

Prof Mark Scott

Housing & Sustainability: The rural dimension



Outline

- Rural sustainability
- What do we mean by rural?
- Housing and rural Ireland
- Demand-side explanations – residential preferences
- Adapting to future challenges

Rural sustainability

- Reconciling 3 deeply held set of values: economic growth; social vitality; ecological integrity
- *BUT* ... Disconnect between physical and environmental goals and social and economic issues ... *AND*
- Selective (or competing) interpretation of rural sustainable development
- Urban Vs Rural?
 - How do we make *all places* and development more sustainable?



Rural Policy 3.0 (OECD, 2019)

To unlock the growth potential of rural areas, and improve the **well-being** of rural dwellers, OECD countries should implement a **people-centred** approach to rural policy that:

Considers economic, social and environmental objectives.

Recognises the diversity of challenges and opportunities across different types of rural areas.

Prepares rural areas to embrace digital technologies.

Lifts productivity and adds value to economic activities.

Supports adaptation to demographic change and high-quality public services.

Facilitates the transition to a climate neutral economy.

What do we mean by rural?

- The OECD's classification of rural
- Urban 49%
- Intermediate rural (near urban) 26%
- Predominately rural 25%

Sustainability challenges vary across different types of rural places

What do we mean by rural?

- Over last 3 decades ... spatially differentiated countryside – 2 broad (contradictory) patterns:

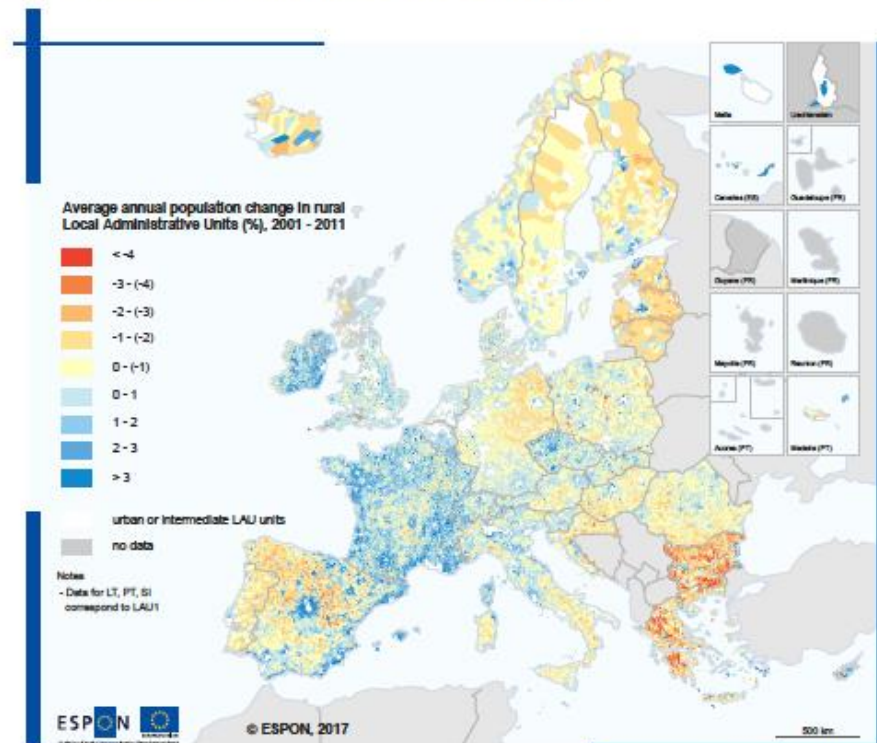
- The Rural Exodus**

- Remote rural
- Sustaining/attracting a population or adapting to decline

- The Rural Population Turnaround**

- Accessible and intermediate rural
- Managing growth and counterurbanisation

Population change in predominantly rural regions, 2001 - 2011

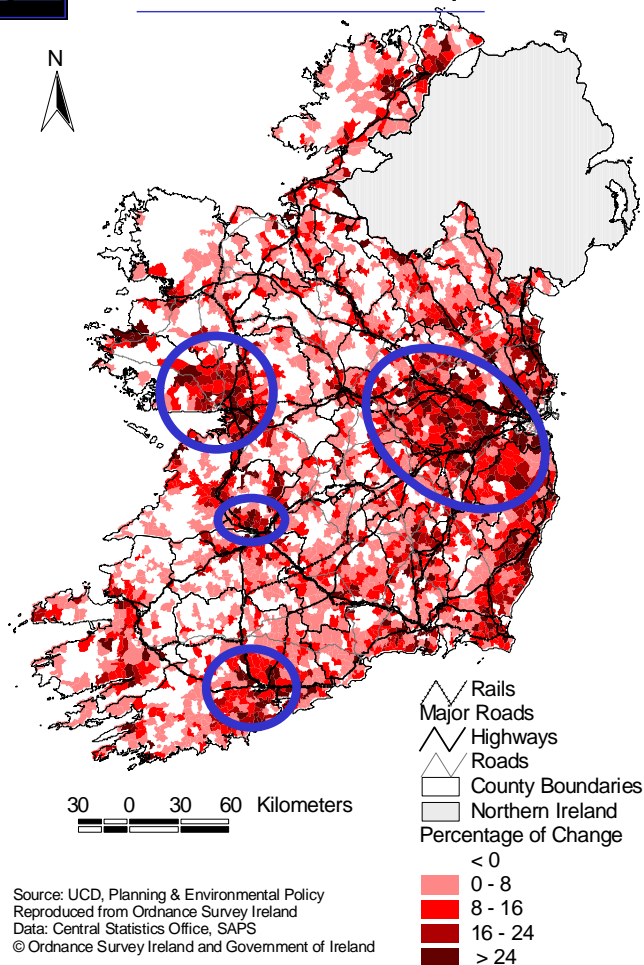


Source: ESPON (2017)

Housing trends in rural Ireland

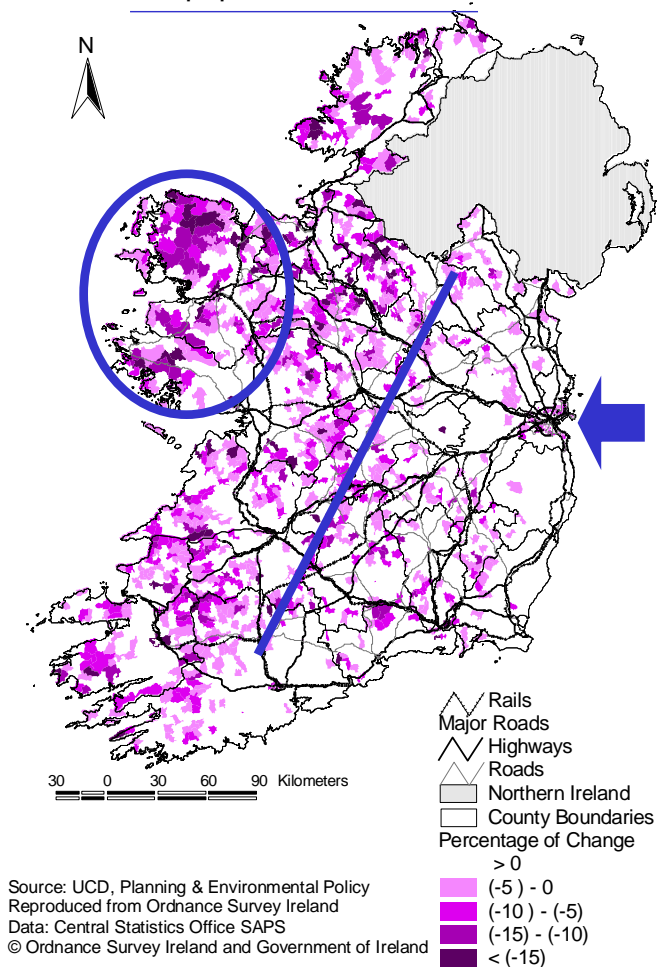
- 37% of Ireland's population live in rural areas (CSO, 2016)
- Single rural dwellings account for one-quarter of State's housing stock (Keaveney, 2006)
- Approximately 70% of rural dwellings are single, detached houses
- Decline in household size
- Increase in size of new dwellings
- Spatial variations

Population Increase 1996-2002



Source: UCD, Planning & Environmental Policy
 Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Ireland
 Data: Central Statistics Office, SAPS
 © Ordnance Survey Ireland and Government of Ireland

Depopulation 1996-2002



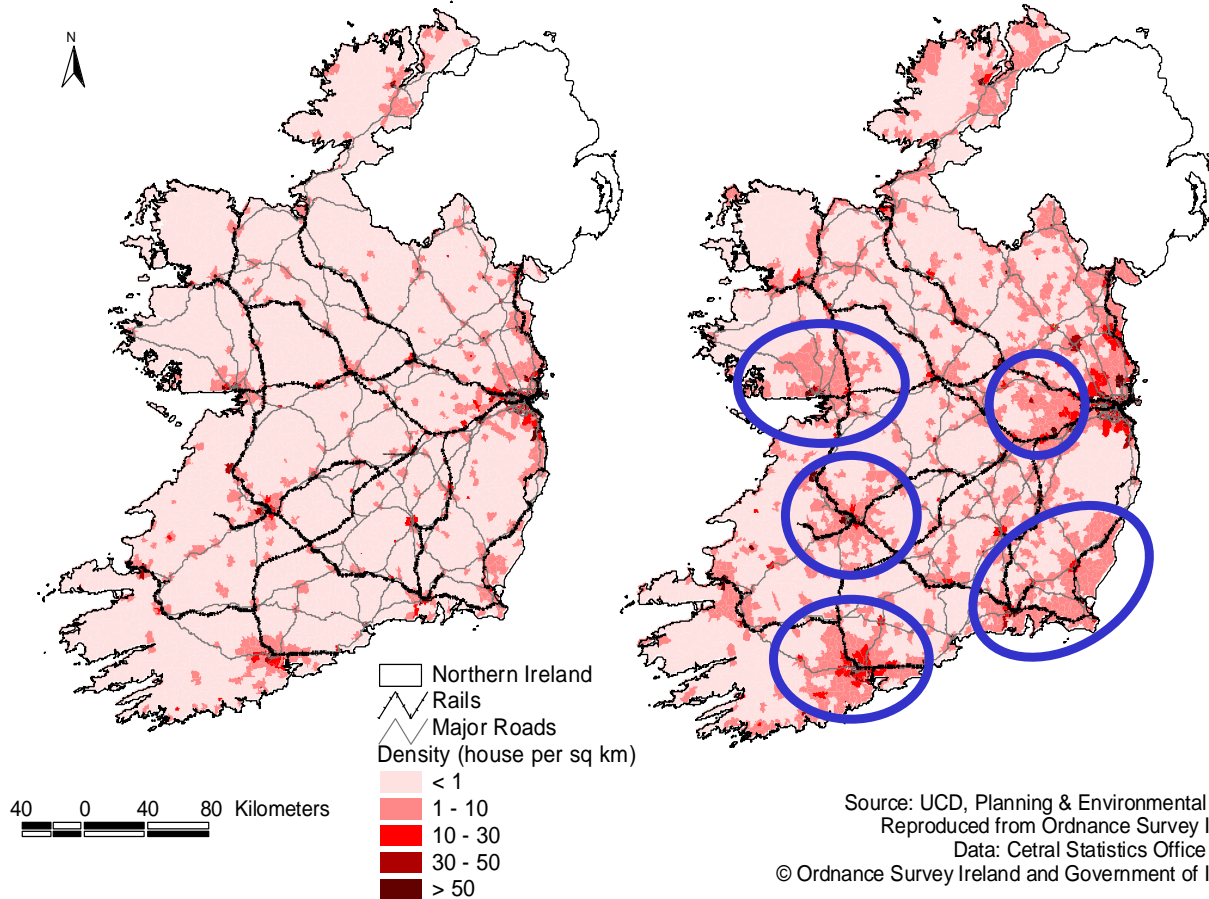
Source: UCD, Planning & Environmental Policy
 Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Ireland
 Data: Central Statistics Office SAPS
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Housing Activity

Density of houses built between 1991-1995

Density of houses built between 1996-2002



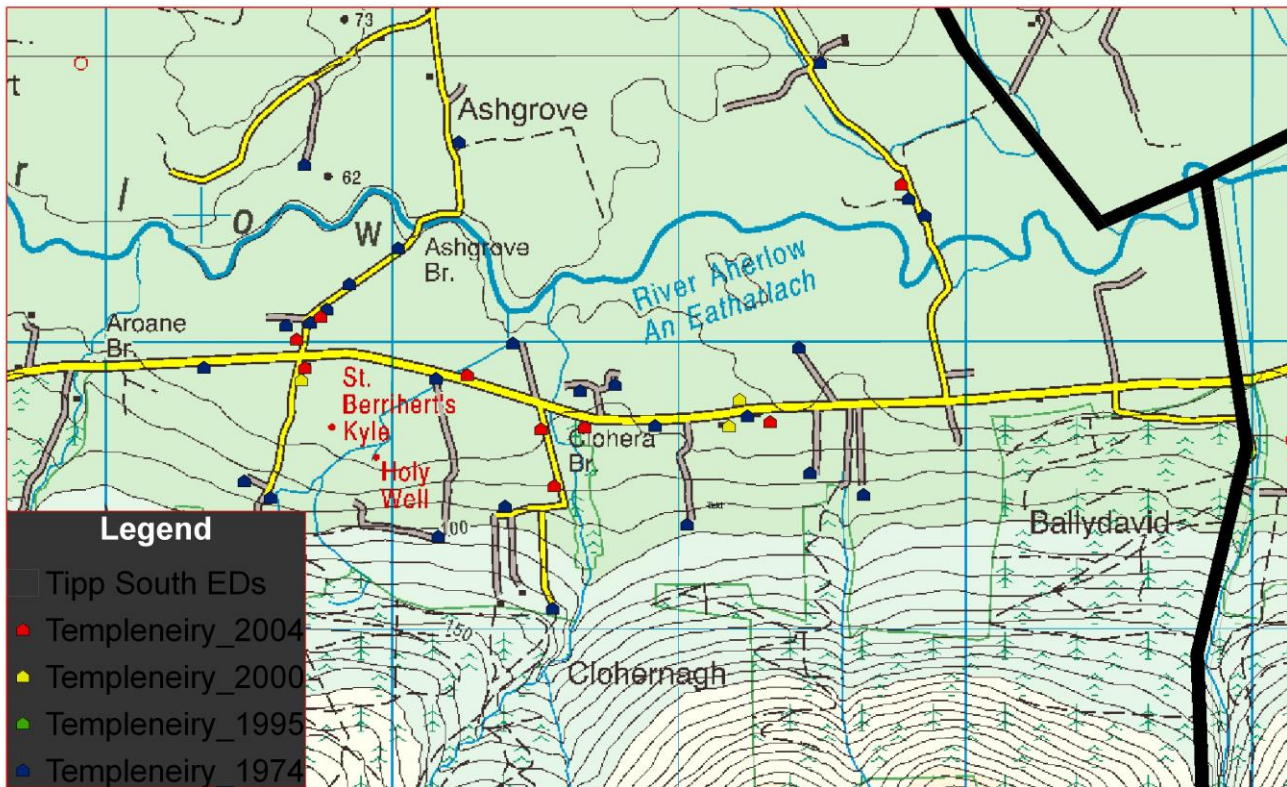
Transformation of urban-rural fringe ...



Dispersed rural housing ...

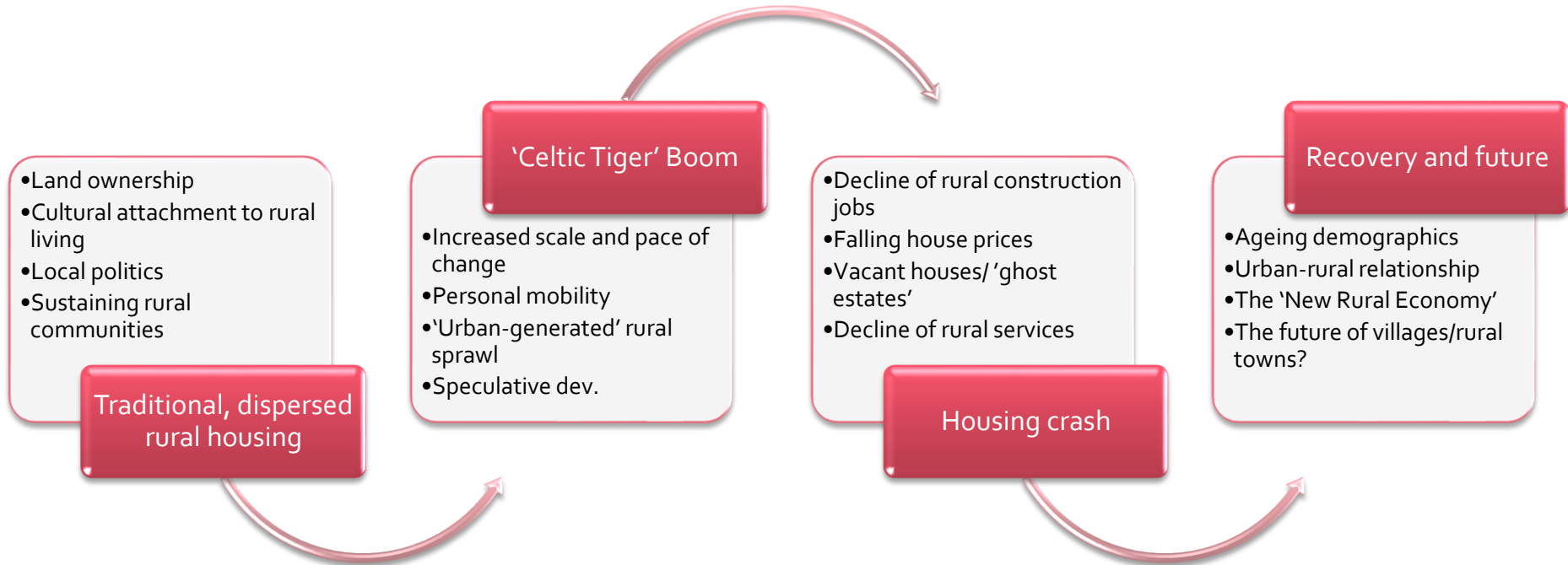


Tipperary - Templeneiry changes over time



changes

Housing trends in rural Ireland



Planning and rural housing

- Managing rural housing is a complex and multi-dimensional issue

Issues:

- Distribution and intensity
- Siting and design issues
- Environmental costs
- Public health and safety
- Infrastructural implications
- **Settlement patterns and community vitality**



Demand-side explanations

- Why do people live in or move to rural places?
- Why is living in the open countryside more popular than living in villages/rural towns?
- Can we influence future consumer behaviour and housing choice?

Understanding consumer behaviour

- **Survey 1: EPA funded study (2008)**
 - 2,000 rural households surveyed
 - National sample: 800
 - 3 case studies: Kildare (400), Clare (400) & South Tipperary (400)

- **Survey 2: IRC funded survey (2013)**
 - 750 interviews across 5 case study counties
 - Focused on households that had moved house between 2000 and 2013



Survey 1 –results summary

- Significance of established residents in rural communities
 - E.g. 55% of respondents had lived in current house for over 20 years
- 19% of respondents had moved to current dwelling in previous 5 years ('recent movers')
 - In relation to recent movers to rural areas nationally, there is a 50-50 split **between urban-generated and rural generated rural housing** (local/lateral movements)
 - Of the urban-generated movers, around half were from a rural background ('return to roots')
- Key motivation for moving from urban to a rural area: related to perceived quality of life factors, followed by economic factors
- Very high levels of residential satisfaction

Survey 2 – results summary

- **Motivations underpinning recent move**
 - House price is important! (for 32 %, this was most important factor)
 - Strong perception that quality of life is higher in rural areas among all 'mover' groups
 - Living close to amenities not viewed as important (at least for initial move)
 - Family networks appear crucial, friends less important (swapping friends for family at key lifecourse transitions) – i.e. 'return to roots' again crucial
 - Premium placed on consumption of private space rather than consumption of rurality
 - House related factors – self-build and influencing design of house was critical

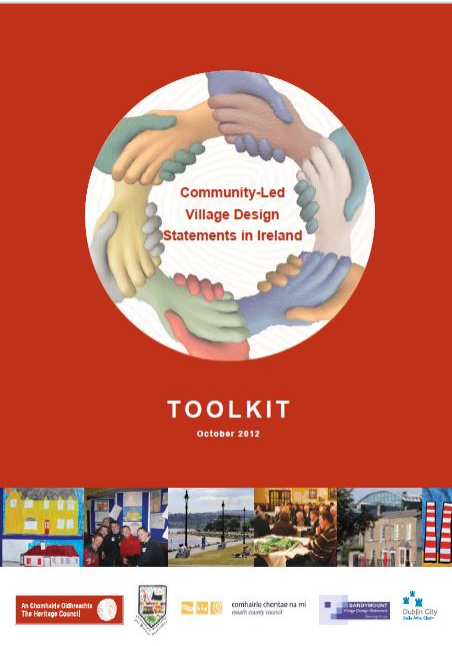
Policy implications

- Non standard decision making
 - Emotions
 - Social pressure
 - Inexperience and limited knowledge
- A more nuanced understanding of residential behaviour
 - 'hard' factors: distance to work, schools, amenities etc – less important
 - 'soft' factors: social networks, 'roots', (elective) belonging, sense of place, community, compromise, lifestyles and identity, environmental attributes – more important

Policy implications

- The importance of good urban planning and social infrastructure in urban places - *liveability*
- Recognise that there *already* is a significant rural and dispersed population
- For urban to rural 'movers', can the attractive attributes of rural places be found in other localities other than dispersed settlement?
- The role of effective village planning
- Greater scope could be given to allow consumers the opportunity to 'self-build' within villages

Positive planning for villages



Community-Led Village Design Statements in Ireland

TOOLKIT
October 2012


In Character Collaborate
The Heritage Council

comhairle chearta na mí
na h-Éireann

CHARITABLE CORPORATION
of the County of Dublin

Dublin City
Dublin City Council

Project Inset 2012 | Building (new) | Sites | National Planning Framework



5 Planning for Diverse Rural Places

5.1 Why Rural Places Matter

Rural areas make a major contribution to Ireland's identity and to overall national development in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms.

Rural areas, including Gaeltacht regions and Ireland's inhabited offshore islands, hold much of Ireland's natural resources, biodiversity, environmental qualities and landscape and contribute in a unique way to Ireland's culture. Well over a third of Irish people live in rural areas and the proportion increases to half of the population if smaller towns and villages are included.

Rural areas are also a focus for working and for recreational activities. The agriculture and tourism sectors, which are particularly important for rural economies, employ in excess of 563,000 people (18% of the national workforce). Rural Ireland has faced challenges in recent decades, such as the loss of traditional industries and employment, migration and poor connectivity. The emergence of new technologies and improved infrastructural connectivity provide opportunities for diversification into new employment sectors and to build on the success of many Irish and foreign-owned companies supporting employment in rural areas.

Accordingly, building on Government policy and the 2017 Action Plan for Rural Development, the National Planning Framework will place a major focus on rural areas in relation to:

- Strengthening Ireland's rural fabric and supporting the communities who live there;
- Planning for the future growth and development of rural areas, including addressing decline, with a special focus on activating the potential for the renewal and development of smaller towns and villages;
- Putting in place planning and investment policies to support job creation in the rural economy;
- Addressing connectivity gaps;
- Better co-ordination of existing investment programmes dealing with social inclusion, rural development and town and village renewal.

ASSOCIATION OF CHARTERED SURVEYORS



REJUVENATING Ireland's small town centres

A Call to Action

RICS

A FRAMEWORK FOR TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL

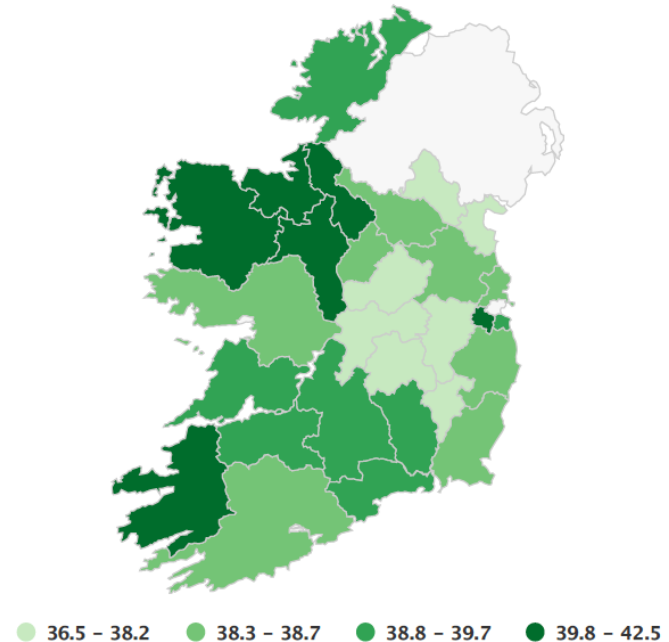
SUCCESS PREMISES FOOTFALL STATISTICS PURPLE FLAG PRODUCTIVITY

OCCUPANCY SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CHAMPION TOWN TEAM STREETScape INVESTMENT FUNDING GARDIAN LOCAL AUTHORITY REGENERATION SUCCESS REPRESENTATION TOURISM PUBLIC REALM NIGHTTIME ECONOMY RESIDENTS INTERVENTION TOWN CENTRE RETAIL VITALITY VILLAGE STRATEGY GROWTH EDUCATORS RENT COMMUNITY INFORMATION TRANSPORT YIELDS PROPERTY LANDLORDS EMPLOYMENT BIDS ACTION PLAN VIBRANCY BUSINESSES CHAMBERS PARTNERSHIP STAKEHOLDERS CLEANLINESS QUALITY CUSTOMER JOBS PARKING EVENTS HEALTH CHECK SCHEMES RATES MANAGER SUPPORTS RURAL SHOPS

RETAIL CONSULTATION FORUM

Final thoughts - *Future challenges*

- **Smart tech, AI and rural places:**
 - Driverless cars
 - 3D printing
 - Drones
- **Ageing:**
 - Healthy ageing in rural places
- **The imperative of climate action**



Average age of rural population
(CSO, 2016)

How adaptable are rural places?