How each region will participate in the NSS.

4.1 Introduction

Section 3 sets out at a broad, national level a spatial structure on the basis of which more balanced regional development can be achieved in Ireland. Gateways, hubs, other towns, villages and rural areas all have complementary roles within that structure in achieving the aim of balanced regional development.

To assist this process the regional approach to spatial planning policy to be developed further by regional and local authorities, is now described in summary form.

There are four main messages for the regional approach to spatial planning.

(1) *Frameworks for spatial planning of cities around the country and their catchments must be developed and implemented.* This involves addressing the planning issues for metropolitan and hinterland areas of cities in an integrated way. Cities and surrounding counties must put in place sustainable and public transport-centred settlement and development strategies within the planning system to support continued progress and competitiveness into the future.

(2) *The county town and large town structure must be strengthened.* This will be achieved through regional and county level settlement and planning policies. These should support the towns, as both generators of business activity and delivery points for the key services that people need if they are to continue living in or be drawn to a particular area.

(3) *A renewed emphasis is needed on the potential role of the small town and village structure.* This can be achieved through public and private investment in essential services such as water services and the use of local authority powers to tackle blockages in the supply of development land. It will also be important to improve the attractiveness of towns and villages through community and other activities such as urban and village renewal schemes and urban design initiatives by local authorities.

(4) *Key rural assets must be protected and the local potential of rural areas developed.* This will be achieved through identifying, conserving and developing on a sustainable basis the various types and combinations of economic strengths of rural areas, with the support of appropriate levels of infrastructure provision. Their potential for economic activity, such as natural resource, local enterprise and tourism related development, and qualities that underpin such activity such as a clean and attractive environment will be central to this process.

The spatial elements in the regions that will partner and benefit from the gateways and hubs in achieving balanced regional development include

* county towns and larger towns with a population of 5000 and over
* other towns particularly in the 1500-5000 population band
* smaller towns, villages and rural areas.

This section of the NSS outlines how the national spatial structure relates to each region, including its towns and rural areas. The Strategy deals with development at regional and local level in a broad manner. Further and more detailed planning will be needed to elaborate the suggested approach through regional planning guidelines, county/city development plans and development strategies. These guidelines, plans and strategies will need to take account of the fact that different areas have characteristics and interests in common and share inter-relationships in the way they function economically and socially.

This section addresses each regional authority area by

* Setting out in summary form spatial policies for the region consistent with this Strategy
* Providing a map of the region illustrating how these policies apply in different areas.

The maps demonstrate how national level elements of this Strategy such as the gateways, hubs and transport framework link to the potential role of regional and local elements, including other towns, villages and rural areas.

The maps share a number of common characteristics

(1) The various parts of the urban hierarchy from the largest cities and towns to urban centres with a population of around 1000 are shown. Along parts of the west coast, the maps also show certain smaller towns under 1000 population. These are located in areas with a weak urban structure. These towns need to be supported by local authorities in the important local roles they play as points at which wider communities access local services and employment.
(2) Other important elements of physical infrastructure are identified such as ports, airports and in remoter western parts, the principal road corridors that provide essential access to these areas.
(3) Towns representing urban strengthening opportunities are shown. These towns, located on important economic and transport corridors or in important locations and with a capacity to grow, must become a focus for the settlement policies of local authorities as incorporated in county development plans.
(4) For rural areas four broad spatial policy priorities for regional and local authorities, relevant government departments and agencies and other bodies such as the city and county development boards are illustrated.

Areas with strategic rural assets within a metropolitan hinterland.

Regional and local authorities in these areas should develop and implement frameworks for spatial planning in the cities and catchments referred to earlier in this section through the regional planning guideline process as well as local land use and transport strategies.

Village strengthening and rural area opportunities

In these areas local authorities should examine closely and activate the potential for new residential, commercial and local employment related development within the structure of small towns and villages. This is of central importance to the economic restructuring of rural areas. Local authorities should use their local knowledge, resources and legal powers under the planning and derelict sites legislation to encourage and facilitate development, supported at national level by various mechanisms such as the urban and village renewal schemes.

Rural areas with strong potential for diversification

In these areas, there is potential for rural diversification based around a possible mix of activities drawn from amongst the tourism, forestry, enterprise and marine sectors. Identifying such potential and activating it needs to be a focus in these areas for local communities and business groups supported by bodies such as the County Development and County Enterprise Boards and relevant government departments and agencies.

Diversifying areas

There are areas, along the west coast particularly, that have been successfully diversifying in recent years. The restructuring of their economies has been based on growing a variety of economic activities. These economies had traditionally been largely dependent on the agricultural sector. On the basis of the 2002 census results, many of these areas have shown increases in population since 1996. However, local authorities should now carefully manage and sustain this diversification process in the future by focusing on conserving the attractiveness of both the landscape and townscape of the areas that supported the diversification process in the first place. Local authorities can perform this role through the planning system through a focus on ensuring that new development is of the highest quality in terms of design and location.

4.2 The Border Region

The physical nature of the border region, and location of roads and communications links, suggests that there are three broad areas to be considered in a more detailed manner within the national structure outlined in Section 3.

These three broad areas are
* the north western part of the border region, mainly Donegal
* the western part, mainly Sligo and Leitrim
* the central and eastern parts, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth

In this context the factors critical to the border region's full participation in balanced regional development include the strengthened roles and contribution of Letterkenny/Derry, Sligo and Dundalk, as new gateways to drive development through enhanced critical mass, accessibility and capacity for development.

Other towns, villages and rural areas will need to develop roles complementary to those of the gateways to ensure that a wider area will benefit from the critical mass in the region provided by the gateways. These other towns, including small towns along the west coast, inland county and larger towns and rural areas in the region are varied in nature and in the development issues they face. Some rural areas are diversifying into tourism and small and medium enterprise/natural resource development, while others have considerable potential for diversification and growth.

County Towns and towns over 5,000 population

Sligo, Letterkenny and Dundalk as gateways will be supported by Monaghan and Cavan as hubs. Monaghan will build on its strategic location between Dublin and Derry on the N2, its links to Armagh and its capacity for growth. Cavan occupies a strategic location on the N3 leading on to Enniskillen, with the town itself also supporting an extensive hinterland. Other county towns, like Carrick-on-Shannon, perform regionally strategic residential, employment, administrative and other service functions.

Fostering and developing these roles will be important to complement the functions of gateways and hubs. Drogheda has much potential for development given its scale, established enterprise base, communications and business and other links with the Greater Dublin Area.

Map 4 Border Region

Legend

- Gateway
- Hub
- County Town
- <5,000 Town
- 1,500 - 5,000 Town
- Urban Centres (circa 1,000)
- Centres in Weak Urban Structure Areas
- National Transport Corridor
- Key Corridor into Northern Ireland
- Airport
- Transit Port
- Major Fishing Port
- Access to Peripheral Areas

- Rural Areas with Strong Potential for Diversification
- Urban Strengthening Opportunity
- Diversifying Areas —— Emerging Management Issues
- Village Strengthening and Rural Area Opportunities
- Strategic Rural Assets within a Metropolitan Hinterland

Map labels

to Galway
Tobercurry
Ballymote
Boyle
Collooney
Sligo
Manorhamilton
Bundoran
Ballyshannon
Drumshanbo
Mohill
Ballinamore
Carrick-on-Shannon
to Dublin
Killybegs
Ardara
Glenties
Donegal
Dunloe
Bunbeg
Letterkenny
Rathmelton
Milford
Raphoe
Ballybofey
Lifford
Strabane
Derry
Carndonagh
Buncrana
Moville
Greencastle
Enniskillen
to Monaghan and Dundalk
Omagh
to Derry and Donegal
Armagh
Belturbet
Clones
Monaghan
Cavan
Cootehill
Bailieborough
Castleblayney
Virginia
Kingscourt
Carrickmacross
to Dublin
to Mullingar, Tullamore and Athlone
Ardee
Dundalk
Drogheda
to Dublin
to Belfast
Newry
Belfast

Approx. Scale
0
35km

Towns 1,500-5,000 population

In more western parts of the border, there are a number of towns in this category running from north of Sligo to Letterkenny and beyond, including Bundoran, Ballyshannon, Donegal, Ballybofey, Buncrana and Carndonagh. These centres have built up important functions in a variety of areas including tourism, retailing and employment in a variety of enterprises. The national transport framework envisaged by the NSS will support the development of such functions in the future through enhanced accessibility. Matching these improvements through quality development, physical attractiveness and joint promotion and marketing will be vital to developing these functions in the future.

In more eastern parts of the border region, towns such as Castleblaney, Carrickmacross and Ardee can promote themselves more effectively in the context of the strength of Dundalk and Monaghan. Cootehill and Baileborough perform important retailing, service and employment functions for local hinterlands. These functions can be enhanced through the regional road networks and links to larger urban centres in the area such as Cavan.

Villages and rural areas

In more western parts of the Border region, notably in coastal Donegal, strong tourism, natural resources and small to medium enterprise sectors have been established. Developed on a sustainable basis into the future, these have the capacity to assure the vitality of this area. Priorities here will include high quality development, while protecting the landscape.

In other parts of the Border region, notably Sligo/Leitrim and through northern parts of Cavan and Monaghan, tourism assets in natural and cultural heritage and inland waterways have much potential for development, with a particular emphasis on towns such as Manorhamilton, Drumshanbo, Ballinamore, Ballyconnell and Belturbet.

In the more eastern parts of the region, which are in the journey to work catchments of larger urban and metropolitan areas, rural villages can play enhanced residential and service functions as an alternative to uncoordinated residential development. Investment in local services will be necessary to enhance capacity for new housing and other functions. Map 4 also identifies villages in remoter areas where the urban structure is weak. Such centres play a key role in delivering services and supporting employment in physically remote and peripheral areas. This role should be acknowledged and supported in relevant county and regional strategies through improvements in accessibility and through supporting opportunities for development.
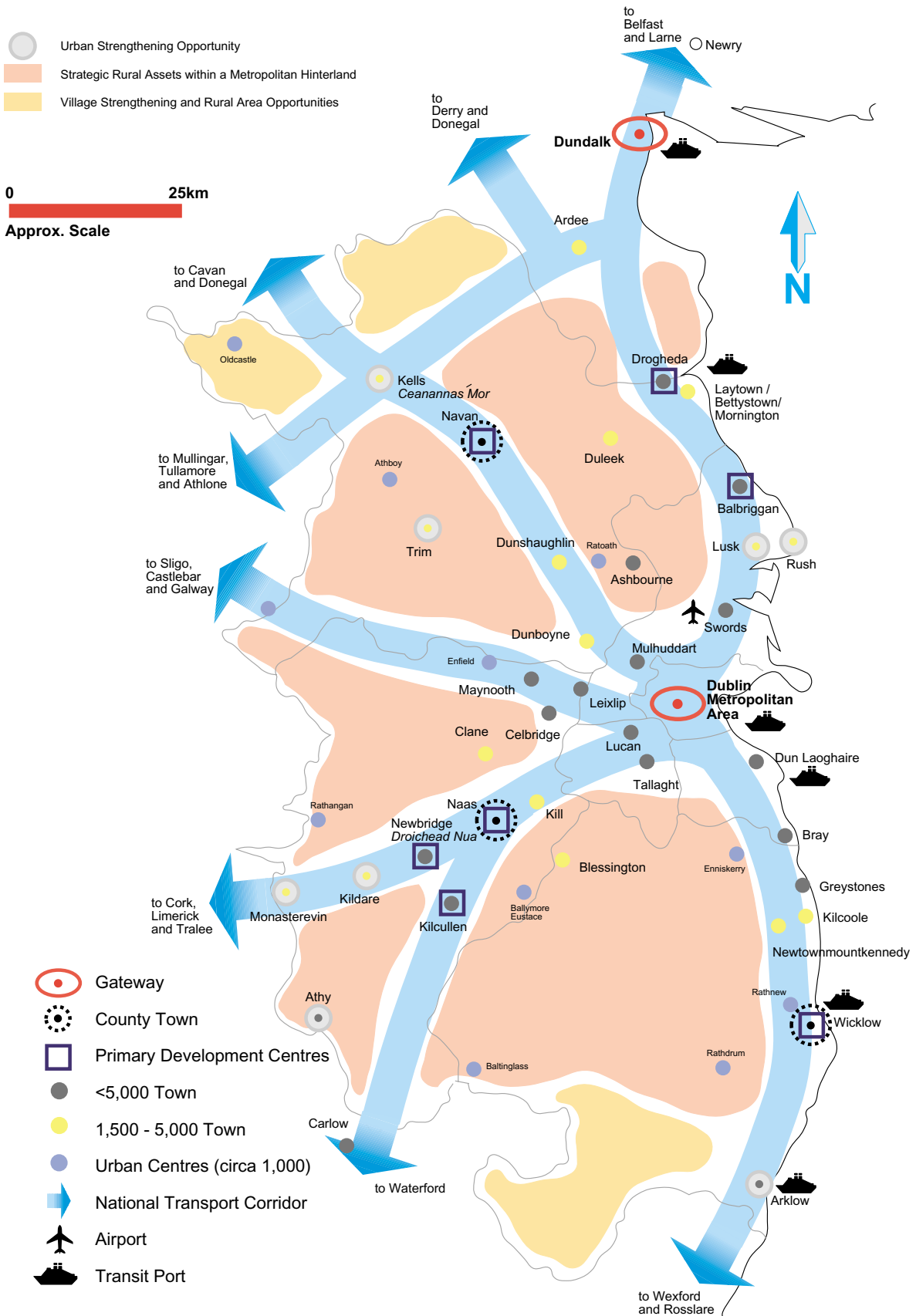
4.3 The Dublin and Mid East Regions

The Dublin and the Mid East regions (the Greater Dublin Area) are considered jointly in this section because of their strong functional interrelationship and the fact that Strategic Planning Guidelines for the two regions are already in place.

Enhancing the competitiveness of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), so that it continues to perform at the international level as a driver of national development, means physically consolidating the growth of the metropolitan area i.e. Dublin City and suburbs. At the same time, development in the hinterland of the metropolitan area is to be concentrated in strategically placed, strong and dynamic urban centres i.e. the ' Primary Development Centres' identified in the Strategic Planning Guidelines. These development centres have a unique role in Irish terms, given the scale of the Dublin City region and the need for internal balance between the city and its surrounding counties.

County towns and towns over 5,000 population

There are a large number of towns of this size in the GDA, located mostly on the main transport corridors radiating from Dublin. The Strategic Planning Guidelines identify towns such as Navan, Balbriggan, Naas/Newbridge/Kilcullen and Wicklow as 'Primary Development Centres'. In the context of the NSS, however, the future roles of primary development centres such as these must take account of wider considerations, in addition to their relationship to Dublin. Issues that arise in this regard include the question of how such centres can energise their own catchments and their relationships with areas in the neighbouring regions of the Border, Midlands and South East.

Map 5 Dublin & Mid East Regions

Legend:

○ Urban Strengthening Opportunity

▧ Strategic Rural Assets within a Metropolitan Hinterland

▨ Village Strengthening and Rural Area Opportunities

Approx. Scale

0 — 25km

Places and directions:

to Belfast and Larne

○ Newry

to Derry and Donegal

Dundalk ⊙ 🚢

Ardee

to Cavan and Donegal

Oldcastle

Kells
Ceanannas Mór

Drogheda ▣ 🚢

Laytown / Bettystown / Mornington

Navan ⊡

to Mullingar, Tullamore and Athlone

Athboy

Duleek

Balbriggan ▣

Trim

Dunshaughlin

Ratoath

Lusk

Rush

to Sligo, Castlebar and Galway

Ashbourne

Dunboyne

Swords ✈

Mulhuddart

Enfield

Maynooth

Leixlip

Dublin Metropolitan Area ⊙ 🚢

Clane

Celbridge

Lucan

Dun Laoghaire 🚢

Tallaght

Rathangan

Naas ⊡

Kill

Bray

Newbridge
Droichead Nua ▣

Blessington

Enniskerry

Greystones

Kildare

Ballymore Eustace

Kilcoole

Monasterevin

Kilcullen ▣

Newtownmountkennedy

to Cork, Limerick and Tralee

Rathnew

Athy

Wicklow ⊡ 🚢

Baltinglass

Rathdrum

Carlow

to Waterford

Arklow 🚢

to Wexford and Rosslare

Legend:

⊙ Gateway

⊡ County Town

▣ Primary Development Centres

● <5,000 Town

● 1,500 - 5,000 Town

● Urban Centres (circa 1,000)

➤ National Transport Corridor

✈ Airport

🚢 Transit Port

The Primary Development Centres need to aim at a population level that supports self sustaining growth, but which does not undermine the promotion of critical mass in other regions. This suggests an ultimate population horizon of up to 40,000 people for the primary development centres. In addition, Drogheda's close functional and physical links with the GDA highlights a need to consider its role in the spatial development of the GDA when reviewing the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the GDA.

Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Towns of this scale in the GDA are also generally located on or near the transportation corridors radiating from Dublin and are relatively close to the larger urban areas. While the primary development centres will be the main focus for responding to future growth in the GDA hinterland, these smaller towns cater for local growth in residential, employment and service functions through enhancing the built environment, water services, public transport links and capacity for development in these centres. Accommodating such additional functions must however be balanced with protecting the character and quality of these towns.

Villages and rural areas

Rural areas in the Dublin and Mid East regions vary substantially from strong agricultural areas, (including villages close to the main urban areas experiencing strong pressure for development), to areas of declining or marginal agriculture and falling populations, particularly in north Meath and south west Wicklow.

In relation to the strong agricultural areas, new development in villages must take account of and respect the established character of these villages. Outside the villages, strategic national food production areas also have amenity and environmental value in terms of water reserves, providing 'green lungs' for surrounding urban areas and valuable eco-systems.

Development of urban generated housing in such areas, which can be accommodated in nearby urban areas, should be minimised. Through county development plan policies, county development board strategies, tourism marketing initiatives and local efforts such as tidy towns and village improvements, the attributes of these rural areas should be harnessed to attract visitors and local business and generate local employment opportunities.

Parts of the Mid East region which are more distant from the larger urban areas have experienced population decline or stagnation. This can be reversed through a focus on boosting the development capacity of smaller villages and rural towns. This can be supported by local authority and private investment in water services to release development land. It also involves encouraging appropriately scaled new development that reinforces the character of these towns and villages and supports local service, retail and employment functions. County development plans have a key role in this process.
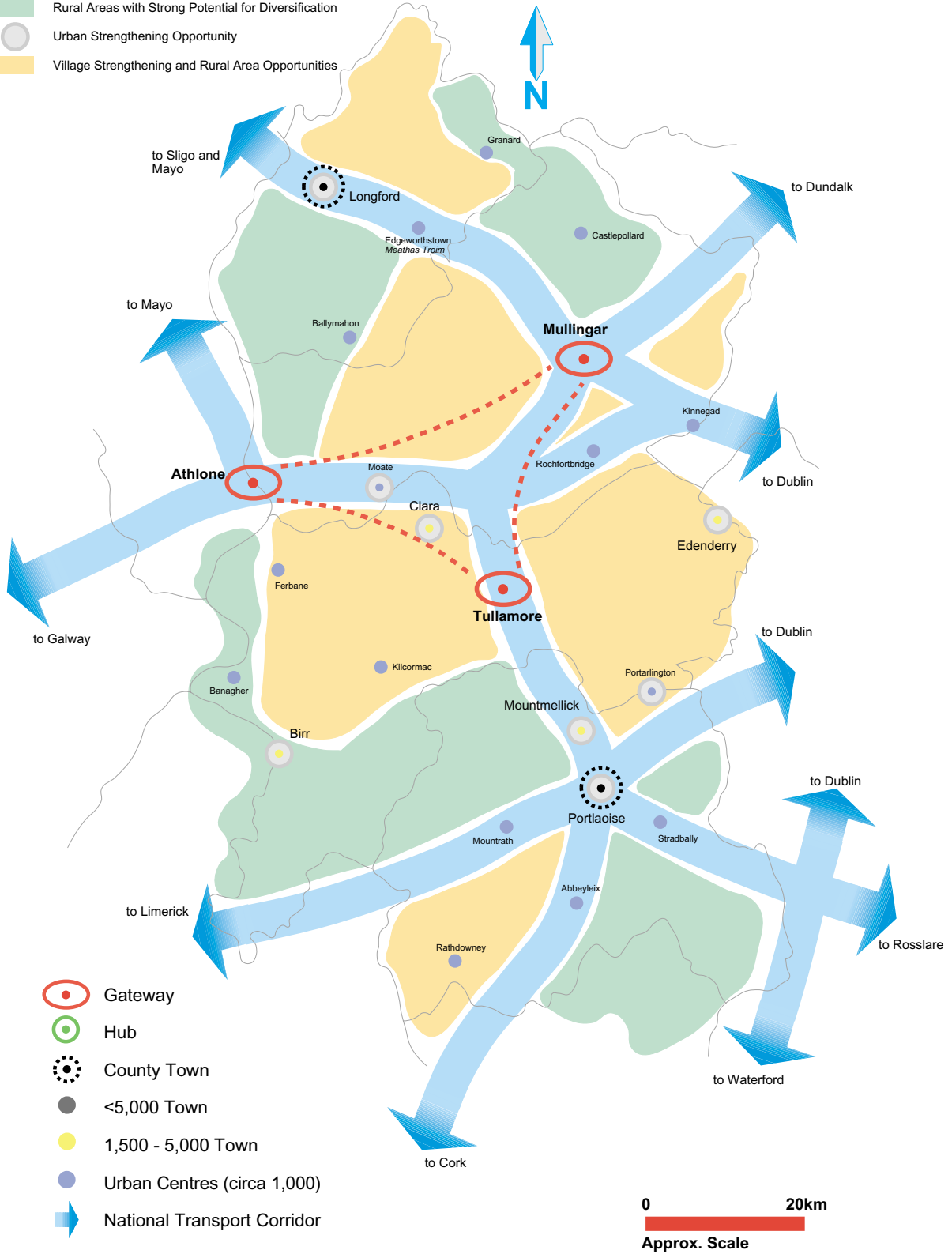
4.4 The Midlands Region

Enhancing the level of critical mass in the Midlands region (Counties Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford), by combining the complementary strengths of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore as a gateway at the heart of the region, is essential to boosting the region's overall economic strength. It will also be important to build on the central location of the Midlands and the key towns at the intersection of national road and rail routes, the attractiveness of the village structure in the Midlands and the natural and other resources of more rural areas. The gateway in the region will help to position other areas to benefit from the strength of that gateway, but those other areas will need to put plans in place to ensure that this happens.

County towns and towns over 5,000 population

In support of the gateway role of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore, other county and large towns such as Portlaoise and Longford, which are strategically placed on national road and rail links, can be enhanced in competitive terms to drive development at the county level.

Map 6 Midlands

Rural Areas with Strong Potential for Diversification

Urban Strengthening Opportunity

Village Strengthening and Rural Area Opportunities

N

to Sligo and Mayo

Granard

Longford

Castlepollard

to Dundalk

Edgeworthstown
Meathas Troim

to Mayo

Ballymahon

Mullingar

Kinnegad

to Dublin

Athlone

Moate

Rochfortbridge

Clara

Edenderry

Ferbane

Tullamore

to Galway

Kilcormac

Portarlington

to Dublin

Banagher

Mountmellick

Birr

Portlaoise

to Limerick

Mountrath

Stradbally

to Dublin

Abbeyleix

to Rosslare

Rathdowney

to Waterford

to Cork

Gateway

Hub

County Town

<5,000 Town

1,500 - 5,000 Town

Urban Centres (circa 1,000)

National Transport Corridor

0	20km

Approx. Scale

High urban design quality, effective water services and clear local development frameworks will be necessary to ensure this. Portlaoise, additionally, has strong national development potential as a transport hub and distribution centre or inland 'port' given its location on several national road and rail routes.

Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Smaller towns in the Midlands such as Portarlington and Mountmellick in Laois and Clara and Birr in Offaly can be enhanced through physical and townscape improvements, water services, facilities for smaller enterprises and enhancements to road and bus networks. This will offer an attractive environment for residential, employment, retailing and service functions. Birr, in particular, with its built heritage and links to the Mid West region, has the potential to become a significant tourism centre and one which further develops small enterprises in a high quality environment.

Villages and rural areas

The historically strong agriculture and natural resources sector, such as peat extraction and energy production, has supported an extensive village structure throughout the Midlands. This structure, with its established residential, service and employment functions, can be supported by necessary investment in key services. Demand for housing within easy reach of larger towns can be harnessed positively to strengthen the residential and other functions of smaller towns. This can be achieved by enabling villages to attract residential and other developments through availability of land and capacity of services.

Additionally, the Midlands has a number of unspoilt landscapes and inland waterway networks that have the advantage of proximity to urban areas such as Dublin. There is therefore considerable future potential to complement the agricultural sector in the Midlands with additional tourism and recreational activity. In addition, many worked-out bogs in the Midlands are highly suited to wind energy development at a significant enough scale to support ancillary manufacturing, servicing and development activities helping to position Ireland as an innovator in wind farm technology.

4.5 The Mid West Region

The contribution to balanced regional development of the Mid-West (Counties Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary) will require the enhancement of the performance of the Limerick-Shannon gateway at the national/international level. This is needed to lever additional investment for the overall region, through its critical mass, strategic location, capacity for innovation and development and connections within the national transport framework. Limerick-Shannon will be supported by Ennis as a hub, taking advantage of the latter's relationship with the Limerick-Shannon gateway and its strategic location between Limerick and Galway. Other towns and rural areas should be supported in developing complementary roles which avail of the spin-off benefits which the performance of the Limerick-Shannon gateway will bring to the region.

County towns and towns over 5,000 population

Towns such as Nenagh, Thurles and Newcastlewest need appropriate policies and actions to support their roles as drivers of development at the county level. Examples include policies or actions to achieve good urban design and environmental quality, water services and effective linkages to the gateway in the region. These and other actions will serve to ensure that employment, housing, retailing and other functions attracted to the region by the gateway, will also have other attractive options to consider for location of all or parts of their operations in the region.

Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Opportunities are emerging for towns like Abbeyfeale, Kilrush, Rathkeale, Roscrea and Templemore to improve their base for enterprise, residential and other functions within the county structure, in partnership with larger towns. Water services, land availability and urban renewal initiatives are among the keys to supporting development in towns such as these.

Villages and rural areas

In aiming to achieve a greater spread of economic and spatial development, it is possible to identify the following broad areas of opportunity in the Mid West.

The success of established tourism areas, such as those along the west coast of Clare and the Lough Derg area, can be sustained through effective management and the sustainable development of assets such as the natural and cultural heritage.

The potential of more rural parts of south county Limerick and north Tipperary, particularly previously strong agricultural areas experiencing population decline due to agricultural restructuring, can be developed. This will be supported through service programmes for villages to attract residential, local enterprise and other functions.

Physical access can be enhanced and the potential of underdeveloped areas can be developed in tourism and other areas particularly in upland or estuarine areas such as west Limerick and the Shannon Estuary, east Clare uplands and lakes and the Silvermines area.

4.6 The South East Region

In the South East region (Counties Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South, Waterford and Wexford) critical mass will be enhanced through Waterford performing as a gateway, supported by Kilkenny and Wexford as hubs. These three together form a nationally strategic 'growth triangle'.
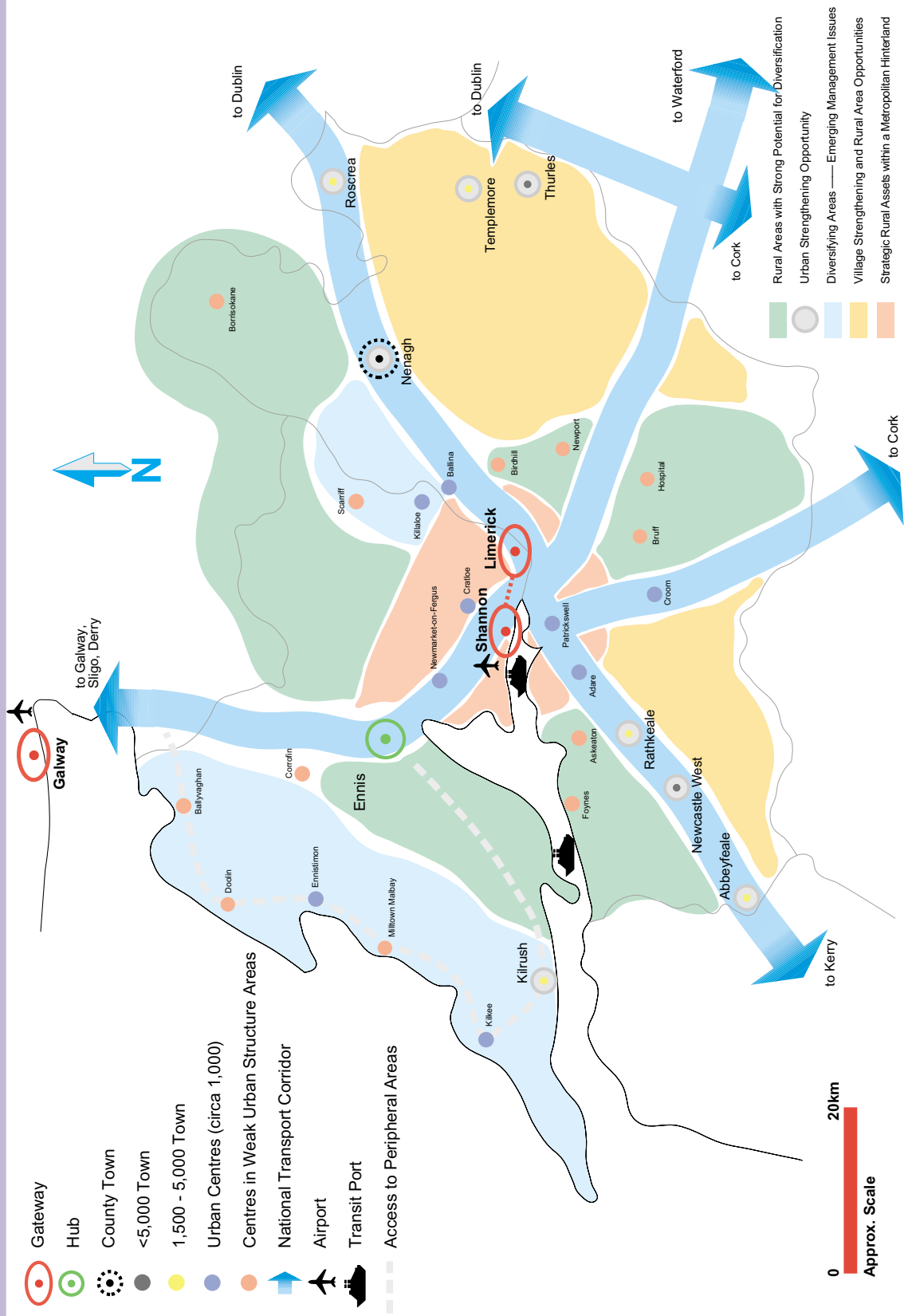
Waterford, Kilkenny and Wexford will drive regional growth by providing a large and skilled population base, substantial capacity for additional residential and employment related functions and an improving transport network. County towns, other towns, villages and more rural areas should be positioned to support the full realisation of the potential for economic development throughout the region, with a particular emphasis on complementing the gateway and hub approach.

County towns and towns over 5,000 population

The critical mass of Waterford as a gateway, supported by Kilkenny and Wexford as hubs, will be complemented by development in surrounding and adjacent towns. The extensive network of county towns and other large towns in the South East provides a key resource, which, combined with the gateway and hub approach, provides a strong platform for balanced development throughout the region.

Towns such as Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir in South Tipperary, Dungarvan and Tramore in Waterford, Carlow town, New Ross and Enniscorthy in Wexford provide good bases for population and services which will attract investment and employment activities additional to those that need to be located in or near a gateway. There are development opportunities for Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir, placed strategically between Waterford and Limerick/Shannon, Dungarvan between Waterford and Cork, Carlow between Kilkenny and Dublin and New Ross and Enniscorthy between Wexford and Kilkenny.

Map 7 Mid West Region

Legend:

- Gateway
- Hub
- County Town
- <5,000 Town
- 1,500 - 5,000 Town
- Urban Centres (circa 1,000)
- Centres in Weak Urban Structure Areas
- National Transport Corridor
- Airport
- Transit Port
- Access to Peripheral Areas

Map labels:

Galway

to Galway, Sligo, Derry

Ballyvaghan
Doolin
Corofin
Ennistimon
Ennis
Milltown Malbay
Kilkee
Kilrush

Scariff
Killaloe
Newmarket-on-Fergus
Cratloe
Ballina
Limerick
Shannon
Patrickswell
Adare
Foynes
Askeaton
Rathkeale
Newcastle West
Abbeyfeale
Croom
Bruff
Hospital
Birdhill
Newport

Borrisokane
Nenagh
Roscrea
Templemore
Thurles

to Dublin
to Dublin
to Waterford
to Cork
to Cork
to Kerry

N

Right-side legend:

- Rural Areas with Strong Potential for Diversification
- Urban Strengthening Opportunity
- Diversifying Areas —— Emerging Management Issues
- Village Strengthening and Rural Area Opportunities
- Strategic Rural Assets within a Metropolitan Hinterland

0   20km

Approx. Scale

Towns 1,500-5000 population

Towns such as Tipperary town, Cahir and Cashel in South Tipperary, Thomastown in Kilkenny, Bagenalstown and Tullow in Carlow and Gorey in Wexford traditionally served a prosperous agricultural hinterland that generally endowed them with townscapes of high visual quality, compact form and a rich built heritage. Today, although farm-based employment is falling, the quality of life attractions and scale of these towns form strong attractions for residential, small and medium enterprise development.

These strengths should be capitalised on by local authorities through local planning and development promotion activities, with the support of urban renewal and other improvement initiatives, improvements to water services and improved capacity for development through, for example, better access to back-land areas. In this way these smaller towns can offer a distinctive alternative for people attracted to the quality of life such towns can offer.

Villages and rural areas

A characteristic of the spatial structure of the South East is the extensive network of villages throughout the region which has developed with the support of a traditionally prosperous agricultural base.

The traditional stability and prosperity of both the villages and their associated rural areas in the South East should be addressed, in the context of falling farm-based employment. This can be done within the county development plan process and through initiatives that enhance the attractiveness of villages as residential areas and locations for other functions drawn to the region both by the Waterford gateway and the extensive network of larger urban centres throughout the region. Such initiatives could include local infrastructure servicing programmes either by local authorities or in partnership with the private sector, the acquisition of key sites that unlock potential for back-land development and complementary policies to encourage people to live in villages.

Many of the more rural areas of the South East have the capacity to augment their established agricultural strength through specialist tourism attractions, taking advantage of planned enhancements to the national road and public transport links between the South east and other parts of the country. This process of adding additional types of economic activity in rural areas will be based on the region's extensive and attractive coastline, river valleys and uplands. For example, the Slaney, Barrow, Nore and Suir valleys encompass both attractive landscapes and towns at strategic bridging points with extensive built heritage. There are similar opportunities along the Wexford-Waterford coastline. Collectively, the tourism attractions of these areas provide a basis for local, regional and national packaging and promotional activities.
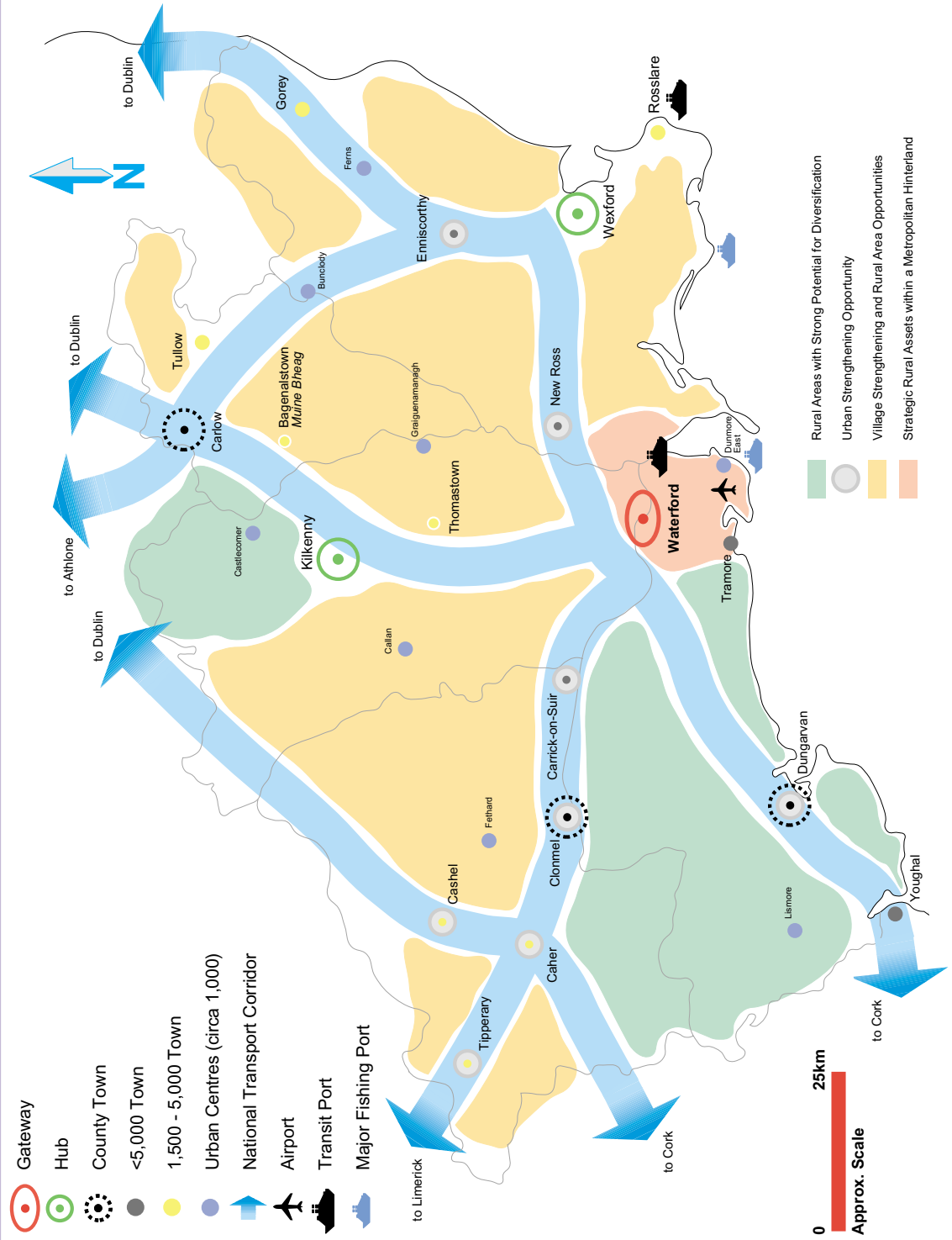
4.7 The South West Region

The South West (Counties Cork and Kerry) will contribute to balanced regional development through acting as a national/international gateway, supported by the Mallow hub at a pivotal location between Cork and Limerick. Cork will build on its substantial and established economic base to lever investment into the South West region. It will do this with the support of its scale of population, its third level institutions and the substantial capacity for growth identified in the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP). Implementation of CASP is important to secure the objectives of the NSS. Appropriate implementation structures supported by the local authorities and State agencies will be needed to drive this strategic plan forward.

Enhancing the contribution of the South West to balanced regional development will also be critically dependent on the development of Kerry. This will be driven by combining the complementary strengths of Tralee and Killarney as a hub and building on their track record and established residential, employment, retailing, education, transport and services functions.

Other components of the South West region at the county and inter-county level will complement the gateway and hubs in developing the potential of the Cork and Kerry areas.

Map **8** South East Region

Legend:

- Gateway
- Hub
- County Town
- <5,000 Town
- 1,500 - 5,000 Town
- Urban Centres (circa 1,000)
- National Transport Corridor
- Airport
- Transit Port
- Major Fishing Port

Rural Areas with Strong Potential for Diversification
Urban Strengthening Opportunity
Village Strengthening and Rural Area Opportunities
Strategic Rural Assets within a Metropolitan Hinterland

N

Approx. Scale
0
25km

Rosslare
Gorey
Ferns
Enniscorthy
Bunclody
Wexford
Tullow
Bagenalstown
Muine Bheag
Graiguenamanagh
New Ross
Carlow
Thomastown
Dunmore East
Waterford
Castlecomer
Kilkenny
Tramore
Callan
Carrick-on-Suir
Dungarvan
Fethard
Clonmel
Cashel
Youghal
Lismore
Caher
Tipperary

to Dublin
to Dublin
to Dublin
to Athlone
to Limerick
to Cork
to Cork

County Towns and towns over 5,000 population

Tralee, Killarney and Mallow, as hubs, will perform important roles within the national structure at the regional and county level. Improvements in regional accessibility through roads, advanced communications infrastructure and public transport links are key supporting factors. Other critical factors are enhanced physical qualities, townscape and improved local services. Towns close to Cork City, such as Midleton, Youghal, Cobh and Carrigaline, need to be promoted and developed as self-sustaining towns. They will benefit from proximity to Cork and at the same time build up their employment and services functions through the implementation of the Cork Area Strategic Plan, in particular through enhancing their road, rail and bus links to Cork City.

Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Within the South West region, there are medium sized towns that play important economic and service functions along remoter parts of the coastline, such as Dingle, Cahersiveen, Kenmare, Castletownbere, Bantry and Skibbereen. Accessibility and effective local planning frameworks and initiatives to release capacity in terms of land and services for sustainable growth are critical factors in activating the potential of such centres in their important county roles.

In more inland parts, towns such as Listowel, Kanturk, Charleville, Mitchelstown and Fermoy have historically developed to serve strong rural and agricultural hinterlands. Capitalising on the location and attractions of such centres on or near important transport corridors, will become an important part of diversifying these towns as their reliance on traditional economic activities lessens. In partnership with Cork as a gateway, centres such as Bandon and Clonakility with their own unique settings and urban design qualities can perform effectively in local employment, retailing, residential and service functions.

Villages and rural areas

In the South West region there are contrasts in the development issues facing smaller towns and rural areas. In more western parts of Kerry and parts of west Cork, a dynamic and nationally important tourism product has been developed which will require effective management and sustainable development of the natural and cultural heritage to sustain it for the future. In the journey to work catchment of Cork and Tralee/Killarney, rural areas are under considerable pressure for individual residential development. Improving services in villages and smaller towns to accommodate sustainable growth and promote a co-ordinated approach to services provision is a potential way forward. In parts of west Cork, such as the Beara peninsula and the uplands on the Cork/Kerry border, there are areas of high environmental quality and improving accessibility that have significant potential for increased development in the tourism, natural resources (forestry and fisheries) areas. There is also potential for small to medium enterprises in, for example, Gaeltacht areas.

4.8 The West Region

Building on the dynamic role of Galway as a gateway and expanding its influence in promoting economic activity will be at the heart of extending balanced regional development to the West region (Counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon). The support of the additional potential of Castlebar and Ballina in County Mayo and Tuam in County Galway as hubs will also be crucial.

Galway, with its population catchment, quality of life attractions, transport connections and capacity to innovate with the support of its third level institutions, will continue to play the critical role which has been essential in activating the potential of the region. The challenge now is to sustain and broaden this role to strengthen other areas. In seeking to enhance the role of Galway recognition must be given to the need to strengthen and protect the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Galway Gaeltacht.

Map 9 South West Region

Approx. Scale

0   25km

N

to Waterford

to Dublin

to Limerick

to Limerick

Youghal

Midleton

Cobh

Passage West

Cork

Carrigaline

Kinsale

Mitchelstown

Fermoy

Charleville
Rath Lurc

Mallow

Blarney

Tower

Newmarket

Kanturk

Millstreet

Macroom

Bandon

Dunmanway

Clonakilty

Skibbereen

Bantry

Castleisland

Killarney

Listowel

Ballybunion

Tralee

Killorglin

Kenmare

Castletownbere

Caherciveen

Dingle

Legend

Gateway

Hub

<5,000 Town

1,500 – 5,000 Town

Urban Centres (circa 1,000)

National Transport Corridor

Access to Peripheral Areas

Airport

Transit Port

Major Fishing Port

Rural Areas with Strong Potential for Diversification

Urban Strengthening Opportunity

Diversifying Areas — Emerging Management Issues

Village Strengthening and Rural Area Opportunities

Strategic Rural Assets within a Metropolitan Hinterland

The contribution that is being made by other towns and rural areas should be strengthened in a way that harnesses local resources and potential in a sustainable manner, while recognising the issue of perhiperality in the West. This will ensure that a wider area will benefit from the presence of critical mass in the region.

County towns and towns over 5,000 population

Castlebar, Ballina and Tuam, as hubs, will perform important roles within the national structure at the regional and county level. Critical factors will include improvements in regional accessibility through advanced communications infrastructure, by road and public transport and through the regional airport at Knock. These critical factors also include the enhanced townscape and local services necessary to underpin capacity for development. In the wider western region Roscommon and Ballinasloe have strong functional links with parts of the Midlands region, particularly Athlone. Roscommon and Ballinasloe will benefit from the Galway and Midlands gateways by virtue of their location on national transport routes and their quality of life and cost advantages in the housing and employment areas. Linking the Midlands gateway with Castlebar/Ballina through upgraded road, public transport and communications links also has the potential to benefit a number of other towns, including Roscommon, Castlerea, Ballyhaunis and Claremorris.

Towns 1,500-5,000 population

Towns such as Westport and Claremorris in Mayo, Ballaghadereen, Boyle and Castlerea in Roscommon and Athenry and Loughrea in Galway present opportunities for development and expansion through effective promotion and marketing in association with larger towns, hubs and gateways. An example already apparent is that of Westport, which has used its physical attractiveness and heritage conservation as a strong selling point, while ensuring that key infrastructure is in place, notably in water services and communications.

Villages and rural areas

In the West region, within the national structure set out in the NSS, the broad components which strategic planning should address include the following.
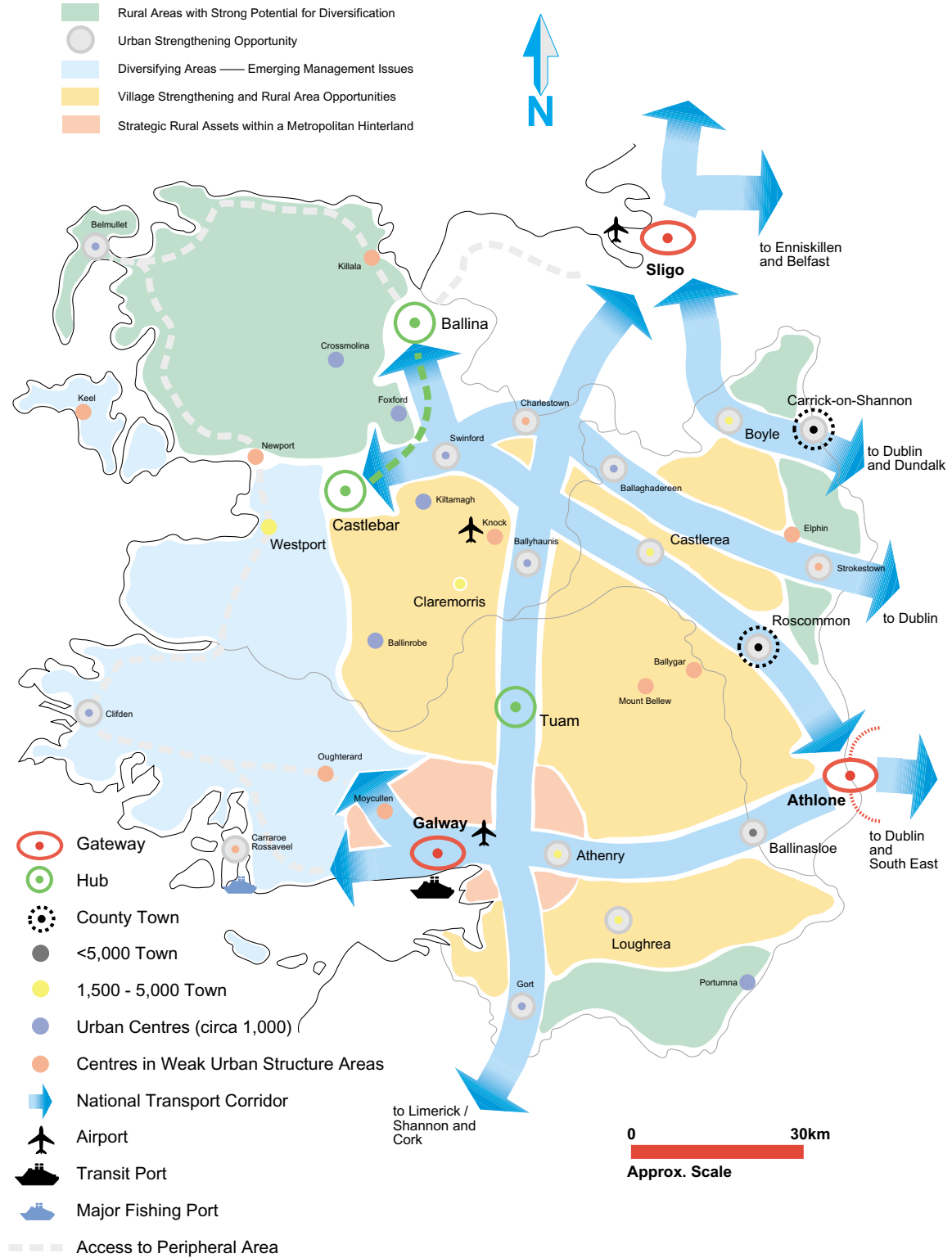
Areas along the west coast, notably in Connemara, and parts of the Mayo/Galway border have been successfully diversifying through a mix of tourism and natural resource development (particularly in forestry and fisheries) and small and medium enterprises. This process has been supported by the work of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Údarás na Gaeltachta. The management and extension of this process in a sustainable manner will be essential in ensuring that regional development reaches out to other communities.

Map 10 identifies towns and villages in remoter areas where the urban structure overall is weak. Such towns and villages play a key role in delivering services and supporting employment in physically remote and peripheral areas. This role must be acknowledged and supported in relevant county and regional strategies, through promoting improvements in accessibility and supporting opportunities for development. Towns such as Clifden, Belmullet and Carraroe will in particular have a vital role in establishing local employment and services functions to drive the process described above.

Many parts of the journey to work catchments of cities and towns such as Galway, Athlone, Castlebar and also areas such as south Mayo and east Galway contain rural areas under considerable pressure for development. Through servicing and development initiatives and pro-active planning, the gateways and hubs can support development in smaller villages in particular where the necessary infrastructure enhancements are provided either through public or private efforts.

Parts of west and north Mayo and eastern parts of Galway and Roscommon in the Shannon catchment, have significant natural and cultural heritage attractions such as landscape, inland waterways and historical artefacts. Priorities for development here include identifying key assets and presenting or assembling a quality package – e.g. enhancing hotel facilities in north west Mayo, improving regional road access and improving awareness through marketing. County development plans and the plans of development agencies should become the instruments for identifying such

Map 10 West Region

Rural Areas with Strong Potential for Diversification
Urban Strengthening Opportunity
Diversifying Areas —— Emerging Management Issues
Village Strengthening and Rural Area Opportunities
Strategic Rural Assets within a Metropolitan Hinterland

N

Belmullet
Killala
Crossmolina
Keel
Foxford
Newport
Ballina
Charlestown
Sligo
to Enniskillen and Belfast
Carrick-on-Shannon
Boyle
Swinford
Ballaghadereen
to Dublin and Dundalk
Kiltamagh
Castlebar
Knock
Ballyhaunis
Castlerea
Elphin
Westport
Strokestown
Claremorris
Ballinrobe
Ballygar
Roscommon
to Dublin
Mount Bellew
Clifden
Tuam
Oughterard
Moycullen
Athlone
Galway
to Dublin and South East
Ballinasloe
Carraroe
Rossaveel
Athenry
Loughrea
Gort
Portumna
to Limerick / Shannon and Cork

Gateway
Hub
County Town
<5,000 Town
1,500 - 5,000 Town
Urban Centres (circa 1,000)
Centres in Weak Urban Structure Areas
National Transport Corridor
Airport
Transit Port
Major Fishing Port
Access to Peripheral Area

0   30km
Approx. Scale

development opportunities and subsequent development priorities. In this way, broader areas will experience the process of rural diversification already underway in some parts of Galway and Mayo. With the necessary marketing and development, these areas will benefit from the strength brought to the region by gateways and hubs.