



Submission to the Limerick Local Government Committee

29th April 2010

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**CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL
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SUBMISSION TO THE LIMERICK LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Context

Clare County Council has been advised that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has established the Limerick Local Government Committee to prepare a report for the Minister into the most appropriate arrangements for local government for the city and county of Limerick.

The Council notes that the Committee's Terms of Reference require that, in considering the most appropriate arrangements for local government in Limerick, the Committee shall comprehend the leadership and development of Limerick as a gateway under the National Spatial Strategy. The Committee shall make recommendations for improved arrangements, be they:-

- (i) Boundary changes.
- (ii) The creation of a unified city and county authority.
- (iii) The sharing and/or co-ordination of functions carried out by the city and county authorities.

This submission, which is in response to a request from the Limerick Local Government Committee, has been considered by the elected members of Clare County Council at a number of Council meetings and represents the views of the elected members in the context of the Terms of Reference of the Committee and

the annex to the Terms of Reference of the Committee. Issues considered include:-

- Traditional public loyalties to existing local government boundaries.
- Changes to the boundary of Limerick City.
- A unified local government structure in Limerick City and County.
- Arrangements to co-ordinate the administration of local government in Limerick.
- Issues relating to the mid-west region in terms of economic, social and physical development.
- The development of the Limerick/Shannon Gateway.
- Maximising the potential of the mid-west region and recognising the importance of cities in driving regional development.
- The regeneration of dis-advantaged communities.
- The delivery of quality, effective and efficient local government services in Limerick and South East Clare.

In preparing this submission, Clare County Council has had particular regard to the “traditional public loyalties to existing local government boundaries” which has been identified and acknowledged in the Terms of Reference of the Committee. In essence, this submission is based on the fact that while there is no justification, whatsoever, for extending the city boundary of Limerick City Council into County Clare, there are measures which can be taken to:-

- (i) Ensure that the Mid-West maximises its potential as a dynamic region, and
- (ii) Enhance the delivery of convenient and effective local government.

This position has been clearly stated in the response of Clare County Council to previous boundary extension proposals.

LIMERICK BOUNDARY EXTENSION PROPOSALS

Limerick City Council has sought to extend the boundary of the City Council on three occasions in the past.

- a) In 1974 the City sought to extend the City Council area by 5,169 hectares to 7,255 hectares. Of this extra area, 3,822 hectares were in County Limerick and 1,347 hectares in County Clare.

- b) A proposal to seek to extend the City Council area from 2,086 hectares to 8,537 hectares was submitted in 1997. 4,830 hectares of the extended area was proposed to be subsumed from County Limerick and 1,621 hectares from County Clare.

- c) Limerick City Council sought to expand its functional area to 8,537 hectares by way of proposal for a city boundary extension in 2005. That extension proposal sought an area of 4,830 hectares from County Limerick and 1,621 hectares from County Clare.

These boundary extension proposals did not succeed in the alteration of the Clare County Boundary.

Clare County Council adopted a Statement of Response to the proposal by Limerick County Borough Council for a borough boundary extension in October 1997. Clare County Council also adopted a Statement of Response to the 2005 proposal under the provisions of Section 29 of the Local Government Act 1991, and proposed that there should be no extension to the boundary of Limerick City Council in so far as it affects the county of Clare.

County Clare – A Distinct Geographic Unit

The 1997 and 2005 Statements of Response identified the unique geographic characteristics of County Clare, and those characteristics have not changed in the interim. The statements identified that *“the county of Clare as a geographic unit was sculpted by nature; bounded on the east and south by the river Shannon and estuary; on the west by the Atlantic; on the north by Galway Bay and its only land links with the rest of Ireland. The land link with County Galway is for the most part guarded by a range of high hills. Only an island could be said to be a more clearly defined territorial entity.*

NC McNamara in the History of an Irish Sept, 1896, states “the geographical position of the county was such as to preserve its habitants from successful invasion, or from being occupied by foreigners until late in the 16th century”.

Excerpts from Samuel Lewis’s topographical directory of Ireland, which issued in 1837, attest to the antiquity of County Clare as an integral territory and to the uniqueness of its inhabitants, its topography and, even perhaps its climate.

The only intrusion into the natural features which surround the county occurs in the south eastern corner where part of Limerick County Borough and part of Limerick County lie west of the Shannon” - (the position in relation to Limerick County has recently been regularised).

The position as set out in the 1997 and 2005 Statements is as valid in 2010 as it was at that time. County Clare is a distinct geographic area and the citizens of the county have a strong traditional public loyalty to the existing county. In fact, there is evidence that the previous attempts to alter the boundary in the south east of the county have been a matter of serious concern to the citizens of south east Clare and the elected representatives in the area have consistently supported retaining the status quo in terms of boundary arrangements in the interests of the communities that they represent.

Clare Communities

County Clare comprises of a network of sustainable communities. In fact, the vision for County Clare, as set out in the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2011-2017 is “a county where people want to live and work sustainably and visit because of its unique quality of life. An inclusive county of sustainable communities that each have respect for their environment, a sense of awareness of place, a sense of shared purpose and a sense of civic pride”.

This sense of awareness of place and civic pride is built on the well established county and parish structure which gives citizens a sense of place and a sense of community. Commitment to an area in family, historical, sporting and cultural terms is a major element in determining a persons sense and heritage of place and any amendment to the boundary of the county would have a seriously negative impact on this sense of place which is the foundation on which viable and sustainable communities are built. There are also strong linkages and relationships between these communities, their democratically elected local government representatives, and existing local government structures.

Local Government Structures

The local government system is based on a strong, legal, democratic foundation. Article 28A of the Constitution sets out the constitutional basis for the role and function of local government and that is re-stated in the Local Government Act 2001, which vests a legal role of broader community governance in local authorities. Local authority members are elected by the citizens of the county to determine policies on behalf of the citizens and to represent the people of the county at local government level. Local government is therefore best placed and has the capacity to comprehensively address the many challenges facing local communities and the increased level of activity by local authorities in areas such as

economic/enterprise development and social inclusion are examples of the local government response to a changing local environment.

The Green Paper on Local Government Reform issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in April 2008, identified that the purpose of local government is to “give expression to local identity, to identify local concerns and to set local priorities”. This statement reinforces the fact that the people of Clare expect local government to be administered by Clare County Council and also reinforces the fact that there is no justification, whatsoever, for extending the city boundary of Limerick City Council into County Clare.

The Green Paper also asks if in key gateway areas such as Limerick, Waterford and Sligo, whether a unitary authority should have jurisdiction over both county and city. It is the view of Clare County Council that any such proposal to unify Limerick City and Limerick County Councils is a matter for those local authorities and while acknowledging that efficient and effective local government is required in Limerick City in the interests of the development of the region, Clare County Council does not express an opinion as to whether that structure should be two local authorities or a unified Council. However, in the event that such a unification was to take effect, Clare County Council would continue to co-operate with the local government entity in Limerick in the interests of effective, efficient and innovative local government in the region.

Regardless of the local government structure in Limerick, Clare County Council will continue to play a leadership role in giving direction to and setting the overall priorities and policies for County Clare. The Council will provide services, will respond to local needs and will seek to ensure integrated solutions to address citizens concerns across a range of service areas. While the appropriate local government structure exists to provide efficient, effective and quality local government democratic representation to the people of County Clare, Clare County Council is open to the consideration of any integrated structure which could enhance public service delivery.

As the committee has been requested to make recommendations for improved arrangements to share and/or co-ordinate functions carried out by the city and county authorities, Clare County Council has identified local government structures which could be considered to achieve that objective in the south east area of Clare adjacent to the Limerick City boundary. These options include:

- (a) retain the status quo – Clare County Council continues to work in partnership with Limerick City Council to deliver efficient quality services and effective and convenient local government in the south east of County Clare (the delivery of quality public services is dealt with in the next section of this submission).
- (b) Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2001 – this section provides that, where in the opinion of a local authority any function performed by it should be performed, generally or in a particular case, by another local authority, and that other local authority is able and willing to perform that function, then the authorities may enter into an agreement as to how the function is performed. A Section 85 Agreement in relation to the South East Clare Area could provide that the range of local authority functions be performed by the Limerick Authority acting as an agent for Clare County Council. Clare County Council is of the opinion that such an arrangement would be inconsistent with the expectation that the people of Clare expect local government to be administered by local representatives democratically elected by the people of County Clare, as referred to above in the context of the Green Paper on Local Government Reform.
- (c) A sub committee of the Mid West Regional Authority – true local government must be local and, having regard to the fact that the remit of the Regional Authority is regional in nature, it would be inappropriate for a Regional Authority to administer local government at local level. In any event, this arrangement would result in a disconnect between the political

and executive at local level and would be detrimental to the role of the both the Regional Authority and the local government system.

- (d) Expanded Local Area Committee – consequent on the implementation of “Better Local Government – A Programme for Change”, local authorities have established Area Committees on the basis of local electoral areas. These Area Committees deal with day to day operational issues and work closely with the Executive to ensure the delivery of quality public services at area level. This structure allows the County Council as a body to deal with strategic policy issues while the Area Committee deals with operational local issues. Clare County Council has established six area committees including a committee which serves the south east area adjacent to the Limerick City Boundary. This committee could be expanded to include representatives, both elected and executive, from Limerick City Council and this structure would facilitate the development of customer centred, integrated, service delivery mechanisms on a partnership basis and would facilitate integrated forward planning for the area.

Delivery of Quality Public Services

Clare County Council is committed to working in partnership with adjoining local authorities to deliver efficient quality services and effective and convenient local government. Examples of this co-operation are evident in the delivery of water services and emergency services in the south east of County Clare. Clare County Council contributes financially to the provision of both of these services by Limerick City Council and in the context of emergency services in particular, Clare County Council assists Limerick City Council in emergency situations. The recent flooding in south east Clare enhanced the level of co-operation which exists between local authorities in the region, and officials from Limerick City and County Councils worked with officials from Clare County Council in managing the impact of flooding and in meeting the needs of citizens who were affected.

In order to deliver convenient and effective local services, Clare County Council has developed a local area office at Westbury and the Council will continue to enhance the delivery of services from that office. In addition, Clare County Council has in the past invested considerable funding in the upgrading of roads in the area, e.g. Long Pavement, and in the improvement to water supply schemes in the area, e.g., Gillogue. The Council delivers the broad spectrum of local government services in the south east Clare area and significant resources are provided each year by the elected members in the Council's annual budget for the delivery of those services.

In relation to public service delivery, the OECD Report "Towards an Integrated Public Service 2008" and the Government response to the OECD review "Transforming Public Services – Report of the Task Force of the Public Service 2008", identified significant potential within the public sector for increasing value for money and achieving better quality and efficiency services for citizens. Both reports recommend that the public sector develop new ways to work and to foster closer connections between different parts of the service, including closer co-operation between local authorities. The reports identified that the focus must be on delivering for the citizen, building services around the citizen and business user, changing systems and structures and utilising technology to meet this objective. The Task Force and the OECD recommend "an even greater integration of the public service for increased effectiveness". The Task Force recommended that "local government structures should be drawn upon to enhance public service delivery, particularly through leadership at local level of shared services, case based approaches and integrated responses. The position of local government, as the level of government closest to the citizen, puts it in an effective position to provide this local leadership role".

Clare County Council is committed to enhanced public service delivery and the Corporate Plan of the Clare Local Authorities adopted in 2010 sets out its vision for the county as "a county where people want to sustainably live, work and visit because of its unique quality of life. An inclusive county of sustainable

communities that each have respect for their environment, a sense of awareness of place, a sense of shared purpose and a sense of civic pride”.

The mission statement of the Clare Local Authorities is “to achieve our vision through quality service delivery in the spirit of partnership”.

Clare County Council is clearly committed to the principles of quality service delivered through partnership and is committed to working with the local authorities in the region to ensure that quality services continue to be delivered to the people of County Clare. The Council welcomes the development of customer centered, integrated, service delivery mechanisms, including those identified in the “National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007” and “Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities – 2007”, and will engage in the process of transformation of the public sector in terms of streamlined service delivery, shared services, joint procurement and any other measures which will achieve the optimum outcomes for our customers. Clare County Council will also engage in the development of innovative mechanisms for enhanced service delivery in south east Clare.

Clare County Council is also committed to working in partnership with the local authorities in the region, and beyond, to develop national scale social and economic infrastructure which is necessary to drive the development of the western regions.

Regional Development

The Terms of Reference of the Limerick Local Government Committee states that the Committee shall have regard to “the need to ensure that Limerick City maximises its potential under the National Spatial Strategy, as a dynamic regional centre in the mid-west, recognizing the importance of cities in driving regional development”.

Limerick/Shannon is the designated gateway for the Mid-West region, with Ennis as a hub town. Regional economic growth is promoted by strong gateway centres and critical mass is required to drive the growth of the wider region. In the context of Limerick City, Clare County Council agrees with the conclusion of the Mid West Task Force Interim Report, July 2009, that a strong city is a necessary prerequisite for a strong region. Successful regions have a dynamic and vibrant city at their core.

Clare County Council also acknowledges the role which County Clare can play in terms of regional development, and the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2011-2017 has set a key goal that “County Clare drives local and regional growth through harnessing the potential of its unique location, quality of life, natural resources and other competitive advantages”. It is imperative, therefore, that the local authorities co-operate at regional level in order to achieve critical mass and competitiveness, and in order to enhance the quality of life for the people of the region.

Clare County Council has a history of strong participation in developing strategies for the region including the Planning, Land Use and Transportation Study (PLUTS) and various economic and development strategies. The Council has incorporated regional partnership in the future plans and strategies for the County, and the core strategy for the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2011-2017 is based on policies and strategies which have been adopted both at national and regional level, including:-

- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020.
- National Development Plan 2007-2013.
- The Atlantic Gateways Initiative – 2006 Framework Plan.
- The Atlantic Gateways Corridor Development Frameworks – overview report 2009.
- National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012.
- Mid West Retail Strategy.

- Regional Planning Guidelines 2004.
- Mid West Area Strategic Plan (MWASP).
- Regional Housing Strategy.

In addition, the social-economic and land-use policies, as expressed in the Draft County Development Plan 2011-2017, were formulated having regard to (and were consistent with) the Development Plans of the adjoining Planning Authorities of Limerick City and Limerick County Council.

Policies in the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2011-2017 include policies to:-

- ♦ Enhance the Shannon linked Gateway through the promotion of economic development, innovation and the development of international and national transport connections.
- ♦ Designate a hierarchy of urban settlements from the hub of Ennis and the gateway of Shannon for appropriately scaled development in order to achieve the critical mass and to provide a range of facilities and services to act as drivers for sub-regional growth throughout County Clare and the Mid West Region.
- ♦ Provide for population growth, having regard to population targets for County Clare and the linked gateway of Shannon/Limerick, allocated by the Mid West Regional Authority.
- ♦ Provide sufficient zoned land to accommodate population targets and associated development in a sustainable manner.
- ♦ Promote linkages as a means of moving people, goods, energy and information throughout the region.
- ♦ Include policies, proposing compliance with the recommendations of the Regional Housing Strategy.
- ♦ Develop the strengths of County Clare, including tourism, Shannon Airport, the Shannon Estuary, the Shannon Industrial area, the University of Limerick (Clare

Campus) and renewable energy resources to increase the level of critical mass which is necessary to drive the growth of the mid west region.

It is evident, therefore, that Clare County Council is committed to regional development through partnership in terms of strategy and policy. This contribution to the development of the region - the high level of partnership and co-operation which exists at regional level - is being achieved within the existing governance structures through participation in the Mid West Regional Authority at political level and through on-going partnership and co-operation at executive level in the formulation of various strategies and in establishing structures such as the Regional Call Out Centre (CAMP), the Limerick/Clare Energy Agency and the Regional Strategic Committee on Waste.

Clare County Council considers that any alteration to the county boundary of County Clare will not in any way enhance the existing spirit of co-operation at regional level and will not enhance the ability of the county to reach its potential to underpin social and economic development at county and regional level.

This spirit of co-operation was the subject of comment in the report of the Limerick City Council Boundary Committee to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in December 2007. That report identified the fact that Mr. John Fitzgerald, Chairman of the Regeneration Agency, had, in his submission to Cabinet in April 2007, stated that “there is a clear need for the development of regional strategies, particularly for housing and retail shopping”. The Boundary Committee noted that the four mid-west local authorities had agreed, in principle, to the need for a review of the Regional Retail Strategy. That Strategy is now being finalised, and the Regional Housing Strategy referred to by Mr. Fitzgerald is also being finalised. In fact, Clare County Council is now the lead authority for the development of a Regional Recreation Strategy. Regional Strategies are now being developed within existing governance structures.

In a wider context, Clare County Council does, however, consider that it may be opportune to revisit the National Spatial Strategy in the light of the increasing connectivity between the cities of Limerick and Galway. The recently announced strategic alliance between NUIG and University of Limerick, the recent opening of the rail line between Limerick and Galway and the ongoing construction of motorway between Limerick and Galway are examples of that increasing level of connectivity.

As previously indicated, critical mass is imperative to drive growth, and Clare County Council considers that the critical mass of Galway city, Limerick city, Shannon and Ennis, as a strategic regional development zone, with a planned and consistent approach to social and economic development and job creation, would constitute sufficient critical mass and scale for the development of the west of Ireland.

This critical mass would include seven third level institutes, a pool of highly talented and qualified people, an international and a regional airport, national motorway, road and rail infrastructure connectivity, a high level of potential for renewable energy, two existing ports and a potential deep water port in the Shannon estuary, a strong tourism product, existing world class business locations in Galway, Ennis, Shannon and Limerick and an attractive quality of life with strong cultural and sporting linkages.

In announcing the membership of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group in December 2009, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government stated that “the forthcoming White Paper on Local Government will, among other things, set out Government policy on the structure of local government in Ireland, including new or enhanced gateway and regional structures”. Clare County Council considers that these new structures should facilitate increased co-operation between the cities of Limerick and Galway, incorporating strong linkages with Ennis and Shannon.

Clare County Council has implemented major infrastructural projects to improve connectivity within the gateway and along the Limerick-Shannon-Ennis corridor including a significant own resources investment in Sixmilebridge Railway Station as part of the Western Rail Corridor. The Council is also engaged, and financially supports, Shannon Development and the other local authorities in the region to deliver enhanced Broadband connectivity, and works in partnership with Shannon Development in the development of enterprise, tourism and a wide range of initiatives. Networks have been established through Atlantic Way to forge greater linkages and collaborative actions in the Western regions, and Clare County Council is an active participant in those networks.

However, in order to ensure that Limerick City, the mid-west, and indeed the west of Ireland maximises its potential, it will be necessary to build on existing strengths and to resolve existing weaknesses. The Mid West Task Force – Interim Report July 2009 offers analysis of the particular challenges that lie ahead and makes recommendations that Clare County Council considers should be implemented with immediate effect.

Mid West Task Force – Interim Report July 2009

The Mid West Task Force was established to consider and make recommendations concerning the implications of the serious economic downturn in the mid-west and socio-economic fabric of the region, exacerbated by the announcement by Dell of the ceasing of manufacturing in Limerick.

Clare County Council informed the Task Force that the Council has identified key strategic objectives, including maximising economic and tourism development, minimising social exclusion, enhancing the natural and built environment, and delivering customer focused quality services. The Task Force was advised that these strategic objectives will be embedded in the Council's policies and operations and that Clare County Council will exercise leadership at county and regional level. Recommendations to the Task Force included the completion of the

connectivity linkages between Limerick and Galway, measures to secure and enhance development of Shannon Airport, accelerated investment in the Hub and Gateway, the promotion of the Mid-West as a world class tourism destination, the development of the Shannon Estuary and the Energy Valley concept and measures to facilitate community work schemes.

The Task Force incorporated a number of these recommendations in its Interim Report and has clearly indicated that further recommendations of Clare County Council will be addressed in the Final Report of the Task Force. Clare County Council welcomes the Interim Report and considers that the recommendations must be implemented to facilitate economic and social development.

Chapter IV of the Interim Report relates to Limerick City and identifies three key issues which, if addressed in the short to medium term, with degree of urgency, will begin to make a significant difference to the development of Limerick City and its environs. These issues are:

- a) The issue of governance in the wider city area.
- b) The Regeneration Plan for Limerick.
- c) The development of Limerick City centre.

In relation to governance of Limerick, as previously stated, Clare County Council does not wish to comment on proposals for a unified local government structure in Limerick.

In relation to the Regeneration Plan for Limerick, Clare County Council has co-operated fully with the regeneration process. The Clare County Manager, with the Limerick City and County Managers, is a member of the Board of the Regeneration Agencies and working through the policies adopted by the elected members, is committed to the regeneration process. Clare County Council is acutely aware that problems which exist in regeneration areas do not enhance the image of the city and the region, and the Council would welcome immediate progress on resolving those problems.

Clare County Council is participating fully in the development of a Regional Housing Strategy for the administrative areas of Limerick (both city and county) and Clare to address the challenges identified in the Regeneration Programme. A core objective of the Strategy is to counteract undue segregation and to promote the development of balanced and sustainable communities. This entails agreed protocols for assisting families from the Regeneration Areas and the effective utilisation of the support funding for the Regeneration Programme. The level of co-operation which exists between the local authorities is proving extremely effective and should be harnessed by the Regeneration Agencies to progress the Regeneration Programme.

Clare County Council does not wish to comment on the development of Limerick City Centre or the order of priority for development, e.g., the regeneration areas, the city centre, suburban areas, the docklands or other developments, due to the fact that the planning authority, i.e., Limerick City Council, would have the information necessary to make such determinations in the context of the City Development Plan.

The Task Force Interim Report referred to the Gateway Innovation Fund. Clare County Council is of the opinion that the Gateway Innovation Fund, in the event that funding becomes available, must include funding for Shannon due to the fact that Shannon is fundamental to realising the potential of the Limerick/Shannon Gateway to drive, not only regional growth, but national growth also. The funding proposals which were submitted, and those identified by the Interim Task Force, related to Limerick and the exclusion of Shannon from funding does not acknowledge the spirit of partnership and co-operation which Clare County Council has adopted in the context of regeneration and regional development and Shannon's critical role in the development of the gateway. The Council notes with concern that the issues for consideration identified by the Committee refers to enabling Limerick to reach its potential as a gateway but does not appear to acknowledge Shannon's status within the gateway.

The Task Force Interim Report also identifies issues which will be addressed in the final report. Clare County Council endorses the proposal to address these particular issues and considers that this task must be completed without delay in the interest of maximising the potential of the mid west region.

The issues identified are:

1. Driving foreign inward investment and the development of enterprise.
2. Examination of the contribution and interrelationships of the economic development agencies.
3. Targeting key investments to offset job losses in low skill manufacturing and the skills set required for same.
4. A Masterplan for the Greater Limerick Area.
5. The potential of the Mid West as an energy hub.
6. Optimisation of the potential of the Shannon Estuary.
7. Tourism: development of a ten year plan.
8. The potential of a major international cargo hub at Shannon Airport.

Clare County Council considers that, to maximise the potential of the Mid-West as an energy hub as recommended by the Task Force, it will be necessary to resolve the difficulties which are associated with grid connectivity. The Council also considers that international connectivity through the provision of direct air services at Shannon Airport must be a priority having regard to the current status of the airport.

SUMMARY

In drafting this submission, Clare County Council has considered matters relating to democratic representation at local government level, the delivery of services to the people of Clare, the future development of the mid west as a region, and the future development of the west of Ireland. The Council has also had regard to the

potential for the future development of the local government system in terms of the Green Paper on Local Government Reform, the OECD Report and the Report of the Task Force of the Public Service, enhanced integrated service delivery mechanisms and, most fundamentally, the retention of the existing Clare County boundary.

The key points of this submission may be summarised as follows:

- There is no justification, whatsoever, for extending the city boundary of Limerick City into County Clare.
- Clare County Council does not wish to comment on proposals to unify Limerick City and Limerick County Councils.
- While appropriate local government structures exist to provide efficient, effective services to the people of Clare, Clare County Council is open to the consideration of any integrated structure which could enhance public service delivery and will engage in the process of public sector transformation in accordance with national public sector policy.
- Clare County Council is committed to working in partnership with adjoining local authorities in terms of service delivery and regional development.
- Clare County Council has and continues to incorporate the principle of regional development through partnership in its strategies and policies.
- Clare County Council considers that any alteration to the county boundary of County Clare will not in any way enhance the existing model of co-operation at regional level and will not enhance the ability of County Clare to reach its potential.
- Clare County Council is an active participant in the development of regional strategies.
- The National Spatial Strategy should be reviewed in the light of increasing connectivity between the cities of Limerick and Galway to create critical mass as a strategic regional development zone.

- Clare County Council welcomes the Interim Report of the Mid West Task Force and considers that the recommendations must be implemented to facilitate economic and social development.
- Clare County Council will continue to support and actively participate in the regeneration process.
- The Gateway Innovation Fund must include funding for Shannon due to the fact that Shannon is a key part of the Limerick/Shannon Gateway.

Clare County Council welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Limerick Local Government Committee and will welcome the opportunity to meet with the Committee in the near future. The Council acknowledges that the task of the Committee is not limited to an extension of the Limerick City boundary, and welcomes the wide brief of the Committee which can ultimately make recommendations for improved governance structures and enhanced public service delivery mechanisms in Clare and Limerick, and which can eliminate any present or future suggestion that an adjustment be made to the boundary of County Clare.

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