

An aerial photograph of Sligo, Ireland, showing the town's layout, a river, and a bridge. A network diagram with white dots and lines is overlaid on the image. The word "SLIGO" is prominently displayed in white, with the 'O' containing a red circle.

SLIGO

Regional Growth Centre for the North West

**Submission to the
National Planning Framework
Consultation Process**

from the

Sligo Economic Forum

March 2017

...where business, creativity and culture collide...

Sligo Economic Forum stakeholders



St. Angela's College, Sligo
Coláiste San Aingeal, Sligeach
A College of NUI Galway



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONTEXT

This submission to the National Planning Framework has been prepared in a collaborative manner by the Sligo Economic Forum (SEF) comprising of Sligo County Council, IDA reland, Enterprise Ireland, Sligo Institute of Technology, Sligo Chamber of Commerce, Fáilte Ireland, St Angela's College, and the Local Enterprise Office.

The National Planning Framework is about setting a vision for a strategic framework for achieving sustainable and effective regional development in Ireland. Within this policy framework, the contention of the SEF is that Sligo should be identified as an urban centre to be developed in an accelerated manner, to drive and sustain regional and rural development in the North West Region.

An integral part of the National Planning Framework is the recognition that successful countries have vibrant cities at key locations driving economic growth within their regions. This submission demonstrates that Sligo has the vision, capacity and ambition to be the regional growth centre for the North-West.

Sligo has the vision, capacity and ambition to be the regional growth centre for the North-West

Sligo is ready. In 2002, the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) recognised Sligo's potential to promote regional development in the North-West. Sligo's Gateway designation was intended to stimulate the achievement of critical mass in terms of population and economic activity.

For 15 years Sligo has been ready to perform its Gateway functions, but the prevailing economic circumstances prevented the implementation of the NSS regional development strategy.

The expert Review Panel commissioned by Government in 2013 to review the NSS strongly recommended that any future national spatial strategy should focus on Gateways only and favoured continuing with each of the proposed Gateways with the exception of the linked midlands Gateway.

Although the Gateway vision has not yet been realised, Sligo's capacity and willingness to grow have sustained and strengthened.

SLIGO 2040 VISION

The vision for Sligo as set out in the Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 (LECP) outlines Sligo's commitment to being “an enterprising, inclusive, resilient and environmentally sustainable place which values and celebrates its unique landscape and rich culture and heritage and where the wellbeing of future generations is central to everything we do” (LECP).

County Sligo will be known locally, nationally and internationally for its rich talent, innovative education system, robust infrastructure, supportive business environment, entrepreneurial culture and high quality of life (LECP).

By retaining Sligo's designation as a regional growth centre, the National Planning Framework (NPF) can help Sligo achieve this vision. Sligo as the self selecting growth centre within the North West Region will make a significant contribution to national economic success supported by its strategic location on the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC), linking the major urban centres of Limerick, Ennis, Galway, Castlebar, Sligo and Letterkenny-Derry. In support of this commitment to realising its economic potential is a significant track record of collaboration and partnership amongst public agencies and private sector stakeholders working together in the interests of Sligo to promote and develop economic, social, cultural, environmental and community activity.

Looking forward to 2040 it is envisaged that Sligo will experience:

- A population growth in the County of 25%, to exceed 80,000.
- We envisage that the population of the of Sligo and Environs Area will exceed 47,000.
- 50% of the population of the county will be under 35 and will have a high ranking in terms of the percentage of the population holding Third Level Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) qualifications.
- Sligo will be the location of choice for new business and inward investment drawn by skills and facilities.
- Sligo has the capacity to achieve international brand recognition as an outdoor adventure heritage and “must see” destination; with attractions based on award winning archaeological trails, the ‘best waves in the world’ and the ‘freshest food of the sea and land’.
- Sligo as a key destination on the Wild Atlantic Way will have steadily transformed itself into an attractive tourist and shopping destination with new hotel facilities capable of hosting international conferences building on its many assets of its wonderful landscape and coastline.

The economic, social and cultural vibrancy of Sligo is attributed to strong leadership, driving a focused county development strategy.

- Key employment areas will be based around tourism and leisure, advanced manufacturing, retail and both private and public services with an additional 12,600 new jobs created across all sectors.
- Sligo will be a place where people want to live, work, explore, create and be.
- Sligo will be a key food destination and hub.
- Sligo will have a competitive strength in processing and analyzing big data for international businesses and in managing smart healthcare provision globally.
- Sligo will support a self-sustaining, vibrant network of rural/urban communities within the region encompassing the areas of South Donegal, North Roscommon, North East Mayo and Co Leitrim.
- Online trading will be the common business model for many SMEs. The uniquely EU-UK trading conditions that exist at the Irish-Northern Ireland border will attract many international companies to establish businesses in Sligo.
- Following on from two decades of strong growth any infrastructural, demographic or location related impediments will have been overcome and Sligo will be home to many virtual business hubs that operate effectively without borders, across global markets.

Sligo will be a place where people want to live, work, explore, create and be.

- Sligo hosts a myriad of music festivals and cultural events throughout the year including the annual Sligo Live Festival which is already a feature of the international music circuit. Sligo has unique advantages in its remarkable built and archaeological heritage, in music, drama and the arts and is positioning itself to become the music capital of Ireland.
- Sligo will project itself as Music City, from the traditional heritage and archiving of Coleman to the Sligo Academy and from Sligo Jazz Project to its many festivals, Sligo is building on all of the peripheral activities around music composition, producing, publishing, recording and performing.

The economic, social and cultural vibrancy of Sligo is attributed to strong leadership, driving a focused county development strategy. Education and research partnerships between the Technological University, NUIG, the Education and Training Board and businesses provides employment-ready graduates. The innovative and very effective educational model is one where young people are employed by companies and educated on-the-job receiving bespoke higher education, across all levels, using the latest online learning techniques with minimal disruption to the working week. Strong industry-education partnerships have driven the implementation of the 4th industrial revolution across the network of Sligo's industries as well as the globally based enterprises using online and augmented reality learning from Sligo Technological University.

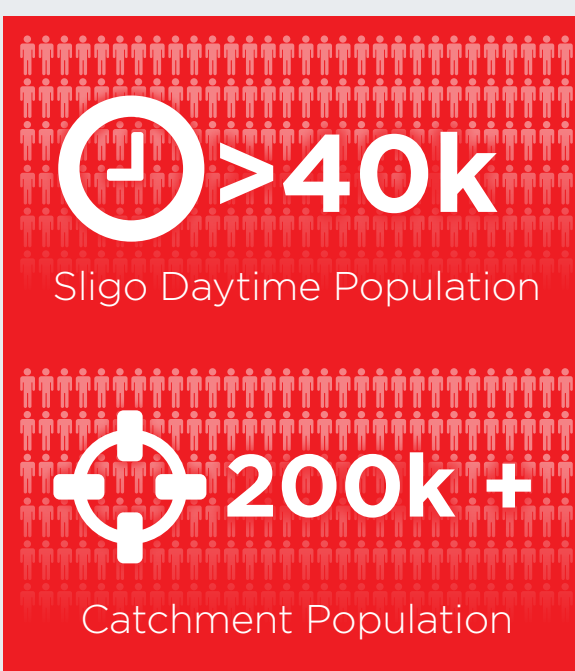
FUNCTIONAL AREA

Located at the point where the Western Region meets the Border Region, Sligo is the largest urban centre in the North-West, serving as an administrative, employment, commercial, health and education centre for a hinterland (or Gateway functional area) that is substantially larger than the hinterlands of other towns with similar populations.

Sligo's functional area extends far beyond the County boundaries, as demonstrated by the thousands of people who travel daily for work from North-East Mayo, South Donegal, North Roscommon and County Leitrim. It has been estimated that the daytime population of Sligo City can be as high as 40,000.

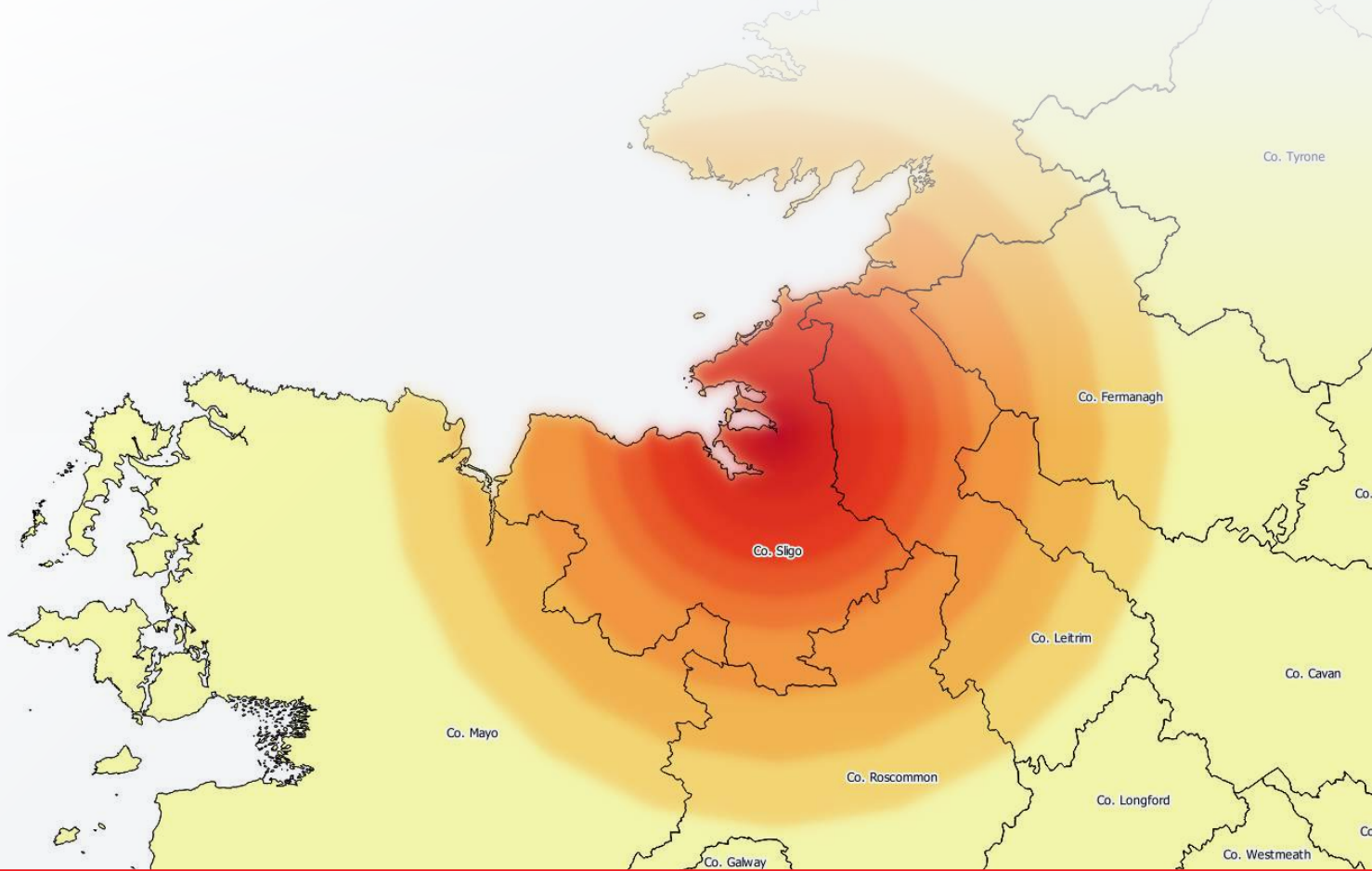
Sligo will be the location of choice for new business and inward investment drawn by skills and facilities.

Sligo is key business node for the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC), connecting the western counties with Northern Ireland. As a partner in the ERC, the Sligo Chamber of Commerce is actively working with the Chambers of other regional towns and cities to create a vision for the region as a preferred business destination for inward investment and new start-up companies. Sligo University Hospital is also strongly connected with other hospitals across the region, and IT Sligo and St Angela's College are both actively collaborating in programme delivery and research with other HEIs across the region.



Sligo is key business node for the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC), connecting the western counties with Northern Ireland.

Sligo serves as a regional capital for the North West Region in many areas including healthcare, education, retail and business services and sustains a population of in excess of 200,000 people within its catchment area.



The Gateway Development Index reports of 2009 and 2013 have shown that the Gateway functional area has in fact expanded (based on POWSCAR data) during the economic crisis. Despite the negative impact on the local economy, Sligo's Composite Index Score has been calculated at 5.0, the same as the national average, both in 2009 and in 2012. Higher than average scores were calculated for health, wellness and public safety, and a consistently positive public perception demonstrates Sligo's attractiveness as a place to live and work.

The UK's decision to leave the EU presents major challenges for Ireland, given the potential implications for Northern Ireland and North-South relations, given the strong economic ties with Britain, and common positions on so many issues at EU level.

Sligo serves as a regional capital for the North West Region

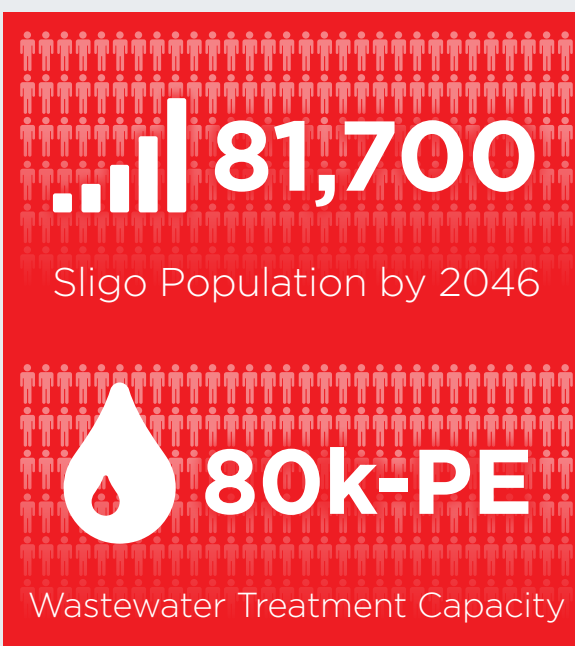
Sligo offers a unique location which no other city of its size and capacity can offer as regards its geographical proximity as a border County. The outstanding resilience and Sligo's location close to the border with Northern Ireland, taken in the context of the potential implications of Brexit, present a unique opportunity for the National Planning Framework to proactively support the North-West by directing growth into Sligo.

GROWTH POTENTIAL

Within walking distance of Sligo's historic city centre, there is potential for large-scale, strategically-planned urban extensions (e.g. Docklands, Caltragh, Ballinode) which would represent the opposite of urban sprawl evident in other cities.

Based on 2016 CSO data and national projections, the population of Sligo should grow to some 81,700 by 2046, an increase of 16,343 (25%). Based on these projections and the immediately realisable development opportunities within the Sligo and Environs Area, it is envisaged that the majority of this growth will be directed into Sligo City area (9,000) with the remainder being dispersed throughout the County focussing on the Key Support Towns of Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry as identified in the County Development Plan.

Therefore, the Sligo City area could experience substantial growth from 19,400 to 28,400 an increase of 50%. The two growth areas in the Sligo City area (which are already serviced or easily serviceable and are contiguous to the existing built up core), include the Hazelwood – Ballinode Area for which a Local Area Plan was prepared in 2004 (capacity of up to 6,600 people) and the Docklands Area (up to 2,900 additional people).



Sligo's Main Drainage Scheme, a 50,000-PE wastewater treatment plant completed in 2008, has the capacity for expansion to serve 80,000 PE.

National roads link Sligo to Dublin, Belfast, Galway, Letterkenny/Derry, with good connections into Counties Mayo, Leitrim, Donegal and Roscommon. Sligo's growth potential is also supported by the rail link to Dublin, the international airport at Knock (Ireland West) and the smaller Sligo Airport (Strandhill).



A number of new projects are in the pipeline, including the N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Scheme (due to commence in 2018) and the Eastern Garvogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme. These schemes will improve accessibility to and through Sligo City and will enhance the liveability and convenience offered by Sligo.

The N16 Sligo to Leitrim County Boundary Scheme is at Route Selection stage (2016) and is expected to commence in 2018.

Sligo's Inner Relief Road (SIRR) is a strategic transport corridor providing access to the city centre and linkages to the surrounding areas, including the port and Docklands. These linkages will continue to be improved on an ongoing basis.

In 2015, the N4 Hughes Bridge was widened to three lanes in each direction, along with the provision of footbridges for pedestrians and cyclists. The widening of the N4/N15 from Hughes Bridge to Scotsman's Walk, including junction improvements, will continue over the next few years.

Excellent broadband, utilities, infrastructure and the availability of well-serviced sites have determined several international companies to locate in Sligo. A new 32-ha IDA Business Park is planned at Oakfield, in the south-western environs of the Gateway City.

As outlined in the Action Plan for Jobs Sligo is part of the IDA Ireland Regional Property Programme with the launch of a €150 million IDA Ireland property investment programme to roll out property solutions in regional locations to attract and embed foreign direct investment and deliver IDA's objective of a 30-40 per cent increase in investments outside of Dublin and Cork. Advanced facilities are under development in Sligo to intensify efforts to enhance and improve competitiveness and build resilience across all sectors of Sligo's economy.

Being rich in renewable energy resources, County Sligo is well-placed to lay solid foundations for a sustainable energy future. Harnessing this potential will boost a range of sectors, while enhancing energy self-sufficiency. The rewards include inward investment, job creation, business development, rural regeneration and a reduction of fuel poverty. Sligo County Council will promote and support the development and diversification of the local energy sector in accordance with EU, national and regional policy.

Sligo County Council is committed to using the planning process to encourage increased energy efficiency in all developments and in particular in the future housing stock of the County.

PLACE MAKING

Within Sligo's urban fabric lies an immense potential for regeneration and the creation of a vibrant place.

Amongst landmark architectural buildings, historic streets and squares, riverside promenades, cultural and civic institutions, several urban design frameworks have shown how to build high-density, mixed-use developments, which enhance and expand on the city centre qualities.

Sligo Local Authority's proactive approach to place-making is best illustrated by the 2016 Sligo East City (Cranmore and Environs) Regeneration Masterplan. The previously commissioned Centre Block Masterplan (1999), the Courthouse Block Urban Design Framework (2005), the Quay Quarter Urban Design Framework (2009) and the Inner Relief Road Urban Design Study (2009) are other examples of Sligo's commitment to place-making.

An important element of 'place-making' is the creation of attractive and pleasant places for people to live while ensuring the needs of all citizens are met. The SEF recognises that provision of a good quality living environment is essential to attract, create and maintain sustainable investment and therefore sustainable communities.

The provision of high end housing in Sligo is an essential component to attracting FDI and other large employers to the area. The new Local Area Plan for the Sligo and Environs Area will release housing land from the Strategic Land Reserve in order to expand the options for residential development by offering a wider choice of location on additional sites.



Urban waterfronts are today some of the most prolific quarters of creative cities: dense, hybrid places where resources, opportunities, aspirations and ambitions of cities are translated into visions, new relations and designs. Sligo Port and the Docklands area in general offers striking views of the landscape and sea surrounding the wider environs of Sligo City. The area contains significant potential in terms of the expansion of the commercial and residential extent of Sligo City and also in terms of the expansion of the leisure and recreational opportunities offered by Sligo.

The pontoon at Sligo Harbour has been a major success and demonstrates the potential of the area for leisure boating if the constraint imposed by the tidal rise and fall can be overcome. There have been suggestions to regulate tidal flow and perhaps "lagoon" the area bounded by Hughes Bridge, Cartron and Ballast Quay, to encourage water-based tourism activities, though this may pose serious environmental consequences.

EDUCATION & ENTERPRISE

Sligo benefits from the presence of two third-level colleges. Sligo Institute of Technology and St Angela's College (NUIG) offer a wide range of courses in business, engineering, humanities, science, nursing, health studies, home economics and education to a combined student population in excess of 7,000.

Both institutions have a proven track record in providing high levels of educational attainment and research to their many students, who come from all counties of Ireland and also from overseas. Both have sufficient capacity for growth and expansion on their existing campuses. A particular strength of IT Sligo is the provision of higher education programmes to over 2,000 students using online/blended learning delivery. This facilitates greater levels of access for students located across the region and who are in the workplace and could not otherwise gain the qualifications they need to upskill and build their careers within the region.

IT Sligo, Letterkenny IT and Galway-Mayo IT are jointly pursuing the creation of a Technological University within the North-Western Region, which will be better equipped to supply a highly-educated workforce to the region's enterprises and will increase participation by the youth of the region in higher education.

As well as the Innovation Centre in IT Sligo, St. Angela's Food Technology Centre supports SMEs in the NW Region and beyond and with support has the capacity to grow and develop its services to the Food Sector. Work is ongoing to establish greater links



between IDA, Enterprise Ireland etc. with the Higher Education Institutions – with input into programme development to address skills shortages, encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, ensure work-ready graduates and to attract industry/employers to the region. As well as examining further education provision and apprenticeship type programmes to provide our young people with key skills to service the needs of the region

Sligo: Regional Growth Centre for the North West

Vision for Potential Job Creation County Sligo 2040

Growth Area		Additional Jobs
Enterprise		6,000
Tourism Hospitality		1,600
Public Sector		1,500
Culture		1,000
Retail		1,000
Local Services		1,000
Education		500
Total		12,600

(Support source: CSO Population and Labour Force Projections 2016-2046)

and our community and to potentially be self-employed/provide employment into the future.

Sligo has a long tradition of successful enterprises from both indigenous companies foreign direct investment. The precision engineering and tool making ecosystem in Sligo which emerged from the Gallagher Brothers in Tubbercurry and carried on through IT Sligo has made a major contribution to enabling and sustaining the enterprise base. Since the early 1970's manufacturing within the Engineering and Medical Devices sectors within FDI have been strong, this has in turn leveraged and strengthened the indigenous engineering, automation and tool making sectors while in turn highlighting the importance and unique capabilities at IT Sligo.

The potential for expansion and for the creation of new businesses, particularly those in medical devices, ICT, services, creative industries and tourism is acknowledged and pursued by the relevant agencies who work closely together in supporting these sectors. Sligo has a unique latent potential in the services sector based on competitive costs, graduate output (locally and nationally), the dominance of manufacturing and the evidence from the other 'gateways under NSS (Letterkenny, Athlone, Dundalk).

Local Authorities in this region are cooperating through their Local Enterprise Offices in proactively assisting small businesses to do business in the USA through a joint programme which has been established with the State of Rhode Island. Under that programme, the ground floor of a premises has been leased in Rhode Island as a base for business meetings, limited product

display, a business address for Irish businesses trading in the USA and also a Centre from which engagement with the diaspora and economic development generally can be promoted. Small companies from this region are already doing significant businesses in the USA through introductions made under this programme. That level of activity is set to increase significantly following the appointment shortly of a person to the Centre to promote this region and our business offering.

The Building Block is an innovative development in the centre of Sligo

involving the provision of workspace on flexible, affordable terms for innovative businesses to operate from via rental of desks from which to do business. The aim is to get highly creative technological and other business people from cutting edge industries as well as employees of businesses looking at Sligo as a possible location from which to operate. Ultra-fast broadband, a creative, modern, progressive environment and ongoing agency supports are key to what the Building Block has to offer.

Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) is considered a hugely important asset for the West and North-West Region in the context of economic development.

It is the main international air access gateway for the west, north west and midland regions of Ireland and now serves more than 20 scheduled and charter destinations across Ireland, the UK, Europe and beyond. It is fully committed to developing and providing valuable connections to and from global destinations for the west of Ireland. As an international Gateway, IWAK offers first class tourism, business and investment opportunities in partnership with its customers, airlines, and tour operators.



In mid 2015, seven of the adjacent local authorities approved investment in Knock Airport for the purposes of assisting the Airport to grow and expand its operations. As a consequence of the investment, the Local Authorities in the west and north-west have established a Partnership with IWAK whose focus and aim is to agree how the region can benefit in a more co-ordinated and impactful way from improved collaboration with the airport.



The ongoing development of IWAK includes attracting new international routes, commercial business and investment, the continued development of improved airport infrastructure for the region and the positioning of the airport as the airport of choice and gateway to both the west of Ireland and the “Wild Atlantic Way”. The innovative and proactive nature of the partnership between the seven local authorities and IWAK seeks to enhance this important piece of infrastructure for the region.

TOURISM

Tourism has been identified in the LECP as one of the key economic drivers for County Sligo.

Sligo is a unique place, with a long history of innovation, enterprise and cultural endeavours. Set in a distinctive landscape, Sligo possesses all factors which contribute to the making of an attractive and fulfilling visitor destination. Due to its natural, historical, built and cultural attractions the potential exists to grow the share of Irish and overseas visitors holidaying in Sligo. Growing the county's visitor economy will deliver significant economic benefits as well as sustaining the social, cultural and environmental values for local communities. Tourism presents an opportunity to boost economic activity within the county, to support existing employment and businesses while also creating new enterprises and jobs.

Tourism success will also act as a catalyst for growth in other sectors, including the creative arts, food and education. To maximise the potential of the Tourism sector as a key economic driver for the County, Sligo is positioning itself as a 'must stop and see' destination in the North West. The Wild Atlantic Way opens up all sorts of growth opportunities for Sligo for the food and craft sector, for accommodation, for camping and caravanning, for tourist trails etc. The accessibility of Sligo as the nearest point to the Wild Atlantic Way from Dublin Airport by both road and by rail can be capitalised on.



Recent Tourism Statistics for Sligo indicate the following:



Sligo has enjoyed tourism growth with overseas visitors rising from 133,000 in 2013 to 186,000 in 2015 an increase of approx 40%.



In 2015, total tourism revenue for overseas and domestic visitors to Sligo is estimated at €112m.



Revenue from an estimated 186,000 overseas visitors who spent at least 1 night in county Sligo in 2015 was €51m which was an increase of 16% on the €44m received in 2013.



Approximately 263,000 Irish residents also visited County Sligo in 2015, spending an estimated €61m.



Mainland Europe is currently Sligo's largest overseas and fastest growing market with 46% or approx 86,000 overseas visitors to Sligo in 2015 coming from mainland Europe.



In 2017, a Tourism Strategy will be developed for County Sligo for the period 2017-2023. It will give strategic focus and vision for tourism development for Co Sligo over a 6 year period. The vision, goals and objectives which will be developed as part of the Co. Sligo Tourism Strategy will be aligned with those set out in the LECP and Sligo County Council's Tourism Statement of Strategy. Central to the development of the County Tourism Strategy and Action Plan is the development of the unrealised tourism potential of Co. Sligo.

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND CREATIVITY

Sligo has a rich and distinguished cultural legacy and a long-standing reputation as a 'cultural county'. Its diverse culture takes into account its Yeats connection which is an important component of Sligo's appeal in addition to the many activities and diverse outdoor pursuits available in Sligo, rural culture, music and the offer and appeal provided by Sligo's urban experience.

Creative talent and cultural diversity are valued components of Sligo life. Over the years, Sligo has seen a high level of investment in the development of cultural programmes and infrastructure to enhance the quality of life it offers.



A significant population of practicing artists coupled with a reputation for excellence among Sligo's cultural organisations such as The Model, Hawk's Well Theatre, Blue Raincoat Theatre Company, Sligo Youth Theatre, The Coleman Centre and The Yeats Society to name but a few, ensures that Sligo's arts ecology is diverse, sustainable and vibrant.



Sligo is steeped in history with excellent examples of early Neolithic, Iron Age, Early Christian and medieval sites. It is described as a special place for the visitor with an interest in landscape and the natural environment. Sligo's heritage assets, both built and natural are only a small flavour of what Sligo's has to offer. Making that heritage story come alive for the visitor requires resources to audit, conserve, sustainably manage, interpret and present it. Heritage can add a rich and immersive experience to developed and proposed visitor experiences and recreational routes. This combined with knowledgeable and engaged local communities can be transformative for the tourism offering in the county.



The Western Development Commission's research "Creative West" shows the Creative Sector to employ a significant number of people in the western region with Sligo having the second highest proportion of people working within the sector at 4.1% of its total workforce. Quality of life and inspiration from the region's landscape and culture are among the strongest motivators for creative people to live and work in the Western Region. The Creative industries are one of the fastest growing sectors in the world's developed economy after financial services, information technology, pharmaceuticals, bio-engineering and tourism.



By building on Sligo's rich cultural, heritage and creative base there are many potential benefits for Sligo such as:

- Cultural regeneration creates jobs and generates revenue
- Culture plays a role in attracting investment (the buzz factor)
- The re-population of run-down areas by creative industries clusters can bring an increase in the use of local amenities and help in the creation of new ancillary businesses
- It can also create a new audience for other cultural products
- Culture and regeneration can change the image of a place
- Cultural regeneration can help communities to build pride, self-confidence and identity

CAPACITY TO **DELIVER**

At the end of 2007, Sligo Local Authorities sought funding from the Gateway Innovation Fund towards an overall investment of €187,620,000.

Four fully designed and financially appraised projects were put forward for funding:

- the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads
- the enhancement of O'Connell Street
- the Cultural Quarter including New Museum and refurbishment of The Model Arts Centre
- the Cleveragh Regional Park

The aims of these projects were to provide key infrastructure, high quality cultural and recreational facilities while developing the urban core and promoting connectivity.

The Cultural Quarter and the enhancement of O'Connell Street have not been funded to date.

However, the Regional Park at Cleveragh has been partly realised and progress is underway regarding land acquisition for the construction of the Eastern Garavogue Bridge.

Sligo County Council, in co-operation with all public and private stakeholders, continues to pursue the implementation of policies and objectives of the Sligo and Environs Plan (2010) and the actions set out in the Local Economic and Community Plan (2016).

Below is a summary of progress to date and planned actions, grouped under four headings that better define the vision for Sligo 2040 – a **Compact City**, a **Liveable City**, a **Green City** and a **Creative City**.



PROGRESS TO DATE AND PLANNED ACTIONS

COMPACT CITY



ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

Rebuilding communities by replacing sprawl with compact urban quarters.

Promotion of high-density, mixed use development, which complement and enhance the historic urban fabric.

Provision of new links between urban quarters, suitable for a range of transport options.

PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND PLANNED ACTIONS

- Sligo East City (Cranmore and Environs) – the Regeneration Masterplan was adopted in December 2016, the implementation is already underway.
- 40 hectares of land are currently zoned for residential and mixed-use development in the city and a further 380 hectares of housing land are included in the Strategic Land Reserve.
- The Docklands area is available for redevelopment right on the edge of the city centre (up to 1,160 new homes).
- The Western Distributor Road is needed to service the Caltragh area and link the new IDA business Park into the transport network.
- Within walking distance of urban core there is an opportunity to create sustainable communities in Caltragh and Ballinode (over 7,000 new homes combined). A further 2,300 homes can be built in the North Fringe area.
- The widening of Hughes Bridge (2016) has alleviated traffic congestion along the main north-south artery (N15/N4).
- The Eastern Garavogue Bridge will further improve north-south circulation and will serve the new Ballinode community.



LIVEABLE CITY



ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

An inclusive city, with human-scale urban fabric and a vibrant core, attractive streets, friendly and safe for the young and old.

Multifunctional public spaces that can regenerate civic engagement and democratic participation.

A city offering easy access to affordable homes, education, healthcare, leisure and recreation, where people can lead healthier and active lives for longer.

PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND PLANNED ACTIONS

- The enhancement and pedestrianisation of O'Connell Street has been planned since 2004. In 2016, funding was obtained from the NWRA for an upgrade that will see limited vehicular access with pedestrian priority, new widened pavements, new street furniture and landscaping, reduced traffic flow and share space for cyclists.
- New public squares are planned for Stephen Street and Quay Street car parks, and three other locations (Adelaide Street, Centre Block and Connaughton Road).
- Sligo Business Improvement District (BID), initiated in 2014, brings together a variety of businesses committed to promoting and improving the trading environment in the city centre. Sligo BID (Business Improvement District) was the first BID to form on the west coast of Ireland (March 2016). Fundamental to the BID is establishing a good working relationship with the local council (both management and elected representatives) and to date in excess of 16 projects have been completed in a spirit of productive collaboration.
- In 2014, Sligo County Council signed up to the national Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme. Sligo's Older People's Council was established in 2015.
- Sligo University Hospital (SUH) serves the people of Sligo, Leitrim, South Donegal and West Cavan. SUH has a Medical Academy with NUI Galway, which includes clinical rotations and education for medical students from NUI Galway on the SUH campus.
- Sligo has been designated as the European City of Volunteerism for 2017, in recognition of the strong spirit of volunteering that was so evident during the recent very successful 2 years of the National Fleadh Cheoil.
- Sligo is one of the few towns in Ireland to be accredited the Purple Flag, in recognition for being destination for night-time entertainment of excellence.
- The provision of a good quality living environment will be a central component of the forthcoming Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan. The creation of homes and areas that people will want to live, work and play in for generations to come is essential to the creation of sustainable communities and a successful city.

GREEN CITY



ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

Making efficient use of natural resources, respecting the environment, maximizing the usage of open spaces and promoting eco-friendly design and construction methods.

PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND PLANNED ACTIONS

- Zone 1 of Cleveragh Regional Recreation and Amenity Campus has been completed. Three more zones are planned, one of which includes water-based recreational facilities.
- Doorly Park, an established riverside amenity area, has been redeveloped with new cycling and walking trails, as well as a multi-use games area (MUGA), playing pitch, play equipment and outdoor gym.
- The network of cycleways and walking routes is gradually being expanded throughout the city. A total of 23 green corridors are identified in the Sligo and Environs Plan.
- The pontoon jetty at Ballast Quay in Sligo, managed and operated by Sligo County Council, is designed to be used by leisure craft for day trips or short-term stays in the city, but is also available for long-term berthing.

- Sligo has global recognition as the surfing capital of Ireland, with some of the world's biggest waves in Mullaghmore attracting many overseas surfers.



- The county boasts some of the best scenery in Ireland and many new businesses locating in the region are developing tourist amenities such as surfing, kayaking, paddle-boarding, hill walking, archaeological tours. Organisations such as the Sligo Sports Partnership are helping to build a network for sports facilities across the county.



CREATIVE CITY



ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, expanding education and providing a skilled workforce to industry.

Promoting diversity and delivering high-quality cultural and tourism products, of regional and national significance.

PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND PLANNED ACTIONS

- IT Sligo and St. Angela's College provide third-level courses responsive to changing market demands.
- The Innovation Centre at IT Sligo is home to over 35 businesses at different stages of development and provides the support, encouragement and the mentoring skills that these start-ups need in order to survive. The Innovation Centre works in close collaboration with Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Office.
- IT Sligo delivers many of its programmes using online/blended learning methods, facilitating those in the workplace from across the county and beyond to attain higher level qualifications in a way that is compatible with their working schedules.
- For creative industries and international businesses looking for a 'soft landing' in Ireland, The Building Block offers a full suite of working solutions in a four-storey building (2,000 sq.m.) located right in the city centre. A variety of business services is available, together with broadband speeds of 1000Mb/s. The Building Block is designed to fully enable the 'Move In, Move Up' concept to make Sligo a more attractive proposition from which to live and work.
- The IDA is committed to creating 32 hectare Technology Park at Caltragh / Oakfield.
- Sligo County Council is currently establishing an Economic Development Forum, to direct a cohesive economic vision for Sligo.
- The Model Arts Centre, redeveloped and extended in 2010, has become a world-class visitor centre, displaying the best Jack B. Yeats paintings and graphics collection in Ireland. The Model Arts Centre retains significant potential to contribute to the placemaking of Sligo.
- A plan for revamping Hawk's Well Theatre has received partial funding from DAHRRGA. The redevelopment will have the potential to transform the theatre into an artist hub for the North-West, providing a visitor experience that is lively, accessible, authentic and interactive.
- The planned County Museum proposes to showcase Sligo's rich archaeological and cultural heritage, including a Yeats Interpretative Centre.
- The implementation of a number of significant tourism projects capitalizing on the Wild Atlantic Way is ongoing.
- Example of recent proposed projects are: Cultural Plaza and Lady Anne Walk, Hazelwood House, Lough Gill Distillery, Surf Centre at Strandhill, National Mountain Bike Centre – Coolaney & Sligo Food Tasting Tour.

CONCLUSION

The collaboration and partnership of the dynamic Sligo Economic Forum has a successful track-record of building indigenous businesses, fostering a steady growth of FDI companies - operating mainly in the services across all sectors. The 'pull-factor' for entrepreneurs and international businesses to establish in the county is the availability of talent, attractive relocation and business start-up packages and the high quality of life, life-style opportunities and the inspiration of the county. Using fine-tuned business intelligence, the Irish diaspora, globally dispersed Technological University & NUI Galway alumni and tourist visitors are vigorously courted as potential new business start-ups. Through strong commercial links with other regional cities along the Atlantic Economic Corridor, the county is making a significant contribution to national economic success.

Sligo Economic Forum is confirming that Sligo has the desire, capacity and ambition to be the Regional Growth Centre for the North West Region of Ireland in the context of delivering on the vision of the National Planning Framework.

**...where business, creativity
and culture collide...**

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