

The People of Clare 1991 - 2002
A Community in Transition

A Socio-Economic and Spatial Perspective

FOREWORD FROM THE CATHAOIRLEACH



Cllr. Pat Hayes, Cathaoirleach

The people of Clare can be proud of what they have achieved over the period 1991 to 2002. As a community they have transformed and modernised their economy and shaped a more globalised society. As a people they have created a more diverse culture and constructed new identities and adapted to others. They have rapidly re-structured the institutions that will maintain the momentum and integrity of these achievements.

In this process the people of Clare generated unprecedented and sometimes unexpected opportunities and challenges. Many of these opportunities and challenges are only emerging. Some are clearly documented within this report. It will be a valuable source of information for the public and those agencies involved in the development of the county.

The Ennis Shannon Limerick corridor has provided an economic engine room for the development of the county to-date. It has experienced the strongest growth in population, labour force and new housing. It is now the dominant location of all jobs outside of agriculture and is the location for most of the modern manufacturing and services industries. It draws its workforce from a wide hinterland, with the result that economic and social benefits are dispersed into many more distant rural areas. It is imperative that the future growth of this corridor remains an economic priority and so benefits the entire county. However, the recent slowdown in the modern manufacturing sector and the absence of a sizeable research and development base in Clare are sources of concern, as both contribute significantly to our more rapid transition to a knowledge-based society.

The high dependency on agriculture as a source of local employment and often the only employment outside of the few urban centres is highlighted in this report. So also are the many social consequences of the rapid change for the vulnerable groups in the county. They are neither well-positioned, in terms of appropriate skills and family demands, to access many of the opportunities that have arisen. Others are too remote from the employment opportunities, or these opportunities may not offer adequate remuneration to justify the expenditure on costs associated with taking up employment such as additional transport or childcare.

While the picture that emerges may appear as a seamless transition to a more urbanised, more 'modern' and heavily concentrated employment base, such a picture does not adequately recognise the stresses to the social fabric that this transition has generated. This report identifies many social groups who for one reason or another were not able to avail of the emerging opportunities and as a consequence their quality of life has not always been positively influenced.

I welcome this report as it identifies many new opportunities and challenges, which we must address if we are to bequeath to future generations, our legacy as the Banner county, which historically was renowned for being to the forefront in building a dynamic and inclusive society.

Gach rath ar an obair.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Pat Hayes". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Cllr Pat Hayes - Cathaoirleach
Clare County Development Board

WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tom Coughlan, Director

This social-economic profile of County Clare for the period 1991 – 2002 provides an invaluable source of data reflecting a decade of unprecedented change.

During the period, Clare experienced significant population growth, high migration into the county, and an increasing level of urbanisation. There was also a sizeable growth in the labourforce, a large decline in agricultural employment, and consequent changes in the patterns of travelling to work. Major change has been experienced during the period 1991 – 2002 in the context of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. It is evident that the tide of the Celtic Tiger has not improved the quality of life for all people in all parts of County Clare.

These major socio-economic changes have been reflected in changing demands for physical infrastructure and community, social and public services. The manner in which those demands have been met is an invaluable learning experience. It can assist in planning the delivery of infrastructure and services into the future. This review of a period of radical change over the past decade can also inform debate in forecasting the type of county in which we will live a decade from now.

It is appropriate that this report was prepared under the auspices of the Community and Enterprise Section in that future challenges facing the county can be addressed through the development of strong communities and a vibrant enterprise culture.

I would like to sincerely thank the Research Team of Community and Enterprise who sourced, collated and presented the data, and who undertook the complex task of preparing this report. I also wish to thank all the staff of Community and Enterprise, the Chairman and members of the County Development Board and all individuals and organisations who supported this project.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Tom Coughlan', written over a thin horizontal line.

Tom Coughlan - Director
Clare County Development Board

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