



IRELAND

National Development Plan 2007-2013

TRANSFORMING IRELAND

A Better Quality of Life for All

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Foreword by an Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, T.D.



The past decade has seen tremendous economic and social progress in Ireland. We have put in place the foundations of a truly modern, forward looking, internationalised society. The greatest challenge we now face is to consolidate and sustain this remarkable achievement to ensure that we provide a better quality of life for all.

Improved living standards, understandably, give rise to heightened expectations. Furthermore, the progress achieved over the past decade does not constitute an end in itself. Rather, it provides us with the resources to continue with the task of making this a superb country in which to live, learn, work and play; a country where opportunities for self-development, wealth and job creation and innovation abound, but where, equally, the more vulnerable in society are cherished and cared for.

Consequently, this National Development Plan encompasses investment of €184 billion over the next seven years. This is a scale of funding which until recently was unimaginable. With these resources comes responsibility: responsibility to ensure that they are deployed intelligently, in an optimal manner that secures and delivers real value for money.

A number of key themes are critical to the successful implementation of this plan and the realisation of meaningful improvements in quality of life:

- We will continue to build on the substantial progress made recently to eliminate major infrastructure deficits;
- We will ensure that our enterprise sector stays at the leading edge globally, by continuing to attract key inward investment, by further stimulating the indigenous sector, by renewed emphasis on worker training and skills and above all by expansion of our science, technology and innovation capacity;
- Recognising that economic and social progress are inter-dependent, almost half of the total funding commitment under this plan is destined for social infrastructure and social inclusion priorities;
- By ensuring that the National Spatial Strategy is fully reflected in implementation of this plan, we will achieve balanced regional development, which is crucial to our ability to absorb the huge population growth predicted over the next twenty years;
- Protection, preservation and improvement of our natural environment will be a priority, with long-term sustainable development underpinning policy planning and implementation; and
- Innovative and integrated or “whole-of-Government” policy development and ensuring value for money for the taxpayer will permeate the implementation of this plan.

The experience of the past ten years shows the need for, and benefits of, longer-term policy planning to ensure that we rise to the challenges and maximise the opportunities facing us. In the new national agreement, *Towards 2016*, the Social Partners recognised the case for longer term planning, by agreeing

for the first time to a ten-year framework for social partnership. This new National Development Plan sets out the resourcing commitments necessary to give effect to major policy developments over the medium term, including many which are put forward or endorsed in *Towards 2016*. Recognising this close synergy, Social Partnership will continue to play an important role throughout the implementation of this plan.

For example, the investment under this plan will give substantial effect to the life cycle approach outlined in *Towards 2016*, which orientates public services around the needs of people at different stages of their lives — children, young adults, people of working age, older people and people with a disability. In particular, it will help deliver the goals for each stage of the life cycle as set out in the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion.

The life cycle approach demonstrates the need for, and willingness to engage in, more flexible and innovative approaches to implementation of policy as befits a modern society in the rapidly changing world of the 21st century. Efficient and effective delivery of this Plan will be a major challenge for the public service — one I know it is capable of meeting in partnership with key stakeholders.

This Plan will also reinforce Ireland's position on the global stage. International developments such as the continued expansion of the European Union, globalisation and the rise of major new economies mean that we must constantly pay attention to the international competitiveness of our economy and indeed to the high regard in which this country is held by many other nations. Many of the measures envisaged under this Plan will be critical to maintaining and improving Ireland's position as a well respected, openly trading, economy and society.

Equally, the launch of this plan is especially timely in relation to North/South co-operation. Since the Good Friday Agreement, we have seen an unprecedented period of peace, prosperity and a better society. There is great scope to build on this progress. This Plan provides a comprehensive overview of North/South co-operation, it sets out proposals for significant investment in new North/South projects that will benefit every single person living on this island, and it brings North/South co-operation firmly into the mainstream of policy-making. I look forward to working together, on a basis of mutual respect and for mutual benefit, with democratically elected representatives of all traditions on this island in building a better future for the people we represent.

In conclusion, I commend to our people this new National Development Plan, with its massive €184 billion investment, as a hugely important further step in transforming Ireland and ensuring a better quality of life for all of its people.

Bertie Ahern, T.D.
Taoiseach

Foreword by an Tánaiste, Michael McDowell T.D.



Ireland has experienced a level of growth in the last decade that has resulted in our achieving one of the highest levels of economic and social development in the world. As a nation, we can feel truly proud of this achievement. However, there are major challenges to be met, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, innovation and social inclusion. This Plan will allow us to continue to improve our quality of life in a sustainable manner, while remaining internationally competitive.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 sets out a programme of integrated investments that will underpin our ability to grow in a manner that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable — not just for this generation but for our children and grandchildren.

As well as providing the physical infrastructure to support progress, a major focus of the plan is on investment in education, science, technology and innovation. This remains the key to Ireland's future development. Only a society that is committed to growth based on education, innovation and a spirit of enterprise can successfully meet its social and environmental challenges.

Meeting these challenges also requires the full participation of all our citizens in society. Recent growth has given us the resources to provide greater support than ever before to the less well off. The measures in this Plan will strengthen the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion focus on ensuring that people have the supports necessary to achieve their full potential at all stages of their life.

While it is a measure of the country's success that we can fund this ambitious programme of investment almost exclusively from domestic resources, this in no way obviates the need to ensure that we achieve value for money. The Plan therefore sets out comprehensive measures to ensure that we get full value for your money both in procuring projects and in ensuring their efficient use.

The implementation of this ambitious, considered and appropriate Plan will require the co-operation of all sections of society and I look forward to working with them to ensure its success.

Foreword by the Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen, T.D.



This Plan is called 'Transforming Ireland — A Better Quality of Life for All'. In the past decade Ireland has enjoyed unprecedented economic success, employment growth and a dramatic rise in general income levels and standards of living across all sectors of our society. This is a country already transformed, a country that has, without exaggeration, reversed its own history.

Over the next seven years we will face many challenges; some new and unpredictable; others posed by the fruits of our success in the past decade. As a people we have always shown resilience in the face of so-called 'external shocks' in the macro-economic sphere. We have been flexible, adaptable and patient in circumstances that might otherwise have overwhelmed us.

In my view, the most predictable challenge we now face is the consolidation of the progress we have made. The previous NDP was about expanding our economy and employment and providing the physical and social infrastructure to facilitate that. In overall terms the NDP 2000-2006 has been successful in fulfilling the overriding objective of economic growth within a broadly sustainable framework.

As a direct consequence of our success the population of our country has increased by 17% over the past ten years to 4.2 million. By 2021 our population may well be in excess of five million people. This Plan addresses these demographic challenges.

How we use land — our spatial strategy — and the infrastructure we develop to service the planned growth and development of our urban centres and their rural hinterlands is crucial to managing the challenges of the future and harnessing the potential for future growth and development provided by the expansion in our population. In this new NDP, spatial objectives are integrated within the goals of economic, social and environmental sustainability and our national and international responsibilities under these headings.

Our young people are now, more than any previous generation, "Citizens of the World", connected by the internet, travel, music and education to a wider world of ideas and influences as part of their normal daily existence. The privations of our own national past, including the difficulties of the decade in which many of them were born, the 1980s, are alien to them. This generation of young Irish people are highly politicised: Globalisation, Climate Change and World Poverty are issues of deep and genuine concern to them. They are wholly conscious of the interdependence of the political, economic and environmental fragilities of a shared world and of the place and role of our own island country within that world.

This National Development Plan is about the future of those young people, their parents, and their grandparents. It establishes a blueprint for the economic and social development of this island for future generations.

In this Plan, we have a unique window of opportunity to get it right: in terms of spatial planning, support infrastructure, environmental sustainability and economic growth.

At the end of this Plan, wherever you live in Ireland, in Dublin, in a Gateway urban centre, in a county town or a rural area, you, your children, your parents, your grandchildren can look forward to a better quality of life in a sustainable environment within a progressive and dynamic economy and society.

You can also look forward to a peaceful future.

Building on the historic achievements since the Good Friday Agreement, this Plan sets out a comprehensive statement of future Government policy on North/South co-operation. It also includes, for the first time, proposals for Irish Government investment in North/South projects and initiatives for mutual benefit. The Government wishes to agree and implement these with the British Government and a restored Northern Ireland Executive in the period 2007-2013. These projects and initiatives will benefit all communities and the entire island of Ireland.

This is an ambitious Plan. Nothing on this scale has ever been attempted before in our history. We are talking about a total investment commitment of €184 billion of, in the main, taxpayers' money over the next seven years to secure the further transformation of our country, socially and economically, within an environmentally sustainable framework. This level of investment is also necessary to secure our future.

Value for money is a prerequisite. It calls for a consistently prudent approach to budgetary policy in the coming years. It demands rigorous monitoring of all the programmes set out in the Plan and a commitment to flexibility by all Governments in determining priorities in accordance with the economic circumstances of the day.

The new NDP has been arrived at following an extensive period of consultation with all interest groups and reflects their input, including the strategy agreed with the social partners in *Towards 2016*. Its investment parameters will enable us, economically and socially, to effectively confront the challenges we face over the next seven years.

As Minister for Finance, I feel especially privileged to present this National Development Plan — 'Transforming Ireland — A Better Quality of Life for All' — to the Irish people. It is a roadmap for sustainable economic expansion, social justice and a better quality of life for all our citizens over the next seven years and beyond. Ireland will be again transformed and, in transforming Ireland, we will deliver a better quality of life for all.

Brian Cowen TD,
Minister for Finance

January 2007

OVERVIEW SUMMARY

Transforming Ireland — A Better Quality of Life for All

Introduction

The National Development Plan *Transforming Ireland — A Better Quality of Life for All* sets out the roadmap to Ireland's future. Within the next seven years, our economy and our society will undergo a transformation almost as radical as the changes we have experienced in the past decade of growth and development. That transformation will be driven largely by the continuing increase in our population, projected to reach over five million people by 2021.

We will experience a change in our economic base, as we move towards more high value added economic activities and industries, both foreign-owned and indigenous. To optimise our choices for a better long-term future we need a roadmap, clearly marking out the landmark challenges we face such as:

- removing the remaining infrastructure bottlenecks that constrain our economic development and inhibit balanced regional development and environmental sustainability;
- further equipping our children and youth with the skills and education to grasp the opportunities presented to us;
- creating and sustaining high value employment opportunities; and
- redistributing the product of wealth to foster an inclusive society, including adequately catering for those who have already contributed to Ireland's success over previous decades.

This National Development Plan integrates strategic development frameworks for regional development, for rural communities, for all-island co-operation, and for protection of the environment with common economic and social goals.

Funding of its investment relies almost completely on our own domestic resources, produced by the taxpayer and invested in priorities that will generate a real economic return, increasing overall wealth in our society and raising standards of living beyond what they might otherwise be.

Securing value for money for the Plan investment and monitoring its implementation will be a key priority and essential to its success in transforming Ireland.

The priorities and approach set out in the Plan are consistent with the ten year social partnership framework agreement — *Towards 2016* — concluded in 2006.

1. Investing in the Future

A €184 billion Investment Framework

Over the next seven years, the National Development Plan 2007-2013 proposes investment of some €184 billion in our economic and social infrastructure, the enterprise, science and agriculture sectors, the education, training and skills base of our people, environmental services and in the social fabric of our

society that, within a strong and vibrant economy geared to meet the challenges of the future, will deliver a better quality of life for all.

The five Investment Priorities of the Plan are:

	€ billion Investment (Current Prices)
Economic Infrastructure	54.7
Enterprise, Science and Innovation	20.0
Human Capital	25.8
Social Infrastructure	33.6
Social Inclusion	49.6
Total	183.7

Funding

Since 1988 National Development Plans have involved a significant contribution from EU Funds, although this contribution had lessened significantly in the 2000-2006 Plan. This new Plan is almost completely funded from domestic sources, the vast bulk of it by the Central Exchequer. The Plan also encompasses new areas as compared with previous Plans such as capital investment by key Commercial State Bodies and certain Social Inclusion schemes. These latter schemes are part of an unprecedented multi-annual level of commitment to investment in Social Inclusion that will benefit people at all stages of their life cycle, from childhood to old age, and promote Social Inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

EU Funding

It is estimated that some €3 billion in EU rural development and structural funding will be made available over the period 2007-2013. The drawdown of this funding will be the subject of separate programmes to be agreed between Ireland and the European Commission. This funding is provided for in the Plan's overall financial envelope.

Infrastructure

The Plan will decisively tackle economic and social infrastructure deficits in areas such as Transport, Energy, Housing, Water, Education and Health. This will be mainly funded by a significantly enhanced 7-year Central Government Capital Envelope of almost €80 billion.

Supported by Prudent Budgetary and Fiscal Strategy

Ability to fund the investment priorities will require economic and budgetary policies that deliver sustainable growth and provide the requisite levels of resources to meet the commitments in this Plan. A prudent budgetary policy, fully consistent with the EU Stability and Growth Pact, that does not add to inflationary pressures within the economy and as endorsed in the National Partnership Agreement *Towards 2016*, will therefore be pursued throughout the Plan period. In this context growth in day to day spending must remain in line with economic growth. There will be an inbuilt flexibility to allow for reallocation as necessary depending on evolving priorities and the economic and budgetary situation.

Necessary and affordable

A solid foundation for the next phase of development of our economy and society has been laid through the economic performance of the past decade and the successful delivery of the previous NDP. Our population has already increased by 8% since 2002 and is expected to grow by a further 12% in the next ten years. 100,000 extra children will enter the education system over the Plan period and this, combined

with other demographic factors, will increase pressure on public and social services and on other infrastructure.

The investment envisaged under this new NDP is therefore necessary to generate and maintain economic growth and employment and fulfil the expectations of our growing population for a better quality of life.

Investment in infrastructure and services under this Plan will generate a long-term rate of return as well as contributing to sustainable economic growth. On the assumption of a broadly favourable international economic climate, the Irish economy is expected to expand at an average rate of around 4 – 4½% per annum over the period 2007-2013. The Plan is affordable on this basis. In fact the period to 2013 provides a major “window of opportunity” in resource terms to invest for future sustainable economic and social development.

Reflecting consensus on priority areas

The investment priorities in this Plan reflect policies agreed under *Towards 2016*, and priorities identified through an extensive consultation process with a wide range of organisations, interest groups and communities. The investment priorities were also independently evaluated by the ESRI. The new NDP in general accords with the infrastructure investment prioritisation proposed by the ESRI but provides for significantly enhanced levels of investment over that proposed by the ESRI.

Value for Money and Implementation

Value for Money in Plan implementation will be central to ensure maximum output and impact for the investment of taxpayers' money and will build on the recent experience whereby most major capital projects are being completed on time and within budget. All programmes and projects will be appraised and implemented within the enhanced VFM framework now in place. Robust implementation and monitoring procedures including measurement of performance by reference to target outputs and inputs will be put in place. Progress will be overseen by a Monitoring Committee representative of social partners, regional and other interests. There will also be an Annual Report on Plan progress submitted to the Oireachtas.

2. Meeting the Challenges — General Goals

Improving the quality of life for all requires integrated development and progressing of social and economic policies. Maintenance of a productive and competitive economy, the availability of rewarding employment opportunities and the generation of sufficient resources to ensure provision of comprehensive social and recreational facilities and services are all inherently bound together in the context of improving quality of life. Many of the key elements of this Plan underpin these common, and interlinked, objectives.

- **Decisively tackle structural infrastructure deficits** that continue to impact on competitiveness, regional development and general quality of life and to meet the demands of the increasing population;
- **Greatly enhance enterprise development, Science, Technology and Innovation, working age training and skills provision** to improve economic performance, competitiveness and our capacity to generate new enterprise ‘winners’ from the indigenous sector as well as continue to attract high added value foreign direct investment;
- **Integrate regional development within the National Spatial Strategy framework** of Gateway cities and Hub towns to achieve the goals of economic growth in the regions and provide for major investment in the rural economy;
- **Invest in long-term environmental sustainability** to achieve our national goal of preserving the integrity of our natural environment for future generations as well as meeting our international

responsibilities and Climate Change obligations; this also involves a more balanced, efficient and sustainable use of our land resources;

- **Realise the opportunities of strengthened all-island collaboration in areas of mutual interest** to build up the island's competitive strengths particularly in the areas of infrastructure, R&D, skills and innovation and to enhance the provision of public services on the island;
- **Deliver a multi-faceted programme for Social Inclusion** and improvements in the quality of life across all age groups and among all population cohorts; and
- **Provide Value for Taxpayers' Money** through robust and transparent appraisal, management and monitoring systems for NDP investment.

3. Investment Plan — Priority Spending Areas

Priority I: Economic Infrastructure

Dealing with infrastructure deficits is crucial to our future economic growth, regional development and environmental sustainability.

Total investment by sector under this Priority is as follows;

Economic Infrastructure Priority €m Current Prices 2007-2013

Programme	Total
Transport	32,914
Energy	8,526
Environmental Services	5,772
Communications and Broadband	435
Govt. Infrastructure	1,413
Local Authority Development Contributions	2,100
Unallocated Capital Reserve	3,500
Economic Infrastructure Total	54,660

Transport

Investment in transport infrastructure over the Plan period will total nearly €33 billion of which:

- €13.3 billion will be invested in upgrading and building new national roads;
- €4.3 billion will be invested in non-national roads, funded by the Exchequer and the Local Government Fund;
- €12.9 billion will be invested in public transport, particularly in the Greater Dublin Area, this investment is a quadrupling of that allocated in the previous Plan;
- €90 million will be invested in the Rural Transport Initiative;
- €1.8 billion will be invested in improving air transport facilities at the country's three national airports; and €96 million for investment in the six regional airports and City of Derry Airport; and
- €480 million will be invested in upgrading strategic ports facilities and regional harbours.

Energy

Security of supply, competitively priced energy and environmental sustainability underpin the €8.5 billion investment in Energy over the Plan period. Major capital investments will be undertaken by the ESB, Bord

Gáis Éireann, Bord na Móna and EirGrid. There will also be investment in key strategic energy infrastructure projects including the East/West and North/South interconnectors and ongoing investment in sustainable energy with a view to meeting the target of 15% of electricity production from renewable sources by 2010.

Environmental Services

Environmental Services priority investment, totalling € 5.8 billion includes:

- €4.75 billion for Water Services;
- Over €750 million for Waste Management, including dealing with the legacy of old landfill sites; and
- €270 million for Climate Change trading allowances purchase.

Communications and Broadband Programme

- €435 million under the Programme to support regional economic development and to address market failures in the provision of broadband in certain parts of the country.

Government Buildings Infrastructure

- €580 million for sites and buildings; and
- €830 million for the Decentralisation programme up to 2011

Priority II: Enterprise, Science and Innovation

Total investment under this Priority is as follows:

Enterprise, Science and Innovation Priority 2007-2013 €m Current Prices

Programme	Total
Science, Technology & Innovation	6,112
Enterprise Development	3,323
Tourism Development	800
Agriculture & Food Development	8,028
Rural Social & Economic Development	844
Gaeltacht & Islands Devopment	457
Marine and Coastal Communities	442
Enterprise, Science & Innovation Total	20,006

Total proposed investment in Enterprise, Science and Innovation of €20 billion is essential to Ireland's attractiveness to high-quality Foreign Direct Investment and the development of our own indigenous companies, including those capable of becoming world leaders in product areas as well as niche companies making specialised products based on our natural resources. The investment will also underpin the modernisation of the agriculture sector, development of the tourism industry and support the rural economy. The breakdown of investment under this priority is in the order of:

- €6.1 billion in Science, Technology and Innovation;
- €3.3 billion in Enterprise development;
- €800 million on Tourism marketing, product development and training programmes;

- €8 billion to modernise and develop Agriculture and Food, in line with the strategy set out in the Agri-Vision 2015 Action Plan;
- €844 million on Rural Social and Economic Development programmes;
- Over €455 million on the Gaeltacht and Islands; and
- Over €440 million for Seafood Development, Fisheries and Coastal Infrastructure and Coastal Protection.

Priority III: Human Capital

Total investment under this Priority is as follows;

Human Capital Priority 2007-2013 €m Current Prices

Programme	Total
Training & Skills Development	7,718
Higher Education	13,017
Schools Modernisation & Development	5,061
Human Capital Total	25,796

Ireland's track record in education investment has been fundamental to generating our economic success. The main objective of the proposed investment of €25.8 billion over the Plan period is to maintain access to the highest standards of education for all in our society, to meet the labour skills requirement of the future and to focus investment in particular on developing the key Third Level Sector. Key features are:

- Over €2.8 billion will be invested in training and skills development programmes, including employment training, apprenticeships, new skills training for adult workers and programmes for school leavers;
- Nearly €4.9 billion in training and development programmes for a wide range of groups, including lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers, ex-offenders and other categories requiring special interventions (this will also support the goals in the social inclusion priority);
- €13 billion for Third-Level Infrastructure and for ongoing costs of the sector in the context of the promotion of strategic and structural development; and
- €5 billion in First and Second Level schools modernisation and development

Priority IV: Social Infrastructure

Total investment under this Priority is as follows;

Social Infrastructure Priority 2007-2013 €m Current Prices

Programme	Total
Housing	21,214
Health Infrastructure	4,970
Justice	2,346
Sports, Culture, Heritage & Community Infrastructure	3,631
Unallocated Capital Reserve	1,450
Social Infrastructure Total	33,612

Investment in social infrastructure underlines the commitment to the fair and equitable redistribution of the fruits of economic success among all sections of our community. The total investment in this priority area of over €33 billion will complement the investment in Social Inclusion under Priority V to greatly enhance social development. The investment consists of:

- Over €21 billion in housing, delivering assistance through social, affordable and voluntary housing schemes to over 140,000 households over the Plan period, including 100,000 new social and affordable units and delivering support under the rent supplement scheme to other households;
- Just under €5 billion investment on health infrastructure, including acute hospitals and primary community and continuing care facilities;
- €2.3 billion to deliver a modernised prison infrastructure, new criminal courts complex and improvements to Garda Stations and Garda infrastructure generally; and
- Over €3.6 billion for sports, culture and heritage infrastructure, including the first phase of the Abbotstown sports complex, the Lansdowne Road stadium, many cultural facilities and a range of programmes to ensure the preservation, protection and display of our natural, cultural, architectural and archaeological heritage.

Priority V: Social Inclusion

Total investment under this Priority is as follows;

Social Inclusion Priority 2007-2013 €m Current Prices

Programme	Total
Children Programme	12,290
Working Age — Education	4,201
Working Age — Social & Econ. Particip.	1,160
Working age — Justice	300
Older People	9,725
People with Disabilities	19,250
Local & Community Development	1,862
Horizontal Programme	848
Social Inclusion Total	49,636

Investment in social priorities is central to this National Development Plan as reflected in the major investment of €49.6 billion in related programmes and policies over the next seven years. This does not encompass social welfare payments which will be addressed in each Budget over the period of the Plan. Key features are:

- €12 billion Children's Programme to provide childcare services, child protection and recreational facilities for children, and educational help for children from disadvantaged communities and those with special needs;
- Over €4 billion in Working Age Education Support programmes to support further education, student support and third level access;
- €9.7 billion to help older people live independently at home and to provide investment in quality residential care facilities for older people who are no longer able to live at home;
- €19 billion to support the provision of programmes and services for people with disabilities;
- The RAPID programme, which prioritises investment on 46 of the most disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns, will be strengthened and enhanced;

- €1.9 billion to support the development of our increasingly diverse communities, including voluntary community bodies, and implementation of the National Drugs Strategy; and
- €848 million to support immigrant integration, language support, the social and economic advancement of members of the Traveller Community, the National Action Plan Against Racism and programmes and measures to combat gender inequality in Ireland.

These measures will support the achievement of the objectives of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (see High Level Goals of Social Inclusion).

4. Integration of National Development Goals and Investment Strategies

Under the Plan, investment priorities are influenced by strategic policy goals specifically in the following areas:

- Regional Development;
- Rural Economy;
- All-Island Co-operation;
- Environmental Sustainability; and
- Social Inclusion.

Regional Development

The Plan sets out a strong framework for the promotion of regional development with a particular focus on investment in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) Gateway centres. Strong urban centres are directly related to regional growth and development, affecting employment, incomes and quality of life throughout the regions.

The key to regional development will be efficient utilisation of Plan investment, especially in infrastructure. To further assist the process a Gateways Innovation Fund will be established. The Fund will initially operate on a pilot basis between 2008 and 2010. The Exchequer will provide an initial €300 million and this will be designed to attract significant matching funding — public or private or a combination of both. Lead local authorities within Gateway centres will be able to advance bids for local economic infrastructure not already part of mainstream Plan investment or local capital programmes, such as urban regeneration projects, transport initiatives (in addition to those under *Transport 21*) and Quality of Life projects.

Gateway Area Challenges

Each Regional/Gateway Area faces specific development challenges and opportunities of their own, providing a focus for targeted investments throughout the Plan period. Key projects and programmes for implementation over the Plan period in each NSS Gateway area are set out in Chapter 3.

Rural Economy

About 40% of Ireland's population live in rural areas, a high proportion by European standards. Rural areas present different experiences, economically and socially. A key task is to support diversification in the rural economy as traditional sectors, whilst still important, make a lesser contribution. All rural communities

require proper access to the wider national economy through physical infrastructure and services. The Plan envisages promoting the partnership between urban and rural areas through complementary developments in infrastructure and services.

Rollout of broadband in rural areas and towns is acknowledged as of central importance to the future economic development of rural Ireland, as is investment in micro-enterprises, tourism and the natural resource industries of agriculture, fisheries and forestry, all provided for under the Plan's Investment Priorities.

Other examples of specific initiatives that will benefit the rural economy include the Rural Transport Initiative, made permanent from the beginning of 2007, with priority assigned to areas that have no public transport services; major investments in Non-national roads and rural water and in the reopening of the Western rail corridor.

All-Island Co-Operation

The NDP sets out in detail the full range of current and planned initiatives for North/South co-operation. For the first time, this Plan also contains proposals for significant Irish Government investment in North/South projects and initiatives for mutual benefit. The Government wishes to agree and implement these with the British Government and a restored Northern Ireland Executive in the period 2007-2013. These projects and initiatives will benefit the entire island of Ireland. Importantly, the proposals are designed to benefit the entire community in Northern Ireland on the basis of sound economic principles and equality. The proposed investment, to be funded from the overall Plan funding envelope, is additional to current planned investment and projects. This Plan therefore includes a comprehensive statement of future Government policy on North/South co-operation. Any new proposals are of course subject to discussion and agreement with the Northern Ireland authorities.

The proposed new investment package includes two new, innovative elements:

- Joint investment in new strategic projects to benefit North and South; and
- The opening up of access to existing development funding on an all-island basis, and/or the introduction of new, agreed joint funding measures with the British Government (and Northern Ireland Executive on restoration).

New Strategic Projects

The Government's priorities for agreement on joint projects with Northern Ireland include:

- The completion by 2013 of a high quality road network on the inter-urban routes linking the major population centres of Dublin, Belfast and the North West (especially the Letterkenny-Derry Gateway);
- The future development of the Dublin-Belfast rail line as part of an integrated rail network serving other major population centres, North and South;
- Improved access for tourism and other opportunities along the Eastern corridor, including better links between Co Louth and Co Down in Northern Ireland;
- A significant upgrading of higher education capacity in the North West and the border region through strategic alliances between the educational institutions, North and South;

- New schemes to promote graduate mobility, graduate retention and access for people from disadvantaged areas to higher education;
- Comprehensive studies on health and education co-operation to be overseen by the responsible Departments and agencies, North and South;
- Maximising the potential for cross-border cancer services, building on the project to provide services for Co Donegal; and
- Examining the possibility of restoring the Ulster Canal.

Development Funding

The Government proposes to develop all-island funding, subject to agreement with the British Government (and the Northern Ireland Executive on restoration) in the following areas: education, skills, science and innovation; energy research, including renewable and sustainable energy; regional development; tourism development; and poverty, social inclusion and community infrastructure.

These areas address the long-term challenges that both Governments agree need to be tackled in the modern, global economy. Funding will be awarded on a competitive basis, thereby rewarding innovation and collaboration and ensuring funds are allocated to the best projects.

Cost

In some cases, these proposals involve more effective use of existing funding on an all-island basis. Other projects will involve a significant investment by the Irish Government. The Government is providing sufficient funding within the overall NDP expenditure allocation to provide for that investment.

The details will be finalised in discussion with the British Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on restoration.

In addition, the Plan sets out important work on North/South co-operation in the full range of policy areas, including:

- infrastructure provision;
- science, technology and innovation projects;
- enterprise and training;
- tourism;
- health services;
- education;
- environment;
- energy;
- agriculture and fisheries;
- culture and heritage;
- social inclusion; and
- reconciliation projects.

Environmental Sustainability

This Plan provides for a direct investment of some €25 billion in Environmental Sustainability. This investment will be complemented by the strategy for balanced regional development and land use as envisaged in this Plan, based on the National Spatial Strategy model for compact and sustainable urban development. This robust framework can accommodate the anticipated rapid growth in our population and concomitant economic growth while maintaining the quality of our natural environment.

Measures such as promoting the switch from car to public transport, especially in Dublin and the other major urban centres, will have a substantial impact on environmental sustainability over the longer term and on our potential to meet international commitments relating to climate change.

Other areas in which this NDP will benefit our environment, whether in terms of reducing damage to the environment by curtailing harmful emissions or discharges or in the protection of our environmental heritage for future generations, include the investment priorities for:

- Environment Services and Waste Management Investment;
- Climate Change Strategy — through investment in public transport, for example;
- Promotion of renewable energy, with a 15% commitment to use of renewables in electricity production by 2010;
- Agriculture;
- Built and Natural Heritage preservation; and
- Environmental Research.

High Level Goals for Social Inclusion

The Government is committed to a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the life cycle approach set out in *Towards 2016*, with implementation supported by the NDP and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. While both Plans identify a wide range of targets and interventions, the Government has also identified a number of high level social inclusion goals to achieve the overall objective of reducing consistent poverty. Based on the life cycle approach, these goals aim to:

Children

- Ensure that targeted pre-school education is provided to children from urban primary school communities covered by the DEIS action plan;
- Reduce the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities. The target is to halve the proportion from the current 27%-30% to less than 15% by 2016; and
- Work to ensure that the proportion of the population aged 20-24 completing upper Second Level education or equivalent will exceed 90% by 2013.

People of Working Age

- Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long term social welfare into education, training and employment. The target is to support 50,000 such people, including lone parents and the long term unemployed, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long term social welfare payments by 2016. This target will be reviewed in the light of experience.

Older People

- Continue to increase investment in community care services for older people, including home care packages and enhanced day care services to support them to live independently in the community for as long as possible.

People with Disabilities

- Increase the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job. The immediate objective is to have an additional 7,000 of that cohort in employment by 2010. The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% by 2016 as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). The overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be increased to 50% by 2016. These targets will be reviewed in the light of experience and the availability of better data.

Communities

Housing

- Deliver high quality housing for those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs and to underpin the building of sustainable communities. An important element will be the enhanced housing output reflected in *Towards 2016*, which will result in the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households being addressed over the period 2007 to 2009. This will embrace meeting special housing needs (the homeless, travellers, older people and people with disabilities).

Health

- Develop 500 primary care teams by 2011 which will improve access to services in the community with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards.

Integration of Migrants

- Develop a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society. As an initial action, resources for the provision of 550 teachers for language supports in the education sector will be provided by 2009 and access to other public services through translation of information and supports will be improved.