

20130626-GOV-CEDRA1

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27.06.13

Re: Consultation Submission – Evidence to the Commission on Economic Development in Rural Areas (CEDRA)

Dear Dr. Meredith,

An Taisce very much welcomes the work being undertaken by the Commission for Economic Development in Rural Areas (CEDRA) and the opportunity to make a submission to its important work.

An Taisce supports the objectives for sustainable rural communities that were developed in both the EU's Salzburg Declaration (EC, 2003) and Ireland's first Strategy on Sustainable Development published in 1997, however, the outcomes from current government policy are poor.

Large parts of rural Ireland have lagged behind in terms of relative disadvantage; employment and job creation; and the extent of rural poverty and social isolation. Peripheral regions, especially in the northwest and north midlands, have consistently lost population share and experienced considerable deficits in respect of services, communications and other infrastructure. These trends have become ever more acute following the collapse of the 'Celtic Tiger' property bubble and the subsequent fiscal austerity and retrenchment measures which have seen the withdrawal of key services in rural areas.

The establishment of CEDRA is a welcome and timely initiative. This submission sets out An Taisce's proposals for the creation of a vibrant rural Ireland. Ours is an alternative viewpoint which is put forward in the context of transformative energy and climate challenges of the 21st Century. Our rural natural resources have therefore never been more important and must be sustainably managed for the long-term. Our civilization is wholly dependent on its ecological and social foundations and our economy should function to sustain and enhance human well-being. It is easy to lose sight of this, especially in times of crises.

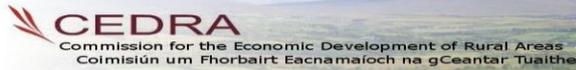
Rural Ireland is today experiencing the stored-up costs of over half a century of poor policies that facilitated a widely dispersed settlement strategy that has failed to generate a supportive economy and this locked-in legacy will be extremely difficult to unpick. Clear and bold strategic policy choices with a long-term focus will need to be recommended to government

Any future development policy for rural Ireland cannot be spatially blind. Given the proposals as part of the 'Putting People First' local government reform agenda to develop Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, a significant opportunity exists to rise above the traditional sectoral policy silos, provide joined up cross-sectoral policy delivery and overcome the weak tradition of territorial and spatial focus. This new opportunity for greater joined-up government is essential for rural development.

We wish the Commission on Economic Development in Rural Areas well in its work.

Yours sincerely,

Tomás Bradley
Planning & Environmental Policy Officer
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Commission for Economic Development in Rural Areas

Key Questions

Part 1 - Rural Economic Development; The Critical Issues?

It is important for us to understand the main challenges associated with job creation in rural areas. The questions in this section seek to identify the main issues that need to be addressed in order to facilitate job creation and economic development. Specific examples in this section will be gratefully appreciated.

1.1 What are the three most important issues that need to be addressed if jobs are to be created in rural areas?

1. A focus on comparative advantage and the sustainable development of rural natural resources and increased local food production, with particular emphasis on greening the economy.

2. A new constitutional social compact and priority emphasis on spatial/social justice for enhanced delivery of public services through increased policy focus of new settlement in small rural towns and villages _____

3. Greater cross-sectoral policy development implementation through improved governance structures and greater and efficient alignment between public investment and spatial planning

1.2 How do these issues impact on or affect job creation / enterprise development?

Focusing on economic development alone is a mistake. The objective of CEDRA should be to focus on how to create the conditions which underpin job creation on a long-term basis – services, quality of life, infrastructure, sustainable population, age vibrancy, environmental quality etc. If such conditions are not created any short-term job creation will be ephemeral

Rural Ireland has been decimated by the slow-leak loss of population/employment to larger urban centres. This can only be reversed through a greater focus on the sustainable exploitation of indigenous resources of rural areas.

Many of the small-scale businesses/services which used to be present in rural Ireland e.g. butchers, grocers, public houses, solicitors etc have closed down due to the fact that people simply drive to avail of such facilities in larger towns. A policy of small-scale nucleation of

population in small rural towns and villages would help support a greater range of employment opportunities and would reverse the flailing fortunes of many rural towns and villages.

1.3 What are the medium and long term implications of these issues?

There is no 'quick-fix' solution to rural economic regeneration. Rural development has been neglected for successive decades and will require a long-term, committed and sustained focus over 20 years, at least, to reverse this historic legacy.

1.4 What is the best way(s) to address these issues?

If economic development is the interchange between households and firms, the best way to promote rural development is to ensure households and firms are spatially proximate. This should be achieved through a SEAT model, i.e. Strategy framed, Evidence based, Action focused and Target driven, which is sufficiently robust to withstand short-term political cycles.

1.5 Who should take the lead role in dealing with these issues?

The reformulated Regional Assemblies under 'Putting People First' should take the overarching lead in cooperation with local authorities, state agencies and stakeholders.

1.5.1 What is the role of companies in tackling these issues?

The key role will be for the State to create the conditions suitable for economic development.

1.5.2 What is the role of local government in tackling these issues?

Local governments should be required to address these issues through new SPC's for economic development, but coordinated at the regional level.

1.5.3 What is the role of the state in tackling these issues?

The role of local and national government is key. Public policy delivery and planning is fundamentally a political strategy. This will require a disengagement from current laissez-faire neoliberal governance to a planned state intervention based on the principles of spatial/social justice

Part 2 – Rural Economic Development; The Opportunities

We are very interested in identifying opportunities for job creation in rural areas or the further development of enterprises and industries located in rural areas. In this section we want your views on what you think is the potential for economic development in your area. We are particularly interested in identifying the types of enterprise and industries that you think can contribute to job creation. The more specific you can be, the more helpful your answers will be in the development of recommendations that will appear in the Jobs Strategy.

2.1 Are there any opportunities for job creation in your area? Please Tick the relevant box.

Yes	n/a	No	n/a
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2.1.1 If you answered (Yes) to Question 2.1, which sectors or industries do you think have potential to create jobs?

N/A

2.1.2 If you answered (No) to Question 2.1, Can you explain why you think there are no opportunities for job creation in your area?

N/A

2.2 What types of business / enterprises could benefit from the development of these sectors or industries?

N/A

2.3 What type of jobs would be created through the development of these business / enterprises?

N/A

2.4 Do you think there are any specific barriers to the development of these business / enterprises (for example a shortage of skilled labour or a critical piece of infrastructure)?

N/A

2.5 Can you identify specific steps that have to be taken to ensure that opportunities for job creation are realised?

N/A

Part 3 - Securing Rural Economic Development.

The Commission's jobs strategy will make recommendations and inform prioritisations made by Government and other stakeholders that will facilitate job creation and economic development of rural areas. We would like your views on what actions are needed to ensure that rural areas contribute to and benefit from national economic growth.

3.1 What actions are needed to ensure that rural areas contribute to economic recovery for the future?

See Part 1

3.2 What actions are required to ensure that job creation opportunities are realised?

See Part 1

3.3 In your view how can the state, local government, local development bodies, other relevant agencies and the private sector work together to create jobs and support enterprise development?

See Part 1

Part 4 - Other Comments / Suggestions

We welcome any comments or suggestions that will help us in our work. If there are issues that you think we need to address in our work and in the final report please outline them below. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for taking the time to participate by sending us your views and opinions.

See attached submission

Part 5 - Respondent Information

Thank you for taking the time to tell us your views and contribute to the work of the Commission. As we may have follow up questions in relation to your contribution we are asking you to provide your name, address OR email. Also, to help ensure we handle your response appropriately, please complete the details below.

5.1 Gender

Tick the relevant box.

Male

Female

5.2 Please indicate your age <i>Tick relevant box</i>	
Under 18	
18 – 29	
30 – 44	
45 – 59	
60 – 74	
75 +	

5.4 What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

Tick relevant box

Primary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secondary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Third Level	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.5.1 If you Ticked (Employed) in previous question, what county are you employed in?

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5.6 How did you hear about this public consultation? Tick the relevant box

Through the media (Newspaper, Radio, TV)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Informed by friend / colleague / family member	<input type="checkbox"/>
By attending a public meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.6.1 If Other, please specify.

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5.7 Do you wish to receive any further information either by post or email regarding this commission (e.g. The Final Report) *Tick the relevant box.*

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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5.7.1 If (Yes) to previous question please provide postal OR email address you would like us to send information to.

Name: T O M Á S B R A D L E Y

Address:
T A I L O R S H A L L
B A C K L A N E
D U B L I N 8

