



**Letterkenny
Chamber**
Advancing business together

Submission to NDP 2026–2035 Review

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Introduction

Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the NDP 2026 – 2035 Review. As the leading business organisation in Donegal, representing over 320 businesses and 10,000 employees, we advocate for strategic investment in the Northern & Western Region to address chronic underinvestment and unlock the region's economic potential.

We advocate for equitable and strategic investment for County Donegal and Northern & Western Region. The NDP must act decisively to address this imbalance and support the transformative potential of the region.

It has been recommended the need for greater co-ordination at a whole of government level across infrastructure projects and the National Development Plan to ensure proactive commitment to balanced regional development. A “business as usual” approach offers the risk of further regional disparity. A new approach is required and some risk-taking across government to successfully drive investment and population to the regions.

The Northern & Western Region has the lowest rate of growth and has been re-classified to a “region in transition”. With this classification the regional imbalance is growing ever wider and there have been no measures introduced to address this widening gap or to prioritise key enabling investment to the North West.

Since the inception of the NDP, many Ministers and documents have committed to Balanced Regional Development yet we have still to see any real evidence of the commitments delivering for the region.

A revised NDP must include stronger measures to:

- Recognise the North West City Region (Letterkenny–Derry) as a strategic growth centre on par with the five cities.
 - Specifically prioritise investment in "Transition Regions" like Donegal.
 - Embed regional equity into all targets.
 - Recognise Letterkenny as an Urban Centre of Growth
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Q4. Review of the National Development Plan will be focused to ensure that economic infrastructure can be prioritised to deliver 300,000 additional homes by 2030 and to support international competitiveness.

In that context, which sectors should be a national priority for additional investment?

Housing x	Energy x	Water x
Transport x	Health	Agriculture
Education	Defence	Enterprise
Higher Education and Research	Justice	Other (Please state) – limit to 10 words

B) Why should these sectors be a national priority for additional investment?

Priority sectors include:

▪ **Transport Infrastructure:**

Seriously address lack of motorway access in Donegal. Accelerate the delivery of the Donegal TEN-T projects. Donegal Ten-T has been approved by cabinet but delivery is still a long way off. The roads infrastructure is holding back investment to Letterkenny and the region as a whole.

The All Island Rail review indicated the need for a rail line for Derry-Letterkenny connectivity. There is little prospect of delivery of this infrastructure in the next 25 years. This should be taken seriously, costed and delivered as soon as possible.

The region's competitiveness is undermined without urgent delivery of TEN-T Donegal Road Projects and Derry-Letterkenny connectivity.

The legacy infrastructure deficit has created a severe barrier to growth and investment.

▪ **Housing:**

Increase delivery capacity by investing in enabling infrastructure and skilled labour. All social housing projects in Letterkenny are moving at a snails' pace. This is having a direct impact on recruitment and retention for employers large and small.

Delivery is currently impeded by:

- Inadequate water/wastewater infrastructure.
- High construction costs and labour shortages.
- The impact of the Defective Concrete Blocks crisis in Donegal.

The housing crisis will only be dealt with by Government setting housing as a priority and delivering housing where it is needed. In 2024 64% of all housing was built in the greater Dublin area. We must prioritise regions where there is need and capacity for growth.

Recommendations to increase supply of housing at speed.

- Prioritise infrastructure that unlocks housing (water, utilities, roads). Deliver serviced sites for public and private developments.
- Introduce incentives for developers in areas where housing supply is most needed.
- Fast-track funding and planning for affordable and social housing so freeing up the private rental market, making funding available for Councils to build without having to borrow at the expense of rate payers.
- Align housing delivery with labour market needs and regional growth centres like Letterkenny.
- Adopt modern methods of construction to allow more housing to be delivered at pace.
- Setting targets with expedited delivery timelines.

Donegal faces the added burden of the defective concrete blocks crisis using up construction company capacity as 1000s of houses need to be re-built. However this should not be used as an excuse not to deliver on targets.

- **Energy:**

Grid capacity in Donegal (110kV) is wholly inadequate. Deliver a 220kV grid line in Donegal to provide energy security for business investment. This would at a very bare minimum bring the region on a par with others.

Improving and increasing the Grid capacity would also help to unlock offshore wind capacity and by doing so reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

- **Water:**

Insufficient capacity in Donegal is directly restricting urban development, especially in Letterkenny, blocking housing and compact growth targets. Population growth targets have been set, yet investment in strategic water and waste water projects is severely lagging. The government should front load funding for critical infrastructure enabling Uisce Eireann to deliver and in turn ensure growth targets can be met.

- **Higher Education & Research:**

ATU investment is well behind the national average. this limits skills pipeline and innovation and research potential. The new technological universities of which ATU is the largest, should receive the same per capita investment per student as other universities. In addition legislation needs to be fast tracked to allow them to borrow for capital build projects such as student accommodation.

- **Education:**

Disparities in educational attainment (there is 16% of people in Donegal with only primary or no formal education) must be addressed to support inclusive growth. In addition priority must be given to traditional skills development. Construction companies have an ageing workforce that will need to be replaced. These traditional skills are important to the future development of the construction industry.

- **Health:**

The funding per capita of Letterkenny University Hospital is well below that of Sligo University Hospital even though it serves a larger population. Access to health services for surgery, cancer treatment is well below that expected for a region of this size. This lack of healthcare services in the County is creating regional inequality.

- **Other (Regional Infrastructure):**

The Northern & Western Region remains a "region in transition" with EU-low infrastructure rankings making the need for targeted investment critical.

The National Development Plan must set priorities that can finally address the infrastructure deficits that exist in the Northern & Western Region.

Q5. In the context of the need to boost the delivery of infrastructure, what trade-offs and constraints should the government be aware of and how should these be managed?

- **Constraint: Regional undercapacity and lack of shovel-ready projects.**

Solution: Establish pre-approved project pipelines in regions with known infrastructure deficits with clear, accelerated timelines.

- **Constraint: Labour and materials shortages.**

Solution: Incentivise training in trades and fast-track apprenticeships; promote offsite and modular construction to reduce on-site timelines.

- **Constraint: Slow planning and coordination between agencies.**
Solution: Create regional delivery units with statutory authority and performance-linked timelines.
 - **Constraint: Political or institutional inertia.**
Solution: Introduce public project tracking and independent oversight for transparency and accountability.
 - **Constraint: Carbon targets vs. development pressures.**
Solution: Prioritise low-carbon infrastructure in transport and housing (e.g. TOD aligned with regional context, EV infrastructure).
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Q6. Government has been communicating on National Development Plan delivery... How can government best communicate the National Development Plan?

- **Improve the interactive map** with status updates, delays, and expected delivery dates per project.
- **Introduce localised dashboards** with region-specific summaries, especially for under-served regions.
- **Publish a quarterly delivery tracker** with visual progress indicators and plain-language summaries.
- **Host annual regional forums** in partnership with Chambers and local authorities.
- **Enable citizen feedback loops** on delays, delivery gaps, and project performance.
- **Create a single branded NDP portal**, merging all sources (maps, trackers, PDFs) into one accessible hub.

Conclusion

This review of the NDP is an opportunity to address regional inequalities and the legacy deficits of many decades in the Northern & Western Region.

- Funding in the NDP from now to 2035 should be prioritised to deliver Critical Regional Infrastructure for this region.
- Allocate a regional stimulus package (e.g., 2% of NW GDP) to address legacy underinvestment.
- Apply “positive discrimination” in capital funding for this historically neglected region.

- It is time for a **whole of government approach** to provide transport infrastructure that will enable this region to emerge from transition to growth.
- Establish accountability across departments and empower regional delivery units. All projects should be looked at through a regional lens. The Government should be providing high levels of public sector investment to this region, where the need is greatest and where the capacity is available.
- Introduce project tracking and public reporting on NDP milestones in real time. Make it readable and easy to use.

Appendix 1 - Some supporting illustrations

FIGURE 1: The Northern & Western Region infrastructure ranking in the EU Regional Competitiveness Index

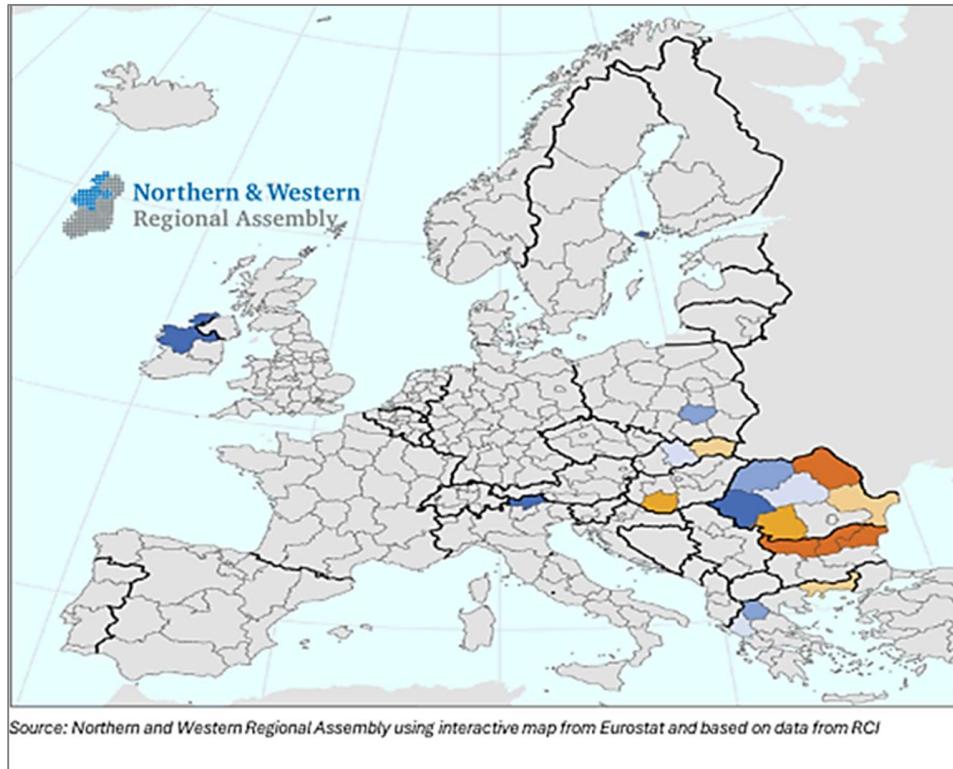


Figure 2: illustrates the absence of any motorway network in the North West City Region

