Irish Futures – Challenges and Opportunities for Ireland

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Why a Futures Project?

- Technique increasingly used in Private and Public sectors
- Scenario Building – Thinking About Plausible and Alternative Versions of the Future
- Fostering Inspiration and Imagination on Longer-Term Issues
- Avoiding immediate concerns with the ‘feasibility’
This is you
Why for Public Services?

- Early warning of possible changes
- Spotting opportunities earlier and dealing with problems when they are easier to fix
- Capacity to think long-term?
- Context of rapid change in Ireland
- Extrapolation is only likely to tell us so much
- Thinking about how we might prepare for different eventualities
- Ignoring Old Demarcations
Project Advisory Board

- Sean Dorgan (Chair)
- David Begg
- Prof John Benington
- Gillian Bowler
- John Cullen
- Prof Brendan Drumm
- Alan Dukes
- Prof John Fitzgerald
- Dr Maureen Gaffney
- Dr Mary Kelly
- Dermot McCarthy
- Martin Mansergh TD
- Ann McGuinness
- Prof John Murray
- Prof Iognáid Ó Muircheartaigh
- Julie O’Neill
- Ruairí Quinn TD
- Eddie Sullivan
- Paddy Wright
Elements within the Project

- Terms of Reference and Establishment of Advisory Board – October 2005
- ‘Horizon scanning’ to identify core drivers of change that will impact on public service provision – Late 2005
- Retrospective Analysis, Research on Public Perceptions, and Initial Drivers of Change – January 2006
- Workshops and Interviews to review Long-Term Drivers and Implications for Public Service – March to May 2006
Elements within the Project

- Impact and Certainty Analysis – Summer 2006
- Scenario Building, including Economic Forecast based on ‘No Policy Change’ – late-2006 and early 2007
- How ready are we to meet these alternative futures? – early 2007
- Completion and Launch - November 2007
Retrospective

- Critical Junctures and Decisions Affecting Public Service Provision
- Post-independence policy makers made bold decisions
- Economic planning
- EU / Supranational
- Stable policy environment
- Shifting Locus of Policy-Making - Social Partnership
- Contribution to creation of Celtic Tiger
- Ability to respond quickly – examples of success where others have failed
Public Perceptions/ Survey Data

- Public Opinion and Perceptions of the Public Service in Ireland, including International Comparisons
- Eurobarometer 2004, European Values Survey 2000
- UK/Ireland MORI poll 2003/2004
- Taoiseach’s Department survey 2006
- Individual local authority polls
- Garda Survey 2005
- Health Service, 2006 and 2001
- Public Appointments Commission, 2006
- Not as bad as we sometimes think…?
Demographic Drivers of Change

- Increasing Population and New Profiles
- A Multicultural Ireland
- An Ageing Population
- Spatial Patterns – Counteracting the dominance of Dublin?
Societal Drivers of Change

- Changing Societal Values and Attitudes
- ‘What’s the bottom line?’ – a ‘results-oriented’ clientele, who will go elsewhere if not happy
- A more individualistic and hedonistic society?
- Greater demands for transparency and accountability
- Breakdown of cultural barriers with greater mobility, but ethnic tensions never far away?
Environmental Drivers of Change

- Energy Supply
- Climate Change
- Natural or man-made environmental disasters remain a possibility
Technological Drivers of Change

- The Pace of Change is Bewildering
- Life-long learning to ‘keep up’
- Communication easier and cheaper
- Help and a hindrance?
- Portfolio careers
- The knowledge economy has great potential, but could also accentuate inequalities
Economic Drivers of Change

- Steady economic growth forecast, with a number of ‘ifs’
- Globalisation – international flows of trade, goods, services, capital, and people
- Geopolitical balances, north/south, migration
- Relentless and dynamic competition, or ‘take a break’
- Services sector as the mainstay of employment
- Reduction in numbers employed in traditional manufacturing and agriculture expected
- Changing corporate profile
## New Balance of Economic Activity

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country / Region</th>
<th>GDP 2005</th>
<th>GDP 2050</th>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU (incl. Turkey)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
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<td>143</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers (relative to US = 100; purchasing power parity is assumed to remain constant)
Workplace Drivers of Change

- Changing work patterns
- Changing workforce
- A more competitive workplace
- Organisations becoming flatter?
- Corporate loyalty as a thing of the past?
Governance Drivers of Change (1)

- What is the future role of the state as a provider of services? – Step Up or Step Back?
- Greater demands to hold political and administrative actors ‘to account’ for decisions
- Absolute accountability vs. Innovation and risk in the public service
- Productivity in the public sector
- Mass production (efficiency) or tailoring services to the needs of the individual (quality)
Governance Drivers of Change (2)

- Demands for greater effectiveness and coordination across different levels and agencies of government
- More complexity in policy-making
- Locus of policy making
- Role of the Media – Government by ‘Liveline’
- Pro-active or re-active?
- Institutional Boundaries
‘Liberty and Individualism’

- More individualistic society
- Continued economic success
- Less interest in traditional politics, but many active in single-issue groups
- Growing inequality and environmental problems
- Poor quality of life
- Larger EU, and more all-Ireland cooperation
‘Islands of Empires’

- Sudden economic downturn
- Increase in intolerance and turmoil
- Emergence of underclass and flight to suburbs
- Intercultural and intergenerational tensions
- Reversal in globalisation – trade protectionism
- Difficult relations within EU, and with Northern Ireland
‘Fattened Geese’

- Active integration of ‘new Irish’ into society
- Slow economic growth
- More self-indulgent, hedonistic society
- Painful transition to less oil-dependent society
- Increased emphasis on sustainable development
- EU continues to play a prominent role
‘Italification of Ireland’

- ‘Take a break’ - Greater emphasis on quality of life
- While creativity and innovation are fostered, economic competitiveness falls behind
- Energy crisis
- Greater regional and local distinctiveness
- Fragmented media
- Resurgence in religion and volunteering
- Increased role for EU, and all-Ireland dimension
Perspectives (External)

- Is the public service ‘fit for purpose’ – is it ready for different eventualities, challenges, opportunities?
- What choices lie ahead?
- Quality of Life
- Economic Performance
- Physical and Social Infrastructure
- Governance and Democracy
Perspectives (Internal)

- Is the public service ‘fit for purpose’ – is it ready for different eventualities, challenges, opportunities?
- What choices lie ahead?
- Political domain
- Civil Service
- Local Government
- Health Service
The Regional Angle?

- Closing the ‘infrastructure deficit’ – what next?
- Regional balance
- Already having to cope with increased and more diverse population – and in a while an ageing population – impacts on areas like strategic planning, transport, housing demand, education, etc
- ‘Plugging the gaps’ at regional and local level?
- Creating a sense of identity in new communities
- A changing workforce
- Increasing divergence between regions and localities
It is not the strongest species that survive, nor is it the most intelligent, but those most adaptive to change – Charles Darwin
Thank you for your attention!

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