



## *Border, Midland & Western Regional Assembly Shaping the Region*

### **BMW Assembly Deputation meets An Taoiseach**

A deputation from the Border, Midland and Western Regional Assembly met with the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD in Government Buildings on Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2006 to discuss a number of issues of concern to the Regional Assembly and to present the Taoiseach with a submission on delivering balanced regional development in the next National Development Plan.

The six member deputation, led by Cathaoirleach, Councillor Michael McGreal, highlighted the many challenges facing the BMW region and set out the key investment priorities for the region. The deputation urged the Taoiseach to ensure that balanced regional development remains a core objective of the next National Development Plan and called for mechanisms to be put in place to ensure that the planned investment is achieved.

The Taoiseach welcomed the Regional Assembly's submission and acknowledged the need for continued investment and more effective delivery of infrastructure and other investments in the future.

Councillor Michael McGreal expressed concerns that the level of investment in national roads and public transport infrastructure had only reached about 60% of forecast up to last year. He called for a stronger commitment to infrastructure in the regions, including investment in strategic road corridors, bringing forward the completion of the Western Rail Corridor, investment in regional airports, and

broadband. The deputation informed the Taoiseach of the Regional Assembly's support for the extension of natural gas supplies to more towns in the region and the development of renewable energy. The deputation called for increased investment in applied research and collaboration in the region's Institutes of Technology. The deputation also called for a better regional spread of investment in tourism attractions, highlighting in particular the low levels of investment to date in angling facilities and marine tourism.

The Taoiseach was presented with the Regional Assembly's proposals for the next National Development Plan. In view of the under-spends that had occurred under the current NDP, the deputation called for improved mechanisms to be put in place such as the earmarking of investment for the region, a stronger regional dimension in the plans and policies of state support agencies, and increased accountability of state agencies to regional bodies. The deputation also called for continued investment to address local development and social inclusion issues and in particular to address the problems faced by low income farm households.

The deputation informed the Taoiseach that the Assembly is currently in the process of preparing the new Regional Operational Programme for the 2007-2013 period in accordance with the EU guidelines and national and regional priorities. This will be completed for consideration by Government in the autumn of this year.

In response to the issues raised, the Taoiseach stated that he supported the need for balanced regional development. He informed the deputation that significant progress will be made in addressing transport infrastructure requirements under the ten year Transport 21 investment programme. He stated that the Government was developing a new energy policy that would benefit the whole Island and is supporting the further roll-out of broadband infrastructure. He accepted the need to improve efficiency in the delivery of major investment programmes in the future. The Taoiseach also stated that the Government would continue to defend the interests of Irish agriculture at EU level.

The Taoiseach informed the deputation of his commitment to progress work on the Western Rail Corridor as quickly as possible and had emphasised this at a recent

meeting with the Chairman of Iarnród Éireann. Councillor McGreal welcomed the Taoiseach's continued commitment to accelerate progress on the re-opening of the Western Rail Corridor, which is seen as an important piece of regional infrastructure.

The Director of the BMW Regional Assembly, Mr. Gerry Finn stated that the meeting with the Taoiseach had provided a valuable opportunity to raise strategic issues regarding regional development policy and to highlight the key investment priorities for the BMW region.

**ENDS**

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**EDITORS NOTE**

The members of the deputation were as follows:

Councillor Michael McGreal, Cathaoirleach of the BMW Regional Assembly  
Councillor Cyril Burke (Mayo)  
Councillor Tom Feighery (Offaly)  
Councillor Dermot Connolly (Galway)  
Mr. Gerry Finn, Director, BMW Regional Assembly  
Mr. Kieran Moylan, Assistant Director

