist Ronnie O’Toole, March 2010**

**“There's a global trend towards megacities for cultural and other reasons” - Dublin BasedoGoogle Vice president John Herlihy, February 2010**

**“Investing in areas with very low populations cannot be seen as a priority in the current economic climate” – Dept of Finance**

*Infrastructure for an Island Population of Eight Million sees rural areas as a source of energy, water and waste disposal with no real role in providing high value added jobs*

# Whither Rural Areas?

- Significant and dispersed rural population
- Overall economic and social situation radically changed
- Rural communities vulnerable to job losses/challenges to rural business
- Threats to those who are vulnerable in rural communities
- Services more likely to be cut than enhanced
- Climate change

# Strategic Planning

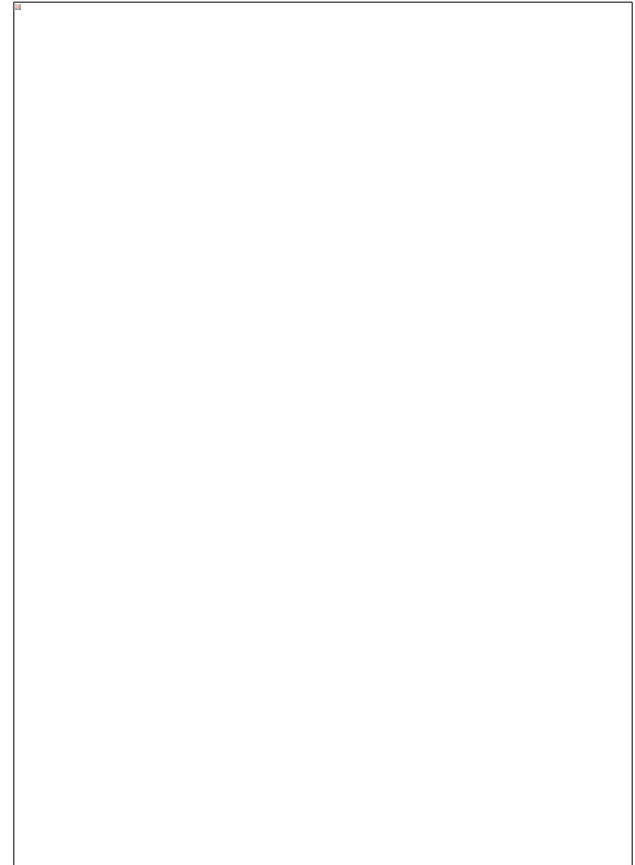
- National Spatial Strategy
- Role of villages/nuclei/crossroad settlements/hamlets
- Evidence based policy making
  - More detail on monitoring of CDPs
  - Number of one offs, second home figures only coming out now because of tax
  - Lack of information on housing conditions
  - Impact of incentives
- Rural Proofing
- Equipping communities and individuals to make submissions

# Engaging Rural Communities

- Feedback from communities:
  - Not aware of what a local area plan is/what it means and the importance of it from a planning decision point of view
  - Not aware of the drafting process
  - Not aware or that familiar/experienced with making a submission
  - Don't fully understand the draft
  - Demystifying the whole process is important, and using simple English is critical
  - Knowledge of process is also very important, and engagement with community by being at local meetings
  - Advance notice to target interest groups if they are known locally is also important
  - Facilitating communities to submit jointly

# Engaging rural communities

- C & V pillar committed to a shift to a collaborative approach to decision making in the planning process
- Co-ordination within local authorities
- IRL training hopes to work with communities and planners



# Social

- CSO: Most significant factor in determining access to services is geographic location of the household
- Lack of adequate public transport is one of the major factors contributing to social exclusion in rural areas
- Maintaining rural and village services
- Copying and pasting of conditions: convincing communities that local circumstances are accounted for
- Over one third of new and one third of old rural households were living within a five mile radius of where they were reared, confirming the “traditional” family aspect to Irish rural settlement patterns
- View that Rural Development = One off rural houses

# Time for a ‘Rural Forum’?

- “Sustainable Rural Housing” guidelines call on local authorities to act as facilitators to bring the main interests concerned with rural settlements together, however cannot see evidence that Irish local government has ever had the funding or institutional capacities to fulfil this

# Housing: Issues of concern

- Planning
- Housing Need
- Housing Affordability
- Environmental protection
- Urban/Rural generated housing
- Spectre of ghost estates & NAMA
- Future of Irish property marketss

# Planning commission

- Meet for a period of 12 months (meeting every 2 weeks)
- Membership of:
  - Relevant Government Depts
  - Representatives from Farming Sector
  - Representatives from rural community & voluntary sector and other social partners
  - Representatives from the Construction Industry
  - Representatives from the Environmental & Heritage Sector
  - Planning professionals
  - Rural Development experts
  - Other relevant organisations

# Planning Commission

- Recommendations of the Commission aim:
  - To ensure that housing policy initiatives/interventions positively promote the long term economic, social and environmental sustainability of rural Ireland as a place to live, work and recreate
  - To restore confidence in the planning system as a mechanism that can provide an objective, transparent, accountable and less divisive way of adjudicating on planning applications than is perceived at present

# Planning Commission

- Develop a model or series of models that will be more appropriate than those used at present for analysing and understanding housing issues in rural Ireland
- Ensure that housing initiatives (public, private and other) appropriate to the dynamics of housing concerns in rural areas are encouraged and facilitated
- Ensure that the central objective of housing policy is given practical and relevant expression in rural Ireland

# Planning Commission

- Ensure that housing policy initiatives/interventions taken at national level are ‘rural proofed’ based on criteria established as part of the Commission’s deliberations
- Decisions on ghost estates/development land that make long term social, economic and environmental sense in a rural context

# Environmental

- *Towards A Sustainable Rural Transport Policy* by IRL & Comhar SDC
- Wastewater treatment
- ENLIVEN
- Cloughjordan
- Planning for renewables

# Economic

- Agriculture now only employs 1 in 5
- Rural tourism only viable alternative to farming?
- Small scale business in rural context
- Social infrastructure to attract and retain the necessary workforce



# Broadband

- At least 25,000 premises can't get broadband
- Speeds here remain below the OECD average
  - In Ireland 0.6 percent of total broadband connections are fibre connections compared to 11.3 percent of subscribers on average in OECD-28 countries
  - Forfas report notes that Finland achieves high levels of quality broadband penetration despite having a dispersed rural population like Ireland
- Role of RPGs and CDPs
- Planning in Innovation Taskforce report

# Conclusions

- Moving from the adversarial and divisive
- Community led planning, Integrated Area Plans
- Planner as activist, advocate and rural champion

# Irish Rural Link

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- IRL Conference 2010
- May 13th and 14th in Killala, Co. Mayo
- This year's Conference will be on the theme of rural poverty and disadvantage

**2010**  
**European Year**  
**for Combating**  
**Poverty and**  
**Social Exclusion**

