

## Southern Regional Assembly



Submission in response to  
**Ireland 2040 –National Planning Framework**  
*Issues and Choices* initial consultation paper

March 2017



# The Southern Region

## Opportunity and Potential

Three out of four **Regional Cities**

**Population Growth** of almost 3% over the last five years

Many **Strong Rural Areas** supported by a **Network of Towns and Villages**

Strong **Job Growth** with 62,600 new jobs created in the last five years

**Two Universities** and **Five Institutes of Technology** with a combined full-time student population of approximately 55,000 with an additional 12,000 part-time students

The only **Two State Airports** outside of Dublin as well as **Two Regional Airports**

All Tier 1 and Tier 2 **Ports of National Significance** outside of Dublin

Modern and **Diverse Industrial Base** with established cluster and specialisms in high value sectors such as pharmaceuticals, life sciences, aviation, precision engineering, information technology, food and beverages

Good quality farm land with **High Agricultural Yields** and strong food processing capabilities

Net exporter of **Clean Renewable Energy** with significant potential for further growth

An extensive coastline with significant **Marine Resource** potential

## 1. National and Regional Planning Challenges

The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) recognises that, as the Irish State approaches the centenary of its independence, there a number of significant challenges facing our country that require decisive leadership and a strong and effective set of national and regional spatial and economic strategies for the future.

The National Planning Framework, or “Ireland 2040 - Our Plan”, must address a multiplicity of overlapping issues including:

- A population increase of around 1 million people, almost a quarter of whom will be over 65 by 2040;
- More than 500,000 additional people at work, many of whom will be in high skilled jobs in and around cities;
- A requirement to develop at least 500,000 extra homes close to services and amenities; and
- Major environmental challenges such as protecting air, water quality, biodiversity and addressing climate change.

By addressing these issues in a co-ordinated and strategic manner, the National Planning Framework (NPF) will provide a sound basis for more effective regional planning which will ensure regional delivery of the national vision. Working closely with the NPF Project Team, the SRA will seek to ensure that positive outcomes arising from national growth can be maximised in the Southern Region and the realisation of the potential of all areas, both urban and rural, within the region.

Ultimately a well-developed NPF will be of benefit both to the state and its regions. The NPF does not need to threaten or undermine the aspirations of any part of the country and should in fact help to unlock the existing potential of less developed areas while at the same time improving the competitiveness of the more developed areas of the state and improve the quality of life of those living and working in those more urbanised areas.

While the Issues and Choices paper identifies a significant number of challenges to be addressed, the principal ones among those will continue to be the mutually supporting objectives of:

- Relieving development pressure on the Greater Dublin Area and the Eastern part of the Country;
- Protecting the competitiveness and key national/international role played by Dublin City; and
- Achieving effective regional development by capitalising on existing assets and opportunities in our regional cities, our county towns and our broad rural base supported by networks of smaller towns and villages.

## 2. Past Trends and Continuation of “Business as Usual”

An assessment of recent trends clearly indicates that, if development patterns continue as they have over the past twenty years, the result will be suburban sprawl in an over-heating, congested and competitively challenged East Coast and under-utilised regional potential throughout the rest of the country.

The ‘business as usual’ scenario would see:

- Dublin continuing to dominate and potentially overheat drawing in an ever-greater share of national development, while at the same time sprawling into surrounding counties;
- New housing developed at a distance from centres of employment leading to increased car-based commuting, congestion and adverse impacts on people’s lives and the environment
- Slower growth in regional cities such as Cork, Limerick and Waterford with low density suburban growth tending to spread from the edges while the city centres continue to struggle; and
- Many smaller rural towns and villages outside the influence of the larger cities and the more remote rural areas experiencing continuing decline.

Such a scenario is completely unsustainable and would be detrimental to the economic, social and environmental future of the country as a whole. The analysis of the 'business as usual' scenario as set out in the *NPF Issues and Choices* paper makes it abundantly clear that a new direction is needed and will require big decisions on a sustained basis over a long period of time, and this is wholeheartedly supported by the SRA.

Given that these past trends are long established and are deeply embedded, are driven by strong market forces, potential policy interventions to alter these trends will need to be very robust and well targeted if there are to be successful. This is the key challenge which the NPF must address.

### **3. An Opportunity for Effective Regional Development**

As a small nation, we all face the same demographic, economic and environmental challenges and it is important that every place plays its part to ensure that these challenges are met in a timely, efficient, and sustainable manner for all our sakes and for the sake of future generations.

For the NPF to succeed it must clearly demonstrate that effective regional development, which delivers growth for our regions, is good for the state as a whole and is good for the continued competitiveness and prosperity and improved quality of life of the Greater Dublin Area.

As stated previously, the population of the state is expected to grow by at least one million people over the next twenty-five years. If these people are to be provided with good quality housing, educational and employment opportunities, healthcare, sustainable transportation, and all the other services that one would expect from an efficient and

modern society, then all areas need to perform to their maximum possible potential.

For pioneering cities and regions, the NPF and RSES should build upon best practices from innovative EU policy across the themes reflected in the Issues and Choices paper, so as to maximise benefit from post 2020 EU programming in seek to achieve our vision for the region and the state.

For example, the EU recognises the opportunity of regions to capitalise on smart investment choices, stating "we have developed the Smart Specialisation concept, which is an innovative approach promoting efficient and targeted use of public investment in research and innovation to enable countries and regions to capitalise on their strengths and create new competitive advantages"<sup>1</sup>.

On encouraging collaboration and sharing good practice between cities in the EU, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) states "we are challenged by global megatrends like globalisation, digitalisation, ageing, environmental concerns and urbanisation, which call on all of us to turn these challenges into opportunities. This cannot be accomplished by one country, region, city, university or company alone; only by thinking and working together, in the spirit of learning, open innovation and crowdsourcing, can we create the desired new solutions"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from Normunds Popens, Deputy Director General, Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission, taken from European Committee of the Regions, Commission for Natural Resources, "The Need for a White Paper on Rurality", 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Quote from Markku Markkula, President of the European Committee of the Regions, taken from CoR Regional Innovation Ecosystems, CoR Guide: Learning from the EU's Cities and Regions.

#### 4. The Southern Region

The Southern Region has a wealth of latent potential which can be harnessed and delivered through supportive policies and investment decision so that future growth in the region can act as an effective counter-balance to the Greater Dublin Area.

Again, it should be emphasised that increased levels of growth in the Southern Region will facilitate more sustainable growth patterns in the Greater Dublin Area. This policy would ultimately enhance Dublin's reputation as a progressive European city where people will continue to choose to live, visit and invest.

The Southern Regional Assembly's vision for the development of the region is:

***To promote the Southern Region as an attractive, competitive and sustainable place to live, work and visit, a region of considerable opportunity for growth based on the quality of its cities, towns and rural areas, well developed physical and social infrastructure, a diverse modern economy and a pristine natural environment.***

The strength and potential of the Southern Region is emphasised by the following facts:

- Three out of four Regional Cities are located within the region – Cork the second largest city in the State, following by Limerick the third and Waterford the fifth largest city
- The region recorded population growth of almost 3% over the last five years
- The regions rural areas are characterised by resilient rural communities supported by a strong network of towns and villages
- The region benefits from a modern and diverse industrial base with established cluster and specialisms in high value sectors such as pharmaceuticals, life sciences, aviation, precision engineering, ICT, food and beverages
- An impressive record of employment growth with 62,600 new jobs created in the last five years

- Two Universities and Five Institutes of Technology with a combined full-time student population of approximately 55,000 with an additional 12,000 part-time students
- A wealth of Research and Development assets
- Two out of three state airports at Shannon and Cork as well as two regional airports in Kerry and Waterford
- Four out of five Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports of National Significance at Cork, Shannon Foynes, Waterford and Rosslare
- Good quality farm land with high agricultural yields and strong food processing capabilities
- Net energy exporter with an abundance of clean renewable energy growth potential
- An extensive coastline with significant Marine Resource potential

Given the well-established strengths of the region, the SRA contends that the Southern Region presents the most significant potential and for the development of an effective counter-balance to the Greater Dublin Area, driven by our regional cities, our county towns and our broad rural base supported by an established and resilient network of smaller towns and villages. Cork City & Metropolitan Area, with a current population in excess of 300,000 has a critical mass with the potential to become a European Metro Region of scale within the Southern Region and an engine for growth in partnership with the cities of Limerick and Waterford.

#### 5. Three Regional Cities

As stated above the Southern Region is uniquely positioned having the three cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford with the potential to act as dynamic engines of growth within the Southern Region.

These regional cities are all major centres of employment, third level education and healthcare and are accessible to the motorway network and other communications infrastructure such as airports and ports.



While the areas of influence of these three cities are extensive (as is demonstrated by the map on the following page showing commuter catchments), the scale of the individual cities are modest by international standards, and are disproportionately small compared with Dublin.

Even though these cities have very wide catchments, or functional areas, the 2011 Census of Population recorded the following official populations for each of the three cities (within city administrative area & suburbs):

Cork City and Suburbs	198,582
Limerick City and Suburbs	91,454
Waterford City and Suburbs	51,519

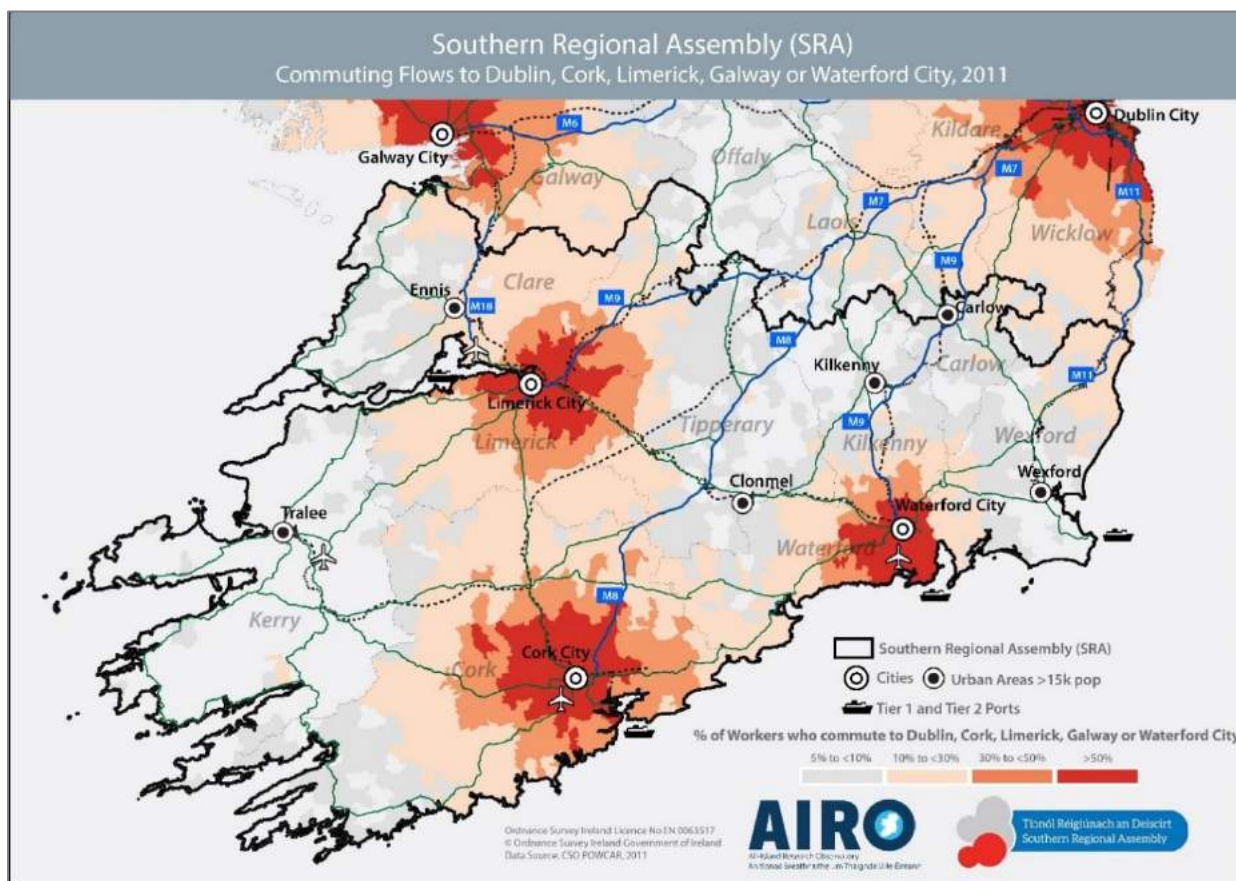
The SRA supports the view taken in the Issues Paper that a step-change is needed in our regional cities. In reality, each of the regional cities need to very significantly increase their current population base if they are to achieve critical mass being capable of acting as a true counter-weight to Dublin.

Accelerated growth in our large regional cities would help absorb a significant amount of the

strain that Dublin has been subject to in terms of accommodating growth in employment, housing need and infrastructure. In support of this approach, a recent EU ESPON study (which tested future spatial development scenarios in Europe to 2050) found that the growth of ‘second tier cities’ ensured more territorial cohesion and competitiveness than focusing on the largest principal cities.

The SRA consider that it essential that each of these cities is developed to its fullest potential and the NPF should not limit the ambitions of any of our regional cities. Instead, the NPF should actively prioritise, facilitate and encourage the maximum level of growth that is sustainable in each one of those locations.

To assist these cities to radically grow and prosper and to fulfil their potential, it would be beneficial if there was increased levels of collaboration between them than currently exists. Playing to their individual strengths, and building on the emerging specialisations should be part of any overall planned strategy of collaboration, and this is something which will be detailed further in the forthcoming RSES



for the Southern Region. To facilitate increased levels of collaboration it is essential that measures are taken to be greatly improve connectivity (digital & transport) between the three cities, and this is further elaborated in Section 12.

One of the keys to unlocking the potential of each city is investment in enabling infrastructure to allow large “brownfield” sites, such as underutilised or redundant dockland sites, vacant city centre lots and transitional edge of centre locations to be redeveloped to deliver high density, high quality, mixed-use urban environments.

Some of the critical infrastructural and investment requirements which have been identified by the relevant Local Authorities to unlock the potential of each city are summarised below. Each of the Cities have prepared their own detailed submissions to the NPF Consultation Paper, and the material set out below is a brief summary of the key points made in these submissions.

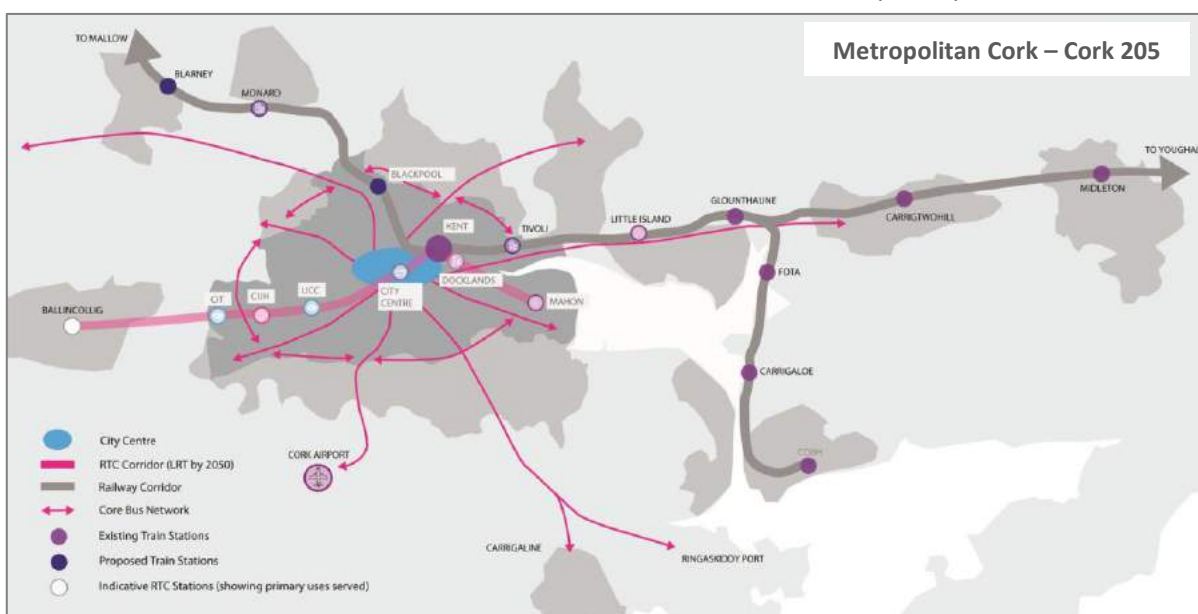
### Cork

Metropolitan Cork<sup>3</sup> is recognised as the key driver of sustainable growth in the Southern Region. Cork has significant comparative advantages in terms of key assets and capacity, differentiating itself in the national context, and competing with similar Metropolitan Areas in Europe and beyond. Given Cork’s existing scale and levels of productivity



(secondly only to Dublin), Cork is already playing an important international role, which can be built upon further.

Unique strengths of Cork include an excellent quality of life, with accessible sports, cultural and recreational facilities in the city centre and countryside. The city was the designated European City of Culture in 2005. Cork City has World Health Organisation (WHO) Healthy City Status and is pursuing WHO Age Friendly City Status. Cork also participates in the UNESCO



<sup>3</sup> The Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) defines Metropolitan Cork as comprising: Cork City and Douglas which is part of the Southern Environs of the City; the satellite towns of Ballincollig, Blarney, Carrigaline, Glanmire, Glounthane, Carrigtwohill, Midleton and Cobh; and the existing strategic employment areas of Little Island, Carrigtwohill, Cork Airport Business Park, Ringaskiddy and Whitegate/Aghada.



Global Network of Learning Cities. Cork has been ranked as No 1 for business friendliness among small European cities by FDI Intelligence under the 2014-2015 European Cities and Regions Futures Report. Cork also has high productivity levels with GVA in the South West well above all other areas outside Dublin and Cork contributes 19% to national GDP.

**Cork 2050 – Realising the Full Potential**, which has been jointly prepared by Cork City Council and Cork County Council, and which has been submitted directly to the NPF Project Team as part of this initial public consultation phase, builds on the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) and over forty years experience of strategic, integrated land use and transportation planning and evidence-based analysis.

The ‘whole of Cork’ approach will maximise the resource that is Metropolitan Cork, including Cork City, as well as the County Towns, Villages, Rural Areas and Islands by building on strengths and addressing issues that limit opportunities. Sustainable principles are embedded throughout along with a recognition that an adaptable economy is required, and that appropriate skills and education-support infrastructure is crucial.

This joint strategy sets out an ambitious vision for the future growth of Metropolitan Cork and sets out a framework for the prioritisation of strategic infrastructural investment across key sectors including transport, housing, jobs, education, health, environment, energy and communications.

**Cork 2050** suggests that Metropolitan Cork has the capacity to grow its population to over 500,000 people, with 120,000 new jobs, by 2050, underpinned by high capacity public transport corridors and a compact form of development. The North and South Docks and Tivoli provide unique brownfield development opportunities of 180 hectares, where new high density sustainable mixed use urban quarters can be created.

To deliver on this potential, policy commitment and investment in appropriate infrastructure is required including, inter alia:

- A Rapid Transit Corridor (RTC), running from Ballincollig town to the Docklands and Mahon via the City Centre.
- A commuter rail network with through running at Kent Station between the Mallow and Middleton lines; interchange between rail and the RTC and electrification of the rail network serving Mallow, Monard, Middleton and Cobh, and potentially Youghal.
- A high capacity Core Bus Network serving all of the main corridors within the Cork Metropolitan area, including Cork Airport, and connecting with inter-city and rural transport services.
- Strategic road infrastructure required to drive balanced regional economic growth and local assets such as:
  - M20 Motorway connectivity between Cork and Limerick
  - M28 from the City to the Port at Ringaskiddy
  - Completion of Northern Ring Road
  - Completion of Dunkettle upgrade
  - Upgrading of the N22
- Enabling works and measures to realise the development of the City Docks and Tivoli.

### **Limerick**

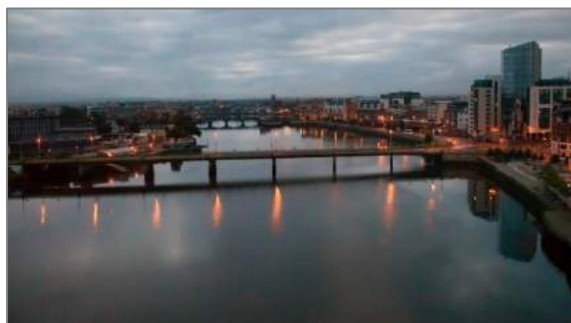
The strategic location of Limerick in the Mid-West, coupled with its considerable social and economic assets, means that the City is strategically positioned to develop and expand as a national and international engine for growth and Limerick Council have set themselves an ambition to deliver a metropolitan region population of circa 300,000 by the year 2040.

There are several current initiatives underway which are working in a co-ordinated way to maximise the potential the Limerick City has to offer such as:

- **Limerick 2030** – A plan and develop key strategic sites in Limerick City and County that will act as anchors for enterprise and investment development

- **Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan** - one of the largest capital programmes and largest regeneration programme in the State, focussed on the three key pillars - Economic, Physical and Social - which will revitalise communities by raising standards of living, opportunity and health and wellbeing
- **Mid-West Area Strategic Plan** - A joint integrated land-use and transport strategy adopted and supported by Clare County Council, Limerick City and County Councils and Tipperary County Council supporting a common vision:

*"The Mid-West Region and Limerick City as its capital, will realise its potential as a Gateway region both nationally and internationally. The future of the region will be based on sustainable economic, social equity and environmental drivers, which together will deliver an enhanced quality of life".*



Key investment priorities to realise this vision include:

- Motorway connectivity between Limerick and Cork;
- Upgrading the N24 up to and including motorway standard;
- Development of the Limerick Northern Distributor Road, enhancing regional interconnectivity and improving access to, as well as facilitating significant expansion of, the University of Limerick and the IDA National Technology Park
- Upgrading of the strategic Foynes to Limerick connection

## Waterford

Waterford City has a drive and an ambition to realise its potential as a strong growth centre for the South-East which would work with its "sister cities" of Cork and Limerick to provide a polycentric and regionally effective counterbalance to the GDA.

To fulfil this regional and national role, the City recognises that it needs to double its population over the period to 2040 (target population of City of in excess of 100,000 people).



Critical investment priorities to enable this significant growth include:

- Investment in enabling infrastructure for the development of the North Quay SDZ, a project of Strategic Importance to Waterford and the region, including: relocation of rail terminal into the North Quay area to provide greater accessibility for mainline rail passengers to the City Centre; and development of a new pedestrian/ public transport bridge between the North and South Quays
- Further bridge crossing is required downstream of Rice Bridge to complete the Outer Ring Road and to improve connectivity to the expanding City and realise the Waterford City PLUTS Study Proposals 2004-2020
- Investment in housing, city centre rejuvenation projects, and other public realm improvements as well as recreational, amenity, cultural and social infrastructure to support a young vibrant population.

- A University for the South-East focused on Waterford City Campus on an equal footing with other established universities
- WUH to be expanded as required to provide 1<sup>st</sup> class Regional health care to support the existing and project population of the South-East.
- Extend Waterford Airport Runway to accommodate Jet Carriers and increase passenger numbers and flight options.
- Supports for high-performing industries to deliver the employment opportunities necessary to drive inward migration to the South-east and to the City of Waterford as a viable alternative to the GDA.

## 6. Strong Regional Towns

At the tier below the cities, there are a number of significant regional towns in the Southern Region which provide employment, shopping and educational facilities (second and third level) for extensive sub-regional hinterlands area and serve an important role for those areas that fall outside the reach and influence of the cities. In addition, in some cases these stronger Regional Towns can actively complement and support the role of the Regional Cities (e.g. the three sisters in the South-East).



The strong County Towns of Carlow, Clonmel, Ennis, Kilkenny, Tralee and Wexford, provide essential services and growth poles outside of the immediate catchments of the three Regional Cities and there are other stronger towns such as Killarney, Mallow and Gorey which have a significant influence on economic activity and service provision outside of the

immediate catchments of the cities and county towns.

Although enterprise has become more mobile, employers are increasingly likely to locate where there are larger pools of labour. This has meant that in contrast to settlement, the spatial pattern of employment is mainly focused on the urban hierarchy of cities and larger towns.

Urban redevelopment opportunities exist in the majority of these established urban centres. The redevelopment of vacant and underutilised town centre sites can bring new vitality and dynamism to these centres making them more attractive locations for the sustainable expansion of economic activities, cultural, social and residential uses (e.g. Hanover Site, Carlow; Abbey Quarter Kilkenny; Trinity Wharf Wexford; Kickham Barracks, Clonmel; Island of Geese, Tralee; Ennis Market Rejuvenation Project).

The NPF needs to acknowledge the role that the County Towns and stronger Regional Towns play and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region will set out clear objectives for these towns and will identify investment and policy priorities necessary to achieve their full potential.

## 7. The Potential of our Rural Areas

Outside of the Regional Cities and the larger Regional Towns the region is effectively rural in character.

The rural area consists not only of open, unspoilt and remote areas but also the actively and intensively managed agriculturally productive areas and the numerous towns and villages that serve these broad areas.

While it is clearly acknowledged that some of the more remote rural areas are challenged in terms of economic opportunity and population retention, the majority is modern, dynamic

and creative, and is an integral part of our identity and economy.

People who live in rural parts of Ireland have enormous talent, creativity and energy. They also have tremendous sense of pride of place and a capacity to work together to overcome obstacles and maximise their assets.

The SRA want to ensure that all parts of the Southern Region are attractive places in which to live and work by revitalising our town and village centres through the implementation of initiatives such as the Action Plan for Rural Development, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the CLÁR and RAPID Programmes and measures to support people to live in town centres. The Southern Regional Assembly supports the developments of areas outside the metropolitan areas which require a multi-faceted strategy/investment package to support same.



To achieve this, it is important that local services in the community are enhanced through the provision of support for rural GPs, through ongoing development of the primary care sector to deliver better care close to home in communities, through support for the rural post office network to adapt to a changing business environment, and through continued access to schools for children in rural Ireland.

Any development which supports the rural economy and the rural social fabric should be strongly promoted. However, the recent phenomenon of urban-generated growth in rural areas, which requires significant investment to serve these new residents, and to facilitate long-distance commuting, needs to be clearly addressed in the NPF and the RSEs. This will require guidance on how to

implement strict management of urban-generated housing in inappropriate locations resulting in increased levels of car borne commuting.

Local communities are resourceful and resilient and should continue to be empowered through support for the Public Participation Network and Local Community Development Committees, to ensure that a diversity of voices is heard and included in local



decision-making processes and that communities continue to identify their own needs and solutions. More challenged and more vulnerable rural communities should continue to be supported through ongoing investment in the LEADER Programme and support through initiatives such as the Rural Social Scheme.

The SRA expects that local enterprise growth will be backed by expediting the completion of critical infrastructure in support of rural innovation, enterprise and competitiveness. Such critical support infrastructure would include: high-speed quality broadband and mobile communication services to all rural locations; water and waste water facilities for the growth of settlements; secure and sustainable energy supplies; enhanced transport connectivity including rural public transport services; and greenway cycling and pedestrian corridors between settlements.

Enterprise and educational supports in sectors such as: agri-food; the marine; forestry; tourism; energy and the green economy; design and craft industries; specialised engineering; the knowledge economy;



business services; and the retail sector, have a key role to play in retaining and upskilling our rural population.

Tourism is a significant economic sector throughout our rural region. Domestic tourism, growth and diversity in the sector across the region, which is within both the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East Corridors, provides significant potential for economic growth in diverse locations across the region. A positive, good practice example of rural economic innovation in the Southern Region is the Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen.

The Hub is a hotspot for technology start-ups and export-orientated companies. Operating from a 10,000 sq.ft. refurbished town centre building, the hub has a 1,000mbs “unparalleled” broadband speed. The Hub supports 75 digital entrepreneurs and aims to generate 500 direct and 1000 indirect jobs into West Cork by 2020.

There is significant potential for further “hub” developments across the region with national and regional support for delivering enabling infrastructure. A region with 1GB infrastructure across many towns and villages will greatly assist the development of our rural and regional economy.

At a strategic level, there is now an opportunity under the NPF and RSES to classify rural character areas at the regional tier. Measuring change in the socio-economic performance of rural character areas across the region will assist monitoring and the effectiveness of rural spatial and economic policy under the RSES.

Key to achieving a sustainable future for our rural population will be implementation and further development of the recently adopted Government policy set out in the Action Plan for Rural Development and the European Rural Policy as set out in the Cork 2.0 Declaration “A Better Life in Rural Areas”, the implementation of which is a “matter for all policy makers of the union, at all levels, local, regional, national and EU”. That declaration seeks innovate, integrated and inclusive rural and agricultural policy in the EU for all rural areas guided by

policy considerations of promoting rural prosperity, strengthening rural value chains, invest in rural vitality and viability, preserving the rural environment, managing natural resources, encouraging climate action, boosting knowledge and innovation, enhancing rural governance, advancing policy delivery and simplification, improving performance and accountability.

## 8. Integrated Land and Marine Development

Extensive coastal and marine assets in the Southern Region include the territorial waters of the Irish Continental Shelf, the coastline and islands, the commercial shipping ports of Cork, Rosslare, Shannon-Foynes and Waterford, the fishing ports and harbours, as well as the cultural and natural heritage of coastal zone.



The Southern Region is a major tourist destination, recently augmented by the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East, both of which link our coastal and inland heritage. National Ports Policy has designated five ports as Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports of National Significance. Apart from Dublin Port, all of these Ports of National Significance are located within the Southern Region.

The Port of Cork Company (Tier 1 Port) is one of only two ports, the other being Dublin, capable of handling traffic across all five principal traffic modes (LoLo, RoRo, Break Bulk, Dry Bulk and Liquid Bulk). It handles approx. 19% of all seaborne trade in the State. It is second only to Dublin in its importance in the



LoLo sector, handling around 21% of all LoLo traffic in the State<sup>4</sup>.

Shannon Foynes Port Company (Tier 1 Port) is the largest bulk port in the country and handles approx. 20% of all seaborne trade in the State. The port's dominance in the dry-bulk sector is particularly pronounced; it has a market share of around 63% in this sector. The company has sought to diversify into other sectors through, for example, promoting the estuary as a specialist energy hub, in particular in the emerging, experimental ocean energy sector (offshore wind and wave energy).

The port of Waterford is the fourth largest of the State commercial port companies in terms of total tonnage handled, and the fifth largest if Rosslare Europort is included. The port offers both LoLo and bulk services and has excellent connectivity to both the national road and rail networks.

Rosslare Europort enjoys a significant proportion of Irish Ro-Ro traffic, is the fourth largest port in terms of overall tonnage handled, and the State's second largest passenger port.

Building on these existing assets, it is an objective of the SRA to develop a Regional Policy for multi-modal logistics, and to identify regional logistics hubs for freight transfer, in combination with identified improved freight routes to port with reference to the TEN-T Core Network through Ireland.

In relation to the emerging ocean energy sector, the IMDO *Report on Irish Ports' Offshore Renewable Energy Services* concluded that the three Ports of National Significance (Tier 1) had the greatest potential in servicing current and future demand in the offshore renewable energy sector. The report additionally identified the two Ports of National Significance (Tier 2), as having important potential in terms of servicing future demand in this sector.

The IMERC initiative, launched in 2010 and located in Ringaskiddy, is a tripartite alliance between UCC, CIT and the Irish Naval Service and partnership institutions including the Beaufort Research Laboratory and National Maritime College of Ireland. The vision of IMERC is to promote Ireland as a world-renowned research and development location that unlocks Ireland's maritime and energy potential. Opportunities are identified for Ireland to be a global leader for niche products and services in the sectors of Marine Energy, Marine ICT, Shipping, Logistics and Transport, Maritime Security and Safety and Yachting Products and Services. Under the IMERC Strategy 2011-2016, a three -step approach to achieve IMERC's objectives required the development of a campus, development of a marine research and development cluster and system changes (a partnership model based on trust to deliver added value from core organisations within IMERC). Phase 2 of IMERC will include a marine and energy science and commercial park with enterprise incubation units and facilities to attract FDI and SME growth within the campus.



Given the strategic location of the commercial and fishing Ports in the region, existing marine industry, existing energy infrastructure, location in relation to the Atlantic Ocean territory, the Southern Region will be critical to realising national targets for growth in the Marine Economy. To build on these strengths, the SRA will actively promote the development of a research driven marine cluster in the Southern Region to support development of marine energy, marine ICT and biotechnology.

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<sup>4</sup> Irish Maritime Development Office, *Irish Maritime Transport Economist*, 2012.

## 9. Economic Progress

As stated in previous sections, the Southern Region benefits from a modern and diverse industrial base with established cluster and specialisms in high value sectors such as pharmaceuticals, life sciences, aviation, precision engineering, ICT, agri-tech, food and beverages and is delivering strong job growth (62,600 new jobs created in the last five years).

The SRA acknowledge the established correlation between large urban areas and regional economic productivity. An examination of business clustering patterns suggests that our cities are the key focus for the knowledge and related business sectors and the SRA will work to ensure that the competitiveness of these cities is maintained and augmented by focussed investment decisions. In addition, outside of the larger urban areas, there are established industrial clusters where natural comparative advantages exist. These regional clusters provide significant opportunities for further development of the rural economy in the agri-food, creative, clean energy, marine and tourism sectors.

A comprehensive econometric analysis of industrial specialisation and concentration, as background and support for the NPF, will establish a robust evidence base to highlight the extent of regional industry specialisation. Such analysis might include location quotients, input-output analyses, industry cluster analysis, and multisector analysis. This analysis, coupled with thorough scenario testing, will identify the potential that exists in our region and will facilitate key decisions on our economic future.

When analysing regional potential there are key factors that should be considered, such as: private capital (including FDI), human capital, skills matching, infrastructure, innovation, natural resources, available technology, innovation capacity, level of research and development, social capital, geography (remoteness, topography), land availability (green field, brown field), level of competition

in input and output markets, labour market efficiency.

The SRA contends that the Southern Region scores highly under each of these indices and that significant population increase, investment in key enabling infrastructure and resultant strong economic growth in the Southern Region represents the most realistic alternative to ‘*business as usual*’ scenario that



we need to move beyond.

If sufficient critical mass can be achieved in our larger urban centres, the availability of an educated and skilled workforce, coupled with a competitive living and working environment and a well-developed regional infrastructure, will ensure that there is no sector of the economy where the Southern Region cannot compete, deliver and excel.

## 10. Protecting our Environment

The Southern Region’s environment qualities and its diverse landscapes, including: rich farmland; river valleys; lakes; upland areas; and our coastline and marine environment, are key assets that require careful protection.

Landscape character areas and protected sites, such as NHAs, SACs and SPAs, frequently overlap local authority administrative boundaries and it is important that there is a consistent approach to their management and protection regardless of which side of an administrative boundary they happen to be. This is especially true of more extensive landscapes and habitats such as uplands, estuaries and our coastal zone.

Also, it is usually the case that ground water and river basins need to be managed by a number of adjoining local authorities and the Regional Assemblies have a key role to play in co-ordinating these matters.

The SRA would welcome a clear recognition of this need for closer collaboration between the local authorities and the Regional Assemblies in relation to environmental protection in the NPF and the SRA will work, through the RSES process, to ensure that a consistent approach is followed by all policy makers.



Of particular interest to the Southern Region, having regard to its varied terrain including the State's highest mountain ranges, are proposals for a specific agenda for remote rural and mountainous areas (Intergroup on Rural Mountains and Remote Areas). Mountain areas are noted as "vital sources of freshwater, biodiversity and places for recreation and inspiration. The mountains area also places of production, providing distinctive local quality foods, energy and employment as well as many ecosystem services. These territories have strong innovation growth potential that can contribute to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy". Proposals are made for better targeted policy solutions in these areas, the need for sustainable, innovative and efficient approaches towards the challenges as well as opportunities offered by remote and mountainous areas.

The SRA accept that achievement of our long-term mitigation goals in relation to greenhouse gas emissions and transitions to a low carbon and climate resilient society is a major challenge. In this context, it will be necessary

to make choices about how we balance growth with more sustainable approaches to development. The Regional Assemblies have a key role to play in the co-ordination of a multi-agency approach to tackle this issue and the SRA would welcome a statement in the NPF confirming and supporting the strategic planning that the Assemblies will play in this regard.

## 11. People's Health and Well-Being

While it is the case that the average age of the national population is increasing, statistics show that this issue is more marked in the regions outside of Dublin due to a differential in term of youth migration within the State.

The likelihood of further outmigration and consequent population decline in rural areas outside urban catchments would accelerate the ageing profile of the population, which in a negative feedback cycle, would hasten the process of decline. Many older people live alone and as services become less viable and withdrawn due to falling population, they would consequently, also have less opportunity for social interaction. Areas with limited social interaction and community participation (including for older people), whether rural or urban, tend to stagnate and suffer from high real or perceived levels of anti-social behaviour and crime.

To reverse this trend it is essential that the NPF delivers greater policy integration and joined up investment decisions across the planning, health and transport policy sectors. Our national and regional planning policy must foster an improved 'quality of life' for people through place-making and design that can anticipate the needs of a community and make provision for that community. We must improve living environments for all so that social disadvantage is tackled and prevented and ensuring that healthy-living options are available within communities in the form of access to sports and recreation facilities, amenities and green areas as well as walking and cycling facilities.

A mismatch between where people can afford to live and where they must travel to for work and study has resulted in people travelling longer distances, often by car, which has contributed to car dependence and traffic congestion as well as wasteful time and energy spent commuting. This is one of the most serious issues facing our planning system today as it means that people spend more of their disposable income on transportation, lose valuable time which could be spent with family or on leisure pursuits and tend to become overweight and obese with obvious longer term health implications.

Addressing this disparity between people’s homes and their places of work/study is the one area where the planning system can have the greatest impact of people’s well-being and quality of life as well as addressing wider societal issues such as the location and maintenance of essential social services.

## 12. Investment in Enabling Infrastructure

Despite the obvious advantages of having the majority of the country’s ports, airports and a sizeable proportion of the national rail and motorway network, access to and within the region still requires further major improvements. Significantly improved connectivity between the three regional cities is essential if they are to work together to act as a viable counter-balance to Dublin and the Mid-East.



The existing National Routes between the three cities (N20, N24 & N25) all require to be radically upgraded, as does the access routes to the Region’s main ports and airports. In

addition, accessibility to the emerging motorway network from the more peripheral parts of the region will also need to be examined as part of the regional strategy.

The SRA will work closely with the NTA and TII to establish the most cost-effective and viable transport network to meet the needs of the Southern Region. The Assembly will work in co-operation with the NTA/TII throughout the RSES process, to prepare Metropolitan City Transport Strategies and an overall Regional Transportation Strategy to ensure an efficient and sustainable build out of transport infrastructure, as an integral part of the RSES. Also, there is considerable scope for expansion of port and airport infrastructure and support services to ensure that these strong regional assets are maximised for the benefit of the state as a whole.

Recent consultations with Irish Water suggest that, while there may be some current issues with distribution networks and treatment capacity in our larger urban centres, significant levels of growth in the larger Regional Cities and Towns can be readily be provided for over the next twenty-five years.

In relation to waste water infrastructure, achieving compliance with discharge authorisation limits is one Irish Water’s priorities. Discharge authorisation limits are influenced by the quality objectives and protection status of the receiving water body.

The following are some of the larger urban centres in the Southern Region that discharge to protected or Nutrient Sensitive waters:

- Cork City discharges to Cork Harbour SAC which is also classed as nutrient sensitive
- Limerick City discharges to the Shannon Estuary SAC
- Ennis also discharges to the Shannon Estuary and to Nutrient Sensitive waters
- Tralee discharges to an SPA and nutrient sensitive waters
- Kilkenny, Carlow and Clonmel discharge to nutrient sensitive waters
- Waterford discharges to the Suir SAC



The requirement to meet established water quality objectives does not necessarily preclude the further expansion of a treatment plant to cater for further growth but it can lead to an increased cost of treatment which must be budgeted for. Most of the treatment works in the above urban centres have some spare capacity for treating additional sewage load although not all of the treatment plants are currently compliant with their discharge authorisation. To address these potential constraints, Irish Water and the SRA anticipate that the NPF will provide a level of certainty in relation to the funding and delivery of the necessary water services infrastructure to support the spatial and economic strategies of region.



Many smaller towns and village require significant investment in appropriately scaled water treatment plants. This investment will enable the more rural parts of the region to meet established water quality standards and will allow them to share in the benefits of anticipated population and economic growth. As this infrastructure is urgently needed, the SRA would welcome the introduction of legislative and regulatory reforms to expedite the planning process for strategic water services projects.

Continued investment in human capital and innovation is necessary to ensure that we continue to have a talented pool of people skilled in areas necessary to support the careers and industries of the future. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 recommended the consolidation of the Institute of Technology sector and the creation of a small number of multi-campus

technological universities which has the potential to further strengthen higher education provision in the regions, supporting indigenous enterprise through skills development and innovation and becoming an important differentiator in attracting foreign direct investment. The SRA fully support this proposal and will ensure that the RSES encourages and provides for greater regional collaboration among education and training providers as well as supports for centres of research and innovation.

The Southern Region has significant research and innovation capability with institutions working with local authorities, state agencies, academia, businesses and communities and working within our region's strong performing economic sectors and assets. Examples in the Southern Region include: Tyndall National Institute, Nimbus Centre, Rubicon Centre, IMERC & UCC's Beaufort Laboratory, Limerick for IT & Limerick for Engineering, Shannon Applied Biotechnology Centre (Shannon ABC), IT Carlow's strategic research areas including, EnviroCORE, DesignCORE, GameCORE, GeoCORE, HealthCORE, SecurityCORE and The Dargan Centre and WITs three main areas of research for development: Telecoms ICT (TSSG); Pharmaceutical Science & Molecular Biotechnology (PMBRC) and Eco-Innovation (EIRC); and Advanced Manufacturing. It is vital that these assets are supported and expanded to ensure that there are enough well-trained graduates in the region to support the demand of the modern knowledge economy and so as to ensure that the region continued to be at the forefront of research in these sectors.

Securing direct international connections (blackhaul routes) from the South Coast will enhance the competitiveness of our cities and region in turn. It is significant therefore that a direct connection from Ireland to the fibre optic cable connection between North America and Europe (the Hibernia Express Link) was made at Garretstown, Kinsale, Co. Cork in August 2015. This connection provides the potential for direct high speed transatlantic inter-net connectivity and a major economic catalyst for the south of the country.



One of the issues that arises repeatedly in discussions with public representatives and rural stakeholders is the very serious impact that the lack of high-speed broadband availability is having on the ability of people in rural areas to conduct business, study or access services that people in the urban areas take for granted. As a matter of urgency, the SRA seeks the immediate roll out of National Broadband Plan throughout the region to unlock the potential of all our rural areas and smaller towns and villages which are fundamental to their maintenance and prosperity.

### 13. Implementation

One of the principal functions of the Regional Assembly is to co-ordinate, promote and support strategic planning and sustainable development of the region. As such, the SRA has a vital leadership role to play in identifying regional policies and coordinating initiatives that support the delivery and implementation of national planning policy. It is also the role of the Assembly to co-ordinate local authorities to secure shared national and local objectives. The primary vehicle for this is the preparation and implementation of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) which will provide a greater level of focus around the high level strategic policies of the NPF.

Given the critical role that the Regional Assemblies will have in coordinating initiatives that support the delivery and implementation of national planning policy, it is essential that the Assemblies are fully integrated into the various organisational structures that will be required to deliver, implement and monitor the NPF.

Because of the overlapping nature of the monitoring requirements of the NPF and the RSES, three Regional Assemblies will continue to work closely with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. To formalise this close working relationship, the SRA suggest that a combined NPF & RSES Monitoring Committee be established

To ensure effective delivery of the policies and objectives as set out in the NPF it is vital that monitoring is based on an agreed and published set of **key indicators** that will measure NPF effectiveness and outcomes to feed back into further implementation, review and updating. All government agencies and public bodies should be required to design their data collection and analysis in such a way as to support and inform these key indicators at national, regional, strategic planning area (SPA) and county level.



The three Regional Assemblies are currently defining the set of key regional indicators to be used for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the three RSESs. The Regional Assemblies are focusing in particular on indicators that measure regional performance in terms of social, economic and environmental progress and its drivers, such as productivity and its levers. It is hoped that the NPF will set out a similar set of key indicators which the regional indicators can be aligned with so that national and regional planning policy can be monitored on a consistent basis across the country.

Also, the three regional assemblies have developed the concept of regional data system and regional dashboard (RDS-RD) to design the architecture (with key stakeholders) and to put in place key data gathering systems that will measure RSES effectiveness. This could inform

progress and outcomes at the NPF level, to feed back into further implementations.

Finally, there is the matter of financial support to ensure implementation of the National Planning Framework. It is envisaged that the NPF will provide spatial clarity and co-ordination that will be supported by future Capital Investment Plans. To demonstrate clear alignment between Capital Investment Plans and the objectives and priorities of the NPF, the SRA suggests that clear statements of such alignment should be a mandatory requirement in each instance.

The actual choice of investment decisions and between specific projects as well as issues of affordability will need to be considered against the background of the NPF with the most significant nationally strategic projects clearly identified. This will provide a degree of certainty that will provide a context within which the Regional Assemblies can articulate regional policies and priorities in support of, and giving effect to, agreed national policy.

## 14. Key Recommendations

1. The NPF must clearly demonstrate that **effective regional development is not only good for the regions but is also good for the Greater Dublin Area** through improved competitiveness, prosperity and quality of life for all parts of the country.
2. The Southern Regional Assembly welcomes the clear recognition in the NPF Issues and Choices Paper of the leadership role that the Regional Assemblies will play in identifying regional policies and coordinating initiatives that support the delivery and implementation of national planning policy and in co-ordinating local authorities to secure shared national and local objectives. In this regard, **the SRA look forward to playing an active role, throughout the various stages of the NPF process, in developing a strategic vision for the Southern Region and State as a whole.**
3. The Southern Region has a wealth of latent under-developed potential which can be harnessed and delivered through supportive policies and investment decision so that future **growth in the Southern Region can act as an effective counter-balance to the Greater Dublin Area.**
4. The **three Regional Cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford** both individually and collectively have the potential to act as engines of growth within the southern region, but require a step-change in approach to significantly increase their existing population bases.
5. The key to unlocking the potential of each of the Regional Cities is investment in enabling infrastructure to allow large “brownfield” sites, such as underutilised or redundant dockland sites, vacant city centre lots and transitional edge of centre locations to be redeveloped to deliver **high density, high quality, mixed-use urban environments.**
6. Significantly **improved connectivity between the three Regional Cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford** is essential if they are to work together to act as a viable counter-balance to Dublin.
7. The Regional Cities are supported by a number of **key County Towns** such as Carlow, Clonmel, Ennis, Kilkenny, Tralee, and Wexford, and that provide essential services and growth poles outside of the immediate catchments of the Regional Cities and the NPF needs to acknowledge the important role that these Regional Towns play.
8. To support our rural communities and our smaller towns and villages, it is **important that local services are enhanced** through the provision of support for rural GPs, ongoing development of the primary care sector to deliver better care close to home, support for the rural post office network to adapt to a changing business environment, local schools and community centres, and public transport/rural transport services.
9. Development of the rural economy and social fabric should be strongly promoted and the **phenomenon of urban-generated development in rural areas needs to be tackled** in the NPF and the RSEs.
10. The NPF needs to set a clear context for **Marine Spatial Planning** addressing issues such as: commercial ports; fisheries and fishing ports; marine industry; energy infrastructure; and tourism, on a regional basis aligned with the emerging Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.
11. Thorough analysis of industrial activity, specialisation and concentration is required to establish a **robust evidence base** to highlight the extent of regional economic potential.

12. The NPF needs to include a clear recognition of the need for **closer collaboration between the local authorities and the Regional Assemblies in relation to environmental protection** as the Regional Assemblies will have an important leadership role, through the RSES process, to ensure that a consistent approach is followed across administrative agencies and boundaries.
13. **Addressing the distances between people's homes and their places of work/study** is the one area where the planning system can have the greatest impact of people's well-being and quality of life as well as addressing wider societal issues such as the location and maintenance of essential social services.
14. The NPF needs to provide a level of **certainty in relation to the funding and delivery of the necessary transportation and environmental infrastructure** to support the spatial and economic strategies of region.
15. Continued **investment in human capital and innovation** is necessary to ensure that we continue to have a talented pool of people skilled in areas necessary to support the careers and industries of the future.
16. As a matter of urgency, the Southern Regional Assembly seek the **immediate roll out of National Broadband Plan** throughout the region to unlock the potential of all our rural areas and smaller towns and villages.
17. NPF monitoring should be based on an agreed set of **key indicators**. All government agencies and public bodies should be required to design their data collection and analysis in such a way as to support and inform these key indicators at national, regional, strategic planning area (SPA) and county level.
18. Because of the overlapping nature of the monitoring requirements of the NPF and the RSES, the SRA recommends that a **combined NPF & RSES Monitoring Committee** be established.

### **The Southern Region – A Region of Opportunity**

*An attractive, competitive and sustainable place to live, work and visit, a region of considerable opportunity for growth based on the quality of its cities, towns and rural areas, well developed physical and social infrastructure, a diverse modern economy and a pristine natural environment*

# **ADDENDUM**

Summary of submissions made directly to the NPF Project Team during the initial public consultation phase by the ten local authorities in the Southern Region

Note: The attached are only summaries of the more detailed submissions made by local authorities in the Southern Region and are only intended to highlight some of the issues arising from those submissions and should not be construed as a commentary or analysis of those more detailed submission which have been submitted directly to the NPF Project Team.





# Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Waterford City and County Council

## Our Regional Cities and Towns

- Waterford City to double its population – grow by at least 50,000 by 2040
- Polycentric arrangement with ‘Sister’ – Cork and Limerick in all “functions” – Education /Research, Commerce, employment, financial, political (Reg Assembly) – (Golden Triangle Concept) so as to become a true counter magnet to Dublin.
- University for SE focused on Waterford City Campus – has to have equal footing to other universities
- Employment creation – to maximise industrial/commercial potential for SE – promote High end employment.
- Expand housing and community so as to retain and increase population numbers.
- Create better Commercial /Retailing destination – encourage extra footfall to refocus the City as the Reg Capital for all functions, including Retail destination.
- WUH – expand as required to provide 1<sup>st</sup> class Regional health care and provide the meaningful function for the other hospital of the Region.
- NQ SDZ development – key site to transform City into the future. (See infrastructural provision)
- Expand tourism in the region – in particular ‘cruise’ tourism in Waterford Port/Dunmore East /Rosslare
- Relocate Rail terminus into NQ Area
- Extend Waterford Airport Runway to accommodate Jet Carriers and increase passenger numbers and flight options.

## The Potential of our Rural Areas

- Strong Towns –Dungarvan & Tramore
- Seven Villages with newly constructed ‘state of the art’ Waste Water Treatment Plants
- Fertile, productive agricultural land with highly developed, technologically based, agricultural operational systems.
- Excellent natural environment, including, mountains, uplands, rivers, valleys
- Excellent heritage /cultural Tourism potential
- Good road connectivity to adjoining counties and to larger cities
- Greenway walking/cycling route Dungarvan to Waterford City and connectivity to Kilkenny/Wexford Green – Blue ways

## Integrated Land and Marine Development

- Extensive coastline and maritime ports, fisheries and marine tourism potential – Helvick, DME, Passage East, Waterford Port are the ports of high activity in fishing, processing, cargo, Tourism –day time (beaches), and hotels, Clonea, Ardmore and Tramore.
- Oil /Gas exploration, off the south coast, further potential for integrated land/maritime development.
- Renewable Energy development Wave and Wind potential off shore development.

## Investment in Enabling Infrastructure

- The NQ SDZ requires pedestrian /light public bus transport bridge to link from South to North Quays
- Further Bridge Crossings required downstream of Rice Bridge to improve connectivity to the expanding City and realise the Waterford City PLUTS Study Proposals 2004-2020
- The Rail Terminus is to be relocated into the NQ area to provide greater accessibility for mainline rail passengers to the City Centre.
- The Airport Runway has to be extended to beyond 22,000m to facilitate large “Jets” and attract larger carriers, greater travel routes, and larger passenger numbers.
- The Technological University based in the City with outreaches to other centres in the Region. The University has to have equal status as other national universities.
- UHW has to be expanded as a Regional Hospital of excellence, providing all acute medical services as for other Regional hospitals.

## Economic Progress

- Waterford City has many large industries with considerable employment potential.
- In the recent past The City has attracted ‘high technology’ industrial development with “pharma” medical devices, etc clustering in the city.
- Greater R&D facilities through WIT (SE Technological University) with specific linkages to High End Industrial Developments will accelerate inward industrial activity.
- There is a need to grow the Office /financial service industry in the City – the ‘Brexit’ position provides the opportunity to attract high end office activity to Waterford, in particular as the rental office sector in Dublin has overheated.

## Protecting our Environment

- The Natural and Built environment of Waterford and surrounding Counties is of excellent quality. The land is of excellent productive quality and agricultural practices are well developed.
- Planning & Environmental Policies have historically been very strong with emphasis on maintaining the quality environment.
- The location in the South East of Ireland means that the climate is more moderate, with greater sunshine than other parts of Ireland
- Greater awareness of Renewable Energy and the role it will play in reducing GHG and climate change has been highlighted in the recently produced Waterford RE Strategy, a collaboration between Planning and The Waterford Energy Bureau
- The larger towns of Waterford have ‘state of the art’ wwtp and in the last year the 7 Village schemes have been completed which increases the locations for additional housing potential and job creation in these strategic towns/villages.
- Water supply is plentiful with the EW Regional Treatment Plant providing clean water to the entire east of the County and City.
- There is a strong culture of protecting the landscape, wildlife, tree cover, and heritage areas, including coastal slob lands and inland wildlife areas. The EU sites are well provided for with good controls in place.

## People’s Health and Well-Being

- The excellent communications structures, town/village settlements, public services and back up services means that health and wellbeing is well developed.

# Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Tipperary County Council

## Our Regional Cities and Towns

- Tipperary has a very strong urban network of Towns, which are important growth centres in their own right and drivers of their local economy. The NPF needs to recognise the importance of these Towns in accommodating future growth and ensure that investment is made in infrastructure to support development.
- Support and invest in Strategic Employment Land Banks, through investment in infrastructure and promotion by the IDA and EI of these sites for large scale employment uses in our towns.
- Recognise the potential of 'branding' to promote the unique characteristics and potential of key towns.
- Develop a framework for Town Centre Action Plans to enable and resource local authorities to assist businesses and communities in realising their potential. Ensure investment in civic improvement works, to showcase heritage assets and enhance town centre public realm and function.
- Revise guidelines for town centre living, taking account to of changing demographics and rural expectation, and seek to incentivise town centre buildings and sites for residential use.
- The NPF should deliver a spatial planning framework which identifies, supports and drives the economic and social development of the 'Mid-West Limerick City Region' and the 'South-East Waterford City Region', both of which Tipperary is an integral part.

## The Potential of our Rural Areas

- Establish the 'Re-vitalisation of Rural Villages' as a core national objective, endorse actions contained in the Rural Development Action Plan and ensure that critical infrastructure is provided to facilitate growth and development.
- Stimulate residential development by provision of a 'Rural Settlement' investment scheme in waste water infrastructure, based on the County Settlement Hierarchies.
- Support the development of low-density cluster developments in villages.
- Increase support/funding for Town and Village Enhancement Schemes
- Recognise Tipperary's comparative advantages as a leader in driving a national renewable energy and bio-economy sector and support and incentivise development of these sectors in the county.
- Recognise the changing nature of the rural economy and opportunities for developmental of technological enterprises e.g. ICT, multi-media etc.
- Recognise the importance of the agricultural sector and its contribution to the agri-food economy.

## Integrated Land and Marine Development

Whilst Tipperary has no access to the coast, the ability of the county and its settlements to easily connect to the ports in Cork, Limerick and Waterford for freight imports and exports along with visitor access is critical for economic growth in the county, in this respect, the N24 and the national rail network is vital for Tipperary.

## Investment in Enabling Infrastructure

- The National Broadband Plan should be delivered as a matter of priority ensuring effective broadband in all areas of the country.
- The provision of a new Motorway between Limerick and Waterford cities (up-grade of the N24) and Link to Cork City via Cahir (M8) is critical for Tipperary and the region.
- Provision of the Killaloe Bypass / Shannon Bridge and R494 improvement & up-grade of Nenagh to Thurles Regional Road (R498) and provision of Thurles and Tipperary Town by-passes is necessary.
- Retention and enhancement of services of the Nenagh to Limerick Commuter line, the Limerick-Waterford and the Nenagh-Ballybrophy Railway Lines.
- Increased investment in the Rural Road Network
- Increased investment in the rural bus network and retention and enhancement of inter-regional bus services.
- Prepare a National Heat Plan, with the purpose of establishing how Ireland can achieve sustainable heating in cities, towns and rural areas through natural resources and technologies such as District Heating.

## Economic Progress

- Support and invest in delivery of objectives set out in the Mid-West and South East Regional Action Plan for Jobs.
- Recognise Tipperary as a designated European Model Demonstrator for the bio-economy and support the development of the Lisheen site as a centre for research and development in the bio-economy.
- Support the identification of Strategy Energy Zones in Tipperary having regard to the county's advantages in natural renewable energy resources, infrastructure, knowledge base and human capital.
- Support the development of a National Food Centre of Excellence in Tipperary.
- Include a commitment on the development of planning policy that will support community investment in renewable energy development and also community led approach to better energy efficiency.
- Recognise Tipperary sustainable tourism assets and support the development and promotion of Irelands Ancient East.
- Identify the Lough Derg/Lakelands and the Munster Vales areas as internationally and nationally important locations and support investment in the successful delivery of these destination plans.

## Protecting our Environment

- Develop new national planning policy on renewable energy development to reflect developments in new technologies for example solar, bio-energy while protecting of environmental assets.
- Prepare a National Landscape Character Assessment, to identify and market key landscape assets in the country, to support the development of planning policy for landscape management in general, and to assist in the delivery of a nationally consistent approach to planning policy for new development etc.
- Identify our bog lands as national strategic assets; invest in the protection and enhancement of their bio-diversity, and invest in their use for sustainable economic, tourism and educational facilities.
- Prepare National Heat Plan, with the purpose of establishing how Ireland can achieve sustainable heating in cities, towns and rural areas through natural resources and technologies such as District Heating.

## People's Health and Well-Being

- Ensure the retention of and enhancement of services at Clonmel and Nenagh Hospitals and provision of Primary Care Centres in key settlements.
- Ensure the provision of services in rural areas to maintain and support the sustainability of communities.
- Prioritise investment in multi-purpose facilities, which enable a wide range of services to be provided (health, recreation, social, economic) to be accessible to our rural populations.
- Provide national planning guidelines which apply the concepts of "**lifetime neighbourhoods**", to include a variety of facilities including housing provision, resources for the young, community centres, health services etc.
- Provide national planning guidelines, which required the principals of universal design to be applied in public realm schemes.
- Support the provision of Third Level facilities in rural areas, to provide cost effective educational opportunities (through ICT etc.) to all sectors of the population.
- Provide supports for our ageing population.



# Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Limerick City and County Council

## Our Regional Cities and Towns

- Limerick is strategically positioned nationally to develop and expand as an urban engine for growth and to become a global centre of economic activity, acting as a counterpoint to Dublin and contributing significantly to the international competitiveness of the Country.
- The NPF must seek to provide effective regional development by developing city regions like Limerick and providing the necessary investment to provide much needed infrastructure to allow this growth. The NPF should promote the significant growth of Limerick, particularly having regard to its strategic central location relative to Dublin, Galway and Cork and also recognising the strong governance structures that exist to make this growth happen.
- Examine mechanisms to rejuvenate our City Centre and encourage residential redevelopment of “Georgian Limerick”.
- NPF should recognise Kilmallock and Newcastle West as key service towns.

## The Potential of our Rural Areas

- There is a need to rejuvenate our towns and villages. Therefore, the NPF should support investment in physical and social infrastructure, including upgrade of wastewater and water services, retention of schools within rural areas, public transport and a roll out of rural broadband.

## Integrated Land and Marine Development

- Continue to support the implementation of the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan and recognise the importance of the Shannon Estuary to the region.
- Promotion of the Strategic Development Sites on the Shannon Estuary as set out in the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan. Prioritise the delivery of the proposed Foynes to Limerick Road Improvement Scheme and rail link and give further promotion to the role and expansion of Foynes Port, recognising its status as a Tier 1 port of national significance.

## Investment in Enabling Infrastructure

- The key to unlocking the potential of Limerick City and County is investment in infrastructure, not only will this make the City and County more competitive, but it will also allow the region to grow. The key areas of investment include:
  - Develop a motorway from Limerick to Cork;
  - Upgrade the N24 up to and including motorway standard;
  - Development of a Limerick Northern Distributor Road – this would improve interconnectivity in the region, with improved access to the University of Limerick and the IDA national technology park, which would also facilitate significant expansion of both areas;
  - Develop the Foynes to Limerick connection;
  - To improve the attractiveness and functionality of our key towns as places to live and work in, bypasses/distributor roads are required for the following towns: Adare, Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale.
- Support the continued expansion of the third level Institutes in Limerick.

## Economic Progress

- We need to become a smart region, to allow for the increase in use of technology and consider the impact that this will have on lifestyle and jobs. Limerick City and County Council are currently implementing a digital strategy and should therefore be recognised as leading the way on this initiative.
- Develop and promote the food production industry, particularly indigenous producers and growers.
- Promote Limerick City and County as a sporting and leisure destination, harnessing the River Shannon as the key jewel in the Region and contributing to the economic development of the county.
- Continue to support the implementation of the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan and recognise the importance of the Shannon Estuary to the region.

## Protecting our Environment

## People's Health and Well-Being

- Ensure universal access in all future developments, so that it allows integration of all members of society.

# Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Wexford County Council

## Our Regional Cities and Towns

- Supports the development of Waterford City to grow to 100,000 people in order to reach the economies of scale necessary for the region to succeed.
- In order for the South East to achieve a strong City Region, there is a requirement to grow Wexford Town to 35-40,000 people and Gorey, Enniscorthy and New Ross to 15-20,000 people.
- It must also be acknowledged that the Dublin region will continue to be an attractive location for commuters.
- Development of a University of the South East is critical to the provision of affordable and accessible educational opportunities and the economic development of the region.
- Current deficiencies at 2<sup>nd</sup> Level Schools within the County must be address urgently.
- Promote up-skilling of workforce along with accessible education, to make Wexford more attractive for jobs investment including FDI and to reduce the high dependence of the workforce on traditionally lower paid industries.

## The Potential of our Rural Areas

- Promote attractiveness of rural towns and villages as viable places to live and work.
- Retention of population requires jobs, and sufficient water and sewerage capacity.
- Requires town and village renewal investment and amenity improvements.
- Continued investment in the social and physical infrastructure of villages will also be critical to retain strong rural communities.

## Integrated Land and Marine Development

- Further investment in the development of Rosslare Europort to maximise freight and passenger transport by rail, to deepen and extend the port to maximise development.
- Promote and support innovation by adding value to seafood products and diversifying the local economies in these coastal areas towards new economic activities, particularly in the broader maritime sector.
- Coastal protection/ flood protection to established settlements.

## **Investment in Enabling Infrastructure**

- Completion of the M11 to Wexford and N25 Wexford to Rosslare Harbour
- Connection of New Ross to the M9
- Delivery of the broadband infrastructure throughout the County
- Ensure the retention and expansion of services on the Dublin to Rosslare Port in passenger travel, and to promote the use of freight on the line
- Retention and expansion of the bus network including linkages to the Towns within the Region as well as services to Waterford and the capital.
- Extension of the energy networks including the Gas Network
- Ensure effluent treatment plants have sufficient capacity to meet population targets, particularly for the main towns of Wexford, Enniscorthy, Gorey and New Ross.
- Upgrade N30 and N80 from Enniscorthy and improve N25 from Wexford to Waterford.

## **Economic Progress**

- Growth and attractiveness of the towns and cities is contingent on creating new employment opportunities and supporting existing industries.
- Preparation and implementation of strategies to grow indigenous industries and lay the ground for inward investment opportunities as an attractive alternative to Dublin.
- Investment made by the Council will require continued support and partnership from Government agencies.
- The development of the service/financial support industries is seen as a key growth area for the County.

## **Protecting our Environment**

- Complete upgrade of smaller town and village sewerage treatment system where inadequate.

## **People's Health and Well-Being**

- The protection and expansion of the University Hospital in Waterford benefits the residents of County Wexford and is supported by the County Council.
- The County Hospitals have a key role in providing general services, including A& E, alongside the specialist services provided by the University Hospital.
- Need to continue with the investment in primary care facilities and roll out development in the towns of Gorey, Enniscorthy and New Ross for expanding aging population.
- The continued need to develop mental health services within the County. The current deficiencies in this service must be improved to support those in need.
- New housing solutions need to take account of the aging population and the likely reliance on social housing to provide affordable, safe and warm accommodation.

# Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Cork City Council

## Our Regional Cities and Towns

**Cork 2050** –is a Joint Cork City Council/ Cork County Council strategy for the development of Cork to 2050 and forms the basis for this submission.

### **National Role, Complementary to Dublin and Regional Growth Driver**

Cork City Council supports the proposition posed in the NPF Issues and Choices paper of the designation of one or more regional cities as a Counter Magnet to Dublin, in the national as well as regional interests. Cork is the largest urban centre outside Dublin, and has a critical mass of population, jobs, services, proven growth potential and connectivity to allow it to act in a complementary role with Dublin at National level as well as to act as the Regional Driver of Growth for the Southern Region. Cork will work collaboratively throughout the Southern Region, particularly with Limerick, Waterford, Kerry and Tipperary to deliver sustainable growth. Cork's sphere of influence will not only benefit the Region but also areas further afield along the burgeoning Atlantic Economic Corridor. Cork 2050 provides the evidence base to show that Cork has the capacity and is the best location nationally to deliver escalated growth (21% of estimated National population growth), to relieve pressure on Dublin and drive growth in the Region. The strategy will deliver a critical mass within Cork Metropolitan Area of over 500,000 people, and create up to 120,000 jobs in Cork by 2050, underpinned by high capacity public transport corridors and a compact form of development. Cork city centre will continue to be the cultural, social and commercial heart of Cork and needs to be further revitalised through upgrading the public realm, re-using vacant space, tackling dereliction, as well as development of new office, retail and residential space. The North and South Docks and Tivoli provide unique brownfield development opportunities of 180 hectares, where new high density sustainable mixed use urban quarters can be created. Delivery of this opportunity will require national and inter-local authority support for enabling mechanisms such as relocation of incompatible uses and delivery of key infrastructure

## The Potential of Our Rural Areas

While this topic does not directly relate to Cork City, Cork City Council supports the policies contained in the Cork 2050 strategy, for Towns, Villages and Rural Area. Cork 2050 puts forward an integrated approach which seeks to maximise the opportunities from the strengths of each individual area, and endeavour to create a cohesive, integrated, mutually reinforcing whole of County approach—the 'Cork Proposition'. These areas collaborate with and deliver for the whole of Cork and indeed the Southern Region and Ireland as a whole.

## Integrated Land and Marine Development

Cork City is historically a Port city and a waterfront city located in the inner reaches of Cork Harbour. The overall harbour is of great economic as well as amenity value to the city and region and the City Council supports to relocation and expansion of Port of Cork to the lower harbour. There is also great potential for expansion of marine and energy related industries and research institutes in and around the city and harbour. The development of the amenity and tourism of assets such as the network of Military forts around the harbour, including Elizabeth Fort, which is located in Cork City, also needs to be supported. The wider coastline of Cork County also offers a significant amenity and recreational asset for the region.

## Peoples Health, Well-Being and Place Making

The focus of Cork 2050 is to deliver a sustainable scale of growth for Cork whilst retaining its high quality of life, health and well being. A Place Making Strategy has been developed that focuses on: Health and Well being, Quality of Place, Social Sustainability, Accessibility, and Vibrancy and Activity. Actions include (1) developing a city of successful neighbourhoods based on best practice internationally, such as the 5 minute city concept, (2) to promote quality of life, health and well being, (3) supporting a vibrant and diverse city centre as the Healthy Heart of the Region, (4) delivery of docklands redevelopment to create new sustainable places with a unique identity,(5) improving accessibility and ease of movement for all through facilitating public transport, (6) walking and cycling, expansion of healthcare to serve the escalated population and (6) providing housing that is appropriate to the diverse needs of residents, including older people and families.



## Investment in Enabling Infrastructure

The Cork 2050 strategy proposes targeted growth along increased density corridors, with delivery of transport, water, energy and ICT infrastructure which is future-proofed and supports competitiveness, climate change adaptation and quality of life. Infrastructural proposals include:

- Targeting growth along Key Transport Corridors – This proposes the provision of a high capacity East West Rapid Transit Corridor, (BRT and in time LRT) serving Ballincollig, City Centre, Docklands and Mahon; and expansion of the commuter rail service on the Midleton, Cobh and Mallow commuter lines. These Rapid Transport lines will be supported by a Core Bus Service. An outcome will be that 87% of people living in Metropolitan Cork will be within 1km of a bus service and 65% will be within 1km of a Rapid Transit system.
- Promote Sustainable Land Use & Transport - Coordinate land use and infrastructure investment to reduce the need to travel, and measures to enable walking, cycling and public transport use
- Support for strategic roads infrastructure providing local and regional connectivity including the N28, Dunkettle , Cork Northern Ring Road and the M20, and the Docklands access bridges.
- Capitalise on existing water infrastructure capacity, and continue steady investment to 2050
- Support for the expansion of Port of Cork and relocation to Ringaskiddy, which will also release brownfield lands for development in the city
- Support for expansion of Cork Airport.
- Accelerate Broadband rollout, and maximise potential of international Tier 1 digital connectivity
- Exploit Cork’s potential for sustainable energy generation, matched by energy efficiency improvements in transport and the built environment
- Development of recreational and amenity facilities (e.g. Marina Park and Tramore Valley Park )
- Make provision for enhanced healthcare, including the provision of a second major hospital, to complement CUH
- Expand educational and training provision including expansion of third level education, support for research and innovation and increase in foreign students

## Economic Progress

Cork 2050 puts forward an economic strategy which sees the delivery of 120,000 jobs by 2050. It proposes developing Cork’s economic strengths so that it remains highly productive and competitive in the short term, but also equipped to adapt to and drive change over the longer term. It identifies 5 pillars of Intervention: (1) People - Skills/Research/Education,(2) Economic conditions - Floorspace/quality of life/housing (3) Connectivity - ICT/Global Connectivity (4) Business Development - Innovation/Entrepreneurialism (5) Organisational - Governance/Promotion & marketing. Target Growth Sectors for Cork: Pharma, Bio-Pharma & Healthcare, Energy & Maritime, Agriculture & Food & Agri—Tech, Financial & Business Services & Fintech, Leisure & Tourism, Technology & Research, Education. Cork City has seen a 10% growth in employment over the last 5 years, much of it due to expansion and development of FDI companies as well as expansion of local services such as cafes and restaurants. There is a need to supplement this by supports for indigenous industries into the future to ensure that we continue to have a diverse and balanced economy. Expansion of the city centre and redevelopment of Docklands will provide opportunities for development of floorspace to meet the needs of sectors such as Technology, Education, and Financial Services, as well as service, cultural and social functions.

## Protecting Our Environment

Cork has significant potential to grow whilst adapting to climate change and taking advantage of the opportunities presented by a low carbon future.

Cork is unique in its ability to contribute towards the shift to a low carbon future grounded in capacity and potential for sustainable energy generation. Key initiatives include (1) Cork harbour will become a Strategic National Energy Zone, (2) Be a ‘first mover’ for Marine Spatial Planning, (3) Invest in areas which generate growth in the Blue Economy, (4) Embrace the potential for technology to improve water management, (5) Reduce emissions through the deliver of high capacity public transport, (6) Manage Cork’s Green Infrastructure sustainably, enhancing its social and economic functionality, (7) Create a diverse network of amenity and recreation spaces and green links, integrated into sustainable urban quarters, (8) Protect and utilise the unique and varied built heritage and character of Cork City, Towns, Villages, Rural Areas and Islands and (9) Make strategic choices in terms of energy efficiency including energy efficiency technologies across the economy .

# Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Cork County Council

## Our Regional Towns and Cities

Metropolitan Cork is recognised as the key driver of sustainable growth in the Region. The SRA should refer to Metropolitan Cork rather than use the term City Region. A similar approach across the State would reflect the fact that multiple administrative areas contribute to the success of all 5 Cities. The term Metropolitan is more accurate, inclusive and collaborative than the term City Region. In the context of the State and Southern Region, Metropolitan Cork should be given appropriate policy recognition as the complementary location to the GDA/Dublin. Metropolitan Cork includes part of the administrative area of Cork County Council and all of Cork City Council. There should be a differentiation (in policy, alignment of Govt Policy and investment prioritisation terms) between Metropolitan Cork and the Limerick & Waterford Metropolitan Areas – an approach adopted in the NPF Issues Document (but which refers to Cork City/City Region rather than Metropolitan Cork). Our opinion is informed by 40+ years experience of strategic, integrated land use and transportation planning and evidence-based analysis that shows Cork has the capacity to drive balanced regional development through collaboration. **Refer to Cork 2050 Submission for further evidence base on how this opinion is formed.** Cork 2050 illustrates that Cork has the capacity to accommodate escalated rates of population and economic growth. By 2050 Cork can accommodate +300,000 people and +120,000 new employment opportunities. In this scenario, Metropolitan Cork will accommodate 500,000, an internationally significant population threshold in terms of driving growth on behalf of the State.

## The Potential of our Rural Areas

Cork 2050 seeks to recognise the strategic importance of rural areas, in addition to acknowledging the important role rural areas can play in contributing to and supporting Metropolitan Drivers of Growth. It may be argued that in many ways the success of the NPF may be measured by how the drivers of growth ensure rural areas and communities outside Metropolitan areas can deliver on their unique potential. Consideration should be given to what we mean by the term rural area. It may be open countryside or could include villages and certain towns. Consideration also needs to be given as to whether rural areas share characteristics with villages, towns and perhaps even locations within Metropolitan Areas and Cities. The integrated Cork 2050 'whole of County' proposition suggests we can begin understand the complex issues effecting the many different type of rural areas/communities by 'Place Profiling' and in this context a framework for place profiling has been proposed which could provide indicators for identifying the range of community typologies including (i) Demographic structure, (ii) Deprivation index, (iii) Vibrancy of community, (iv) Services availability, (v) Proximity, (vi) Enterprise and industry (vii) Environment and (viii) Housing Security. The NPF should ensure rural areas are understood. Sustainable development should not be concerned with imposing policies to 'manage' rural areas. Cork 2050 proposes an 'Enterprise Model' for community development based on principles of sustainability, accessibility, facilitating and enabling, and climate change mitigation. It is an approach based on helping communities to work with stakeholders and agencies to develop actions for delivery and which will assist the process of obtaining funds, delivery of services etc. In this context Cork 2050 includes a list of Key Actions that may be applied across towns, villages, rural areas and islands across the State and which include roll out of broadband, establishment of local enterprise zones, active development of global markets for rural based industry etc.

## Economic Progress

Cork 2050 sets out 6 sectors that will form the long-term focus of Cork's economy, and the global, macro trends which these sectors will grow and develop into (i) Pharma, Bio-Pharma, Healthcare & Life Sciences, (ii) Energy & Maritime, (iii) Agriculture & Food and Agri-Tech, (iv) Financial & Business Services & Fin Tech (v) Leisure & Tourism, (vi) Technology & Research, (vii) Education. The economic development scenario model indicates employment growth potential of up to 120,000 additional jobs to 2050 across a range of sectors. Cork 2050 sets out the following 5 Pillars of Intervention to assist in creating the circumstances for delivery based on the following key areas: (1) People – Skills/Research/Education, (2) Economic Conditions – Floorspace/Quality of Life/Housing, (3) Connectivity – ICT/Global Connectivity, (4) Business Development – Innovation/Entrepreneurialism, (5) Organisational – Governance/Promotion & Marketing. It is a stated objective that by 2040, subject to implementation of the Cork 2050 strategy, Cork will have a resilient and diverse economy that creates on average over 3,500 jobs per annum by building on comparative advantages and growing indigenous businesses. Please Note: Economic growth is also being pursued outside Metropolitan Cork, including in the key sectors of Agriculture & Food, Agri-Tech, Technology, Tourism, Marine & Fisheries, Energy (such economic growth will also drive sustainable and appropriate population growth). From a tourism perspective it is significant that both the Wild Atlantic Way and Irelands Ancient East meet/start/end in Cork. Metropolitan Cork has port and airport (each with both freight and passenger traffic services) and can connect goods and people, including tourists, throughout Cork and the Region. Both the Port and Airport have existing capacity to deliver on behalf of the Region and State. Strategic Tourism Projects include Spike Island, Camden Fort Meagher, Dursley Cable Car, Mallow Castle, Famine Museum, Proposals for Marinas along the West coast, Further development of cruise-liner facilities and services at Cobh and Bantry.

## Integrated Land and Marine Development

Marine spatial planning is essential to the effective management and utilisation of the marine environment including exploitation of energy resources. It requires coordination and potential integration with terrestrial planning. Cork has a range of assets in this context including Cork Harbour (internationally recognised as one of the deepest in the world), longest coastline of any county in the country, brownfield opportunities at Dockland locations, a Tier 1 port, significant tourism assets including marinas, Spike Island, the Wild Atlantic Way, naval service, extensive research & development investments as well as energy production, oil refining etc. Furthermore Castletownbere is recognised as a national asset within the fisheries sector while Bantry Harbour has significant development potential – including to augment the successful cruise liner services at Cobh. In this context Cork is uniquely positioned to play a lead role in the integration of marine and terrestrial planning, not least in terms of conservation and landscape protection. Accordingly it is a stated aim of Cork 2050 that Cork becomes a 'first mover' in Marine Spatial Planning.

## Investment in Enabling Infrastructure

From a cost benefit analysis perspective it could be argued that in prioritizing the investment projects listed below and in the Cork 2050 submission, the Government would be investing where there is a demonstrable capacity and proven track record to deliver returns that are sustainable over the longer-term. In this context Cork County Council which hosts much of the most productive economy in the most productive region in the State is uniquely positioned to deliver escalated rates of return on appropriate capital investment. Taken together the impact of the projects would be transformational, helping to ensure the Cork fulfills its potential to maximize its capacity to drive sustainable growth on behalf of its community, the Region and State. The Port of Cork, Cork International Airport, the Health Services, a wide range of representative Bodies (Chamber, IBEC, CIF, CDF etc) and providers of third level education are major stakeholders and collaborators of Cork County Council. Similarly, Cork County Council collaborates with Cork City Council on various matters that promote the interests of the Cork Region, most notably through the ongoing CASP strategic planning structures and the Cork 2050 Project. Please note we have taken the opportunity to present an innovative approach to Active Land Management to help provide the stability required in the housing market to drive the most efficient economy in the most efficient region in the state: this approach will require significant infrastructural investment by the Government if it is to deliver in a timely manner. We would point out that many of the infrastructural investment priorities listed below will facilitate and support Capital Investment Programmes / Projects being progressed by our stakeholders/collaborators, including state agencies and will support economic activity.

**National Roads Infrastructure, Roads & Transportation Driving Growth in the Region:** N22 Macroom - Baile Bhúirne, Bandon Relief Road N71 (Phase 1), Bandon Relief Road N71 (Phase 2), N25 Carrigtwohill to Middleton Upgrade, M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy Motorway, N40 Demand Management Study Recommendations, Cork North Ring Road, Dunkettle Interchange Upgrade, M20 Cork to Limerick Motorway, M25 Little Island Interchange Upgrade, N27 Airport Road Junction Improvements, N71 Bandon – Skibbereen upgrades to provide overtaking opportunities, N73 Mallow – Mitchelstown Clogher Cross/Ballynamona and Annakissa schemes, N72 Kilcanway to Ballygriffin Realignment, N72 Mallow Northern Relief Road, Mallow Blackwater Bridge & N20 Link. *Refer to Cork 2050 Submission for County Strategic Infrastructure.*

**Public Transport:** East-West Rapid Transit Corridor (Bus Rapid Transit initially and following plan led development of economic and population growth along the designated corridor, the conditions may be created to warrant investment in Light Rail)

**Rail Line enhancements:** Key interchange hub at Kent station (to connect rail with BRT/LRT line), to improve journey time and frequency, additional station locations. **Strategic Rail Requirements:** Blarney - New Rail Station X-01 Stoneview Site, Stoneview Upper and Lower Rail Bridges, Carrigtwohill – 3no. New Bridges over Railway Line, Middleton - New Rail Station X-01 Site, and Road/Rail bridge for access to development lands. **Improved core bus network:** With significant priority at congestion points, High frequency services.

**National Broadband Infrastructure/Rural Broadband:** The upgrade of existing and ongoing roll-out of broadband is critical to supporting established businesses and to facilitate future economic development/activity. The need is particularly acute in communities outside of Metropolitan Cork, which have significant capacity to adapt to emerging economic opportunities as well as in tourism, agri -tech, food/beverage and the marine sector. The Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen is an example of how the Cork Region delivered positive results following broadband investment at a location outside of Metropolitan Cork.

**Strategic water infrastructure-Water Supply:** In terms of continued investment in this sector the following are the key issues facing Cork in terms of potable water supply: (i) Protection of existing sources (sustainable and environmentally friendly abstraction), (ii) Completion of trunk mains to ensure a security of supply, (iii) Continued investment in water extraction infrastructure, (iv) Development of new sources such as bored wells, (v) Continuation of the lead pipe replacement scheme, (vi) Continuation of rehabilitation schemes to minimise water leakage. *Refer to Cork 2050 Submission for further details on the required investment in water supply and waste water treatment.*

## People's Health and Well-Being

Cork County Council acknowledges there is a need to focus on maintaining and improving quality of life and the environment, with the goal of balancing the need to grow, develop, adapt and change with the requirement to help communities better serve residents.

In this context Cork 2050 includes a Place-making Strategy that is person-focussed and seeks where possible to increase densities along designated transport corridor and provide improved connectivity to towns, villages, rural areas and island communities.

The strategy seeks to offer a strong economy but not at the expense of Cork's high -quality of life, social cohesion and well-being. The Place-making strategy is being delivered via 5 Priority Areas: (1) Health & Well-being, (2) Quality of Place, (3) Social Sustainability, (4) Accessibility and (5) Vibrancy and Activity. Stated place-making principles include (i) Consolidation of growth at appropriate scales, (ii) Coordination and integration of land use and transportation, (iii) Mixed use and vibrant places, (iv) Creating conditions for arts to flourish, promote unique cultural assets and encourage creativity and (v) Supporting the creation of successful communities. Please note: consideration of Peoples Health & Well-Being should have regard to communities and places other than in Metropolitan Areas. Cork County Council would point to the international success enjoyed by Clonakilty.

## Environmental Protection

The Cork 2050 submission seeks to decouple economic and population growth from carbon usage, while at the same time building resilience into the environment, places and communities as well as responding to climate change. The Spatial Strategy focuses development into higher density, mixed use locations along high capacity public transport corridors in Metropolitan Cork.

**Movement and Air Quality:** Transport is one of the main sources of carbon and air pollution. Cork 2050 will deliver a reduction in energy usage and carbon consumption by 500,000 tonnes. This will be achieved by reducing the need to travel through better integration of housing, employment and education along with the roll-out of an integrated and enhanced public transport network, including increasing sustainable transport modal share. **Sustainable Energy Economy:** Cork will be positioned to take advantage of growth in sustainable and renewable energy generation systems and increased demand while seeking to deliver sustainable energy supply and increased energy efficiency. This will be achieved in part by supporting energy sector R&D, by development of ecosystem as well as specifically targeting Marine and Energy sectors. Cork has significant renewable energy assets that offer growth potential: hydro, wind, wave & tidal, gas, biomass, solar and forestry. Realising the potential of Corks assets requires ongoing strategic investment. In addition, Cork is uniquely positioned to advance carbon capture and storage at the Kinsale Gas Field Storage Facility. Energy Cork is an industry driven cluster pursuing coordinated actions to strengthen enterprise and employment within the energy sector in Cork. Cork 2050 approaches strategic environmental management using Green & Blue Infrastructure, Landscape and Ecosystems Services. This approach recognises there is a need to achieve a balance between Environmental Protection and delivering economic and population growth that is sustainable over the longer-term. Environmental Protection is also significant from a Cultural Heritage perspective.

# Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Carlow County Council

## Our Regional Cities and Towns

- Dublin a strong international capital city
- Prioritisation of four city regions outside of Dublin, with focus on South East Waterford City Region – Waterford is now Dublin’s nearest city region and gateway to Britain and Europe.
- South East is dependent on Waterford being a strong performing city – investment required in key infrastructure – airport, port, education, transport, rail and health
- Critical mass – population growth in South East Region
- Balanced regional development is critical, to relieve development pressure on Dublin and create additional growth in the Southern and other regions
- Regional cities should be complemented by each of the main urban centres in each county in the region i.e. Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford and Clonmel in the South East, to deliver growth and contribute to an effective city region
- Recognition of influence of Greater Dublin Region on the South East – NPF to recognise county and regional boundaries on an inter-regional basis and Regional Assemblies to co-ordinate and ensure more effective sub-regional and regional outcomes.
- Importance of County Towns like Carlow complementing the role of Waterford and Dublin City growing at an appropriate scale to accommodate employment growth at a sustainable level

## The Potential of our Rural Areas

- An appropriate Settlement Strategy to be developed - Current planning policy relating to ‘Core Strategy’ requires review to meet supply and demand and to prevent towns and villages being eroded through population decline
- Investment in regeneration of rural towns and villages prioritised – a long-term strategy is required, including implementation of the Government’s Action Plan for Rural Development – ‘Realising our Rural Potential’
- Investment in physical and social infrastructure and improvement of the public realm and recreational/amenities facilities, in the interest of People’s Health and Wellbeing and quality of life
- Public Transport services must be enhanced
- Communication / Connectivity – High quality and affordable broadband in all areas - Rollout of Rural Broadband / National Broadband Plan

## People’s Health and Well-Being

- Upgrading of Waterford Regional Hospital – freeing up capacity in hospitals in Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny General Hospital, Kilcreene Orthopaedic Hospital and Clonmel Regional Hospital
- Investment in physical and social infrastructure and improvement of the public realm and recreational/amenities facilities, in the interest of People’s Health and Wellbeing and quality of life

## Investment in Enabling Infrastructure

- Address, where feasible, infrastructural deficiencies that may be hindering economic development and aim to ensure that sustainable infrastructural development precedes economic development - NPF to be catalyst for prioritisation of Government Investment in infrastructural development
- Upgrading of the N80 National Secondary Route. The section of the N80 through Carlow, forms part of the designated Euroroute from Rosslare to the Midlands. This Euroroute has previously been identified as a priority in the South East Regional Planning Guidelines and Transport Infrastructure Ireland policy documents
- Transportation Improvements to N25 and remaining N24
- NPF to be catalyst for Irish Water Investment, to ensure continued growth and to accelerate the provision of water and sewerage services to eliminate any delay in the progression of development
- Upgrading of rail infrastructure

## Economic Progress

- Multi campus Technological University for the South-East (TUSE) - NPF to support and highlight the importance of the provision of a multi campus Technological University for the South-East, comprising of the Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC) and the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)
- Labour Force - Promote and facilitate appropriate educational / training measures to ensure a suitably skilled local workforce
- Employment Creation – Implementation of Government’s Action Plan for Jobs – whilst unemployment in the State was 14% in 2011 and is now down to 6.7% at end of last quarter of 2016, unemployment in South East Region peaked at 17% in 2011 and is now down to 9.4% - target to reduce this level of unemployment to below the national average
- Smart Economy – Southern Region should be identified as leader on the digital age - preparation and implementation of a Digital Strategy for the Region
- Tourism Development –progress implementation of Ireland’s Ancient East; Develop Regional Greenways; Develop Services along the Rivers and build on Creative Ireland – Arts, Culture, Festivals and Venues
- Agri Sector – Build on the Regions strong agri sector
- Revival of the sugar beet industry and construction of a new bio-refinery (potential to create 5,000 jobs)
- Encourage establishment of a Regional Logistics Park adjacent to Junction 5 on the M9

## Protecting our Environment

- Renewable Energy Developments - NPF Policy required if country is to achieve climate change and energy obligations. National Policy for both wind and solar farms is urgent and essential
- Encourage and facilitate the development of ‘green industries’, including industries relating to renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies where appropriate.
- Waste Management Policy for the country and region

## Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Kerry County Council

### Our Regional Cities and Towns

- Development of the Kerry Hub & Knowledge Triangle linking the Hub towns of Tralee & Killarney and the important employment & research centre of Killorglin as a strong internal economic core are critical for the county.
- NPF to target the Development of the strategic links from KHNT to the regional cities of Limerick & Cork
- Strong core – not a commuter belt to regional cities – Kerry limited influence in Cork/Limerick
- Potential for significant population growth – Tralee - 50,000 doubling population over 20yrs
- Complete the formal Munster University Process
- Tralee Technology Park – expansion in adjoining lands, provision of additional clean technology space
- Town Centre renewal projects, support town centre retail, incentivise residential development in urban centres
- Provide the necessary infrastructure to service land and enable targeted growth become achievable
- Development of strategic international access is an economic and logistical imperative. Only with high quality mobility and connectivity within the region can the Southern Region market itself as a cohesive entity and scale of economic activity that can establish it as a true regional counterbalance to the GDA.

### The Potential of our Rural Areas

- Prioritise the strengthening of towns & Villages to support rural populations through infrastructure investment
- Provide necessary broadband in rural towns and villages to support home-working, rural community enterprise centres and the tourism industry.
- Link the development of water and waste water infrastructure in accordance with county plan priorities and economic development opportunities in the county. Support the development of national greenways (South Kerry Greenway, North Kerry Greenway) as economic drivers of rural areas.
- Build on the success of the Wild Atlantic Way through appropriate infrastructure investment in coastal settlements to provide additional economic opportunities for employment particularly in the shoulder seasons
- Increase funding for town/village renewal scheme
- Recognise the potential of research, development & innovation opportunities aligned to the natural landscape
- Recognise the opportunities for creative industry, linked to the cultural heritage of areas and their tourism potential, and the associated economic benefits and employment opportunities.
- The REDZ grant scheme has provided opportunities for innovative projects in rural areas that can be further developed. The Reeks pathway project is one such successful project where landowners were trained in the skills of pathway maintenance and have carried out tremendous improvements in access to these mountains.
- The potential of the marine industry remains largely undeveloped in the country and with targeted investment this could add to the success of the Wild Atlantic Way and enrich the experience of visitors while at the same time provide sustainable employment.
- World renowned landscape and quality environment in rural areas – need for recognition of landscape management by landowners
- Potential of further expansion in agriculture and food production in rural areas – impact of BREXIT – building capacity and scale
- Recognise the value of heritage & cultural tourism in rural areas.

### Investment in Enabling Infrastructure

- Target Inter-Regional air and sea access disparities through significant policy change and investment (Southern Airport Strategy)
- The N21/N69 national road from Tralee to Limerick.
- The N22 Cork to Kerry via Macroom and Ballyvourney.
- Proposed M20 with a link to the Kerry Hub and Knowledge Tri-angle.
- Improved connectivity to facilitate the growth of tourist traffic in the region, in particular along the Wild Atlantic Way
- Economic development of Fenit Port.
- Continued investment in Killarney-Tralee-Fenit route corridor.
- Shortened rail Journey times and increased frequency on the Tralee-Dublin route.
- Roll out of Broadband 1GBs to the Region. Future proofed broadband speeds of 5GBs.



## Integrated Land and Marine Development

- Develop the potential of Fenit Port as a major contributor to the export of large scale manufacturing for the Region, its potential as Cruise tourist destination and as a major fishing port.
- Provision of high quality access to Fenit Port through improved road linkages along the economic corridor from Killarney through Tralee to Fenit
- North Kerry's location on the Shannon Estuary presents opportunities for future sustainable economic development and employment growth. The estuary features 500km<sup>2</sup> of navigable water running from Kerry Head and Loop Head as far as Limerick City, a distance of 100km and it is one of the premier deepwater locations in Europe. The Shannon Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) [an interagency land and marine based plan for the future development and management of the marine-related industry and tourism along the estuary] has been prepared.
- Develop the potential of Dingle port as a significant fishing and tourism destination
- Kerry has huge potential in the development of marine tourism and leisure activities
- The potential for investment in greenway and blue way connectivity along the Atlantic Coast
- The potential for expansion in seafood business and research in seafood sustainability requires further investment
- Potential of marine renewable industry and exploration and development of Ireland's natural off-shore resources

## Economic Progress

Development of the Ballylongford Landbank.  
Completion of the IDA advanced manufacturing facility at Kerry Technology Park.  
Construction of a second live building to attract FINTECH service providers at Kerry Technology Park.  
Investment in centres of excellence of research and innovation targeting existing global leading companies in the area  
Network coastal towns through innovation and creativity hubs through Cork, Kerry and along the Western Seaboard  
Development of Shannon LNG Project for security of supply at National and Regional level  
Extension of Natural Gas Network  
Sustainable Renewable Energy Investment (Bio-mass)  
Targeted Regional Investment in proven sectors in the region  
Financial Services (incl. Fin-Tech) Smart-Agri, Tourism, Food, Marine, Export driven manufacturing  
Development of Centres of Excellence within the region in research and innovation linking global leading companies with higher education  
The development of tourism infrastructure in the coastal towns along the Wild Atlantic Way.  
The strengthening of the existing built tourism infrastructure in the region (e.g. museums, heritage centres etc.)  
Support the development of business tourism in the region  
Development of South Kerry Greenway Project, the North Kerry Greenway incorporating Tralee/Fenit and Listowel

## Protecting our Environment

Market the excellent quality of environment in Kerry and within the wider region as a huge asset for investment in a increasing socially aware economy  
Prepare a National Landscape Character Assessment to demonstrate key landscape assets in the country, to assure consistency across planning policy for new development and to guide the development of planning policy for landscape management throughout the country.  
Ensure the necessary investment in water and waste water infrastructure in towns and villages to make them sustainable options for rural development  
Develop national policies and guidelines around renewable energies in relation to solar, wind and biomass  
Land management strategies in areas of declining population, supporting landowners to ensure that land continues to be managed and linking schemes to access and thus recognising the economic value of the, protection of our landscape.  
Promote Research & Innovation in unique Landscapes that exist within the county and wider region

## People's Health and Well-Being

Investment in Community Infrastructure (e.g. rural transport, out-reach health services, the post office network, community doctors and social workers) to sustain population in regions away from cities and large towns.  
Develop appropriate strategies for changes in demographics throughout the region including age strategies, rural transport, support for immigrants, rural isolation.  
Promote the development of integrated neighborhood developments that allow for changing demographics that can support communities in all stages of life.  
Invest in the community and social infrastructure in towns and villages, urban and rural amenities and the enhancement of the public to create a sense of well-being in our communities.

# Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Clare County Council

## Our Regional Cities and Towns

- NPF needs to focus on the growth of certain city regions across the country and in particular the growth of Limerick City region. Shannon, Ennis and the supporting towns and villages across the mid-west region have the capacity to absorb increased growth over the next 20 years in terms of residential and employment potential.
- Ennis Town and its key role as a Retail Provider within the region – Ennis needs to build on its hub town designation under the NSS and the NPF needs to ensure its regional status is highlighted. In terms of physical infrastructure, the augmentation of the Ennis town water supply and the extension of water and wastewater pipelines and new road infrastructure to serve new development areas will be investment priorities in the medium term. It is considered essential that the NPF ensures that the regional importance of the county town is highlighted and provisions built into the plan to ensure that Ennis together with other regional towns are promoted for expansion and development and that funding mechanisms and political commitment to their development is provided within the lifetime of the plan.
- National level clear guidance in relation to brownfield and derelict sites is required as these key sites can accommodate considerable expansion within the country in the short to medium term.
- Shannon town was identified as a Linked Gateway in the National Spatial Strategy and its status in the NPF should continue to reflect its importance as an aviation, industry, enterprise and R&D centre. The continued expansion of Shannon town and Shannon airport is a critical driver in the growth of Limerick City and the future prosperity of the wider region.

## The Potential of our Rural Areas

- In order to accommodate the expected population increase and to accommodate same at a regional level there will be a need to expand the role of our rural towns and villages across the country.
- The NPF should set out a strategy to ensure that key service centres can be expanded, which should include a clear funding mechanism for the delivery of improved environments and for the delivery of necessary infrastructure to these centres as investment into these town and villages will be the key deciding factor on whether rural locations can be sustained as locations which are attractive for people to locate in.
- The NPF should address the issue of one off rural housing at a national level. Providing alternatives for people will be a key aspect to addressing this issue and this can be achieved in providing better environments and increasing investment in our rural towns and villages.

## People's Health and Well-Being

- Green Infrastructure has extensive benefits including the promotion of sustainable travel and improved well-being and quality of life for those who live and work in the area. Most significantly, Green Infrastructure Plans will enhance the appeal of places as locations for future investment and economic growth.
- County Clare area has immense potential for the further development of tourism and recreation developments.

## Protecting our Environment

- The Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary – how will we ensure that this has a sufficient statutory effect which can recognise and build on its role and importance as an economic, renewable energy, environmental, tourism plan for the region
- Wild Atlantic Way and potential spin off effects within the wider region
- Burren UNESCO designation, Cliffs of Moher Geopark – what it means for the Region – what potential can be harnessed

## **Integrated Land and Marine Development**

- There is significant potential for growth in the Blue Economy and it has the capacity to expand the range of employment opportunities available in coastal areas and to revitalise these areas from a social and economic perspective. There is also potential for an enhanced off-shore energy. In light of the forthcoming requirements to prepare marine spatial plans for Irish coastal waters, it is important that the National Planning Framework provides high-level guidance and direction for both marine and terrestrial areas.
- The NPF must work to achieve a positive inter-relationship between developments in marine and terrestrial areas. It should support new development, such as off-shore energy production, and also balance that new development with the enhancement of environmental quality and the protection of highly important existing activities such as fishing and tourism. The merging of terrestrial and marine planning provides the potential to develop a coordinated approach that will make the most efficient use of resources, reduce environmental impacts and support high quality development.

## **Investment in Enabling Infrastructure**

- Under-investment in physical infrastructure is a major inhibiting factor to population retention and growth in rural areas. Many towns and villages (population <1,500 persons) have a vibrant and growing population and offer a wide variety of services. However, these towns have been unable to support new housing or employment development due to a lack of capacity in water and waste water services.
- Limerick Northern Distributer Road infrastructure
- The expansion of the University of Limerick campus is considered to be critical to the development of the mid-west region. The NPF should recognise its role within the region as a hub for education, R&D and as a stimulator for industries and employment centres to locate in the region, in particular in Limerick City and Shannon.
- Rural broadband is essential to support business development and expansion in rural areas. It also enhances social connectivity and reduces the disadvantage of peripheral locations
- The N85 Road Improvement Scheme which will include the up-grade of Blakes Corner in Ennistymon – key infrastructural project planned within the region
- Co. Clare is home to two nationally important energy power plants (Ardnacrusha and Moneypoint). The NPF should address how the future of these power plants will be protected and should explore potential developments that could be accommodated within these sites in order that they can evolve and expand into the future. Securing these sites is considered to be a key infrastructural goal not just at a local or regional level but at a national level given their critical contribution to the power supply of the country.
- The NPF can provide an opportunity to progress a regional or national level approach to the selection of areas that are most suitable for renewable energy development, be they marine or terrestrial areas
- Enhancements to the electricity grid to facilitate increased renewable energy generation, including new connections for off-shore renewable energy developments.

## **Economic Progress**

- The potential of increased passenger numbers at Shannon airport should be identified and a national focus given to maximising this resource into the future. The airport has capacity for 4.5 million passengers a year and in 2016 1.74 million passengers passed through the airport.
- The International Aviation Services Centre already comprises a community of 45 aerospace and aviation companies and the expansion of this cluster is being proactively progressed. Shannon is also a centre for business, enterprise, manufacturing and general industry and has grown into a major employment hub in the region.
- One of the greatest economic and natural assets, in both the mid-west and the country, is the Shannon Estuary. With water depths of up to 37 meters, the Estuary can accommodate Post-Panamax and Neopanamax vessels and has significant potential for a wide range of using such as transshipment, marine-related industries, energy production, aquaculture, tourism and recreation.

# Key Regional Priorities from the perspective of Kilkenny County Council

## Our Regional Cities and Towns

- Kilkenny Co. Co. reaffirms the Joint Submission to the NPF on behalf of the five local authorities of the South East Planning Area.
- Kilkenny City and County has the capacity to deliver for itself and region.
- Abbey Creative Quarter (city centre) has the potential to deliver 60,000sqm of mixed use residential and employment use.
- Kilkenny City has capacity for circa 4,800 homes, within the overall concept of the compact 10 minute city.
- Establishment of a regional implementation group through Regional Assembly
  - One South East Waterford City Region – One Voice.
- Delivery of the Technological University for the South East is critical.
- Deliver a National Innovation and Design Centre in the region to build on the Regions strengths in this area
- Financial support under the LIHAF to deliver strategic infrastructure to deliver new housing units of scale in Kilkenny City.
- Completion of Ring Road in Kilkenny City which has approved EIS
- Completion of Central Access Scheme phase 2 and phase 3
- The South East Planning Area needs to position itself as a complementary gateway relieving development pressures from Dublin.
- Kilkenny contains the critical mass and has the distance from Dublin to be capable of being successful in sustaining itself in employment terms, not to repeat mistakes of commuter-driven development

## The Potential of our Rural Areas

Enable the development of rural communities and diversification of the rural economy by

- Create economic opportunities in towns, villages, rural areas by targeting the primary production industries of agriculture and food, energy, tourism, and the creation of added-value enterprises associated with these industries, including small & medium enterprises such as artisan food producers.
- Building on the unique and distinctive assets of heritage, culture and landscape.
- Investment in Tourism infrastructure or regional scale e.g. Regional Greenways etc.
- Implementation of National Broadband Plan
- Co-ordination and/or rationalisation of the multiplicity of existing schemes in the Rural Development area
- Through active land management reduce of dereliction and under utilisation of buildings, promote and support the re-use of obsolete buildings and sites for residential purposes in villages towns and rural areas.

## **Integrated Land and Marine Development**

- **Belview Port and it's strategic development zone has a total of 190ha of undeveloped land**
- **Provide upgraded access arrangements for N29 for the 190ha zoned land.**
- **To develop and maximise a cruise liner capability for the South East Region at appropriate berthing locations.**

## **Investment in Enabling Infrastructure**

- **Financial support under the LIHAF to deliver strategic infrastructure to deliver new housing units of scale in Kilkenny City.**
- **Investment in key infrastructure (e.g. port, airport, expanded education, transport connections, road and rail and health).**
- **A revised PLUTS dealing with the greater Waterford City area aligning new time frames and populations to the NPF at a strategic level with legislative backing for governance and implementation.**
- **Delivery of international broadband connectivity via the Great Island connector and of dark fibre connectivity between all of the Cities.**
- **Motorway connection via N24( refer to joint submission by local authorities) and improvements to N25**
- **Upgrading of N80 linking the Midlands (Tullamore M6) to the ports and urban centres of the SEWCR and allowing relief of pressure on the M50**

## **Economic Progress**

- **Policy direction to redress the imbalance in FDI investment in the South-East.**
- **Build on the Regions thriving agric sector through the delivery of a Precision Agriculture Centre of Excellence, utilising strategic partnerships between Global brands and our Institutes of Technology.**
- **Implementation of objectives for the South East Action Plan for Jobs Brand and marketing of the South East Planning Area, value proposition, Sunny South East is long past its sell by date.**
- **Regional Retail Strategy including digital retail strategy.**
- **Linkages from South East to Wales and mainland Europe (connectivity that could alleviate congestion at Dublin port) Ireland's gateway to Europe.**
- **Deliver a National Innovation and Design Centre in the region to build on the Regions strengths in this area and position the Region to be ahead of the curve in relation to new job growth areas.**
- **Expansion of tourist visitors in Kilkenny as a HERO site under the Irelands Ancient East brand**
- **The development of a regional greenways through the newly established Regional Greenways Office.**