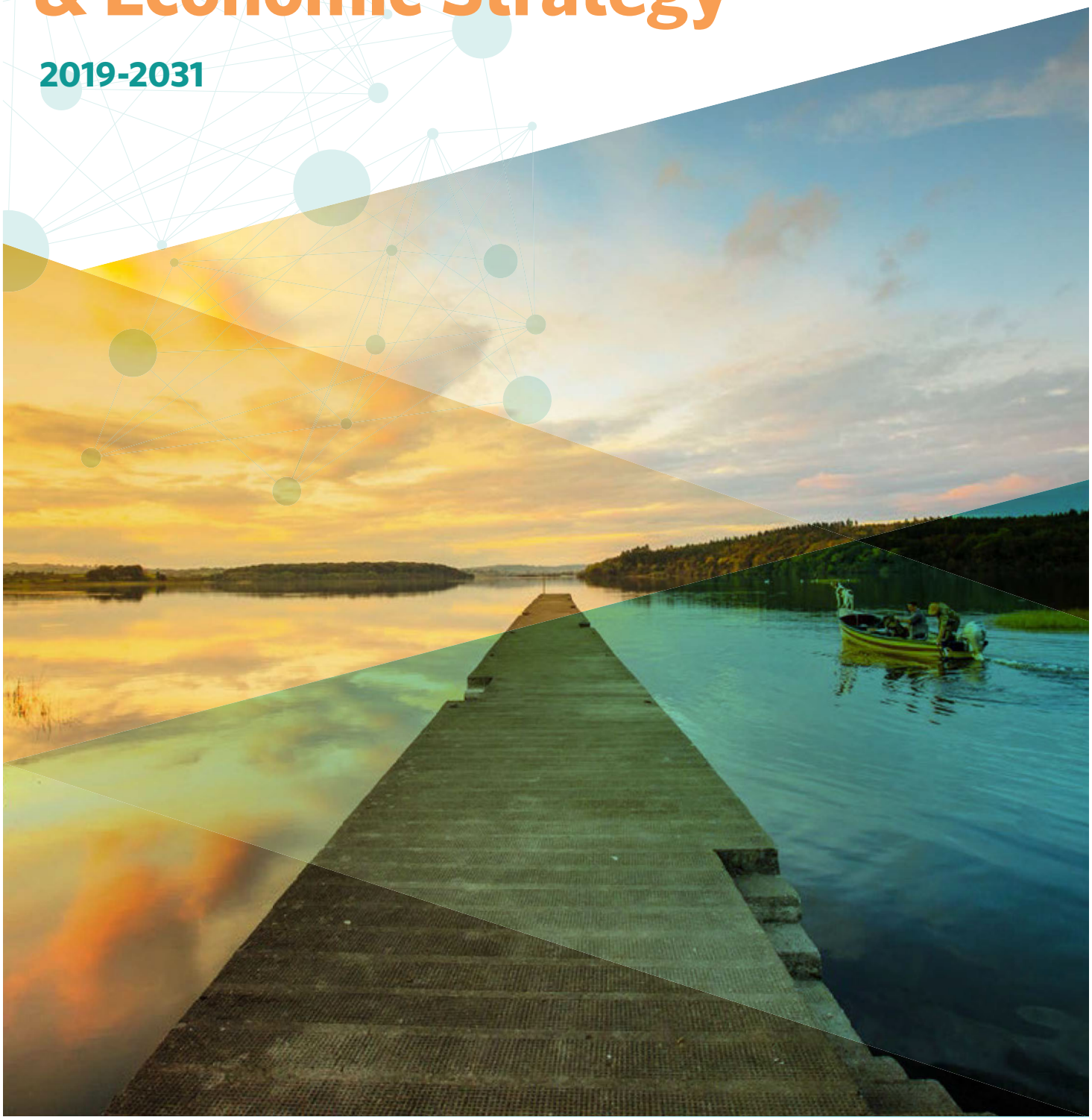
Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy

2019-2031



Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

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Director's Foreword

A Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future growth and to better manage regional planning and economic development throughout the Region. It identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives.



This RSES brings together for the first time spatial planning, economic policy and provides the environment for investment, and in doing so it marks a significant policy milestone for Regional Government in Ireland. Members from the 12 local authorities that constitute the Region, came together as an Assembly to make, for the first time, an overarching strategy that benefits the entire Region. In making this Strategy the Assembly is playing a key role in informing new approaches towards assisting in the delivery of regional development.

Established in 2015, the Assembly spent its initial setup period developing a comprehensive understanding of the needs of its stakeholders, particularly across the areas such as place making, housing, economic opportunity, our environment and heritage and the regions infrastructure challenges. An evidence based approach, to establish the issues and identify solutions, was undertaken by the Assemblies executive team and underpins the Strategy. A vision for the Region was developed by the elected members and stakeholders to guide and inform the policies and objectives of the Strategy.

The RSES builds on the foundations of Government policy in Project Ireland 2040, which combines spatial planning with capital investment, and has been prepared from an extensive bottom up consultation process. It is an integrated cohesive policy document that provides a Spatial Strategy to manage future growth in the region. It is a Climate Action Strategy to accelerate climate action. It is an Economic Strategy to sustain and strengthen our economy and a Metropolitan Plan for the sustainable growth of Dublin as an international city. Finally, it is an Investment Framework to prioritise funding.

Throughout the strategy there are 3 cross cutting key principles;

- Healthy Placemaking - To promote people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit, invest and study in.
- Climate Action - The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon society recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.
- Economic Opportunity - To create the right conditions and opportunities for the Region to realise sustainable economic growth and quality jobs that ensure a good living standard for all.

The Assembly recognises the opportunities in the changing dynamic in Ireland and the Strategy seeks to optimise investment in the region and maximise the potential of national and European funding. This will be done through partnership with stakeholders and in collaboration with other agencies to deliver on the shared vision of the Strategy and to continue building a sustainable, healthy and resilient region.

Jim Conway,
Director

Cathaoirleach's Message

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the first Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region, which has been made by the Regional Assembly. It marks the result of extensive consultation and work across the region and it demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of regional government.



At the outset I would like to thank and commend my colleagues from the 12 local authorities represented on this Assembly who worked tirelessly to ensure that an equitable and far sighted strategy, designed to achieve balanced regional growth across the entire region, is now in place to ensure a clear roadmap for achieving healthy placemaking, climate action and economic opportunity for all citizens.

Starting in 2017, we sought the views of individuals and organisations to build up a picture of what was needed to ensure the future of the people who live, work and lead their lives in our Region and indeed that of the generations to come.

I would like also to thank everyone who contributed to bringing the Strategy together, be they individuals or those who work for the many stakeholders who actively participated in this production.

Ours is a diverse region, stretching from a vibrant national capital of international significance through areas of rich heritage and immense natural beauty that support a varied tourism and recreation offering. We have natural assets include the raised bogs and lakes in the Midlands, the Wicklow Mountains National Park, Slieve Bloom mountains, the bays and estuaries of the eastern seaboard and inland waterways such as the Royal and Grand Canals and the Shannon corridor.

Our built heritage includes historic and walled towns, world class museums and attractions such as the Book of Kells and the UNESCO World Heritage site of Brú na Boinne, the medieval monasteries of Clonmacnoise and Glendalough and a number of historic castles, houses and demesne landscapes.

This Strategy will ensure that we focus on maximising these great advantages as well as identifying new opportunities and planning for the foreseen and unforeseen challenges that await us, both here in Ireland and internationally.

This Strategy marks a significant step forward by regions in Ireland and demonstrates what we can achieve when we pull all our regional strength together. It now falls to us to make sure the objectives of the Strategy are met and I look forward to being a part of making this happen over the coming years.

Eddie Fitzpatrick,
Cathoirleach

Members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

Dublin City Council (DCC)

Paddy Bourke
Christy Burke
Ciarán Cuffe
Gaye Fagan
Mary Freehill
Dermot Lacey
Claire O'Connor

South Dublin County Council (SDCC)

Francis Duffy
Pamela Kearns
Robert Russell

Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown County Council (DLR)

Kate Feeney
Mary Hanafin
Pat Hand
Lettie McCarthy
Barry Ward

Fingal County Council (FCC)

Kieran Dennison
David Healy
Brian McDonagh

Louth County Council

Conor Keelan
Colm Markey

Kildare County Council

Ivan Keatley
Padraig McEvoy
Martin Miley

Meath County Council

Brian Fitzgerald
Maria Murphy
Tommy Reilly

Wicklow County Council

Thomas Cullen
Derek Mitchell
Pat Vance
Irene Winters

Offaly County Council

Eamon Dooley
Eddie Fitzpatrick

Longford County Council

Mick Cahill
PJ Reilly

Westmeath County Council

Andrew Duncan
Paddy Hill

Laois County Council

Paddy Bracken
Catherine Fitzgerald



1 Introduction

1.1 Vision

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape the future development of our Region to 2031 and beyond....

> "To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all"

1.2 Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly was established on 1st January 2015. The Region covers nine counties containing twelve local authorities namely – Longford, Westmeath, Offaly, Laois, Louth, Meath, Kildare, Wicklow, Fingal, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils and Dublin City Council. The Region includes 3 subregions or Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), namely the Midland, Eastern and Dublin SPAs (see Figure1.1).



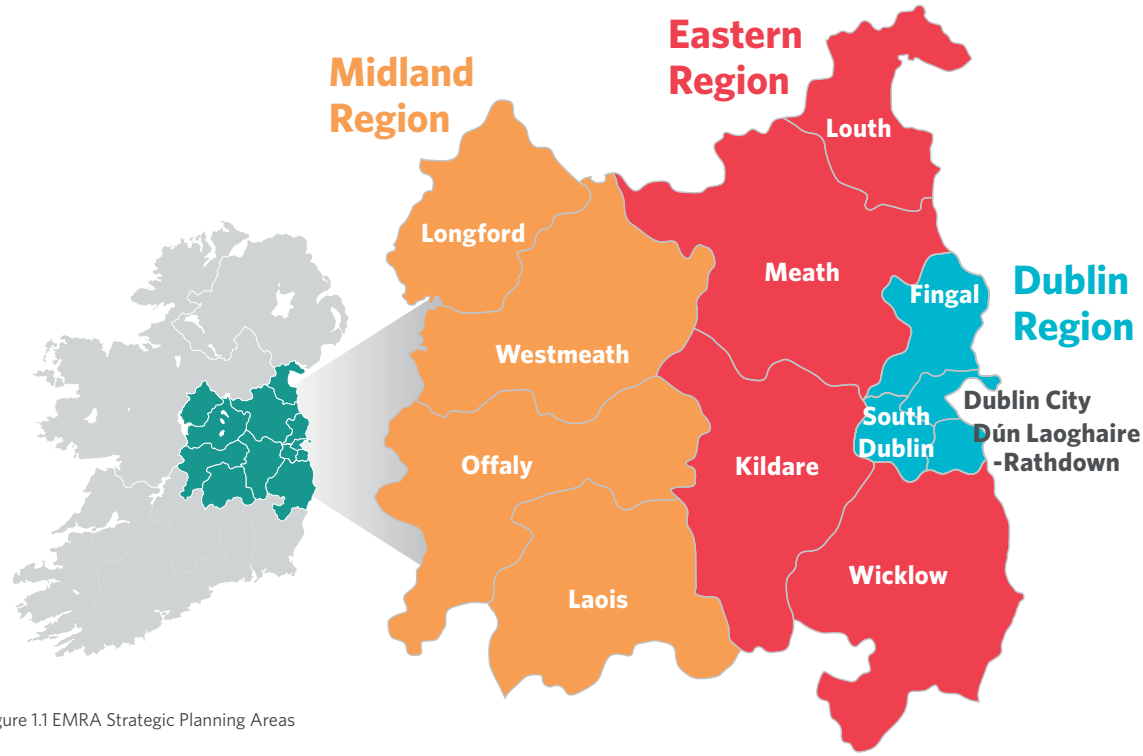


Figure 1.1 EMRA Strategic Planning Areas

One of the principal functions of the members of the Assembly is the delivery of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), a new concept in Irish planning where not only the spatial but also the economic factors that set out the future of the Region are brought together into one all-encompassing strategy.

The Regional Assembly also has functions in relation to European funding and programming as well as a permanent presence in Brussels with the Irish Regions EU Office. The Assembly is the secretariat for the national delegation to the Committee of the Regions, and manages the economist function on behalf of the three Assemblies. It is a stated objective of the Assembly to have an increased role in the management of European funding post 2020 in line with that of the other two Regional Assemblies. Furthermore, the Regional Assembly's functions can be expanded with a significant role in the delivery and application of investment under Project Ireland 2040 (PI 2040), which includes the National Planning Framework (NPF) 2040 and a detailed capital investment plan, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027.

1.3 What is a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)?

A RSES is a strategic plan which identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. At this strategic level it provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development throughout the Region.

The RSES provides a:

- **Spatial Strategy** – to manage future growth and ensure the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, study, visit and invest in.
- **Economic Strategy** – that builds on our strengths to sustain a strong economy and support the creation of quality jobs that ensure a good living standard for all.
- **Metropolitan Plan** – to ensure a supply of strategic development areas for the sustainable growth and continued success and competitiveness of the Dublin Metropolitan Area.
- **Investment Framework** – to prioritise the delivery of key enabling infrastructure and services by government and state agencies.
- **Climate Action Strategy** – to accelerate climate action, ensure a clean and healthy environment and to promote sustainable transport and strategic green infrastructure.

The principal statutory purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Region. The RSES is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 to address employment, retail, housing, transport, water services, energy and communications, waste management, education, health, sports and community facilities, environment and heritage, landscape, sustainable development and climate change.

The RSES is a significant evolution of regional policy making and replaces the current Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs). These provided strategic policy and recommendations at a regional level with which both county and city development plans have to be consistent in policy making. Three RPGs have been operational in the Region – the Border (which includes Louth), the Midland and the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) RPGs, 2010-2022.

The regional tier of governance in Ireland sits in the middle of the planning hierarchy and the policy making at this level has to be consistent with the NPF, as does that at a local level with the RSES, see Figure 1.2 which shows the Spatial Planning Hierarchy in Ireland.

The RSES will be implemented in policy by way of review by local authorities of all development plans and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) after the adoption of this Strategy. Key state agencies and sectoral bodies will also have to consider their strategies and investment plans in light of the adoption of the RSES.

The RSES will be realised by the delivery of European and National funding that will achieve the Regional Strategic Outcomes (and NPF National Strategic Outcomes) expressed in the Strategy. These funds will focus on the priorities and key aspects of the RSES to sustainably grow the Region to 2031 and beyond.

The RSES is informed by:

- **Project Ireland 2040** – the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan, economic and other relevant policies of the government, including climate change plans and the ten-year capital investment plan.
- **Consultation process** – Three public consultation display periods during the process. An initial public and stakeholder consultation process with an issues paper and 171 submission received. A 12 week public consultation period on the Draft RSES where 312 submissions were received. And a further 4 week public consultation period on propsed material amendments to the Draft RSES with 106 submissions received.
- **Engagement process** - Engagement and collaboration with key stakeholders in the Region through Technical Working Groups and Senior Officials Advisory Group.
- **Socio- Economic Profile** – a Regional Profile and Map Viewer was prepared for the Region in collaboration with the All Island Research Observatory (AIRO) in Maynooth University, as part of our commitment to evidence informed policy making and evaluation.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** – a parallel SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Flood Risk Assessment (RFRA) process informs each stage in the making of the RSES.

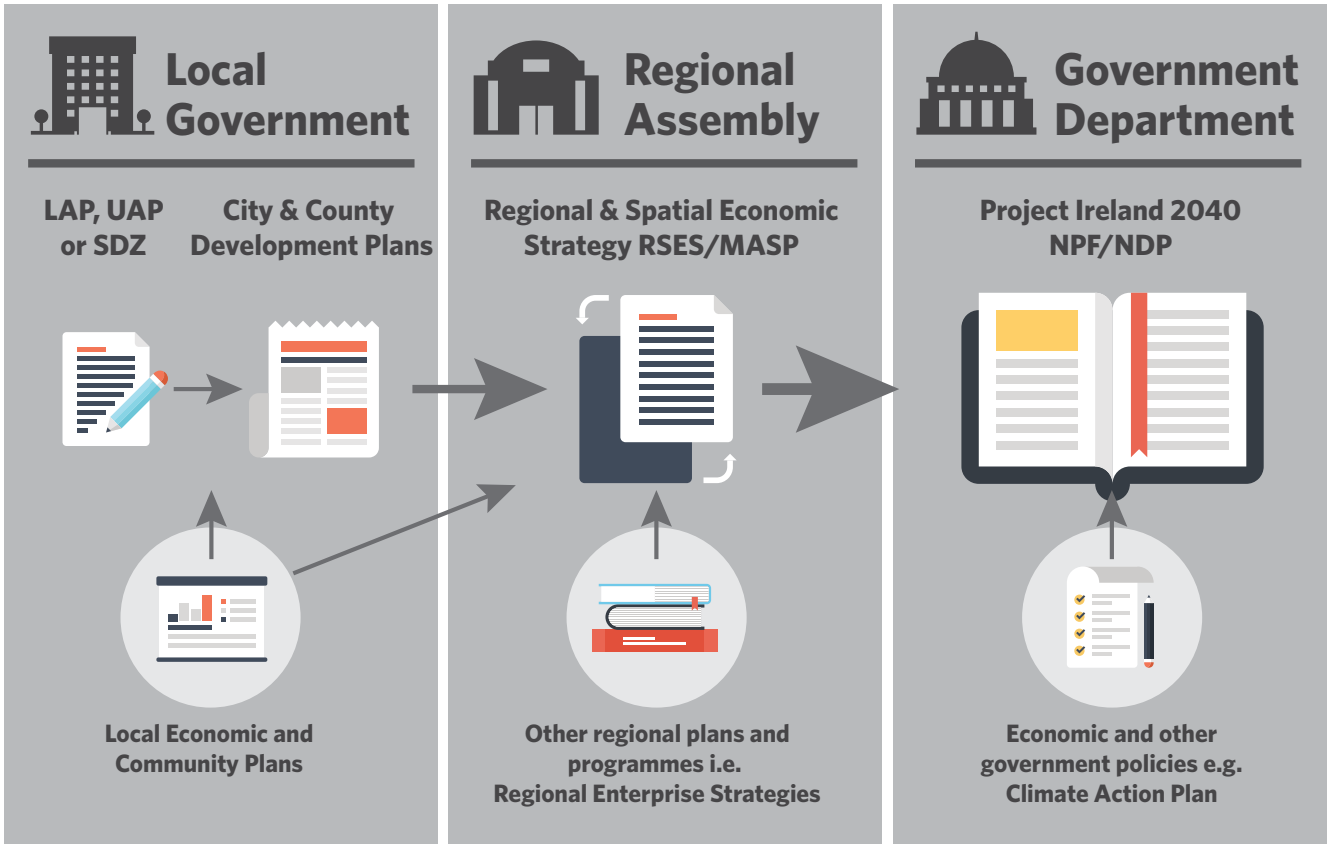


Figure 1.2 Spatial Planning Hierarchy in Ireland

1.4 Spatial and Economic Policy Background

Developing the Strategy is achieved through the integration of spatial and economic policy both horizontally (across sectors) and vertically. By ensuring good alignment with European and National policy, the RSES can ensure that investment is targeted towards identified policy and objectives. Key policy parameters for the RSES growth strategy are also set by national policy documents including the NPF and the National Development Plan 2018-2027 along with Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025 Enterprise 2025.

European Socio-Economic Policy

European spatial planning is closely interlinked with a number of trans-national, regional, economic and environmental policies and programmes. The European Union's cohesion policy is currently divided into 11 Thematic Objectives (TO) aimed at reducing disparities in the development of its territories and to contribute to the priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth envisaged by the Strategy "Europe 2020". The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its Regions. It is implemented at regional level through Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) for the period 2014-2020.

ROP objectives include; to increase competitiveness; to support innovation and investment in human capital; to enhance the natural attractor; to promote energy efficiency and sustainable mobility and to promote policies for social inclusion.

The next EU programming period 2021-2027 is under development, there is an emerging convergence of territorial and cohesion policy in this process, which will give greater focus on the delivery of national and regional spatial policy. The European Commission has proposed a new framework for the future Regional Development and Cohesion Policy that identifies five main objectives:

- **A smarter Europe** (innovative and smart economic transformation)
- **A greener, low-carbon Europe** (including energy transition, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk management)
- **A more connected Europe** (mobility and ICT connectivity)
- **A more social Europe** (European Pillar of Social Rights)
- **A Europe closer to citizens** (sustainable development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives).

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework and National Development Plan

With the publication of a new national spatial policy in February 2018 with Project Ireland 2040 (PI 2040)– National Planning Framework (NPF), which is underpinned by capital investment in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027, Ireland is undergoing a review of planning and economic policy from the national level, to the regional and the local. The preparation of the RSES has been directly informed by PI 2040 and the National Policy Objectives contained therein.

One of the key drivers for the NPF is the promotion of effective regional development that manages more balanced growth between the three Irish Regions; the Eastern and Midland Region, the Northern and Western Region and the Southern Region. The NPF sets out a preferred 'regional parity' scenario where the growth of the other Regions would at least match that of the Eastern and Midland Region.

While it is recognised that Dublin is at the forefront of international competition for investment, the NPF encourages significant regional concentration towards the second-tier cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford and some regionally important larger settlements, such as Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda.

The key elements of the growth strategy identified at the national level, which set the parameters for the development of the RSES growth strategy include:

- Regional parity between the EMRA, and NWRA and SRA combined
- Regional concentration toward cities and some regionally important larger settlements
- A focus on contained growth and reduced sprawl by targeting infill and brownfield lands in existing built-up areas
- Sequential provision of infrastructure with some critical infrastructure in place to promote investment
- A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan to deliver compact regeneration and growth in the Dublin metropolitan area and
- A comprehensive approach to rural fabric supporting sustainable growth and reversing decline.

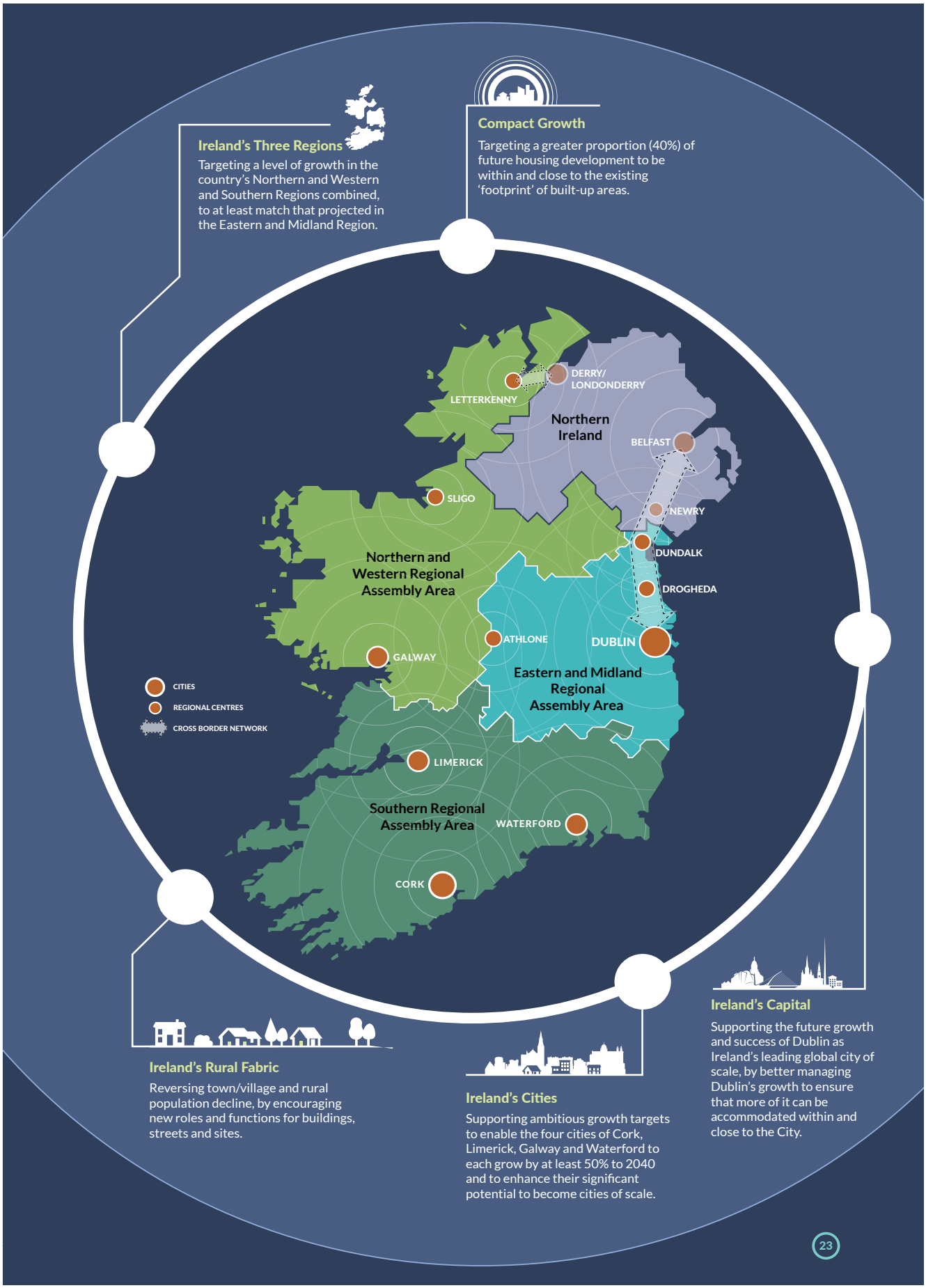


Figure 1.3 NPF map

Enterprise 2025

The national vision is that the Country is best placed to succeed in business by delivering sustainable employment and higher standards of living for all. Policies re-assert an export-led growth strategy underpinned by talent and innovation. This national policy aims to deepen resilience in the enterprise base to support the creation of quality jobs throughout Ireland so that full employment is sustainable over the longer term.

Key national economic priorities in Enterprise 2025 that set the parameters for the development of the RSES growth strategy include to;

- increase the emphasis on developing Irish owned enterprises – embedding resilience in our enterprise base, enhancing productivity and delivering quality jobs – including supporting companies to navigate their way through Brexit
- harness the distinctive characteristics of our foreign and Irish owned enterprise mix through collaboration and clustering
- place a spotlight on innovation and talent and leverage our strengths in disruptive technologies so that we achieve our ambition with more enterprises developing new products, services and solutions to compete effectively against international competition
- realise the full potential of our Regions through investments in placemaking - developing places that are attractive for business investment and for people to live and work
- develop our international relationships and strengthen economic diplomacy to raise Ireland's visibility, protect Ireland's reputation and provide opportunities for our enterprises.

Review of the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines

The National Spatial Strategy, 2000 introduced the concept of polycentric development in Ireland, with a focus on strengthening of the role of urban centres which have the potential to develop into 'nodes' or gateways' to promote a more balanced regional development and counterbalance to the dominant capital.

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) were to support the implementation of the NSS as a policy tool to achieve the Government's objective of more balanced regional development. The RPGs provided the link between the national and local planning frameworks providing more detail and establishing a development and spatial framework that was used to inform local authority development plans and other planning strategies at county, city and local level.



1.5 The RSES Process



Figure 1.4 RSES Process

In preparing the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) EMRA engaged in a dedicated collaborative approach to consultation. This included a series of consultation meetings undertaken with local authorities, state agencies, public bodies and other interest groups. Five Technical Working Groups were set up under the four themes of Place, Infrastructure, Economy and the Environment and in relation to the Dublin Metropolitan Area (MASP), and a series of workshops were held with relevant stakeholders.

A Senior Officials Advisory Group, made up of representatives from local authorities, government departments and public agencies provided a strategic advisory role during the process. The Assembly is also arranged into three Strategic Planning Area (SPA) Committees consisting of elected members, who developed policy and considered the preparation of the RSES.

A significant evidence gathering exercise informed the initial preparation of the RSES. This culminated in the publication of an Issues Paper and an associated background Socio-Economic Evidence Baseline Report, prepared in collaboration with the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University, in order to provide a detailed overview of the socio-economic characteristics of the Region. Interactive maps were also made available on the EMRA Web Viewer. This demonstrates the Assembly's commitment to an evidence-based policy making approach to the RSES process.

Stage 1: Issues Paper
The Issues Paper was made available for public comment between 20th November 2017 and 16th February 2018, seeking submissions on relevant strategic planning and economic development matters. 171 submissions were received during the consultation process and a Director's Report on the submissions was prepared and considered by the Assembly prior to preparing the draft RSES.

Stage 2: Draft RSES
On foot of the above consultations and engagement at the EMRA meeting of 19th October 2018 a draft RSES was prepared and made available for public consultation between 5th November 2018 and 23rd January 2019 inclusive. 312 submissions were received and a Director's Report was prepared. At the EMRA meeting of 1st March 2019, the submissions were considered and the memebers agreed to make the Strategy subject to 139 proposed Material Amendments.

Stage 3: Material Amendments
The proposed Material Amendments accompanied by updated environmental reports were made available for public consultation between March 15th and April 12th 2019 inclusive. 106 submissions were received to this third and final public consultation process and a third Director's Report on the submissions was prepared.

Stage 4: Final RSES
Following consideration of the Director's Report on the Proposed Material Amendments, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly at the EMRA meeting on the 3rd May 2019 decided to make the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region on the 28th June 2019, in accordance with section 24 (9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The RSES was subject to a Ministerial Direction issued on 14th January 2020.

1.6 Regional Profile

The EMRA is one of the three Regional Assemblies in Ireland. The Region covers nearly 14,500 square kilometres, which is the smallest in terms of land area but the largest in population size, with over 2.3 million people. The Eastern and Midland Region is also the primary economic engine of the state providing more than 1 million jobs. The main settlement is the capital city of Dublin, which is home to 1.2 million people and is supported by a network of regional and county towns and an extensive rural hinterland.

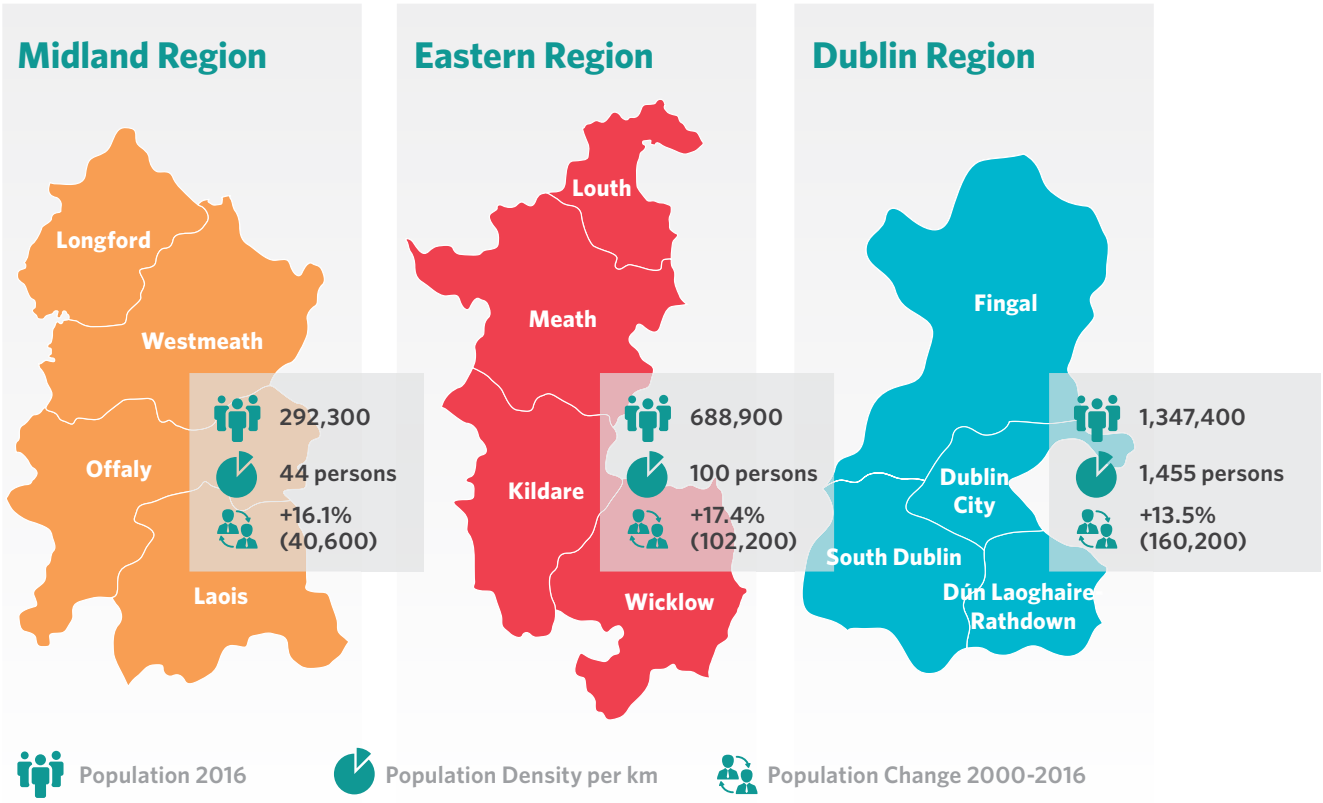


Figure 1.5 Our Strategic Planning Areas: Vital Statistics, CSO 2016

The Region is also home to areas of rich heritage and immense natural beauty that support a varied tourism and recreation offering, with more than 270km of coastline from Carlingford Lough in County Louth to Kilmichael Point on the Wicklow-Wexford border. Key natural assets include the raised bogs and lakes in the Midlands, the Wicklow Mountains National Park, Slieve Bloom Mountains, the bays and estuaries of the eastern seaboard including the Dublin Bay UNESCO Biosphere and inland waterways such as the Royal and Grand Canals and the Shannon corridor, which are a key focus for water-based tourism.

Our built heritage includes historic and walled towns, world class museums and attractions such as the Guinness Storehouse, the Book of Kells and the UNESCO World Heritage site of Bru na Boinne, the medieval monasteries of Clonmacnoise and Glendalough and a number of historic castles, houses and demesne landscapes.

The Eastern and Midland Region is the economic engine of the State and is on the trans-European network linked to Liverpool across the Irish Sea and to Belfast along the M1 Corridor. The Region is administratively based on three Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) namely, The Dublin SPA, The Eastern SPA and The Midlands SPA, which provide for a sub-regional planning remit. The SPAs recognise the historic connections and ongoing similarities that exist at this level. The Dublin region is the main global gateway to Ireland, with Dublin Airport one of the fastest growing in Europe and continued growth both in the import and export of goods through Dublin Port. The Eastern counties have the benefit of proximity to Dublin and a strong tourism and leisure offering as well as good national and international connectivity. The Midlands is a dynamic region, centrally located in the heart of Ireland with a high-quality environment and quality of life and unparalleled national interconnectivity.

A Growing Region

From 2006 to 2016 the Region grew by 15% - an increase of over 300,000 people – exceeding the state average growth rate of 12% over the same period. The Region contains some of the fastest growing communities in the Country which increases demand for housing, infrastructure and services in those areas.

Recent trends show that population growth is set to continue having regard to the Region's young demographic profile and a return to net inward migration as the Country returns to economic growth after a severe economic crash in 2008. However, population growth rates varied across the Region, with some peripheral and inner urban areas experiencing population decline between 2006 and 2016, while other areas have seen significant growth rates see Figure 1.6.

In line with a prevailing state-wide trend of urbanisation, the Region saw the continued increase in the share of population residing in urban areas however alongside this is a trend for counter urbanisation with strong growth in the peri-urban and rural areas surrounding Dublin. Laois and Fingal were the fastest growing counties, with significant growth rates of 26% and 23% respectively.

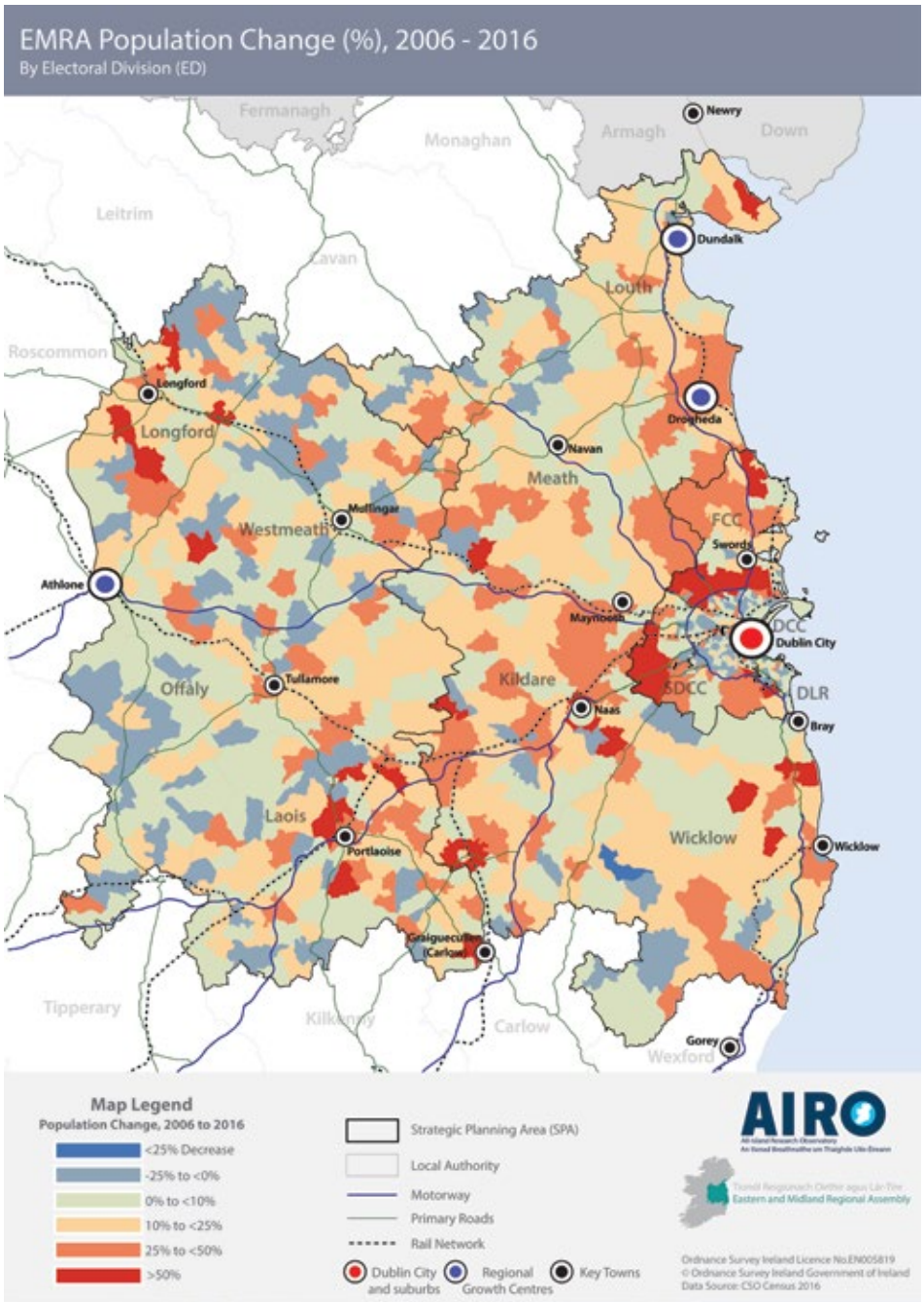


Fig 1.6 Population Change (%) 2006-2016

Young and Diverse

It is important to understand the age breakdown and demographic profile of our population if we are to plan for the long-term housing, transport, education and employment needs of our young, yet ageing population and to attract and retain our highly skilled and multi-cultural labour force.

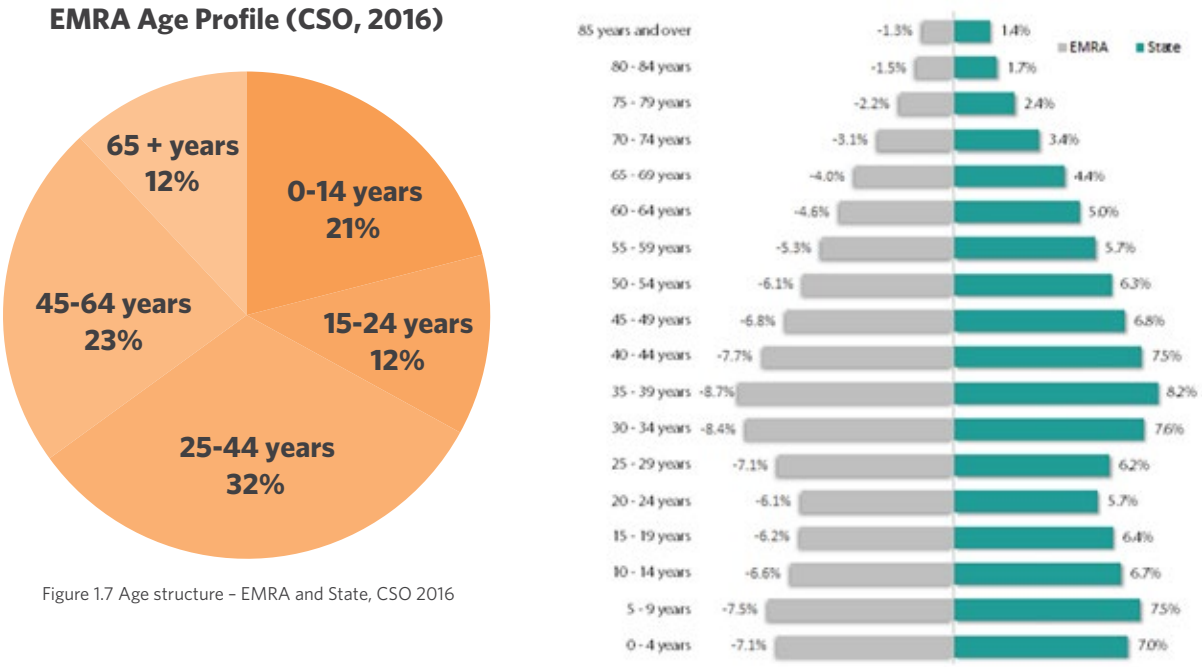


Figure 1.7 Age structure – EMRA and State, CSO 2016

Young: In 2016 the age profile of the Region is young with nearly half a million children or 1 in 5 people in the Region that are aged under 14 years of age, rising to 1 in 4 of the population in fast growing counties like Fingal and Laois. The population surge is moving up from primary school age and the number of children of secondary school age children is expected to rise to 2026 and decline thereafter. By 2031 there will be a significant increase in the number of people in the 15-24 years age cohort, which will lead to greater demand for third level education.

Labour force: There are over one and a half million people of working age (15 – 64 years) in the Region, a key human capital asset with nearly 1 in 3 of the population in Dublin alone between 25 and 44 years. Labour force growth is set to continue and although its relative share is to decrease, the overall size of the working age population is projected to rise, with increases in the cohorts between 15-29 years and 45-64 years. Accordingly, there will be continued demand for ongoing skills development and also for family homes as well as smaller and one-person households.

Ageing: In line with state-wide trends the population is rapidly ageing. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, at an average age of 39 years, is the oldest county in the Region and state. By 2031 there will be a significant increase in the regional population aged over 65 and we need to plan for adequate healthcare, accommodation and services to enable independent living for as long as possible, encourage active lifestyles and address isolation for our older residents.

Diverse: In 2016 the Region is the most demographically diverse in the state, with nearly 300,000 people or more than 1 in 8 residents who are non-Irish nationals, rising to around 1 in 6 in Dublin City, Fingal and Longford counties. Countries of origin include Poland, Lithuania, UK and other EU nationals while migrants from Africa and Asia are mostly concentrated in Dublin. The number of non-Irish nationals fell for the first time between 2011-2016 partly due to the increase in dual citizenship, as more people become Irish citizens.

Quality of Life

Placemaking is an essential link between spatial planning, improved quality of life and creating places that are attractive to live, work, visit and invest in. Along with demographic change here are a number of issues to consider when seeking to promote and create healthier places including access to services, housing, sustainable transport and social and economic opportunities.

Housing: The Region is home to over 800,000 households, with 4 out of 5 living in conventional housing while apartments account for around 18% or our housing stock. Homeownership is still the dominant tenure but rental is growing, with 1 in 5 households in the private rental market and 1 in 10 households living in social rented accommodation. One of the challenges facing the Region is the continued growth rates of household formation coupled with a severe slowdown in the development of new housing stock during the economic recession, resulting in housing supply and affordability pressures in both sale and rental markets, particularly in Dublin and urban areas but affecting all of the Region.

Employment; The Region has a robust enterprise base of traditional and emerging sectors and strong clusters of universities and research centres to support innovation. A highly skilled labour force has helped the Region attract FDI and multi-national enterprises (MNEs). The Dublin region is a global hub for international investment and high value jobs in ICT, financial and business services while local enterprise and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) provide vital employment across the whole of the Region. The Eastern and Midland counties have the highest share of micro-enterprises with specialisations, which include tourism, the equine, food and creative industries.

Deprivation; The Trutz Haase deprivation index identifies areas of affluence and deprivation in the Region. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown is the most affluent local authority in the State and the Region, while Longford is the most disadvantaged in the Region and is the third most disadvantaged local authority in the State, see Figure 9.3 (Chapter 9 Quality of Life). However there are pockets of disadvantage across the Region, with 15% of the population living in disadvantaged areas, sometimes in close proximity to areas of relative affluence. Education and skills are closely related to employment opportunities, with rates of third level education highest in Dublin and lowest in the Midlands, while rates of technical/apprenticeships were higher in the Eastern and Midland counties.

Travel patterns; Where there is a mismatch between the locations of jobs and where people live, it leads to long distance commuting, see Figure 1.8 which shows the location of jobs compared to the number of resident workers across the region. The commuter catchment of the Dublin Metropolitan Area now extends into parts of the Midlands, Louth and south into Wexford. While Dublin has higher rates of sustainable transport, private vehicles remain the primary mode of travel to work or education across the whole of the region. Long distance car-based commuting is a key challenge that is leading to congestion of transport networks and negative impacts on people's quality of life and on the environment.

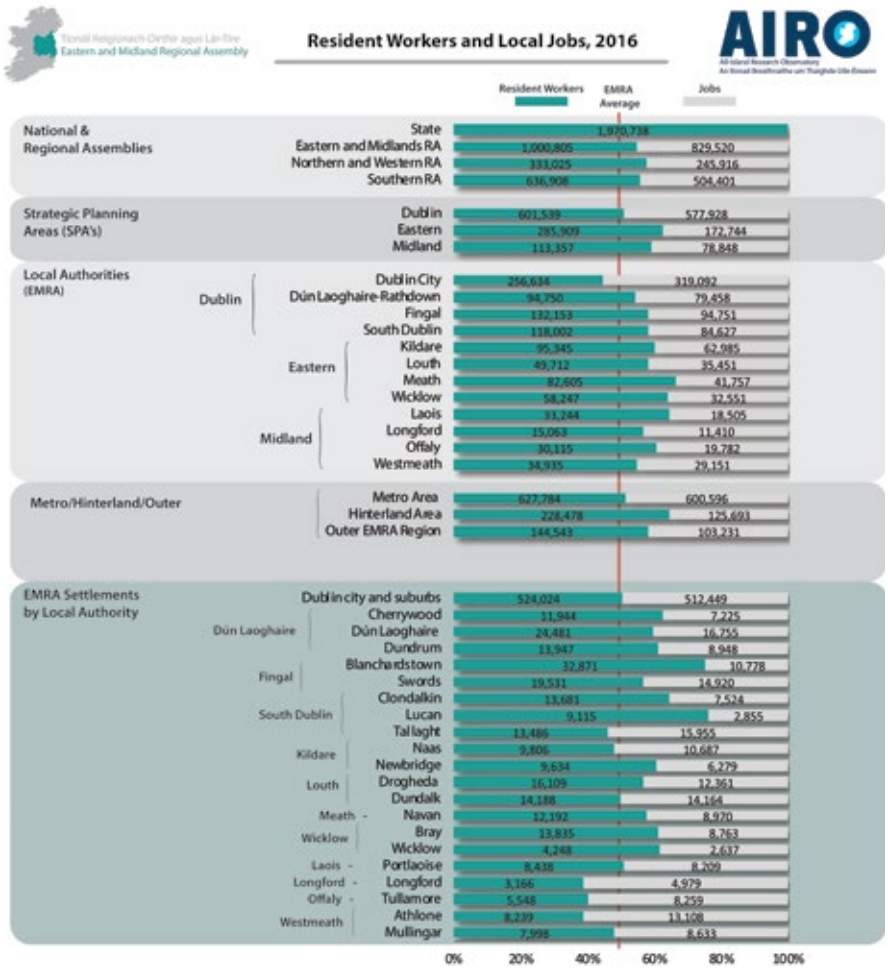


Fig 1.8 Resident Workers and Local Jobs, CSO 2016

Functional Urban Areas (FUAs)

Urban and rural areas can be interconnected to each other through many different social and economic interactions. As the places where people live, work and socialise often extend across local and regional administrative boundaries, an understanding of these cross boundary 'functional' areas is needed to help better plan for the provision of infrastructure, transport, housing, services and amenities in our Region.

The National Planning Framework identifies an urban structure for the Region based on commuting patterns, with reference to the EU/OECD definition of 'functional urban areas' (FUAs)[1] which is used to identify areas with different sub-regional interdependencies and influence in the region. The FUAs support and augment the Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), which provide for a sub-regional planning remit, through recognising spatial, social and economic similarities and differences within each SPA. These FUAs are;

- **The Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA)**, home to 1.4 million people in 2016, is the main international gateway to Ireland and includes the continuous built up city area and a number of highly urbanised surrounding settlements within a polycentric metropolitan area. The Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) in Chapter 5 identifies a number of large-scale strategic residential and economic development areas, that will deliver significant development in an integrated and sustainable manner in the metropolitan area.
- **The Core Region;** which is the peri-urban 'hinterlands'[2] within the commuter catchment around Dublin, which covers the Eastern counties and extends into the Midlands, north into Louth and south beyond the Region into Wexford. The Core Region is home to over 550,000 people with some of the youngest and fastest growing towns in the Region and the State.
- **The Gateway Region[3];** includes the Midlands and north east border areas, outside the Core Region, which are strategically located as inter-regional portals to the Northern and Western and Southern Regions, where over 400,000 people reside. The Gateway Region also includes the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone and Dundalk, a number of large county towns as well as smaller towns and villages which support the wider rural and agricultural area where the population is more dispersed.

While the influence of Dublin extends across much of the Region, it is important to recognise that the Region also contains an extensive network of large economically active towns, which provide key services and employment functions for their own hinterlands or 'Functional Urban Areas' (FUAs). The size of the FUA, relative to the urban core, shows the influence of these urban centres over their surrounding hinterlands. See Figure 1.9 which shows those large towns[4] in the Region that have an identifiable FUA.

See also Appendix E for definition of Functional Urban Areas in the Region.



1 The standardised EU/OECD definition of a city region or urban 'hinterlands' is the commuter catchment from which are least 15% of the relevant 'urban core' workforce is drawn.

2 The functional urban 'hinterland' of the Dublin Metropolitan Area includes all Electoral Districts (EDs) where at least 15% of their employed residents are working in the Dublin Metropolitan Area based on Place of Work (POWCAR) 2016 census data.

3 The urban core for this analysis are based on NTA/TII delineations of settlements which are modifications of CSO settlement boundaries to allow for additional local jobs locations outside residential areas.

4 'Large towns' in the Region are towns with a population over 10,000 people or 2,500 local jobs.

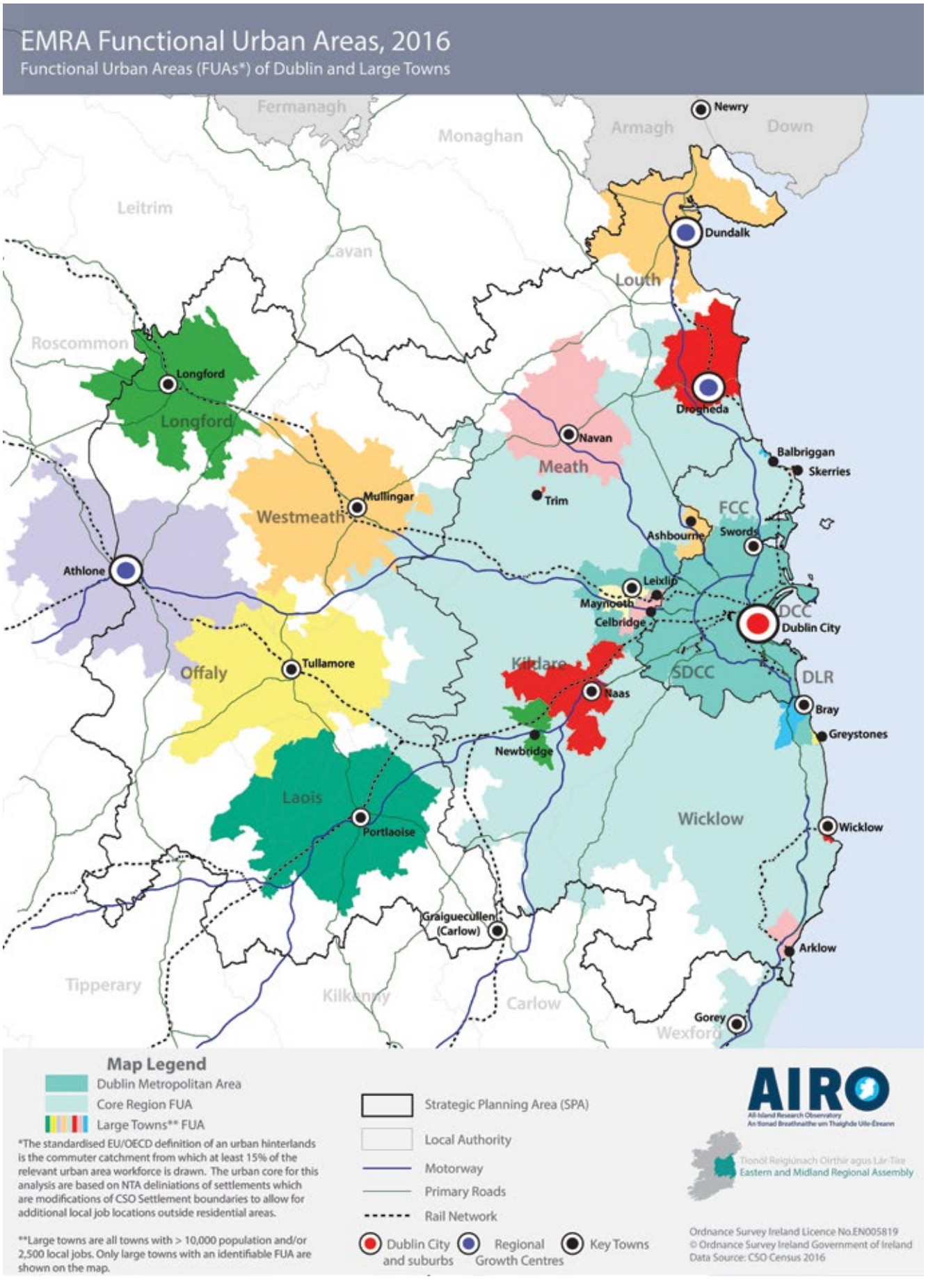


Figure 1.9 Functional Urban Areas, Dublin and Large Towns CSO 2016



2 Strategic Vision

At its core, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) sets out a settlement and economic growth strategy that seeks to ensure that the needs of the Region's citizens such as access to employment opportunities and services, ease of travel and overall well-being are met.

The shared vision and set of outcomes for the RSES have been informed by an extensive public consultation and developed in collaboration with our elected members and key stakeholders, reflecting the Assembly's co-production approach to regional policy formulation. Using a regional collaboration approach the RSES has developed a shared vision, on behalf of our citizens, that sets the strategic direction for where we want our Region to be by 2031 and beyond.

2.1 Our Shared Goals

16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) are aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the EU thematic objectives and national policy including the NPF's National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) to embed a coherent policy hierarchy and to ensure that future investment is targeted towards identified policy recommendations and goals.

There is significant policy alignment between the UN SDGs and the National Planning Framework's National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs). The development of Regional Strategic Outcomes in the RSES is also closely aligned and supportive of the NSOs.



Figure 2.1 EU Thematic Objectives





Figure 2.2 UN Sustainable Development Goals[5]

5 https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/



Figure 2.3 National Strategic Outcomes.
Source: Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)6

6 https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/09022006-project-ireland-2040/

2.2 Vision and Key Principles

In developing the vision for the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) a number of key national policy documents were considered including Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP) along with Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025 namely Enterprise 2025: Innovative, Agile, Connected.

In addition to the above the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) also considered submissions received during the initial public consultation period and carried out extensive engagement with our elected members through Strategic Planning Area (SPA) Committees and with other relevant stakeholders through Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and on an on-going and iterative basis.

Our ambition is for the RSES to provide a platform for co-ordination and collaboration between local authorities, state and semi-state bodies to develop a shared responsibility and understanding about how we plan, to achieve a better future for all up to 2031 and beyond.

Vision Statement

"To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all"

The place or environment in which we live or work has a profound impact on our health. The Region contains some of the fastest growing communities in the country and the long-term trend is for residential development moving further outwards from Dublin, with significant growth in many of the small towns and villages in the peri-urban area surrounding the city leading to an increase in car-based long-distance commuting. At the same time an overall lack of adequate housing supply to meet a growing population has resulted in affordability issues and increasing homelessness, with a resulting negative impact on quality of life and regional competitiveness.

One of the key challenges facing the Region is the need for better alignment between population growth, location of residential development and employment to create healthy and attractive places, and this is reflected in the Vision Statement.

A key challenge facing the Region, along with all other regions, is the transition to a low carbon society. For the RSES this means five primary areas of transition which are at the core of the Strategy:

- sustainable development patterns which promote compact growth, reduce transport demand and encourage low carbon transport modes;
- sustainable transport systems (people and freight);
- carbon storing and sequestering land uses;
- energy efficient buildings and industry; and
- renewable energy.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The Strategy is underpinned by key cross-cutting principles that reflect the three pillars of sustainability; Social, Environmental and Economic, and expressed in a manner which best reflects the challenges and opportunities of the Region. The central need is for the RSES to be people focussed, as 'quality of life' encapsulates strong economic output and stability, good environmental performance and a good standard of living for all.

The 3 Key Principles are:

- **Healthy Placemaking**
  To promote people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit, invest and study in.
- **Climate Action**
  The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon society recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.
- **Economic Opportunity**
  To create the right conditions and opportunities for the Region to realise sustainable economic growth and quality jobs that ensure a good living standard for all.

2.3 Regional Strategic Outcomes

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) seeks to determine at a regional scale how best to achieve the shared goals set out in the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) of the NPF. To this end, the Strategy sets out 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs), which are aligned with international, EU and national policy and which in turn set the framework for city and county development plans. Thus, the RSES can assist local authorities in aligning with EU priorities to leverage funding and partnership opportunities.

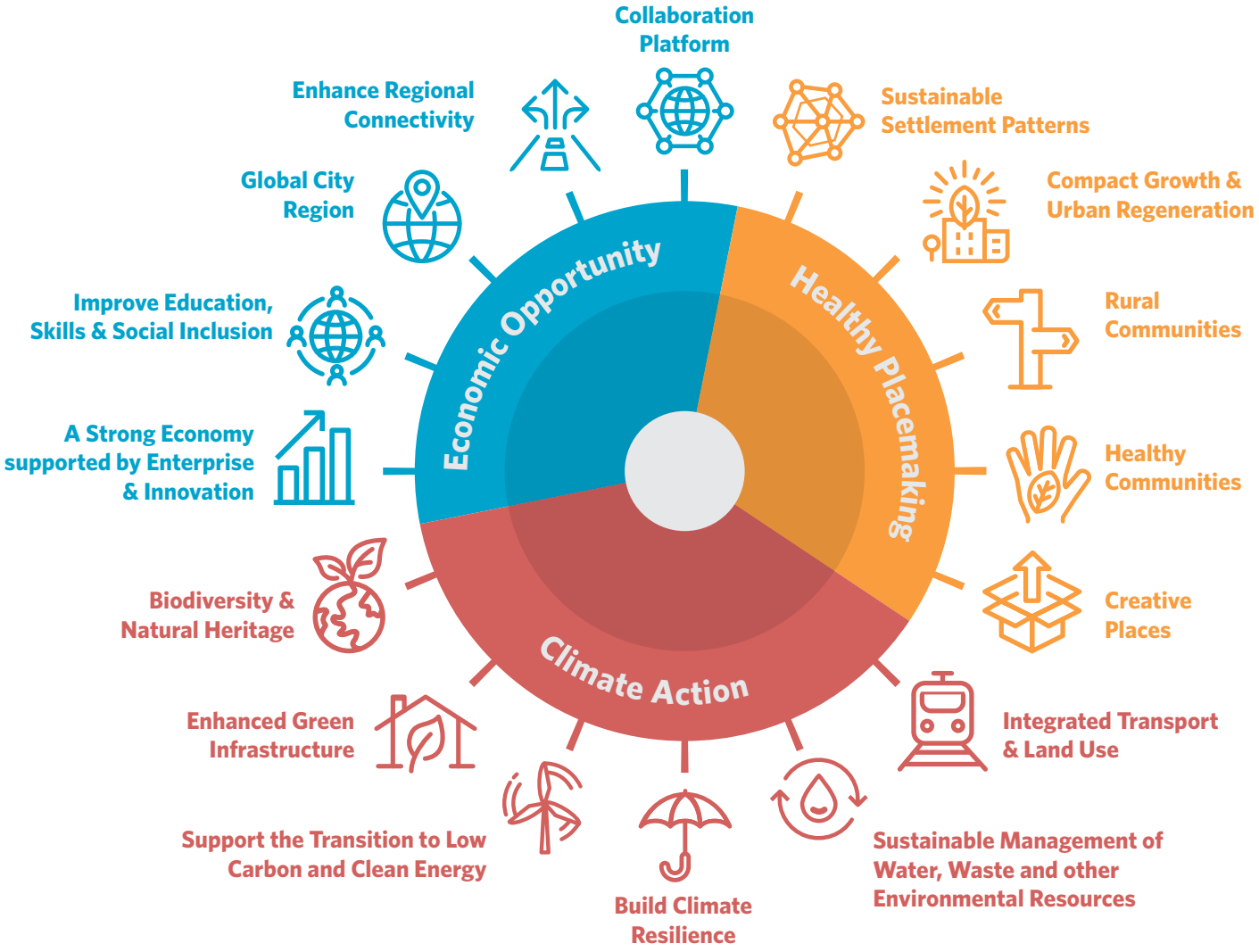


Figure 2.4 Regional Strategic Outcomes

KEY PRINCIPLES

Healthy Placemaking

To promote people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit and study in.

Climate Action

The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon economy recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.

Economic Opportunity

To create the right conditions and opportunities for the region to realise sustained economic growth and employment that ensures good living standards for all.

The 16 RSOs set out in Figure 2.4 is also cross referenced and aligned with the 3 key principles of the RSES and have been developed in iteration with the Strategic Environmental Outcomes of the parallel Strategic Environmental Assessment process.

1. **Sustainable Settlement Patterns**
   Better manage the sustainable and compact growth of Dublin as a city of international scale and develop Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda and a number of key complementary growth settlements of sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth. (NSO 1, 7, 10)

2. **Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration**
   Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region's citizens. (NSO 1)

3. **Rural Communities**
   Support sustainable rural development and strengthen rural networks, economies and communities. Manage urban generated growth in areas under strong urban influence and encourage sustainable growth in areas that have experienced decline or stagnation. (NSO 1, 3)

4. **Healthy Communities**
   Protect and enhance the quality of our built and natural environment to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling, ensure clean air and water for all and quality healthcare and services that support human health. (NSO 10)

5. **Creative Places**
   Enhance, integrate and protect our arts, culture and heritage assets to promote creative places and heritage led regeneration. (NSO 5, 7)

6. **Integrated Transport and Land Use**
   Promote best use of Transport Infrastructure, existing and planned, and promote sustainable and active modes of travel to ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning. (NSO 2, 6, 8,9)

7. **Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources**
   Conserve and enhance our water resources to ensure clean water supply, adequate waste water treatment and greater resource efficiency to realise the benefits of the circular economy. (NSO 8, 9)

8. **Build Climate Resilience**
   Ensure the long-term management of flood risk and build resilience to increased risks of extreme weather events, changes in sea level and patterns of coastal erosion to protect property, critical infrastructure and food security in the Region.(NSO 8, 9)

9. **Support the Transition to Low Carbon and Clean Energy**
   Pursue climate mitigation in line with global and national targets and harness the potential for a more distributed renewables-focussed energy system to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050. (NSO 8, 9)

10. **Enhanced Green Infrastructure**
    Identify, protect and enhance Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services in the Region and promote the sustainable management of strategic natural assets such as our coastlines, farmlands, peatlands, uplands woodlands and wetlands. (NSO 8, 9)

11. **Biodiversity and Natural Heritage**
    Promote co-ordinated spatial planning to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of our protected habitats and species including landscape and heritage protection. (NSO 7, 8)

12. **A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise and Innovation**
    To build a resilient economic base and promote innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems that support smart specialisation, cluster development and sustained economic growth. (NSO 5,10)

13. **Improve Education Skills and Social Inclusion**
    To improve education and develop the right skills to attract employers and retain talent and promote social inclusion to ensure opportunities for quality jobs across the Region. (NSO 5,10)

14. **Global City Region**
    Promote Dublin as a global city region and protect and enhance international connectivity, including ports and airports and promote the Region as a gateway to Ireland. (NSO 6)

15. **Enhanced Strategic Connectivity**
    Protect and enhance international connectivity and regional accessibility to support economic development, build economic resilience and support strengthened rural communities and economies including the blue-green economy and tourism. (NSO 2, 3, 6)

16. **Collaboration Platform**
    Provide a regional framework for collaboration and partnerships and to support local and regional bodies in leveraging funding and partnership opportunities. (NSO 2, 3, 5)



3 Growth Strategy

At the core of the RSES is the consideration of a settlement hierarchy for the Region, which sets out the key locations for population and employment growth, coupled with investment in infrastructure and services to meet those growth needs. This will set the framework for the development plans of each local authority and subsequently the quantum of residential and employment generating zoned land required. Therefore the approach taken in the RSES is robust, evidence based, and driven by clear sustainability and quality of life objectives.

The Growth Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region will;

- Support the continued growth of Dublin as our national economic engine
- Deliver sustainable growth of the Metropolitan Area through the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)
- Target growth of our Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk as regional drivers
- Support our vibrant rural areas with a network of towns and villages
- Facilitate the collaboration and growth of the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor
- Embed a network of Key Towns through the Region to deliver sustainable regional development.
- Support the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable Region.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Growth Strategy

RPO 3.1: Key stakeholders including local authorities in the Region shall, through their policies and objectives including development plans, commit to the delivery of the Growth Strategy as detailed in the RSES.



3.1 Developing a Growth Strategy for the Region

The RSES is tasked with the development of planning and economic development policy for future needs in the Region based upon consideration of the availability of land, resources, environment and infrastructure capacity. A key part of developing the Growth Strategy is the examination of alternatives and approaches as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) including the 'business as usual' approach which sees a continuation of current trends.

While all areas within the Region shall collectively contribute to its success and in turn draw strengths from the sustainable growth of the Region, there is a requirement to identify which places have the greatest assets and potential to become a focus for population and/or employment growth and to act as regional economic drivers. Regional assets and resources need to be fully realised to enable all places to reach their full potential.

Chapter 2 Strategic Vision of the RSES identifies a number of key Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) that feed into the development of the Growth Strategy including the need to protect and enhance strategic connectivity, to support economic development, rural communities and to promote compact growth and integrated transport and landuse.

Asset-Based Approach

An asset-based approach to spatial development identifies and builds on a combination of the social, economic and natural assets that are available within a settlement, in order to determine an overall growth strategy and settlement hierarchy. This holistic approach, recognises the step change required to ensure that growth is sustainable in the long term, and to ensure that settlements identified for significant population and/or employment growth are supported by the requisite investment in infrastructure and provision of employment, amenities and services.

Central to this is the development of an evidence-led 'asset base', which can be used to identify settlements which have the greatest capacity and potential for growth, while ensuring that the future growth is sustainably managed within the capacity of those settlements. The 'asset base' developed for the RSES was informed by the preparation of regional profiles and spatial analysis[7] as part of the evidence baseline and supplemented by settlement profile information that was provided by the 12 local authorities in the Region, which set out current and planned capacity to deliver sustainable compact growth in a number of identified settlements.

7 www.emra.ie/maps

The asset base compiles information across 25 different indicators which considers not just historic population growth, but a wider number of relevant factors to build a holistic profile of regional settlements, in terms of their scale and functions, human capital and placemaking assets, enterprise ecosystem, connectivity, environmental and infrastructure capacity. The asset-based criteria outlined in Table 3.1 was developed to identify a settlement hierarchy set out in Chapter 4 People and Place and the development of policy and objectives for Key Towns in the Region.

See Appendix A for more information on the data and indicators which were collated to develop an asset/potential based settlement profile of Key Towns in the Region.

As part of our commitment to evidence-based policy making and evaluation, EMRA will make the regional baseline data available as a shared evidence base for the region and encourages other public bodies and local authorities to use this data, particularly to inform the preparation and implementation of development plans (DPs), local area plans (LAPs) and local economic and community plans (LECPs). See also Section 9.3 'Asset Test for the strategic location of new residential development'.

Table 3.1 ASSET/POTENTIAL BASED CRITERIA APPROACH TO GROWTH STRATEGY

ASSET-BASED CRITERIA - aim is to enable places to fully realise their potential	As expressed in; Settlement Strategy	As expressed in; Economic Strategy
SCALE Centres of scale which have the critical mass to drive growth.	Settlement typology based on rate of growth, scale, development capacity and availability of strategic sites.	Critical mass (and diversity) in population and enterprise base to attract and maintain employers and employees.
FUNCTION Functional role and level of services including provision of employment.	Mapping of Functional Urban Areas to determine commuting catchments, level of self-sufficiency and connections to other towns.	Development of regional/ county level economic profiles and performance of settlements, including economic assets.
HUMAN CAPITAL Talent attraction and skills development.	Access to schools, third level education and health services are key to talent attraction.	Availability of labour force demographics, skills matching, and talent attraction policies to develop employment opportunities.
PLACEMAKING High quality vibrant public spaces and enhanced quality of life.	An attractive public realm and access to amenities, facilities, arts, culture and heritage as a key determinant of placemaking policy.	Developing attractive places to live work and invest in. Linked to 'functionality' to meet enterprises and labour force expectations.
ENTERPRISE ECOSYSTEM Enterprise clusters and networks.	Better alignment of housing and strategic employment locations and strengthened local economies.	Spatial economic engines and areas of influence and ecosystems of innovation and entrepreneurship.
CONNECTIVITY Transport capacity and accessibility and communications.	Integration of land use and transportation planning, underpinned by analysis of travel patterns and potential for sustainable modes.	Global / national / regional connectivity includes ICT, transport and infrastructure (Hard) and networks and collaborations (Soft).
NATURAL CAPITAL Environmental sensitivities, resources and assets.	Integration of recommendations and proposed mitigation measures, arising from SEA/AA/FRA underpinned by a regional Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services approach.	Significant resource potential of renewable energy, circular economy and green/blue economy.
INFRASTRUCTURE Enabling infrastructure to drive regional growth.	Collaboration with providers to deliver key telecommunications, transport, utilities and social infrastructure.	Strategic employment locations enabled by physical, technology infrastructure, and supporting services.

Table 3.1 Asset/Potential based criteria approach to Growth Strategy



Figure 3.1 Growth Strategy – Strategic Connections

Strategic Connections

The growth strategy for the Region is underpinned by a settlement strategy (set out in Chapter 4 People and Place) and an integrated land use and transportation strategy (Chapter 8 Connectivity) which seeks to protect and enhance global connectivity and regional accessibility, including the Trans European TEN-T road, rail and port network. Investment in sustainable mobility will be delivered through local transport plans (LTPs), to be prepared by local authorities in collaboration with transport agencies, to include, but not limited to, Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda, Portlaoise, Mullingar, Tullamore, Longford, Balbriggan, Navan, Naas, Newbridge, Wicklow-Rathnew, Ashbourne, Arklow and urban areas in the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

The RSES seeks to protect and enhance strategic connections in the Region, including;

Eastern Corridor; Dublin - Belfast Economic Corridor to Rosslare Europort

Cross boundary coordination is a significant element of the Strategy and will be even more so with the onset of Brexit, playing a critical role in supporting economic growth and competitiveness. The Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor is the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland with the cities and towns along the Corridor home to a population of around 2 million. The Corridor connects the large towns of Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry by high-capacity national road and rail links, major airports of Dublin Airport, Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport and Belfast and Dublin ports. The Eastern Corridor extends south to Rosslare Europort, which is an important economic and transport link, particularly in the post Brexit scenario. The RSES supports a feasibility study for high speed rail between Dublin and Belfast and enhanced rail services on the south-eastern line to include the extension of DART services to Drogheda.

Strategic Connections to the Northern and Western Region

Athlone is strategically located in the centre of Ireland as a gateway to the west between Dublin and Galway. Cross border co-ordination of future development will be supported by investment in sustainable mobility including increased recreational use of the Grand Canal and completion of the Dublin to Galway Greenway which is designated as a trans-European Eurovelo Route. Longford is strategically located as a portal to the northwest on the Dublin to Sligo rail corridor, also serving the key towns of Mullingar and Maynooth. Planned upgrades to the M/N4 motorway, enhanced rail services on the Dublin-Sligo line including DART to Maynooth and increased recreational use of the Royal Canal as part of a Dublin to Westport Greenway, will improve northwest connectivity. Dublin to Cavan generally follows the N/M3, while development of the cross border A5 route connecting to the N/M2 will improve connectivity between Dublin and the border counties to Derry and Letterkenny.

Strategic Connections to the Southern Region

The Dublin to Cork rail corridor is strategically important linking the two largest cities in the State, and part of the EU TEN-T core network, which aims to protect and enhance strategical international connections between Belfast, Dublin and Cork. The Dublin to Cork rail corridor also provides commuter rail services to the Dublin hinterlands. The RSES supports a feasibility study for the provision of high-speed rail links between Dublin and Limerick/Junction Cork and enhanced rail services including the extension of the DART to Celbridge/Hazelhatch in north Kildare. There is potential to promote links between the Grand Canal, the Barrow Line and to further develop the Barrow Blueway connecting Carlow-Graiguecullen on the boundary with the Southern Region and extending south to Waterford.

Integrating the Environment

The Growth Strategy has been developed as part of an iterative process which provides an opportunity to integrate key aspects of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) into the development of scenarios which set out different options for the type of growth that might arise in the Region.

A key part of the Growth Strategy is the examination of alternatives and approaches as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) including the 'business as usual' approach which sees a continuation of current trends.

Business as Usual

The NPF has highlighted the problems associated with a 'Business as Usual' approach where future growth is purely market driven without any policy interventions.

Recent analysis in projecting the current trends scenario suggests an ongoing shift in population and jobs towards the counties around Dublin resulting in unsustainable pressures on Dublin and a greater distance between where people live and where people work, which would lead to missed opportunities for the utilisation of existing infrastructure and services. The SEA for the NPF also highlighted serious environmental issues that would arise from further sprawl outside our cities and larger towns including a degraded environment, loss of farmland and habitat to predominantly greenfield development and increased risk of groundwater pollution. Business as usual is not therefore considered to be a reasonable option.

Development of Alternative Scenarios

The NPF sets the framework for scenarios that can be reasonably considered at regional level, based on; regional parity between the growth of our Region and the two other regions (North Western and Southern Regions); regional concentration toward cities (Dublin) and regionally important larger settlements (Athlone, Drogheda, Dundalk); a focus on consolidated growth in existing built-up areas; sequential provision of infrastructure with some critical infrastructure in place to promote investment.

To test these three questions, a range of options were considered which included discrete alternatives and more value-driven scenarios, which can combine certain complementary scenarios. The preferred scenarios formed the basis for the RSES Growth Strategy, See Table 3.2;

The selection of scenarios is informed by the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) and 3 Key Principles as set out in Chapter 2 Strategic Vision of the RSES along with key issues identified in the RSES engagement and SEA process. The consideration of alternatives is set out in full in the SEA Environmental Report and can be summarised and reflected below in the three broad questions that were asked;

1. What is the optimum spatial strategy to drive growth in the Region, and should growth be more concentrated in a few large settlements or dispersed across a number of regional settlements?
2. What policy and actions are required to drive transition to low carbon/climate resilience and to protect biodiversity and at what scale can they be most effective – national, regional or local?
3. What economic policies do we need to support a strong regional economy and should we focus on a few competitive sectors and/or areas, or spread our resources and investment more widely?

Table 3.2 Selection of preferred scenarios for the Eastern and Midland RSES

Type	Alternatives assessed	Preferred scenario
1. Spatial Strategy	The NPF identified regional concentration and consolidated urban growth as the most sustainable approach to growth patterns in the regions. The SEA for the EMR assessed a number of alternatives based on the extent to which growth is either concentred in Dublin and the identified Regional Growth Centres or highly dispersed throughout a number of towns in the Region. The optimum settlement strategy was informed by consideration of an evidence baseline identifying the key assets, potential for growth and environmental capacity of settlements.	The optimum spatial strategy combines the growth of Dublin and regional centres with a selected number of large self-sustaining settlements that have the assets and capacity to grow in a sustainable manner while minimising impacts on the receiving environment. This option offers the best opportunity to align services with population and economic growth, promote compact growth in urban settlements and make the best use of infrastructure including public transport thereby reducing transport emissions and improve regional accessibility.
2. Climate and Biodiversity	A number of scenarios at different scales were considered to drive transition to low carbon/ climate resilience and to protect and enhance biodiversity from; inclusion of existing national strategic policies; to developing a regional green infrastructure and ecosystem services approach and; inclusion of site level alternatives for adaptation/mitigation, informed by strategic flood risk and Natura Impact appraisal.	Current trends indicate that implementation of existing national policies alone will not be sufficient to meet climate targets therefore additional measures are required. The preferred scenario combines this with complementary approaches including the development of a regional Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services approach together with site-based alternatives for adaptation/mitigation of impacts in strategic development locations.
3. Economic Strategy	A number of economic growth scenarios were considered and these were dictated by different policy approaches to enterprise development, which ranged from focussed spatial and/or sectoral specialisation to a wider distribution and dispersal of investment and across the Region/ sectors. Assessment was informed by consideration of identified strategic economic assets and by national policy including Enterprise 2025.	The preferred Economic Strategy promotes smart specialisation strategies based on identified strengths and competitive advantages, combined with cluster policies that promote economies of scale and network effects in certain locations. The Strategy should also support diversification of local economies and development of innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems for sustained national growth that can withstand external shocks.



3.2 Growth Enablers for the Region

The places where people live and work often extend across local or regional administrative boundaries. The Growth Enablers for the Region are underpinned by spatial mapping of these 'functional urban areas' (FUAs), which help us better plan for the provision of infrastructure, transport, housing and services in our Region (See also Chapter 2 Strategic Vision), and aligned with the settlement strategy for the Region as set out in Chapter 4 People and Place.

These Functional Urban Areas support and augment the Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), which provide for a sub-regional planning remit, through recognising spatial, social and economic similarities and differences within each SPA.

The mapping of FUAs in the Region shows the relative dominance of Dublin but also highlights the importance of larger towns and county towns that play a key role in providing employment and services for a large catchment population.

GROWTH ENABLERS FOR THE REGION

The key enablers for growth across the Region align with the Growth Strategy and state the priorities for each part of the Region to meet its potential.

- Promote global connectivity and regional accessibility as part of an integrated land use and transport strategy, with a focus on protecting national assets and enhanced inter-regional connectivity.
- Support the future success of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale by better managing strategic assets to increase opportunity and sustain national economic growth and competitiveness.
- Deliver strategic development areas identified in the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) to ensure a steady supply of serviced development lands to support Dublin's sustainable growth.
- Facilitate collaboration to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, to drive synergy in the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border network and strengthen economic links with the south east extending to Rosslare Europort.
- Target significant growth in the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk to enable them to act as regional drivers, with a focus on improving local economies and quality of life to attract investment and the preparation of urban area plans (UAPs).
- Promote compact urban growth to realise targets of at least 50% of all new homes to be built, to be within or contiguous to the existing built up area of Dublin city and suburbs and a target of at least 30% for other urban areas.
- Embed a network of Key Towns throughout the Region, which have the capacity to deliver sustainable compact growth and employment for their catchments in tandem with enabling public transport, infrastructure and services.
- Promote balanced growth in a limited number of economically active settlements which have the identified capacity and potential for self-sustaining growth.
- Promote targeted 'catch up' investment to support self-sustaining local employment, and in services, sustainable transport and amenities in places that have experienced rapid commuter driven population growth.
- Promote regeneration and revitalisation of small towns and villages and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for their surrounding rural areas.
- Support rural areas by harnessing natural resources to develop renewables, recreation and tourism opportunities including green infrastructure planning and the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways.

Dublin City and Metropolitan Area

With a total population of nearly 1.2 million people in 2016, Dublin city and suburbs accounts for about half of the Region's population or a quarter of the national population, as well as being the largest economic contributor in the state. As Ireland's only international city of scale, Dublin acts as the global gateway to Ireland and its influence extends well beyond its administrative boundaries.

The wider Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA) metropolitan area, home to 1.4 million people in 2016, covers the continuous built up city area and includes the highly urbanised settlements of Swords, Malahide, Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge, Bray and Greystones, which have strong connections with the city.

Dublin plays a key role in attracting internationally mobile talent and investment and combines vibrant urban living, a rich heritage and character and access to nature including Dublin Bay, the coastline and Dublin-Wicklow mountains. The Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) in Chapter 5 sets out a strategy to achieve growth of 1.4 million people in Dublin City and suburbs and 1.65 million people in the Dublin Metropolitan Area by 2031 through the delivery of large-scale strategic development areas.

Growth Enablers for Dublin City and Metropolitan Area (See also Section 5.3) include;

- To sustainably manage Dublin's growth as critical to Ireland's competitiveness, achieving growth to 1.4 million people in Dublin City and Suburbs and 1.65 million people in the Dublin Metropolitan Area by 2031.
- To realise ambitious compact growth targets of at least 50% of all new homes to be built, to be within or contiguous to the existing built up area of Dublin city and suburbs and a target of at least 30% for other metropolitan settlements, with a focus on healthy placemaking and improved quality of life.
- To deliver strategic development areas identified in the MASP, located at key nodes along high-quality public transport corridors in tandem with the delivery of infrastructure and enabling services to ensure a steady supply of serviced sites and to support accelerated delivery of housing.
- To increase employment in strategic locations, providing for people intensive employment at other sustainable locations near high quality public transport nodes, building on commercial and research synergies in proximity to large employers, industry clusters and smart specialisation and activating strategic sites to strengthen the local employment base in commuter towns.
- Enhance co-ordination across local authorities and relevant agencies to promote more active land management and achieve compact growth targets through the development of infill, brownfield and public lands, with a focus on social as well as physical regeneration and improved sustainability.
- Protect and improve access to the global gateways of Dublin Airport and Dublin Port for the Region and to serve the Nation, and safeguard and improve regional accessibility and service by rail, road and communication, with a key focus on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.



The Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor

The Dublin to Belfast Corridor is the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland, with the cities and towns along the Corridor home to a population of around 2 million people. The Eastern Seaboard has seen the highest growth and highest internal migration of our population. The Corridor links the two largest cities and the large towns of Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry on the island by high-capacity road and national rail links and plays a critical role in supporting economic growth and competitiveness.

The Corridor is also the national entry point to the island through its airports and ports. Three major airports, Dublin Airport, Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport, and significant ports in Belfast and Dublin, with complimentary ports along the Corridor.

Growth Enablers for the Dublin- Belfast Economic Corridor include;

- Compact and focused growth in the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk to grow to city scale.
- Drive in the linkage between Dundalk and Newry to strengthen a cross border synergy in services and functions.
- Improve accessibility and service by rail, road and communication between Dublin and Belfast.



The Core Region

The Core Region includes the peri-urban 'hinterlands' in the commuter catchment around Dublin, which covers the Mid-East counties of Louth, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow, extending down the East Coast and into parts of the Midlands. More than 550,000 people reside in the Core Region in 2016. The Mid-East has seen the highest ten year population growth to 2016 in the Region and contains some of the youngest and fastest growing towns in the state. The Core Region enjoys access to a high-quality environment, rich heritage and key tourism assets and attractions such as the coastline, the Royal and Grand Canals, the Boyne and Barrow Blueways, Tayto Park, UNESCO site at Bru na Boinne and Wicklow Mountains National Park.

The Core Region contains a strong network of county and market towns that have a good level of local employment, services and amenities, which serve not just their resident populations but a wider catchment area. These include Arklow, Balbriggan, Drogheda, Navan, Naas, Newbridge and Wicklow. These towns have capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining and to attract high quality knowledge-based employment at strategic accessible locations.

Some areas in the Core Region have emerged mainly as commuting towns, experiencing high rates of population growth but with a weak level of services and functions for their resident populations. These towns will require 'catch up' investment in local employment and services in order to become more self-sustaining and to improve sustainable mobility, particularly in those places where there are high levels of car dependency.



Growth Enablers for the Core Region include;

- To promote continued growth at more sustainable rates, while providing for increased employment and improved local economies, services and functions to allow towns become more self-sustaining and to create the quality of life to attract investment.
- Drogheda to realise its potential to grow to city scale and secure investment to become a self-sustaining Regional Growth Centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, driving synergies between the Drogheda - Dundalk - Newry cross border network.
- Commensurate population and employment growth in Key towns, coupled with investment in enabling transport, infrastructure and services to facilitate the achievement of compact growth targets of at least 30% of all new homes to be within the existing built up area of settlements.
- 'Catch up' investment to promote consolidation and improvement in the sustainability of those areas that have experienced significant population growth but have a weak level of services and employment for their residents.
- Diversification and specialisation of local economies with a focus on clustering, smart specialisation, place making and urban regeneration to create the quality of life to attract FDI and indigenous investment and increase high value knowledge-based employment including second site and relocation opportunities.
- Promote the Region for tourism, leisure and recreational activities including development of an integrated greenway network while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced.

The Gateway Region



The Gateway Region includes the midlands and border areas which act as interregional gateways to the rest of the island, and parts of southwest Wicklow. More than 370,000 people reside in the Gateway Region in 2016, which includes the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone and Dundalk, as well as an extensive network of county and sub county towns and small towns and villages, which support the wider rural and agricultural area where the population is more dispersed. The area contains many key natural resources and tourism assets under the Hidden Heartlands brand, including the River Shannon and inland waterways, Carlingford and the Cooley Peninsula, Slieve Blooms, Lakelands and midland peatlands including Lough Boora.

The location of the Midlands is strategically important, with an influence that extends to all three Regional Assembly areas. Towns that straddle regional boundaries and act as gateways to the south, west and northwest include Carlow-Craigucullen, Athlone and Longford. Like Mullingar, Portlaoise and Tullamore, these towns provide functions at a much higher level than their resident population, providing key employment and services for their own extensive hinterlands.

The northeast includes County Louth and parts of Meath, which are strategically located in proximity to the Dublin- Belfast cross-border network, focussed on Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry and which is the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland, and will become more important post Brexit, acting as national entry point to the island through its airports and ports.

Growth Enablers for the Gateway Region area include;

- Support continued growth of Athlone, with a focus on quality of life and securing the investment to fulfil its role as a key Regional Growth Centre and economic driver in the centre of Ireland.
- Support compact growth in the Regional Growth Centre of Dundalk to grow to city scale, capitalising on its location on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor to drive the linkage between Dundalk and Newry to strengthen cross border synergy in services and functions.
- 'Catch up' investment to promote consolidation and improvement in the sustainability of those areas that have experienced significant population growth but have a weak level of services and employment for their residents.
- Regeneration of small towns and villages, with a focus on the identification of rural town, village and rural regeneration priorities to bring vibrancy to these areas.
- Diversification and growth of smart specialisation of local economies with a strong focus on clustering including sustainable farming and food production, tourism, marine, energy and renewables, bioeconomy and circular economy, with a focus on publicly owned peatlands in the midlands, to support a 'Just' transition and realise the benefits of green technologies.
- Promote the Region as a key destination for tourism, leisure and recreation activities and support the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced.

Collaboration

The RSES identifies enablers for the Region, however it is recognised that to deliver on this strategy there is a need for collaboration and coordination, across boundaries, sectors and organisations. The Assembly will foster collaboration in the allocation of funds to maximise the value for money and delivery of RSES policy. Furthermore, the RSES will enable cross boundary collaboration between local and regional bodies in relation to enterprise and employment, transport, education, retail and service delivery.

Cross boundary coordination is a significant element of the Strategy and will be even more so with the onset of Brexit which is likely to have a direct impact upon the border. This will affect movement of people and goods, will have direct economic impact upon the Region and will lead to environmental concerns. Post – Brexit consideration should be given to a process that can firmly establish protocols for environmental protection and trans-boundary communication. Further coordination will be fostered by the Assembly in the establishment of a relevant structure to address complex policy areas such as the preparation of a Maritime Spatial Plan for the Region.

More effective strategic planning and co-ordination of the future development of nationally and regionally strategic locations that straddle inter- or intra-regional boundaries, for example Athlone, Carlow, Drogheda and Dundalk / Newry, is required. The Regional Assembly will ensure that joint urban area plans are delivered for the Regional Growth Centres by the relevant local authorities to deliver regional centres of scale.

Compact Growth

A key National Strategic Outcome (NSO 1) in the NPF and Regional Strategic Outcome (RSO 2) in the RSES is the need to achieve ambitious targets for compact growth in our urban areas. Urban regeneration and infill sites can contribute to sustainable compact growth and revitalisation of existing settlements of all scales. This will help to address National Policy Objective 3a, 3b and 3c of the NPF which targets the delivery of new homes within the footprint of existing settlements[8].

Achieving this target will require active land management responses to ensure that land and building resources within existing settlements are used to their full potential. As part of this approach, preparing sites within urban contexts for regeneration will require consideration of historic industrial uses and processes that could have impacted on ground conditions. This will require forward planning for how legacy issues such as removing or treating contaminated soil and remediating the ground on-site appropriately is factored into the regeneration process.

This is a necessary part of the assessment of the potential of brownfield sites as the removal and treatment of contaminated soils can prove problematic and could hinder the delivery of otherwise suitable sites in an urban context.

It is considered that a set of Guiding Principles are necessary to deal with the complexities of brownfield regeneration.

8 NPO 3a Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements.
NPO 3b Deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints.
NPO 3c Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Local authorities, in the preparation of the core strategies of their development plans, shall consider the following Guiding Principles to deal with the complexities of brownfield and infill sites;

- The establishment of a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites as part of the active land management process, that identifies the development capacity and any constraints on sites that are zoned for development including potential contamination and incorporating other relevant databases such as the Derelict Sites Register and the Vacant Sites Register. The database should be spatially referenced and searchable to allow for regular updating and monitoring and so that brownfield re-use can be managed and co-ordinated across multiple stakeholders.
- Proposals for strategic brownfield and infill sites should be accompanied by a site brief and/or masterplan that sets out a phased programme for the regeneration of the site and demonstrates how the proposal will comply with National Guidelines that seek to achieve sustainable compact development and to integrate principles of good urban design and placemaking[9].
- Local authorities should liaise with the Regional Waste Management Office when considering proposals for the development of brownfield sites that require the offsite disposal of contaminated waste, so that a programme for site remediation can be identified early and considered by all stakeholders. Proposals for brownfield regeneration in strategic locations should be accompanied by a site risk statement and waste plan and for the disposal of any wastes arising including any hazardous or contaminated material.
- Encourage pilot projects for the re-use of brownfield sites and encourage active temporary uses where feasible and as far as practicable to encourage activation of vacant sites that require longer lead in time regeneration processes.
- Set out measures to reduce vacancy and the underuse of existing building stock and support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within urban centres.
- Explore opportunities for biodiversity enhancement to improve ecological connectivity as part of the strategic re-intensification of urban infill and brownfield sites.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Compact Growth

RPO 3.2: Local authorities, in their core strategies shall set out measures to achieve compact urban development targets of at least 50% of all new homes within or contiguous to the built up area of Dublin city and suburbs and a target of at least 30% for other urban areas.

RPO 3.3: Local authorities shall, in their core strategies, identify regeneration areas within existing urban settlements and set out specific objectives relating to the delivery of development on urban infill and brownfield regeneration sites in line with the Guiding Principles set out in the RSES and to provide for increased densities as set out in the 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas', 'Sustainable Urban Housing; Design Standards for new Apartments Guidelines' and the 'Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities'.

9 DHPLG Guidelines 'Urban Development and Building Heights' and 'Sustainable Urban Housing; Design Standards for New Apartments', 2018, 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)', 2013, 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas', 2009.

Environmental Assessment

The RSES is a tier within a planning framework which is guided by the NPF and will be supported by further robust tiering of county and local level plans within an overall hierarchy. As detail is developed down through the hierarchy, further opportunity for focused assessment will be required to inform decision making at a level of greater granularity. It is therefore important that where other strategies and plans undergo review or changes to reflect the national and regional policy objectives and outcomes of both the NPF, and subsequently the RSES, they should also consider any relevant environmental requirements.

Feasibility studies will be carried out to support decision making in relation to policy base for this RSES and this will include an environmental appraisal which considers the potential effects on the wider environment, including specifically, the Natura 2000 Network. Furthermore, feasibility studies will be supported by robust site / route selection processes which consider a full range of alternative modes and technologies.

At the project level, all applications for development consents for projects emanating from any policies that may give rise to likely significant effects on the environment will need to be accompanied by one or more of the following, as relevant:

- An Ecological Impact Assessment Report (EcIA),
- Environmental Report (ER) including Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)
- An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) if deemed necessary under the relevant legislation (statutory document),
- Natura Impact Statement if deemed necessary (NIS) under the relevant legislation (statutory document).

The RSES recognises that at the project consent stage if it appears that any element of the RSES cannot be implemented without adverse impacts which cannot be adequately mitigated or compensated then the proposals will only make provision for the level and location of development for which it can be concluded that there will be no adverse effect.



Assessment of Proposals for Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs)

Local authorities, in preparing their development plans, are required to include objectives for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas. This is to include the promotion of measures to reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources, reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change.

Guidelines, prepared by The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG), will provide clarification around the development of a suitable methodology for measuring carbon emissions, appropriate to strategic land use designation and related transport infrastructure in the context of the preparation of city/county development plans.

It is not the intention of the RSES to render approval of land use designation or transport infrastructure, conditional on consistency with GHG emissions reductions targets in the absence of an agreed methodology at national level. In the interim, the RSES will support the development of a methodology to assess the impact of city and county development plan strategies on carbon reduction targets.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Environmental Assessment and Assessment of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

RPO 3.4: Ensure that all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA and AA as appropriate. In addition the future strategic development of settlements throughout the Region will have full cognisance of the legal requirements pertaining to sites of International Nature Conservation Interest.

RPO 3.5: Identification of suitable employment and residential lands and suitable sites for infrastructure should be supported by a quality site selection process that addresses environmental concerns such as landscape, cultural heritage, ensuring the protection of water quality, flood risks and biodiversity as a minimum.

RPO 3.6: City and county development plans shall undergo assessment of their impact on carbon reduction targets and shall include measures to monitor and review progress towards carbon reduction targets.

Sustainable Growth

In line with RSO 9 EMRA supports the plans and projects for climate action from local authorities and the Department of Communication Climate Action and Environment aimed at accelerating the transition to a low carbon and circular economy. Chapter 7 Environment elaborates on the approach the RSES adopts to achieve sustainability for the Region.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Sustainable Growth

RPO 3.7: Local authorities shall have regard to environmental and sustainability considerations for meeting sustainable development targets and climate action commitments, in accordance with the National Adaptation Framework. In order to recognise the potential for impacts on the environment, local authorities shall address the proper site/route selection of any new development and examine environmental constraints including but not limited to biodiversity, flooding, landscape, cultural heritage, material assets, including the capacity of services to serve any new development.



4 People & Place

4.1 Introduction and context

This chapter sets out a settlement hierarchy and the identification of key growth areas in the Region that will see significant development up to 2031 and beyond. The Settlement Strategy will build on the policy direction adopted by the previous Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) to facilitate growth that is directed towards a number of key designated settlements as part of an integrated land use and transportation strategy to achieve more co-ordinated and sustainable settlement and travel patterns across the Region.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) supports the implementation of National Policy Objectives and targets contained in Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF) and alignment with the investment priorities of the National Development Plan 2018-27 (NDP) by coupling new development with the requisite investment in services and infrastructure.

Planning plays a central role in creating places that enhance people's quality of life, and consequently health and wellbeing. Placemaking and quality of life is increasingly recognised as a key factor in attracting investment, skills and talent (see Chapter 9 Quality of Life).

The three overarching key principles of healthy placemaking, climate action and economic opportunity are all key drivers of this chapter. The Settlement Strategy is also informed by a number of key Regional Strategic Outcomes such as the provision of sustainable settlement patterns, compact growth, sustainable rural development, integrated transport and landuse, sustainable management of environmental resources, enhanced regional connectivity and enhanced green infrastructure.

The Strategy is informed by an evidence driven Settlement Typology and Asset-Based approach, which identifies key assets and capacity issues in the Region's settlements and seeks to ensure that all places can meet their full potential and support the health and wellbeing of people who live, work, study in or visit the Region as well as the environment with which they interact.



Context

It is clear that the RSES, while looking at the coherence of the Region as a whole, should have the ability to respond to the different needs of different areas, including between urban and rural. There is an extensive urban settlement pattern in the Region with 24 settlements with a population over 10,000 people and a further 21 settlements with a population over 4,000 (see Figure 4.1). It contains a city and suburbs, large towns, small towns and villages and the rural countryside. Whilst Dublin is dominant in the Region, there are different areas within the Region, characterised by their location and relationship to the Capital City. These have been identified in the Growth Strategy as the Metropolitan Area, The Core Region and The Gateway Region. Within these areas the urban structure has different pressures and opportunities. This difference in context is reflected in the policy responses of the RSES.

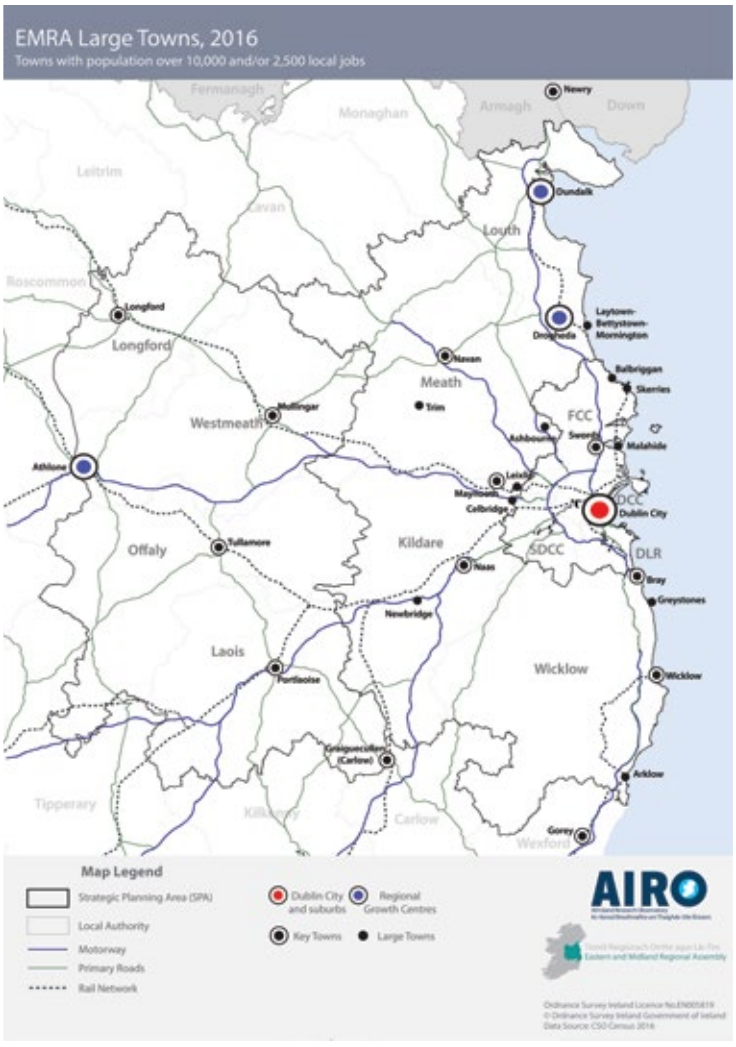


Figure 4.1 EMRA Large Towns (> 10,000 population)

4.2 Settlement Strategy

The NPF sets out a targeted pattern of growth for our Region and our Capital City and this is further expanded in the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework (July 2018). These growth figures in Table 4.1 are to inform the delivery of national policy expressed in the NPF and the delivery of this Strategy. The further breakdown of population projections to county level are contained at Appendix B for use by local authorities in the formulation of the core strategies of their development plans. The approach in core strategies of development plans to realise these population targets will be informed by the transitional population projections methodology set out in the NPF Roadmap, and a robust evidence based analysis of demand, past delivery and potential.

Table 4.1 NPF Population Projections

SPA	2016	2026	2031
Dublin	1,347,500	1,489,000 - 1,517,500	1,549,500 - 1,590,000
Mid-East	689,000	759,000 - 777,000	789,000 - 813,500
Midlands	292,500	318,500 - 324,500	329,500 - 337,000
Total	2,329,000	2,566,500 - 2,619,000	2,668,000 - 2,740,500

The RSES has used a robust evidence based approach to derive a settlement hierarchy that will achieve the Regional Strategic Outcomes for the benefit of the whole Region, see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2.

Table 4.2 Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Typology	Description	Areas		
		Metropolitan	Core Region	Gateway Region
Dublin City and suburbs	International business core with a highly concentrated and diversified employment base and higher order retail, arts, culture and leisure offer. Acts as national transport hub with strong inter and intra-regional connections and an extensive commuter catchment.	Dublin City and suburbs		
Regional Growth Centres	Regional Growth Centres are large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area.		Drogheda	Athlone Dundalk
Key Towns	Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres.	Bray Maynooth Swords	Navan Naas Wicklow-Rathnew	Graiguecullen (Carlow) Longford Mullingar Tullamore Portlaoise
Self-Sustaining Growth Towns **Self- Sustaining Towns**	i) Self-Sustaining Growth Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining. ii) Self-Sustaining Towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining.	To be defined by development plans.		
Towns and Villages	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions.	To be defined by development plans.		
Rural	Villages and the wider rural region	To be defined by development plans.		

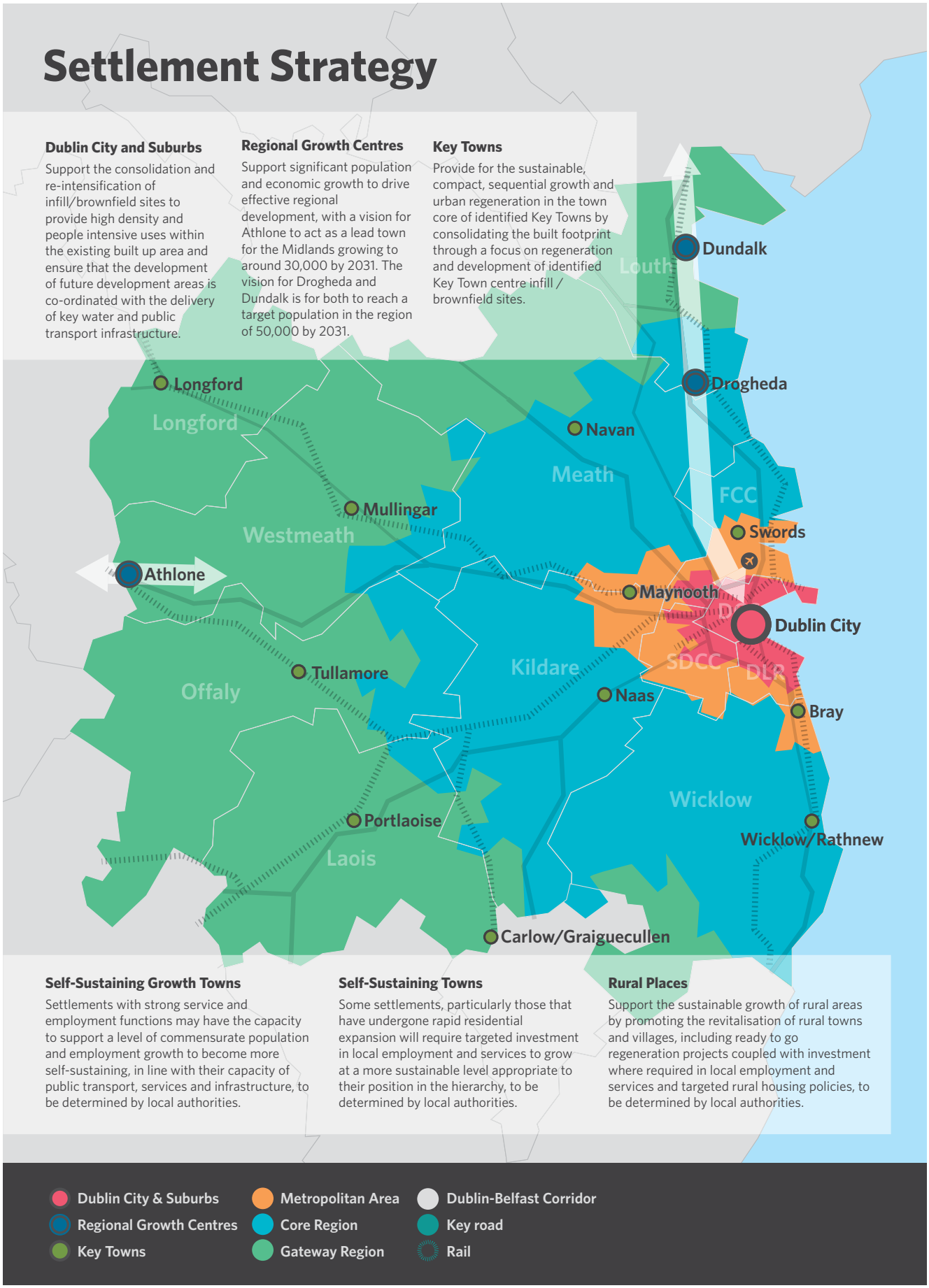


Figure 4.2 Settlement Strategy

4.3 Defining a Settlement Typology

The NPF sets the policy parameters for the Region to better manage the growth of Dublin as a city of international scale supported by the growth of the key Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda, which form the upper two tiers in the settlement hierarchy. To achieve effective regional development, Dublin and the Regional Growth Centres will be supported by the complementary development and regeneration of a small number of selected Key Towns.

Population and employment size are not the sole determinant of a settlement's functional role or in the consideration of its strategic regional significance. Some towns with a large population base located within the catchment of Dublin have emerged mainly as commuting towns, with a level of function significantly lower than their population base. Conversely, other towns have a level of function higher than their population base and play a key regional role.

The RSES considered the following using an asset-based approach (see also Table 3.1) in the development of the Settlement Strategy:

- The scale of population, growth rates and local ambition for sustainable compact growth
- The scale of employment provision and commuting flows
- Particular sub-regional interdependencies and influence, for example whether a settlement is located within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, Core Region or Gateway Region
- The extent of local services provision i.e. administration, education- particularly third level, health, retail and amenities
- Levels of relative affluence or deprivation
- The availability of economic development assets and clusters
- Transport accessibility and trip profiles, including internal trips
- Environmental sensitivities, resources and assets
- Current and planned infrastructure capacity

The RSES identifies a third tier of Key Towns which are Swords, Maynooth, Bray, Navan, Naas, Wicklow-Rathnew, Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore, Portlaoise and Graiguecullen (Carlow). They are large economically active service and/or county towns, with high quality transport links that play an important service role for their catchments and that have the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement Dublin and the Regional Growth Centres.

Further to the identification of Key Towns it is acknowledged that there are a number of settlements, which also have strong service and employment functions and have the capacity to support a level of commensurate population and employment growth. In this regard local authorities shall apply a similar evidence driven asset-based approach to the consideration of all settlements, some of which may have the potential and ambition to become drivers for growth in the county or to play a key role in providing services and employment to their local catchments.

Towns in the lower tiers should provide for commensurate population and employment growth, providing for natural increases and to become more economically self-sustaining, in line with the quality and capacity of public transport, services and infrastructure available. It is considered appropriate that population targets for these towns be defined in the core strategies of development plans, and be reflective of local conditions and place potential.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Core Strategies

Local authorities, in the preparation of their core strategies should have due regard to the settlement typology of towns in the Region and carefully consider the phasing of development lands to ensure that towns grow at a sustainable level appropriate to their position in the hierarchy. See Tables 4.2 and 4.3 for further guidance.

Table 4.3 Settlement Typologies and Policy Responses

Settlement Typology	1. Dublin City and suburbs	2. Regional Growth Centres	3. Key Towns	4. Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self- Sustaining Towns	5. Towns, Villages and Rural Areas
Significance	**International**	**National**	**Regional**	**County**	**Local**
Socio Economic Functions	International business core with strong diversified economic base with access to international markets. High density retail and service hub with high quality arts, culture and leisure offer.	Large regional centres with strong economic base and good connectivity to Dublin and its markets. High level of service and retail functions playing a key role for a wide catchment.	Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers.	Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns, some of which have experienced rapid population growth and require 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining.	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions. Rural areas both within and outside the influence of large urban areas.
Transport Profile	Self-sufficient (high internal trip rate) transport hub with high quality public transport and links to other centres.	Self-sufficient settlements with higher rates of internal trips and public transport connections to Dublin and other centres.	Self-sufficient settlements (Gateway Region) and commuter settlements with high quality public transport and growth capacity at transport nodes.	Self-sufficient and commuter settlements, with good public transport and regional transport links, some of which may be highly car dependent.	Towns and rural villages some of which may not have good public transport or regional connections and may be highly car dependent.
Policy Response	Continued consolidated population and employment growth with a focus on improving housing supply and amenity provision to create sustainable communities and improve public transport and sustainable travel options.	Key drivers of regional economic growth aligned with significant rates of population growth, coupled with investment in services, amenities and sustainable transport.	Commensurate population and employment growth, on high quality public transport corridors coupled with investment in services, amenities and sustainable transport.	Consolidation coupled with targeted investment where required to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options and to become more self-sustaining settlements.	Consolidation coupled with targeted rural housing and investment policies where required to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options and to become more self-sustaining.

The translation of these policy responses into core strategies in development plans should also consider the scale and location of settlements and accordingly the requisite nature and scale of development appropriate at these locations. In this regard, higher densities in core strategies should be applied to higher order settlements such as Dublin City, Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns. However there should be a graded reduction in residential densities for Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns, towns and villages that are commensurate to the existing built environment.

Local authorities, in developing their core strategies and settlement hierarchies will consider the following growth enablers for every part of the Region to meet its potential including;

- **Economic Growth –** Harness opportunities for economic growth by supporting synergies between talent and place, building on identified assets to strengthen enterprise ecosystems and provide quality jobs. Re-intensify employment within existing urban areas, complemented by strategic employment growth in the right locations and diversification of local and rural economies to better withstand economic shocks and sustain national growth.
- **Align Population, Employment and Housing Growth –** Divergence between the places people live and work leads to long-distance commuting and congestion, which is having a negative impact on quality of life. To address this, promote sustainable growth in the right locations and 'catch up' investment and consolidation in local services, amenities and employment in areas that have experienced large scale commuter driven housing development.
- **Compact Sustainable Growth –** Promote compact, sequential and sustainable development of urban areas from large to small to realise targets of at least 50% of all new homes to be built, to be within or contiguous to the existing built up area of Dublin city and suburbs, and a target of at least 30% for other urban areas. Support co-ordination across local authorities and agencies to promote active land management and better use of under-utilised, brownfield and public lands.
- **Regeneration and Development –** Identify significant ready-to-go regeneration projects in the existing built areas of our cities, towns, villages as well as rural regeneration opportunities, which could leverage private and public-sector support and investment, including NPF and European funding with a focus on social as well as physical regeneration.
- **Strategic Connectivity –** Protect and enhance global connectivity including the TEN-T network to ensure the best use of existing and planned transport infrastructure, safeguard national assets and improve sustainable mobility. Enhance regional accessibility as part of an integrated land use and transport strategy to enable the development of designated towns on strategic and public transport corridors and in tandem with enabling infrastructure.
- **Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor -** Safeguard and improve accessibility and service by rail, road and communication between Dublin and Belfast and drive cross border networks between Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry. Post-Brexit, consideration should be given to a process that can establish protocols for environmental protection and movement of people and goods.
- **Healthy Placemaking -** To realise sustained economic growth and employment including the integration of better urban design, public realm, amenities and heritage to create attractive places to live, work, visit and invest in. Focus on placemaking to create attractive and sustainable communities to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling.
- **Climate Action –** to accelerate a transition to a greener, low carbon and climate resilient region with focus on energy transition, carbon sequestration and reduced travel demand through the promotion of sustainable settlement patterns. Support the Climate Action Regional Offices and local authorities in their implementation of climate strategies.
- **Collaboration –** The Assembly will foster collaboration in the allocation of funds to maximise the value for money and delivery of RSES policy and to promote enhanced collaboration between local and regional stakeholders in relation to enterprise and employment, transport, education, retail and service delivery and in the preparation of local transport plans and urban area plans (UAPs). There will be a need to co-ordinate the sources of funding of infrastructure, including community facilities that will be located within joint urban area plans.



Taking Account of Existing Plans

Where there may not be an ideal fit between some current plans and the more up to date broad national and regional future development parameters set out under the NPF, this Strategy and/or updated data that might be circulated by the Department from time to time as new information (i.e. Census data) becomes available, appropriate transitional arrangements will be put in place.

For example, the consideration of development land prioritisation measures by local authorities rather than 'de-zoning' of land, where there may be a surplus, would be more appropriate. The Department of Housing Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) will provide updated planning guidelines on their development plan functions to planning authorities in this regard. The NPF or the NPF Implementation Roadmap document, do not seek the downzoning of land, however.

Core strategies may apply prioritisation measures and/or de-zoning of land where a surplus of land is identified in plans with regard to the NPF Implementation Roadmap up to 2031. In preparing core strategies account should also be given to the consideration of sequential lands which are suitable for the delivery of housing but may not be forthcoming in the plan period having regard to 2031 roadmap targets, subject to proper planning and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the zoning of land and planning permission alone, do not necessarily guarantee delivery and population growth in accordance with projected, targeted timeframes.

Therefore, in planning for future growth, it will be important for planning authorities to set out and monitor the service capacity and likely rate of completion of development on zoned lands, both brownfield and greenfield as well as elsewhere, having regard to local conditions and trends.

Much closer attention will need to be paid to actual delivery, taking the steps that may be necessary to implement strategic planning aims, housing delivery in the immediate term and above all, avoiding the hoarding of land and/or planning permissions.

Effective ways to tackle any tendencies towards land and/or planning permission hoarding or excessively slow delivery include measures such as the Vacant Site Levy and the release of alternate lands where permitted development, without any wider delivery constraints, is not being brought forward.

Accordingly, sites with long-term development potential at priority locations should not be 'reserved' at the land allocation stages of the plan-making and implementation processes, in such a way as would create an unreasonable dependency on such sites being brought forward or that would impede the bringing forward of other suitable lands with better prospects for delivery in the short term, if the strategic sites are not being brought forward by their owners.

Proactive land management therefore requires realistic prioritisation, proper monitoring and effective co-ordination across regional, metropolitan, city and county levels.

For current planning purposes, the immediate short term will be regarded as the period to 2021, the short-medium term may be regarded as the period from 2021 to 2026, the medium term is the period from 2026 to 2031 and the long term is the period post-2031.

By the time the current Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) are complete and city and county development plans reviewed, the first round of post-RSES development period 2021-2026 will have become the short term.

Headroom

Practice in relation to previous Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) and core strategies, has generally been to match future population targets to the physical extent of land being zoned for development, based on assumptions related to density and household occupancy. A further factor of 50% of the identified land requirement has also been universally applied as 'headroom'.

The concept of headroom based solely on zoned land provision does not account for housing yield arising from the re-use of existing housing stock, mixed-use development, urban intensification or infill or brownfield development.

NPF Roadmap population projections already incorporate 25% headroom figures for all parts of the country (Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework, Appendix 2). This may be supplemented by additional 25% headroom, applicable in the 16 local authority areas that are projected to grow at or above the national average growth figure (page 5 of the NPF Roadmap). This further headroom may be applied regionally and locally, at RSES and city and county development plan stage.

Application of headroom is particularly relevant to urban areas, particularly the five cities, where the aim is to target at least half of future housing delivery within existing built-up areas.

However, the scale of projected population targets for cities means some transfer of projected growth to their wider metropolitan areas is appropriate, particularly during the transition period to 2026, this level of transfer may be determined at the regional or metropolitan level.

Measuring Delivery through Active Land Management

The population projections targeted in the NPF Roadmap are the current benchmark against which delivery may be measured. Planning authorities at regional and city/county level are expected to set out both the distribution and prioritisation of planning measures, including land zoning, required to deliver population growth.

It is expected that distribution will be at the scale of the regional or local authority area, having regard to the NPF and RSES, and priority will be related to timescales, initially to 2021 and then to 2026, 2031 or beyond.

Performance may be measured by the extent to which growth is delivered in accordance with targets and identified priorities. Good performance will enable optimal delivery of services and infrastructure to support development and critically, will also inform future review. It is likely that achieving good performance will require a range of more active land management measures, beyond just zoning land.

This will include analysis of service capacity, needs and overall cost, infill/brownfield potential and patterns of housing delivery and output, including the take-up and completion of planning permissions. It will be necessary for planning authorities, in both their forward planning and development management functions, to act to encourage greater competition in the delivery of output, particularly at priority locations.

All of this will require a suitable 'pipeline' of development opportunities, prioritised on the basis of likelihood of meeting targets and kept under review through monitoring and reporting.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Settlement Strategy

RPO 4.1: In preparing core strategies for development plans, local authorities shall determine the hierarchy of settlements in accordance with the hierarchy, guiding principles and typology of settlements in the RSES, within the population projections set out in the National Planning Framework to ensure that towns grow at a sustainable and appropriate level, by setting out a rationale for land proposed to be zoned for residential, employment and mixed-use development across the Region. Core strategies shall also be developed having regard to the infill/brownfield targets set out in the National Planning Framework, National Policy Objectives 3a-3c.

RPO 4.2: Infrastructure investment and priorities shall be aligned with the spatial planning strategy of the RSES. All residential and employment developments should be planned on a phased basis in collaboration with infrastructure providers so as to ensure adequate capacity for services (e.g. water supply, wastewater, transport, broadband) is available to match projected demand for services and that the assimilative capacity of the receiving environment is not exceeded.

4.4 Dublin City and Suburbs

The RSES supports continued population and economic growth in Dublin City and suburbs, with high quality new housing promoted and a focus on the role of good urban design, brownfield redevelopment and urban renewal and regeneration. There is an opportunity to promote and improve the provision of public transport and active travel and the development of strategic amenities to provide for sustainable communities. Dublin City and suburbs is considered in the context of the MASP and is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 5 Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP).

The NPF sets out ambitious targets to achieve compact growth with 50% of housing to be provided within or contiguous to the built-up area of Dublin City and suburbs. To achieve this, the MASP identifies strategic residential and employment corridors along key public transport corridors existing and planned, that contain development opportunities. These include; Dublin Docklands and Poolbeg West, former industrial lands including Naas Road, the regeneration of older social housing projects, Parkwest-Cherry Orchard and Ballymun, large scale urban expansion on the North Fringe of the city, the western suburbs including Adamstown and Clonburris SDZs, Fortunestown near the emerging town of Saggart/Citywest, brownfield lands in Tallaght along with the development of the Hansfield SDZ lands in Blanchardstown.

There is also potential for significant re-intensification of employment lands within the M50 ring, at Sandyford Business District and Cherrywood, to complement the Docklands and city centre business district. Outside the M50, the Dublin Enterprise Zone in Blanchardstown and Grangecastle in south Dublin have significant capacity for high tech manufacturing, research and development in campus style settings.

The Naas Road lands are a significant landbank straddling the Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council boundary, with long-term potential to become a major district centre but which require significant investment and site assembly efforts to enable their activation. Other long-term opportunities include the development of Dunsink, a major greenfield landbank inside the M50 ring, that requires requisite investment in infrastructure and public transport links.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Consolidation and Re-Intensification

RPO 4.3: Support the consolidation and re-intensification of infill/brownfield sites to provide high density and people intensive uses within the existing built up area of Dublin City and suburbs and ensure that the development of future development areas is co-ordinated with the delivery of key water infrastructure and public transport projects.



4.5 Regional Growth Centres

Regional Growth Centres are large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area.

The RSES supports the direction of significant population and economic growth towards the key Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk. These towns, located outside the Dublin Metropolitan Area are, in addition to Dublin, critical to the implementation of effective regional development as set out in the NPF. They will accommodate significant new investment in housing, transport and employment generating activity. They are important self-sustaining centres that act as economic drivers for the Region, capitalising on their strategic location and high-quality connections to Dublin, while also servicing and supporting a wider local economy, which extends beyond the Region in the case of Athlone and cross border in the case of Dundalk.

There is an opportunity to improve sustainable transport links and to provide for the requisite infrastructure required to enable these towns grow to their full potential. The growth of these towns will realise a more consolidated urban form that will optimise the use of existing and planned services by increasing population and employment density in a sustainable fashion. The Strategy sets out a strategic development framework for their future growth to allow them to reach sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth.

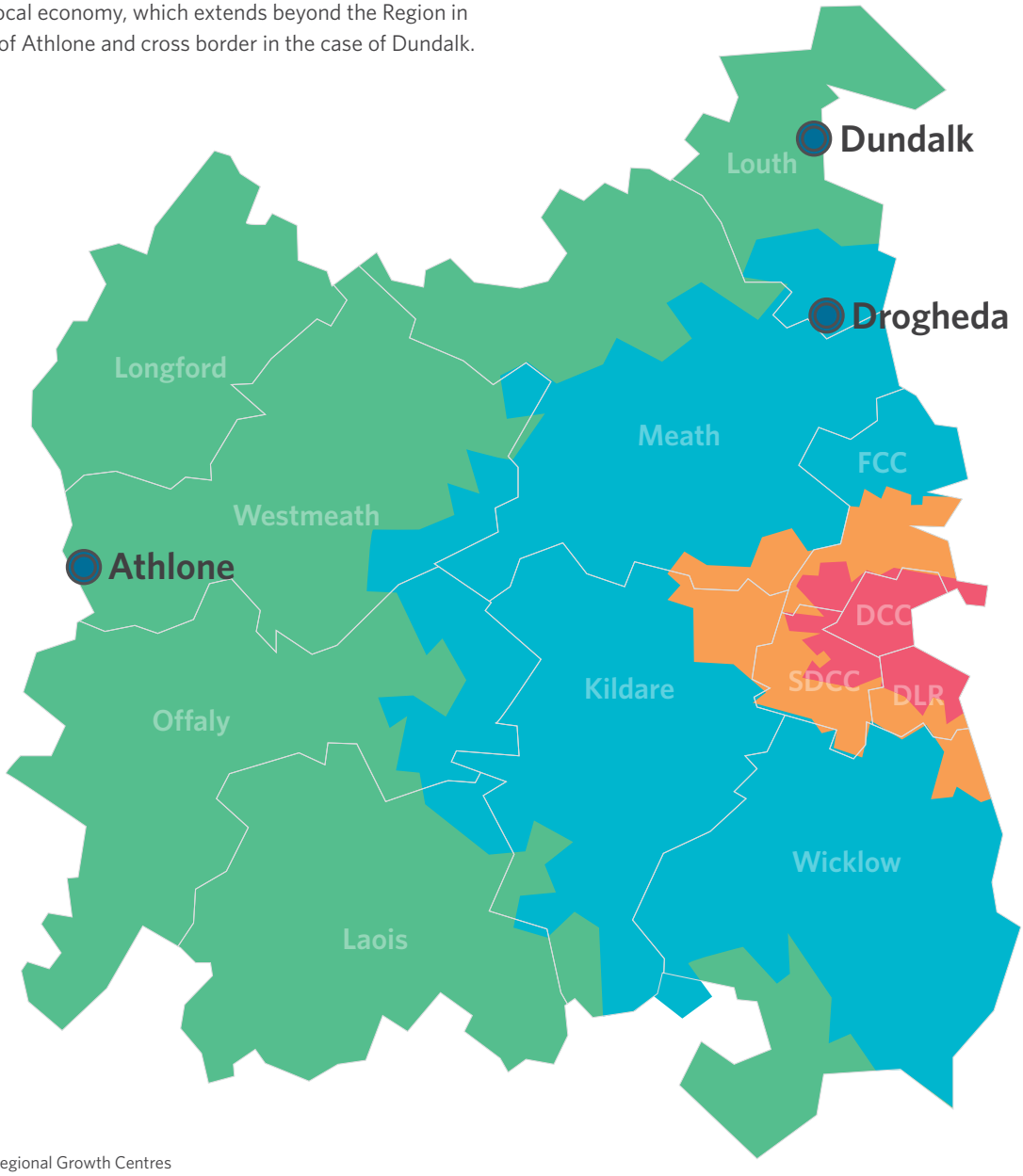


Figure 4.3 Regional Growth Centres



Athlone

Strategically located in the centre of Ireland at a key node between Dublin and Galway on the River Shannon, Athlone has direct national connectivity to towns such as Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore, Maynooth, Portlaoise, Ballinasloe and Roscommon. Due to its scale of population, employment and services, Athlone acts as a key regional centre for an extensive catchment that extends into the Northern and Western Region. Athlone's employment and housing potential, historic centre and cultural assets, along with its attractive natural environment along the banks of the River Shannon, provide for significant tourism opportunities and an enhanced quality of life for both residents and visitors to the town.

Key priorities are to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of Athlone as a regional driver, with a target population of 30,000 up to 2031, providing for an enhanced public realm and regeneration in the town centre along with significant employment growth linked to the further development of Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and building on the town's existing strong economic base and enterprise clusters.

In order to enhance co-ordination of development in Athlone, where the town and its environs lie within the combined functional area of two local authorities and two regional assemblies, the preparation and adoption of a Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) will be vital for Westmeath County Council and Roscommon County Council.

Residential Development:

Key to the success of Athlone is the availability of zoned and serviced lands within the existing built up area to facilitate significant population growth. The development of lands at Curragh Lissywollen, Lisseywollen South, Cornamagh, Cornamaddy and Monksland / Bellanamullia, have the potential to deliver the population targets identified in the RSES. In particular, the development of the strategic landbank at Lissywollen South, also offers the opportunity to develop a new urban quarter extending from the town centre, while the development of Monksland / Bellanamullia lands supports the continued development of the Athlone West area.

Vital to the growth of Athlone as a Regional Centre is the provision of high quality, well designed housing development that ensures a mixture of housing types and meets the needs of a variety of households. This is essential to support all of the residents of Athlone, including the current and future employment base thus strengthening the economic potential of the settlement.

Regeneration:

Future development required to achieve the vision for Athlone includes the regeneration of underused, vacant or derelict lands in the town centre, to facilitate population growth and to strengthen the retail and commercial functions of the Regional Centre. The renewal of lands at Loughanaskin provide opportunity to consolidate the commercial core of Athlone, reinforce neighbourhood identity and enhance the physical character of the area. The delivery of enhanced public realm in the town centre and along the River Shannon's waterfront will support further amenity, recreation and tourist related development within the settlement along with the development of the Western Bank as a Cultural Quarter. Additional opportunity exists for rejuvenation at sites including Station Road, the Texas, Irishtown and Dunnes Stores sites. Improving connectivity within the Regional Centre, including between Athlone Town Centre and Golden Island Shopping Centre, provides opportunity to enhance the public realm and to contribute to overall placemaking within the Regional Centre impacting positively on the convenience, image and function of Athlone as a Regional Centre.

Regeneration opportunities are to be identified as part of the Joint Urban Area Plan, through an integrated master planning approach, which can further support associated funding proposals under the Project Ireland 2040 Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and associated funding mechanisms.

Economic Development:

Athlone has an established economic base with significant administrative, retail, industrial, tourism and services employment, which serves an extensive catchment area that extends beyond the region. The development of Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre offers an opportunity to maximise its central accessible location and to build on the resilience of its local employment base that includes existing economic clusters of indigenous and international companies in the manufacturing, pharmaceutical, research and development, medical devices, ICT and software development sectors. Athlone's success in attracting Foreign Direct Investment makes it an optimal location for future investment as the key regional economic driver for the centre of the Country.

The Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC) together with Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and Athlone Business and Technology Park are important focal points for the development and strengthening of industry and higher education links in research and development (R&D). AIT is a leading third level institute with research capability in materials, bioscience and software, which are complementary to the industries in the Athlone area. The RSES supports AIT in its ambition, in partnership, to become a Technological University. In line with the smart specialisation approach, there is further potential to build links with industry to develop a pipeline of employment focussed skills to enter the workforce of specialised, high-tech industries, to boost Athlone's reputation as a university town and to increase its attractiveness as a location for talent and investment.

The provision of increased employment densities to support envisaged population growth will require enhanced co-ordination between the local authorities, enterprise agencies and regional stakeholders to ensure the sequential delivery of serviced sites in central accessible locations, including;

- Garrycastle IDA as a centre of excellence for education, research, enterprise and innovation with potential for clustering with Athlone Institute of Technology.
- Blyry – expansion of indigenous and existing industry.
- Creggan – new innovative business park, potentially supported by fast track planning mechanisms such as a SDZ.
- Monksland – development and expansion of the existing industrial sectors at this location.

It is important to acknowledge the strong economic and employment role that the retail sector within Athlone provides. It is considered that the Joint Retail Strategy by Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils will augment the development of Athlone as a regional shopping destination.

Tourism:

As a major tourist destination in the Midlands, Athlone capitalises on the rich natural and cultural heritage amenities that exist in the surrounding hinterlands, making it an ideal base to begin exploration of Ireland's 'Hidden Heartlands', which is being promoted as part of Fáilte Ireland's new tourism experience brand. Its central location coupled with its excellent levels of connectivity ensure that Athlone is easily accessible for tourists and recreational visitors.

There is potential to capitalise on Athlone's urban heritage and culture, and attractive natural setting on Lough Ree which opens into the River Shannon, one of the Country's most scenic waterways with links to the surrounding landscape and attractions such as the ancient monastic heritage site of Clonmacnoise and the medieval town of Rindoon. Waterways Ireland is developing a Masterplan for the Shannon Blueway which will build on the potential of Lough Ree and the Shannon as a key recreation and amenity attraction. Potential exists to develop a cross sectoral approach to maximise the tourism potential of the River Shannon and Lough Ree, involving Westmeath, Roscommon and Longford County Councils with other relevant stakeholders.

A key element of the tourism offer in Athlone is the Dublin to Galway National Cycleway route that spans over 200 kilometres, running through Athlone and connecting the cities of Dublin and Galway. This will form part of the European wide EuroVelo network and bring a cycle route of international significance to the Midlands.

Enabling Infrastructure

The joint UAP should provide for a coordinated planning framework amongst local authorities and other agencies to identify and deliver strategic development and regeneration areas to achieve compact growth targets. The goal of achieving compact urban growth will increase the need to improve sustainable transport and to provide for the requisite infrastructure to enable Athlone to develop as a Regional Growth Centre. This will include the upgrading of the water supply and the sewage treatment system in order to meet the growth targets set in this strategy.

Flooding associated with the River Shannon is a significant consideration for Athlone's future development and the joint Urban Area Plan should include tailored policy in this regard, including building upon existing measures under the Athlone Flood Alleviation Scheme and the Shannon Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study.

Athlone is well serviced by the national road and rail networks and its position makes the Regional Centre easily accessible. The Strategy supports the improvement of strategic inter-regional connections to Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Sligo, along with the improvement of public transport links within the Regional Centre and its hinterland. Transport infrastructural upgrades between Athlone and the Key Towns of the area namely Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore, Portlaoise and Roscommon will serve to create a more cohesive region and allow for the Key Towns to capitalise on Athlone's role as a Regional Growth Centre.

The promotion of walking and cycling within and through the Regional Centre through the development of greenways along the canal, as part of a wider Dublin to Galway cycle route and the provision of a new east-west pedestrian/ cycle bridge over the River Shannon is also supported.

A Local Transport Plan, prepared jointly by Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils and which includes strategic road links within and surrounding Athlone shall be prepared in collaboration with the relevant transport agencies.



Athlone Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP)

The RSES envisages a population target of 30,000 for the entire settlement of Athlone up to 2031. This includes lands within the combined functional area of the two local authorities of Westmeath and Roscommon. The preparation and adoption of a statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) by Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils is to be a priority. The joint UAP under agreement of both local authorities, is the appropriate mechanism to determine the functional urban area and plan boundary along with the distribution of population which should be generally in proportion to existing population levels in each local authority area.

In tandem with the requirements outlined in the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework, the joint UAP for the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone should endeavour to support and provide for the following:

- A strategic vision for the future development of Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre, including the development of critical mass and reflective of its role as a regional driver.
- A boundary for the plan area to support the achievement of compact growth targets with a minimum of 30% of new homes to be built within the existing built up area, supported by the large scale delivery of lands at Curragh Lissywollen, Lissywollen South, Cornamagh, Cornamaddy and Monksland / Bellanamullia.
- Preparation of a wider collaborative Economic Development Strategy to promote increased employment and enterprise opportunities in Athlone, and to facilitate enhanced co-ordination between local authorities, enterprise agencies and regional stakeholders to support the phased delivery of serviced employment lands at Garrycastle IDA, Blyry, Creggan and Monksland. In promoting the economic development of Athlone, this may include support for the consideration/investigation of fast track planning mechanisms such as, the designation of an SDZ.
- The regeneration of underused, vacant or derelict town centre lands and the consolidation of retail and commercial functions in line with a joint Retail Strategy prepared by the local authorities.
- The identification of infrastructural investment priorities and promotion of a joined-up approach to the delivery of key enabling infrastructure to facilitate the sequential delivery of strategic residential, employment and regeneration development areas.
- Support the upgrading of the water supply and treatment system to meet the growth targets set in this strategy.
- Promote Athlone as a sustainable transport hub, of national and regional importance and support the preparation of a joint Local Transport Plan between Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils in collaboration with transport agencies and key stakeholders to improve sustainable mobility in the town.
- Support the proposal to make AIT a Technological University and for the development of a 'smart cities' approach to drive research, innovation and EU funding opportunities in Athlone.
- Support the development of a cross sectoral approach to maximise the tourism potential of the River Shannon and Lough Ree, involving Westmeath, Roscommon and Longford County Council and relevant stakeholders.
- Support the implementation of the Athlone Waterfront Strategy to provide for public realm and amenity enhancements and tourist related developments along the waterfront.
- Support ongoing implementation of flood risk management and flood alleviation measures to facilitate the growth of Athlone.
- Support the development of an Open Space Strategy with provision for a public park in Monksland and the provision of sustainable transport, recreation and amenity spaces to support existing and future populations.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Athlone Regional Growth Centre

RPO 4.4: A cross boundary statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) for the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone shall be jointly prepared by Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils in collaboration with EMRA and NWRA. The UAP will support, the development of Athlone as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Regional Centre and economic driver for the centre of the Country.

The Joint UAP will identify Athlone's functional urban area and outline a boundary for the plan area, in addition to the identification of strategic housing and employment development areas and the infrastructure investment requirements to promote greater coordination and sequential delivery of serviced lands for development.

RPO 4.5: Promote Athlone as a key location for regional economic development supporting the provision of increased employment through the expansion of the existing enterprise ecosystem in Athlone and smart specialisation, that have developed through collaboration with the relevant enterprise agencies including the IDA, Athlone Institute of Technology and the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre and support the provision of physical infrastructure and zoned lands to realise the phased delivery of strategic employment lands in central accessible locations.

RPO 4.6: Support the role of Athlone Institute of Technology as a centre of excellence for education and in achieving its status as a Technological University.

RPO 4.7: Support the development of a cross sectoral approach to promote Athlone as a key tourism destination in the Midlands, building on Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand and the forthcoming Shannon Tourism Masterplan to develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.

RPO 4.8: Support the regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield / infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands to facilitate significant population growth and achieve sustainable compact growth targets of 30% of all new homes to be built within the existing built up urban area.

RPO 4.9: Support ongoing implementation of flood risk management and flood alleviation measures to facilitate the growth of Athlone.

RPO 4.10: Support the development of joint economic, transport and retail plans by Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils in collaboration with, and where appropriate, relevant local authorities and relevant agencies, to facilitate the growth of Athlone as a regional economic driver.





Drogheda

Drogheda is an established centre of agglomeration strategically located on the Dublin-Belfast rail corridor and M1 Motorway in proximity to both the metropolitan centres of Dublin and Belfast. Drogheda, and Dundalk have the potential to form part of a sustainable network of centres of scale, including Newry, connected by public transport within the Region and within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. However, the realisation of a sustainable linear sequence of urban centres of scale at Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry will require further promotion and investment in public transport infrastructure.

Drogheda is identified as the fastest growing town in the Country in the most recent inter-census period. Drogheda's location on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, combined with its existing physical, economic and social asset base, provides significant sustainable growth potential. If promoted, this latent potential can help to realise the growth potential of the broader Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross-border network as an engine for sustainable regional development.

Key priorities are to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of Drogheda as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031. The objective is to provide for the regeneration of the town centre, the compact planned and co-ordinated growth of the town's hinterland along with enhancing Drogheda's role as a self-sustaining strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. The dynamic of securing investment, while driving synergies between the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border network, and building on the existing education and skills base in the region are promoted within the Strategy period.

In order to enhance co-ordination of development in Drogheda where the town and its environs lie within the combined functional area of two local authorities, the preparation and adoption of a statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP), to be jointly prepared by Louth County Council and Meath County Council will be a priority. The UAP will provide for a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas so that a minimum of 30% compact growth can be achieved.

Regeneration:

There are underutilized areas in Drogheda where there is opportunity for regeneration and place making. The revitalization and redevelopment of the town centre will be prioritised including the regeneration of opportunity sites and their surrounding areas. The integrated physical, economic and social regeneration of identified areas will be promoted capitalizing on existing facilities. It is recognized that the regeneration dynamic can present opportunities to combat social exclusion in the town.

The physical, economic and social regeneration of the Heritage Quarter is promoted including the renewal of the Westgate area, as provided for in the townscape recovery guide 'Westgate Vision', which has secured funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund. The vision supports the adaption and reuse of vacant buildings, the sensitive redevelopment of vacant lands for new homes and businesses within a dynamic public realm investment program to provide an attractive and well-designed urban district. The RSES supports this approach as an alternative option to new development on greenfield sites. Additional regeneration opportunities such as the regeneration of the Drogheda Docklands will be identified in the joint UAP. The UAP will ensure that a coordinated approach is taken to future compact growth, sustainable development and investment to enhance Drogheda's role as a compact Regional Growth Centre.

Residential Development:

Key to the success of Drogheda as a self-sustaining Regional Growth Centre is targeted compact growth through the renewal and regeneration of underused, vacant and/or derelict town centre lands for residential and commercial development facilitated through the joint UAP. The availability of vacant and derelict serviced sites for residential development within the town centre also allows for an opportunity to contribute towards place making. In this regard the regeneration of the Westgate Area, will attract more people to live in the town core.

It is acknowledged that rapid phases of housing delivery in recent years requires the need to promote self-sustaining economic and employment-based development opportunities in the town to provide for employment growth for the existing population and to reverse commuting patterns. Job opportunities in the town will also help to combat social exclusion. The development of existing town centre brownfield and infill sites and the sustainable and co-ordinated development of zoned lands in the northern environs and southern environs of the town will be supported. The objective is to create compact mixed use employment and residential communities in key locations and in proximity to established residential areas and transport hubs while balancing growth north and south of the town centre.

Tourism:

Drogheda at the gateway to the Boyne Valley is of international significance in terms of its historical narrative, archaeology, architecture and urban heritage. The historic significance of Drogheda with its foundation in the 12th century and significant events in Irish history, most notably, the sacking of Drogheda by Cromwell's forces in 1649 and the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Drogheda offers significant heritage and tourism potential, both within the town itself where the town's rich urban heritage is evident in the archaeology and architecture within the historic town core, and also as a gateway to heritage sites outside the town in the Boyne Valley.

The River Boyne is the most important natural amenity of Drogheda and should be central to any future strategy for the town and its regeneration. Enhancing and developing the existing parklands and open space to the west of the town will provide an important new link to Brú na Boinne and beyond and allow the recreational value and leisure uses of this area to be maximised.

Economic Development:

Drogheda is strategically located between the Dublin and Belfast Metropolitan areas with access to the deep labour markets in both the Dublin and Belfast city regions. The further development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor providing improved accessibility for setup or relocation of indigenous businesses and FDI to the area will enhance its role as a key regional economic driver. To support economic growth and competitiveness and realise the potential of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, continued cross-border collaboration and co-operation between the relevant departments, agencies and stakeholders will be necessary.

Drogheda has developed a strong and broad employment base in the range of services and manufacturers it supports, principally in the financial, payment, shared services and food technology sectors. Drogheda shall promote further employment growth based on the attractiveness of its assets and the quality of life offering for workers and residents. This can include additional employment opportunities, including high value jobs, to provide for a greater jobs to residents ratio. The establishment of The Mill in Drogheda hosting numerous start-up companies highlights the existing pool of entrepreneurial talent present that will continue to be supported and developed. There is opportunity for Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) to continue to develop as a centre for excellence for education with a Drogheda campus. There is also potential with the Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE), enhancing the educational offer in the north east. The retention of indigenous talent can be achieved by providing appropriate and career advancing employment opportunities locally or in sustainable urban centres of scale within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor accessible by public transport.

The role of the Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital as a significant employer and centre of excellence in health in the region is acknowledged, providing services to the surrounding region.

Finally there is a requirement for both a transport strategy and a retail strategy to be prepared as part of the joint UAP process in order to coordinate land use and transportation and to provide for sustainable retail development in Drogheda and its hinterland.

Enabling Infrastructure:

The joint UAP shall provide a coordinated planning framework by the local authorities and other agencies to identify and deliver strategic development and regeneration areas to achieve compact growth targets and to prioritise infrastructure investment The goal of achieving compact urban growth will increase the need to improve accessibility and sustainable mobility. There will need to be investment in the requisite infrastructure to enable Drogheda to develop as a sustainable Regional Growth Centre. Drogheda will benefit from the proposed DART expansion programme identified in Project Ireland 2040, which will provide for a fast, high-frequency electrified rail service to the town to enhance the existing heavy rail service. The existing McBride Rail Station will continue to be the main public transport hub for Drogheda and its environs. However, accessibility to the station will need to be improved, including access to the undeveloped lands to the east of the station, and stronger linkage should be forged between rail and bus services in the town.

Drogheda is strategically located on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and the existing high capacity road and national rail links play a critical role in supporting economic growth and competitiveness for the region. The RSES supports the improvement and protection of walking and cycling routes such as the Boyne Greenway and public transport provision including accessibility by rail in order to support sustainable productivity growth while protecting the intra-regional capacity of the existing motorway network.

The planning and delivery of the Drogheda Flood Relief Scheme will protect existing development and future growth. The RSES recognises and supports the regional significance and role of Drogheda Port including its potential for relocation and the future development of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR).



Drogheda Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP)

A cross boundary statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) for the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda shall be jointly prepared by Louth and Meath County Councils in collaboration with EMRA. The UAP will support, the development of Drogheda as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Regional Centre and economic driver. The joint UAP will provide a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas for the future physical, economic and social development of Drogheda to ensure it achieves targeted compact brownfield / infill growth of a minimum of 30% and ensure a coordinated approach is taken to the future growth and development of the town to ensure that it has the capacity to grow sustainably and secure investment as a Regional Growth Centre on the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor. The joint UAP will identify a functional urban area and plan boundary for the plan area and strategic housing and employment development areas and infrastructure investment requirements to promote greater coordination and sequential delivery of serviced lands for development.

The RSES envisages a population target of 50,000 is for the entire settlement of Drogheda up to 2031. This includes lands within the combined functional area of the two local authorities of Louth and Meath. The preparation and adoption of a statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) by Louth and Meath County Councils is to be a priority.



The joint UAP under agreement of both local authorities, is the appropriate mechanism to determine the functional urban area and plan boundary along with the distribution of population which should be generally in proportion to existing population levels in each local authority area. In tandem with the requirements outlined in the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework the joint UAP for the Regional Centre of Drogheda should endeavour to support and provide for the following:

- Provide for the sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in the town core by promoting the regeneration of underused, vacant or derelict town centre lands for residential development to facilitate population growth.
- Support the regeneration of the Westgate area of Drogheda's historic town centre to address vacancy and dereliction in the town core and as an alternative option to new development on greenfield sites.
- Facilitate the regeneration of lands at McBride Station to capitalise on existing and planned public transport infrastructure, including the DART Expansion Programme whilst avoiding development that detracts from the town centre.
- Provide for redevelopment or renewal of obsolete areas on lands at Mell / North Road.
- Support the sustainable development of existing zoned lands in the northern and southern environs of the town with a particular emphasis on the promotion of the IDA Business Park as a location for economic investment and the creation of compact, residential communities in key locations in proximity to established residential areas and transport hubs.
- Support the implementation of the Urban Design Framework Plan for the Heritage Quarter.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Drogheda Regional Growth Centre

RPO 4.11: A cross boundary statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) for the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda shall be jointly prepared by Louth and Meath County Councils in collaboration with EMRA. The UAP will support, the development of Drogheda as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Regional Centre and economic driver. The Joint UAP will identify a functional urban area and plan boundary for the plan area and strategic housing and employment development areas and infrastructure investment requirements to promote greater coordination and sequential delivery of serviced lands for development.

RPO 4.12: Support the role of Drogheda Docklands and Port in particular by:

- Supporting and protecting the role of Drogheda Port as a port of regional significance
- Facilitate relocation of Drogheda Port subject to a feasibility study and appropriate coastal zone management.
- Supporting the future development of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR).

RPO 4.13: Promote and enhance cross-border interactions to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important cross-border network for regional development.

RPO 4.14: Promote self-sustaining economic and employment-based development opportunities to match and catch-up on rapid phases of housing delivery in recent years to provide for employment growth and reverse commuting patterns.

RPO 4.15: Promote Drogheda as an urban tourism destination while protecting its natural and built heritage resources with a particular focus on capitalising on the following assets:

- The town's role as a gateway to the Boyne Valley heritage sites and World Heritage site at Brú Na Bóinne
- Amenity potential of the River Boyne including the Boyne Greenway
- Fáilte Ireland's Ancient East designation.

RPO 4.16: Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development and measures to improve educational attainment levels, up skilling in key competencies and skills acquisition.

RPO 4.17: Support the proposed Drogheda Flood Relief Scheme, subject to the outcome of the planning process and appropriate environmental assessment.

RPO 4.18: Enhance Drogheda's role as a strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and provide for employment opportunities through identification of suitable sites for new industry including FDI.



Dundalk

Dundalk is an established centre of agglomeration strategically located on the Dublin-Belfast rail corridor and M1 Motorway in proximity to both the metropolitan centres of Dublin and Belfast. It is identified as one of the fastest growing towns in the country in the most recent inter-census period. Dundalk has the potential to form part of a sustainable network of urban centres of scale, including Newry, connected by public transport within the Region and within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. However, the realisation of a sustainable linear sequence of urban centres of scale at Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry will require further promotion and investment in public transport infrastructure.

Dundalk in particular, due to its proximity to Newry, provides for enhanced cross-border interactions which, if promoted, can help to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important cross-border network for regional development.

Key priorities are to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of Dundalk as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031. The objective is to provide for the regeneration of the town centre and the compact and planned co-ordinated development of the town's hinterland, along with enhancing Dundalk's role as a strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. The dynamic to capitalise on its location, driving the linkage between Dundalk and Newry and strengthening cross border synergy in services and functions is promoted within the Strategy period.

The preparation and adoption of a statutory Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be a priority for Louth County Council, to provide a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas so that a minimum of 30% compact growth can be achieved.

Regeneration:

There are underutilized areas in Dundalk where there is opportunity for regeneration and place making. The revitalization and redevelopment of Dundalk town centre will be prioritised including the regeneration of opportunity sites and their surrounding areas. The integrated physical, economic and social regeneration of identified areas will be promoted capitalising on existing facilities. Regeneration provides the opportunity to enhance pedestrian permeability and combat social exclusion in the town.

The physical, economic and social regeneration of the Longwalk area, which has secured funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund will be targeted as a significant area to establish a new living and working quarter at the heart of Dundalk town centre. In addition, regeneration opportunities are identified at Carroll's Village Shopping Centre, Williamson's Mall and Dunnes Park Street, and within the delivery of the Clanbrassil Street and St. Nicholas' Quarter Rejuvenation Scheme. These will introduce more employment to the area, they will reinvigorate the town centre, improve accessibility and sustainable mobility and strengthen Dundalk's importance as a Regional Growth Centre. The regeneration of the Seatown/Port Harbour Area envisaged in the Urban Design Framework (2008) and delivered through the UAP will provide an opportunity to create a water based urban quarter and activity location enhancing tourism potential in Dundalk.

Residential Development:

Key to the success of Dundalk as a self-sustaining Regional Growth Centre is targeted compact growth through the renewal and regeneration of underused, vacant and/or derelict town centre lands for residential and commercial development facilitated through the UAP. The availability of vacant and derelict serviced sites for residential development within the town centre and other character areas will facilitate place making opportunities. Continued proactive targeting of vacant properties for their acquisition and renewal will reduce vacancy and increase the active housing stock within this Regional Growth Centre. Sustainable urban expansion will be delivered through the development of the Mount Avenue area and other lands, supported by associated enabling infrastructure.

Economic Development:

Having regard to the town's proximity to the border with Northern Ireland and the linkages between Dundalk and Northern Ireland there is a need to ensure resilience to the potential implications of Brexit. Dundalk is strategically located between the Dublin and Belfast Metropolitan areas with access to the deep labour markets in both the Dublin and Belfast city regions. The further development of the linear Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and improved accessibility for setup or relocation of indigenous businesses and FDI to the area will enhance its role as a key regional economic driver. To support economic growth and competitiveness and realise the potential of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, continued cross-border collaboration and co-operation between the relevant departments, agencies and stakeholders will be necessary.

Dundalk has a strong and broad economic and employment base with a healthy equilibrium between resident workers and jobs and is an acknowledged established Pharma hub. Commerce and trade are the largest industries, followed by professional services concentrated in IDA Dundalk Business & Technology Park, and Xerox Technology Park. Furthermore, the presence of Dundalk Institute of Technology provides a key driver for an enterprise ecosystem along with the existing sectoral clusters. The RSES supports the Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) to continue to develop as a centre for excellence for education in the north east.

The retention of indigenous talent can be achieved by providing appropriate and career advancing employment opportunities locally or in sustainable urban centres of scale within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor accessible by public transport.

The regeneration of Dundalk Port/Harbour area can contribute to the town's economic and tourism development and this is recognised and supported by the RSES.

Finally there is a requirement for both a transport strategy and a retail strategy to be prepared as part of the UAP process in order to coordinate landuse and transportation and to provide for sustainable retail development in Dundalk and its hinterland.

Enabling Infrastructure:

The UAP shall provide for a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic development and regeneration areas to achieve compact growth targets and to priortise infrastructure investment The goal of achieving compact urban growth will increase the need to improve accessibility and sustainable mobility and provide for the requisite infrastructure to enable Dundalk to develop as a Regional Growth Centre. This will include a transport strategy for Dundalk which prioritises modal shift, process and operational improvements to the Dundalk wastewater treatment plant and the planning and delivery of the Dundalk Flood Relief Scheme.

Dundalk is strategically located on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and the existing high capacity road and national rail links play a critical role in supporting economic growth and competitiveness for the region. The RSES supports the improvement and protection of public transport provision including accessibility by rail in order to support sustainable productivity growth while protecting the intra-regional capacity of the existing motorway network.

The promotion of walking and cycling within and through the Regional Centre is supported by the RSES including the social and economic benefits of the Carlingford to Omeath Greenway forming part of the 'Great Eastern Greenway'.

Dundalk Urban Area Plan (UAP)

A statutory Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be prepared by Louth County Council for the Regional Growth Centre of Dundalk in collaboration with the EMRA. The UAP will support the development of Dundalk as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Regional Centre and economic driver. The UAP will provide a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas for the future physical, economic and social development of the town to ensure targeted compact growth of a minimum of 30% is achieved. The UAP shall facilitate the sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in the town core by consolidating the built footprint of Dundalk through regeneration of the town centre Core Character Area with a focus on rejuvenation of Clanbrassil Street / St. Nicholas Quarter and development of key town centre infill / brownfield sites in this area. A significant proportion of future urban development shall be accommodated on infill/ brownfield sites by encouraging development, including renewal and regeneration of underused, vacant or derelict town centre lands for residential development to facilitate population growth. The UAP will identify a functional urban area and plan boundary for the plan area and strategic housing and employment development areas and infrastructure investment requirements to promote greater coordination and sequential delivery of serviced lands for development.

The RSES envisages a population target of 50,000 for the entire settlement of Dundalk up to 2031. The preparation and adoption of a statutory Urban Area Plan (UAP) by Louth County Council is to be a priority. The UAP is the appropriate mechanism to determine the functional urban area and plan boundary along with the distribution of population. In tandem with the requirements outlined in the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework the UAP for the Regional Centre of Dundalk should endeavour to support and provide for the following:

- Support development on key town centre infill/ brownfield sites include inter alia Long Walk Shopping Centre, Carroll's Village Shopping Centre, Williamson's Mall, and Dunne's Park Street.
- To enhance accessibility and sustainable mobility within the town centre by improving links between the core and surrounding areas through the further integration of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.
- Promote the Seatown / Port Harbour Area for regeneration and repurpose of a water based urban quarter
- Facilitate urban expansion through development of the Mount Avenue masterplan lands, and other lands.
- Support the implementation of the Dundalk Urban Design Framework Plan (2008) or any update thereof.



REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Dundalk Regional Growth Centre

RPO 4.19: A statutory Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be prepared by Louth County Council for the Regional Growth Centre of Dundalk in collaboration with the EMRA. The UAP will support the development of Dundalk as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Regional Centre and economic driver. The UAP will identify a functional urban area and plan boundary for the plan area and strategic housing and employment development areas and infrastructure investment requirements to promote greater coordination and sequential delivery of serviced lands for development.

RPO 4.20: Promote and enhance cross-border interactions to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important cross-border network for regional development.

RPO 4.21: Enhance Dundalk's role as a strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and provide for employment opportunities through identification of suitable sites for new industry including FDI.

RPO 4.22: Support the role of Dundalk Institute of Technology as a centre of excellence for education.

RPO 4.23: Enhance potential for economic development and regeneration at Dundalk Port/ Harbour area subject to a feasibility study and appropriate coastal zone management.

RPO 4.24: Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development and measures to improve educational attainment levels, up skilling in key competencies and skills acquisition.

RPO 4.25: Support the proposed Dundalk Flood Relief Scheme, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.



4.6 Key Towns

Key Towns are large towns which are economically active towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas. They have high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as regional drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres.

Key Towns, given their historic significance and performance as settlements within a regional context, have potential to accommodate commensurate levels of population and employment growth, facilitated by their location on high quality public transport corridors and aligned with requisite investment in services, amenities and sustainable transport.

Development plans should provide for the sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in the town core of Key Towns by consolidating the built footprint through a focus on regeneration and development of identified key town centre infill / brownfield sites.

A significant proportion of future urban development should be accommodated on infill/brownfield sites by encouraging development, including renewal and regeneration of underused, vacant or derelict town centre lands for residential development to facilitate population growth.

The Key Towns for the Region are;

- Swords, Maynooth and Bray in the Metropolitan Area
- Navan, Naas and Wicklow-Rathnew in the Core Region
- Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore, Portlaoise and Graiguecullen (Carlow) in the Gateway Region.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Key Towns

RPO 4.26: Core strategies in local authority development plans shall support objectives to achieve a minimum of 30% of housing in Key Towns by way of compact growth through the identification of key sites for regeneration.

RPO 4.27: Key Towns shall act as economic drivers and provide for strategic employment locations to improve their economic base by increasing the ratio of jobs to workers.

METROPOLITAN KEY TOWNS

Metropolitan Key Towns are large economically active service towns located within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, with high quality transport links and capacity for increased residential and employment densities at strategic transport nodes. These should be read in conjunction with the MASP, Chapter 5. The Key Metropolitan Towns of Swords, Maynooth and Bray are important in a regional and in a county context and they have the capacity and future growth potential to accommodate above average growth in the Region with the requisite investment in employment creation, services, amenities and sustainable transport. The details and prioritisation of this delivery is set out in the MASP, Chapter 5.



Swords

Due to its strategic location in proximity to Dublin City, the airport, national road network and with the planned Metrolink, Swords acts as a Key Town for the metropolitan area. Swords is the County Town in Fingal, and is a major town with a young and growing population of over 39,000 people in 2016, and which provides a strong economic and service function for its catchment. Key priorities are to promote compact growth and enhanced public realm in the town centre along with the planned sequential development of Swords.

Swords is located in the Dublin Metropolitan Area and is included in the MASP (see Chapter 5 MASP) and is located on the Metrolink Corridor.

Regeneration:

The Sustainable Swords Project will consolidate and strengthen Swords historic town centre. The identity of the town centre will be enhanced through the development of Swords Civic Centre and Cultural Centre, the delivery of the conservation plan for Swords Castle, and the delivery of an enhanced public realm in the town centre, in accordance with a new healthy placemaking strategy. Additionally, core recreational and amenity spaces will be promoted, in particular Ward River Valley Park, Swords Cultural Quarter including Town Park, and Ward River Walk, west of Main Street.

Residential Development:

Key to the success of Swords will be the strengthening of the role of Main Street, with a focus on compact growth and targeting infill development. Residential development, in the shorter term, is mainly directed to the western and southern areas of the town, with longer term development of Lissenhall. This strategic landbank offers the opportunity for the development of a well-connected mixed-use urban district on the northern side of Swords within 1 km of the Metrolink corridor. The development of the area follows the sequential development of Swords and is in keeping with the Council's long-term strategic vision for the town.

Economic Development:

The strategic regeneration of Swords offers an opportunity to build on the existing resilience of the local economy. There are opportunities to create a strategic employment node maximising opportunity presented by Sword's strategic location well served by air, Metrolink and the national road network. Furthermore, Swords-Dublin Airport has developed as a key location for industry and employment generating activities. Ensuring high skilled employment opportunities for residents of Swords is a key objective. Airport related activities will continue to be of major importance, along with the protection and enhancement of access to Dublin Airport as a global gateway to the Region and the State.

Enabling Infratructure:

The delivery of Metrolink in co-ordination with other public transport proposals, including the Bus Rapid Transport/ Busconnects and Park and Ride programmes and electric vehicle charging infrastructure, is crucial for the future sustainable development of Swords. There is significant potential to transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes through the provision of high-quality walking and cycling permeability offering direct routes to local destinations and public transportation hubs. Improvements to the road and cycle network are required to capitalise on this, together with the delivery of new road infrastructure. Swords was identified in the Fingal Spatial Energy Demand Analysis as having heat densities high enough to be feasible for connection to district heating systems.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Swords Key Town

RPO 4.28: Support the continued development of Swords as a vibrant Key Town with a thriving economy; an integrated public transport network; an attractive and highly accessible built environment with the highest standards of housing, employment, services, recreational amenities and community facilities.

RPO 4.29: Support the regeneration of underused town centre lands along with the planned and sequential infill opportunities to provide for high density and people intensive uses in accessible locations that are accessible to high quality transport, existing and planned, and to support the preparation of a local area plan for the strategic landbank at Lissenhall for the longer-term development of Swords.

RPO 4.30: Facilitate the strategic regeneration of Swords to build on the resilience of the local economy and provide for an enhanced urban environment with a particular focus on the development of Swords Civic Centre and Cultural Centre, the delivery of the conservation plan for Swords Castle, and the delivery of an enhanced public realm in the town centre and to promote recreational and amenity uses in accordance with a healthy placemaking strategy.

RPO 4.31: Support Swords-Dublin Airport as a key location for airport related economic development and employment provision linked to the protection and enhancement of access to Dublin Airport lands including the delivery of Metrolink.

RPO 4.32: Encourage transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes in Swords through the provision of high quality walking and cycling permeability offering direct routes to local destination and public transportation hubs.



Maynooth

Maynooth, with a population of 14,600 people in 2016, is a large active town in north-east Kildare, and which is strategically located on the Dublin to Sligo railway line, M4 motorway and the Royal Canal. Maynooth provides a significant level of employment at Maynooth University, the M4 Business Park and local business in the town centre. A number of higher order services are located in the town including education, health, cultural, leisure and recreational facilities. The town has experienced significant population growth and has a young demographic with many university students living in and travelling to the town. St. Patrick's College, the Royal Canal, Maynooth Castle and the nearby demesne landscape of Carton House are key assets and attractions.

To enhance co-ordination of development in Maynooth, including its environs in County Meath, the preparation and adoption of a Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) should be carried out by Kildare and Meath County Councils.

Maynooth is located in the Dublin Metropolitan Area on the North-West Corridor and is included in the MASP (see Chapter 5 MASP).

Regeneration:

Opportunities exist for the expansion of the town centre by utilising backlands in the Harbour area and at Carton Park, to maximise synergies with the existing core retail area. The Canal Harbour regeneration lands comprise of a number of brownfield sites, some vacant buildings/sites and a substantial public park with playing pitches and a playground. The town has relatively high rates of sustainable transport, with potential to capitalise on existing tourism assets with connections to the Royal Canal and its designation as Euro Velo Route 2, a Pan-European walking and cycling route. Alleviating traffic congestion will further enhance the attractiveness of Maynooth, which has potential to act as a major shopping destination for the surrounding area.

Residential Development:

Maynooth has seen significant population growth along the Moyglare, Dunboyne and Dublin Roads with further land designated for residential development to the south east of the town at Greenfield and at Railpark. The Railpark lands are subject to a new relief road and bridge over the railway line together with the provision of linkages to the Royal Canal towpath and town centre. There is further potential for the consolidation of the built form of Maynooth to the northwest and southwest of the town to provide for significant residential development.

Economic Development:

While the number of people at work within the town is relatively high, a significant number of residents commute to Dublin. There are significant opportunities to further develop knowledge-based employment focusing on ICT and manufacturing through the development of a research and technology campus to the west of the existing university campus. The further development of Maynooth University as a leading third level research and educational facility is critical for the economic development of the town and the region with potential synergies to large established employers such as Intel and Hewlett Packard. Lands at Moygaddy within the Maynooth Environs of County Meath have also been identified for Science and Technology based employment.

Enabling infrastructure:

Planned infrastructure upgrades include the M4 from Maynooth to Leixlip and for a bridge and relief road to the south east of the town. The DART Expansion project and proposed electrification of the rail line to Maynooth represents a significant opportunity for sequential growth in Maynooth. A new sewer connection for the Railpark lands, in association with the relief road will also unlock significant development potential, along with the development of an Outer Orbital Route connecting the east of the town and lands within the Maynooth Environs of Meath and to the west of the town with the provision of new roads connecting the Moyglare Road to the Kilcock Road. The provision of additional road capacity around the town offers an opportunity for improved public transport walking and cycling networks, through relocation of road space within the town.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Maynooth Key Town

RPO 4.33: Support the continued development of Maynooth, co-ordinated with the delivery of strategic infrastructure including pedestrian and cycle linkages within the town and to the Royal Canal Greenway, DART expansion and road linkages forming part of the Maynooth Outer Orbital Route in a manner which supports future development and population growth and builds on synergies with Maynooth University promoting a knowledge-based economy.

RPO 4.34: Support Maynooth as a key town to act as an economic driver for north Kildare and provide for strategic employment at key locations to improve the economic base of the town and provide for an increased number of local jobs.

RPO 4.35: A cross boundary Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) shall be prepared by Kildare County Council and Meath County Council to provide a co-ordinated planning framework for the Maynooth area. The Joint LAP shall identify a boundary for the plan area, strategic housing and employment development areas and infrastructure investment requirements and promote greater co-ordination and sequential delivery of serviced lands for development.

RPO 4.36: To promote the consolidation of the town centre with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites and the establishment of residential uses to encourage greater vibrancy outside of business hours and the enhancement of the public realm.



Bray

Bray is the largest town in County Wicklow, with a population of 32,600 in 2016, and strategically located at the eastern gateway to the County, with access to the N/M11 corridor (including M50), DART/rail line and quality bus service. It is a strong active town that provides higher order services, including tertiary education, health, cultural and leisure facilities and is a major retail and shopping destination, attracting people from the surrounding towns and villages. While many residents commute to Dublin, there is potential to provide for significant local employment growth for both its residents and its extensive surrounding catchment. Bray is a visitor and tourism destination benefitting from its natural setting on the coast with the backdrop of the Wicklow Mountains.

Bray is located in the Dublin Metropolitan Area and is included in the MASP (see Chapter 5 MASP) and is located as a key node on the North-South (DART) corridor.

Regeneration:

There is significant potential for new development in the established town centre and built up area, particularly since the completion of the River Dargle Flood Defence Scheme. The former Bray Golf course and Harbour Lands are designated for high density new mixed-use development with improved town centre functions, which will be significantly enhanced through the construction of the Florentine Centre on the Main Street along with the development of the seafront. Bray is well located for tourist access to the Wicklow mountains and with attractions such as Bray Seafront, the Bray-Greystones Cliff Walk, Bray Head, Bray Sea Life centre and Kilruddery House.

Residential Development:

Population growth in Bray has been modest compared to other settlements as expansion of the town is constrained by the coast to the east, Bray Head/Sugarloaf mountains to the south and the N/M11 to the east. In order for Bray to fulfill its growth potential, lands at Fassaroe to the west of the N/M11 are targeted for new housing, employment and major community and sports facilities, along with development of lands at Old Connaught (Conna)-Fassaroe, which are within Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. The delivery of new mixed-use development of Bray Golf course and Harbour Lands will provide for consolidation within the established town.

Economic Development:

Bray has a highly concentrated and diversified employment base and provides employment for its residents and surrounding towns as far as Wicklow, Arklow and Gorey. Due to Ardmore Studios, the town has been at the centre of the Irish Film Industry for 60 years. The town aims to attract major employment generating investment in the retail, services and industrial sectors with a particular focus on promoting Bray as a destination for high value investment in people-based industries, at accessible locations to public transport. There is also scope for employment growth at Fassaroe to improve the local employment base in Bray.

Enabling infrastructure:

Bray has access to high quality public transport including DART services and is at the terminus of the proposed Luas Green Line extension, with excellent potential to promote sustainable mobility and achieve the vision of 'walkable' communities. The development of a new centre at Fassaroe is largely dependent on the delivery of transportation infrastructure including upgrades to the N/M11 and the delivery of high-quality public transport connections to Bray. The development of Bray-Fassaroe should be undertaken in collaboration between Wicklow County Council, Dún Laoghaire- Rathdown County Council and the transport agencies to ensure the delivery of roads and public transportation infrastructure to support the westward expansion of the town.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Bray Key Town

RPO 4.37: Support the continued development of Bray including the enhancement of town centre functions, development of major schemes at the former Bray golf course and Bray harbour, along with increased employment opportunities and co-ordination between Wicklow County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, and the transport agencies to facilitate the delivery of key infrastructure required for the westward extension of the town, including Bray-Fassaroe public transport links and road improvements.

RPO 4.38: Support the development of Bray as a strategic employment location with a particular focus on attracting high value investment in 'people' based industries at accessible locations, in order to increase the number of local jobs.

RPO 4.39: To promote the consolidation of the town centre with a focus on placemaking and the regeneration of strategic sites to provide for enhanced town centre functions and public realm, in order to increase Bray's attractiveness as a place to live, work, visit and invest in.

RPO 4.40: To support ongoing investment in public transport infrastructure, including the appraisal, planning and design of the LUAS extension to Bray. The development of Bray-Fassaroe should be undertaken in collaboration between Wicklow County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and the transport agencies to ensure the delivery of enabling transportation infrastructure and services.

RPO 4.41: Encourage transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes through the promotion of alternative modes of transport and 'walkable communities' whereby a range of facilities and services will be accessible within short walking or cycling distance.

CORE REGION KEY TOWNS

The Key Towns of Navan, Naas and Wicklow-Rathnew are located within the Core Region and are important within a regional and county context. These towns have capacity and future growth potential to accommodate above average growth coupled with the requisite investment in employment creation, services, amenities and sustainable transport.



Navan

Navan is a key town located in the Core Region, functioning as a dynamic urban centre and the focal point for the economic, cultural and social development of County Meath. It is one of the Country's fastest growing towns, with a young and diverse population of over 30,000 people in 2016. Navan is located on the M3 corridor and is well served by a local and regional public transport bus service including a frequent express service to Dublin. As the County Town, Navan acts as a key employment centre with potential to further strengthen the retail, employment and service functions of the town through the consolidation and expansion of the town centre along with new strategic development areas, and to improve connectivity, sustainable transport and public realm.

Regeneration:

In addition to economic growth, there is also a need to create a modern and attractive urban environment in Navan. This will be delivered through the implementation of the Public Realm Strategy 'Navan 2030' and the Active Land Management Strategy for the town. The funding recently allocated to Navan through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund will assist in the rejuvenation of the urban core and built fabric of the town including the Flowerhill and Railway Street Regeneration Projects. Key parts of the town that have suffered from under-investment and have high levels of vacancy will be targeted for renewal and regeneration. This will make town centre living a more attractive option, will improve vibrancy in the urban core, and will assist in the creation of a more compact settlement.

Residential Development:

Navan has a compact and walkable town centre surrounded by residential areas. The consolidation of residential development proximate to social and community infrastructure will be promoted. The sustainable development of vacant residential and regeneration sites in the town centre in conjunction with the implementation of the public realm and movement plan 'Navan 2030' will assist in reinvigorating the urban core of the town and making it a location of choice to live and do business. Navan has a number of strategic sites including the former County Council Offices at Railway Street, which are located in a key position between the cultural quarter, the town centre to the north, which has potential for mixed use development, and the town expansion area to the south, which has also been identified as the preferred location for a future train station. Other strategic lands include a residential Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) at Clonmagadden and a development opportunity at Farganstown. The LIHAF funded link road at Farganstown will facilitate the creation of a 'live-work' community at this location.

Economic Development:

Navan is the primary centre of employment in the County with a range of retail and services including two retail parks, an acute hospital, health centres, court service and a number of primary and post primary schools. Whilst the industrial and business parks in the town are performing well, outbound commuting for employment remains an issue. Navan is promoted as a strategic centre for employment in the County to address this issue and improve the ratio of jobs to resident workers. There are a number of industrial estates, including an IDA Business and Technology Park providing employment in sectors such as manufacturing, logistics, medical devices, services and communication. In addition, the Boyne Valley Food Hub, with approved state funding, aims to develop an innovation-rich enterprise support system in Navan to intensify growth of food and drink entrepreneurs. The continued success of Navan Enterprise Centre illustrates the growing demand for workspaces by entrepreneurs, start-ups and established businesses. The planned consolidation and expansion of existing business parks along with the town centre offers an opportunity to broaden the employment base while the delivery of a distributor road at Farganstown has potential to attract new investment in high quality intensive employment uses. Strategic lands are also reserved for the future development of a Regional Hospital for the north east of the country. The future re-development of Páirc Táilteann will be an important economic, sporting and cultural asset for the County and the Region and is significant in the context of Navan 2030 and the vision of an enhanced town centre.

Enabling infrastructure:

Navan is strategically located on the M3 to Dublin with national road connections to Drogheda and Mullingar. Planned infrastructure upgrades include the delivery of the LIHAF funded distributor road at Farganstown, a link road between the Dublin and Trim Roads and a new road and Blackwater bridge linking the SDZ lands at Clonmagadden, along with a new bridge over the Boyne and the southwestern section of the Navan outer orbital subject to feasibility. There is potential to improve public transport as part of the delivery of Phase 2 of Navan Rail project, subject to feasibility and for further investment in walking and cycling both in the town and regionally. The provision of additional road capacity around the town offers an opportunity for improved public transport, walking and cycling networks, through relocation of road space within the town. The confluence of the Rivers Boyne and Blackwater in the town offer potential to improve amenity and recreational use including the further development of the Boyne and Navan Greenways.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Navan Key Town

RPO 4.42: Support the delivery of road infrastructure to release strategic residential and employment lands for sustainable development and to improve connectivity and the efficient movement of people and services in the town.

RPO 4.43: Support the implementation of the Public Realm Plan 'Navan 2030' to make the town a more attractive place to live, shop, visit, and do business.

RPO 4.44: Support development of a regional hospital to serve the north east of the country.

RPO 4.45: Support the extension of the Boyne Greenway to include Navan to promote sustainable transport choices and as a recreation asset for the town, subject to the outcome of the planning process and environmental assessments.

RPO 4.46: Key Towns shall act as economic drivers and provide for strategic employment locations to improve their economic base by increasing the ratio of jobs to workers.

RPO 4.47 : Support the development of strategic employment lands on the Trim Rd in Navan, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.



Naas

Naas is a Key Town located in the Core Region, well served by the M7 motorway with good road connections to the rest of the Country and a commuter rail service to Dublin. Naas has a population of 21,597 people in 2016 with a highly skilled workforce and plays a key role as a County Town in providing employment and services for a wide catchment. There are strong links between Naas and the nearby settlements of Sallins and Newbridge, with a strong interrelationship of services, employment and education between Naas and Newbridge. There is potential to capitalise on the significant infrastructure investment which has taken place in Naas, to further strengthen the local employment base, promote regeneration and consolidation of the town centre and surrounding residential and employment areas, with improved permeability and sustainable transport links and to build on assets including the historic centre, Naas Racecourse and Grand Canal.

Regeneration:

A key priority for Naas is the regeneration of the historic town centre with enhancement of retail and commercial functions and consolidation of strategic development areas including the Castle Quarter, Devoy Quarter, Corban's Lane and the Canal Quarter, along with the further development of Millennium Park in the Northwest Quadrant and regeneration of industrial lands in the north east of the town. The regeneration by the adaptive re-use of existing buildings, the sensitive infill of vacant sites and the creation of new urban form will be promoted as part of the core regeneration areas. There is also a need to improve pedestrian permeability and connectivity within the town centre and linking to surrounding residential and employment areas with peripheral development at Monread in particular, to Sallins-Naas Railway Station.

Residential Development:

There is a need to redress past legacies of rapid housing growth to ensure the delivery of further appropriately and easily accessible social, education, recreation, sports and amenity spaces to ensure that facilities grow to meet the needs of the increasing population and keep pace with development. The sustainable growth of Naas should be carefully managed to promote the concept of a compact town by encouraging appropriate densities in suitable locations and by resisting sporadic isolated developments which do not integrate with the surrounding urban fabric. Promoting placemaking and more mixed tenure and the delivery of lifetime adaptable homes that can accommodate the changing needs of a household over time should be encouraged thereby helping to create integrated communities.

Economic Development:

Naas has a high jobs ratio providing a large employment base for resident workers and attracting inward commuting from a wide catchment of north Kildare and west Wicklow. The regeneration of the town centre along with the opening of Corban's Lane Shopping Centre positions Naas to provide significant retail and commercial functions. The local employment base will be strengthened through the development of the Mid Eastern Region Innovation Think Space (MERITS) extending and enhancing the technology environment in the region. There is also potential for high-quality high-density indigenous and Foreign Direct Investment within the Millennium Park in the Northwest Quadrant and for re-intensification of industrial lands in the north east of the town. Naas is well serviced in terms of healthcare with Naas General Hospital, Vista Primary Care Centre and Enable Ireland Kildare Children's Services while McAuley Place provides alternative residential and social care for older people in the town. Historic assets include the historic centre, St. David's Castle, Leinster Mills and Jigginstown Castle.

Enabling Infrastructure:

Naas is bound by the M7 motorway and has high levels of car dependency, congestion and commuting to Dublin along with a strong interrelationship of services, employment and education between the settlements of Naas, Sallins and Newbridge. Naas has a high level of internal trips, however further investment is needed in public transport and active travel connections within the town linking residential areas and the Northwest Quadrant to Sallins-Naas railway station. The Naas Branch of the Grand Canal runs southwards from Sallins to the canal harbour in the heart of the town and then branching off to Corbally Harbour. There is potential to develop the amenity, recreation and sustainable transport potential of the canal including the development of greenways from Naas to Sallins and Corbally Harbour and linking to the cross regional Grand Canal Greenway. Through targeted investment, the town can achieve a walkable and cycle friendly connected environment underpinned by a sustainable transport network. The delivery of new and enhanced public transport infrastructure in Naas and Sallins including Park and Ride and Interchange facilities will be supported as identified by the NTA and Kildare County Council.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Naas Key Town

RPO 4.48: Promote the improvement of the transport network within and serving Naas town, including delivery of a robust and efficient walking, cycling and bus network with strong links to Sallins Railway Station, key destinations within the town and to the North West Quadrant and town centre area.

RPO 4.49: Support the development of the Grand Canal for amenity, recreation and sustainable transport purposes including the Naas to Sallins and Naas to Corbally harbour greenways and linking these to the national Grand Canal Greenway.

RPO 4.50: Regeneration and consolidation of the historic centre to improve the retail and commercial functions of the town core, with enhanced permeability and sustainable mobility within the town centre and improve links between the core and surrounding residential and employment areas through the further development of walking and cycling routes and improved public transport.

RPO 4.51: Strengthen the local employment base including through the development of MERITS, Millennium Park in the North West Quadrant and the regeneration of underutilised lands including industrial lands in the north east of the town.

RPO 4.52: Support the delivery of new and enhanced public transport infrastructure in Naas and Sallins, including Park and Ride and interchange facilities as identified by the NTA and Kildare County Council.

RPO 4.53: Support an enhanced role and function of Naas as the County town of Kildare, particularly as a hub for high quality employment, residential and amenities.



Wicklow – Rathnew

Wicklow-Rathnew includes both the Ccounty Town of Wicklow and the town of Rathnew, with a combined population of c. 14,000 people in 2016 and is a key settlement within the Core Region. It has a strategically important location on the M/N11 and rail corridor, and at the centre point of the coastal area of the County. Wicklow has an important position as the County Town, providing higher order services and facilities for the residents and its catchment. Rathnew has a distinct identity and functions as a local service centre for its local community. Key priorities are to strengthen the local employment base, improve sustainable transport and promote compact growth with a focus on regeneration, development of the port and harbour area, and to expand Wicklow-Rathnew's role as a hub for tourism, training and education.

Regeneration:

Key regeneration opportunities include the development of Wicklow Port and Harbour, served by the port access road, to expand commercial berthing and pleasure craft capacity subject to feasibility and protection of European Sites such as the Murrough, a coastal wetland which is popular with walkers with views of the town and coastline. There are opportunities for the densification and enhancement of residential and retail uses in the two town centres of Wicklow and Rathnew and to improve pedestrian mobility and connectivity. There is also potential for further development of the Wicklow County Campus as a third level education facility for enterprise, education, training, research and development.

Residential Development:

Wicklow Town – Rathnew enjoys rail and road access to Dublin City and the wider region, and an abundance of recreational amenities close by including the coast, the harbour and the Wicklow Mountains; as a result there is a high demand for housing in this settlement. Redevelopment and opportunity sites within the core areas of Wicklow-Rathnew will be promoted in the first instance for new residential development, with sites close to transport infrastructure, recreational and education amenities and employment being prioritised thereafter.

Economic Development:

Wicklow-Rathnew is a major employment hub, with a strong employment base attracting inflows of workers from around the County. The largest sectors in the settlement are commerce, manufacturing and education/ health/ public administration. There are a number of active business and industrial parks, with potential for expansion, as well as a supply of undeveloped zoned employment land available for growth. Wicklow Town plays a significant role in the provision of administrative services, delivering the functions of local government from Wicklow County Council, the provision of tertiary educational facilities at the Wicklow County Campus at Rathnew (in conjunction with Carlow IT) and higher order health facilities at Knockrobin Primary Health Centre. The settlement aims to capitalise on its existing assets such as the commercial port, a third level college campus at Rathnew-Clermont, as well as its location on the M/N11 corridor. There is potential for the town centre to strengthen and promote economic development associated with retail and commerce, the expansion of port and harbour activities and the nearby Ashford Studios. Wicklow Port is home to commercial businesses and fishing as well as providing an important leisure amenity with tourism potential. Wicklow Port is well positioned to become a hub for the service of the off-shore wind energy sector in particular. Wicklow has a long maritime tradition with leisure events such as the Wicklow Regatta and the Round Ireland Yacht race which starts and ends in Wicklow Port. There is potential to develop Wicklow-Rathnew as a recreation and tourism hub due to its attractive coastal location and its proximity to key destinations such as the Wicklow Mountains, Glendalough and Brittas Bay and the key attractions within the town including the Wicklow Gaol, the Murrough, coastal walks, beaches, architectural heritage, sports facilities and as a terminus of the planned Greystones – Wicklow Coastal Route. Wicklow is also situated between the protected conservation sites of the Murrough cSAC/SPA and Wicklow Head SPA. While the ecological protection of these sites is a priority, there is potential to expand the range of recreational and tourist facilities associated with its coastal location.

Enabling Infrastructure:

Wicklow-Rathnew has high levels of car-based commuting to Dublin with issues in relation to public transport capacity, particularly rail, and traffic congestion on the M/N11. Significant investment has occurred with construction of the port access and town relief roads and a new wastewater treatment plan, with planned infrastructure upgrades on the M11 from the M50 to Kilmacanogue. While there are good pedestrian and cycling facilities on new roads, there is potential for further investment in walking and cycling within the town and to enhance connections to surrounding urban centres and regional trails. There is potential to improve sustainable mobility through the enhancement of bus and rail services. Public transport improvements would improve the accessibility of Wicklow-Rathnew to Dublin and the wider area, and would likely contribute to population and economic growth.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Wicklow-Rathnew Key Town

RPO 4.54: Support an enhanced role and function of Wicklow-Rathnew as the County Town, particularly as a hub for employment, training and education.

RPO 4.55: Support Wicklow-Rathnew's role in the provision of third level education at the Wicklow County Campus Rathnew (in association with Institute of Technology Carlow) and in particular, to support the development of the campus as a hub for the Film Industry and Screen Content Creation Sector.

RPO 4.56: Support enhancement and expansion of Wicklow Port and Harbour, to expand commercial berthing and pleasure craft capacity subject to a feasibility study with particular focus on avoiding adverse impacts on the integrity of adjacent European Sites.

RPO 4.57: Support the development of Wicklow-Rathnew as a tourism hub having regard to its accessibility to key tourist destinations in the Region.

RPO: 4.58: To support ongoing investment in rail infrastructure to ensure its continued renewal, maintenance and improvement to a high level to ensure high quality of frequency, safety, service, accessibility and connectivity.

GATEWAY REGION KEY TOWNS

Longford Town, Mullingar, Tullamore, Portlaoise and Graiguecullen (Carlow), are large economically active towns located within the Gateway Region. These towns provide important connections with adjoining regions and have the capacity and future growth potential to accommodate above average growth in tandem with the requisite investment in employment creation, services, amenities and sustainable transport.



Longford

The County Town of Longford, is strategically located on the N4/M4 motorway and the Dublin to Sligo rail line, acting as a portal to the Northern and Western Region and providing a supporting role to the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone.

Longford acts as a key employment centre with strong retail, administrative and service functions that serve a wide catchment. The town has a young, diverse and growing population of 10,000 people and a growth rate of 13% in the ten years to 2016. Key priorities are to promote compact growth, the regeneration of the town centre and to expand Longford's role as a hub for enterprise, employment and tourism.

Regeneration:

Longford Town has a number of strategic areas that can act as regenerative catalysts increasing the residential, economic and leisure potential of the town centre, whilst also addressing vacancy, derelict buildings and enhancing the vibrancy of the town. Key areas include the Camlin Quarter and Ballyminion Areas with further strategic sites throughout, including possibilities within the southern quarter of the town. The Longford Flood Relief Scheme will address flood considerations and support appropriate use of riverside locations. There are opportunities for improved links between both ends of the town and enhanced rejuvenation of, and connections between, the Royal Canal Greenway and the former location of the canal harbour around the Market Square.

Residential Development:

The delivery of housing in Longford Town is essential to support the overall role and success of the settlement. A key focus for the settlement is to encourage the provision of high quality housing development at the right locations over the coming years in order to ensure wider societal benefits and the sustainability and enhancement of facilities such as schools, shops, recreation facilities and open spaces. Central to this is the requirement to provide high quality housing products that meet a variety of housing needs, including those required by employees of existing and potential industry and enterprises within the town.

Economic Development:

The town has a particularly high ratio of jobs to resident workers with significant in-commuting and employment in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, pharma and agri-food. The planned development of a creative and innovation hub and co-working space on the Main Street offers a further opportunity to drive enterprise development and entrepreneurship in the town. There is also potential to build on significant investment in the nearby flagship Centre Parcs holiday village and the investment by the local authority in tourism and recreational infrastructure. The Upper Shannon Erne Future Economic Project, which is a collaboration between the Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon local authorities with ESB and Bord na Móna, provides the opportunity to deliver cross regional economic projects.

Services and Amenities:

Longford has a rich cultural heritage with potential to develop as a recreation and tourism hub, building on its proximity to attractions such as Centre Parcs, the Royal Canal, The Dublin-Westport Greenway and Mid Shannon Wilderness Park and key assets within the town such as St Mel's Cathedral, the River Camlin, a theatre and walking routes such as the Rebel Trail and Literary Trail. Social inclusion will be key to supporting greater participation in local community and economic development and to addressing higher levels of unemployment and relative deprivation in the town.

Enabling infrastructure:

Longford is strategically located on the N4/M4 from Dublin to Sligo, with national roads including the N55 to Athlone, N5 to Castlebar and N63 to Roscommon. Planned infrastructure upgrades include the N4 from Mullingar to Carrick-on-Shannon and there is further potential to provide for enhanced rail service on the Sligo rail line and improve connections to Athlone. Potential exists to stimulate economic development through the provision of broadband and natural gas within the town. Delivering on Longford's walking and cycling strategy will improve sustainable travel and provide links to national and cross regional walking and cycling trails.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Longford Key Town

RPO 4.59: To enhance accessibility and sustainable mobility within the town centre by improving links between the core and surrounding areas through the further integration of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.

RPO 4.60: Support the development of Longford as a tourism hub having regard to its accessibility to key tourist destinations in the Region including Center Parcs, and proximity to natural amenities, recreational opportunities and the town's location on the Rebel Longford Trail.

RPO 4.61: Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development and measures to improve educational attainment levels, up skilling in key competencies and skills acquisition.

RPO 4.62: Support the plan-led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in the town for residential, employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities and the consolidation of the town centre and the enhancement and linking of brownfield and outlying sites to the town centre, with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites.

RPO 4.63: Support Longford Town as a strategic portal to the northwest and south in recognition of its location at the junction of the N55; M4/N4 Dublin/Sligo and N5; due to its proximity to the regional growth centre of Athlone; and support its role as a strategic employment centre.



Mullingar

The town of Mullingar, with a population of 20,928 in 2016 is located on the Dublin to Sligo rail line and M4 motorway, provides an essential role in supporting population and job growth and in this regard acts as a crucial centre for the surrounding hinterland.

The advancement of Mullingar includes the promotion of economic development and employment creation; support for the development of the town's assets in built and natural heritage; encourages the continued investment in arts, culture and outdoor recreational activities including walking, cycling, fishing, boating, eventing and sports; and provides for the continued development of the tourist economy.

Regeneration:

The consolidation and regeneration of Mullingar is a key priority to support the overall role and function of the town. Strategic sites that provide opportunity include Columb Barracks and St. Loman's as major opportunity sites and the town centre sites of Blackhall, Grove Street, the Harbour Street Car Park and the Dunnes Stores Car Park. The promotion of town centre enhancements and public realm improvements will contribute to the sustainability of the town centre and improve opportunities for sustainable transport choices.

Residential Development:

The provision of housing plays a fundamental role in the overall economic, social and environmental success of the settlement. It is essential to ensure an effective supply of land for the provision of housing and that high quality development is secured in the right place at the right time. A range of well-designed housing types that meet the needs of a variety of households will help to sustain and enhance the settlement, contributing to the creation of a high quality place.

Economic Development:

Mullingar operates as a strong economic driver covering a relatively wide catchment, with opportunity to capitalise upon and augment the high ratio of jobs to resident workers. The economic role of Mullingar can be supported through mechanisms such as realising the potential of the existing IDA presence and property, advance development of high quality enterprise and employment zones including existing business parks; and support and promotion within sectors such as engineering and ICT, consumer products, financial services, shared services (multi-lingual), R&D, robotics and advanced manufacturing. Recognition of the settlement's potential for tourism and eventing is also supported.

Services and Amenities:

Mullingar has a rich built heritage in keeping with its historic commercial importance as a market town. It has significant protected structures and six architectural conservation areas. Mulingar also has significant amenity resources. The Royal Canal is a significant amenity and resource for the town as are Lough Ennell and Lough Owel. The Royal Canal Greenway from Spencer Dock through Maynooth and on to Mullingar has the potential to support recreational tourism and may provide a link into the Dublin to Galway Eurovelo route. The Old Rail Trail between Athlone and Mullingar is a considerable greenway asset. The greenway from Mullingar to Lough Owel is nearing completion and it is intended to extend this to Lough Ennell. Other visitor attractions in proximity to Mullingar that can be built upon include Belvedere House and Gardens.

Enabling infrastructure:

Mullingar is strategically located on the N4/M4 from Dublin to Sligo, with a national road the N55 to Athlone in proximity. Planned infrastructure upgrades include the N4 from Mullingar to Longford and there is further potential to provide for an enhanced rail service on the Sligo rail line. The RSES supports the preparation of a Local Transport Plan for Mullingar.

Significant Government spending in recent years has seen the Mullingar Main Drainage Scheme upgraded at a cost of €39m. Water supply to the town is currently sourced from Lough Owel, but in the long-term will be provided by the South Westmeath Scheme which will provide an interconnector between Athlone and Mullingar or through connection to a feeder from the Dublin Water Supply Scheme. The RSES promotes maximising return on existing and planned infrastructural investments in keeping with Mullingar's role as a Key Town and County Town for Westmeath.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Mullingar Key Town

RPO 4.64: Support Mullingar's role as a tourism hub having regard to its accessibility to key tourist destinations in the Region including proximity to natural amenities and recreational opportunities including the Galway to Dublin Greenway.

RPO 4.65: Promote the plan led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in the town for employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities and to support the economic development and regeneration of the town centre.

RPO 4.66: Support the development and expansion of the Midlands Regional Hospital including any necessary supporting infrastructure.

RPO 4.67: Support Mullingar's role as an important employment hub by promoting economic development and clustering of related enterprises.



Tullamore

Tullamore acts as a key population and employment centre for the surrounding hinterland. It is located on the Dublin to Galway rail line, in close proximity to the M6 Dublin/Galway Motorway with the N80 and N52 providing important and essential intra-regional linkages to motorways, the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone and key towns of Portlaoise, Mullingar and Longford. Flanked by the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the south and Lough Boora Discovery Park to the west, which is to be connected by a greenway along the Grand Canal by 2020, the town offers significant quality of life advantages. The town has a high ratio of jobs to resident workers, reflecting its role as an employment centre and the extent of its area of influence. Continued employment and population growth coupled with placemaking and regeneration are key priorities for the settlement.

Regeneration:

Tullamore has a number of opportunity sites supporting regeneration and redevelopment, focusing on compact growth, place making and transition to a low carbon society/ economy. Key sites include the Grand Canal Harbour, the former 'Texas' site, Tanyard and former 'Carrolls' site, former 'Coens' site and the railway node. The redevelopment of the Grand Canal Harbour has potential for enterprise, recreation, residential, public realm and tourism related development.

Residential Development:

Relevant to the delivery of housing in Tullamore is support for a range of housing types which are well designed with consideration to tenures and density, integrated green infrastructure, active travel links and renewable energy options. The provision of housing at the right locations will play a fundamental role in the overall economic, social and environmental success of the settlement.

Economic Development:

The further development of the med-tech cluster centred on the IDA business park in Srah provides opportunity to drive development within the town. Opportunity also exists for the town, and indeed County, in light of the existing industry based on energy supply to provide a centre of excellence related to energy retrofitting. Economic development in particular that compensates for the loss of employment in the peat production business, with particular reference to the rural communities which were founded and supported by this industry since the 1930s, will be supported. Tullamore Regional Hospital also provides the potential for linkages to existing and new med-tech businesses and research. Desirable economic investment for Tullamore would be in the form of green jobs and green technologies, innovation, digital technologies, circular bioeconomy, food & beverage (in particular its distilling heritage), advanced manufacturing, tourism, recreation & amenity and high quality town centre retail development. A continued emphasis on placemaking is required in order to attract inward investment and expansion of existing businesses.

Services and Amenities:

Tullamore has a rich cultural heritage with potential to develop as a recreation and tourism hub, building on its proximity to attractions such as the Grand Canal Greenways, Blueways and Lough Boora Discovery Park, Charleville Castle Demesne, Durrow High Cross, peatways, the planned Midlands Cycle Destination – Offaly and the Slieve Bloom Mountains, including the national mountain bike trail (MTB) centre. The shared vision document, Spirit Level - Lough Ree and the Mid-Shannon and the Shannon Masterplan represents an indication of the potential for green and blue tourism in the wider area. The presence of the Tullamore Dew visitor centre, particularly in the context of the potential linkages to the development of 'Whiskey Trails' throughout the Region and beyond, represents a further area for development.

Enabling infrastructure:

The enhancement of Tullamore's accessibility as a key node between the M4/6 and M7 motorways is important. The improvement of capacity and journey times on the N80, N52/N62 National secondary routes and the R420 to the M7 and the R402 to the M4 will enable greater intra-regional connectivity and improve the cohesiveness of the Midland area. Furthermore, the R420 Tullamore to Monasterevin and R402 Edenderry to Enfield roads perform functions akin to National Secondary Routes, supporting Tullamore's linkages to other Key Towns and the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone and these should be considered for upgraded status in the future.

An upgrade to the wastewater network is required to enable the future development of the town. Irish Water have completed a Drainage Area Plan of the town, which will be used to inform proposals into the future.

Improved walking and cycling permeability together with the provisions of green and blue infrastructure, through enhancing linkages and connectivity, will enable the further development of tourism opportunities, particularly for the Shannon Area, thus augmenting economic opportunity.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Tullamore Key Town

RPO 4.68: Support Tullamore's role as a tourism hub and development as a Tourism Destination Town having particular regard to its distilling heritage and industry and accessibility to key tourist destinations, natural amenities and recreational opportunities including the Grand Canal Greenways, Lough Boora Discovery Park, Slieve Bloom Mountains and peatlands. This is coupled with support for Tullamore as a service hub for the 'Midlands Cycle destination – Offaly' and the recognition of the settlement's potential as a conferencing and event hub, given the town's central location, accessibility and experience of event provision.

RPO 4.69: Support the role of Tullamore as a major employment centre with key assets being its existing positive jobs to resident employee ratio, excellent quality of life and future strategic development sites, with support for the provision of enabling and facilitative infrastructural development to complement this role.

RPO 4.70: To examine the need for complementary third level outreach educational facilities at Tullamore, particularly with regard to support for Tullamore Regional Hospital and where appropriate, its continued development as a Teaching/University Hospital, together with potential for linkages to existing and new med-tech businesses and research facilities.



Portlaoise

Portlaoise is a strategically located settlement that provides important inter-regional links to the south and south-west, maximising its situation on the Dublin to Cork/ Limerick rail line and M7/M8 Motorway. Likewise, the N80 provides an essential link accessing Carlow, Waterford and Rosslare to the southeast and Tullamore, Mullingar and Athlone to the northwest.

Job creation and the facilitation of economic development are central priorities for the settlement over the coming years, in order to support the significant population growth levels experienced and recognition that the settlement was one of the fastest growing towns between 1996 and 2016. In tandem with this, the sustainability, vitality and vibrancy of the settlement can be enriched through a major focus on the regeneration of the town centre, balancing and consolidating housing and retail development located adjoining the town core. The NPF has identified the need for a self-sustaining and community driven renewal and regeneration project for the town as a demonstration project to be part funded under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.

Regeneration:

The regeneration of the town comprises a number of opportunity sites including James Fintan Lalor Avenue, Lyster Square and laneways connection with the Main Street, Fort Protector and Fitzmaurice Place, Schools site and the former Bank of Ireland Branch/Prison Officer's Club. "2040 and Beyond – A Vision for Portlaoise, A strategy for a Better Town Centre" completed in 2017 sets out principles and a programme of regeneration of the town.

The Portlaoise Regeneration Demonstration Project aims to focus on regenerating the original town centre with a view to the creation of a place that people want to live and spend time in. It is anticipated that this will be a demonstrator project to show how the best quality planning, urban design and implementation can create rejuvenated towns, tied with opportunity to become a 'Low Carbon Town Centre' through reducing the impacts of the car on the public realm and improving the mix of uses within the town centre.

Residential Development:

Over the coming years focus will be on proactively encouraging housing delivery in a sustainable manner that acknowledges economic and market conditions, whilst ensuring housing need is met including the housing needs of younger people, families, private renters and the ageing population. The provision of a mixture of well-designed housing types at appropriate locations will facilitate and contribute to the ongoing regeneration, consolidation and renewal of the town.

A number of opportunity sites offer potential to deliver consolidated residential development over the short, medium and long term, such as the Maltings Site on Mountmellick Road, Centrepoint Site on the Mountrath Road, and the former Schools sites within the town centre.

Economic Development:

Portlaoise has a strong economic base, significant talent and success spread across various sectors including the Global Business and ICT Service sectors, agri-business sector and the public services sector. This has attracted internationally renowned companies and provides a solid foundation for economic growth and employment into the future.

The J17 National Enterprise Park (formerly Togher Inland Port) is a c. 121 hectare site located to the southwest of Portlaoise town centre. It is bounded by the M7 motorway and includes the existing IDA Park on the Mountrath Road. This area has significant potential for the development of the economic base of Portlaoise. A masterplan prepared in 2018 sets out to achieve objectives which will contribute to the future prosperity of Portlaoise and will facilitate industrial, commercial and enterprise developments having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, that includes environmental and transportation requirements.

Services and Aamenities:

Portlaoise has a rich architectural heritage with the town centre designated as an Architectural Conservation Area. Portlaoise was successful in obtaining funding through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund for a new Cultural Quarter, focusing on landmark buildings such as the Fort Protector and Old St. Peter's Church.

In terms of natural heritage the development of the River Triogue Blueway will be a considerable amenity and tourism resource for the town, linking the People's Park in the south to the Linear Park in the north. The accessibility of the Slieve Bloom Mountains from Portlaoise is also a key asset.

The Midland Regional Hospital at Portlaoise is an acute hospital that serves the catchment areas of Laois, Offaly, Kildare, Carlow and Tipperary.

Enabling Infrastructure:

Given the strategic location of Portlaoise, the maintenance and upgrading, where appropriate, of transport links are required to enhance connectivity within and beyond the region, facilitate economic potential and enhance quality of life. This includes the motorway network, as Portlaoise benefits from direct access via two Junctions onto the M7 namely junctions 16 and 17, and the national road networks including the N77 and N80 routes.

The service provided by the Dublin-Cork rail line is required within the settlement and provides regular daily services to Cork, Killarney and Limerick to the south and Dublin to the north. High frequency commuter trains to and from Dublin, during morning and evening peaks, offer an important sustainable transport option for people within the settlement.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Portlaoise Key Town

RPO 4.71: Support delivery of the Portlaoise Regeneration and Development Demonstration Project and assist the local authority in seeking funding opportunities for delivery of regeneration development.

RPO 4.72: Support transition of Portlaoise to a low carbon town centre by reducing car use and promoting walking and cycling and improving the mix of uses within the town centre.

RPO 4.73: Support the vision and objectives of the J17 National Enterprise Park Masterplan, where appropriate, which aims to deliver a viable economic zone within Portlaoise which will accommodate a range of potential businesses and industries whilst having regard to spatial planning, infrastructural, environmental and transportation requirements and compatibility with adjoining land uses. This is subject to compliance with the requirements of the SEA, Habitats and Floods Directive.

RPO 4.74: Support the development and expansion of the Midlands Regional Hospital at Portlaoise.

Graiguecullen – Carlow

Whilst Carlow is largely located within the Southern Regional Assembly's functional area, part of the town around Graiguecullen is located within County Laois and so within the functional area of the EMRA.

In order to enhance co-ordination of development in Carlow where the town and its environs lie within the combined functional area of two local authorities, the preparation and adoption of a joint local area plan shall be a priority for Carlow County Council and Laois County Council to provide a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas so that a minimum of 30% compact growth can be achieved. This requires a focused approach and coordinated action amongst local authorities and other agencies. The distribution of population between the two local authorities should be decided by both local authorities in the joint local area plan and this distribution should be commensurate with existing population levels.

Carlow is home to two well established institutions, the Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC) and Carlow College (St. Patrick's), both of which have substantial links with the surrounding regions.

Population targets apply for settlements in the first instance and then are to be prescribed for each county within the context of the revised Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow- Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012 -2018.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Graiguecullen – Carlow Key Town

RPO 4.75: A cross-boundary Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) shall be prepared for Carlow by Carlow County Council and Laois County Council having regard to its location within the combined functional area of both local authorities. The Joint LAP shall provide a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas for the future physical, economic and social development of Carlow/Graiguecullen to ensure it achieves targeted compact growth of a minimum of 30% and ensure a co-ordinated approach is taken to the future growth and development of the combined urban area, ensuring that it has the capacity to grow sustainably and secure investment as a Key Town. The Joint LAP shall identify a boundary for the plan area and strategic housing and employment development areas and infrastructure investment requirements to promote greater co-ordination and sequential delivery of serviced lands for development. Regard shall be had to the respective housing, retail and other local authority strategies that may be in place.

RPO 4.76: Support the sustainable development of environmentally sensitive, low intensity amenity development associated with the Barrow Blueway subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive and Floods Directive.

4.7 Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns

Supporting the regional driver role of Key Towns, Self-Sustaining Growth Towns and Self-Sustaining Towns, are settlements that act as regionally important local drivers providing a range of functions for their resident population and their surrounding catchments including housing, local employment, services, retail and leisure opportunities. It is important to acknowledge the variation of function that exists at this settlement level, with some towns operating as commuter towns whilst others function more sustainably.

Table 4.2 sets out a settlement typology for towns in our region, based not just on scale but also considering the role and function of those settlements. Development plans should identify an appropriate settlement hierarchy and growth rates within their core strategies, based on their unique assets and growth potential within the city or county context and having regard to Table 4.2 and the Asset Based Approach outlined in Chapter 3 Growth Strategy.

It will be crucial to promote activity in towns that support local and surrounding urban and rural populations through good connectivity, support for economic development and regeneration opportunities, strengthening communities (including rural communities) across our region, in line with Regional Strategic Outcomes 2 and 3 of the RSES.

Self-Sustaining Growth Towns

Self-Sustaining Growth Towns are towns that contain a reasonable level of jobs and services which adequately caters for the people of its service catchment. This may include sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links, which have capacity for continued commensurate growth.

Towns in the Dublin Metropolitan Area and Core Region tend to have experienced strong commuter focussed growth but some of these towns offer potential for increased residential densities at high quality public transport hubs and can accommodate average or above average growth to provide for natural increase, service and/or employment growth where appropriate, to be set out in the core strategies of county development plans.

Within the Gateway Region, towns, such as some of those located in the Midlands, tend to have more significant employment and service functions relative to their regional and local catchment. Some also have a high ratio of jobs to resident workforce, which means that they are attracting workers from a wide catchment area. These towns offer potential for regional economic growth and can accommodate average or above average growth to provide for natural increase, service and/or employment growth where appropriate, to be set out in the core strategies of county development plans.

Self-Sustaining Towns

Self-Sustaining Towns are towns that require contained growth, focusing on driving investment in services, employment growth and infrastructure whilst balancing housing delivery.

A number of settlements within the Metropolitan Area, Core and at the eastern fringes of the Gateway Regions have undergone rapid commuter-focused residential expansion over the recent decade, without equivalent increases in jobs (i.e. settlements characterised by a low ratio of jobs to resident workforce) and services. Population growth in these towns shall be at a rate that seeks to achieve a balancing effect and shall be focused on consolidation and inclusion of policies in relation to improvements in services and employment provision, to be set out in the core strategies of county development plans.

Towns recording the highest growth rates in the country over the last ten years (>32%), and which have lower levels of employment provision include; Ashbourne, Balbriggan, Blessington, Clane, Kinsealy-Drinan, Lusk, Laytown-Bettystown, Ratoath, and Sallins. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that such towns are important employment and service centres. In addition some of these settlements, such as Ashbourne and Ratoath have the potential to strengthen their employment base and develop as important centres of employment due to their strategic location, connectivity with surrounding settlements, and the availability of a skilled workforce.

4.8 Rural Places: Towns, Villages and the Countryside

The RSES recognises the major contribution that rural places make towards regional and national development in economic, social and environmental terms. Rural areas in the Region, including the Gaeltacht area, contribute to Ireland's unique culture and identity, and provide significant natural resources, biodiversity, environmental qualities and landscape features.

Physically, the rural parts of the region are characterised by a diverse range of natural amenities and landscapes, including rich agricultural lands, bog lands, mountains and uplands, lakes, rivers and streams and coastal areas. The Region is home to many vibrant rural communities, in towns, villages and the countryside. There are visible differences between the many types of rural areas and rural communities, including scale, accessibility, the influence of neighbouring urban centres, natural resource assets and access to infrastructure and services. These differences ought to be recognised in planning for rural places.



Challenges Facing Rural Places

Rural areas are facing many challenges, ranging from urban generated pressures in some areas to a declining and ageing population in other areas, changes to economic structure, and lack of access to infrastructure and new technologies. The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development, Realising Our Rural Potential, provides the framework for a co-ordinated approach across Government to the economic and social development of rural communities. The Plan focuses on both the economic and social development of rural Ireland and the regions. It sets out measures which will directly benefit rural places, as well as the enterprises which operate within them, with over 270 specific actions to be delivered over a three-year period to 2020.

A key challenge is to ensure that in planning for rural places, responses are uniquely tailored to recognise the balance required between managing urban generated demand in the most accessible rural areas, typically in proximity to Dublin and other towns, whilst supporting the sustainable growth of rural communities and economies, including those facing decline. In general, those rural places in proximity to large urban centres have experienced significant growth and urban generated pressures and require levels of growth to be managed in order to ensure that there is a requisite service level for the existing population. Those in more peripheral locations have experienced decline in population and marked vacancy, requiring support for the existing population and regeneration of existing cores. The development strategy for these rural places is to be set out in the core strategies of county development plans.

Planning for Future Growth in Rural Places

Housing

Facilitating housing is paramount to ensuring the sustainability, vitality and viability of the rural places of the Region. Support for housing and population growth within rural towns and villages will help to act as a viable alternative to rural one-off housing, contributing to the principle of compact growth. The availability of serviced sites, in tandem with schemes such as the Irish Water Scheme for Small Towns and Villages, will help to enable this.

In terms of population distribution within the Region, 94% of the EMRA's total population lives within areas under urban influence. Within the Eastern SPA, 91% of the population lives in areas under urban influence whilst in the Midlands SPA this figure is 72.9%. Local authorities' rural housing planning policy should be evidence based and accommodate rural generated housing consistent with the settlement framework contained in this Strategy and the DEHLG Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2005, or any successor thereof, and should be accommodated within the Housing Needs Demand Assessment, reflecting the housing needs of the county as a whole.

The NPF and RSES make a distinction between areas under urban influence, i.e. within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and rural areas outside these catchments. In such areas a more flexible approach based primarily on siting and design will apply.

Core strategies for county development plans shall identify areas under strong urban influence in the hinterlands of settlements and set the appropriate rural housing policy response to avoid ribbon and over spill development from urban areas, support revitalised towns and villages, achieve sustainable compact growth targets, sustainably address rural decline and protect the rural resource for rural communities.

Regeneration, Renewal and Funding Opportunities

The NPF identifies the need to strengthen and diversify rural towns to be a focus for local housing and employment growth. Rural towns can act as a focus for development in their areas through the provision of services across economic, social and administrative areas. The countryside within the Region provides for rural economies and rural communities, based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural enterprise. This should be facilitated while avoiding over-spill development from urban areas and urban generated housing.

For some rural areas, urban and commuter generated development has undesirably affected the character and cohesion of these locations. Simultaneously, in less accessible rural locations, population levels have declined and it has been difficult to sustain basic services and community facilities at these locations.

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed to providing an additional €1 billion for a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund[10] over the period 2019 to 2027. The Fund will provide investment to support rural renewal for suitable projects in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas. It will be administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development. This fund provides an opportunity to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland, to make a significant and sustainable impact on rural communities, and to address de-population in small rural towns, villages and rural areas. It will be a key instrument to support the objectives of the NPF, and in particular to achieve Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities – one of the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF. The RIAI's Toolkit for Towns and Villages offers useful advice for local authorities in relation to rural regeneration.

10 https://drcd.gov.ie/about/rural/rural-regeneration-development-fund/

Enabling and Sustaining the Rural Economy

This Section should be read in conjunction with the Rural Economy section at Chapter 6 Economy and Employment of this document.

A key objective of the NPF is to enable all parts of the Country – both urban and rural – to achieve their full potential. The RSES reflects this core objective and aims to strengthen the fabric of rural Ireland, supporting rural towns and communities as well as the open countryside, improving connectivity, and supporting job creation, particularly in a more diverse range of sectors.

The rejuvenation of rural towns and villages requires that appropriate job creation can be supported in rural areas. Traditional sectors such as agriculture, tourism, extractive industries and forestry are complemented by diversification in sectors such as food, renewable energy and opportunities provided from improved digital connectivity. The agri-food sector plays a significant role in Ireland's rural economy and this sector is supported through the implementation of Food Wise 2025. The forestry sector is another significant contributor to the economy as is tourism and the development of greenways, blueways and peatways to provide an alternative visitor experience. Energy production, including renewable energy in the form of wind, solar and biomass have to date largely been provided in rural areas and the location of future renewable energy production is likely to be met in rural areas. (For further details in relation to rural economy refer to Chapter 6 Economy and Employment and in relation to digital connectivity Chapter 8 Connectivity).

The RSES supports tourism development and promotional branding to ensure that areas associated with Ireland's Hidden Heatlands and Ireland's Ancient East are developed and promoted to tap into the economic potential of rural areas (see Chapter 6 Economy and Employment in relation to the development of tourism in the Region).

CASE STUDY:

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund



Under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) approximately €2.9m has been allocated to the Historic Granard Motte Project, to develop a major tourism and amenity attraction at the site of Granard Motte, a national monument at Granard, Co. Longford. The project will develop a heritage park on 15 acres of land and will recreate a living Norman Village and children's amenities. It will complement previous successful funding applications on the site that saw the development of a 'Knights and Conquests' Heritage Centre and an onsite café as part of the REDZ scheme and Town and Village Renewal scheme. The Knights and Conquests Centre[11] is an interpretative centre telling the story of the Norman Knights in Ireland, allowing visitors an opportunity to walk through time and learn about life in Norman Ireland.

The RRDF funds will be used to bring additionality to the overall project, allowing for a tourism product of national and international scale to be opened on the site. This will be a living history village, which will result in an immersive visitor experience on Norman life 800 years ago, where visitors will be transported back to Norman Ireland through a series of innovative living history displays and activities, supported by audio-visual presentations, augmented reality, VR and print. It will link into the Granard Motte, bringing it back into playing a pivotal role in the development of the town.

This project is a collaboration between Longford County Council, the local community and Fáilte Ireland. The RRDF allowed this project to be significantly scaled up to that of a tourism product that would encourage people to visit, enhancing the visitor experience and therefore the long term sustainability of the project. This means that this project will have a significant economic impact on the town of Granard and the wider region. It is anticipated that in excess of 40 jobs will be created as a result of this project and 15,000 visitors projected to visit the site yearly, once fully operational. This will benefit existing and new businesses in Granard.

11 https://www.knightsandconquests.ie/

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Rural Areas

RPO 4.77: In development plan policy local authorities shall prioritise the regeneration of rural towns and villages through identification of significant regeneration projects for rural villages and rural areas which could harness untapped assets with community and wider private and public sector support and investment including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

RPO 4.78: Development plans should support the development of a 'New Homes in Small Towns and Villages' initiative which would augment the delivery of actions by local authorities, Irish Water, communities and other stakeholders in the provision of services and serviced sites to create 'build your own home' opportunities within the existing footprint of rural settlements to provide new homes to meet housing demand.

RPO 4.79: Local authorities shall identify and provide policies that recognise the contribution that small towns, villages and rural areas contribute to social and economic wellbeing. As part of this policy provision that seeks to support and protect existing rural economies such as valuable agricultural lands to ensure sustainable food supply, to protect the value and character of open countryside and to support the diversification of rural economies to create additional jobs and maximise opportunities in emerging sectors, such as agri-business, renewable energy, tourism and forestry enterprise is supported.

RPO 4.80: Local authorities shall manage urban generated growth in Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence (i.e. the commuter catchment of Dublin, large towns and centres of employment) and Stronger Rural Areas by ensuring that in these areas the provision of single houses in the open countryside is based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area, and compliance with statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

RPO 4.81: In rural areas outside the Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence local authorities shall encourage sustainable growth in areas that have experienced decline or stagnation, facilitate the provision of single houses in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

RPO 4.82: Local authorities shall ensure that economic development that is urban in nature should be in the first instance located in urban areas.

RPO 4.83: Support the consolidation of the town and village network to ensure that development proceeds sustainably and at an appropriate scale, level and pace in line with the core strategies of the county development plans.

RPO 4.84: Support the rural economy and initiatives in relation to diversification, agri business, rural tourism and renewable energy so as to sustain the employment opportunities in rural areas. In keeping with the NPF, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly will support the longer term strategic planning for industrial peatland areas. This may include support, where appropriate, for a Transition Team in place and preparation of a comprehensive afteruse framework plan for the peatlands and related infrastructure, which addresses environmental, economic and social issues, including employment and replacement enterprise reflecting the current transition from employment based around peat extraction.



5 Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)

5.1 Introduction and Context

Increasingly city regions are the focal point for internationally mobile investment and high skilled jobs. While Dublin performs well on an international scale, it has significant challenges in areas such as transport, housing, amenities, sustainability and liveability. Therefore, it is imperative that Dublin should have a clear ambition and vision to build on its strengths as a global metropolitan region.

The requirement for a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) to be prepared for Dublin as part of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy is set out in Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF). The MASP provides, for the first time, a 12 to 20 year strategic planning and investment framework for the Dublin metropolitan area.

The MASP is aligned with a number of Regional Strategic Outcomes in the RSES which include managing the sustainable and compact growth of Dublin, the regeneration of cities and better use of under-used land, integrated transport and land use and the promotion of Dublin as a global city region.

The MASP is an integrated land use and transportation strategy for the Dublin Metropolitan Area that sets out;

- **A Vision for the future growth of the metropolitan area** and key growth enablers, identifying strategic corridors based on their capacity to achieve compact sustainable and sequential growth along key public transport corridors, existing and planned
- **Large scale strategic residential, employment and regeneration** development opportunities and any infrastructure deficits or constraints that need to be addressed
- **A sequence of infrastructure priorities** to promote greater co-ordination between local authorities, public transport and infrastructure providers for the phased delivery of sites.



The Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA)

The boundary of the Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA) was established in the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) 2010- 2022 and the NTA Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) 2016 – 2035. There are seven local authorities in the metropolitan area including all of Dublin City, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and parts of Fingal, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow.

Dublin City and suburbs has a population of 1.2 million people, in 2016, while the metropolitan area of Dublin covers a wider area and is home to 1.4 million people or 3 out of 5 people living in the Region. Between 2006 and 2016 the metropolitan population increased by around 160,000 people or 13%, which was slightly higher than the state, but lower than the average growth rate in the Eastern and Midland Region, which grew by around 15% over the same period. The MASP envisages a population of 1.65 million in the metropolitan area by 2031, an increase of 250,000 people or 18% from 2016.

See Appendix E for more detail on the definition of the DMA boundary.

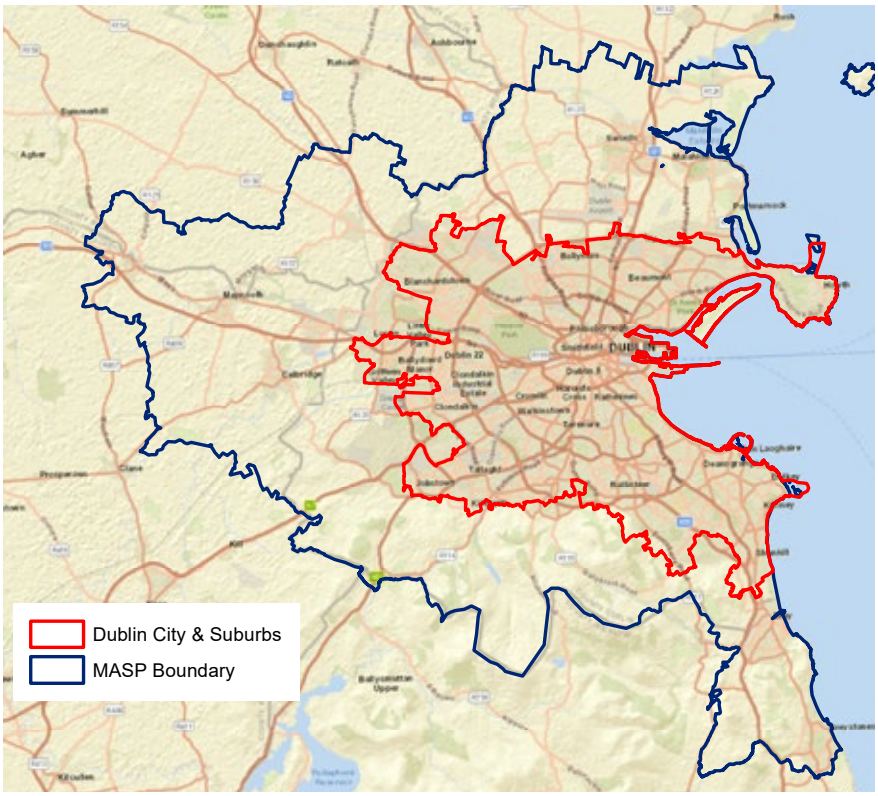


Figure 5.1 MASP Boundary Source: EMRA

5.2 Vision

The vision for the MASP was developed in collaboration with key stakeholders in tandem with and complementary to the vision for the RSES. The visioning process identified some key strengths and place attributes to determine current issues and opportunities and building on this, developed a vision for where the Dublin metropolitan area should be in 12 to 20 years.

Over this horizon the MASP needs to be flexible enough to adapt and respond to external risks such as climate change, technology disruption, demographic and cultural change and economic shocks and to support a future transition to low carbon, for sustainable and electric mobility, increased access to online services and an ability to respond to and benefit from smart technologies.

The Dublin Metropolitan Area is young, diverse and multi-cultural and is performing well at an international level. However, there is a need to better manage the sustainable and compact growth of the city, and to address key challenges related to housing supply, affordability, transport, sustainability and liveability to ensure Dublin can sustain its competitiveness, provide good quality of life for residents and continue to attract and retain talent and investment as a global city region.

Key assets are Dublin's vibrancy, welcoming people and unique character, culture and heritage assets along with access to Dublin Bay and the coastline, the Phoenix Park and the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains. The friendliness and diversity of its people and the concentration of amenities, social and economic opportunities and access to public transport networks are also key to Dublin's success.

There is a need to enable regeneration and employment opportunities for established communities where redevelopment and re-intensification occurs, particularly in areas of on-going deprivation. Changing demographics and increasing urbanisation will also require a long-term planning response to meet existing and future needs translating into demand for regeneration, housing and employment.

Vision Statement

Over the years to 2031 and with a 2040 horizon, the Dublin metropolitan area will;

"build on our strengths to become a smart, climate resilient and global city region, expanding access to social and economic opportunities and improved housing choice, travel options and quality of life for people who live, work, study in or visit the metropolitan area"

This high-level vision is underpinned by a spatial framework that supports the overall Settlement Strategy in Chapter 4 People and Place and sets out an integrated land use and transportation strategy for the sequential development of the metropolitan area, focussed on:

- Consolidation of Dublin City and suburbs
- Key Towns of Swords, Maynooth and Bray
- Planned development of strategic development areas in Donabate, Dunboyne, Leixlip and Greystones

5.3 Guiding Principles for the growth of the Dublin Metropolitan Area

To achieve the vision the MASP identifies a number of Guiding Principles for the sustainable development of the Dublin Metropolitan Area;

- **Dublin as a Global Gateway –** In recognition of the international role of Dublin, to support and facilitate the continued growth of Dublin Airport and Dublin Port, to protect and improve existing access and support related access improvements.
- **Compact sustainable growth and accelerated housing delivery –** To promote sustainable consolidated growth of the Metropolitan Area, including brownfield and infill development, to achieve a target of 50% of all new homes within or contiguous to the built-up area of Dublin City and suburbs, and at least 30% in other settlements. To support a steady supply of sites and to accelerate housing supply, in order to achieve higher densities in urban built up areas, supported by improved services and public transport.
- **Integrated Transport and Land use –** To focus growth along existing and proposed high quality public transport corridors and nodes on the expanding public transport network and to support the delivery and integration of 'BusConnects', DART expansion and LUAS extension programmes, and Metro Link, while maintaining the capacity and safety of strategic transport networks.
- **Increased employment density in the right places –** To plan for increased employment densities within Dublin City and suburbs and at other sustainable locations near high quality public transport nodes, near third level institutes and existing employment hubs, and to relocate less intensive employment uses outside the M50 ring and existing built-up areas.
- **Alignment of growth with enabling infrastructure –** To promote quality infrastructure provision and capacity improvement, in tandem with new development and aligned with national projects and improvements in water and waste water, sustainable energy, waste management and resource efficiency.
- **Social Regeneration –** To realise opportunities for social as well as physical regeneration, particularly in those areas of the metropolitan area which have been identified as having high relative deprivation.
- **Identify Future Development Areas –** To identify future development areas that may be delivered beyond the lifetime of the RSES, but within the longer-term 2040 horizon set out by the NPF.
- **Metropolitan Scale Amenities –** To enhance provision of regional parks and strategic Green Infrastructure, to develop an integrated network of metropolitan scale amenities, and to develop greenways/blueways along the canals, rivers and coast, as part of the implementation of the National Transport Authority's Cycle Network Plan for the Greater Dublin Area.
- **Co-ordination and active land management –** To enhance co-ordination across local authorities and relevant agencies to promote more active urban development and land management policies that help develop underutilised, brownfield, vacant and public lands.

5.4 Metropolitan Area Strategy

Strategic residential and employment development corridors are identified in the MASP, to create sustainable compact communities with improved housing choice, access to social and economic opportunities, enhanced services and amenities for a resident population of some 1.65m people in the metropolitan area by 2031.

The criteria for identifying the corridors involved a selection of strategic development opportunities identified by local authorities and included an evidence-based analysis of their current and future development capacity and their potential to deliver agreed strategic outcomes such as; compact development; placemaking; accessibility to high quality public transport corridors; potential for economic development and employment creation and to support a reduced carbon footprint through greater energy efficiency and the creation of energy districts.

A phased sequence of infrastructure investment is identified to enable the accelerated delivery of strategic development corridors both within the short term to 2026; medium term in the lifetime of the RSES to 2031; and to the long term horizon of the NPF to 2040. MASP is also aligned with the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and NDP to ensure that it can inform national-level sectoral investment plans and co-ordinate investment within the metropolitan area through a €2 Billion Urban Regeneration Fund and the establishment of a national Land Development Agency.

To achieve ambitious compact development targets of at least 50% of all new homes within or contiguous to the existing built up area in Dublin and 30% in other settlements, the MASP identifies strategic residential, employment and regeneration development opportunities on the corridors along with the requisite infrastructure investment needed to ensure a steady supply of sites in tandem with the delivery of key public transport projects as set out in the NDP, see Fig 5.2 and Table 5.1.

Strategic development corridors include;

City Centre within the M50 (Multi modal)
The ongoing regeneration of Dublin Docklands and Poolbeg, coupled with the redevelopment of older social housing (former PPPs), industrial and underutilised lands, support the consolidation of Dublin City. The proposed DART Underground and LUAS extensions to Finglas and Lucan subject to appraisal and delivery post 2027, will unlock long-term capacity including strategic landbanks such as Dunsink.

North – South Corridor (DART expansion)
The DART Expansion Programme, to be delivered by 2027 will increase capacity on the northern commuter line and support ongoing large-scale urban expansion of the North Fringe lands and Donabate. On the south-eastern commuter line capacity is unlocked by a new station at Woodbrook - Shanganagh, with the consolidation and westward expansion of Bray to Fassaroe and Old Conna linked to improved public transport connections.

North - West Corridor
(Maynooth/Dunboyne line and DART expansion)
Strategic development areas along the Dunboyne/M3 parkway line include the Dublin Enterprise Zone (linked to improved bus connections), Hansfield lands and the sequential development of lands in Dunboyne served by the M3 Parkway station. The proposed electrification of the main Maynooth line, to be delivered by 2027, will support sequential growth in Leixlip and Maynooth.

South - West Corridor
(Kildare line, DART expansion and Luas red line)
The consolidation of the western suburbs of Clonburris, Kilcarbery and Adamstown, linked to increased capacity and electrified services on the Kildare line, to be delivered by 2027, and at Grangecastle supported by additional bus connections. Brownfield regeneration lands at Naas Road and Tallaght and new residential communities at Fortunestown, supported by the LUAS redline.

Metrolink - LUAS Corridor
(Metrolink, LUAS green line upgrades)
The development of the proposed Metrolink project, subject to appraisal and delivery post 2027, will unlock significant long-term capacity in Swords-Lissenhall and in South Fingal - Dublin Airport, subject to the protection of airport capacity and accessibility. Proposed upgrades to the existing LUAS Green line will support development in the south county at Sandyford, Cherrywood and Ballyogan.



Figure 5.2 Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan

TABLE 5.1 Strategic Development Areas and Corridors, Capacity Infrastructure and Phasing

Corridor	Residential	Employment/ Mixed Use	Phasing/Enabling infrastructure
City Centre within the M50 (Multi-modal) **Population capacity** Short 35,000 Medium 10,000 Long 15,000 **Total 60,000**	**Docklands** build out of North Lotts and Grand Canal Docks with further physical and social regeneration of Poolbeg and northeast inner-city lands	Further development of people intensive high tech and services-based business districts in Docklands and Poolbeg	**Short to Medium term** Dodder bridge, LUAS extension to Poolbeg, local and wider area water upgrades, waste water upgrades and district heating
	City centre regeneration of older social housing projects (former PPPs), Parkwest-Cherry Orchard, Ballymun, Ashtown-Pelletstown and St James – Heuston lands	Regeneration of Diageo lands, health and education related employment at St James and Grangegorman campus	**Short to Medium term** Waste water upgrades, social infrastructure **Long term** Long term capacity supported by DART underground
	Naas Road /Ballymount – significant brownfield lands in South Dublin and Dublin City Council areas, with potential for residential development and more intensive employment/ mixed uses	Re-intensification of underutilised lands including Naas road and older industrial estates, subject to feasibility study	**Medium to Long term** Multi-modal public transport, new Luas stop, site assembly, waste water upgrades and local area water network upgrades
	Dunsink – major greenfield landbank with long term potential to develop a new district centre	Subject to feasibility	**Long term** LUAS extension to Finglas, access, site conditions, feasibility
North-South corridor (DART) **Population capacity** Short 31,000 Medium 13,000 Long 7,000 **Total 51,000**	**North Fringe** – large scale urban expansion creating new communities at Clongriffin-Belmayne (Dublin City) and Baldoyle-Stapolin (Fingal)	Completion of mixed-use districts with retail and service provision	**Short to Medium term** Access to rail station, bus upgrades, new road connections, drainage, parks and social infrastructure
	Donabate – significant residential capacity in this strategically located rapidly growing coastal village	Consolidation of economic and service base in tandem with population growth	**Short term** DART expansion, distributor road and railway bridge, social infrastructure, local area water network and storage upgrades
	South County Dublin - North Wicklow – development of new residential communities at Woodbrook- Shanganagh and Bray Golf course and Harbour lands	Strengthening commercial town functions in Bray, developing IDA strategic site in Greystones to strengthen economic base in North Wicklow	**Short term** Access road, new station at Woodbrook - Shanganagh. Access to Bray station and PT bridge.
	Bray Fassaroe* – westward extension of Bray at Old Connaught-Fassaroe (Dún Laoghaire) and Bray -Fassaroe (Wicklow) lands	New mixed use residential and employment district at Fassaroe, west of Bray Greystones Strategic site	**Short to Medium term** High capacity bus between Bray and Fassaroe, distributor road, N/ M11 upgrades, new bridge to Old Conna. Waste water upgrades. Local and wider area water network and storage upgrades **Long term** LUAS extension to Bray

Corridor	Residential	Employment/ Mixed Use	Phasing/Enabling infrastructure
North-West corridor (Maynooth/ Dunboyne commuter line /DART) **Population capacity** Short 24,000 Medium 10,000 Long 3,000 **Total 37,000**	**Dublin 15 lands** – continued development of Hansfield linked to the future development of Barnhill and Kellytown landbanks to the south and east	Further development of large-scale employment in Dublin Enterprise Zone** and synergies with Blanchardstown IT	**Short term** Public transport, Clonsilla Station, water network and waste water upgrades.
	Leixlip – strategic greenfield lands near Confey station with capacity for phased development, improve links to Leixlip and adjoining Dublin/Meath lands	Large scale former Hewlett Packard site and Collinstown site to strengthen employment base for North Kildare	**Short to Medium term** LUAS extension to Maynooth, roads upgrades, community and social infrastructure, waste water and local water network upgrades
	Maynooth – Significant strategic residential capacity at Railpark lands and to the north and west of the town near Maynooth University	New Research & technology Park adjoining Maynooth University	**Short to Medium term** DART expansion, road upgrades, bridge, Maynooth Outer Orbital Route, waste water and local water network upgrades
	Dunboyne – Sequential development prioritising zoned and serviced lands near the railway station and town centre and at Dunboyne North / M3 Parkway station	Space intensive 'big box' employment at Portan. Mixed use 'live - work' development at Dunboyne North	**Medium to Long term** Outer Orbital road, distributor road, additional watermains and waste water upgrades
South western corridor (Kildare line/ DART and LUAS redline) **Population capacity** Short 45,000 Medium 21,000 **Total 66,000**	**Western suburbs** - Continued development of Adamstown SDZ and the phased development of Clonburris located strategically between the west Dublin suburbs of Lucan and Clondalkin. New residential community at Kilcarbery near Clondalkin.	Promotion of high tech, manufacturing and research and development in Grange Castle Business Park	**Short to Medium term** New roads and railway bridge, new rail station, DART expansion to Celbridge-Hazelhatch (Adamstown, Clonburris) Access road and waste water upgrades (Kilcarbery). Public transport and access (Grange Castle). New water network infrastructure to supply Clonburris SDZ and local network upgrades
	LUAS red line - Regeneration of brownfield lands in Tallaght. New district at Fortunestown near emerging town of Saggart/Citywest	Re-intensification of older industrial estates at Naas Road/ Ballymount, Intensification of industrial lands and mixed-use development at Tallaght Town Centre/Cookstown	**Short to Medium term** Brownfield conditions and site assembly waste water upgrades and Citywest junction link at Tallaght/Fortunestown
Metrolink / LUAS Greenline Corridor (Metrolink/ LUAS) **Population capacity** Short 28,000 Medium 25,000 Long 18,000 **Total 71,000**	**Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown** – New and emerging mixed-use districts of Cherrywood and Sandyford. New residential communities in Ballyogan and environs and Kiltiernan-Glenamuck	Continued development of high-density business districts at Cherrywood and Sandyford. New mixed use centres in Ballyogan and Kiltiernan	**Short to Medium term** LUAS green line upgrades. Public transport and roads upgrades. New road and bridge and N11 junction (Cherrywood) and water upgrades
	Swords – sequential development of strategic residential sites within Swords and development of Oldtown-Mooretown lands	Airport related, commercial facilities and employment linked to development of Metrolink	**Short to Medium term** Public realm, pedestrian and cyclist provision. Road improvements, BusConnects. Additional runway and improved access (Airport). Waste water upgrades. Local and wider area water network upgrades
	Swords – Lissenhall – new mixed-use urban district on the northern side of Swords linked to delivery of Metrolink	Development of high-tech research and development employment within a campus setting at Lissenhall East	**Medium to Long term** Improved bus connections, Metrolink, roads improvements and expanded internal road network and waste water upgrades

*Development at Fassaroe will be undertaken in collaboration between Wicklow County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and the transport agencies
**Dublin Enterprise Zone is not directly served by existing or planned rail and will require improve bus connections and demand management measures

5.5 Enabling Infrastructure

A key aim of the MASP is to unlock the development capacity of strategic development areas within the metropolitan area by identifying the sequencing of enabling infrastructure and by directing the cross sectoral investment required to deliver development. In addition to transport investment priorities, which are set out in the MASP, the Dublin metropolitan area is experiencing capacity issues in relation to both water and wastewater infrastructure.

A number of water and wastewater projects are ongoing to deliver capacity at a large scale to the metropolitan area and it is critical that the timelines for delivery of these projects are aligned with the phased delivery of strategic development areas in the MASP. These include;

Water Supply:

- Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region to supply water to Dublin
- Vartry water supply scheme (water supply for north Wicklow and south Dublin).

Waste Water Treatment:

- The Greater Dublin Drainage Project
- The Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant Project.

Energy

Development of the energy distribution and transmission network in the Region will enable distribution of more renewable sources of energy to facilitate future energy demand in strategic development areas along with the roll-out of the Smart Grids and Smart Cities Action Plan[12] enabling new connections, grid balancing, energy management and micro grid development, see also Chapter 10 Infrastructure for more information on Infrastructure and Energy.

Social infrastructure

The MASP supports ongoing collaboration with regional stakeholders to ensure that social infrastructure such as education, health and community facilities are provided in tandem with the development of strategic development areas, and in particular to ensure that opportunities for social as well as physical regeneration are realised, see Chapter 9 Quality of Life for more information on social infrastructure. See Table 5.1 for more information on Infrastructure and Phasing.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Enabling Infrastructure

RPO 5.1: Support continued collaboration between infrastructure providers, state agencies and local authorities in the metropolitan area to inform cross sectoral investment plans and capital spending plans to accelerate the development of strategic development areas and secure the best use of public lands in the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

12 DBEI Smart Grids and Smart Cities Action Plan 2013

5.6 Integrated Land use and Transportation

The principles underpinning the development of the MASP include the effective integration of transport planning with spatial planning policies, from regional down to local level and the alignment of associated transport and infrastructure investment priorities. The national policy in metropolitan areas is to increase sustainability through greater alignment of land use and transport. The NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (2016) provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) over the period 2016 - 2035. The alignment of the MASP and the GDA Transport Strategy is key to the coordination of policy making and investment within the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

To the extent practicable, development within the metropolitan area should be carried out sequentially, whereby lands which are, or will be, most accessible by walking, cycling and public transport – including infill and brownfield sites – are prioritised. The transport capacity of the strategic national road network should also be maintained and protected and larger scale, trip intensive developments, such as high employment density offices and retail, should primarily be focused in locations which are well served by existing or proposed high capacity public transport corridors.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

MASP Sustainable Transport

RPO 5.2: Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including Metrolink, DART and LUAS expansion programmes, BusConnects and the Greater Dublin Metropolitan Cycle Network and ensure that future development maximises the efficiency and protects the strategic capacity of the metropolitan area transport network, existing and planned.

RPO 5.3: Future development in the Dublin Metropolitan Area shall be planned and designed in a manner that facilitates sustainable travel patterns, with a particular focus on increasing the share of active modes (walking and cycling) and public transport use and creating a safe attractive street environment for pedestrians and cyclists.



Key transport infrastructure investments in the metropolitan area as set out in national policy include;

Dublin -Belfast Economic Corridor

The Strategy supports the development of the Dublin - Belfast Economic Corridor through targeted investment in transport infrastructure and services complementing and maintaining its function as part of the EU TEN-T core network. See Chapter 8 Connectivity for further information.

Rail;

- DART Expansion Programme - new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines, including provision of electrified services to Drogheda or further north on the Northern Line, Celbridge-Hazelhatch or further south on the Kildare Line, Maynooth and M3 Parkway on the Maynooth/Sligo Line, while continuing to provide DART services on the South-Eastern Line as far south as Greystones
- New stations to provide interchanges with bus, LUAS and Metro network including at Kishoge, Heuston West, Cabra, Glasnevin, Pelletstown and Woodbrook
- Reappraisal of the extension of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan during the Mid Term Review of the GDA Transport Strategy, see also Chapter 8 Connectivity
- Complete construction of Metrolink from Swords to Sandyford and consider underground extensions to other locations from Charlemont
- LUAS Green Line Capacity Enhancement in advance of Metrolink
- Appraisal, planning and design of LUAS network expansion to Bray, Finglas, Lucan and Poolbeg
- Assessment, and, if appropriate, planning and design of LUAS network expansion to Hazelhatch and Booterstown
- In principle there is a need to carry out an evaluation of underground metro routes within the M50

New and Enhanced Park and Ride

New Park and Ride locations at Swords, Finglas, Dunboyne, Liffey Valley, Naas Road, Carrickmines, Woodbrook, Greystones

Bus

Within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, investment in bus based public transport will be delivered through BusConnects, which aims to overhaul the current bus system in the Dublin metropolitan area, including the introduction of Bus Rapid Transit.

Roads

- M4 Maynooth to Leixlip
- M11 from Jn 4 M50 to Kilmacanogue
- N3 Clonee to M50
- M50 Dublin Port South Access

Walking and Cycling

Facilitating modal shift to more sustainable transport options, including walking and cycling is a key element in promoting better traffic management and climate change strategies in the metropolitan area. The NTA Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan sets out a strategy to enhance the urban network and develop the primary urban cycle arteries, which include the Royal Canal and Grand Canal ring and the Rivers Liffey, Tolka and Dodder, see Figure 5.3 (Primary urban cycle network shown in red).

Outside of the city an inter-urban cycle network extends to the surrounding metropolitan towns to provide new connections between Dublin and towns in Fingal, Kildare, Meath, and Wicklow, to develop urban – rural connections and provide attractive commuting routes.

The expansion of shared-bike schemes can also make a positive contribution to sustainable transport and mobility within the wider metropolitan area.

Metropolitan Greenway Network

Greenways are high quality cycleways, which are generally segregated from traffic and often routed through parks and areas of high amenity value such as coastal, canal and riverside routes. Where greenways pass through a designated environmental area, careful environmental assessment, routing and design will be required to avoid significant impacts on habitats and species. See Chapter 7 Environment for more information on Greenways and Blueways in a regional context.

A number of greenways are of strategic value in terms of their length as an amenity, as a means of providing access to major recreational areas in the mountains, on the coast or in significant public parks, and also as part of a connected Strategic Metropolitan Greenway Network.

Strategic Greenways proposed and/or under development in the metropolitan area include:

- **East Coast Route** from Sutton to Sandymount with potential to link into a Dublin Port Greenway, to extend north to link into the Fingal Coastal Way and to develop a wider East Coast Trail from Rosslare to Northern Ireland
- **Royal Canal Greenway** from Spencer Dock through the northern inner suburbs along the canal to Maynooth and Mullingar with potential to link into the Dublin to Galway Eurovelo route
- **Grand Canal Greenway** from Docklands through the southern inner suburbs to Naas, Newbridge and Kildare joining the Barrow Way at Athy with potential to link to Cork
- **River Liffey Greenway** from Dublin Port along the Liffey Quays to Leixlip. Cross-connections are proposed through the Phoenix Park linking the Royal Canal to the Grand Canal
- **Dodder Valley Greenway** from Grand Canal Dock along the river corridor which passes largely through public parks in the southern suburbs to Bohernabreena, with potential to develop links to the Dublin Mountains and Wicklow Way
- **Western Canals Loop** a proposed 40km long recreational city loop linking the Grand Canal at Adamstown to the Royal Canal at Leixlip via Griffeen Valley Park, Lucan and the Liffey Valley.

There is also potential for strategic radial routes to link into other greenways such as the Rivers Tolka, Santry, Poddle and Camac greenways to provide for local links and enhanced recreational opportunities, see Figure 5.3 (Greenway Network shown in green).

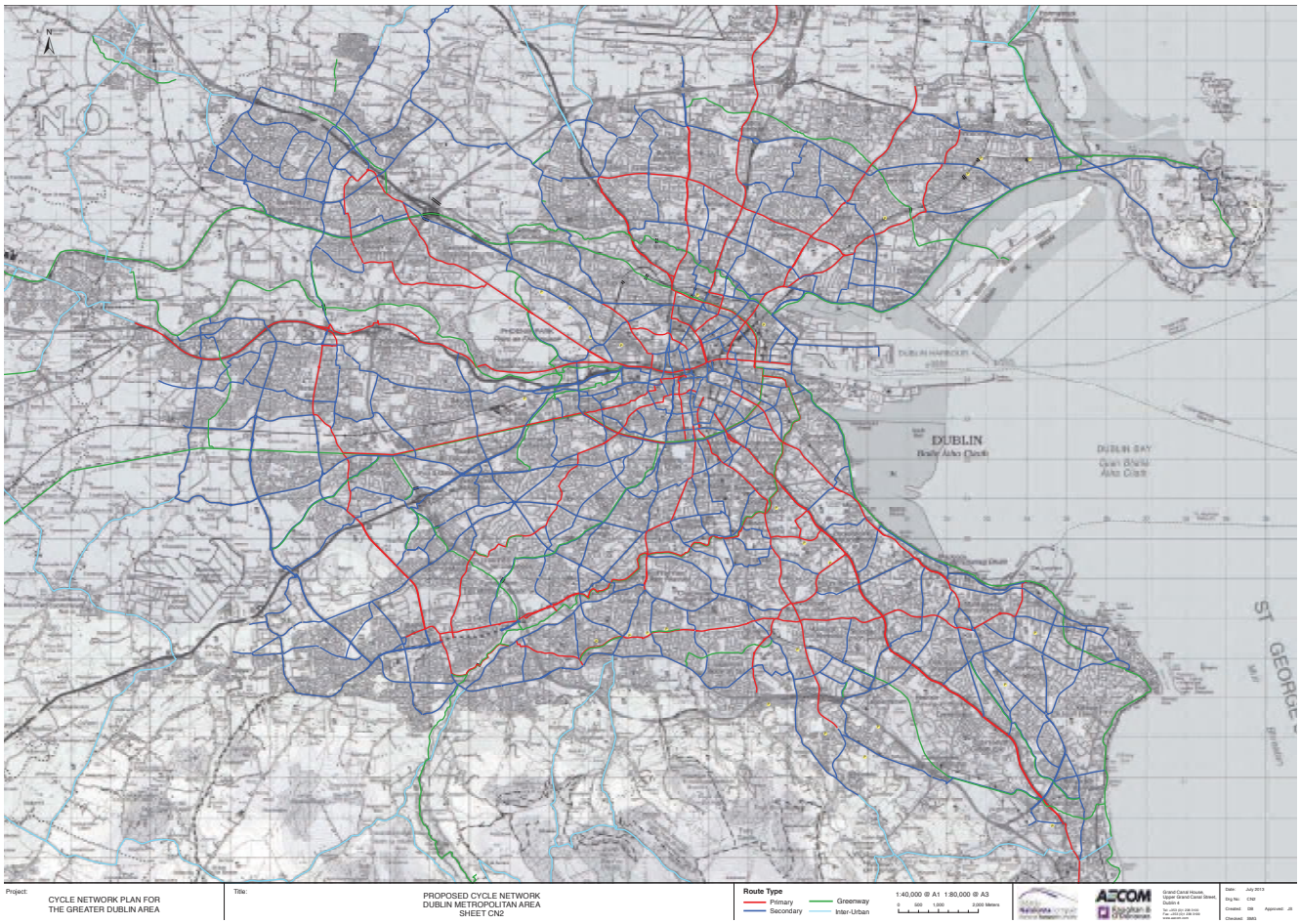


Figure 5.3 Dublin Metropolitan Area Cycle Network Source: NTA Cycle Network for the Greater Dublin Area



Figure 5.4 Greater Dublin Area Public Transport Network 2027
Source: National Development Plan 2018-2027

5.7 Housing Delivery

The supply of quality, affordable housing plays a key role in underpinning economic growth and competitiveness of the Dublin metropolitan area.

The NPF and Rebuilding Ireland identifies a target of at least 25,000 annual new homes required nationally to satisfy housing needs to 2040 and an increased national output of 30,000 to 35,000 to 2027. This translates to an approximate housing target of at least 7,500 units per annum to be provided in the metropolitan area to 2040. The MASP identifies opportunities for some 113,000 residential units when fully built out to 2040, which meets the projected populations in the MASP to 2026 and 2031.

The Strategy supports a sequential approach to development with a primary focus on the consolidation of sites within or contiguous to the existing built up and zoned area of Dublin City and suburbs, supported by selected metropolitan settlements that have the capacity to achieve higher residential densities in tandem with the provision of public transport, infrastructure and services.

Phased sequential development

Having regard to the long lead in time for planning, design and development, a prioritisation and indicative phasing has been applied to strategic development areas based on any identified infrastructure and/or site constraints and linked to the delivery of strategic public transport, key infrastructure and service provision. Phasing periods are 2026 (short term), 2031 (medium term) and 2040 (long term). This also aligns with census periods and the availability of census data will allow for more effective monitoring of housing delivery.

It is therefore considered appropriate that the MASP is focused on the phased and sequential delivery of a steady stream of sites to meet demand including the identification of long term strategic future development areas. It should be noted that housing units delivered through the MASP site-based regeneration does not preclude additional capacity for increased residential densities being realised throughout the metropolitan area by means of ongoing infill, re-intensification and development of sites that may not have not been identified in the MASP.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

MASP Housing and Regeneration

RPO 5.4: Future development of strategic residential development areas within the Dublin Metropolitan area shall provide for higher densities and qualitative standards as set out in the 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas'[13], 'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments' Guidelines and 'Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities'[14].

RPO 5.5: Future residential development supporting the right housing and tenure mix within the Dublin Metropolitan Area shall follow a clear sequential approach, with a primary focus on the consolidation of Dublin and suburbs, and the development of Key Metropolitan Towns, as set out in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and in line with the overall Settlement Strategy for the RSES. Identification of suitable residential development sites shall be supported by a quality site selection process that addresses environmental concerns.



13 Department of Housing Planning and Local Government, 2009
14 Department of Housing Planning and Local Government, 2018



Core Strategy

The core strategies of the relevant local authorities should demonstrate consistency with the population targets expressed in the NPF and the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework July 2018. The NPF identifies a target population of 1.4 million people in Dublin City and Suburbs for 2031, an increase of some 220,000 people, and a target of 1.65m in the MASP, an increase of some 250,000 people.

The further breakdown of population projections to county level are in Appendix B and shall be used by local authorities in the formulation of the core strategies of their development plans. There is a further allowance of transition population targets in NPO 68 by way of up to 20% of the targeted growth in the city being transferred to other settlements in the MASP[15]. This shall apply only to the three Metropolitan Key Towns in the MASP namely Bray, Maynooth and Swords, and only if they can demonstrate compact growth on high capacity planned or existing public transport corridors.

The determination of population targets for local authorities within the MASP in accordance with the NPF and this strategy, including the population targets for the City and the Metropolitan Key Towns, should be agreed in consultation with the MASP Implementation Group, within six months of publication of the RSES to inform the preparation of the core strategies of the relevant city and county development plans. Should it not be possible to reach agreement within the above timeframe, the matter will be referred to the Minister for further determination.

It is important to note that the figures represented in Table 5.1 are a statement of the population capacity of the corridors – not targets, which is based on the identified capacity of opportunities along the corridors translated to an estimated population capacity. The phasing of short (2026), medium (2031) and long term (2040) is based on infrastructure delivery and the Guiding Principles of the MASP. It demonstrates the capacity of the corridors to meet and exceed the NPF population targets for Dublin City and the MASP which is a key outcome of the RSES for the Region.

Furthermore, it is recognised that there would be significant additional capacity to deliver increased residential densities on other sites through the ongoing provision of infill, reduction in vacancy and re-use of underutilised lands and vacant buildings within the metropolitan area.

The core strategies of development plans relevant to the MASP should have a focus on the delivery of sites in the MASP whilst retaining flexibility to respond to new and future opportunities for the delivery of housing in the metropolitan area, in line with the transitional population projections methodology in the NPF roadmap and a robust evidence-based analysis of demand, past delivery and potential. See also Chapter 4 People and Place for more information on the strategic development of Dublin and the Metropolitan Key Towns of Swords, Bray and Maynooth.

15 NPO 68 A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan may enable up to 20% of the phased population growth targeted in the principal city and suburban area, to be accommodated in the wider metropolitan area i.e. outside the city and suburbs or contiguous zoned area, in addition to growth identified for the Metropolitan area. This will be subject to:
any relocated growth being in the form of compact development, such as infill or a sustainable urban extension;
any relocated growth being served by high capacity public transport and/or related to significant employment provision; and
National Policy Objective 9, as set out in Chapter 4.

5.8 Employment Generation

The MASP identifies a number of large-scale employment and mixed-use development areas within the metropolitan area, which should be developed in co-ordination with the sequential delivery of infrastructure and services.



The MASP aims to continue densification in the city centre, re-intensify strategic employment areas within the M50 ring and to activate key strategic sites such as Cherrywood to complement existing employment hubs such as the city centre, Docklands and Sandyford Business District, providing for a limited number of people intensive employment locations that are accessible to public transport.

Outside the M50 ring there is potential to re-intensify older industrial estates such as Naas Road/Ballymount, brownfiled lands in Tallaght/Cookstown and to provide for high tech and research and development employment at strategic employment hubs such as Dublin Enterprise Zone in Blanchardstown and Grangecastle Business Park, linked to improved bus connections.

The MASP also supports employment generation at strategic locations within the metropolitan area to strengthen the local employment base and reduce pressure on the metropolitan transport network, including; future employment districts in Swords and Dublin Airport/South Fingal; Maynooth; Bray; Greystones; Dunboyne-Portane; and Leixlip (see Table 5.2). Strategic employment locations, particularly those that are employee intensive should be located in proximity to existing or planned strategic transport corridors.

The Economic Strategy sets out Guiding Principles for the location of strategic employment areas that include access to;

- **suitable locations** (depending on the extent to which an enterprise is people or space intensive or subject to environment constraints);
- **serviced sites** (based on whether an industry is dependent on a particular infrastructure such as energy, water, transport or communications networks);
- **connectivity** (including access to international markets that requires proximity to an airport/port);
- **skilled labour force** (proximity to third level education and lifelong learning) and
- **local strengths** (a diverse sectoral mix, research, innovation and technology centres, start-up hubs and incubators, emerging clusters or cross industry value chains),

See Section 6.3 (Chapter 6 Economy and Employment) for full list of Guiding Principles.

TABLE 5.2 Potential of Strategic Employment Development Areas in the Dublin Metropolitan Area

Strategic corridor	Strategic Employment locations	Employment potential
Docklands and City centre (Multi-modal)	Docklands, Poolbeg and north east inner city	High tech, financial services and people intensive employment and regeneration of underutilised lands
	City centre (Grangegorman and St James-Diageo lands)	Re-intensification and regeneration of underutilised lands, employment opportunities related to education and hospital campus development
	Industrial lands	Re-intensification of older industrial lands subject to feasibility
North-South corridor (DART)	North County Wicklow (Bray, extension to Fassaroe, Greystones)	Re-intensification of commercial town centre functions and new mixed-use district. Redevelopment of IDA strategic sites at Greystones to strengthen employment base for North Wicklow
North-West corridor (DART/Maynooth-Dunboyne commuter line)	Dublin Enterprise Zone (Dublin 15)	Large scale office, research and development and high tech manufacturing in proximity to Blanchardstown IT
	Dunboyne employment lands	Space intensive 'big box' employment at Portane. Mixed use development at M3/Parkway
	Leixlip employment lands	Large scale former Hewlett Packard site and Collinstown site for regional enterprise to strengthen employment base for North Kildare
	Maynooth Research & Technology Park	New technology and research and development employment related to synergies with Maynooth University
South west corridor (DART /LUAS redline)	Naas Road/Ballymount lands	Potential for intensification of industrial lands and development of new mixed-use district
	Tallaght Town Centre /Cookstown	Potential for intensification of industrial lands and development of a new mixed-use district
	Grange Castle Business Park	Space intensive uses e.g. IT, research, pharmaceuticals in a campus style setting
Metrolink / LUAS Green line Corridor	South County Dublin (Cherrywood, Ballyogan and Sandyford)	Mixed-use districts with significant retail and people intensive employment to complement city centre and docklands
	Swords and Dublin Airport/South Fingal	Future employment locations and airport related and commercial facilities in Swords and Dublin Airport/South Fingal

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

MASP Employment lands

RPO 5.6: The development of future employment lands in the Dublin Metropolitan Area shall follow a sequential approach, with a focus on the re-intensification of employment lands within the M50 and at selected strategic development areas and provision of appropriate employment densities in tandem with the provision of high quality public transport corridors.

5.9 Green Infrastructure and Amenities

Green Infrastructure (GI) can be broadly defined as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which is designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings

Metropolitan scale GI includes natural features such as rivers and canals, our coastline, regional parks, agricultural lands and amenity sites, forming a network of interconnected natural, semi-natural and managed areas that weaves through the metropolitan area, conserving natural ecosystems, managing flood risk and providing health and recreation benefits to people.

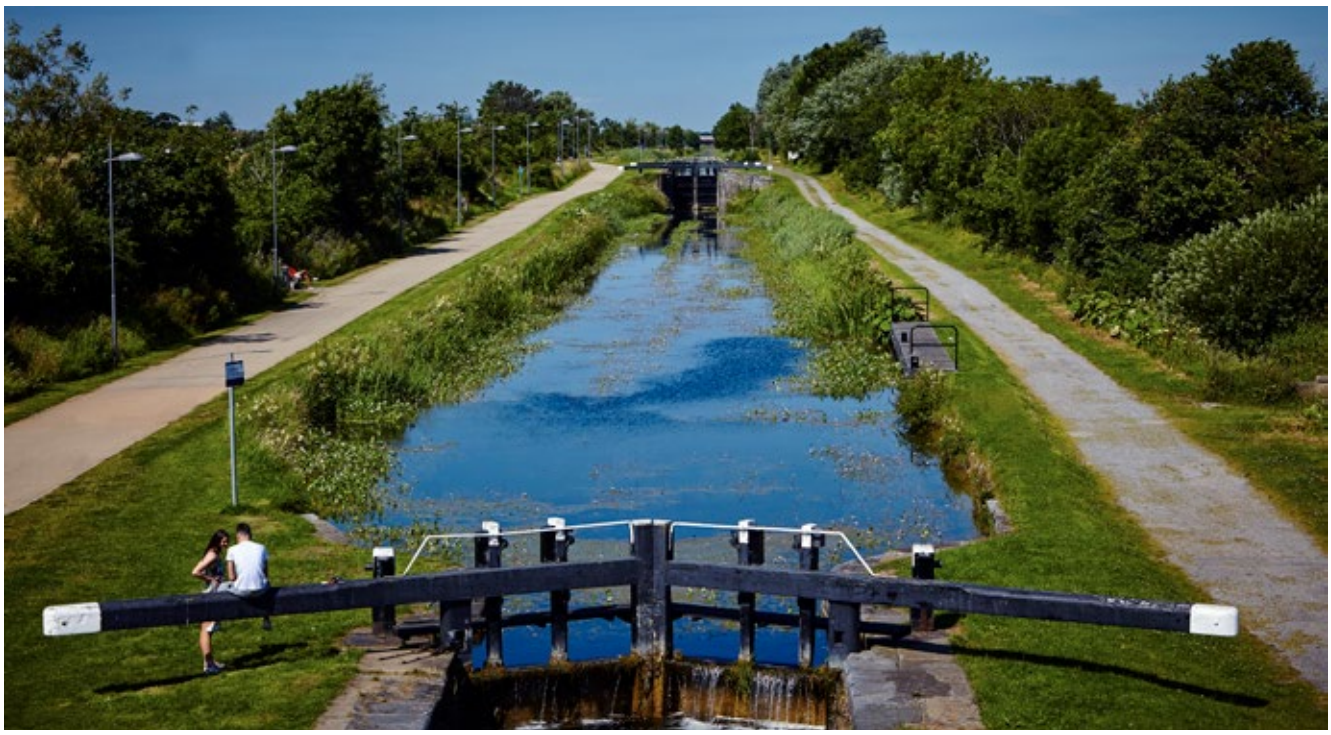
In the Dublin Metropolitan Area strategic assets include; Dublin Bay and the marine SAC from Rockabill to Dalkey; the east coast estuaries, islands and headlands, linked by the East Coast Way; the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains including the Wicklow National Park and the Wicklow Way; Special Amenity Areas at North Bull Island, Howth and Liffey Valley SAAOs; UNESCO designated sites of Dublin Bay Biosphere[16] (see case study) and the Historic city of Dublin (tentative); water corridors including the Rivers Liffey, Tolka, Santry, Mayne, Poddle, Camac, Griffeen, Dodder, Ward and Broadmeadow, the Grand and Royal Canals and regional parks including; Liffey Valley**,** Phoenix Park, Ward Valley Park, Tymon Park, Marlay Park, Killiney Hill, Father Collins Park and the proposed Dunsink and Swords Regional Parks.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

MASP Green Infrastructure

RPO 5.7: Co-ordinate across local authority boundaries to identify, manage, develop and protect regional Green Infrastructure, to enhance strategic connections and develop a Green Infrastructure policy in the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

RPO 5.8: Support the promotion and development of greenway infrastructure and facilities in the Dublin metropolitan area and to support the expansion and connections between key strategic cycle routes and greenways as set out in the NTA Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan.



16 http://www.dublinbaybiosphere.ie/

CASE STUDY:

Dublin Bay Biosphere

In 1981, UNESCO designated North Bull Island as a Biosphere because of its rare and internationally important habitats and species. In 2015, the Biosphere was expanded to over 300 km2 of Dublin Bay, reflecting its significant environmental, economic, cultural and tourism importance and to promote wider goals of conservation, learning and sustainable development. The Dublin Bay Biosphere is the world's only Biosphere located largely within a capital city.

The Biosphere comprises three zones; the core zone of high natural value including the Tolka and Baldoyle Estuaries, Booterstown Marsh, Howth Head, North Bull Island, Dalkey Island and Ireland's Eye; the surrounding buffer zone of parks, golf courses and green spaces and; the wider transition zone including residential areas, harbours, ports, industrial and commercial areas. Over 300,000 people live within the newly enlarged Biosphere.



Metropolitan Greenbelt

The principles of GI recognise the importance of semi natural and managed lands as well as wild and natural areas. Green belt and rural /agriculture land use zonings form a natural greenbelt around the built-up area of Dublin City and suburbs and some metropolitan settlements, and provides a defined natural envelope for development. Land use zonings related to green infrastructure and rural/agricultural landuses[17] form a baseline for the metropolitan greenbelt including;

- Dublin Bay and the Coastal Zone (East)
- Dublin/Wicklow mountains (South)
- Zoned Greenbelt, agricultural lands and airport lands (North and West)
- Liffey Valley, Phoenix Park and the Metropolitan Greenway Network ('green fingers' connecting rural to urban).

The EMRA supports the further development of Green Infrastructure policies in the metropolitan area to support the compact development of Dublin and the metropolitan settlements. The identification and mapping of GI assets supports the development of policies for their management and for the further development of strategic connections. The EU funded En Route project applied an ecosystem services approach[18] to support the development of Green Infrastructure policy in the Dublin region, utilising NPWS National Ecosystem Services mapping pilot[19] and Myplan.ie General Zone Types (GZTs)[20] to identify areas of importance for conservation and nature based recreation, see case study below and Figure 5.5. Refer also to Chapter 7 Environment & Climate - Guiding Principles for Green Infrastructure.

CASE STUDY:

Enhancing Resilience of urban ecosystems through Green Infrastructure (EnRoute)

EnRoute is an EU funded project to support knowledge exchange in the development of urban Green Infrastructure (GI) across 20 cities in Europe including the Dublin Region. The Irish project team included EMRA, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Government departments (DAHRG, DHPLG), local authorities (LAs) and the Dublin Bay Biosphere Partnership.

En Route produced a common set of data and indicators (based on the MAES framework) to assess and monitor the performance of urban GI in terms of ecosystem services and condition. The selection of indicators is based on local needs and includes;

- **Ecosystem services** including; recreation, pollination, coastal protection, microclimate regulation, air quality, noise reduction, carbon sequestration, flood protection and water quality.
- **Urban ecosystem condition** including; habitat conversion and land degradation, climate change, pollution, introduction of alien species, environmental quality, urban greenspace and contaminated sites.

17 Myplan.ie General Zone Types (GZTs) including 'green' (G) recreation, conservation, corridor/belt, amenity and open space and 'primary'(P) rural/ agricultural land uses
18 http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/ecosystem_assessment/
19 https://www.npws.ie/research-projects/ecosystems-services-mapping-and-assessment/story-map-viewer-and-data-downloads
20 http://www.myplan.ie/viewer/gztcoderef.htm

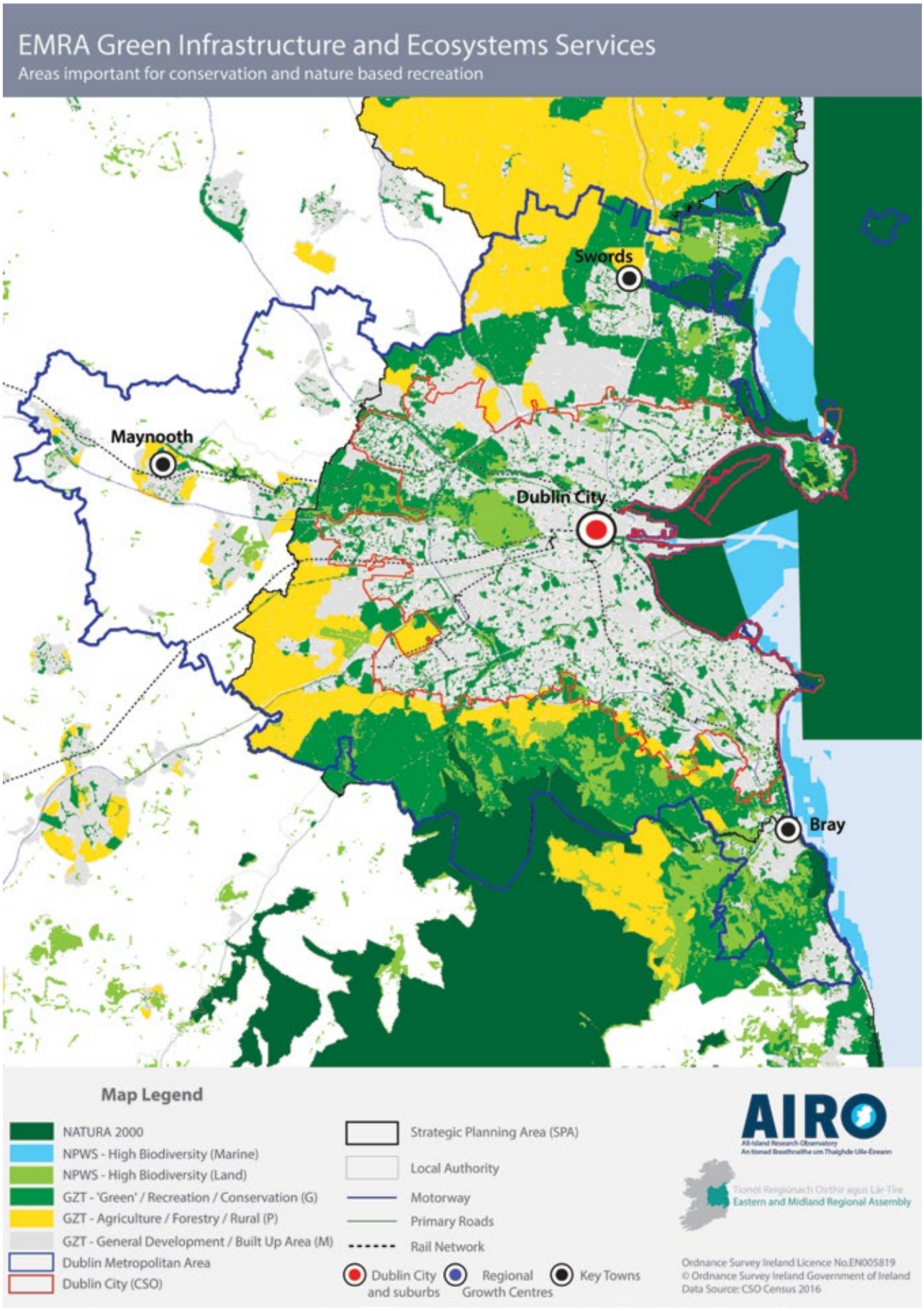


Figure 5.5 Green Infrastruture and Ecosystem services
Source: www.myplan.ie (GZT) and www.npws.ie (National Ecosystem Services mapping pilot)



6 Economy & Employment

6.1 Introduction

The Eastern and Midland Region (EMR) is a strong region that drives national progress providing more than half of what is produced and is home to one in two people living in the country. This chapter is driven by the key principle of economic opportunity. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) has identified a number of Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) which include building a resilient economic base by means of promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, developing and enhancing regional accessibility and connectivity, providing a regional framework for collaboration and partnerships, improving education skills and social inclusion, and the promotion of creative places.

This RSES – as a regional expression of the national enterprise policy Enterprise 2025 Renewed - is a principle-based framework which sets out Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) for the Region and guides relevant actors that support the development of the Region. As a statutorily based document the RSES informs effective planning and investments in placemaking throughout the Region that facilitate enterprise development among other objectives. In accordance with Project Ireland 2040 the Region will accommodate around 320,000 additional people in employment.



Enterprise Policy Hierarchy

The RSES is extremely important within the Enterprise Policy Context, sitting just below national enterprise policy in the enterprise policy hierarchy and is recognised as a vital delivery mechanism to ensure success in business and deliver sustainable employment. The Government's National Enterprise policy document 'Enterprise 2025 - Renewed' aligns itself at the national level with the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan 2018-2027 (Project Ireland 2040), whilst the policies of 'Enterprise 2025- Renewed' embrace a top down and bottom up approach that ensures realisation of the potential of regions and support enterprises to start and grow.

This national enterprise policy outlines the necessity to give effect to Project Ireland 2040 and the RSES through effective governance and coordinated implementation, ensuring prioritisation of investments that deliver impact and value for money, taking account of regional development objectives and realities. All Government departments are to align their capital expenditure over the coming years with the ambition and desired outcomes set out in the National Planning Framework. It is specifically acknowledged as part of national enterprise policy that the RSES will give greater effect to Project Ireland 2040, realising the full potential of our regions through investments in placemaking – developing places that are attractive for business investment and for people to live and work, for instance.

Enterprise Agencies

The central enterprise policy hierarchy, that includes the RSES, is supported by and informs the work and strategies of the Enterprise Agencies at national level. It further informs and supports a number of national enterprise initiatives including for instance, Future Jobs Ireland, Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) and funding allocation through funding streams such as the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) and the funds announced as part of Project Ireland 2040.

It is important to highlight the role of the agencies with responsibility for enterprise development who play a key role in the implementation of this strategy. These include IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland that operate under the auspices of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI). In addition the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) operate as the first stop shop for all small enterprises. The LEOs have been integrated into local authorities and Enterprise Ireland continues to provide the overarching strategic policy direction and coordination services. Other bodies and agencies that provide supports include Teagasc, Fáilte Ireland, Bord Bia, the Irish Film Board, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Western Development Commission, and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. Although this is not an exhaustive listing, it serves to highlight the somewhat complex enterprise environment that exists today. Appendix C gives an overview of Enterprise Agencies.

6.2 Profile

Regional Context: Jobs and Enterprise Base Profile

With employment levels nearly back to peak levels before the last economic crisis, the Region's enterprise base is well diversified with a strong proportion in services. These range from internationally traded financial and global businesses, to retail, locally traded, tourism, and public sector. Although its share in manufacturing is relatively low, it still employs more than 90,000 people.

The Region has strong concentrations and/or large employers in Biopharma, ICT, Food and Engineering sectors. There is a cohort of internationally successful Irish owned enterprises involved in engineering, serving a range of markets such as automotive, medical devices, and agri-tech. From records of state enterprise development agencies, a number of sectors displaying high levels of productivity can be identified, such as ICT related (services, facilities and consultancy), Machinery and Equipment, Electrical Equipment and Chemicals. However, overall in the Region, Services are the dominant sector.

The classification of economic activity into goods (manufacturing) and services facilitates provides an insight into the infrastructure requirements of these sectors for the RSES. Manufacturing has specific requirements for transportation infrastructure which is particularly relevant to the movement of physical goods to their markets. In the case of services, it is more about the type of infrastructure that enhances quality of life, and placemaking that attracts and retains the talent needed to operate these services. The following graph demonstrates the economic composition profile for each SPA, local authority and analytical areas[21].

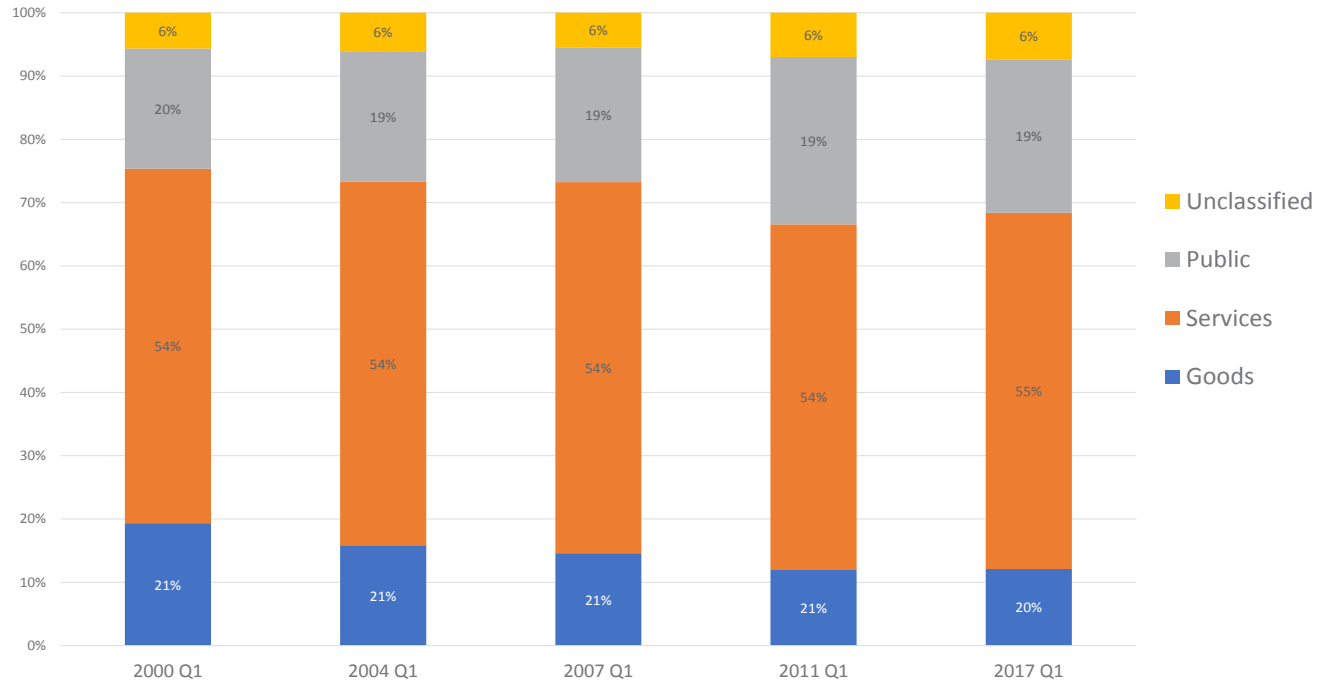


Figure 6.1 Eastern & Midland Region Total Employment
Source: DBEI

21 While the greatest concentration of jobs related to ICT, Finance and Science occur in Dublin City with more than 120,000 jobs, in contrast Longford hosts less than 1,000 of this type of jobs.

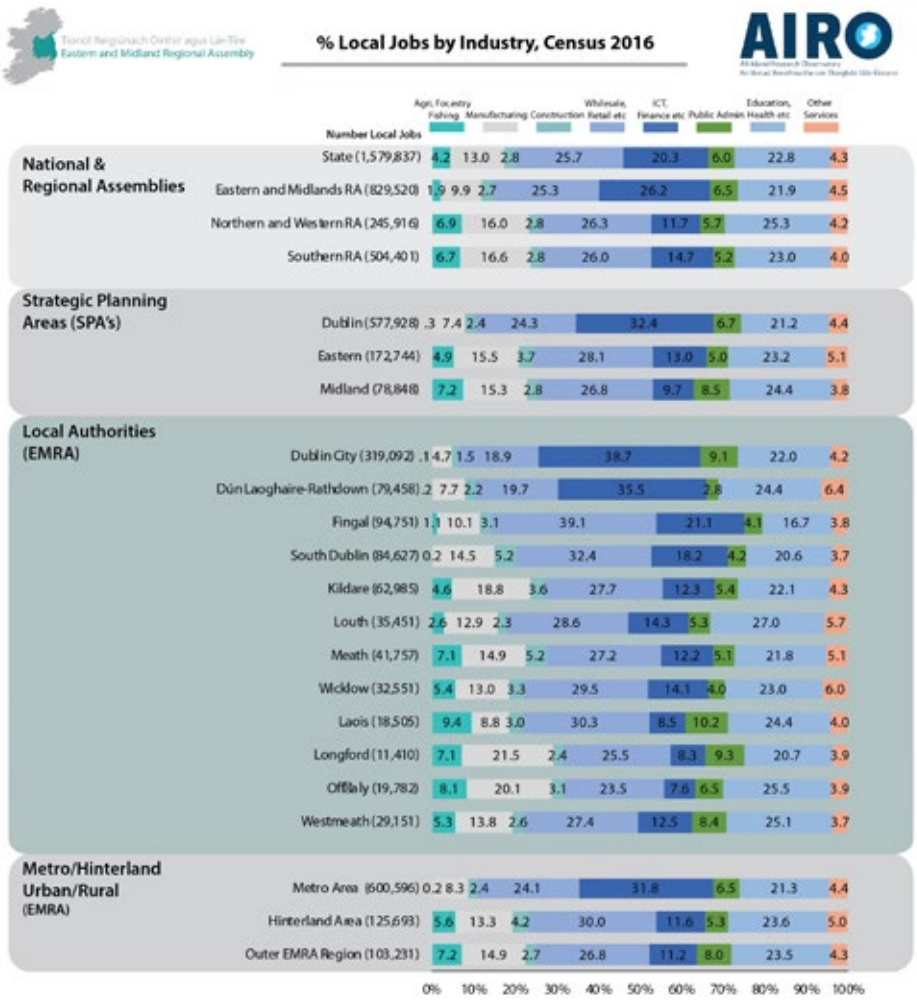


Figure 6.2 Percentage of Local Jobs by Industry

Strengths and Opportunities[22] for the EMR

The Dublin Strategic Planning Area (SPA) enjoys features that are very attractive to enterprises to locate and operate, such as its population size, a varied enterprise base, access and connectivity to national and international markets, available skills and talent pool, and sophisticated consumers as a testbed. Nevertheless, Dublin faces capacity constraints that undermine its functionality in areas such as housing and infrastructure.

The Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor - as the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland, with the cities and towns along the Corridor home to a population of around 2 million people - offers an opportunity to develop critical mass and enhance potential.

The Eastern SPA is strong in manufacturing, hosting a number of foreign owned investments of significant scale in the Technology and Pharmaceutical sectors. The Midlands SPA has strong concentrations of foreign and Irish owned companies in manufacturing - predominantly in medical devices, pharma/bio, food and engineered products.

In general, there is a challenge of satisfying the developmental needs of Dublin so that it can continue to fulfil its role as an international and national driver and economic entity in its own right, while at the same time addressing the economic potential of the rest of areas in the Region. The RSES addresses the challenge in two ways. Firstly, through an orderly growth of the Region, where the growth of Dublin is managed and facilitated, and where Regional Growth Centres increase their critical mass, all supported by an integrated network of settlements. This is addressed with the Growth and Settlement Strategy presented in Chapters 3 Growth Strategy and 4 People and Place. Secondly, the Strategy is about placemaking to facilitate the development of resilience and competitiveness in the Region's economic base, supported by entrepreneurship, skills and innovation. The Strategy aims to create the ideal conditions for enterprises and people to thrive, to create wealth and to improve quality of life for all.

22 The current REPs and LECPs in the region have enabled coordination of local stakeholders to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to each locality and sub-region.

6.3 Economic Strategy

The vision for the Region is a growth that is sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient. This requires the development of a strong economic base that is supported by enterprise, innovation and skills. The aim is for a vibrant and diversified enterprise base with strong and healthy clusters bringing disruptive technology innovations to national and global markets, with a responsive and efficient labour market.

With immediate challenges emerging such as global issues and potential vulnerabilities within Ireland's enterprise base, this RSES adopts a threefold approach:

- Firstly, sustaining what we have in the immediate term
- Secondly, transforming our enterprise base for longer term resilience, and
- Thirdly, building on our strengths to be successful in international trade while managing potential vulnerabilities.

The RSES seeks to achieve this vision through the following economic principles;

Smart Specialisation: Smart specialisation is part of the EU's cohesion policy and the Europe 2020 Strategy that focuses on each region's strengths and the activities that support these strengths. As a place-based approach, it is characterised by the identification of strategic areas for intervention based both on the analysis of the strengths and potential of the economy and on an Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) with wide stakeholder involvement. IDA, EI, LEOs, SFI and all enterprise agencies as well as Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), ensure industry, education institutions and communities play a key role in this entrepreneurial discovery process.

Smart specialisation focuses on boosting productivity, regaining lost competitiveness, increasing export intensity and diversity of markets, taking measures to improve our attractiveness as a location for investment either national or foreign, and to increase our entrepreneurial activity. Smart specialisation also recognises that supporting strong and dynamic enterprises and investing in Science, Technology and Innovation will accelerate the economic and societal return on investment. Strengthening enterprise engagement with academic research and driving more commercialisation of publicly performed research is an essential component of supporting an innovative and enterprising economy.

Clustering: These are initiatives that create, maintain, or upgrade an economic stronghold, by strengthening linkages or facilitating collective action to improve the cluster-specific business environment. Modern cluster policies aim to put in place a favourable business ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship in which new players can emerge and thus support the development of new industrial value chains and emerging industries. Clusters are more a reflection of cross-industry linkages and 'related diversification' than of narrow specialisation[23]. Clusters in the vast majority of cases are not 'created', rather they emerge, because different locations provide different types of opportunities for specific companies to invest, succeed and grow. Clusters are the result of a cumulative process, take a long time to develop and are inherently unpredictable. Nevertheless, the State can play a facilitative and supportive role. There is potential to further strengthen collaboration and clustering activities between foreign and Irish owned enterprises, and between enterprises, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and the research base.

Orderly Growth: Though the identification of locations for strategic employment development in line with our Growth and Settlement Strategy, compact growth will be achieved. This involves managing and facilitating the growth of Dublin and to increase the scale of our Regional Growth Centres to be able to provide the range of functions to their hinterlands. This needs to be facilitated by appropriate, effective and sustainable infrastructure development in these centres, and at the same time avoid sprawl. This encompasses connectedness aimed at facilitating a network of skills and talent living in our settlements. It requires a support network of infrastructure - including broadband - in order to make the Region more connected and competitive. This will help to deliver high quality jobs that are well-paid and sustainable.

23 Smart Guide to Cluster Policy, Guidebook Series – How to support SME Policy from Structural Funds, European Commission, 2016. Much of the dynamism of clusters derives from 'economies of scope' rather than static 'economies of scale'.

Placemaking: From an enterprise development perspective, investment in the creation of place is key to realising regional potential. Business leaders and entrepreneurs make the decision about where to establish, invest or expand. Internationally, and in Ireland, the trend is increasingly toward urban areas of scale and concentrations of economic activity. The global environment has become increasingly competitive – not only in terms of attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), but also in terms of the challenges facing our Irish owned enterprises as they aim to gain a foot-hold in, or diversify their export markets. Entrepreneurs and Irish owned enterprises are increasingly mobile and they are making location choices in a global context. Indeed, many now face international competition on their doorstep, reinforcing the imperative to innovate and to invest in areas of the business that improve competitiveness. In addition and in line with RSO 2 of Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration, there is a need to reduce consistent poverty rates and deprivation indices in the Region and to avoid depopulation of the smaller towns and rural areas. Similarly, region-wide unemployment blackspots require attention by identifying and addressing their causes.

In general, companies are attracted to invest in locations where they can access human capital (skills and talent), higher education institutes and lifelong learning prone environments, where people will want to live and work and where the surrounding infrastructures are supportive of business. It is a combination of factors, such as innovation capacity in the location, continuous flow of infrastructure investments to ensure connectivity, competitive services and amenities, property solutions, housing, quality of life and access to trade and markets, that delivers efficiencies, economies of scale and wider societal benefits. The Smart City concept (see section 6.6) plays to our strengths in ICT and our small international scale, and in this respect constitutes an opportunity to develop a differentiated offering, to attract mobile talent, entrepreneurship, FDI, and to stimulate innovation across all enterprise.

Future Proof and Risk Management: With emerging global development and challenges, such as Brexit, tax developments, trade wars, it is important to constantly foresee and horizon scan to identify unforeseen challenges and be ready to act upon them accordingly. See section 6.7.





Figure 6.3. The Economic Strategy

Developing a Competitive and Resilient Economic Base

Enterprise 2025 sets out a portfolio approach to sectoral development – recognising that sectors contribute in different ways in the economy, delivering value added, export growth and quality of employment throughout Ireland, see Figure 6.4.



Figure 6.4: Enterprise 2025 Renewed Sectoral Cohorts (Portfolio approach). Source: DBEI (2018).

The RSES will seek to encourage collaboration between industry and local stakeholders to grasp opportunities for enterprise development. The emergence of new opportunities can be facilitated through providing a favourable ecosystem for innovation and enterprise and a framework to stimulate the bottom-up dynamics seen in clusters and cluster initiatives.

Spatial Enterprise Strategy

Quality of Places: Creating the Right Environment

Placemaking represents an opportunity to develop a sustainable competitive advantage for the Region. Creating the right environment for enterprise and employment to thrive can deliver high-quality places, as they become attractive locations to work, live, invest, study and visit. Chapter 9 Quality of Life addresses these issues in more detail.

With a focus on business location decisions and enterprise development, the RSES introduces a Health Place Audit (HPA) see Appendix C, it provides a framework to audit the quality of specific places. The HPA is an instrument that enables the assessment of whether or not a specific place has the features that make it attractive for business, and to identify infrastructure gaps that justify and give significance to projects.

Enterprise Development and Innovation Assets – Enterprise Supporting Ecosystem

Led by DBEI, the enterprise supporting ecosystem comprises business incubation centres, community enterprise centres, accelerator development schemes, local enterprise offices, research and innovation centres with Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), technology gateways, technology centres, research centres, and IDA business and technology parks. This inventory of assets distributed in the Region aims to enable and stimulate collaboration within and across regions, playing a key role in shaping and implementing Technology Innovation Poles. Figures 6.5 and 6.6 map these assets, and Appendix C provides a complete list of these assets.



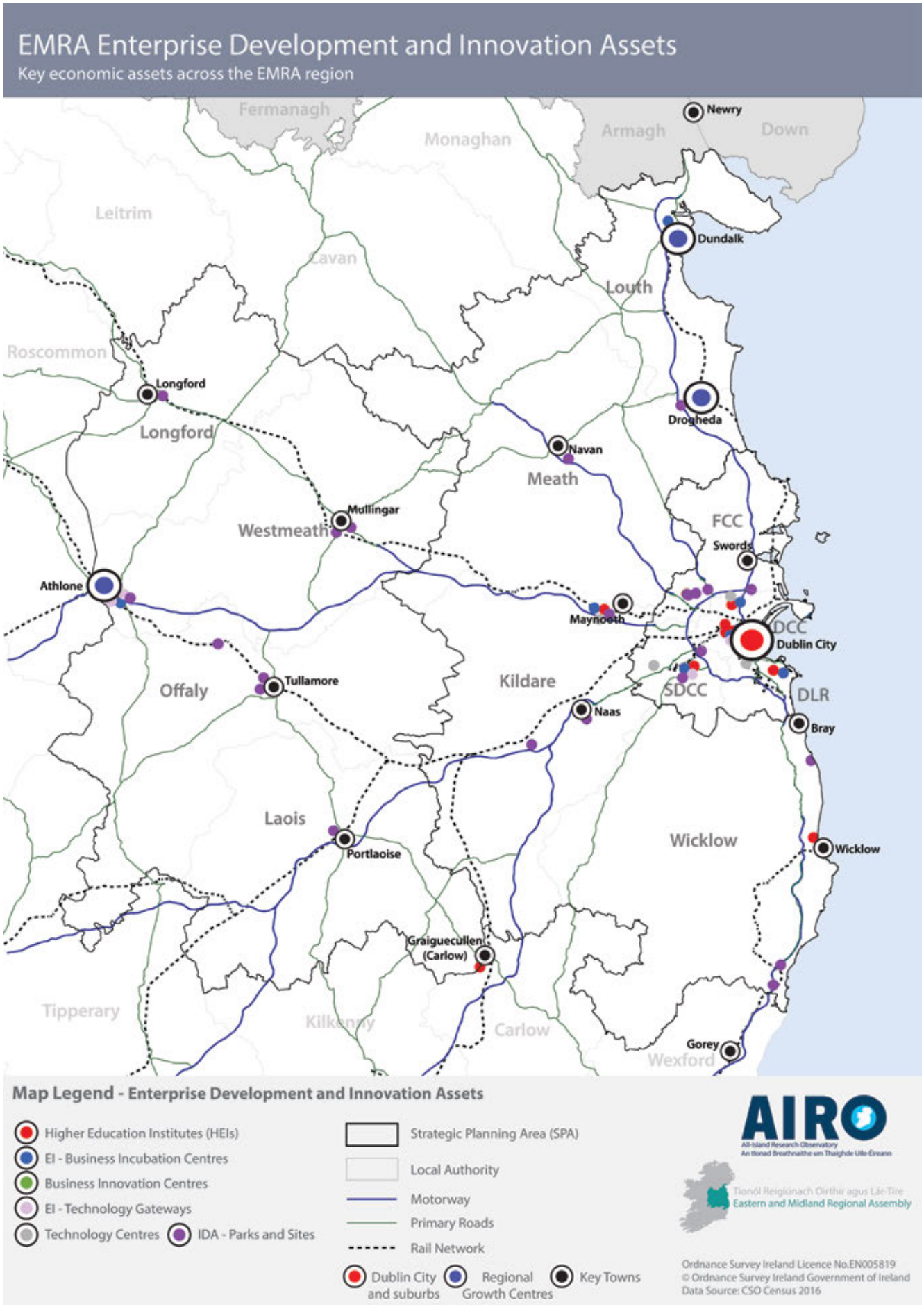


Figure 6.5 EMRA's Enterprise Development and Innovation Assets Map



Figure 6.6 Dublin SPA's Enterprise Development and Innovation Assets Map

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles to Identify Locations for Strategic Employment Development

These considerations were used as principles to identify the locations for strategic employment development as set out in Chapter 4 People and Place and Chapter 5 for the MASP. Local authorities in development plans and through LECPs should apply the same principles.

Planning to accommodate strategic employment growth at regional, metropolitan and local level should include consideration of:

- Location of Technology and Innovation Poles - Institutes of Technology (IoTs) and Universities, as key strategic sites for high-potential growth of economic activity.
- Current employment location, density of workers, land-take and resource/infrastructure dependency, including town centres, business parks, industrial estates and significant single enterprises.
- Locations for expansion of existing enterprises.
- Locations for new enterprises, based on the extent to which they are people intensive (i.e. employees/customers), space extensive (i.e. land), tied to resources, dependent on the availability of different types of infrastructure (e.g. telecoms, power, water, roads, airport, port etc.) or dependent on skills availability.
- Locations for potential relocation of enterprises that may be better suited to alternative locations and where such a move, if facilitated, would release urban land for more efficient purposes that would be of benefit to the regeneration and development of the urban area as a whole, particularly in metropolitan areas and large towns.
- Within large urban areas where significant job location can be catered for through infrastructure servicing and proximity to public transport corridors.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles for Investment Prioritisation in Placemaking for Enterprise Development

- Local authorities, REPs, and LECPs in their preparation of projects to bid for funds, shall give due regard to factors already identified as enablers of enterprise development[24], that is availability of human capital, proximity to a third level institution, transport infrastructure; broadband infrastructure; and, a diverse local sectoral mix.
- Capacity of places needs to be considered, having regard to implications of commuting on quality of life.
- Align to national strategy and approach for data centres – right location for use and energy demand.
- There is opportunity for the health / wellbeing sector with new hospitals, for instance St James.
- Focus on densification of existing built urban footprint around existing public transport corridors.
- Give due regard to enhanced functioning of global services centres, for instance the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) and advanced manufacturing centres.
- Identify and prioritise locations considering capacity, analysis of assets, with a vision for the City and the Region.
- Facilitate data gathering and cross promotion through local business intelligence units in local authorities. EMRA may facilitate shared evidence base through a regional data system/dashboard.
- Explore a 'second site' strategy for multinational corporations (MNCs) in outlying locations.
- Location specific sectors can be addressed more clearly – energy, marine, greenways, blueways, and peatlands.

24 McCoy et al. (2018) The Impact of Broadband and Other Infrastructure on the location of New Business Establishments. Journal of Regional Science.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Competitive and Resilient Economic Base

RPO 6.1: Support the national economic agencies, Local Enterprises Offices, Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committees, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders, with their plans for job creation and enterprise development with an emphasis on:

- an enterprise base with increased productivity and more diversification – including diversification of their markets - with high levels of innovation, skills adaptability, and relatively low costs of doing business.
- maintaining full-employment with unemployment rates of each Strategic Planning Area not exceeding the State average by more than one percentage point
- applying the Guiding Principles for strategic employment and investment prioritisation in placemaking for enterprise development presented in this RSES.



6.4 The Region's Economic Engines and their Sectoral Opportunities

In alignment with the Growth Strategy for the Region in Chapter 3, and in conjunction with the Settlement Strategy expressed in Chapter 4, it is an aim of the RSES that there is a convergence between where people live and work and that settlements improve the quality of life of their people.

For a country of Ireland's scale, many sectoral strategies are developed at national level – such as Agri food, Marine/ Maritime, Bioeconomy - and regional actors play a key role in their effective implementation. Nevertheless, smart specialisation can only work if choices are based on real knowledge of local potential and if the right actors are involved, therefore a bottom-up approach is also necessary. For instance, when considering the development of sectoral opportunities, it is important to consider the past and current industrial composition in that particular location, as new sectors may require fundamentally different assets compared to those available in the location.

Furthermore, there are place-specific needs from particular industries, such as proximity to high energy services infrastructure, water capacity, availability of a large pool of potential employees, proximity to public transport, access to international markets through airports and ports, and serviced lands. These issues should be considered by local authorities in their economic zoning objectives in development plans and objectives in LECPs to anticipate and respond to the needs of existing enterprise and realise sectoral opportunities, examples include retail, marine and energy production.

The pervasiveness of digitisation across all sectors compounds the complexity of sector development, and it provides for constant and rapid evolution of emerging technologies including artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and virtual reality.

Based on information from REPs, LECPs, localised enterprise strategies and other stakeholders with regards to the presence of strong sectors in their localities and considering sectoral growth trends, a list of sectoral opportunities has been identified for Dublin, Dublin-Belfast Economic corridor, Regional Growth Centres, towns and villages. These sectoral opportunities should be considered by all enterprise development stakeholders, including REPs and local authorities, giving due regard to the sectoral strategies envisaged at national level. This list is not exhaustive and should not be viewed as a limitation.

Dublin Metropolitan Area

As Ireland's Capital with international visibility, Dublin plays a key role as a location of choice for mobile investment. Dublin competes with other cities based throughout Europe and internationally. It is a competitive, world class city of scale that provides access to a multilingual skills base, that facilitates mobility of people and international access.

Dublin as national economic driver is the only city in Ireland with international scale. It hosts a variety of enterprises with large concentration of multi-nationals; a large number of universities, institutes and research centres with a young and well-educated population. All these features translates into:

- Dublin Metropolitan area with a strong capacity to attract FDI, and
- A large amount of new business formation - start-ups - and a high concentration of organisations dedicated to research and development, which suggests a critical mass of businesses in a healthy ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship.

We can be, and should be, ambitious for our Capital City as we deliver on Project Ireland 2040. A coordinated and strategic approach to deliver on a truly smart city would not only elevate Ireland's visibility internationally, but also provide a seed-bed for start-ups and a test bed for the deployment of disruptive technologies.

Sectoral Opportunities Dublin and Eastern SPAs

Having regard to the strengths of its own enterprise base, Dublin should explore opportunities for further development on Fintech, CorpTech, personalised and regenerative medicine, internet of things, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, technology consulting, sharing economy, international education services, investment management and administration, and marine energy. The Dublin Regional Enterprise strategy (2017-2019) identifies key sectors and employment levels, together with the clustering of activity and supports across the Region, including: administration; professional services; tourism and leisure; education and training; manufacturing and industry; transport and logistics; construction; information and communication technology, and, retail and wholesale. Current REPs and LECPs identify manufacturing, distribution and logistics, technology, pharmaceutical, equine foods, and creative industries/film.

Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor

The Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor is a key element in the development of the RSES (see Chapter 3 Growth Strategy). The Corridor is underpinned by a strong presence of transport infrastructure that connects the two main cities of scale on the Island. Its area of influence hosts a combined population- between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland- of more than 3.3 million people of which Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry are part.

The Corridor has the capacity to provide the only potential paired city growth pole of scale on the Island- reaching a European benchmark 5 million population target to compete with similar city regions in the EU. The imperative to counteract BREXIT with a proactive spatial economic policy adds to the international significance of the Corridor. It also provides opportunities to further Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), for example with the Louth Pharma hub at the centre of the Corridor, and the e-payments cluster. By increasing its critical mass, population and jobs growth will take place in a sustainable growth pattern focused on clusters and smart specialisation, in line with the Region's Economic and Settlement Strategy. The Corridor also offers extended strategic connections throughout the Island through links with the TEN-T network and the Dublin- Rosslare route.

Sectoral Opportunities Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (including Dundalk and Drogheda)

Advanced manufacturing, smart manufacturing, biopharma, bioprocessing, applied nanotechnology, alcoholic beverages, marine energy, energy storage, wind energy, advance manufacturing, experiential tourism, and Fintech.

Regional Growth Centres: Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk

The role of these Regional Growth Centres within the RSES is to serve as a focal point to gain critical mass and to deliver positive impacts to their surrounding areas and enhance overall regional and national growth (see Chapter 4 People and Place). A coordinated approach to infrastructure investment will be taken for the development of all urban centres and inter-connections in order to build greater levels of critical mass and to facilitate effective movement of goods and people internationally and nationally.

The presence of Third level institutes in Athlone and Dundalk can play an increasingly strong role as key drivers of economic growth. These Technology and Innovation Poles envisage building facilities, developing the expertise and supportive capabilities of the Institutes of Technologies (IoTs) working with Enterprise Ireland (EI) and IDA. The IoTs can play a key role as drivers of enterprise activity across the Regions through inter-institutional connections and impactful collaboration.

Sectoral Opportunities Midlands (including Athlone)

Advanced manufacturing, smart manufacturing, medical devices, implanted devices, pharma/bio, food and engineered products, advanced composite materials, applied nanotechnology, technology consulting, Food and Beverage Industry including sustainable foods, meat products, agri-biologicals, bio-refining, bio-conversion, biotechnology, smart construction, Tourism including experiential tourism, precision farming, global engineering services outsourcing, drug delivery services, renewable energy, Big Data and Data Analytics.

Key Towns, Self- Sustaining Growth Towns and Self- Sustaining Towns

The RSES Growth Strategy set out in Chapter 3 and settlement hierarchy in Chapter 4 identifies Key Towns, Self- Sustaining Growth Towns and Self- Sustaining Towns, the latter categories being defined at county development plan stage.

Key Towns, strong market/sub county towns are locations that have an economic function that provides employment for their surrounding areas and have a wide catchment. In many cases these areas have varying economies and sectors and the Strategy will support their sustainable growth.

Rural Places: Towns, Villages and the Countryside

The Action Plan for Rural Development set for 2020 aims to protect and promote the sense of place and culture and the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish rural landscape that make Ireland's rural areas authentic and attractive as places to live, work and visit.

The current Action Plan places a major focus on strengthening Ireland's rural fabric and supporting the communities who live there; Planning for the future growth and development of rural areas, including addressing decline, with a special focus on activating the potential for the renewal and development of smaller towns and villages; Putting in place planning and investment policies to support job creation in the rural economy; addressing connectivity gaps; better co-ordination of existing investment programmes dealing with social inclusion, rural development and town and village renewal.

Sectoral Opportunities Key Towns, Self- Sustaining Growth Towns, Self- Sustaining Towns and Rural Places

Precision farming, biotechnology, Tourism including experiential tourism, food and beverage products, functional food premium, renewable energy, solar energy microgeneration, wind energy, energy storage, and low carbon construction.

The smaller towns and the rural economy are an important part of the social fabric in the Region. There is a need for promotion in rural places of new economic opportunities arising from digital connectivity and indigenous innovation and enterprise as well as more traditional natural and resource assets (e.g. food, energy, tourism), underpinned by the quality of life offering.

New business formation and innovation in rural areas depend on drivers such as the presence of human capital, proximity and access to higher education institutions, ICT infrastructure including broadband, transport infrastructure and the presence of a wide sectoral mix.

The Partnership Companies, Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), Local Enterprise Centres and LECPs in rural areas should prioritise regeneration of town and village cores, promotion of local industry and enable the ambition of all places and enhance quality of life.

CASE STUDY:

Irish Rural Link Programme

Irish Rural Link (IRL), is a national network of organisations and individuals campaigning for sustainable rural development in Ireland and Europe. IRL, a non-profit organisation directly represents over 600 community groups and is a member of the Community and Voluntary Pillar of Social Partnership.

The network provides a structure through which rural groups and individuals, representing disadvantaged rural communities, can articulate their common needs and priorities, share their experiences and present their case to policy-makers at local, national and European Level. Projects include the Farm Safety Programme, National Rural Network and Local Public Banking and a number of EU funded projects.[25]

Local authorities should enable the identification of regeneration and rural development projects within existing towns and villages by identifying and quantifying available land (serviced or with potential to be serviced) and vacant buildings. Cross-boundary and inter-regional partnerships should be prioritised and nurtured. For instance, the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project brings together the counties of Cavan, Leitrim, Roscommon and Longford to explore and develop opportunities in renewable energy, tourism, and digital strategies.

Local authorities may leverage the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network, Chambers of Commerce and business networks to expand and diversify their rural enterprise base (see Figures 6.5 and 6.6 Enterprise Development and Innovation Assets maps for Dublin and the Region).

The Assembly, through its European functions, will assist in leveraging of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy to improve agricultural productivity, ensuring that farmers earn a reasonable living, help to address climate change, maintain rural areas and landscapes and keep the rural economy alive.

It is an ambition of the RSES to stimulate a greater number of start-ups, more export focussed companies, and to enhance the business survival rates overall in the Region. Many companies will continue to trade on the domestic market and they play an important role in Ireland's economy across a broad range of sectors and activities. In terms of employment-intensive sectors such as retail, tourism, construction, education and health, while these may not be the focus of an export-led technology-focussed economic strategy they are core employers in the Region and will continue to do so. These sectors also have significant implications for the RSO of placemaking and creating attractive environments in which to live and work.

While the RSES seeks to anticipate and plan for jobs growth and economic development, new and unexpected opportunities for enterprise development are likely to arise for particular locational reasons, such as local resources, skills, assets, innovation or quality of life.

CASE STUDY:

Boyne Valley Food Hub

The Boyne Valley region has been synonymous with food production and trade as far back as 10,000 years ago. The Boyne Valley Food Hub is a flagship project of Boyne Valley Food Innovation District in partnership with local authorities and LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia, IDA, Teagasc and with leading universities and industry. The aim is to accelerate the growth of the agri-food sector through collaboration, innovation, and clustering to support scalable, sustainable and profitable food businesses in Meath, Louth, Kildare and Wicklow.

Boyne Valley Food Hub packages a number of industry deliverables including food units for start-up and scaling food business, a community kitchen, a Food Innovation and Research Lab and onsite food technologist and business development manager, to support food innovation programmes.

25 www.irishrurallink.ie

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Unexpected Opportunities for Enterprise Development

RPO 6.2: Support local authorities to ensure their LECPs and city and county development plans are sufficiently agile to account for unexpected opportunities, to accommodate valid propositions for enterprise development that may emerge and for which there are strong locational drivers that do not apply to the same extent elsewhere.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor

RPO 6.3: Support the effective planning and development of large centres of population and employment along the main economic corridor, in particular Drogheda and Dundalk.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Rural Economy

RPO 6.4: Local authorities shall identify measures in LECPs for regeneration in small towns and villages cores.

RPO 6.5: Local authorities shall explore projects in LECPs for the enhancement of the competitiveness of their rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability. Cross-boundary and inter-regional partnerships are encouraged and they will be supported.

RPO 6.6: Support local authorities to explore mechanisms for the emergence of a diversified sectoral mix in rural areas. This includes the identification of appropriate locations to drive regeneration of these rural towns and villages for example by the provision of serviced sites for housing and co-working/incubator space near Institutes of Technology to facilitate technological spillovers through greater connections and linkages.

RPO 6.7: Support local authorities to develop sustainable and economically efficient rural economies through initiatives to enhance sectors such as agricultural and food, forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bioeconomy, tourism, and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage.

RPO 6.8: To support the sustainable development of tourism in the Region in line with the strategic objectives of both Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands experience brand propositions.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Regional Enterprise Plans

RPO 6.9: The Regional Assembly supports the Regional Enterprise Plans to focus on;

- Support a high level of economic success throughout the region by building on local strengths and regional innovation capacity.
- Position and support the growth of the Midlands as an advanced manufacturing centre of excellence.
- Leverage opportunities in big data and data analytics from iLOFAR.
- Ensure that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy.
- Increase enterprise engagement in innovation, research and development to ensure Dublin's continued competitiveness and productivity.
- Build a pipeline of sustainable and scalable start-ups in Dublin and provide quality support.
- Develop the Mid-East as a hub for the Screen Content Creation Sector.
- Build an ecosystem framework to support the financial services, payments and agri-food sectors throughout the Region.
- Develop a network of innovative co-working spaces in the region to mitigate long commuting times, promote remote working opportunities and life-style benefits.

6.5 Specific Sectors: Retail, Tourism, Marine, Low Carbon Economy and Agriculture

The following specific sectors- as labour intensive economic activities - are of particular importance to the Region, given their sensitivity for job creation, maintenance and sustainability.

Retail

The retail sector is a significant employer and economic contributor in the Region. It also plays a key role in placemaking and creating attractive liveable environments. As a significant attractor it enables the provision of strong mixed-use commercial cores throughout the network of city, towns and villages in the Region and can play a key role in the regeneration of areas.

The Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 are designed to ensure retail development is plan-led, to promote city centre vitality through the sequential approach to development, enable good quality development in appropriate locations, facilitate a modal shift; all to deliver quality urban design outcomes.

The Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008 was prepared by the Dublin and the Mid-East Regional Authorities (now dissolved). The retail hierarchy as expressed in the GDA strategy is substantially reflected in current city and county development plans, and is presented here combined with the existing retail hierarchy in the remainder of the Region that was not included in the GDA. It is recognised that the floorspace thresholds detailed in the GDA strategy were prepared in a different economic climate and in many cases are still to be reached. In this regard, EMRA will support and drive the preparation of a new retail strategy for the Region under the requirements of the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, or any subsequent update, to update this hierarchy and apply floorspace requirements for the Region.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Retail Strategies and Retail Planning Guidelines

RPO 6.10: EMRA will support the preparation of a Retail Strategy / Strategies for the Region in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, or any subsequent update, to update the retail hierarchy and apply floorspace requirements for the Region.

RPO 6.11: Future provisions of significant retail development within the Region shall be consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, or any subsequent update, and the retail hierarchy for the Region, expressed in the RSES, until such time as this hierarchy is updated.



Table 6.1 Retail Hierarchy for the Region	
Level 1	**Metropolitan Centre**
	Dublin City Centre
Level 2	**Major Town Centres & County (Principal) Town Centres**
	Dún Laoghaire: Dún Laoghaire, Dundrum
	Fingal: Swords, Blanchardstown
	Kildare: Naas /Newbridge, Maynooth
	Laois: Portlaoise
	Longford: Longford
	Louth: Drogheda, Dundalk
	Meath: Navan
	Offaly: Tullamore
	South Dublin: Tallaght, Liffey Valley
	Westmeath: Athlone, Mullingar
	Wicklow: Bray, Wicklow
Level 3	**Town And/Or District Centres & Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centres)**
	Dublin City: Finglas, Northside Shopping Centre, Ballyfermot, Rathmines, Crumlin Shopping Centre, Donaghmede Shopping Centre, Omni**,** Ballymun, Point Village and Poolbeg, Clongriffin / Belmayne, Phibsborough, Naas Road
	Fingal: Malahide, Balbriggan, Skerries, Charlestown
	South Dublin: Adamstown, Crumlin (Ashleaf), Clonburris, Clondalkin, Citywest, Kilnamanagh, Lucan, Rathfarnham
	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown: Stillorgan, Blackrock, Cornelscourt, Nutgrove, Cherrywood
	Wicklow: Greystones, Arklow, Blessington (Baltinglass, Rathdrum, Newtownmountkennedy)
	Meath: Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Trim (Laytown/Bettystown)
	Kildare: Celbridge, Kilcock, Kilcullen, Athy, Kildare, Monasterevin, Clane, Leixlip
	Laois: Portarlington, Graiguecullen
	Louth: Ardee, Drogheda District Centre: Matthews' Lane, Dundalk District Centres: Dublin Road & Ard Easmuinn
	Offaly: Birr, Edenderry
	Westmeath: Castlepollard
	Longford: Granard
Level 4	**Neighbourhood Centres, Local Centres-Small Towns And Villages**
Level 5	**Corner Shops/Small Villages**

Framework for Town Centre Renewal

The concepts of vitality and viability are central to maintaining and enhancing town centres. Keeping a town vibrant and responsive to the needs of the community is an ongoing challenge and a greater range of supports need to be put in place to enable successful town centre renewal. These supports could include administrative supports by local authorities, training supports for town centre coordinators or other town stakeholders and financial supports such as grants for office fit outs, shop front grants, or supports for starting businesses and the Town and Village Renewal scheme and urban and rural regeneration funding.

The Framework for Town Centre Renewal (Retail Consultation Forum, 2017) sets out an action plan for Town Centre renewal which has the potential to support viable and sustainable towns and villages that meet the long-term needs of our society, economy and environment. Refer to Chapter 9 Quality of Life for additional policies in relation to placemaking.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Town Centre Renewal

RPO 6.12: Local authorities shall include objectives in development plans and local area plans supporting emphasis on placemaking for town centres, for example through inclusion of a Placemaking Strategy for towns and implementation of Town Centre Renewal Plans.

RPO 6.13: Local authorities shall support the preparation of Design Guidelines to provide for improvements in the appearance of streetscapes and for revitalising vacant spaces for example with cost effective, temporary uses that build on the longer-term vision for space.

RPO 6.14: EMRA will support the use of targeted financial incentives to re-establish the dominant role of town centres provided for in planning policy to encourage a greater take up of town centre development opportunities for retail, residential, commercial, and leisure uses.

Tourism

A safe, clean environment, scenic landscapes and rich heritage contribute greatly to our cultural identity and quality of life, and are key attractions for overseas visitors to the island of Ireland. The Government's Tourism Policy Statement People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025 sets the Government's primary objectives for tourism i.e. to increase overseas visitors and revenue and the associated employment whilst protecting our natural, built and cultural assets. The 'Action Plan for Rural Development Realising our Rural Potential' highlights the potential of activity tourism to contribute to economic growth in rural areas.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport Policy Document People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism To 2025 makes a number of policy proposals that are relevant to the planning of tourism, namely;

- Protecting heritage assets through sustainable tourism
- Targeting high growth potential areas
- Incorporate Cultural and Sports-based Offerings
- Respecting Brand Architecture and the Environment
- Need to optimise Air and Sea Connections
- Need to facilitate inter-modal transport transfers
- Support for Cross-Border Tourism

Natural and Cultural Tourism Assets

The Region has a varied and rich tourism offering from the cultural draw/assets of the capital city, to the long sandy beaches and cliff walks along the east coast that extend north to the Cooley Peninsula and connect with the Mournes and Sliabh Gullion in Northern Ireland. The Midlands has a diverse and relatively unspoilt landscape presenting a broad range of tourism related opportunities in its inland waterways, lakes, canals, rivers, mountains, forests, parks, eskers, peatlands, architecture and historical demesnes.

People have lived, farmed and visited the Region from prehistoric times shaping the landscape that we have today. From the Neolithic passage graves of the Boyne Valley, to the royal seat of the High Kings at Tara, to the monasteries of Glendalough, Clonmacnoise and Monasterboice and their round towers which offered protection from Viking invasions, to the Cistercian abbeys of Bective and Mellifont which brought agricultural reform, to historic Dublin Castle, to the Walled Towns of Trim, Castledermot and Drogheda, the planned estates of Abbeyleix and Castletown House. The Peatlands of the Bog of Allen and the plains of the Curragh are unique landscapes in the Region.

The inland waterways of the Grand and Royal Canals; and the Rivers Barrow, Boyne, Liffey and Shannon, are the foundation of a blueway tourism product (see Chapter 7 Environment & Climate). There is the potential for a coast to coast network of national greenways, including the Royal and Grand Canals and the Barrow Way, with regional water-based trails along the Old Rail Trail Greenway, and the Boyne Valley greenway on the old Kingscourt line. A number of potential local leisure trails include the Dublin Bay Sutton to Sandycove route, the Dodder Greenway and Tolka River and Carlingford to Newry.

Fáilte Ireland has identified that our landscape and heritage are the key driver for the promotion of Ireland's tourism, followed by its people, its safe environment and its range of attractions. There is an inextricable link between the Region's landscape, agriculture and tourism offer. The vast array of built, cultural and natural assets that are the cornerstone of our tourism product need adequate resources to sustain them. Our natural and cultural landscapes are a finite resource with varying degrees of carrying capacity. The quality of our natural scenery and physical environment, built heritage, and the range of activities for visitors, are areas in which national, regional and local government have a key role to play, through conservation and preservation of that which is irreplaceable and the sustainable development of that which enhances the visitor's overall experience.

Three of the four Fáilte Ireland's regional tourism brands are based in the Region: Dublin- Surprising by Nature, Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Their research has identified niche areas such as food, heritage and cycling tourism which can be built into unique tourism product offerings for each of their regional tourism brands.

Fáilte Ireland is creating a framework to develop and deliver visitor experience development plans (VEDPs) across the Country to underpin these brands, and to address the issues of regionality and seasonality in Ireland. Through collaboration and partnership, stakeholders and industry must join together to develop a joint plan and commit to delivery of its actions. A VEDP has already been prepared for Ireland's Ancient East. This will enable clusters and geographies to amplify their local tourism offering in a compelling and motivating way for international tourists and encourage increased visits, dwell time and spend in the locality.

CASE STUDY:

Lough Boora Discovery Park



Increasing areas of Bord na Móna peatlands are becoming cutaway and have potential for beneficial uses including renewable energy, biodiversity, amenity uses, water storage and other infrastructure. Lough Boora Discovery Park is an example of a cutaway area that has been developed as an amenity with high biodiversity value, with restored wetland and woodland habitats.

Lough Boora, which once supplied over a million tonnes of peat every year, is now a sanctuary for wildlife, with a visitor centre and 24 land sculptures, inspired by the area's industrial heritage. It is also a prime outdoor recreation attraction with an extensive network of off road walkways and cycle paths, including the Mesolithic Route, one of the most important historic sites in Ireland. Lough Boora now attracts over 100,000 visitors a year.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Natural and Cultural Tourism Assets

RPO 6.15: Support the preparation and implementation of Visitor Experience Development Plans within the Region to underpin the overarching regional tourism brands and to deliver greater tourism benefits and to promote the natural and cultural assets of the Region.

RPO 6.16: Support working with relevant landowners and recreational/ tourism agencies to increase access to the countryside and coastal areas to ensure maintenance of the existing network.

RPO 6.17: Support the maintenance of, and enhanced access to state and semi-state lands such as National Parks, Forest Parks, Waterways, etc., together with Monuments and Historic Properties, for recreation and tourism purposes. Access should be planned and managed in a sustainable manner that protects environmental sensitivities, ecological corridors, and the ability of local infrastructure to support increased tourism.

RPO 6.18: Support the preparation and implementation of local authority tourism strategies and diaspora strategies. All tourism strategies and plans should include clear monitoring protocols to monitor the ongoing effect of tourism on sensitive features with particular focus on natural and built heritage assets.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Tourism

RPO 6.19: Support the local strategies that are already in place to link the River Shannon Blueway, The Royal and Grand Canal Greenways and the proposed Barrow Blueway right across the Midlands, incorporating the towns of Longford, Athlone, Mullingar, Tullamore and Portarlington.

RPO 6.20: Support Offaly County Council, Bord na Móna and Coillte in the development of the 'Midlands Cycling Destination- Offaly'.

Investing in the Tourism Product

There needs to be a recognition that investment is needed in the assets themselves in terms of ensuring their sustainability and ability to support a growing tourism industry. Adequate recognition of the value of investing in heritage conservation will reduce the potential conflict with loss of authenticity and appreciation of a place, tourism provision and more informed planning decisions. Investing in heritage in terms of placemaking will benefit not just tourism but the local citizen.

There is a commitment from government in the 'Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018 - 2027' to invest in the sustainable tourism potential of our culture and heritage infrastructure. The ambition is for a world-class cultural and heritage infrastructure as well as providing a world-class visitor experience for people coming to our national parks and reserves.

To come to an area, visitors need reassurance that there will be enough attractions to see and activities to do during the day, a sufficient range of accommodation options and a night-time economy to provide evening options. The most effective and efficient way to deliver this for visitors is through destination towns. Many of these towns already deliver well to fulfil the needs and desires of our visitors, particularly in established tourist destinations. Others, however, both within established destination areas and outside them, require varying degrees of improvement and investment across a wide range of touchpoints including transport links, accommodation supply, public realm attractions, restaurants, a night-time economy, visitor management etc.



A Framework for Destination Towns across Ireland, prepared by Fáilte Ireland, will ensure that the standard for these towns is raised and they are transformed into destination towns that satisfy the needs and desires of our tourists. To do this, it assigns and sustains different roles to the two main types of destination towns based on their tourism functions:

- Always-On Destination Towns are usually larger towns that offer a full range of year-round facilities at scale. They will usually be the main transport hub for the Region (often at the end of main national arterial road and rail routes); have a wide range of accommodation types and supply; have conference, hotel, restaurant and shopping facilities that are open all year; and considered to be the main hub for the Region.
- Seasonal Destination Towns offer a full range of smaller-scale seasonal facilities. They scale down – often significantly – during the off season, offering only local services while relying on the 'always-on' destination towns to provide support for those tourists who do visit in the off season. However, during the peak season they will offer transport services, medium/small-scale hotels, B&Bs, holiday homes, attractions, restaurants, cafés, pubs etc. They also function as activity hubs from where visitors can explore the wider rural area.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Identification of Destination Towns

RPO 6.21: EMRA will work with local authorities and Fáilte Ireland to identify destination towns within the Region for the prioritisation of investment and supports to drive tourism growth in the Region, to spread the benefit of tourism throughout the Region and to encourage the increase of tourism product development.

Marine

Development opportunities in the marine or blue economy relate to fishing, renewables, new applications for health and medicine, and tourism to name a few.

Marine resources provide many non-commercial benefits too, for example amenity, biodiversity and climate regulation. Given the increasing demand for marine space, the forthcoming National Marine Spatial Plan will enable stakeholders and the public to ensure a joined up approach in planning and management. Further RPOs with regard to the development of the blue economy and maritime heritage are dealt with in Chapter 7 Environment & Climate.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Marine Economy

RPO 6.22: EMRA support the preparation of the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) to ensure alignment, and consistency between land use and ocean based planning, and to ensure co-ordination which supports the protection of the marine environment and the growth of the Marine economy.

Low Carbon Economy and Circular Economy

An acceleration of the transformation of our economic activities and the way we live towards a more sustainable setting is one of our main aspirations.

Section 7.9, Climate Change, provides further detail on the approach the RSES adopts to transform our Region into a low carbon and circular Region. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity for the Region's enterprise and innovation ecosystem to explore sectoral opportunities in industries that employ green technologies and are in line with our National Adaptation Framework.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Low Carbon and Circular Economy

RPO 6.23: Support enterprise development agencies and LEOs on the development of industries that create and employ green technologies and take measures to accelerate the transition towards a low carbon economy and circular economy.

Agriculture

Agriculture is intrinsically linked to our national identity and the agri-food sector is one of Ireland's most important indigenous manufacturing sectors. The agri-food and drink sector in Ireland in 2016 generated 7% of gross value added (€13.9 billion), and accounts for almost 10% of employment when processing and marketing are included. Because agri-food companies source most of their raw materials and services from Irish suppliers, this sector produces a far bigger return than other traded sectors of the economy.

Agricultural production, sustainability, food security and health are closely linked and there is a growing recognition on the value of agricultural land, particularly in areas that are experiencing strong urbanisation pressures. There is a need to ensure both the protection of the agriculture industry and the rural landscape that supports it. This includes recognising the value of horticultural land, protecting the resource productivity of agricultural land and addressing development pressures and the potential impact that Brexit will have on agriculture and food exports throughout the region.

Agriculture is both highly exposed to and is a significant contributor of Climate Change, accounting for over a third of all national emissions. Current quantity and export driven Irish agriculture targets are set out in Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025. There is a need to align our climate targets and the future proofing of the agricultural economy and to establish sustainable farming practices and production methods. The Smart Farming programme promotes the adoption of resource efficiency measures that demonstrate both cost savings and environmental benefits.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Agriculture

RPO 6.24: Support the Departments of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and Communications, Climate Action and Environment to enhance the competitiveness of the agriculture sector with an urgent need for mitigation as well as real and effective and adaptation mechanisms for the long-term sustainability of the agri-sector.

6.6 Drivers for Resilient, Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth

Economic growth is driven by productivity growth which in turn is underpinned by skills, innovation, infrastructure, trade, and our enterprise ecosystem.

Skills and Talent

It is people who innovate, who have ideas, who build networks to produce and grow our economy. The ability to develop, nurture, retain and attract talent is critical in today's dramatically changing world, therefore education and training institutions are needed to develop our people's skills and talent. However, it needs to be ensured that the skills are appropriate and relevant to the needs of the individual, the economy and society as a whole. The National Skills Council (NSC) advises on prioritisation and delivery of identified skills needs, and Regional Skills Fora managers[26] foster stronger links between employers and the education and training sector.

Although progress has been made with Apprenticeship and traineeship programmes[27], there are still challenges on lifelong learning with the national rate below the European average. Particular shortfalls are amongst the employed, workers over the age of 35 and those who do not hold a third level qualification.

Innovation

The collective capacity to innovate is one of the most important sources to improve productivity and maintain competitiveness for the Region. Innovation 2020 sets up the national strategy for research development, science and technology, it identifies the actions for supporting innovation in enterprise, education for innovation, and innovation for social progress in the economy.

The DBEI Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) aims to encourage collaboration in science, technology and innovation to increase our innovation capacity, and it draws from the Research Priority Areas 2018-2023, see Table 6.2.

The Region is home to a wide range of organisations engaged in innovation, such as education institutions and research centres[28], most of which are located in the Dublin Metropolitan Area, Athlone and Dundalk. This is a key strength of the Region that can be capitalised upon.

26 The Fora have been established to align with wider Government policy and initiatives on regional economic development, including the Regional Action Plans for Jobs, Education and Training Providers Enterprise agencies, local authorities, INTREO. Various Government departments and agencies, representatives of enterprise and employers in each region. The Fora main activities and outcomes: Engagements, Forum Specific Event Participation, Signposting, Industry Involvement with Education Provision HE, Relationship building, Skills needs assessments, and Apprenticeship/Traineeship Development.

27 Recently the Apprenticeship Council developed programmes in the areas of insurance practice, electrical engineering, accounting technician and international financial services. A total of 8 new traineeship programmes have been developed and rolled out in 2017 in areas such as hospitality, animation and engineering.

28 http://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/Find-a-Research-Partner/Research-Map-of-Ireland/

Table 6.2 Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF)

Themes	Priority Areas
ICT	Future Networks, Communications and Internet of Things
	Data Analytics Management, Security, Privacy, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence (including Machine Learning), Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality
	Digital Platforms, Content and Applications
Health and Wellbeing	Connected Health and Independent Living,
	Medical Devices
	Diagnostics
	Therapeutics
Food	Food for Health, Smart and Sustainable Food Production and Processing
Energy, Climate Action and Sustainability	Decarbonising the Energy System and Sustainable Living
Manufacturing and Materials	Advanced and Smart Manufacturing,
	Manufacturing and Novel Materials
Services and Business Processes	Innovation in Services and Business Processes

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Skills and Innovation

RPO 6.25: Support REPs, LEOs and local authorities to collaborate with the Regional Skills Fora managers, Higher Education Institutes, Education and Training Boards and local stakeholders to address skills shortages and lifelong learning challenges in the Region.

RPO 6.26: Support and foster the collaboration of industry and research to identify areas of research, development and innovation, and to identify projects for funding.

RPO 6.27: Support community and adult education providers who are already providing formal and non-formal education to targeted disadvantage groups and who have already identified the barriers to participation in lifelong learning such as childcare, transport and rural isolation to increase participation rates and support progression into further education and employment.



Social Enterprise

Social enterprises trade for a social/societal purpose, earn at least part of their income from trading activity, they are separate from government, and re-invest surplus to pursue the social objective. They assist with addressing social, economic and environmental challenges while fostering inclusive growth, shared prosperity, social inclusion, training and job creation often for marginalised people. They represent an opportunity to deal with endemic unemployment blackspots.

Social enterprises operate in what is known as the Third Sector or the social economy and seek to address challenges which the private sector may not see a viable or profitable opportunity and in which the public sector may struggle to provide effective service delivery. They typically embrace and embed collaboration, solidarity, pluralism and sustainability leading to integrated economic and community development in their respective setting or concerning their social objective. See also Chapter 9 Quality of Life in relation to Social and Economic Opportunity.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Social Enterprise

RPO 6.28 Support local authorities in the design, development and roll-out of social enterprise practices, with a strong emphasis on collaboration.

Technology and Innovation Poles-Anchors: Regional Scientific Centres

The creation of Technology and Innovation Poles provided for under the NPF, envisages building facilities and developing the expertise and supportive capabilities of the Institutes of Technology (IoTs) and Universities (DCU, UCD, Trinity and NUI Maynooth) that includes working with Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Regional Skills Fora, to support the development and growth of the Region.

This concept sees a role for the IoTs, as a driver of start-ups and scale-up of enterprises across the Region through inter-institutional connections and impactful collaboration.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Technology and Innovation Poles – Anchors: Regional Scientific Centres

RPO 6.29: Support the development of sites where high-tech and high potential start-ups (HPSU[29]) can thrive, in conjunction with IoTs and Universities, to create collaborative and innovative growth.

29 A HPSU is defined as: a start-up that is introducing a new or innovative product or service to international markets; is involved in manufacturing or internationally traded services; is capable of creating 10 jobs in Ireland and realising €1 million in sales within three to four years of starting up; is led by an experienced management team; is headquartered and controlled in Ireland; and is less than five years old from the date of the company's registration.

Smart Cities, Towns and Villages

Although there is no single definition of a smart city, at its simplest, the concept envisages a smart city as one that has digital technology embedded across all urban functions. There are opportunities for greater innovation in and around our cities, towns and villages.

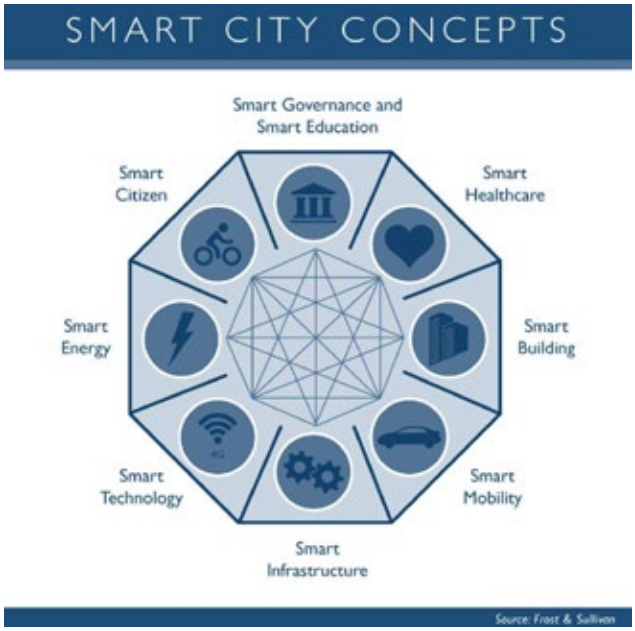


Figure 6.7 Smart City Concepts

The **Smart City**[30] is a concept and platform to solve complex challenges and achieve policy outcomes, such as the efficient use and deployment of infrastructure and local services, increasing public safety, increasing entrepreneurial activity through the intelligent usage of technology. It involves a systematic integration of ICT in the planning, design, operations and management of our cities, towns and villages for the benefit of the citizen. Smart cities boost the location's attractiveness for people and business, especially those who want to innovate[31].

CASE STUDY:

'Smart Dublin'

Smart Dublin is an initiative of the Dublin local authorities, which aims to promote the Dublin region as a world leader in the development of smart city technologies, using open data, and with innovation districts such as Smart Docklands as a test bed. Smart Dublin is participating in the national innovation pre-commercial procurement initiative administered by Enterprise Ireland (Small Business Research Initiative), which provides an opportunity for local authorities to engage with smart technology providers, researchers and citizens to develop new technology solutions through a programme of competitive challenges[32].

The **'All Ireland Smart Cities Forum'**, supported by Maynooth University provides a platform for networked knowledge sharing between the cities of Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Galway, Waterford, Belfast, Derry and Newry and includes the two regional initiatives of Smart Dublin and Cork Smart Gateway.

The **EU Action for Smart Villages**[33] initiative seeks to develop the potential offered by improved rural connectivity and digitisation and to build on local enterprise and infrastructure assets to drive innovations around energy, transport, agri-food, tourism, e-services, remote working etc.

Local authorities can also support the development of 'smart communities' by allowing use of public assets to support increased local connectivity and by 'digital master planning' of new large-scale development areas. To leverage the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, EMRA will support and identify flagship projects that would benefit from public-private partnerships involving experiments with emerging technologies and a focus on the citizen experience. This will demonstrate ambition and showcase Ireland as a technology-rich economy in an international context[34].

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Smart Cities, Towns and Villages

RPO 6.30: Support existing smart city initiatives such as Smart Dublin and the All Ireland Smart Cities Forum and support the development of smart city programmes in Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda.

30 Although there is no single definition, at its simplest, the concept envisages a smart city as one that has digital technology embedded across all city functions. http://www.forbes.com/sites/sarwantsingh/2014/06/19/smart-cities-a-1-5-trillion-market-opportunity/

31 Examples of smart city initiatives include: Amsterdam Smart City (ASC); Barcelona (e.g. Open Data BCN); Copenhagen (first carbon neutral city ambition); and Esbjerg, Denmark (Next Step City)

32 www.smartdublin.ie

33 European Commission, European Network for Rural Development, EU Action for Smart Villages, 2017

34 International examples include: the ambition to make Paris car free by 2025; Singapore is working with Siemens on waste disposal and marketing itself as a place for tech research into waste; Sweden is focusing on e-payments to become an almost cashless society; Estonia was the first country in the world to implement a nationwide 'birth-to-death' electronic health record system.

Our Enterprise Ecosystem-Stimulating a Pipeline for Growth

The survival and growth of new businesses are critical elements of any economy's growth and performance. New businesses are the source of new ideas, technologies, disruptive business models and new sectors. Entrepreneurs and start-ups thrive within a dynamic community of like-minded and supportive individuals, hence, it is an aim of the RSES to create a business environment that is conducive to business start-up, including SMEs, and sustaining growth throughout all phases of their lifecycle. EMRA will aid and support enterprise development agencies in the removal of obstacles to starting a business, and to seek ways in which risk can be minimised, to ensure that starting a business is considered to be a valid career option.

In order to gain the maximum return on investment, a series of factors needs to be borne in mind that will maximise the likelihood of new business formation and continued success of existing businesses. The evidence[35] points to the availability of human capital[36]; proximity to a third level institution; transport infrastructure; broadband infrastructure[37]; and finally, a diverse local sectoral mix as being key factors in the development of start-ups. In addition, access to finance is required and investigations into the suitability of Local Public Banking Models are acknowledged, specifically through the inclusion of post offices and credit unions as part of invigorating local communities particularly in the area of SMEs and the agri sectors that allow commerce to thrive.

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) network that operate throughout the Region play a key role as the first one-stop shop for small enterprises that trade locally. The LEOs act as catalysers, drivers and accelerators of entrepreneurship by means of training and increasing networking and connections in the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

On one hand, LEOs reinforce the 'think small first' principle in terms of coordinating with relevant stakeholders to make it easier for businesses to start and to navigate their way through the first years of trading. On the other hand, EI and IDA work on creating and strengthening linkages between Irish-owned enterprises and foreign-owned enterprises[38]. In the context of BREXIT and disruptions to supply chains, it is timely to accelerate activities in this regard, building on learnings to date, and further strengthening the capabilities and capacities of Irish owned enterprises to meet demand for innovative products and services. Altogether, enterprise development agencies and LEOs support existing Irish Entrepreneurs and set-up conditions to attract overseas entrepreneurs to the country.

In addition, co-working spaces and business incubator hubs play an important part of the ecosystem as they represent the physical environment where entrepreneurs and start-ups operate. With this in mind, a network of co-working hubs hosting techworkers and distributed across the Region offers a platform to materialise and further develop the concept of Ireland's Edge. The network can be centrally directed but locally managed and driven by a whole range of stakeholders. It represents a hotbed of learning, creativity and innovation with the potential to become a significant experimental testbed for developing a practical, internationally comparable approach to development. Kells Technology Hub and MERITS Think Space in Naas are examples of these hubs.

Finally, from a social perspective, the challenges posed by unemployment blackspots are recognised. An understanding of their nature and causes is required in order to identify policy responses and revert reinforcing negative patterns[39].

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Innovation Capacity

RPO 6.31: Support enterprise development agencies and LEOs in their efforts to increase business innovation capacity, to create a distributed network of co-working hubs, to promote Ireland's Edge to strengthen linkages between Irish-owned enterprises and foreign owned enterprises, and to support existing Irish entrepreneurs and to attract overseas entrepreneurs.

35 McCoy et al. (2018) the impact of broadband and other infrastructure on the location of new business establishments. Journal of Regional Science.

36 Measured as the percentage of the population with a third level qualification.

37 Which needs to be coupled with availability of Human capital to have a significant effect.

38 The 'Global Sourcing Initiative', 'Trade Missions' to Ireland and 'Peer networks for Lean initiatives' provide a stimulus to increase linkages between Irish and foreign owned entities and contribute to optimising spillover benefits.

39 Clustering initiatives to address unemployment blackspots in the region may adopt a 'shared value' approach or 'inclusive cluster framework initiative', for instance: http://masseconomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/EDJ_12_Fall_InclusiveClusters.pdf

CASE STUDY:

Tech Hubs

Co- working spaces provide desk and office space, a co-working community, and the supports and networks that technology entrepreneurs and businesses need to start, internationalise, and grow their business. It is an objective of the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) to build a network of innovative co-working spaces in the Mid East counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow.

The Kells Technology Hub is an example, which offers serviced affordable accommodation to startups and SME's to support entrepreneurship, training and the delivery of innovation programme, which was funded through the 'Rural Economic Development Zone' (REDZ) initiative. MERITS will be a new, purpose built, co-working incubation and accelerator space in Naas, with technology expertise and supports by MaynoothWorks, which will house over 100 tech workers when open in 2020.

Monitoring and Evaluating Our Ecosystem Performance

Establishing an environment to stimulate entrepreneurship will require concerted effort to continuously assess and reassess what is working and what is not and to take the necessary actions in a timely manner to redress barriers.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Ecosystem Performance

RPO 6.32: Support enterprise development agencies to map, monitor and evaluate the Region's enterprise and innovation ecosystem, benchmarking against other relevant jurisdictions nationally and internationally.

Infrastructure Investment

Continuous investment in infrastructure is required to meet the growing demands from population and increasing economic activity. In line with Project Ireland 2040, several large infrastructure projects have already been approved for feasibility studies. Therefore, the Regional Investment Plan will be co-ordinated along with the forthcoming National Land Development Agency, as well as the NDP.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Infrastructure Investment

RPO 6.33: With the allocation outcomes from the competitive calls EMRA, in cooperation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), will prepare a Regional Investment Plan for the Region in accordance with Project Ireland 2040 and the Public Spending Code.

Trade

Mechanisms to gain access to international markets, such as Free Trade Agreements provide an opportunity for the Region's enterprise base to grow and compete internationally. Although trade agreements are managed at EU level, measures can be put in place to gain greater share in international markets for the Region, and to increase the chances of entry into new markets. These mechanisms include international relationships and visibility with branding and reputation.

EMRA supports the development of a coherent and shared vision for all EMRA stakeholders with international focus, building on heritage, culture and attractive qualities of the Region. This vision can be supported with case studies for public buy-in, LECPs should consider a similar international focus.

EMRA with its European role and the Irish Regions European Office shall collaborate with Government departments to strengthen and develop international partnerships and strengthen the Region's economic diplomacy. This includes proposals for re-routed trade corridors between Irish ports and mainland Europe after Brexit.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Branding

RPO 6.34: EMRA will support the construction of a regional brand that is consistent with, and complementary to, current local and national branding, to promote the Region domestically and abroad.

6.7 Capacity Building: Bidding Capacity, Shared Evidence Base, Future Proof and Anticipating Economic Structural Changes

An inherent part of the Strategy is the building of institutional capacity to enable an effective implementation and to respond to emerging challenges.

Bidding Capacity

With the introduction of competitive bids as part of Project Ireland 2040 and similar frameworks to draw down funds from other sources such as EU funds, there is a need to ensure that all local authorities and local stakeholders have sufficient capacity to scout funding sources and to prepare professional and robust applications (bidding capacity).

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Bidding Capacity

RPO 6.35: Design and implement a framework to provide technical support to local authorities, government agencies and regional stakeholders to develop and strengthen their bidding capacity, that is their capacity to identify infrastructure deficits and opportunities, to prepare strong business cases, to identify funding sources, to bid, and successfully attract competitive funding.

Common and Shared Evidence Base for REPs, LAPs, LECPs and CDPs

Through a systematic collection of relevant regional data economies of scale can be achieved and this common and shared evidence base will inform the forthcoming reviews of REPs, local area plans (LAPs), LECPs and city and county development plans (CDPs).

It will facilitate an alignment to the RSES and national policy, and it will simplify the identification of specific issues relevant to their localities. The evidence base should consider greater insights of the industrial evolution of towns and localities in order to have a better understanding of how towns and localities have developed to date, thus enabling the identification of growth constraints, the assets and the growth opportunities.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Shared Evidence Base

RPO 6.36: Design and implement a basic framework with the CSO to build a common, up-to-date, dynamic and shared evidence base and monitoring framework at regional and local level with information on assets, economic base, settlement functions, and economic performance, to be published as open data where appropriate.

Future Proof – Readiness to Address Emerging Challenges

Developing the RSES requires a thoughtful consideration of conditions that may affect the intended outcomes. This leads to the need to take actions to prepare and be ready to address emerging issues. For this purpose, a foresight exercise is considered appropriate. When planning and designing strategies, an assessment of whether or not assumptions or current conditions will maintain or change over the Strategy timeframe is extremely important. In this regard, the National Risk Assessment[40] continuously scans for potential risks.

There is a variety of emerging issues such as BREXIT, international tax developments, US trade and investment policies, technological advances, and climate change. On the basis of this foresight exercise, the EMRA will seek to develop a prevention or contingency plan which provides preparedness and readiness for the economy of the Region, to be delivered in line with the provisions of Chapter 12 on Implementation and Monitoring. Likewise, the use of 'Pivot Strategies' for businesses that may be affected by emerging economic risks, such as BREXIT for instance, can be beneficial.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Economic Risk Management System

RPO 6.37: Prepare and operate an economic risk management system, with preventive action plans, considering social and environment factors.

40 The National Risk Assessment is conducted annually by the Department of the Taoiseach. It identifies risks under the following headings: geo-political, economic, environmental, social and technological.

Anticipating Economic Structural Changes

It is important to recognise that, given changes in the industrial and economic landscape, some sectors find themselves under pressure which can result in jobs loses. Therefore, mechanisms are needed to support people engaged in declining industries by means of up-skilling, lifelong learning and communication strategies to redirect their activities and skills towards alternative uses.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Anticipating Economic Structural Changes

RPO 6.38: Support enterprise agencies, REPs, LECPs, Regional Skill fora and local stakeholders on their introduction of contingency plans and pilot projects based on the strengths of the Region to counteract the effects from industrial decline and potential external shocks in the Region. This may include lifelong learning programmes, appropriate business supports and upskilling to facilitate moving to alternative sectors in the locality or region, for example the Bord na Móna Regional Transition Team for a comprehensive afteruse framework plan for the peatlands.





7 Environment and Climate

7.1 Introduction

A clean well protected environment supports human health and wellbeing and provides a natural resource for our agriculture and tourism industries. While the overall quality of our environment is good and progress has been made in reducing air pollutants and protecting the quality of water bodies and our natural and wild places, challenges remain in relation to biodiversity protection, water and urban waste water treatment and some localised air quality issues.

There is a growing awareness of the wide range of important services which natural ecosystems provide; from the food we eat, the water we drink, the raw materials we use for fuel, construction and medicine, a sink for the disposal of wastewater and the creation of space for leisure activities. These ecosystem services boost resilience to climate change by regulating our climate, acting as natural flood defences (e.g. through wetlands and forests), storing carbon in peatlands and providing pollinators for crops.

The drivers for this chapter are the key principles of healthy placemaking and climate action. The RSES has identified a number of key Regional Strategic Outcomes which include; the need to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of our protected habitats and species including landscape and heritage protection; to identify, protect and enhance our Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services; to ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources; to build climate resilience, to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050 and the protection of the healthy natural environment to ensure clean air and water for all.

Climate change is already affecting the terrestrial and marine environment due to rising sea levels, increased sea temperatures, precipitation changes, coastal flooding and erosion and ocean acidification and these changes are likely to continue and intensify over the lifetime of the RSES.

How we manage our environment and heritage is governed by numerous pieces of legislation at national, European and International level. Ireland is a signatory to a number of international agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UNESCO Convention for the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy and the European Landscape Convention 2000. See Appendix D for underpinning EU Directives and other relevant policy and regulation.



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The European Directive on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive), sets out the requirements for an environmental assessment to be carried out for all plans and programmes prepared by authorities at a national, regional or local level. The SEA process of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is informed by a Regional Flood Risk Appraisal (RFRA), which provides an assessment of all types of flood risk to inform the strategic planning and development of the region and to inform the location of development and growth areas.



7.2 Integrated Land and Marine Planning

The Key EU Directives underpinning integrated land and marine planning in Ireland are the Marine Strategy Framework (MSFD), Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Water Framework Directives (WFD). Compliance with MSFD will play a key part in protecting mobile species and the marine environment from threats such as climate change, ocean warming, ocean acidification, overfishing, marine litter and pollution and to ensure sustainable use of shared resources particularly with regard to renewable energies of offshore wind, wave and tidal. While most of our coastal waters are of good or high status, there are particular pressures on estuaries as areas of intensive commercial and recreational activities.

Effective Integrated Land and Marine Planning is about planning when and where human activities take place at sea, ensuring these activities are as sustainable as possible and engaging stakeholders in the planning of maritime activities. At present, a National Maritime Spatial Plan is being prepared by government. This will be the marine counterpart of the National Planning Framework and will be at the top of the hierarchy of plans and sectoral policies such as offshore energy, port development and the marine environment. It will cover the entire maritime area; the coastal zone including land-sea interactions, the Dublin Bay Biosphere, territorial seas, the Exclusive Economic Zone, and international co-ordination.

More detailed regional maritime spatial plans may be required at a later date[41], offering an opportunity for further stakeholder engagement and integration of marine and territorial plans over the lifetime of the RSES. As terrestrial and marine ecosystems are closely connected, the Regional Assemblies and the coastal local authorities have an important role in ensuring integration of land and marine planning within the Region and with Northern Ireland to ensure that management of coasts and marine waters is on an all-island basis.

See Chapter 8 Connectivity and Chapter 10 Infrastructure for additional ports and harbours policies.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Integrated Land and Marine Planning

RPO 7.1: To ensure consistency and alignment between the upcoming National Maritime Spatial Plan (due in 2021) and regional approaches to marine spatial planning and to integrate the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Marine Spatial Planning implementation into future land use plans in the Region in recognition of the opportunity to harness Ireland's ocean potential.

RPO 7.2: To achieve and maintain 'Good Environmental Status' for marine waters and to ensure the sustainable use of shared marine resources in the Region, and to promote the development of a cross-boundary and cross-border strategic management and stakeholder engagement framework to protect the marine environment.

CASE STUDY:

The Celtic Seas Partnership

The Celtic Seas Partnership has developed a strategic management framework and stakeholder engagement model for Dublin Bay as part of the Celtic Seas partnership. The project built partnerships between people and organisations to support local level implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, promote better understanding of marine resources, common goals and adoption of an ecosystem-based approach. To aid marine management and monitoring, EMRA worked in collaboration with Maynooth University to develop a data dashboard for Dublin Bay[42].



41 The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is implementing MSP in Ireland, the Marine Institute provide technical and scientific advice.
42 http://www.celticseaspartnership.eu/Celtic-seas-partnership/dublin-bay/

Coastal Dynamics

The Region's east coast is constantly changing due to a variety of natural and cultural processes such as coastal erosion, dune retreat and harbour sedimentation. These processes occur through the movement of sediment by wind or waves, storm impacts, the destabilising effect of vegetation removal, and human activity. Our coastal areas are a key driver for leisure and tourism however, and they need to be managed carefully to sustain coastal character and the quality of the environment.

Coastal erosion and flooding have the potential to seriously affect properties, businesses, transport infrastructure, coastal habitats and cultural heritage sites. Many areas are experiencing 'coastal squeeze' from increasing population and development pressures and the effects of climate change, with the east coast particularly vulnerable to sea level rise due to the large proportion of the population living in close proximity to the coast (See also Section 7.9 Climate Change).

The development of strategic coastal flood and erosion hazard maps for the national coastline[43], can be used by local authorities to inform assessment of potential hazards associated with future proposed development, to guide decisions on local coastal planning and development, and to develop appropriate plans and strategies for the sustainable management of coastlines including the identification, prioritisation and, subject to the availability of resources, the implementation of coastal protection works both of a structural and non-structural nature.

The primary areas of potential coastal erosion risk for the north east coast and south east coast are: Shanganagh to Bray, Greystones, Ballygannon to Five Mile Point, Five Mile Point to Wicklow, Portrane, Skerries, Balbriggan, Bettystown to Laytown, Clogher Head to Baltray, Dunany Point to Cruisetown, Salterstown to Dunany Point, Annagassan and Greenore.

Because intervention within a coastal area may cause problems further along the coast, any proposed intervention measures are best developed in conjunction with a coastal erosion risk management study, which will carefully investigate the problem and explore the full range of management options. The OPW has published guidelines for coastal erosion risk management measures and funding applications under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme.

The Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) approach can assist in meeting obligations under the WFD, MSFD, and Nature Directives. ICZM involves coastal stakeholders coming together to enable more joined-up thinking and coherent policy for the sustainable management of all aspects of the coastal zone including; improved governance, stakeholder engagement and participation, data collection and monitoring. The National Adaptation Framework (NAF) and the National Mitigation Plan (NMP) set out the national strategy to adapt to and reduce climate vulnerability.

The combination of river flooding during storms and marine surges can create severe flood events in coastal areas. These effects are likely to increase over the lifetime of the RSES due to a greater frequency of climate driven extreme weather events. Coastal flooding is covered by the 2009 Guidelines on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management. See also Section 7.4 Flooding.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Coastal Dynamics

RPO 7.3: EMRA will support the use of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) to enable collaborative and stakeholder engagement approaches to the management and protection of coastal resources against coastal erosion, flooding and other threats.

RPO 7.4: Statutory land use plans shall take account of the risk of coastal erosion, whereby new development should be avoided in areas at risk of coastal erosion to the greatest extent practicable.

43 The Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS), OPW

Growing the Blue Economy

As an island nation, we are highly dependent on our seas and Ireland's marine sector or blue economy is an important and growing part of the national economy. Recent years have seen significant growth in the sector and increased spending on marine research. Harnessing our Ocean Wealth – An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland (HOOW) targets a doubling of the value of the maritime economy by 2030 including; shipping, maritime transport, sea fisheries, aquaculture, tourism and energy. One of the future challenges will be to align 'blue growth' with conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem health, while adhering to the objectives of the MSFD, MSP and WFD. See Chapter 6 Economy and Employment for the marine economy.

Fisheries and Aquaculture

Fishing is a substantial sub-sector in the Region, with Howth being one of six national Fishery Harbour Centres and a number of small fisheries clusters along the eastern seaboard including Wicklow, Clogherhead and Dún Laoghaire. While the traditional fishing industry faces challenges in relation to seasonal employment, fish stocks and coastal hazards, there are also opportunities for diversification and development of bio resources including seafood, aquaculture and offshore renewables. MSP will play a key role in managing the environmental impacts of 'blue growth' on marine biodiversity, introduction and/or spread of invasive species and increased pollution.

See Chapter 8 Connectivity for additional policies on ports.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Fisheries and Aquaculture

RPO 7.5: EMRA shall work with coastal stakeholders to support the sustainable development of the national Fishery Harbour Centre in Howth and the sustainable growth of the seafood and on-shore aquaculture sector in the Region, and to ensure that marine resources are sustainably managed and that planned activities on land do not adversely affect the marine economy and environment.

Maritime Heritage

Underwater cultural heritage can be found in many forms and in all underwater environments including the coastal waters and foreshore areas of the Region. Underwater cultural heritage is also found in the Region's numerous lakes, rivers and canals. Submerged monuments can be identified from the Record of Monuments and Places and are subject to statutory protection established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994.

The UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage is the foremost international legal reference for the protection of underwater cultural heritage. It creates common criteria and best practice standards for the protection of underwater cultural heritage to promote its safeguarding.

Ship wreck sites over 100 years old should be both protected and enhanced. To ensure the protection of historic wrecks from potential development impacts local authorities should seek to protect and promote the value of underwater cultural heritage and cultural tourism, which could include diving on wrecks, coastal wreck trails and maritime heritage tours. As such, maritime villages and towns represent a significant cultural heritage resource and are an integral part of the Region's built and cultural maritime heritage.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Maritime Heritage

RPO 7.6: Local authorities shall include in development plans, where relevant, policies for the protection and enhancement of ship wrecks and underwater cultural heritage and shall consult the Wreck Inventory of Ireland Database when assessing planning applications located in marine, riverine or lacustrine environments.



7.3 A Clean and Healthy Environment

We depend on our natural resources to protect public health, the environment, amenities and to sustain employment in sectors such as agri-food and tourism, particularly in rural Ireland.

The Region's natural capital can be defined as our stock of renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of ecosystem services that provide benefits to people. These benefits include clean air and water, a stable climate, protection from floods, food to eat, the resources we use for fuel, building materials, clothes and medicines, recreation and a sense of peace and wonder, as well as habitat for wildlife. Managing natural capital so that it can continue to deliver the ecosystem services that give us these benefits is important in order to ensure sustainable development. Unmanaged natural capital risks the continued degradation and depletion of these assets, and in turn, of their capacity to provide the economy and society with the ecosystem benefits that they depend on. These services also regulate our climate, regulate our water flows (e.g. through wetlands and forests), sequester and store carbon in our peatlands and improve soil quality for our crops.

Access to a clean and healthy natural environment is also shown to bring multiple associated health benefits while environmental pollution can have negative effects on human health, on animals and plants and on natural ecosystems. Most sources of environmental pollution are caused by human activities such as transportation, construction, industrial and agriculture activities and domestic waste.

Air Quality

Air pollution is one of the biggest environmental risks to human health leading to respiratory disease, asthma and lung cancer, and to the environment as sources of air pollution also produce climate pollutants. Particulate matter from the burning of fossil fuels for home heating and nitrogen dioxide from traffic is a leading cause of air pollution in the Region.

The protection of air quality requires cross sectoral policy responses to address air pollution emissions including; integrated land use and transport; a shift to active and public transport modes of travel; use of alternative cleaner fuels for home heating and transport including the use of Compressed Natural Gas powered commercial vehicles, a transition to electric vehicles and electrification of public transport and local authority fleets; the promotion of energy efficient buildings and cleaner home heating; the development of Green Infrastructure in urban areas, as trees, hedgerows and bushes can remove pollutants from the air.

The EPA's ambient air quality monitoring network provides real time air quality data for urban areas within the Region. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment are developing a National Clear Air Strategy. This will require local authorities to play a role in local data collection to support the EPA's network and to facilitate air quality alerts and pollen counts.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Air Quality

RPO 7.7: To reduce harmful emissions and achieve and maintain good air quality for all urban and rural areas in the Region and to work with local authorities and the relevant agencies to support local data collection in the development of air quality monitoring and to inform a regional air quality and greenhouse gas emissions inventory.

Noise pollution

Stress from living with noise can have chronic effects on human health including impacts on mental health and sleep disturbance. Excessive noise also has harmful effects on wildlife. The EU Environmental Noise Directive requires that local authorities prepare strategic noise maps and action plans, setting out mitigation measures to reduce the harmful effects, including long term exposure to environmental noise from roads, railways and airport traffic and the protection of 'quiet areas', which are shown to bring significant health and wellbeing benefits. The EPA has established an Ocean Noise Register for Ireland. See also Chapter 8 Connectivity in relation to airport noise.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Noise Pollution

RPO 7.8: Local authorities shall incorporate the objectives of the EU Environmental Noise Directive in the preparation of strategic noise maps and action plans that support proactive measures to avoid, mitigate, and minimise noise, in cases where it is likely to have harmful effects.

Light pollution

Artificial light is important for businesses, homes, roads and recreational purposes, however the inappropriate or excessive use of artificial light – especially blue light – can be harmful to wildlife, particularly nocturnal species and on human health due to sleep disruption. Light pollution can refer to skyglow (the brightening of the night sky over urban areas), light trespass (where light falls where it is not intended) or light glare (where light is excessively bright). Light pollution is increasing in the Region due to increasing development.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Light Pollution

RPO 7.9: Local authorities shall consider measures to minimise the harmful effects of light pollution in the future provision of outdoor lighting, including improving their approach to street lighting and ensuring that new developments are lit appropriately and to ensure that environmentally sensitive areas are protected.

Water Quality

Most public water comes from surface water sources including rivers and lakes, groundwater and springs and it is vital that it does not contain pollutants that might endanger public health, aquatic systems and the amenity value of our waters. The Region has abundant water resources including major rivers, lakes and groundwater resources, see also Section 7.7 Green Infrastructure. The aim of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is to maintain high and good ecological status waters where they exist, and prevent deterioration of status in all waters by identifying key threats to water quality on a catchment basis.

Pollution from urban waste water is one of the key threats to water quality, due to inadequate urban waste water treatment (UWWT), storm water overflow or direct discharges into watercourses. Hydromorphology (the physical modification of water bodies due to water abstraction, channelisation and the building of embankments, dams and weirs) is also identified as a key pressure. Loss of wetlands, discharge of silt, drainage, run-off from farming, septic tanks, peat extraction, hedge removal and land improvements can all be significant to water and aquatic habitat quality. With regard to biodiversity, species considered to be most under threat are those linked to wetlands and that are sensitive to water pollution.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) (see also Chapter 10 Infrastructure – Guiding Principles for incorporation of SuDs) and Wetland and River Restoration initiatives can play a role in regulating the flow and water filtration. In addition, water conservation is increasingly important and sustainable water management practices such as rainwater harvesting and adopting circular economy systems can help in meeting our obligations under the Water Framework Directive and Climate adaptation.

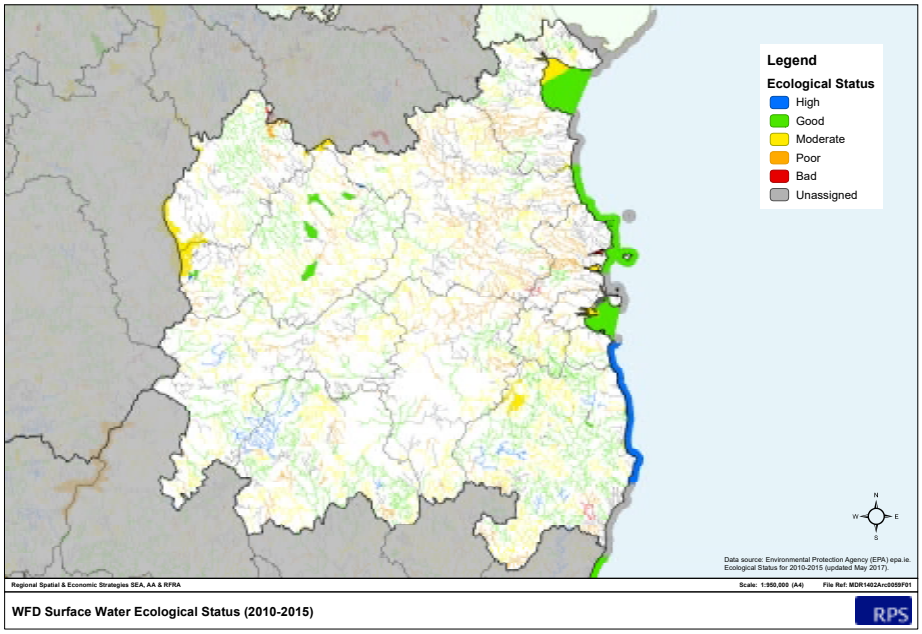


Figure 7.1 Status of Water Bodies

Integrated Catchment Management

Compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is achieved through River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and a Programme of Measures that are reviewed every six years. For the second cycle of those plans from 2018–2021, a single national River Basin District has been defined. EU Water Policy Regulations also place new obligations on local authorities in coordinating the catchment management and public participation elements of the WFD and the development and implementation of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).

The draft 'Water Services Guidelines for Planning Authorities' is being prepared by DHPLG to assist planning authorities in implementing the requirements of the WFD. Once finalised, the Guidelines will be issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The Guidelines are prepared in consultation with Irish Water and the local authority sector.

The Local Authority Water and Communities Offices (LAWCO) has been set up to co-ordinate local authorities on water issues and to engage with local communities on water related projects. There are two regional committees supported by LAWCO in the Eastern and Midland Region which include the Border, and the Midlands and Eastern regions.

The Regional Committees are developing a Regional Integrated Catchment Management Programme for the period of this RBMP (2018– 2021) to set out new evidence-based measures for mitigation of threats in water bodies identified as being 'At Risk' and prioritised Areas for Action under the RBMP. A key aim of Integrated Catchment management is to facilitate the movement and sharing of data and information between local authorities, the EPA and other relevant public authorities at the water-body scale.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Water Quality

RPO 7.10: Support the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in achieving and maintaining at least good environmental status for all water bodies in the Region and to ensure alignment between the core objectives of the Water Framework Directive and other relevant Directives, River Basin Management plans and local authority land use plans.

RPO 7.11: For water bodies with 'high ecological status' objectives in the Region, local authorities shall incorporate measures for both their continued protection and to restore those water bodies that have fallen below high ecological status and areas 'At Risk' into the development of local planning policy and decision making any measures for the continued protection of areas with high ecological status in the Region and for mitigation of threats to waterbodies identified as 'At Risk' as part of a catchment-based approach in consultation with the relevant agencies. This shall include recognition of the need to deliver efficient wastewater facilities with sufficient capacity and thus contribute to improved water quality in the Region.



7.4 Flood Risk Management

Flooding is a natural process that plays a role in shaping the natural environment. Floods are a regular occurrence and the Region has experienced a number of severe flooding events in recent years, particularly on flood plains and in coastal areas, where flood risks will increase due to more frequent extreme weather events and sea level rise linked to climate change. Flooding can occur from a range of sources, individually or combined, including: coastal flooding (from the sea or estuaries); fluvial flooding (from rivers or streams); pluvial flooding (from intense rainfall events and overland flow); groundwater flooding (typically from Turloughs), and other sources, such as from blocked culverts. The long-term land use planning of the Region must also consider the likelihood of higher flood risks both inland and in coastal locations due to climate change.

Water management is subject to two key EU directives, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) , which aims to improve our water quality; and the Floods Directive, which aims to reduce the risks associated with flooding.

Flooding can be positive for the environment, such as where many wetland habitats and species depend on periodic flooding for their conservation. However it can also pose a potential threat or flood hazard to people and property, cause damage to the environment, such as pollution of habitats, and to our cultural heritage, such as monuments and historic buildings. Sustainable land use management and natural flood risk mitigation measures can slow down the water flow in catchments and rivers, for example by protection and/or rewetting of peatlands and bogs and by planting hedgerows across hillsides. Such measures may not be able to solve severe flood problems on their own, but can form part of the solution and can also help to achieve environmental goals, including improving water quality, nature conservation/ biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation.



Flood Risk and the Planning System

Flood risk prevention aims to avoid or remove a flood risk. The National Climate Change Adaptation Framework 2018 requires certain public bodies, including local authorities, to prepare local and sectoral adaptation plans. The planning system plays a major role in land use and flood management, integrated through the planning hierarchy at national, regional and local levels, and is central to the strategic flood risk management pillar of 'Prevention'.

The Guidelines on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management[44] provide a systematic framework for the consideration of flood risk at all stages in the planning and development management processes. The Guidelines adopt a sequential approach when integrating flood risk assessment into the process of policy and plan making, based on avoidance, reduction and mitigation of risk.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and the development of permeable surfaces can play a role in reducing and managing run-off from new developments to surface water drainage systems, reducing flood risk downstream, improving water quality and contributing to local amenities. Green Infrastructure should be recognised and preserved where possible as natural defences against flood risk in both urban and rural areas (See Section 7.7 in relation to Green Infrastructure and Chapter 10 Infrastructure for more detail including Guiding Principles for incorporation of SuDS).

44 Flood Risk Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009, jointly developed by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) and the OPW

Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs)

The national Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme is central to the medium to long-term strategy for the reduction and proactive management of flood risk in Ireland. The programme delivers on core components of the National Flood Policy and on the requirements of the EU Floods Directive and was undertaken in cooperation with local authorities and other public bodies, and was co-ordinated with the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).

In 2011, the national Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) identified 300 communities at potentially significant flood risk (96 within the Eastern and Midland Region), referred to as the Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs), which were then the focus of the CFRAM Studies and the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs). AFA areas within the Region include Dublin (23), Kildare, (16) Laois (7), Longford (6), Louth (8), Meath (13), Offaly (9), Westmeath (3) and Wicklow (11).

The OPW has published predictive fluvial and coastal flood maps prepared through the CFRAM programme for the AFAs, including Flood Zone maps developed in accordance with the definitions set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. The predictive flood maps for the AFAs will inform the long term planning and development of the Eastern and Midland Region, as part of RSES[45]. See Appendix H for a list of new Flood Relief Schemes in the Region to be advanced in intial phase to detailed design and construction.

Regional Flood Risk Assessment

The Flood Risk Management Guidelines identify that regional flood risk appraisal and management policy recommendations are necessary to set a regional policy framework for local planning decisions and policy making. A Regional Flood Risk Assessment (RFRA) has been carried out in conjunction with a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to inform the preparation of the RSES, taking into account those areas that are vulnerable to two key sources of flooding – fluvial and coastal - and to ensure the effective management of flood risk coupled with wider environmental, sustainability and economic considerations and in line with national strategic outcomes that seek the consolidation of established settlements in the Region.

The integration of RFRA into the RSES ensures that all future zoning of strategic lands for development in areas at risk of flooding shall follow the sequential approach set out in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines. Where the RSES recognises the need for development in areas at potentially significant flood risk, local planning policy and decision making shall take full account of existing and potential future flood risk to avoid and minimise the creation of new flood risks that could otherwise arise through inappropriate future development.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Flooding

RPO 7.12: Future statutory land use plans shall include Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and seek to avoid inappropriate land use zonings and development in areas at risk of flooding and to integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, non-porous surfacing and green roofs) to create safe places in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines for Local Authorities.

RPO 7.13: EMRA will work with local authorities, the OPW and other relevant departments and agencies to implement the recommendations of the CFRAM programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.

RPO 7.14: Local authorities shall take account of and incorporate into the development of local planning policy and decision making the recommendations of the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk.

RPO 7.15: Local authorities shall take opportunities to enhance biodiversity and amenities and to ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive sites and habitats, including where flood risk management measures are planned.

45 Flood maps are available to view at www.floodinfo.ie

7.5 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage

Biodiversity protection is core to the EU Birds and Habitats Directives but is also incorporated into the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Water Framework Directive (marine waters) the Nitrates Directive (agricultural run-off), the SEA Directive, EIA Directive and the Invasive Species Regulations.

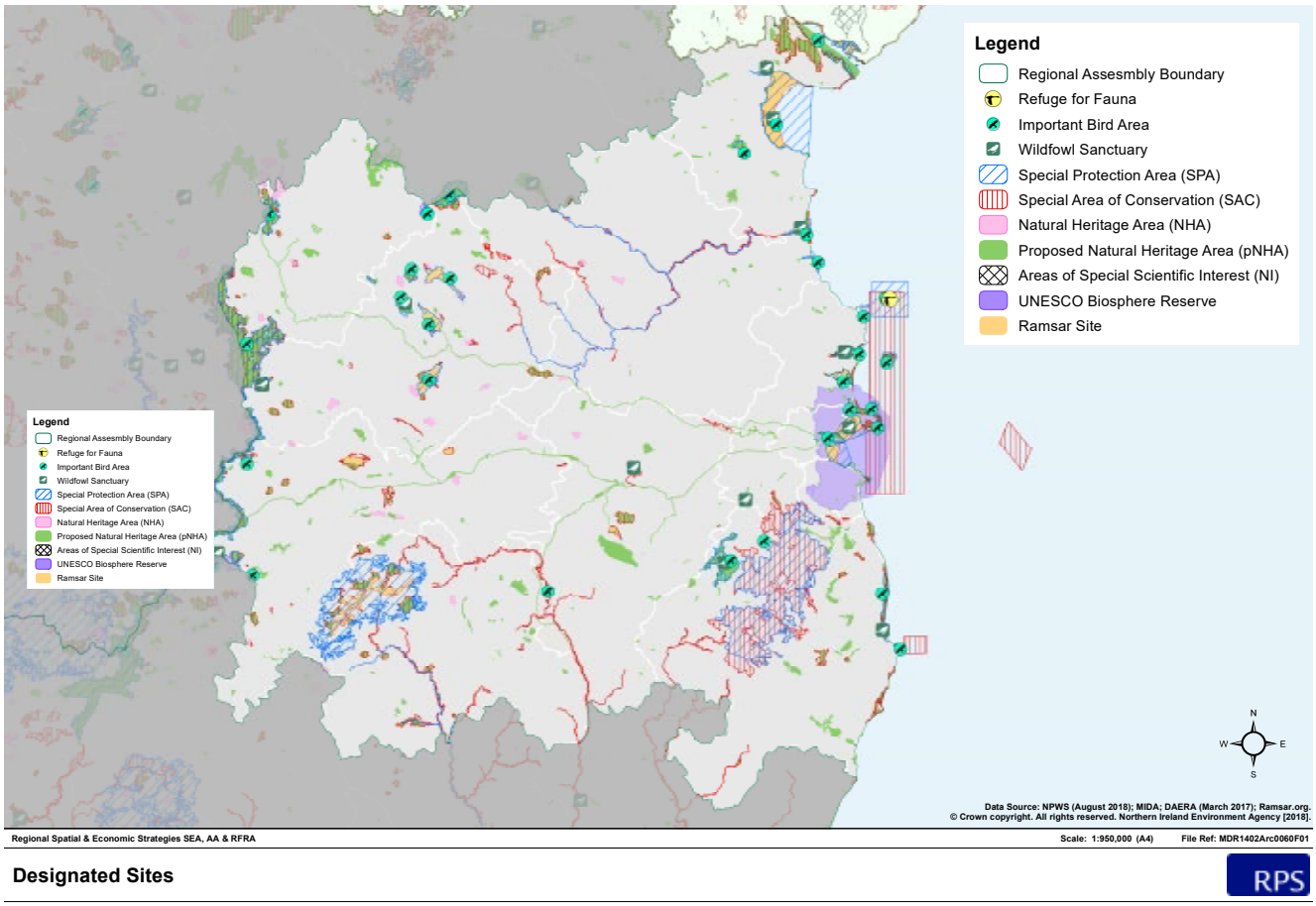


Figure 7.2 Designated Sites in the Region

Status of Designated Sites

The condition and conservation of our natural and semi-natural habitats impacts on the quality of life of residents and visitors to the Region, as well as making significant contributions to the economy and agriculture. Potential environmental impacts of spatial planning policy on the status of designated sites and habitats include; habitat loss, deterioration and fragmentation, reduced soil nutrients, disturbance to breeding birds, species changes, reduced air and water quality, the spread of invasive species, land use change, impacts on natural processes of erosion and sedimentation and to ecosystem services such as drainage, flooding and water attenuation and carbon storage.

Under the Habitats Directive, Ireland is obliged to report on the status of habitats and species every six years. Unfortunately assessments show that most of the 58 habitats assessed have unfavourable conservation status. Threats to the status of designated sites include development pressures, sub-optimal land management, agriculture, inappropriately sited forestry, waste water pollution, widespread pesticide use, introduction of non-native and invasive species, and climate change. The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 sets out targets to support the designation and management of conservation areas and address identified threats to biodiversity. See Appendix F which lists all designated sites in the Region.

Biodiversity supporting sites in the Region (which may contain designated sites within their area) include national parks (Wicklow Mountains) and UNESCO biosphere reserves (Dublin Bay), where environmental conservation is combined with visitor management strategies to support the development of unique educational, cultural and recreational opportunities. Biodiversity can also be found on the edges and right in the centre of high density urban areas; in parks, hedgerows, graveyards, rivers and gardens, allowing urban populations to connect with nature in our cities and towns (see Section 7.7 Green Infrastructure).

CASE STUDY:

The Living Bog

Funded by the EU Life Nature and Biodiversity Fund, with assisstance from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the 'The Living Bog' is the largest raised bog restoration project ever undertaken in Ireland and aims to restore 12 of Ireland's unique raised bog SACs in seven counties between 2016 – 2020.

It is estimated there has been a 99% loss of the original area of actively growing raised bog in Ireland. What little remains is in need of restoration and conservation. Restoration work on these Natura 2000 sites will improve over 2,600 hectares of threatened raised bog habitat – the equivalent of 18% of the national high bog area. Sites in the Midlands region include Ardagullion, Clara, Ferbane, Garriskil, Mongan, Moyclare, Raheenmore and Sharavogue Bogs[46].

Biodiversity and Climate Change

Climate change poses a real threat to the functions of ecoystems, however high biodiversity habitats such as wetlands, woodlands and peatlands are key for both climate mitigation and adaptation measures, providing important carbon sinks, water attenuation and flooding protection. Careful land management is needed to ensure that land use changes do not impact on the ability of the natural environment to absorb climate impacts.

Warmer climates and waters have also seen Invasive Alien Species (IAS) emerge as a key challenge with negative impacts on both terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The National Biodiversity Data Centre has developed an inventory of invasive species, such as Japanese Knotweed which can also have a negative economic as well as environmental impact. The All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 sets out natural management measures to protect native species including a reduction in the use of pesticides, management of hedgerow cutting and the retention of unmanaged roads and park areas.

National Parks

Heritage and nature based tourism is a large and growing component of international tourism. The 22,000 hectares of protected uplands in the Wicklow Mountains National Park is a key asset in the Region, located in close proximity to Dublin and it is estimated that at least 1.5 million people access the park each year. The Wicklow National Park Information Centre is located close to the upper lake, 2 km from the OPW Glendalough Visitor Centre.

The 2018 National Parks Tourism Interpretive Masterplan sets out an investment framework[47] to promote an enhanced visitor experience in Ireland's Parks and Reserves. There is a significant opportunity for the sensitive design and development of a dedicated visitor centre, improved access to the park and to expand the informal trail network connecting to the waymarked Wicklow Way, which runs along the eastern margins of the park.

There is also an opportunity to develop a National Park based on the raised bog peatlands of the Midlands in the emerging Lough Ree and Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park that could act as an economic driver in the area focussing on eco-tourism and addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation whilst also acting as an important nature reserve addressing conservation and biodiversity. This would need to be led by National Parks and Wildlife Service in association with local authorities, landowners and other key stakeholders.

46 www.raisedbogs.ie

47 Jointly funded by the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Failte Ireland

Dublin Bay Biosphere

In 1981 UNESCO designated North Bull Island in Dublin Bay as a Biosphere because of its rare and internationally important habitats and species. To support sustainable development, UNESCO's concept of a Biosphere has evolved to include not just areas of ecological value but also the communities that live and work within these areas. In recognition of the environmental, social and economic importance of Dublin Bay the Biosphere was expanded in 2015 to cover the entire Bay and adjoining terrestrial zone, where over 300,000 people live and work. The Biosphere contains three different zones, the core zone of high natural value, the buffer zone of public and private green spaces and the transition zone forming the outer part of the Biosphere including residential, industrial and commercial areas. See also Section 5.9 Case Study: Dublin Biosphere.

The Biosphere is managed by the Dublin Bay Partnership, which includes the local authorities, Dublin Port Company, Failte Ireland and the NPWS. The partnership works with communities, universities and schools to develop opportunities for people and nature to connect, including guided tours, citizen science events, becoming a volunteer or joining the research network. The development of biosphere branding also offers opportunities for the marketing of sustainable business and biosphere products.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Biodiversity and Natural Heritage

RPO 7.16: Support the implementation of the Habitats Directives in achieving an improvement in the conservation status of protected species and habitats in the Region and to ensure alignment between the core objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and local authority development plans.

RPO 7.17: Facilitate cross boundary co-ordination between local authorities and the relevant agencies in the Region to provide clear governance arrangements and coordination mechanisms to support the development of ecological networks and enhanced connectivity between protected sites whilst also addressing the need for management of alien invasive species and the conservation of native species.

RPO 7.18: Work with local authorities and state agencies to promote the development of all aspects of park management in the Wicklow National Park and the Slieve Bloom Mountains.

RPO 7.19: Support the consideration of designating a National Park for the peatlands area in the Midlands.

RPO 7.20: Promote the development of improved visitor experiences, nature conservation and sustainable development activities within the Dublin Bay Biosphere in cooperation with the Dublin Bay UNESCO Biosphere Partnership.



7.6 Ecosystem Services

Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human wellbeing, there are four main types; provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services.

Provisioning services are the products obtained from ecosystems such as food, fresh water, wood, fibre, genetic resources and medicines. Regulating services are defined as the benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes such as climate regulation, natural hazard regulation, water purification and waste management, pollination or pest control. Support services highlight the importance of ecosystems to provide habitat for migratory species and to maintain the viability of gene-pools. Cultural services include non-material benefits that people obtain from ecosystems such as spiritual enrichment, intellectual development, recreation and aesthetic values[48].

The incorporation and consideration of an ecosystem services approach can lead to significant enhancements in relation to planning policy as well as at project stages and is recommended to be used by local authorities in the preparation of development plans and other statutory landuse plans.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Ecosystem Services Approach

RPO 7.21: Local authorities shall promote an Ecosystem Services Approach[49] in the preparation of statutory land use plans.



48 https://biodiversity.europa.eu/topics/ecosystem-services
49 See Appendix G Glossary for definition and sources

7.7 Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure (GI) can be broadly defined as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which is designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings[50].

GI can include areas of high biodiversity value grasslands, wetlands, waterways, peatlands, woodlands and uplands. It can also refer to landscape elements at all spatial scales down to trees, hedgerows, gardens, parks and open space. Blue infrastructure refers to a network of assets which are linked to water such as rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, ponds and wetlands. Together they are sometimes referred to as Green and Blue Infrastructure. For the purposes of the RSES, the term Green Infrastructure is used, which seeks to enhance the interrelationships between green (ecology) and blue (hydrology) ecosystems.

Integration of GI as a planning concept requires an understanding of where our key strategic natural assets are located, the plants and animals that live there and the human activities that take place. Green Infrastructure policy land use zonings are already embedded in some local authority development plans, allowing for the consideration of GI in local planning policy and decision making.

The multiple benefits of GI are recognised in a number of national policy documents. The National Biodiversity Plan sees GI as crucial to achieving biodiversity targets and developing ecological corridors that allow the movement of species through their entire natural habitat. The Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways focuses on the economic and social benefits of creating and connecting greenways, particularly in rural areas, while the Flood Risk Management Guidelines highlight its key role in managing flood risk and adapting to climate change.

The EPA 2016 report 'Health Benefits from Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure' states that human health and wellbeing depends on a healthy environment and that management of such a key natural resource also has strategic importance in terms of the potential to contribute to the Irish economy. EMRA is a partner on the EPA-funded project Green and Blue Spaces: A Health-Led Approach (GBI Health). Internationally, large amounts of evidence suggest that access to green and blue spaces provide significant health benefits. GBI Health examined and confirmed the positive influence green and blue spaces have on health and wellbeing in an Irish context. See case study GBI Health, section 9.4 Healthy Placemaking.

Placemaking and Green Infrastructure

GI serves a wide variety of important functions including but not limited to; provision of habitat, increased biodiversity, ecological corridors, climate change adaptation and mitigation, water treatment, water retention, local amenity provision, air quality improvement, cultural and heritage preservation, a mentally restorative environment and flood mitigation.

At the local authority scale, GI offers an opportunity to develop integrated strategies around economic development, urban placemaking and rural policy. Linking strategic natural assets with cultural and heritage assets further enhances the opportunities for GI strategies to drive recreation and tourism benefits. Table 7.1 identifies the strategic GI and cultural heritage assets in the Region.

50 European Union (2013): Building a Green Infrastructure for Europe.

Table 7.1 Strategic Natural, Cultural and Green Infrastructure Assets in the Region	
Bays, estuaries, headlands, islands and reefs	Carlingford Lough, Clogher Head, Dundalk Bay, Boyne Coast and Estuary, Rockabill, Skerries islands, Rogerstown Estuary, Malahide Estuary, Portmarnock, Baldoyle Estuary, Irelands Eye, Lambay Island, Howth Head, Dublin Bay and Tolka Estuary, Bull Island, Booterstown nature reserve, Dalkey Island, The Murragh wetlands, Wicklow Head, Wicklow reef, Maherabeg and Brittas dunes
Maritime towns and beaches	Clogherhead, Laytown /Bettystown, Balbriggan, Loughshinny, Rush, Skerries, Portrane, Rush, Donabate, Claremont, Donabate, Malahide, Portmarnock, Dollymount, Sandymount Seapoint, Sandycove, Dalkey, Killiney, Bray, Greystones, Wicklow Town, Maheramore, Brittas, Clogga, Arklow
Lakes, Rivers and canals	Loughs Sheelin, Derrvaragh, Ennel, Blessington, Gowna, Owel and Ree, Lough Tay – Lough Dan on the Cloghoge River. Rivers Avonmore, Aughrim, Avoca, Boyne, Barrow, Blackwater, Brosna, Clodagh, Fane, Dee, Dodder, Dargle, Glyde, Inny, Liffey, Nore, Nanny, Poddle, Slate, Santry, Shannon, Slaney and tributary Derry River Tang, Tolka and walks around the Vartry Reservoir Canals; Grand Canal and Royal Canal
Greenways, blueways and peatways	Dublin to Galway Eurovelo Route, Green & Silver triangular navigation route encompassing Dublin Royal Canal, River Shannon and Grand Canal, Shannon Wilderness Corridor, East Coast Trail, Newry to Carlingford, Royal and Grand Canal Ways, Canal loop Greenway (linking the Grand and Royal Canals)** Wicklow Way, Dublin Mountains Way, Liffey Valley, Dodder*, Lakelands Greenway, Newgrange to Newbridge Greenway**, Blessington Greenway, Coastal Greenway from Wicklow to Greystones**, Arklow – Shillelagh recreation trail*, Peatways (Corlea, Boora), Barrow and Boyne Blueways
Uplands, woodlands and designated sites	Uplands; Cooley Peninsula, Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, Slieve Blooms Woodlands; Knocksink, Glen of the Downs, Charleville Wood SPAs, SACs, NHAs and pNHAs, Ramsar sites See Appendix F
Bogs and Peatlands	Abbeyleix Bog, Red Bog, Mouds, Ballynafagh, Moneybeg, Clareisland, Mount Hevey, Scragh, Crosswood, Carn Park, Garriskil, Derragh, Wooddown, Girley (Drewstown), Killyconny, Brown Bog , Clooneen, Ardagullion, Mount Jessop, All Saints, Clara, Raheenmore, Ferbane, Sharavogue, Moyclare, Mongan, Derry, Coolrain, Lisbigney, Knockacoller, Holdenstown, Carriggower Bog
National and Regional Parks	Wicklow Mountains National Park, The Curragh Plains, Japanese Gardens, Birr Castle, Lough Boora Discovery Park, Charleville, Emo Court, Heywood Gardens, Tullynally Castle and Belvedere House and gardens. Argillan House and Gardens, Castletown house and attendant demesnes, Newbridge demesne, Oldbridge demesne, Phoenix Park, Ward Valley Park, Tymon Park, Marlay Park, Killiney Hill, Dodder Valley Park, Griffeen Valley Park, and Corkagh Park. Avondale and Kilmacurragh, Lough Ree and Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park and Lanesborough Commons North Park.
Medieval, historic and walled towns.	Medieval towns of Carlingford, Drogheda, Kildare, Naas, Trim and Athlone. Historic planned towns of Birr, Abbeyleix, Castlepollard and Tyrellspass. Walled towns of Ardee, Carlingford, Drogheda, Castledermot, Athy, Athlone, Naas, Trim and Dublin.
Heritage sites	Bru na Boinne-Boyne Valley UNESCO World Heritage Site, Dublin Bay UNESCO biosphere, Proposed; Historic city of Dublin, Monastic sites at Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Kells, Monasterboice and Glendalough. Royal sites of Ireland at Dun Aillne, Hill of Uisneach and Tara Complex. Curragh Plains, Baltinglass cluster of hillforts, Clondalkin (Clondalkin Round Tower), and Rathfarnham (Rathfarnham Castle). See also Record of National monuments

*under development

**proposed



Figure 7.3 Navigational map of the Region's main Green/Blueway routes[51]

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In the preparation of Green Infrastructure Strategies, local authorities shall follow these Guiding Principles;

- **Identify and protect existing GI Assets** - before development (including spatial mapping where appropriate) and enhance the potential of the existing network through the development of new GI assets during development processes.
- **Connectivity is key** – interconnect GI assets with each other and with people, providing linkages from built up areas to the countryside. This includes wildlife corridors between areas of high biodiversity value and the development of greenways, blueways and peatways.
- **Consider the ecological impacts of greenways** – while the development of greenways and blueways has positive health and wellbeing benefits, there is also potential for habitat loss and disturbance due to increased movement of people. Therefore there is a need to strategically plan, deliver and manage our GI networks and ensure appropriately designed infrastructure to reduce the impact on the natural environment.
- **Integrate an ecosystem services approach** – addressing biodiversity protection, water management and climate action in the planning and management of green spaces, for example provision of street trees, roadside hedges, planting wildflower meadows, introducing wildlife under- and over-passes, permeable surfaces and SuDS along connecting routes and green walls and roofs on buildings.
- **Design GI strategies that function at different scales and across boundaries** – to this end local authorities should work with their neighbouring authorities to co-ordinate GI strategies and with infrastructure providers to seek out opportunities to develop GI along strategic infrastructure corridors.
- **Carbon Sequestration** – local authorities should consider the potential for carbon sequestration in GI Strategies, whereby certain areas can be considered as strategic and integral mechanism for the long-term storage of carbon to mitigate the contribution of fossil fuels emissions and combat climate change.
- **Integrate built and natural heritage** – provide links between walking and cycling routes particularly in areas of high amenity, uplands, lake shores, river banks, forests with built heritage sites, areas of historic or archaeological importance and National Monuments. The development of waymarked ways and looped walks can maximise recreation and tourism benefits to local populations but may require the creation of new rights of way either by agreement or by the use of compulsory powers.

51 Source: homepage.eircom.net/~barrowline/maps.htm

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Green Infrastructure

RPO 7.22: Local authority development plan and local area plans, shall identify, protect, enhance, provide and manage Green Infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner and should also have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species.

RPO 7.23: Support the further development of Green Infrastructure policies and coordinate the mapping of strategic Green Infrastructure in the Region.

Development of Greenways, Blueways and Peatways

The Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways Strategy 2018 by the Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport sets out how National and Regional Greenways in Ireland should be planned and constructed and sets out a framework for funding of Greenway projects.

The aim is to develop national (at least 100 kilometres long) and regional (at least 20 kilometres, but preferably 40 kilometres long) trail networks as a unique alternative means for tourists and visitors to access and enjoy rural Ireland, helping to support the development of rural communities and job creation, as well as protecting and promoting natural assets and biodiversity. The greenways strategy is closely aligned to the National Outdoor Recreation Plan to link into state owned recreation areas including Coillte trails, Bord na Mona peatlands and Waterways Ireland.



There are significant opportunities to develop a number of flagship greenways in the Region;

Greenways; The Dublin – Galway greenway offers potential to link the marketing of the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and the Hidden Heartlands and connect to the EuroVelo network of long-distance European cycling trails. Other regional greenways under development include the East Coast trail with potential to extend cross border to the Newry to Carlingford Greenway and the Old Rail Trail between Athlone to Mullingar, which highlights the potential to develop disused railway lines in the Region. The Blessington Greenway – approved extension around Blessington Lake, taking in the surrounding villages of Lackan and Ballyknockan and offers the potential to attract people to work and visit the area and surrounding villages. The Wicklow Way hiking route from Dublin to the Blackstairs Mountains would benefit from improved facilities and connections into the informal mountain walks in Wicklow Mountains National Park.

Blueways; The development of navigable inland waterways in collaboration with Waterways Ireland including; the Shannon and Shannon-Erne connecting the islands of Lough Ree, Clonmacmoise and Shannon harbour; linking the Royal Canal with the Grand Canal along the River Shannon; the Barrow Way from Lowtown to Graiguecullen / Carlow; and the emerging Boyne Blueway. There is further potential to position the Dublin Docklands as a significant water-focussed amenity and develop the Grand Canal and Spencer Docks as the urban gateways to the Grand and Royal Canals. Blueways are particularly important for water quality, fisheries and ecological habitats, and for activities such as kayaking and snorkelling.

Peatways; There is potential in the midlands to develop a regional peatway interconnecting a range of biodiversity and cultural hotspots such as the Mesolithic (first settlers) site in Lough Boora, Co. Offaly and the Iron Age bog road in Corlea, Co.Longford. There is also potential to enhance access and link into trails in the Slieve Bloom Mountains in Ireland's central plain.

Careful routing and design is needed to ensure that greenways do not impact negatively on agriculture, natural heritage or the biodiversity value of natural ecological corridors such as rivers and canals or on coastal habitats. Planning has a key role to play in developing and connecting the regional greenway network for nature conservation, recreation and tourism to support the diversification of rural economies and promote more sustainable travel modes, particularly in urban areas, see also Chapter 5 MASP for greenways in the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Greenways, Blueways and Peatways

RPO 7.24: Promote the development of a sustainable Strategic Greenway Network of national and regional routes, with a number of high capacity flagship routes that can be extended and /or linked with local greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure, notwithstanding that capacity of a greenway is limited to what is ecologically sustainable.

RPO 7.25: Support local authorities and state agencies in the delivery of sustainable strategic greenways, blueways, and peatways projects in the Region under the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Riparian setbacks

RPO 7.26 Support the development of guidance for assessment of proposed land zonings in order to achieve appropriate riparian setback distances that support the attainment of high ecological status for waterbodies, the conservation of biodiversity and good ecosystem health, and buffer zones from flood plains.

7.8 Landscape

The RSES recognises the important place of landscape considerations, including in terms of placemaking, culture and attractiveness. The diverse range of scenic landscapes of the Region stretch from the Irish Sea and the eastern seaboard with its islands, seascapes, waterscapes, beaches, bays and estuaries westwards to the River Shannon and its callows; and to the lakes, wetlands, fens, eskers, bogs and agricultural lands in between. The Region is home to the Slieve Bloom and the Wicklow Mountains and significant natural and built watercourses such as the Royal and Grand canals and the rolling riverine landscapes of the Boyne, Liffey, Barrow and Nore River Valleys and a number of historic and demesne landscapes, planned estates and gardens.

Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors (Article 1a of the European Landscape Convention). Ireland signed and ratified the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (ELC) which promotes a wider concept of the landscape as defined by the interaction of both human and natural, covering urban, peri-urban and rural areas as well as land, inland waters, coastal and marine areas.

The ELC recognises the importance of all landscapes, and not just exceptional landscapes, as having a crucial bearing on quality of life and as deserving attention in landscape policy. It aims to encourage public bodies to adopt policies and measures at national, regional and local level to promote, manage and plan landscapes. In an Irish context the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 will continue to govern decision making in relation to landscape.

The National Landscape Strategy for Ireland (NLS) provides a high-level policy framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning of the landscape by way of supporting actions. The NLS recognises the importance of landscape protection and its interconnectivity with biodiversity and climate change. The Strategy includes a core objective to develop a national Landscape Character Assessment, to provide a framework for greater consistency in the approach to landscape classification and assessment to ensure the conservation of special landscape areas, which by their nature often extend across administrative boundaries.

Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a tool for identifying the features that give a specific area its 'sense of place'. Landscape characterisation should be integrated with and, where appropriate, informed by green infrastructure strategies.

The NLS identifies the need for a national GIS platform to provide the structure for on-going collection, monitoring and review of the landscape's physical, scientific, ecological, biodiversity and cultural assets. Although a number of local authorities in the Region have undertaken landscape character assessments, there remain gaps in coverage and inconsistencies in approach. The national landscape character assessment, when complete, will provide consistency in how we characterise and connect with the landscape, and provide a framework for regional and local landscape character assessments.

Soils

The main pressures on soil resources in Ireland arise from intensive agriculture and organic waste disposal, inappropriately located forestry, industry, peat extraction, urbanisation and infrastructure development.

Soil sealing - covering the ground with an impermeable material – is one of the main causes of soil degradation and affects fertile agricultural land, impacts biodiversity, increases flood risk and water scarcity and contributes to climate change. See Chapter 10 Infrastructure for policies on SuDS and permeable surfaces.

Farming

Traditional farm landscapes are a highly valued asset in the Region, varying from horticultural produce in Dublin and Eastern counties, beef and dairy in the Midlands, and sheep grazing in the Region's uplands.

Farming in the Region faces multiple challenges. Due to increasing urbanisation, agricultural land surrounding cities and towns as well as green areas within them are subjected to increasing development pressures, particularly in Dublin and Eastern counties. There is a key role for local authorities and the Regional Assembly to work together to ensure integrated land use management and planning to support the sustainable development of rural areas in our Region.

Agriculture also faces political, environmental and climatic issues. Brexit and upcoming CAP reforms have the potential to negatively impact agriculture across the Region, particularly relating to livestock and dairy production. To limit the negative environmental impacts of farming, and considering the agricultural growth targets set out in Food Wise 2025, agriculture within the Region will have to adapt. Expansion of current practices would almost certainly lead to increased biodiversity loss, as well as more nitrate contamination of our water courses. From a climate perspective, business as usual will result in Ireland's failure to meet our national, European and international climate targets. By addressing these challenges, there is an opportunity to support low carbon and low impact farming such as local agri-food, biomass production, permaculture, appropriate agri-forestry and incorporating circular economy thinking by using anaerobic digesters to produce renewable electricity, heat and gas from farm wastes.

Peatlands

Peatlands form unique landscapes which can act as amenity areas for locals and visitors and support a variety of outdoor activities such as hill-walking, wildlife watching and fishing which bring economic benefits in remote areas. Peatlands are also considered amongst the most important ecosystems in the world, because of their key value for biodiversity, regulation of climate, water filtration and supply. There has been significant damage to peatlands in our Region due to peat extraction and agricultural improvement together with the associated drainage and burning related to these land uses.

The National Peatland's Strategy produced by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the NPWS aims to provide a long-term management framework to optimise the social, environmental and economic contribution of all peatlands within the State, setting out supports, structures, funding mechanisms and regulatory frameworks to promote a partnership approach to their sustainable development. Bord na Mona, as one of largest peatland landowners, is an important stakeholder in the future use of peatlands. Its Strategic Framework for the Future Use of Peatlands indicates that sites that have been cutaway will be made available for alternative uses including alternative energy (wind, biomass), agriculture & horticulture, forestry, biodiversity and ecosystem services, amenity and tourism.

The National Peatlands Strategy also discusses future uses of peatlands. There is recognition for the wide range of stakeholders interested in peatland management including; turf cutters, industry, non-governmental organisation conservationists, state agencies and local residents.

The Lough Boora Discovery park in Co Offaly is a Bord na Móna cutaway bog, which has been developed as an outdoor amenity area with restored wetland and woodland habitats that provide important habitats for a wide diversity of animals birds and plants. It includes a sculpture park, angling and bird watching facilities and extensive walking routes. There is potential to develop a regional peatway connecting natural and cultural attractions and the Mesolithic (Iron age) bog trails and to develop a National Park based on the raised bog peatlands of the Midlands area, see also Section 7.7 Green Infrastructure.

CASE STUDY:

Care Peat

Peatland ecosystems are arguably the most effective carbon capture machines on the planet when fully functional. In Ireland we burn peat to create electricity or heating and we drain it for agriculture or forestry. Care Peat examines the potential of reducing Ireland's carbon emissions by up to 5% through re-wetting our peatland habitats, restoring biodiversity and capturing carbon.

Care Peat aims to create new economic models that are advantageous to all stakeholders looking at the potentials of carbon credits and sphagnum farming for example to try and find a green solution that will also enhance income for landowners. The project will support collaboration between local authorities, the Bord na Móna Transition Team and relevant stakeholders. It will incorporate relevant policies such as the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021 and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans[52].



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In the consideration of development on peatland areas, the following Guiding Principles should apply:

- Consideration of the potential contribution of peatlands to climate change mitigation and adaptation including renewable energy production.
- Consideration of habitats and species of environmental significance.
- Consideration of the potential contribution of peatlands to an existing or proposed greenway/blueway/peatway network.
- Consideration of the ecosystem services and tourism potential provided by peatlands.
- Development of peatlands shall ensure that there are no negative impacts on water quality.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Landscape

RPO 7.27: Following the adoption of a national landscape character assessment, the Assembly will prepare a Regional Landscape Character Assessment to promote better landscape management and planning in the Region.

RPO 7.28: Work with local authorities and relevant stakeholders, to identify areas of high value agricultural land and to ensure food security in the Region and to promote sustainable farming practices that maintain the quality of the natural environment, protect farm landscapes and support the achievement of climate targets.

RPO 7.29: Support collaboration between local authorities, the Bord na Móna Transition Team and relevant stakeholders and the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management that incorporate any relevant policies and strategies such as the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021 and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans. This shall include support for the rehabilitation and/or re-wetting of suitable peatland habitats.

52 https://insight-centre.org/Project/care-peat

7.9 Climate Change

Climate change is a global challenge which requires a strong and coherent response at national, regional and local level. Observations show that Ireland's climate is changing in terms of sea level rise, higher average temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, more frequent weather extremes, the spread of invasive alien species and increased risk of wild fires, for example upland gorse fires. These changes are projected to continue over the coming decades. Climate change will have diverse and wide-ranging impacts on the Eastern and Midland Region's environment, society and economic development, including managed and natural ecosystems, water resources, agriculture, food security and bioeconomy, human health and coastal zones.

The thematic approach taken in preparation of this Strategy is underpinned by cross-cutting key principles, one of which is climate change. Climate change is impacting and will continue to impact many of the policies and objectives contained in the Strategy and as such informs policies including those in relation to flood risk management and surface water drainage, settlement strategy, transport, waste management, water services, energy, natural heritage, and green and blue infrastructure.

Climate policy at global, national, regional and local level will continue to be driven by the need to reduce GHG emissions, replacement of fossil fuels or high embedded carbon products with sustainable alternatives such as biobased products, and also enhancing carbon sinks. Emissions in the Region largely come from energy supply, transport, residential and commercial buildings and industry. However, no matter how successful efforts to reduce GHG emissions turn out to be, climate change will continue to impact the Region over the coming decades. The need for appropriate adaptation or climate proofing measures will therefore also be necessary to ensure a comprehensive response to the challenge of climate change in the Region. Adaptation involves taking steps to adjust human and natural systems in response to existing and anticipated climatic change, in order to avoid unwanted impacts and to take advantage of new opportunities that may arise. The priority policy areas identified are energy generation, the built environment and transport.

The National Adaptation Framework outlines the following summary of observed and projected climate changes and impacts for Ireland. For an overview of legislation and policy relating to climate change refer to Appendx D.

Project Ireland 2040 the National Planning Framework outlines the role of the planning system in facilitating mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and ensuring that sustainable infrastructure networks build resilience to climate change. In this regard National Strategic Outcome 8 is dedicated to achieving transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society. This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework noting that new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewable energy focused system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.

CASE STUDY:

URB-ADAPT

Urb-ADAPT is a partnership between EMRA and University College Cork, funded by the EPA, to aid climate change adaptation for urban areas in the Eastern and Midlands region.

With Dublin city as a case study, the project aims to develop a regional approach to the assessment and management of current and future vulnerability to climate risks. The project will identify options and requirements and produce implementation guidelines for local authorities across our region in adapting to a changing climate[53].

53 www.urbadapt.com

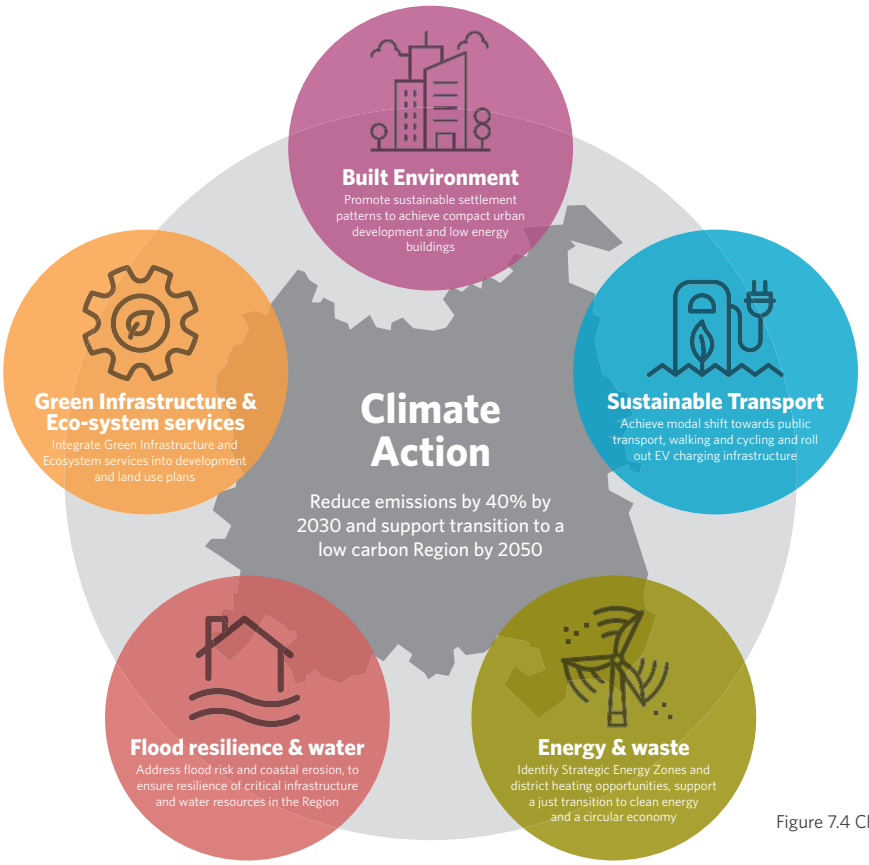


Figure 7.4 Climate Stategy

Parameter	Observed	Projected	Example of Biophysical Impacts
Temperature	▪ Average temperatures have increased by 0.8°C since 1900, an average of 0.07°C per decade. ▪ The number of warm days (over 20°C) has increased while the number of cold days (below 0°C) has decreased.	▪ Projections indicate an increase in average temperatures across all seasons (0.9-1.7°C). ▪ The number of warm days is expected to increase and heat waves are expected to occur more frequently.	▪ Incidences of cold stress are likely to decrease while incidences of heat stress will increase. ▪ The duration of the growing season will increase, occurring earlier and extending farther.
Precipitation	▪ Increase in average annual national rainfall of approximately 60mm or 5% in the period 1981-2010, compared to the 30-year period 1961-1990. ▪ The largest increases are observed over the west of the country.	▪ Significant reductions are expected in average levels of annual, spring and summer rainfall. ▪ Projections indicate a substantial increase in the frequency of heavy precipitation events in Winter and Autumn (approx. 20%).	▪ The increased occurrence of dry spells will result in increased pressure on water supply. ▪ An increase in the frequency of extreme precipitation events will result in increased fluvial and pluvial flood risk.
Wind Speed and Storms	▪ No long-term change in average wind speed or direction can be determined with confidence. ▪ The number and intensity of storms in the North Atlantic has increased by approx. three storms per decade since 1950.	▪ Projections indicate an overall decrease in wind speed and an increase in extreme wind speeds, particularly during winter. ▪ The number of very intense storms is projected to increase over the North Atlantic region. Projections suggest that the winter track of these storms may extend further south and over Ireland more often.	▪ Increases in extreme wind speeds may impact on wind turbines and the continuity of power supply. ▪ Infrastructure will be at risk due to the increased occurrence of intense storms (e.g. winter 2013/2014).
Sea Level and Sea Surface Temperature	▪ Historically, sea level has not been measured with the necessary accuracy to determine sea level changes around Ireland. However, measurements from Newlyn, in southwest England, show a sea level rise of 1.7cm per decade since 1916. These measurements are considered to be representative of the situation to the South of Ireland. ▪ Sea surface temperatures have increased by 0.85°C since 1950, with 2007 the warmest year in Irish coastal records.	▪ Sea levels will continue to rise for all coastal areas, by up to 0.8 m by 2100. The south of Ireland will likely feel the impacts of these rises first. ▪ Sea surface temperatures are projected to continue warming for the coming decade. For the Irish Sea, projections indicate a warming of 1.9°C by the end of the century.	▪ Significant increase in areas at risk of coastal inundation and erosion. ▪ Increased risk to coastal aquifers and water supply. ▪ Change in distribution fish species; ▪ Implications for fisheries and aquaculture industries.

Figure 7.5 Observed and projected climate changes and impacts for Ireland
Source: National Adaptation Framework

Current Situation

The EPA's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections Report 2017-2035[54] provides an assessment of Ireland's total projected greenhouse gas emissions out to 2030, progress towards achieving its emission reduction targets set under the EU Effort Sharing Decision up to 2020 and a longer-term assessment based on current projections.

The report indicates an overall increase in greenhouse gas emissions from most sectors. The projected growth in emissions is largely underpinned by projected strong economic growth and relatively low fuel prices leading to increasing energy demand over the period. The report finds that Ireland is not projected to meet 2020 emissions reduction targets with our non-Emissions Trading Scheme emissions projected to be between 0% and 1% below 2005 levels in 2020. This compares to the target of 20% below 2005 levels by 2020. Furthermore, Ireland is not on the right long-term trajectory to meet longer term EU and national emissions reduction commitments in the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors.

The main emissions sources which are relevant to the EMRA Region include electricity, built environment, the transport sector and agriculture. In terms of energy the largest source of emissions is fossil fuel generating stations. Three peat fired stations are located within the EMRA Region in Edenderry, Lough Ree and West Offaly. The majority of emissions from energy industries come from power generation. Peat use for power generation is expected to decrease in the short to medium term and the RSES seeks to ensure that alternative energy sources can be facilitated. In terms of transport aviation (Dublin Airport), road and rail are the main sources of emissions. The overall growth in transport emissions projections is largely underpinned by growth in diesel fuel consumption which is expected to decline post 2025 with the acceleration of the deployment of electric vehicles during this period. Policies are therefore needed to facilitate and encourage use of electric vehicles and to increase the potential for trips to be taken by sustainable modes of transport. Emissions in the agriculture and built environment sector are projected to increase and the RSES will need to address the built environment (mainly residential) sector.

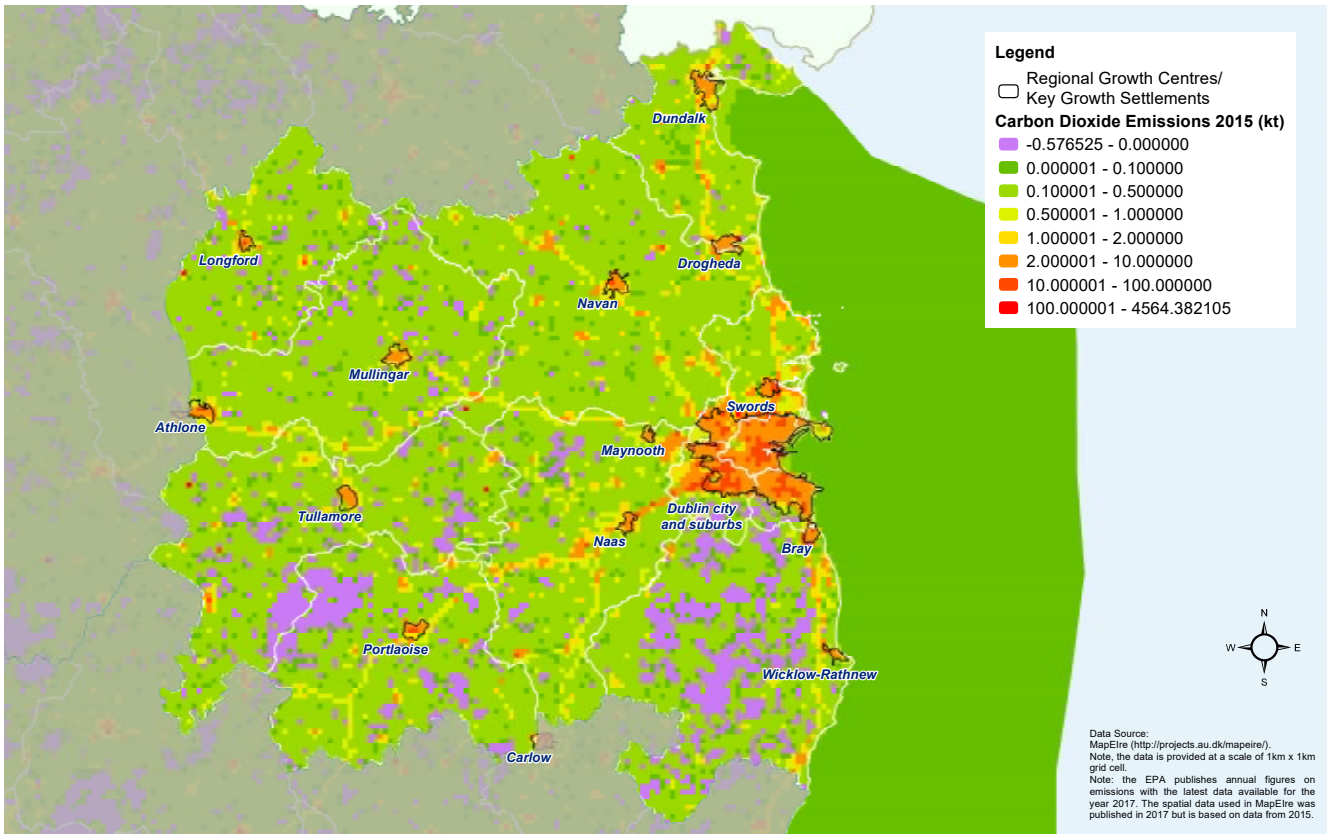


Figure 7.6 Carbon Dioxide Emissions in the Region

54 http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghgprojections2017-2035/EPA_2018_GHG_Emissions_Projections_Summary_Report.pdf

Estimates of GHG emissions at a regional level using 2015 CO_2 emissions shows that the highest concentrations of emissions occur in Dublin City and its suburbs, the major settlements, and along the national road network. Some areas show zero to negative CO_2 emissions – these areas represent carbon sinks, or areas which can remove CO_2 from the atmosphere, such as bogs and large areas of forestry; the mapped distribution of these indicate that the largest sinks occur in the Wicklow Mountains and Slieve Bloom Mountains, as well as in pockets throughout the Midlands.

In terms of addressing the future challenges of climate change, the EMRA will work closely with the newly appointed Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs). The Dublin Metropolitan Climate Action Regional Office (run by the four Dublin local authorities assisted by Codema) and the Eastern and Midland Climate Action Regional Office (run by Kildare County Council) will be responsible for planning and actions regarding Climate Change mitigation and adaptation in their regions. Climate Action Regional Offices shall ensure coherence and coordination with the RSES when formulating regional climate change adaptation plans.



Support Transition to a Low Carbon, Circular & Climate Resilient Region

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is committed to the Region becoming a low-carbon and circular region. This will require reduction of all greenhouse gases, of which carbon dioxide is the most prominent. The priority is to minimise energy demand and waste, and then address how energy will be supplied and renewable technologies incorporated. In order to address this, it is necessary to reduce the effects of climate change through settlement and travel patterns, energy use, waste and protection of green infrastructure.

In order to ensure that future development in the Region will be transitioned to a low carbon usage there is a need to be able to assess the level of transport demand and greenhouse gas emissions. For local authorities, in analysing land for urban development, there is a need to inform the decision making at Core Strategy stage by the ability to assess the predicted impact of the potential land use on modal split and transport greenhouse gas emissions. The Assembly will progress this method of assessment with key stakeholders and transport agencies to provide a robust method of assessment. In addition, city and county development plans will undergo assessment of their impact and progress on carbon reduction targets (See Chapter 3 Growth Strategy RPO 3.6).

CASE STUDY:

National mapping of GHG and non-GHG emissions sources

The 'National mapping of GHG and non-GHG emissions sources' in Ireland was funded by the EPA and carried out by Aarhus University (AU), Denmark, in cooperation with the Irish emission inventory and the EPA GIS team responsible for the EPA GeoPortal, to support national reporting of spatial emissions, which is now a requirement under international conventions and directives.

MapEIre provide emissions with a high spatial resolution of 1 km x 1 km. Emissions mainly occur from road transport, with elevated emissions in urban areas. Spatial emissions for 2016 are consistent with 2018 emission inventory reporting. Output from the national emission mapping model "MapEIjoint re" is presented in maps and shapefiles can be downloaded directly from the website[55].

In terms of addressing the future challenges of climate change, the EMRA will work closely with the newly appointed Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs). The Dublin Metropolitan Region Climate Change Office (run by the four Dublin Local Authorities) and the Eastern and Midland Region Climate Change Office (run by Kildare County Council) will support Climate Action in the EMRA region. It will be critically important that actions identified by both the Climate Action Regional Offices and the RSES align in terms of ensuring coherence on climate action responses.

An increase in electricity demand is likely resulting not only from increased population and economic development but also resulting from a move away from the use of fossil fuels in the transport sector towards clean mobility.

In order to ensure security of electricity supply the Strategy must address this increased demand for electricity in such a way as to strike a balance between addressing the need for a significant shift towards renewable energy and enabling resources to be harnessed in a manner consistent with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

A key element of the Strategy is the need to monitor progress towards achieving a low carbon, circular and climate resilient society.

The bioeconomy in Ireland has enormous potential which is yet to be unlocked. Development of the bioeconomy is also consistent with Ireland's low carbon transition objective. Favouring renewable biological resources over fossil fuel-based ones through the expansion of the bioeconomy, whilst keeping sustainability concerns to the fore, has the potential to contribute towards meeting Ireland's climate change targets. As the bioeconomy has the potential to grow rural and regional businesses and jobs, it is a useful instrument to embed pro-environmental actions. The bioeconomy extends from farming and the agri-food businesses, marine-based industries, forestry, waste management, energy suppliers, and pharma and bio-technology products. Ireland has flourishing firms in all of these sectors but much more can be done to unlock the bioeconomy's commercial potential and its environmental benefits.

55 http://projects.au.dk/mapeire/spatial-results/download/

CASE STUDY:

Bioeconomy

A sustainable bioeconomy is the renewable segment of the circular economy. It can turn bio-waste, residues and discards into valuable resources and significantly cut food waste. Realising this potential requires investment and implementing systemic changes that cut across different sectors (agriculture, forestry, fisheries, aquaculture, food, biobased industry).

EU and National Funds will support Research and Innovation outputs that address cross-cutting challenges and opportunities in the bioeconomy, including the teaming up of regions in bioeconomy-related Smart Specialisation partnerships. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and SEAI are also supporting a number of bioeconomy related projects including Agri Bio Circular Economy, led by UCD - ABC Economy, develops new sustainable value chains for the circular bioeconomy in Ireland by maximising value and minimising environmental impacts through cascading of biomass for production of biobased products and energy[56].

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Climate Change

RPO 7.30: Within 1 year of the adoption of the RSES, the EMRA shall seek with other stakeholders to carry out an assessment of transport emissions in the Region to identify GHG forecasting and to analyse the emissions impacts of development in the Region.

RPO 7.31: Within 1 year of carrying out a regional emissions assessment, EMRA shall compile and publish an emissions inventory and, in collaboration with the relevant departments and agencies, agree emissions reductions targets in accordance with agreed national sectoral plans and to support an aggregate 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in line with the EU 2030 Framework.

RPO 7.32: With the assistance and support of the Climate Action Regional Offices, local authorities shall develop, adopt and implement local climate adaptation and mitigation strategies which shall address issues including local vulnerability to climate risks and identify and prioritise actions, in accordance with the Guiding Principles of the National Adaptation Framework, National Mitigation Plan.

RPO 7.33: Climate Action Regional Offices shall provide support to the local authorities on the development, adoption and implementation of local climate action strategies (which can address both adaptation and mitigation). Ongoing support should relate to the specific actions, and obligations and timescales for same that must be undertaken by the local authorities in accordance with local climate change adaptation strategies and compliance with national policy.

RPO 7.34: EMRA supports the National Policy Statement on Bioeconomy (2018) and supports the exploration of opportunities in the circular resource-efficient economy including undertaking a bioeconomy feasibility study for the Region to identify the area of potential growth in the Region to inform investment in line with the national transition objective to a low carbon climate resilient economy.

56 https://www.seai.ie/resources/seai-research/research-projects/details/agri-bio-circular-economy-abc-economy

Decarbonising the Energy Sector

The Region will need to shift from its reliance on using fossil fuels and natural gas as its main energy source to a more diverse range of low and zero-carbon sources, including renewable energy and secondary heat sources. Decentralised energy will be critical to the Region's energy supply and will ensure that the Region can become more self-sufficient in relation to its energy needs.

Generating electricity supply from indigenous renewable sources requires:

- facilitating the provision of appropriate renewable energy infrastructure and technologies and deeper cooperation with Northern Ireland and the EU
- expansion and upgrading of the grid with the aim of increasing the share of variable renewable electricity that the all-island system can accommodate
- Onshore wind, bioenergy, solar and offshore energy
- Effective community engagement including support for micro generation
- Moving from carbon intense fossil fuel generation to lower emissions fuels
- Increasing the use of electricity and bioenergy to heat our homes and fuel our transport
- The need to ensure sufficient electricity to meet increased demand

The Strategy supports an increase in the amount of new renewable energy sources in the Region. This includes the use of wind energy – both onshore and offshore, biomass, and solar photovoltaics and solar thermal, both on buildings and at a larger scale on appropriate sites in accordance with National policy and the Regional Policy Objectives outlined in this Strategy.

It is necessary to establish a consistency of approach by planning authorities, both in identifying areas suitable for renewable energy development and having regard to potential impacts, inter alia on biodiversity, landscape and heritage. It is also necessary to reflect the advancements in technology, and reflect the need to engage with, and be responsive to the needs of communities asked to host renewable energy infrastructure.

The need for early stakeholder engagement in relation to renewable energy generation projects is critical. Effective community engagement is essential for building public confidence and to help Ireland achieve a transition to renewable energy. An increase in community participation in renewable energy projects such as community ownership models should be supported in this regard. Optimisation of community benefit from renewable energy projects also needs to be ensured.

The 'Sustainable Energy Community' Network is a programme established by Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) supporting communities in which everyone works together to develop sustainable energy systems. 200 no. communities across Ireland are now part of the Sustainable Energy Communities network, a rapidly expanding national movement towards a cleaner energy future. This programme has been particularly successful in the Region.

CASE STUDY:

Dunleer Sustainable Energy Community



In 2015 the Dunleer Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) was established with the vision of providing leadership to the community of Dunleer County Louth and other communities across Ireland on addressing the challenge of climate change. The objectives of the group are:

- Education; through the 'energy ambassadors' community education programme to advise people on everyday steps to reduce energy use
- Retrofit of homes; leading to a 30% reduction in energy use in 200 homes throughout County Louth
- Community energy generation; partnering with the Centre for Renewable Energy at Dundalk IT, Louth County Council and the Alheim region in Germany to develop knowledge and best practice

District heating offers an efficient and cost-effective heating option using networks from a variety of potential technologies and renewable energy sources, such as combined heat and power (CHP), biomass energy, geothermal or energy from waste. The use of renewable energy solutions to provide heating and hot water to houses and businesses contributes to sustainability as it reduces demand for and consumption of energy while using a renewable form of fuel.

Waste heat presents a huge indigenous resource. Waste heat is the single largest available low-carbon source of energy available in the Region that is not being used. In Dublin City alone, there is enough waste heat to meet the heating demands of nearly half of the city's buildings. These sources of heat are typically used in District Heating systems. Sources of waste heat include data centres. Waste heat is a resource which is too often overlooked and can meet a large proportion of the Region's heat demands indigenously and without fossil fuels. In response, the Strategy seeks to support the micro-generation, geothermal energy, district heating, storage of heat and energy and the role of the electricity transmission and distribution network.

CASE STUDY:

HeatNet

South Dublin County Council has an established track record in participating in European projects, with a focus on Spatial Planning and Energy for Communities in partnership with other local authorities across Europe and the Covenant of Mayors initiative. In partnership with City of Dublin Energy Management Agency (CODEMA), the Council is now leading a project to develop Dublin city's first public district-heating network.

With partners across 5 EU states, the 'HeatNet' project will link Tallaght Hospital to the County Hall complex to form the core of a district-heating network which when operational is expected to save the Council almost 1,900 tonnes per year after 5 years. Heatnet will run until 2020 and will receive European Regional Development Funding through the INTERREG North West Europe programme.

Local authorities should harness the potential of renewable energy in the Region across the technological spectrum from wind and solar to biomass and, where applicable, wave energy, focusing in particular on the extensive tracts of publicly owned peat extraction areas in order to enable a managed transition of the local economies of such areas in gaining the economic benefits of greener energy.

The provision of infrastructure should be supported in order to facilitate a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting sites of optimal energy production to the major sources of demand.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Decarbonising the Energy Sector

RPO 7.35: EMRA shall, in conjunction with local authorities in the Region, identify Strategic Energy Zones as areas suitable for larger energy generating projects, the role of community and micro energy production in urban and rural settings and the potential for renewable energy within industrial areas. The Strategic Energy Zones for the Region will ensure all environmental constraints are addressed in the analysis. A regional landscape strategy could be developed to support delivery of projects within the Strategic Energy Zones.

RPO 7.36: Planning policy at local authority level shall reflect and adhere to the principles and planning guidance set out in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publications relating to 'Wind Energy Development' and the DCCAE Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland on Guidelines for Community Engagement and any other relevant guidance which may be issued in relation to sustainable energy provisions.

RPO 7.37: A bioeconomy plan for the Region should be developed that outlines the capacity of the Region to supply the range of bioenergy resources required for the fuel mix as well as the current and projected consumption requirements for growth in this market.

RPO 7.38: Local authorities shall consider the use of heat mapping to support developments which deliver energy efficiency and the recovery of energy that would otherwise be wasted. A feasibility assessment for district heating in local authority areas shall be carried out and statutory planning documents shall identify local waste heat sources.

Low Energy Buildings

The design, construction and operation of new buildings has a significant role to play in reducing energy demand and increasing energy efficiency into the future. Careful consideration should also be given to the adaptability of buildings over time, to enable the building stock to be retrofitted or refurbished to meet higher energy efficiency standards into the future. The importance of wood as a low embodied energy material in the construction industry is recognised. The Strategy recognises the importance of the concrete industry in the sustainable long-term development of the construction industry. The 'whole-life performance' of concrete products is acknowledged as is the aggregates and concrete industry's continued strive to provide a net positive environmental impact throughout the lifetime of its products[57].

The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) 2013-2020 was updated in 2017 and requires the public sector to show leadership on energy efficiency with a target of 33% improvement in energy efficiency applied to the public sector.

The recast of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) requires that all new buildings (public and private) are Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) by 2020 (this broadly equates to a BER Rating A3). This is a critical requirement for the housing stock in particular.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Low Energy Buildings

RPO 7.39: Local authorities shall report annually on energy usage in all public buildings and will achieve a target of 33% improvement in energy efficiency in all buildings in line with the requirements of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP).

RPO 7.40: Local authorities shall include policies in statutory land use plans to promote high levels of energy conservation, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in existing buildings, including retro fitting of energy efficiency measures in the existing building stock and energy efficiency in traditional buildings. All new buildings within the Region will be required to achieve the Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) standard in line with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD).

RPO 7.41: Support and promote structural materials in the construction industry that have low to zero embodied energy & CO_2 emissions.

Decarbonising Transport, Sustainable Settlement Patterns and Compact Growth

There is an increasing awareness and understanding of the ability of coherent transport planning to contribute towards lowering our national carbon emissions profile, as well as supporting the local economy, facilitating economic development and providing other social and economic benefits to local communities.

Well-planned settlements can ensure that sustainable transport patterns are established by reducing the need for unnecessary private car journeys – and the associated CO_2 emissions - and promoting modal shift towards low-carbon travel alternatives such as public transport, walking and cycling. Chapter 8 Connectivity of this Strategy puts forward a Transport Strategy which provides for a shift towards alternatives to the private car, increased walking and cycling, and promotion of greater efficiency in the use of our transport networks. It is of fundamental importance that the distribution of activity (for example where people live and work) is planned in a manner which reduces the need to travel and achieves a move towards a low carbon society having regard to the impact which transport has on carbon emissions.

Clean and energy-efficient vehicles play an important role in reducing energy consumption, CO_2 levels and pollutant emissions. Green public procurement policies therefore represent a valuable tool in demonstrating strong leadership, as well as normalising and supporting the uptake of low-emission vehicles. This is recognised on a national and international level through the Clean Vehicles Directive.

Full electrification of the national car fleet represents a feasible option for Ireland, where supporting recharging infrastructure is developed. Though it is expected that most electric vehicle (EV) recharging will happen in homes with driveways, it is important that charging is available where this is not an option. The roll out of EV infrastructure, in particular EV charging infrastructure must, therefore, be integrated and mainstreamed into spatial and planning policies and supported across all levels of governance to ensure that the charging network will allow us to meet current and future needs in the Region.

Modal shift to public transport or non-motorised transport should be supported through improved behaviour and improved transport infrastructure. This should be supported by increased availability of low carbon fuels/biofuels such as Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) as well as implementation of the National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland and on Parking.

57 https://www.irishconcrete.ie/backbone-sustainable-construction/environment/

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Decarbonising Transport

RPO 7.42: Local authorities shall include proposals in statutory land use plans to facilitate and encourage an increase in electric vehicle use, including measures for more recharging facilities and prioritisation of parking for EVs in central locations.

Resilience of Critical Infrastructure

Critical infrastructure (CI) provides the essential functions and services that support European societal, economic and environmental systems.

As both natural, including extreme weather events, and man-made disaster and crises situations become more common place, the need to ensure the resilience of CI so that it is capable of withstanding, adapting and recovering from adverse events is paramount. Critical infrastructure includes transport Infrastructure, electricity and gas networks, flood risk management, and water services infrastructure. Critical transport infrastructure is often locally clustered, which can concentrate the negative impacts of climate change and create challenges for contingency planning and responses to extreme weather events. It is important that local authorities, as key decision makers and frontline actors in emergency planning, should be supported in identifying risks and vulnerabilities to key infrastructure to build capacity within their organisations and structures.

Incorporating renewable energy within Ireland's energy supply may improve the resilience of energy infrastructure as reliance on energy imports and the associated concentrated infrastructure is reduced. Distributed renewable energy sources can contribute to local energy system resilience. For example, during both Storm Ophelia and Storm Emma, when the operation of many of Ireland's infrastructures was challenged, wind energy maintained output throughout the adverse conditions and contributed to maintaining local supply and post event recovery to normal operation.

The Region should promote best practice in resilience in critical infrastructure, including implementation of emerging European best practice in this regard.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Resilience of Critical Infrastructure

RPO 7.43: Climate Action Regional Offices and local authorities should consider the identification of critical infrastructure within their functional areas, and particularly of the interdependencies between different types of sectoral infrastructure, as a first step in 'future-proofing' services and to help to inform longer-term adaptation planning and investment priorities.



8 Connectivity

8.1 Introduction

Connectivity, which includes transport connectivity and digital networks connectivity, has a major impact on the quality of life, the level of community interaction, the economic prosperity, and the environmental quality of the Region.

This chapter sets out proposals to help to achieve the National Strategic Outcomes outlined in Project Ireland 2040- The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Vision Statement and Regional Strategic Outcomes contained in this Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). The thematic approach taken in preparation of the RSES is underpinned by the cross-cutting key principles of healthy placemaking, climate action and economic opportunity, all of which are influenced by the provision of a well-functioning, integrated public transport system and high quality digital networks. The RSES identifies regional strategic outcomes which include integrated transport and land use planning, the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050, compact growth, enhanced regional and international connectivity, enhanced green infrastructure and the provision of sustainable settlement patterns.





8.2 Transport Strategy

Transport demand is determined on the basis of the distribution of population, employment, education and all other socio-economic and cultural uses.

Trends within the Region indicate that there is an overreliance on the private car for travel to work and education. Approximately 46% of Dublin's population commute by private car while approximately 65% and 69% of the populations of the Eastern and Midland SPAs respectively travel by this mode. In tandem with this a 2017 DTTAS paper[58] estimated that congestion in the Dublin area was costing the economy over €350m per year by 2012, in terms of lost time, and that this would grow to more than €2bn by 2033.

This congestion impacts on the Region's commuters, public transport and the efficient movement of goods and services to, from and within the Region. The challenge facing the EMRA is a shift towards alternatives to the private car and promoting greater efficiency in the use of our transport networks. As such, it is of fundamental importance that this distribution of activity is planned in a manner which reduces the impact of the need to travel, on people's lives.

Transport can affect health and wellbeing both directly, for example through traffic accidents, commuter stress, or accessibility to employment and health services and indirectly, for example through higher rates of diseases and ill health as a result of pollution or sedentary lifestyles. Increasing traffic is a health hazard that predominantly effects the more socially disadvantaged and deprived. In contrast the provision of good public transport, greenways and cycleways can enhance areas, contributing to liveable places and creating opportunities to be physically active. There is a need to overcome barriers to better mobility be they political, economic or physical such as poverty, disability, affordability or gender.

58 http://www.dttas.ie/sites/default/files/publications/corporate/english/cost-congestion-main-report/cost-congestion-main-report.pdf



Transport as a sector is one of the significant contributors to our national Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and as a nation we need to act on climate change and adapt and mitigate all sectors accordingly. The need to transition to a low carbon society by reducing transport usage and transitions to lower carbon options, including transition to clean renewables is a key aspect of Ireland's response to climate change. Transition to a low carbon transport system is firstly about reducing the need for travel and then shifting to economically efficient modes, i.e. active travel modes and public transport. Transitioning existing fossil fuel vehicles to clean renewable vehicles is a vital further step.

Policy measures outlined in this chapter have been prepared with regard to the National Climate Change Mitigation Plan and DTTAS's first adaptation plan for the transport sector, Developing Resilience to Climate Change in the Irish Transport Sector. For additional policies with respect to transport and climate change refer to Chapter 10 Infrastructure and Chapter 7 Environment.

The Strategy aims to provide a spatial framework to promote smart compact growth as an alternative to continued peri-urban sprawl around our cities and towns, with a resultant negative impact on the environment and people's health and wellbeing due to increased commuting and loss of family and leisure time. In the Region the trend is for large scale urban growth in the suburbs and peri-urban areas around Dublin and large towns, resulting in increased length of trips facilitated by the dominance of the private motor car. There is significant evidence linking the experience of sprawl and long-distance commuting with poor health outcomes and impacts on employee productivity and absenteeism.

The design of buildings and streets and the creation of compact sustainable towns where citizens can have a good quality of life is key to the provision and promotion of sustainable travel choice. Places that are typified by poor connectivity and lower residential and employment densities are characterised by lower rates of walking and cycling and a significantly higher rate of private car travel than their denser counterparts. There is a need to ensure alternatives to the car in the design of streets and public spaces prioritise cycling and walking as active transport modes.

The objective of transport investment is, therefore, to contribute to economic, social and cultural progress of the Region, and the protection and enhancement of the environment, in line with Government priorities in other sectors. The success of transport planning in meeting society's needs requires close integration of transport investment and land use planning, to guide the direction of future development within the Region.

8.3 Framework for the Integration of Transport planning with Spatial Planning Policies

Given the diverse character of the EMRA area, the RSES encompasses the demand for transport and associated movement patterns from regional down to local level.

The NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services over the period 2016 - 2035. This Transport Strategy has informed this chapter of the RSES. The RSES is required by legislation to be consistent with the National Transport Authority's Transportation Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

Transport policies and objectives for the Midlands and County Louth, as well as the GDA are set out in this chapter, with a focus on:

- The on-going management and enhancement of the national and strategic road networks to address the Region's intra-regional, inter-regional and international connectivity
- The maintenance of an appropriate level of rail service and enhancements
- Provision for enhanced regional and local bus services
- Improvements to walking and cycling provision in towns and villages; and
- Improvements to public transport provision in rural areas.

Table 8.1 sets out the hierarchy of policies and plans, against which transport policy in the EMRA area is formulated and implemented.

The role of the transport system is to meet the travel needs resulting from existing and future land uses in a manner that is consistent with the policies of the National Planning Framework and the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

Table 8.1 Hierarchy of Plans and Policies

International	The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)
National	National Planning Framework, Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future, Planning Land Use and Transport Outlook – PLUTO 2040
Regional Level	Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035. Transport Plans for Athlone (multiple regions), Dundalk (cross border) and Drogheda (multi county) Dublin- Belfast Economic Corridor.
Metropolitan Area	Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035.
County Level	Development plans, county cycling and walking strategies.
Settlement Level	Settlement walking and cycling strategies, local area plans, Local Transport Plans, Local Link Rural Transport Programme, Mobility management plans.

At the most strategic level, the transport objectives underpinning the RSES are based on two complementary elements with the overarching goal of prioritising sustainable transport modes in order to achieve improvements in air quality, reduction in CO_2 emissions and noise reduction:

- The effective integration of transport planning with spatial planning policies, from regional down to local level; and
- Associated transport investment priorities.

Key targets set out in the Government's Smarter Travel Policy in terms of modal share include a reduction of the total share of car commuting from 65% to 45% while alternatives such as walking, cycling and public transport will be supported and provided to the extent that these will rise to 55% of total commuter journeys to work.



Figure 8.1: EMRA Strategic Transport Infrastructure

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Integration of Land Use and Transport

The RSES provides the basis for the integration of land use and transport planning in the Region, informing the preparation and implementation of plans, programmes and projects at all levels. To achieve this the EMRA, in conjunction with local authorities, the NTA and other agencies, will seek to apply the following Guiding Principles in statutory land use plans, taking into consideration the requirements of both urban and rural areas across the Region.

- For urban-generated development, the development of lands within or contiguous with existing urban areas should be prioritised over development in less accessible locations. Residential development should be carried out sequentially, whereby lands which are, or will be, most accessible by walking, cycling and public transport – including infill and brownfield sites – are prioritised.
- City and county development plans shall undergo assessment of their impact on carbon reduction targets in their preparation, and shall include measures to monitor and review progress towards carbon reduction targets.
- Larger scale, trip intensive developments, such as high employee dense offices and retail, should in the first instance be focused into central urban locations.
- Within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, except in limited planned circumstances, trip intensive developments or significant levels of development should not occur in locations not well served by existing or proposed high capacity public transport.
- The strategic transport function of national roads and associated junctions should be maintained and protected.
- All non-residential development proposals should be subject to maximum parking standards;
- In locations where the highest intensity of development occurs, an approach that caps car parking on an area-wide basis should be applied.
- The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life. Accessibility by car does need to be provided for, but in a manner, which complements the alternative available modes. Local traffic management and the location / management of destination car parking should be carefully provided.
- Planning at the local level should prioritise walking, cycling and public transport by maximising the number of people living within walking and cycling distance of their neighbourhood or district centres, public transport services, and other services at the local level such as schools.
- Support the '10 minute' settlement concept, whereby a range of community facilities and services are accessible in short walking and cycling timeframes from homes or accessible by high quality public transport to these services in larger settlements.
- New development areas, including peripheral areas, should be permeable for walking and cycling and the retrospective implementation of walking and cycling facilities should be undertaken in existing neighbourhoods, in order to a give competitive advantage to these modes. Where possible, developments shall provide for filtered permeability.
- Proposals for right of way extinguishments should only be considered where these do not result in more circuitous trips for local residents accessing public transport, or local destinations.
- Cycle parking should be appropriately designed into the urban realm and new developments at an early stage to ensure that adequate cycle parking facilities are provided.
- Support investment in infrastructure and behavioural change interventions to encourage and support a shift to sustainable modes of transport and support the use of design solutions and innovative approaches to reduce car dependency. Development will have regard to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, where appropriate.
- Where additional road capacity is provided within or around any town which has an objective to cater for traffic that currently uses the road network in central areas and their immediate environs, that this additional capacity would be used for the improvement of the public transport, walking and cycling networks within the towns through the reallocation of road space to these modes.
- Ensure the protection of Natura 2000 networks and associated ecological linkages. Plans and projects that have the potential to negatively impact on Natura 2000 sites should be subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Integration of Transport and Land Use Planning

RPO 8.1: The integration of transport and land use planning in the Region shall be consistent with the guiding principles expressed in the transport strategy of the RSES.

RPO 8.2: The capacity and safety of the Region's strategic land transport networks will be managed and enhanced, including through the management of travel demand in order to ensure their optimal use.

RPO 8.3: That future development is planned and designed in a manner which maximises the efficiency and protects the strategic capacity of the metropolitan area transport network, both existing and planned and to protect and maintain regional accessibility.

RPO 8.4: Land use plans within the GDA shall demonstrate a consistency with the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and plans with or outside of the GDA shall be consistent with the guiding principles expressed in the RSES.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Regional Strategy for Freight Transport

RPO 8.5: To support the preparation of a regional strategy for freight transport in collaboration with the relevant transport agencies and the other Assemblies.

Local Transport Plans (LTP)

Local Transport Plans (LTP) will represent the lowest tier of the NPF's framework for the integration of land use and transport planning and the achievement of the NPF's objective of 'compact smart growth', they will be subject to further environmental assessment at local level as appropriate.

LTPs will be based on a clear set of objectives and the most recent demographic and travel information taking into account the policies and objectives of the local authorities, insofar as they align with those of National and Regional Policy. LTPs will include the transport priorities for each settlement in terms of public transport infrastructure and services; cycle investment; improvements to the pedestrian environment; and road enhancements. Local Link Offices (Transport Coordination Units) will be consulted in the development of LTPs.

The policies, objectives and measures which emerge from the LTPs shall be incorporated into the relevant statutory land use plans pertaining to each settlement.

The settlements for which Local Transport Plans will be made will include, but will not be limited to, Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda, Arklow, Ashbourne, Balbriggan, Longford, Mullingar, Portlaoise, Naas, Navan, Newbridge, Tullamore, and Wicklow-Rathnew and certain large settlements or development areas within the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Local Transport Plans

RPO 8.6: In order to give local expression to the regional level Transport Strategy within the Region in conjunction with the NTA, Local Transport Plans (LTP) will be prepared for selected settlements in the Region.

Mobility Management Plan (MMP)

A Mobility Management Plan (MMP) is a management tool that brings together transport and other staff and site management issues in a coordinated manner. It normally brings together a package of measures tailored to the needs of an individual work site or a collection of work sites.

This package generally includes measures to promote and improve the attractiveness of using public transport, cycling, walking, car sharing, flexible working or a combination of these as alternatives to drive-alone journeys to work. It can consider all travel associated with the work-site, including business travel, fleet management, customer access and deliveries. A MMP is not a plan for physical transport infrastructure such as cycle and pedestrian routes.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Mobility Management and Travel Plans

RPO 8.7: To promote the use of mobility management and travel plans to bring about behaviour change and more sustainable transport use.

The Role of Transport in Rural Development

The importance of development which supports the rural economy and the rural social fabric is of fundamental importance to the future development of the Region.

The rural economy and the rural social fabric should be supported through the provision of better local connectivity and connectivity to services and commercial activities located in cities and towns. In addition to this, urban-generated development in rural areas needs to be managed in such a way so as to safeguard the integrity of rural areas and to support the accommodation of urban-generated development within urban areas.

The Role of Transport in enabling Access for All

The planning process affords an opportunity to facilitate and deliver a more socially inclusive society through the mitigation of the built environment through better design, greater integration and accessibility across all societal needs and disabilities. Transport is one of a number of key policy areas through which social inclusion can be effectively addressed in this manner. Transport policies and investments will be developed to assist the greatest number of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments in the shortest possible time with a particular focus on meeting the needs and opportunities of an ageing population.



8.4 Transport Investment Priorities

Major transport infrastructure investments, identified in the Project Ireland 2040 - National Development Plan, have an important role in enabling the sustainable and balanced development of the Region over the period of the RSES.

Proposals for infrastructure investment should clearly demonstrate their consistency with spatial planning objectives, at regional and national level. Such proposals will be subject to environmental assessment and feasibility where assessment has not already taken place.

The management, maintenance and improvement of existing transport infrastructure is also a key consideration, to ensure that the safety, capacity and the efficiency of the networks are maintained and factored into the capital funding process.

Rail

The primary function of the rail network in the Region is to provide commuter rail services to Dublin City, and major employment locations within the Metropolitan Area and in large towns. Intercity rail services also play a key role in offering sustainable travel alternatives for longer distance trips, providing improved interregional connectivity.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Rail Infrastructure

RPO 8.8: The RSES supports delivery of the rail projects set out in Table 8.2, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

Table 8.2: Rail Projects for the Region
DART Expansion Programme - new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines, including provision of electrified services to Drogheda or further north on the Northern Line, Celbridge-Hazelhatch or further south on the Kildare Line, Maynooth and M3 Parkway on the Maynooth/ Sligo Line, while continuing to improve DART services on the South-Eastern Line as far south as Greystones
Provide for an appropriate level of commuter rail service in the Midlands and South-East
Complete the construction of the National Train Control Centre.
New stations to provide interchange with bus, LUAS and Metro network including Kishoge, Heuston West, Cabra, Glasnevin, Pelletstown and Woodbrook.
A feasibility study of high-speed rail between Dublin Belfast, Dublin Limerick Junction/Cork will be carried out.
Reappraisal of the extension of the Dunboyne/ M3 Parkway line to Navan during the Mid Term Review of the GDA Transport Strategy.
Complete construction of Metrolink from Swords to Sandyford and consider underground extensions to other locations from Charlemont.
LUAS Green Line Capacity Enhancement in advance of Metrolink.
Undertake appraisal, planning and design of LUAS network expansion to Bray, Finglas, Lucan and Poolbeg.
Undertake assessment, and, if appropriate, planning and design of LUAS network expansion to Hazelhatch and Booterstown.
In principle there is a need to carry out an evaluation of underground metro routes within the M50.



Bus

Within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, investment in bus infrastructure and services will be delivered through BusConnects. Outside the Metropolitan Area, where bus services provide the backbone of the regional public transport system, in particular for those without access to the private car, investment will be focussed on improving connectivity between regional settlements, including Dublin, and enhancing the reliability and the level of service within key settlements.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Bus Infrastructure

RPO 8.9: The RSES supports delivery of the bus projects set out in Table 8.3 subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

Table 8.3: Bus Projects for the Region

Core Bus Corridors comprising 16 radial routes and 3 orbital routes in Dublin
Regional Bus Corridors connecting the major regional settlements to Dublin
Dublin Metropolitan Bus Network Review
Network reviews for the largest settlements across EMRA, with a view to providing local bus services
Review of bus services between settlements
Review of local bus services throughout EMRA, including services to small towns and villages and the rural transport programme
New interchange and bus hub facilities
New fare structures
Enhanced passenger information
Improvements to bus waiting facilities
Integrated timetabling of bus and rail into a coherent national and regional network.

Strategic Road Network

The quality of the strategic road network and connectivity to it, within the Region has been substantially improved over the last two decades, with many large-scale road schemes being completed and/or nearing completion. The NDP recognises the importance of achieving steady-state maintenance and safety of the National Roads network as a priority in order to ensure that the existing extensive transport networks, which have been greatly enhanced over the last two decades, are maintained to a high level to ensure high quality levels of service, accessibility and connectivity for transport users.

The RSES recognises the importance of maintaining, improving and protecting the strategic function of the key transport corridors including the imperative to improve and protect the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast road corridor, which forms part of the TEN-T core network.

It is not intended to establish an exhaustive list of schemes for development over the period of the RSES especially with regard to maintenance and management of the Region's roads network. Instead, it is intended that road schemes are developed in accordance with Guidelines on a Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects and Programmes for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in accordance with the general objectives of the RSES and the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Investment in Improved Strategic Road Connectivity

RPO 8.10: The RSES supports appraisal and or delivery of the road projects set out in Table 8.4 subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

Table 8.4: Road Projects for the Region
M7 Naas to Newbridge bypass widening, Osberstown Interchange and Sallins Bypass
N2 Slane Bypass
N2 Rath Roundabout to Kilmoon Cross
N2 Ardee to south of Castleblaney
M4 Maynooth to Leixlip
M4 Mullingar to Longford (and Sligo)
M11 from Jn 4 M50 to Kilmacanogue
N3 Clonee to M50
N52 Ardee Bypass
N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan
M50 Dublin Port South Access

A number of significant regional road schemes will also be supported and local relief roads will be brought forward as a means of reallocating existing road space in urban areas to public transport, walking and cycling in accordance with guiding principles of this Strategy, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

In addition, long term protection shall remain for the Eastern Bypass and the Leinster Outer Orbital Route.

Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor

The Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor comprises an internationally important spine connecting the two largest settlements on the island of Ireland via the regional growth centres of Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry.

The RSES will promote the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast corridor as a driver for regional economic development within the Region. This needs to be supported through targeted investment in transport infrastructure and services in connecting major urban centres and international gateways, complementing and maintaining its function as part of the EU TEN-T core network. The EMRA is seeking to promote public transport-based development on the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor (see Chapter 6 Economy and Employment).

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor

RPO 8.11: Support the improvement, and protection, of the EU TEN-T network and the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast road network.

RPO 8.12: Support the delivery of a higher speed rail connection between Belfast and Dublin and Cork.

Rural Transport

The NTA provides rural transport services through the Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018-2022. The key priorities of this programme continue to be directed at addressing rural social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. The services provided under the programme are therefore intended to fulfil a primarily social function, in meeting the needs of communities in towns, villages and rural areas.

The NTA will develop and expand the Local Link Rural Transport Programme in the following manner:

- seek further integration with other public transport services, including HSE and school transport;
- better linkage of services between towns, villages and rural areas;
- ensure fully accessible vehicles operate on all services;
- enhance the customer experience;
- increase patronage among children and young people; and
- encourage innovation in the service.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Rural Transport Programme

RPO 8.13: Support the Local Link Rural Transport Programme throughout rural areas of the Region.

Park and Ride

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Park and Ride

RPO 8.14: The RSES supports delivery of the strategic park and ride projects set out in Table 8.5 subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the outcome of the planning process.

Table 8.5: New and Enhanced Park and Ride
Swords
Finglas
Dunboyne
Liffey Valley
Naas Road
Carrickmines
Woodbrook
Greystones

In addition, others may be developed in appropriate locations where the national road network meets the strategic public transport network. Across the EMRA, in particular at regional and suburban train stations and on bus routes, the potential for the development and/or expansion of local park and ride facilities will also be examined.

Walking and Cycling

The following walking and cycling objectives will guide investment in the EMRA:

- Delivery of the cycle network set out in the NTA Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan inclusive of key commuter routes and urban greenways on the canal, river and coastal corridors
- Delivery of the National Cycle Plan within the Region inclusive of the Greenway and Blueway projects
- Provide safe cycling routes in towns and villages across the Region
- Enhance pedestrian facilities in all urban areas in the Region; and
- Investment priorities for cycleways feasibility and route selection studies for cycleways shall identify and subsequently avoid high sensitivity feeding or nesting points for birds and other sensitive fauna.



8.5 International Connectivity

High quality accessibility to international gateways, located both within and outside of the Region, for people and internationally traded goods / services is of fundamental importance to economic competitiveness at regional and national levels.

The achievement of this objective will be contingent on the development and improvement of critically enabling road and rail infrastructure, and public transport services, for the movement of people and goods.

The NPF includes High-Quality International Connectivity as a National Strategic Outcome and recognises the crucial role that the provision of high-quality international connectivity has for overall international competitiveness and addressing opportunities and challenges from Brexit through investment in our ports and airports, in line with sectoral priorities already defined through National Ports Policy and National Aviation Policy and signature projects such as the second runway for Dublin Airport and major redevelopment at Dublin Port including proposals for a southern port access route.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

International Connectivity

RPO 8.15: The critical role of the EMRA's international gateways will be protected by ensuring that local land use policies facilitate their functions and their landside access capacity for all transport modes.

RPO 8.16: Support the improvement and protection of the TEN-T network to strengthen access routes to Ireland's ports, including investment in the ongoing development of the N11/M11 to improve connectivity to Rosslare and improvements to the Dublin-Wexford Rail line.



Dublin Airport

Dublin Airport accounted for 85% of all air passengers in the Country in 2016. The number of passengers has increased year on year to reach 29.5 million in 2017 and is forecast to increase again in 2018[59]. Dublin Airport is a key national asset to Ireland's economic success which is linked with its global connectivity to trade and tourism markets and requires support to ensure it continues as an economic driver. The National Aviation Strategy for the first time supports the growth of the Airport to a secondary hub airport; Dublin Airport has a number of features which make it an attractive option for airlines, including the availability of full US Preclearance.

Consideration of continued growth of the Airport has to include the environmental considerations, airplanes are a significant emitter of greenhouse gas and noise both of which have to be mitigated. Also, in the interests of public safety, careful land use planning considerations must be given in the surrounding areas and flight paths.

Landside access to Dublin Airport will be significantly enhanced by the provision of Metrolink. In addition to this project, the critical role of buses and taxis in serving air travellers and those employed in the Airport area will develop further over the period of the RSES, in order to ensure that the mode share for public transport is maintained at a high level and increased further. In the longer term, consideration of heavy rail access to the Airport would facilitate direct services from the national rail network in the context of potential future electrification.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Dublin Airport

RPO 8.17: Support the National Aviation Policy for Ireland and the growth of movements and passengers at Dublin Airport to include its status as a secondary hub airport. In particular, support the provision of a second runway, improved terminal facilities and other infrastructure.

RPO 8.18: Improved access to Dublin Airport is supported, including Metrolink and improved bus services as part of BusConnects, connections from the road network from the west and north. Improve cycle access to Dublin Airport and surrounding employment locations. Support appropriate levels of car parking and car hire parking.

RPO 8.19: Spatial planning policies in the vicinity of the airport shall protect the operation of Dublin Airport in respect to its growth and the safe navigation of aircraft from non-compatible land uses. Policies shall recognise and reflect the airport noise zones associated with Dublin Airport. Within the Inner Airport Noise Zone, provision of new residential and/or other noise sensitive development shall be actively resisted. Within the Outer Noise Zone, provision of new residential and/or other noise sensitive development shall be strictly controlled and require appropriate levels of noise insulation in all cases.

RPO 8.20: Spatial planning policies for areas located within the Public Safety Zones shall reflect the guidance set out in the ERM Report "Public Safety Zones, 2005" (or any update thereof) commissioned by the then Department of Transport and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, in assessing proposals for development falling within Airport Public Safety Zones.

Regional Airports

Ireland West-Knock and Shannon Airports proximity to the Midlands is recognised and have important tourism and enterprise development functions for the catchments they support.

59 http://issuu.com/daapublishing/docs/daa_annual_report_2017?e=5056106/60531841

Sea Ports

Ireland's port and shipping services play an important role as enablers of economic growth. Irish ports are critical infrastructure for international trade, with over 90% of our international trade moving by sea. Ports also serve as logistics and distribution hubs. The Region is home to the largest sea port in the country, Dublin Port, and also contains a number of regional ports of significance and smaller harbours. These include Arklow, Drogheda, Dundalk, Dún Laoghaire, Greenore, Howth, Wicklow and Warrenpoint in Northern Ireland.

Given the nature and function of ports, combined with the location interfacing with the marine environment, there is potential for environmental conflict with the existing ecosystem. This sensitivity is further increased by the proximity of most of our Region's ports to designated sites. In order to minimise potential impacts on EU protected habitats, brownfield port developments which maximise the capacity of existing port sites should be prioritised over greenfield developments. The approach to port development in the Region shall adhere to the European Commission guidelines on the Implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives in Estuaries and Coastal Zones.

As required by National Ports Policy (2013), a National Ports Capacity study has been commissioned which will assess the capacity of the national ports network. The maritime economy and its role as an enabler in effective regional development is discussed further in Chapter 6 Economy and Employment.

In terms of port facilities, National Ports Policy and the national hierarchy or tiering of ports recognises the long-term international trend in ports and shipping towards increased consolidation of resources in order to achieve optimum efficiencies of scale. This has knock-on effects in terms of vessel size, the depths of water required at ports and the type and scale of port hinterland transport connections. National Ports Policy seeks to ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 Ports, ports of regional significance and smaller harbours are addressed to ensure their effective growth and sustainable development at a national and regional level.

The Assembly supports the role of all ports in the Region and seeks to harness economic opportunities from the ocean economy and the Ports in the Region in realising the full potential of the ocean economy. Particular regard is had to the Government's integrated plan for the marine industry – Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth (2012), the National Marine Research and Innovation Strategy 2017-2021 (Marine Institute Ireland, 2017), and Ireland's Ocean Economy (NUIG, 2017). The EMRA supports the undertaking of a feasibility study to examine the different options and potential for facilitating offshore renewable energy development at ports.

Dublin Port

Dublin Port is the largest port in the Country handling almost 50% of all trade in Ireland and growth of 35.7% over the last five years. In 2018 there was a record throughput of 38 million gross tonnes, a 4.3% increase on 2016. Dublin Port is one of five major ports classified as Tier 1 / Tier 2 ports in National Port Policy and categorised as core / comprehensive ports in the EU's TEN-T network. Dublin Port is recognised in this RSES as a critical national facility; a key economic driver for the Region and the nation and an integral part of Dublin City, in line with the Dublin Port Masterplan 2040 (reviewed 2018).

Regional Ports

The regional ports are recognised in this RSES as important centres of economic activity, and the RSES seeks to protect and support the role of regional ports as economic drivers for the Region. This includes ports of regional significance located at Drogheda, Dundalk, Dún Laoghaire, Greenore and Wicklow as well as other regional ports at Arklow, Howth, and Warrenpoint in Northern Ireland.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Ports

RPO 8.21: The EMRA will support the role of Dublin Port as a Port of National Significance (Tier 1 Port) and its continued commercial development, including limited expansion and improved road access, including the Southern Port Access Route.

RPO 8.22: The EMRA supports ports of Regional Significance that serve an important regional purpose and/or specialised trades or maritime tourism; and the accessibility requirements of regional ports within the Region, from within their regional catchments will be addressed through the provision of improved access routes, where necessary and improved access to the national and regional road networks. Opportunities for the use of rail, where such ports are connected to the rail network is also promoted.

RPO 8.23: The EMRA supports the protection of the marine related functions of ports in the Region in order to ensure the future role of ports as strategic marine related assets is protected from inappropriate uses, whilst supporting complimentary economic uses including the potential for facilitating offshore renewable energy development at ports.

RPO 8.24: The EMRA supports the undertaking of feasibility studies to determine the carrying capacity of ports in relation to potential for likely significant effects on associated European sites including SPAs and SACs.

8.6 Communications Network and Digital Infrastructure

Access to broadband in the Region is improving but remains incomplete. Many rural and peripheral areas of the Region are poorly served by broadband and there is a need to increase the rate of investment in broadband, in particular in rural areas.

The increasing use of digital technologies is impacting on every aspect of our lives: from transport, to education, leisure and entertainment and health services. Infrastructure to deliver better connected services is vital to our continued growth, supporting businesses and enhancing our communities. As the digital economy grows, we must ensure that the business opportunities and benefits are felt throughout the Region from our capital city to every town, village and outlying rural area.

The provision of next generation broadband services to rural areas is a key enabling support to ensure smaller urban areas and rural areas are not at a disadvantage in attracting and retaining enterprise and employment compared to larger urban centres. The National Broadband Plan will play an integral role in delivering this infrastructure and revitalising businesses and communities across rural Ireland. This is a fast moving and evolving infrastructure and the region will need to be able to respond and adapt to future communications networks and technology along with changing work practices and emerging economic models.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Communications Networks and Digital Infrastructure

RPO 8.25: Local authorities shall:

- Support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan.
- Facilitate enhanced international fibre communications links, including full interconnection between the fibre networks in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- Promote and facilitate the sustainable development of a high-quality ICT network throughout the Region in order to achieve balanced social and economic development, whilst protecting the amenities of urban and rural areas.
- Support the national objective to promote Ireland as a sustainable international destination for ICT infrastructures such as data centres and associated economic activities at appropriate locations.
- Promote Dublin as a demonstrator of 5G information and communication technology.

RPO 8.26: The EMRA supports the preparation of planning guidelines to facilitate the efficient roll out and delivery of national broadband.





9 Quality of Life

9.1 Introduction

The place or environment in which we live or work, including its physical nature and social environment or community, has a profound impact on physical and mental health wellbeing, and quality of life. Irish culture has a longstanding identification with place. Placemaking is an essential link between spatial planning and facilitating improvements to people's quality of life and developing places that are attractive to live, work, visit and in which to invest.

The key principle of healthy placemaking is the driver for this chapter to deliver on a number of the Regional Strategic Outcomes on compact growth, regeneration, integrated transport and landuse, rural development, human health and creative places to create healthy and attractive places, to improve our quality of life.

Over the lifetime of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy population growth and changing demographics will require a policy response to ensure positive health outcomes for older people, for children, families and young people and to support the integration of migrants and address social exclusion and isolation, see Figure 9.1.

The availability of, and access to, services is key to creating healthier places. This includes access to adequate housing and employment choice, supported by good healthcare and education, quality public realm and access to nature, the arts and cultural heritage.

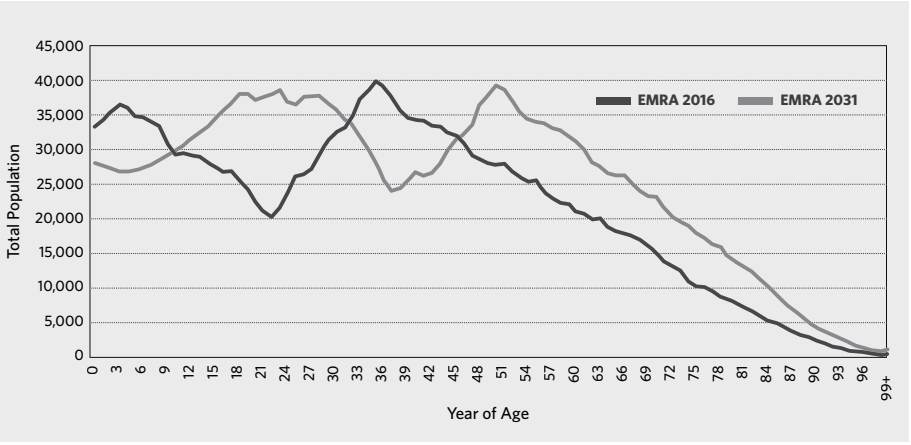


Figure 9.1 Changing Demographic Profile – Age Structure 2016 to 2031
Source: CSO



9.2 Diverse and Inclusive Region

The age profile of the Region is in general very similar to that of the country as a whole, with slightly higher rates in the young working ages (20 to 39 years), and it is expected to follow similar trends over the coming years, most notably an increasing ageing population. Figure 9.1 shows the largest increases in population are expected in the 15-24 year cohort (+54%), 45-64 year cohort (+33%) and 65 plus (+64%), over the lifetime of the RSES to 2031[60].

Changing household formation trends will require a range of housing typologies including student housing, smaller units, shared living schemes and flexible designs that are adaptive for people's full life cycle to meet their housing needs today and into the future.



60 CSO Regional Population Projections 2016-2031 (Traditional M2F2 scenario) December 2013

Age Friendly Communities

There is an urgent need for responsive planning policy to avoid an ageing population crisis. In 2016, just under 1 in 8 people in the Region are aged over 65 but it is this cohort that is projected to increase most significantly over the lifetime of the RSES, with growth rates of over 85's set to almost double. The RSES recognises that many factors that contribute to a good quality of life for older people are community-based and that all sectors- government, businesses, voluntary groups, service providers, local authorities and the public – have a role in creating an age-friendly society.

This requires high quality healthcare and public services and, where appropriate, the choice of affordable care in the home or in the community for our older citizens. Quality placemaking should also integrate the principles of universal access in the design of buildings, housing, public realm, amenities and transport services to create places that are safe, easy to move around and accessible to all[61].

Migration and Diversity

The CSO population projections highlight demographic pressures that will remain a feature in the Region, as migration will be a key driver of future population growth over the lifetime of the RSES. The Region is the most demographically diverse in the State, and more than 1 in 8 of the regional population are non-Irish nationals, with higher rates in Dublin City and the counties of Fingal and Longford. As more immigrants become Irish or dual citizens, the numbers of non-Irish nationals in the Region have fallen in the last intercensal period. Settlements that have more than a quarter of their residents born outside the State include; Longford, Blanchardstown, Athlone and Portlaoise.

The dispersed settlement patterns for in migration in Ireland are atypical in a European context, where migrants tend to concentrate in large employment centres and may reflect wider housing pressures as much as government policy. The quality of services and amenities for a diverse and multi-cultural society will be a key determinant in how successful and attractive the Region is. This will require a planning response to support the integration of migrant communities and to ensure that diverse needs are met now and over the lifetime of the Strategy.

Traveller Community

The Traveller community in Ireland represents c.1% of the population and, according to the ESRI's 2017 research paper A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland, experiences different social and economic conditions from the wider population. This includes different age profiles, rates of fertility, health profiles (including life expectancy) and levels of discrimination.

The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy was produced by the Department of Justice and Equality in 2017[62] and attempts to deliver actions to aid in the social inclusion of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. The actions address themes such as cultural identity, education, employment, health, equality and accommodation. Local authorities are required to develop and implement 5 year accommodation programmes for Travellers.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Diverse and Inclusive Region

RPO 9.1: Local authorities shall ensure the integration of age friendly and family friendly strategies in development plans and other relevant local policy and decision making, including provision for flexible housing typologies, buildings and public spaces that are designed so that everyone, including older people, disabled people and people with young children can move around with ease, avoiding separation or segregation.

RPO 9.2: Support local authority and sectoral initiatives to increase active participation and social integration of minority groups, including non-Irish nationals and Travellers.

61 National Disability Authority 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach'. www.universaldesign.ie
62 http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/National_Traveller_and_Roma_Inclusion_Strategy_2017%E2%80%93%202021

9.3 Housing and Regeneration

It is widely acknowledged that there is a need for a significant increase in the delivery of housing in the State. The NPF identifies a national target of at least 25,000 new homes, half of which are expected in our Region, being annually required in order to satisfy the State's housing needs up to 2040. Achieving this level of supply will require increased national output of 30,000 to 35,000 homes per annum in the years to 2027, to deal with a deficit that has built up since 2010, and will be subject to monitoring and review.

The NPF requires a change in strategy in relation to meeting housing need from the traditional approach of developer led provision of housing, often on greenfield sites at a remove from an urban settlement, to a plan led strategy of consolidation with the provision of the majority of housing in cities and other defined settlements[63]. This will require a change in housing typologies and, given the changing economic and demographic patterns envisaged in the NPF, a change in tenure typologies as well.

Recent trends in the delivery of specialised housing typologies such as student accommodation, build to let developments and shared accommodation is indicative of the change in approach that will be necessary to accommodate the changes in demand and demographics in the Region into the future, and the RSES needs to reflect this.

The provision of affordable, appropriate and adaptable accommodation is a key challenge facing the State and the Region. In addition to the location of housing needing to reflect the strategic outcomes and policy objectives of the NPF, it also needs to be provided based on a rigorous assessment of housing need. Housing quality is also important in order to secure positive health outcomes.

The RSES sets out an asset-based approach to the strategic location of residential development in the Region, targeting significant population growth in Dublin and the Regional Growth Centres, supported by balanced population and employment growth in Key Towns and a limited number of economically active Self-Sustaining Growth Towns. Other towns will require targeted 'catch-up' investment to enhance local employment and services, for example in rapidly growing commuter towns or to promote regeneration in rural towns and villages. In applying a tailored approach to the location of new housing and urban development, investment needs can be linked to the NPF/NDP Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds.

Asset Test for the strategic location of new residential development;

- **SCALE** - Is there potential for compact sustainable development, based on the settlements scale, rates of growth, local ambition and availability of serviced lands?
- **FUNCTIONS** - Is there a good level of local employment provision, based on its jobs ratio and net commuting flows, and/or potential to develop complementarities with other places?
- **SERVICES** – Will local services and amenities including community, education, health, leisure and retail be accessible as set out in the '10-minute settlement' concept?
- **PLACEMAKING** - Will the development re-enforce a sense of place and character, and create a healthy and attractive environment in line with good urban design principles?
- **ECONOMIC**– Is there potential for better alignment of housing and employment provision, to strengthen local economies or drive economic development opportunities?
- **CONNECTIVITY** – Is the development accessible to existing/planned public transport and is there potential to improve modal share of public transport, walking and cycling?
- **ENVIRONMENT** – Does the environment have the carrying capacity for development? Is there potential to enhance environmental quality and/or support transition to low carbon/climate resilience?
- **INFRASTRUCTURE** – Is there a requirement for improvements to water, waste water, utilities and/or digital infrastructure and services to support the proposed development?

See also Asset /Potential Based Criteria set out in Table 3.1 and Appendix A

63 See NPF National Strategic Outcomes 1 and 7 and National Policy Objectives 28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37 https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/09022006-project-ireland-2040/.

Housing Supply and Affordability

Housing supply in the Region has been slow in picking up from historically low levels during the recession. There is a further lag on the delivery of social housing which in turn is placing further pressures on the existing housing stock. Housing affordability and supply issues are impacting upon health and wellbeing, due to overcrowding, with people residing in substandard accommodation and homelessness.

There is a need now for accelerated delivery of housing, particularly in Dublin and in identified growth settlements in the Region to ensure the development of high quality and affordable homes located within sustainable communities in order to meet the existing and future needs of a growing population.

The slow growth of housing stock compared to rates of population growth and household formation has led to an increase in the average number of persons per household to around 2.8 in the Region, based on the 2016 census, which saw a reversal of the long-term decline in the average household size. There are some regional differences in occupancy rates ranging from 2.5 persons per household in Dublin City to around 3 in the surrounding counties.

The delivery of housing in the Region has largely been market driven with people's choice of where to live often driven by affordability. Addressing housing supply and affordability will require a suite of cross sectoral measures that reflect the interplay between land values, building costs and fiscal and planning policies. Local authorities, approved housing bodies and other sectoral agencies should be resourced with adequate skills, support and resources to drive the delivery of high quality social and affordable homes and sustainable communities.

CASE STUDY:

Affordable Cost Rental Housing



The provision of affordable accommodation is a major challenge facing the state and the Region. The development of a new affordable 'cost-rental' sector has been identified as part of the reform of the Irish housing system. Under cost-rental models, rents are linked to the cost of building and managing the property, and based on income rather than market rents.

Looking to cities like Vienna, large scale delivery of cost rental can improve national competitiveness and the attractiveness of our cities. The rented home remains a public asset and future rent increases can be controlled to ensure affordability and security for tenants. Cost rental schemes depend on acquisition low-cost lands, including state lands to develop the site and operate on a no profit rental margin. The Land Development Agency (LDA) has a key role to play in facilitating site assembly and achieving objectives for social and affordable housing on public lands.

Housing Tenure

Since 2011 there has been significant change in housing tenure patterns across the Region with a drop in mortgaged households and a significant increase in the number of households living in private rented accommodation. Over 2 in 5 householders in Dublin City are in rental accommodation with the majority of new housing growth in the private rental sector. Across the Region rates of private rental are also growing in the urban centres.

In contrast, home ownership rates remain high in the Region with 1 in 3 people having mortgages. There has also been an increase in the number of homes owned outright with many people who own their homes outright being empty nesters often in an older age demographic. There is a need to incentivise mobility in the housing market, to address social isolation among older people and to offer more choice by way of an increased supply of accommodation for all life stages.

Homelessness

The issue of homelessness is a critical challenge facing the Region into the future and is the first pillar of Rebuilding Ireland, the State's response to the need to accelerate housing supply in Ireland. The National Statement on Housing Need and Demand[64] points to the fact that the homelessness problem has been increasing. Although the EMRA does not have an active role in the delivery of housing or in the provision of support services for homeless persons and families, the RSES will set the context for overall housing provision in the Region in the most sustainable locations, within which local authorities and other agencies and bodies will deliver homeless services and accommodation.

Housing Need Demand Assessment

The NPF, in NPO 37[65], requires each local authority, with coordination from the Regional Assemblies, to undertake a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) for their administrative area that will provide a robust common evidence base to inform housing and land use zoning policies and support the preparation of local authority housing strategies and development plans.

The HNDA evidence base includes a range of housing data, along with wider economic, demographic and affordability trends, to understand key housing market drivers and give a statistical estimate of all current and future housing needs, by tenure. The HNDA will inform policy responses about the future location, typology and tenure of housing needs, including affordable housing and single houses in the countryside, which in turn will inform the provision of a sufficient land supply in the right locations to deliver future additional housing.

There is an acknowledgement that in the case of Dublin, the HNDA may be at a metropolitan scale having regard to inter-county and inter-regional settlement interactions. Having regard to the significant influence that Dublin plays in relation to the housing and settlement patterns and demands within the Region it is considered that a Regional HNDA is appropriate for the four Dublin local authorities. It is further noted that new statutory guidelines on development plans will be provided in relation to housing provision and the gathering of housing data (See also Chapter 4 People and Place).

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Housing

RPO 9.3: Support local authorities, approved housing bodies and other sectoral agencies in the provision of a greater diversity of housing type and tenure, including social and affordable housing and exploring new models of low cost rental and affordable homeownership.

RPO 9.4: Design standards for new apartment developments should encourage a wider demographic profile which actively includes families and an ageing population.

RPO 9.5: Support local authorities, either individually or combined, in the provision of a Housing Need Demand Assessment that will inform housing policy that provides for diverse housing demand and is in accordance with statutory guidelines.

RPO 9.6: Support local authorities and other relevant agencies such as the Dublin Region Homeless Executive in relation to addressing the issue of homelessness in the Region.

64 Housing Agency National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand and Outlook of 2017 - 2018

65 NPO 37 A 'Housing Need Demand Assessment' (HNDA) is to be undertaken for each local authority Area in order to correlate and accurately align future housing requirements. The HNDA is:

to be undertaken by local authorities with coordination assistance to be provided by the Regional Assemblies, and at a Metropolitan scale, particularly where inter-county and inter-regional settlement interactions are to be planned for and managed;

to primarily inform housing policies, housing strategies and associated land use zoning policies as well as assisting in determining where new policy areas or investment programmes are to be developed; and

to be supported, through the establishment of a coordination and monitoring unit to assist local authorities and Regional Assemblies in the development of the HNDA (DHPLG, Regional Assemblies and the local authorities). This will involve developing and coordinating a centralised spatial database for local authority housing data that supports the HNDA being undertaken by local authorities.

Regeneration

One of the key elements of the NPF relates to the need for compact growth, with development being focussed within and close to existing built-up areas[66]. A vital element of this approach is the regeneration of infill and brownfield sites. The importance of the role of regeneration in the delivery of Project Ireland 2040 is acknowledged by the provision of the Urban Regneration and Development Fund (URDF) and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF).

Achieving compact growth targets will require active land management responses to ensure that land and building resources within existing settlements are used to their full potential. Local authorities will be required to establish a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites so that brownfield re-use can be managed and co-ordinated across multiple stakeholders as part of the active land management process– see Chapter 3 Growth Strategy for Urban Infill/Brownfield Regeneration - Guiding Principles.

National Land Development Agency

The National Land Development Agency being established under the NPF will have the objective of maintaining and enhancing the capacity for co-ordinating and developing large, strategically located land banks in order to promote the delivery of housing and other development in order to provide, inter alia, more affordable homes.

It is envisaged that the Agency will have CPO powers and will drive renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential (NPF National Policy Objectives 12 and 66[67]). It is further envisaged that the Agency will access the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund in order to achieve these goals.

Refer also to Chapter 3 Growth Strategy, Chapter 4 People and Place and Chapter 5 MASP for additional policies in relation to compact growth and regeneration.

CASE STUDY:

Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)



The €2 Billion ten-year Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) was launched in 2018 to support compact sustainable development, through the regeneration of Ireland's cities and large towns, in line with the objectives of Project Ireland 2040 – The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018 -2027. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) provides the investment framework for Eastern and Midland Region (EMR).

The types of proposals eligible for funding include strategic development areas, active land management, measures to address building vacancy and refurbishment, public realm improvements, enabling infrastructure, sustainable mobility and transition to low carbon and climate resilience. In 2019, 38 successful projects in the EMR were allocated over €42 million, of which nearly €15 went to urban areas within the Dublin Metropolitan Area and over €27 million to support the rejuvenation of Regional Growth Centres and large towns in our Region.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Regeneration

RPO 9.7: Support the National Land Development Agency in co-ordinating and developing large, strategically located landbanks, particularly publicly owned lands, in city and town centres that require consolidation and aggregation of land to enable regeneration.

RPO 9.8: To work with local authorities, government departments and relevant agencies to promote increased urban densities in all existing settlements and the use, where appropriate, of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) and other incentives including development contributions to encourage urban regeneration of brownfield lands over the development of greenfield sites and to promote more active land management and co-ordinated provision of enabling infrastructure particularly on publicly owned lands.

RPO 9.9: To support, at a National level, efforts to explore ways to deal effectively with waste and contamination relating to brownfield regeneration.

66 NPO 3a Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements.
NPO 3b Deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints.
NPO 3c Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints

67 NPO 12 The Government will establish a National Regeneration and Development Agency to work with local authorities, other public bodies and capital spending departments and agencies to co-ordinate and secure the best use of public lands, investment required within the capital envelopes provided in the National Development Plan and to drive the renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential. The Government will consider how best to make State lands available to such a body to kick-start its development role and to legislate for enhanced compulsory purchase powers to ensure that the necessary transformation of the places most in need of regeneration can take place more swiftly and effectively.
NPO 66 A more effective strategic and centrally managed approach will be taken to realise the development potential of the overall portfolio of state owned and/or influenced lands in the five main cities other major urban areas and in rural towns and villages as a priority, particularly through the establishment of a National Regeneration and Development Agency

9.4 Healthy Placemaking

Healthy placemaking seeks to protect and enhance the unique identity and character of places and to facilitate improvements to human wellbeing and the quality of life that comes from the interaction of people and their environment. Placemaking is underpinned by good urban design, which seeks to create public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate social interaction.

The creation of healthy and attractive places requires ongoing improvements to the physical and social infrastructure of our urban centres, some of which have experienced decline due to prevailing trends of counter-urbanisation and for online and out of town shopping. Effective public realm interventions can dramatically improve human wellbeing and are also a key factor in enhancing the attractiveness of places for talent and business investment as well as for residents, workers, visitors and shoppers.

A key element of healthy placemaking is the need to ensure alternatives to the car in the design of streets and public spaces and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking as active transport modes. The provision of high quality public transport, greenways and cycleways can enhance areas, contributing to more attractive places and creating opportunities to be physically active and reduce the negative consequences of car-based commuting.



Figure 9.2 Healthy Placemaking Stategy

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles for the creation of healthy and attractive places[68], to ensure that;

- Good urban design principles are integrated into the layout and design of new development, as set out in Departmental Guidelines 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)'
- Future development prioritises the need for people to be physically active in their daily lives and to promote walking and cycling in the design of streets and public spaces
- New schools and workplaces are linked to walking and cycling networks
- Exposure of children to the promotion of unhealthy foods is reduced such as the careful consideration of the location of fast food outlets in the vicinity of schools and parks
- Provision of open space should consider types of recreation and amenity uses required
- Public open spaces to have good connectivity and be accessible by safe, secure walking and cycling routes
- Open space to be planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating ecosystem services, climate change measures, Green Infrastructure and key landscape features in their design.

68 For more information see DECLG 'Local Area Plans- Guidelines for Planning Authorities', 2013 (Chapter 5)

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Healthy Placemaking

RPO 9.10 In planning for the creation of healthy and attractive places, there is a need to provide alternatives to the car and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking in the design of streets and public spaces. Local authorities shall have regard to the Guiding Principles for 'Healthy Placemaking' and 'Integration of Land Use and Transport' as set out in the RSES and to national policy as set out in 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)'.

RPO 9.11: Local authorities shall support the preparation of Design Guidelines to provide for improvements in the appearance of streetscapes and for revitalising spaces for example with cost effective, temporary uses that build on the longer-term vision for space.

RPO 9.12: In Planning policy formulation and implementation local authorities and other stakeholders shall be informed by the need to cater for all levels of disability, through the appropriate mitigation of the built environment, and in particular for the needs of an ageing population.

RPO 9.13: Local authorities and relevant agencies shall ensure that new social infrastructure developments are accessible and inclusive for a range of users by adopting a universal design approach and provide for an age friendly society in which people of all ages can live full, active, valued and healthy lives.

Recreation and Open Space

The focus on compact growth and increased densities in urban areas will require a greater alignment between the development of communities and the provision and planning of open space to provide for the recreational and amenity needs of communities. The RSES supports the preparation of open space and parks strategies by local authorities, and for enhanced cross boundary collaboration to provide for a hierarchy of open space provision including regional scale open space and recreational facilities.

Recreation infrastructure and green spaces which are attractive, rich in biodiversity and well connected are shown to contribute to improved physical and mental health. It is important to consider green space within a holistic framework as it can be enhanced through other means in the built environment including the quality of the surrounding environment, density of residences, land-use mix, connectedness and walkability. The presence of green spaces also has a role to play in reducing air pollution, mitigating floods, protecting wildlife and improving building energy performance.

Research shows that access to green spaces (parks, forests, fields, trees, etc.) and blues spaces (rivers, canals, lakes, coasts) also have clear health benefits. These green and blue spaces can be called green and blue infrastructure (GBI), see Case Study 'GBI Health'[69]. Green infrastructure in all its forms and multifunctionality is addressed in Chapter 7 Environment and Climate.

CASE STUDY:

GBI Health

Research has shown that people in areas with more GBI (Green and Blue Infrastructure) tend to be healthier. GBI Health is a research project by NUI Maynooth, University College Dublin and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly that applied a health led approach to examine the strength of the effect that different types of GBI e.g. rivers versus parks, can have on human health.

This research carried out an audit of Irish health data to identify areas of low and high health outcomes and used GIS mapping to determine what types of GBI were present at multiple scales (neighbourhood to region). The results of the spatial analysis and statistical modelling confirmed associations of good health outcomes with the presence of GBI and associations of poor health outcomes with lower levels of GBI. The results found stronger associations with green rather than with blue space.

69 https://gbihealthireland.com/

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In planning for recreation and open space local authorities should follow these Guiding Principles:

- Facilitate a sufficient supply of good quality sports and recreation facilities, including networks for walking, cycling and other activities and shall maximise the multiple use of such facilities by encouraging the co-location of services between sports providers, schools, colleges and other community facilities.
- Support play policies to address the play and recreation needs of children and young people and ensure the integration of play provision and child-friendly neighbourhoods.
- Provide for the development of dedicated youth spaces in key urban areas and the development of multi-function spaces in smaller communities / rural areas.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Recreation and Open Space

RPO 9.14: Local authorities shall seek to support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve.

RPO 9.15: Local authorities shall support the vision and objectives of the National Sports Policy, including working with local sports partnerships, clubs, communities and partnerships within and beyond sport, to increase sport and physical activity participation levels locally.

RPO 9.16: Local authorities shall support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policies contained in development plans.

RPO 9.17: To support local authorities in the development of regional scale Open Space and Recreational facilities particularly those close to large or growing population centres in the Region.



9.5 Social and Economic Opportunity

Social Inclusion is a key objective at national and local level. It refers to the way in which all persons in a community are integrated in an equal manner by reducing barriers to social inclusion for example belonging to a jobless household; being a lone parent; having a disability; being homeless or affected by housing exclusion; and belonging to an ethnic minority.

Europe 2020 includes targets to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion. People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.

There is a clear link between health and social class with self-reported rates of good health much lower in areas of social disadvantage. The Trutz Haase deprivation index identifies pockets of affluence and deprivation in the Region[70]. Figure 9.3 shows the Pobal HP Deprivation Index scores for the Region.

Education and skills are closely related to employment opportunities. The level of third level educational attainment can be seen as an indicator of the economic potential of a place as the proximity of a suitably skilled labour force is a key determinant for the location of businesses. The total population with a third level education residing in the Region is nearly 37%, above the State average (33%), however there are clear regional differences between the Midland (26%) and Dublin counties (41%). EU 2020 sets targets of at least 40% of 30-34 year olds completing third level.

The Economic Strategy of the RSES seeks to promote the creation of quality jobs that support a decent standard of living and afford economic security. Additional social inclusion measures are required to ensure that everyone is able to benefit and access economic opportunities across the Region.

Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs)

The Local Government Reform Act 2014, gave local authorities an expanded economic role including the preparation and adoption of LECPs. For the first time, LECPs require the integration of local economic and community development activities to promote economic and social opportunities for citizens and communities.

The first round of six year LECPs, launched in 2016, are overseen by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and seek to facilitate collaboration between the public sector, agencies and business sector as well as the community and voluntary sector. LECPs highlight a number of local policy and actions to provide opportunities for participation by marginalised communities and social groups at risk of exclusion.

It is important that local authorities work collaboratively with service providers and stakeholders including the local community through LCDCs and the LECPs to identify social infrastructure needs and set out an agreed programme of social infrastructure provision with key stakeholders involved in that process.

In the formulation of LECPs local authorities should consider demographic trends and patterns when carrying out an assessment of the need for social infrastructure to consider the impact of factors such as an ageing population and the resulting demand for facilities.

70 https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2018/06/The-2016-Pobal-HP-Deprivation-Index-Introduction-07.pdf

Social Enterprise

A Social Enterprise is an enterprise whose main objective is to achieve a social impact[71] and many social enterprises have emerged from the community and voluntary sector. Access to services is key to addressing social exclusion and inequality, and an increasing array of local support services are being developed in collaboration with Social Enterprise, such as homecare, employment activation, environmental services, and social housing.

Objectives to support social enterprises are set out in many local authorities' LECPs, with further supports and services provided by Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), which act as a 'first stop shop' for those in business or starting a business, including social enterprises, subject to certain criteria. The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) is preparing a national social enterprise policy for Ireland. Refer also to Chapter 6 Economy and Employment – Drivers for Resilient, Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth.

CASE STUDY:

Ava Housing

Ava Housing, formerly the Abhaile project is a scheme for older homeowners to reconfigure their family-sized homes, creating a new rental unit within the house. This social enterprise provides project management and support services from the initial adaption works to managing and collecting of rent on behalf of the homeowner.

The Ava Housing[72] model addresses two key housing needs; enabling older homeowners, some of which are at risk of social exclusion, to remain in their homes and communities by future-proofing the home and providing for a better standard of living; and generating new affordable single occupancy rental capacity from our existing housing stock which can provide access to jobs, transport and public services. The scheme was awarded a Social Enterprise Grant Scheme, drawn down under the Dublin City Local Enterprise Office (LEO), and won the Homes for Smart Ageing Universal Design Challenge under the Rebuliding Ireland Programme.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Social and Economic Opportunity

RPO 9.18: Support the implementation of local authority Local Economic and Community Plans, in collaboration with Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and through the use of spatial planning policies, to seek to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the Region.

RPO 9.19: EMRA shall work collaboratively with stakeholders including the wide range of service providers through the LECPs to effectively plan for social infrastructure needs.

71 Social Enterprises are defined as enterprises that; trade for a social/societal purpose; earn at least part of their income from trading activity; are separate from government; re-invest surplus to pursue the social objective (Forfas, 2013.)

72 www.avahousing.ie



Figure 9.3 Pobal HP Deprivation Index

9.6 Access to Childcare, Education and Health Services

Successful places also support a wide range of services and facilities that meet local and strategic needs and contribute towards a good quality of life. These include facilities in relation to health, education, libraries, childcare, community centres, play, youth, recreation, sports, cultural facilities, policing, places of worship, burial grounds and emergency facilities.

Social infrastructure plays an important role in developing strong and inclusive communities. The Regional Assembly supports enhanced co-ordination between local authorities, service providers and stakeholders including the local community through Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) to identify social infrastructure needs and to respond to population growth and changing demographics and the resulting demand for facilities.

Social infrastructure should be easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Shared use and co-location of facilities should be encouraged, in order to align service provision, use land more efficiently and facilitate opportunities for further inclusion and community participation.

Childcare and Schools

The RSES aims to address mis-alignment in the Region across a range of factors including school provision, facilities and child-friendly amenities. School provision is a key part of social infrastructure to be provided in tandem with housing provision. The RSES will seek to prioritise the alignment of targeted and planned population and employment growth with educational investment, including the provision of new schools on well-located sites within or close to existing built-up areas that meet the diverse needs of local populations.

It is expected that the number of children will continue to increase until the mid 2020s and decline only slowly thereafter. This means that the continued provision and enhancement of facilities and amenities for children and young people, such as childcare, schools, playgrounds, parks and sportsgrounds, is a priority and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.

Optimally, schools need to be located along sustainable transport corridors (i.e. walking, cycling, public transport). Car dependency is a significant mode of school transport in the Region. As far as is practicable, in addition to factoring sustainable access as a condition for new schools and educational infrastructure, a programme of settlement retrofit is needed to facilitate safe walking, cycling or ease of access to public transport alternatives.

Provision of quality affordable childcare places is critical, both developmentally for children and also as an effective labour market intervention. Affordability of childcare is a factor, particularly so for low-income families, and is deemed as a barrier to employment[73].

Through local authority county development plans and local area plan policy, co-ordinated decision making on school locations between the Department of Education and Skills and local authorities should be provided and a planned approach to education provision to locate new school facilities within access to public transport and active travel modes should be promoted.



73 Indecon International Economic Consultants Indecon Report on Support for Childcare for Working Families and Implications for Employment, Prepared for Donegal County Childcare Committee, November 2013

Third Level Education and Lifelong Learning

Access to high quality education and training has an important role to play in developing sustainable and balanced communities in the Region. Third level institutions and higher education providers in the Region are a critical enabler of economic development, providing continuing professional development, advanced research, and facilities to support business growth and clustering. Universities are also vital in providing higher order skills necessary to attract and retain major international companies. Third level education should be complemented by further education and apprenticeship training.

Higher education institutions play a key role in driving sustainable regional development. In a dynamic and fast paced skills environment, education and training providers are challenged to respond to workplace skills needs. Regional Skills Fora work in tandem with education providers and businesses to meet the emerging skills needs and to address any gaps in their respective regions. Education Training Boards (ETBs) deliver labour-market focused programmes delivering key skills to employers, supported by the Regional Skills Fora. ETBs also deliver a range of part time adult and community education programmes that provide a key pathway to participation in society.

The development of multi-campus Technological Universities will lead the development of skills and talent in the Region. The RSES supports Athlone Institute of Technology in achieving its status as part of a Technological University by merging with a least one other Institute of Technology. The Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) comprising Dublin Institute of Technology and the Institutes of Technology in Tallaght and Blanchardstown, will drive research and innovation in the Dublin region.

The EMRA will support the provision of high quality education and training provision, including the allocation of sufficient sites and the development of childcare facilities, schools, colleges and universities in appropriate locations to cater for population growth targets under the RSES, to provide for greater educational choice to facilitate improvement in skills, and to assist in tackling disadvantage.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Childcare, Education and Life Long Learning

RPO 9.20: Support investment in the sustainable development of the Region's childcare services as an integral part of regional infrastructure to include:

- Support the Affordable Childcare Scheme.
- Quality and supply of sufficient childcare places.
- Support initiatives under a cross Government Early Years Strategy.
- Youth services that support and target disadvantaged young people and improve their employability.

RPO 9.21: In areas where significant new housing is proposed, an assessment of need regarding schools provision should be carried out in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills and statutory plans shall designate new school sites at accessible, pedestrian, cycle and public transport friendly locations.

RPO 9.22 To support the role of Higher Education Institutions and Educational Training Boards in addressing skills shortages and life-long learning needs in the Region, and to support the further development of multi-campus Technological Universities to drive research and innovation.



Healthcare

The availability and access to health services is central to creating healthier places. In addressing lifestyle induced illness and an aging population, the provision of educative and primary health care can support lifestyle adjustments that help people avoid tertiary care, leading to a more effective and less burdened health-care system.

Gaps in the Region's healthcare infrastructure, in particular the demand and capacity for primary care, acute care and social care services need to be addressed to meet the health care needs of a growing and ageing population, including the recommendations of the Trauma Steering Group – A Trauma System for Ireland.

Enhancement of the quality of the built and natural environments can improve mental and physical health and reduce health inequalities and enable healthy choices to be made. This includes improved access to green spaces and the provision of new Green Infrastructure (see Chapter 7 Environment and Climate).

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Provision of Health Services

RPO 9.23: Facilitate the development of primary health care centres, hospitals, clinics, and facilities to cater for the specific needs of an ageing population in appropriate urban areas in accordance with RSES settlement strategy and core strategies of development plans.



9.7 Access to Arts, Culture, Language and Heritage

Culture, language and heritage are an integral part of Irish life. Their importance in society remains undiminished, from their deep intrinsic value, to their wider social import and benefit, and their economic potential in terms of creative industries and cultural tourism.

The Region's rich cultural offer includes visual and performing arts, music, spectator sports, festivals and carnivals and a diverse and innovative food scene. It also includes a unique natural and built heritage including National Parks and nature reserves, National Monuments and Cultural Institutions, historic cities, towns and villages. (see Chapter 7 Environment & Climate for more information on Natural Heritage). The Region also benefits from a growing community of Irish speakers, particularly in Dublin, which, with all of these other elements contributes to the Region's opportunities to support and enhance cultural tourism.

The role of arts, culture, and language in providing for enhanced wellbeing and social cohesiveness is recognised with participation in cultural activity directly linked to individual and societal wellbeing and quality of life. There is significant provision of arts and cultural facilities with nearly all national cultural institutions and several regionally significant facilities located in the Region.

Additionally, arts and culture have a key role to play in highlighting the distinctiveness of place in our cities, towns and rural areas and they play a significant role in defining Ireland's international profile, as a place of culture, learning and creativity, thus assisting to attract tourism and investment. Cultural tourism forms a central plank of the Irish tourism industry and a very significant generator of foreign exchange earnings (See Chapter 6 Economy and Employment).

Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is the fabric of our lives and societies. It surrounds us in the buildings of our towns and cities, our landscapes, natural sites, monuments and archaeological sites. Cultural heritage brings communities together and builds shared understandings of the places we live. Intangible cultural heritage refers to the practices and traditions that are central to the lives and identities of our communities, groups and individuals.

Sustaining and investing in cultural infrastructure is a core consideration of the Strategy. The opportunities for economic development through support for the expansion of the creative industries, and in particular the audio visual sector, are also a focus under this RSES given the importance of Dublin and Wicklow to the sector nationally. There are significant opportunities for a co-ordinated national, regional and local approach to support the development of creative places (studios, performance spaces, collaborative work spaces) that meet local needs and aspirations.

Local authorities provide a key link in the relationship between national policies and the cultural experience of people in their everyday lives.

CASE STUDY:

South Eastern Creative Corridor

The South Eastern Creative Corridor[74] is is an initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in Wicklow and the South East which aims to support the development and growth of enterprises in the creative audio visual sector, including the animation and film industry, with the aim of job creation as well as the development of a sustainable creative industry cluster in the region.

The year long business development programme was launched in Wicklow County Campus in 2016 and offered enterprise owners an intensive programme of training, mentoring, networking and access to finance in order to assist participating businesses to increase sales, improve profitability, explore new markets and take full advantage of the opportunities in the sector. Funding for the initiative, which was led by the Wicklow LEO, was provided by Enterprise Ireland under the Regional Action Plan for Jobs competitive fund.

74 http://creativecorridor.ie/

Language

The Eastern and Midland Region is diverse and multi-lingual. 2016 Census results show that 363,000 (15.6 %) of the Region's residents spoke a foreign language, other than Irish or English at home, with Polish by far the most common language, followed by French, Romanian and Lithuanian. The total number of persons who could speak Irish in the Region was 787,000 (34%) of residents.

In line with An Stráitséis Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010 – 2030 (20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030) 'Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage' seeks to develop a flagship Irish language and cultural hub in Dublin. There is also a commitment to expand the use of the Irish language as the community language of the Gaeltacht.

There are two Gaeltacht districts within the Region, both in rural County Meath – Ráth Cairn and Baile Ghib. According to 2016 census returns, these Irish speaking communities have a population of 1,776 representing approximately 1.85% of the national Gaeltacht population. A Language Plan will be prepared for the Limistéir Pleanála Teanga (Language Planning District) for Ráth Chairn and Baile Ghib in accordance with the Gaeltacht Act 2012.

These Gaeltacht districts are endowed with a unique linguistic and cultural heritage and demonstrate significant capacity and capability in terms of its highly developed forms of social capital and community resilience. These dynamic social and communal features represent at once an important socioeconomic and sociolinguistic differentiator and also act as a key regional development asset which can contribute to efforts in achieving effective regional development objectives[75].

Archaeological Heritage

The Region's historic environment, represented in its built form, landscape heritage and archaeology, provides a depth of character that benefits the Region's economy, culture and quality of life. The built environment, combined with its historic landscapes, provides a unique sense of place, whilst layers of architectural history provide an environment that is of local, national and international value.

The Region's heritage assets include World Heritage Sites, built and natural conservation areas, protected structures, parks and gardens, monuments, archaeological remains, canals and waterways, peatlands, hedgerows and ancient woodlands.

The Region is home to the world renowned UNESCO World Heritage Site at Brú na Bóinne. In addition, the Region is home to a number of UNESCO candidate sites including the historic city of Dublin and medieval monastic sites at Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Kells and Monasterboice and representatives of the Royal Sites of Ireland at Dún Áilinne, Hill of Uisneach, and Tara Complex.

CASE STUDY:

CHERISH

The CHERISH project[76] (Climate, Heritage and Environments of Reefs, Islands and Headlands), funded by the EU's Ireland-Wales Programme, will employ new technologies to analyse coastal and island archaeology and heritage sites most affected by climate change.

The project aims to raise awareness and understanding of the past, present and near future impacts of climate change, storminess and extreme weather events on the rich cultural heritage of the regional seas and coast, with Skerries Islands as one of the case studies.

75 The NPF supports the implementation of language plans in Galetacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks (National Planning Objective 29).
76 http://www.discoveryprogramme.ie/

Architectural Heritage

Local authorities, through their city and county development plans and designation through the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), enable places of architectural value to be protected. Good heritage management should be incorporated into spatial planning to promote the benefits of heritage led urban regeneration in historic towns, for example through the protection of historic urban fabric, the reuse of historic buildings and the enhancement of places of special cultural or natural interest. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is an invaluable built heritage resource for local authorities and the general public.

The Region is home to towns and villages from medieval times such as Carlingford, Drogheda, Trim and Athlone to the historic planned towns such as Birr, Abbeyleix, Castlepollard and Tyrrellspass. Fishing villages are dotted along the east coast such as Clogherhead, Balbriggan, Skerries, Dalkey and Arklow. The Region is home to a number of designated Irish Heritage Towns; Dalkey, Trim, Kells, Kildare, Athy, Baltinglass, Abbeyleix, Tullamore and Birr. These built heritage assets are a non-renewable resource that contribute to our understanding of our past, and the well-being and quality of life of our current citizens and also represent an opportunity for sustainable economic development.

The repair and reuse of historic buildings is an integral part of sustainable development. Design consideration should promote the regeneration of historic buildings to provide contemporary family homes. The provision of high quality public realm and recreational spaces are also considerations for encouraging and promoting urban living and can make urban living more attractive.

Many of our historic towns retain fragmentary remnants of their former medieval defences. The Irish Walled Town Initiative is a network of medieval towns across Ireland supported by the Heritage Council. There are 8 walled towns in the Region – Ardee, Carlingford, Drogheda, Castledermot, Athy, Athlone, Trim and Dublin.

Heritage Led Regeneration

Planning for the regeneration of a historic town needs an integrated approach that balances the protection of the built heritage and the sustainable development of historic urban areas with the needs of modern living and takes account of the concerns and aspirations of the community and key stakeholders. This requires the coordination and management of sometimes conflicting demands and interests of different stakeholders. However, the development of a common vision for the town, supported by a coordinated and integrated series of objectives and a programme of realistic, achievable actions, will balance the conservation of the heritage with the needs of those who live in and use the historic town.

Bringing unused or underused spaces within our towns back into use has many advantages. In addition to reviving the economic value of an urban area, it also removes abandoned and derelict sites, and reduces the pressure to build on greenfield sites, on valuable agricultural land.

Local distinctiveness is key to each town having a unique selling point. The character and distinctiveness of the historic built environment are central to the future success of Irish towns. There are opportunities for local authorities and other stakeholders to target funding initiatives for heritage led regeneration.

Other initiatives to promote placemaking and the economic vibrancy of historic town centres include the Navan Town Centre Health Check and Wicklow and Balbriggan historic public realm plans, which are linked to the statutory local area plans. Community led village design statements were also piloted in Julianstown (rural pilot) and Sandymount (urban pilot), in partnership with Meath County Council and Dublin City Council.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Arts, Culture, Language and Heritage

RPO 9.24: Promote and facilitate the role of arts and culture in recognition of its importance to people's identity and the potential for economic development through a unique cultural tourism offering throughout the Region.

RPO 9.25: Seek to work with all relevant stakeholders to promote equality of access to and engagement with arts and cultural services and in the promotion of culture and heritage led urban and rural regeneration.

RPO 9.26: Seek to build on the success and support the clustering of the film and audio visual sector in the Dublin and Wicklow areas and to support training of film workers and crew around the Region, as well as exploiting opportunities for the industry outside of these hubs.

RPO 9.27: EMRA will support local authorities to work with local communities to promote historic towns in the Region in the practice of heritage led regeneration, to promote the sensitive and adaptive reuse of historic building stock and industrial structures where appropriate, and to strengthen their capability to draw down European and national funding.

RPO 9.28: Support the implementation of language plans for the Region's Gaeltachts and the identification of Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks in the Region, and to promote the development of the Gaeltacht in Meath in a manner that protects and enhances the distinctive linguistic and cultural heritage, whilst meeting the needs and aspirations of both residents and visitors alike.

RPO 9.29: Support the designation of the UNESCO candidate sites in the Region.

RPO 9.30: Support the sensitive reuse of protected structures.





10 Infrastructure

10.1 Introduction

The sustainable growth of the Region requires the provision of services and infrastructure in a plan led manner to ensure that there is adequate capacity to support future development. High-quality infrastructure is an important element of a modern society and economy, it provides essential functions and services that support societal, economic and environmental systems at local, regional and national levels.

It strengthens economic growth through enhancing efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, creates sustainable and attractive places, and underpins social cohesion through providing vital facilities for people in the form of schools, public transport, healthcare and housing. Ireland's abundant natural and environmental resources such as our water sources are critical to our environmental and economic wellbeing into the future. Conserving and enhancing the quality of these resources will also become more important in a crowded and competitive world as well as our capacity to create beneficial uses from products previously considered as waste, creating circular economic benefits.

The key driver for this chapter is the key principle of climate action and environmental sustainability generally. The RSES has identified a number of key Regional Strategic Outcomes which include sustainable management of water and other resources, supporting the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050 and building climate resilience, amongst others.



10.2 Sustainable Management of Water

Regional Context

With finite resources and an emphasis on environmental compliance and network upgrades, future investment in water services to accommodate growth will need to be focused. In this context balanced growth that supports the efficient and effective use of existing infrastructure will be a key consideration in ensuring the sustainable social and economic growth of Ireland into the future. The quantum, location and distribution of planned development must have regard to the capacity of public water services and seek to make efficient use of and maximise the capacity of existing and planned water services infrastructure.

EMRA supports the development of Drinking Water Protection Plans in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the current and future cycles of River Basin Management Plans. In this regard, EMRA supports the inclusion of objectives in city and county development plans relating to the provision of mitigation and protection measures for all protected areas, including Drinking Water Protected Areas and associated Source Protection Plans.

A key priority for the Region is to ensure that the water supply and waste water needs are met by new national projects to enhance the water supply and increase waste water treatment capacity for the Region. Irish Water will need to consider contingency plans to address any potential delays in the delivery of projects to ensure resilience of water supply and waste water treatment for the Region.

Water Supply

Water supply for the wider Dublin area is at critical levels of demand and to facilitate further growth in line with NPF population growth projections, prioritisation of water supply investment should occur. The importance of investing in the Region's infrastructure to ensure it remains a competitive location is recognised. Irish Water has identified key projects for the Region which are included in Project Ireland 2040 to support planned development and maintain and improve existing services. Specifically, the Water Supply Project for the Eastern & Midlands Region is required to ensure sufficient treated water is available to meet the long-term water supply needs of the Region to provide for projected growth up to 2050 and contribute to resilience and security of supply for the Region. In the absence of the Water Supply Project there will be an issue with servicing growth. The benefiting corridor for the project will provide a new water supply for most of the Region and is a key element of realising potential across the Region. The project aims to meet the domestic and commercial needs of over 40% of Ireland's population in the medium to long term future (up to 2050).

The development of a new rural settlement investment approach, coordinating Irish Water, local authority, developer and community led solutions to ensuring that sustainable water services solutions are progressively implemented should be encouraged. Irish Water's National Water Resources Plan is due to be prepared and EMRA will engage fully with Irish Water in its preparation of same.

The approach in the Region should be to ensure that water is used as efficiently as possible, address water wastage, water conservation and reduce leakage, minimising demand for capital investment.

Table 10.1: Strategic Water Services Projects

The Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midland Region to supply water to the Greater Dublin Area and other communities in the Eastern and Midlands Region
Irish Water's National Programme of Investment to tackle leakage through find and fix (active leakage control) and water mains rehabilitation
Vartry Water Supply Scheme
The Rural Water Programme



REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Water Supply

RPO 10.1: Local authorities shall include proposals in development plans to ensure the efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure in order to manage and conserve water resources in a manner that supports a healthy society, economic development requirements and a cleaner environment.

RPO 10.2: EMRA supports the delivery of the strategic water services projects set out in Table 10.1, subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

RPO 10.3: The Regional Assembly and local authorities shall liaise and cooperate with Irish Water to ensure the delivery of Irish Water's Investments and other relevant investment works programme of Irish Water that will provide infrastructure to increase capacity to service settlements in accordance with the settlement strategy of the RSES and local authority core strategies, and provide for long term solutions for waste water treatment for the Region.

RPO 10.4: Support Irish Water and the relevant local authorities in the Region to reduce leakage, minimising demand for capital investment.

RPO 10.5: Work closely with Irish Water to revise the Draft Investment Plan (2020-2024) and subsequent investment plans to align the supply of water services with the settlement strategy and objectives of the EMRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

RPO 10.6 Delivery and phasing of services shall be subject to the required appraisal, planning and environmental assessment processes and shall avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

RPO 10.7: Local authority core strategies shall demonstrate compliance with DHPLG Water Services Guidelines for local authorities and demonstrate phased infrastructure – led growth that is commensurate with the carrying capacity of water services and prevent adverse impacts on the integrity of water dependent habitats and species within the Natura 2000 network.

RPO 10.8: Encourage the development of a new rural settlement investment approach, coordinating Irish Water, local authority, developer and community led solutions to ensuring that sustainable water services solutions are progressively implemented.

RPO 10.9: Local authorities and Irish Water should work together to examine significant raw water sources which may be made redundant by the Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region with a view to reserving and protecting them for future back up or 'windfall' type economic development opportunities where high water use is required.

Urban Waste Water Treatment

The Greater Dublin Drainage Project aims to provide drainage infrastructure to support the continued development of the Greater Dublin Area. The project aims to provide long term sustainable wastewater drainage and treatment.

The elimination of untreated discharges from settlements in the short term, while planning strategically for long-term growth and taking account of the requirements of the Urban WW Directive should underpin the approach to waste water treatment in the Region.

As with the approach to water supply, EMRA supports the development of a new rural settlement investment approach, coordinating Irish Water, local authority, developer and community led solutions to ensure that sustainable water services solutions are progressively implemented in the Region.

Table 10.2: Waste Water Infrastructure
The Greater Dublin Drainage Project
The Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant Project
The Athlone Main Drainage Project
The Upper Liffey Valley Sewerage Scheme

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Waste Water Treatment

RPO 10.10: Support Irish Water and the relevant local authorities in the Region to eliminate untreated discharges from settlements in the short term, while planning strategically for long term growth in tandem with Project Ireland 2040 and in increasing compliance with the requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive from 39% today to 90% by the end of 2021, to 99% by 2027 and to 100% by 2040.

RPO 10.11: EMRA supports the delivery of the waste water infrastructure set out in Table 10.2, subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

RPO 10.12: Development plans shall support strategic wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and provide for the separation of foul and surface water networks to accommodate the future growth of the Region.

RPO 10.13: EMRA shall support appropriate options for the extraction of energy and other resources from sewerage sludge in the Region.

RPO 10.14: EMRA supports the servicing of rural villages (serviced sites) to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside, in line with RPO 4.78.



Surface Water

Approaches to manage surface water that take account of water quantity (flooding), water quality (pollution), biodiversity (wildlife and plants) and amenity are collectively referred to as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). SuDS mimic nature and typically manage rainfall close to where it falls thereby reducing the risk of fluvial and pluvial flooding and can be regarded as a sequence of management practices, control structures and strategies designed to efficiently and sustainably drain surface water, while minimising pollution and managing the impact on water quality of local water bodies[77]. Flood mitigation measures also seek to mitigate adverse potential impacts of climate change such as sea level rise, more intense rainfall with wetter winters and warmer summers.

SuDS can play a role in reducing and managing run-off from new developments to surface water drainage systems, reducing the impact of such developments on flood risk downstream, as well as improving water quality and contributing to local amenity.

The incorporation of the principle of Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDs) in all public and private developments in urban areas is recommended as is the need for diversion of storm water from combined sewers where possible in order to overcome challenges in relation to management of surface water and its separation from foul sewage.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Surface Water

RPO 10.15: Support the relevant local authorities (and Irish Water where relevant) in the Region to improve storm water infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in the urban environment and in the development and provision at a local level of Sustainable Urban Drainage solutions.

RPO 10.16: Implement policies contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS), including SuDS.

RPO 10.17: Implement the specific recommendations of the GDSDS in relation to Climate Change Regional Drainage Policies for all relevant developments within the Region.

RPO 10.18: Local authorities shall ensure adequate surface water drainage systems are in place which meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the associated River Basin Management Plans.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following Guiding Principles for SuDs shall be incorporated into development plans and LAPs:

- Include policies and actions to encourage the integration of 'soft' measures including SuDs, green space, Green Infrastructure and permeable surfaces in the design of drainage and sustainable water management of existing and future developments.
- Identify areas where SuDS will or may be required to be incorporated.
- Include objectives requiring the use of SuDS in public and private developments in urban areas, both within developments and within the public realm to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.
- Take opportunities to enhance biodiversity and amenity and to ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive sites and habitats, including where flood risk management measures are planned. Plans and projects that have the potential to negatively impact on Natura 2000 sites should be subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.
- Encourage the use of Green Roofs where expansive roofs are proposed such as industrial, apartment, civic, commercial, leisure and educational buildings, and non-porous surfacing to create safe places.
- Seek to reduce the extent of hard surfacing and paving as well as requiring the use of sustainable drainage techniques. Where possible, consideration should be given to measures that have benefits for both WFD and flood risk management objectives, such as natural water retention measures, and also for biodiversity and potentially other objectives.

77 https://www.susdrain.org/delivering-suds/using-suds/background/sustainable-drainage.html)

10.3 Energy

A secure and resilient supply of energy is critical to a well-functioning region, being relied upon for heating, cooling, and to fuel transport, power industry, and generate electricity. With projected increases in population and economic growth, the demand for energy is set to increase in the coming years.

In the context of a move towards a more energy-efficient society and an increase in renewable sources of energy, there is a need to set a policy approach which will address an increased demand for indigenous resources and increased security of supply. Overreliance on non-indigenous supplies of energy is still a major issue for the Region. To meet our energy targets, we need to better leverage natural resources to increase our share of renewable energy. There is an established tradition of energy production in the Midland counties by state agencies, however national environmental policies are dictating the wind down of traditional fossil fuel powered stations, such as peat fired power plants in these counties. (Refer to Chapter 7 Environment and Climate in relation to renewable energy).

The main energy networks serving the Region are electricity and gas. Having regard to projected population growth and economic growth in the Region it is important that the existing electricity and gas networks can be upgraded to provide appropriate capacity to facilitate development of the Region. Improving energy efficiency is vital in order to reduce energy consumption while improving economic growth. The roll-out of Smart Grids to support Smart Cities development is supported to advance this sector. Increased connectivity with other grids is also needed and projects such as the North South interconnector are of great importance for the Region. See relevant policy supports in relation to Smart technologies in Chapter 6 Economy and Employment and Chapter 7 Environment and Climate.

The diversification of our energy production systems away from fossil fuels and towards green energy such as wind, wave, solar and biomass, together with smart energy systems and the conversion of the built environment into both generator/consumer of energy and the electrification of transport fleets will require the progressive and strategic development of a different form of energy grid. The development of onshore and offshore renewable energy is critically dependent on the development of enabling infrastructure including grid facilities to bring the energy ashore and connect to major sources of energy demand. It is also necessary to ensure more geographically focused renewables investment to minimise the amount of additional grid investment required, for example through co-location of renewables and associated grid connections.

The Dublin Region is the major load centre on the Irish electricity transmission system. Approximately one third of total demand is located here, similarly the Eastern Region is a major load centre on the Irish transmission system. The main urban demand centres are composed of a mix of residential, commercial and industrial demand, which is expected to grow up to 2025 and beyond. Developing the grid in the Region will enable the transmission system to safely accommodate more diverse power flows from renewable generation and also to facilitate future growth in electricity demand. These developments will strengthen the grid for all electricity users, and in doing so will improve the security and quality of supply. This is particularly important if the Region is to attract high technology industries that depend on a reliable, high quality, electricity supply.

CASE STUDY:

CODEMA

Codema is Dublin's Energy Agency, providing advice and support for the four local authorities in the Dublin Region in ensuring their own sustainable energy use. Codema is also engaging with EU and SEAI funded energy programmes to promote innovation in the region. An increasingly important role is to increase energy awareness among citizens and energy stakeholders, thus providing a comprehensive local and regional service for energy and climate change.

Examples of Codema's work include Climate Change action planning, district heating system planning, energy performance contracting, management of European projects, energy saving behavioural campaigns, and detailed energy reviews.

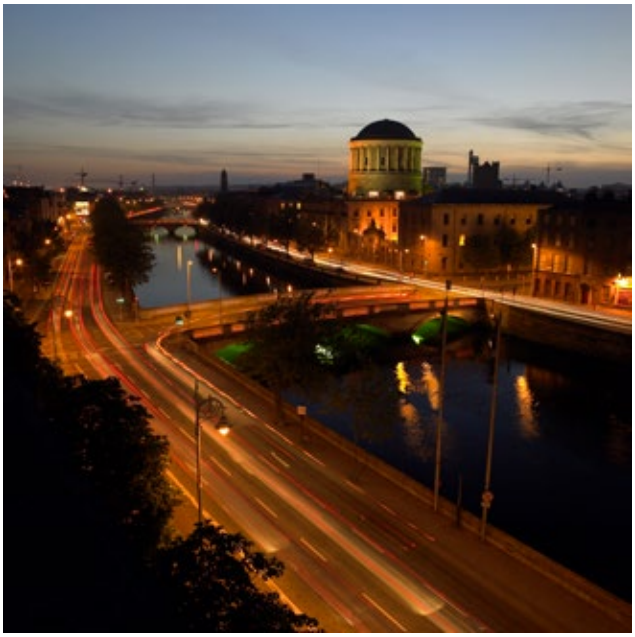
Future Electricity and Gas Supply and Demand

Support for the development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity and the development of enhanced electricity networks as well as new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this plan under EirGrid's (2017) Grid Development Strategy will serve the existing and future needs of the Region and strengthen all-island energy infrastructure and interconnection capacity.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Local authority development plans shall facilitate the provision of energy networks in principle based on the following guiding principles and considerations:

- The development is required in order to facilitate the provision or retention of significant economic or social infrastructure.
- The route proposed has been identified with due consideration for social, environmental and cultural impacts and address issues of climate resilience, biodiversity, impact on soils and water quality.
- The design is such that it will achieve least environmental impact.
- Where impacts are inevitable mitigation features have been included.
- Where it can be shown that the proposed development is consistent with international best practice with regard to materials and technologies and that it will ensure a safe, secure, reliable, economic and efficient high-quality network.
- In considering facilities of this nature that traverse a number of counties or that traverse one county in order to serve another, planning authorities should consider the proposal in light of the criteria outlined above. It is important that planning authorities are engaged in early consultation and discussion with the relevant Transmission System Operator.
- Corridors for energy transmission or pipelines should avoid creating sterile lands proximate to key public transport corridors, particularly rail routes, and in built up urban areas.
- Regard for any National or Regional Landscape/ Seascape Character Assessment.



The following Regional Policy Objectives are outlined to ensure the development of the energy networks in a safe and secure way to meet projected demand levels, to meet Government Policy, to ensure a long-term, sustainable and competitive energy future for Ireland and enable energy service providers to deliver their statutory function.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Energy Infrastructure

RPO 10.19: Support roll-out of the Smart Grids and Smart Cities Action Plan enabling new connections, grid balancing, energy management and micro grid development.

RPO 10.20: Support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Strategy. This Includes the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity and gas transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

RPO 10.21: Support an Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM) as a key priority for Ireland.

RPO 10.22: Support the reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission and distribution network to facilitate planned growth and transmission/ distribution of a renewable energy focused generation across the major demand centres to support an island population of 8 million people, including:

- Facilitating interconnection to Europe, particularly the 'Celtic Interconnector' to France and further interconnection to Europe/the UK in the longer term
- Facilitating interconnection to Northern Ireland, particularly the 'North-South Interconnector and further co-operation with relevant departments in Northern Ireland to enhance interconnection across the island in the longer term
- Facilitating transboundary networks into and through the Region and between all adjacent Regions to ensure the RSES can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local, regional and national scale to meet future needs
- Facilitate the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to allow linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner
- support the safeguarding of strategic energy corridors from encroachment by other developments that could compromise the delivery of energy networks.

RPO 10.23: Support EirGrid's Implementation Plan 2017 – 2022 and Transmission Development Plan (TDP) 2016 and any subsequent plans prepared during the lifetime of the RSES that facilitate the timely delivery of major investment projects subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the outcome of the planning process, in particular:

- Support reinforcement of the Greater Dublin Area between Dunstown and Woodland 400 kV substations to increase the capacity of the often congested and highly loaded Dublin transmission network to enable the transmission system to safely accommodate more diverse power flows and also facilitate future load growth in the area
- Support the installation of additional transformer capacity and increased circuit capacity to meet Dublin demand growth to strengthen the network for all electricity users and improve the security and quality of supply
- Support the Laois-Kilkenny Reinforcement Project to strengthen the network in large parts of the Midlands and provide additional capacity for potential demand growth in the wider region and strengthen the Region's transmission network by improving security and quality of supply and ensuring there is the potential for demand growth.

RPO 10.24: Support the sustainable development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy resources in accordance with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources 'Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan' and any successor thereof including any associated domestic and international grid connection enhancements.

10.4 Waste Management

Waste Management Policy for the Region is contained in the Eastern and Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015 – 2021. The overall vision of the Regional Waste Management Plan is to rethink the approach taken towards managing waste and that waste should be seen as a valuable material resource. The Plan, through this section and Chapter 7 Environment & Climate, also supports a move towards achieving a circular economy which is essential if the Region is to make better use of resources and become more resource efficient.

Waste is defined as anything that is discarded. A circular economy is one where materials are retained in use at their highest value for as long as possible and are then re-used or recycled, leaving a minimum of residual waste. This Strategy supports the move to a more circular economy as this will save resources, increase resource efficiency, and help to reduce carbon emissions. The successful implementation of circular economy principles will help to reduce the volume of waste that the Region produces and has to manage and will assist in delivering the resource efficiency ambition of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Local authorities should achieve waste reduction, increases in material re-use and recycling, and reductions in waste going for disposal. This can be achieved by complying with the strategic objectives, targets and goals set out in the Eastern – Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015 – 2021 and any subsequent waste management plans and promoting a more circular economy that improves resource efficiency and innovation to keep products and materials at their highest use for as long as possible. Waste minimisation and waste avoidance can be encouraged through the reuse of materials and using fewer resources in the production and distribution of products.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Waste Management

RPO 10.25: Development plans shall identify how waste will be reduced, in line with the principles of the circular economy, facilitating the use of materials at their highest value for as long as possible and how remaining quantums of waste will be managed and shall promote the inclusion in developments of adequate and easily accessible storage space that supports the separate collection of dry recyclables and food and shall take account of the requirements of the Eastern and Midlands Region Waste Management Plan.



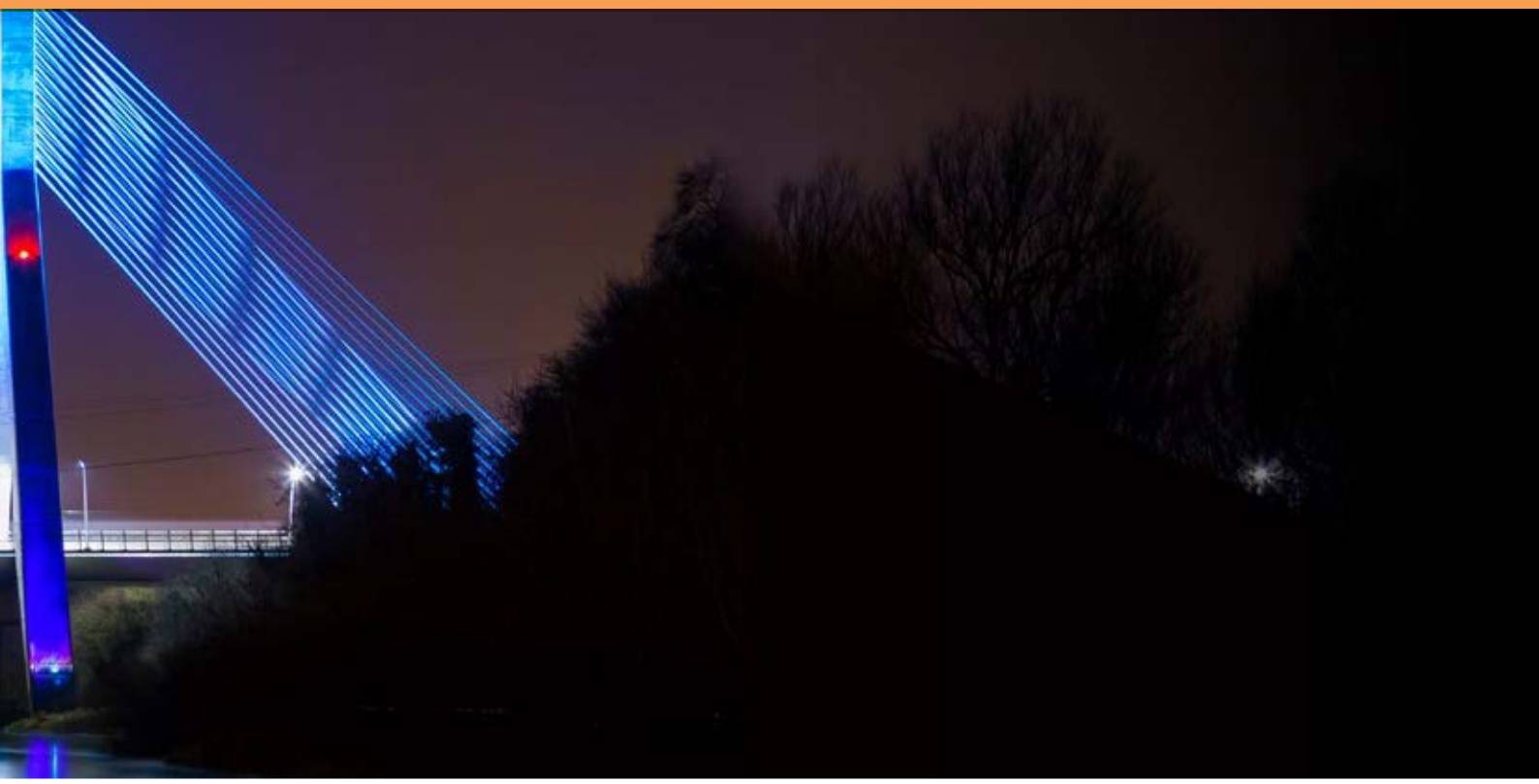
11 All Island Cohesion

11.1 Introduction

The Strategy recognises the strong links between our Region and Northern Ireland and also the links with the Southern and Northern and Western Regions.

With regard to Northern Ireland and notwithstanding the presence of an international border and the future uncertainty surrounding that border in light of the United Kingdom's proposed departure from the European Union, the Regional Assembly recognises the need to work together for mutual advantage in areas such as economic development and promotion, co-ordination of social and physical infrastructure provision and environmental management. In preparing the Strategy, the Regional Assembly have engaged in collaboration with local authorities and Government agencies in Northern Ireland.

Implementation of the RSES in tandem with the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland will require collaborative work which will be supported by the Framework for Co-operation on Spatial Strategies between Ireland and Northern Ireland.



11.2 Collaboration with Northern Ireland in Support of an All Island Approach

In the context of ongoing North-South cooperation across a wide range of policy areas, there are three key areas of practical co-operation between relevant departments and local authorities in Ireland and Northern Ireland that will both support and be supported by the implementation of both the NPF and the RSES. These relate to economic development, investment in infrastructure and environmental management.

Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor

The Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor, as the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland, is identified in this Strategy as a regional growth enabler. The Corridor comprises a nationally important spine connecting the two largest settlements on the island of Ireland via the regional centres of Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry. The Corridor is underpinned by a strong presence of transport infrastructure connecting Dublin and Belfast.

The regional centres of Drogheda and Dundalk have the potential to form part of a sustainable network of centres of scale, including Newry, connected by public transport within the Region and within the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. The location of Dundalk and Drogheda provides for enhanced cross-border interactions which if promoted can help to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important cross-border network for regional development.

This Strategy supports a drive in the linkage between Dundalk and Newry to strengthen a cross border synergy in services and functions between these towns, to ensure that drivers and policy are complimentary and not competing and for these two towns to continue an approach to shared services and interlinked growth.

The Corridor is also the national entry point to the island through its airports and ports with three major airports, Dublin Airport, Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport, and significant ports in Belfast and Dublin, with complimentary ports along the Corridor.

This needs to be supported through targeted investment in transport infrastructure and services in connecting major urban centres and international gateways, complementing and maintaining its function as part of the EU TEN-T core network, that sees All-Ireland linkages to Cork, whilst the Dublin- Belfast Economic corridor also provides separate linkages onto the Dublin-Rosslare Corridor, see Figure 11.1.



Figure 11.1: TEN – T Core Network (North Sea – Mediterranean).
Source: ec.europa.eu

The Dublin- Belfast Economic Corridor has the capacity to provide the only potential paired city growth pole on the Island of scale - reaching a European benchmark 5 million population target to compete with similar city regions in the EU. The imperative to counteract BREXIT with a proactive spatial economic policy adds to the international significance of the Corridor, see also Chapter 6 Economy and Employment.

The Strategy promotes the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast Economic Corridor as a driver for regional economic development within the EMRA area.

Investment in Transport, Energy and Communications Infrastructure

This strategy supports the co-operation with relevant departments in Northern Ireland to provide for enhanced transport connectivity between Ireland and Northern Ireland, to include cross-border road and rail, cycling and walking routes, as well as blueways, greenways and peatways.

The need for a new interconnector between the electricity grids of Northern Ireland and Ireland has been identified by the Irish Government and Northern Ireland Executive as a project of common interest. Future enhancement of energy security and resilience to support a population of 8 million people will be supported through progression of further north-south interconnection of electricity grids. The South-North gas pipeline, enhanced East-West interconnection between the island, wider UK and European gas networks and ongoing work to harmonise gas transmission arrangements on the island support meeting EU requirements for gas market integration. These objectives are supported in the Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) included in this Strategy, see also Chapter 10 Infrastructure.

In the information age, telecommunications networks play a crucial role in enabling social and economic activity. This RSES supports actions to strengthen communications links to develop a stable, innovative and secure digital communications and services infrastructure on an all-island basis in co-operation with relevant departments in Northern Ireland. This includes, subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the outcome of the planning process, support for further enhancement of links between the North American continent and the island of Ireland and Europe, direct access to international backbone data systems and the roll-out of appropriate public policy and investment interventions such as the National Broadband Plan.



Tourism

This Strategy supports the coordination and promotion of all-island tourism initiatives through continued co-operation between the relevant tourism agencies and Tourism Ireland.

This includes support for themed tourism branding bundles linking tourism assets north and south and support for development of blueways and greenways which can offer potential for an enhanced tourism offering throughout the border area including support for long-distance cycling/walking routes which link Northern Ireland and Ireland, see also Chapter 6 Economy and Employment in relation to sectoral opportunities and Chapter 7 Environment & Climate on Green Infrastrcture.

Management of Our Environment

In recognition that national and other administrative boundaries do not reflect the trans-boundary nature of the environment and its stewardship, this Strategy seeks to ensure effective management of shared landscapes, heritage, water catchments, habitats, species and trans-boundary issues in relation to environmental policy in co-operation with relevant departments in Northern Ireland.

Catchment based strategies require management by both jurisdictions and a number of jointly funded North-South Implementation Bodies have roles and responsibilities in these areas in addition to co-ordination through the North South Ministerial Council. This includes for example the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) which requires Member States to coordinate their efforts in relation to international river basin districts. Additionally, management of all coastal and transitional waters surrounding the island of Ireland requires a coordination approach, as does management of cross-border groundwater and co-ordination of landscape character assessment, habitats and protected sites.



11.3 Collaboration with the Southern Region and Northern and Western Region

Inter-regional accessibility and cooperation is also central to delivering the overall Growth Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region, for further detail on strategic conections see also Chapter 3 Growth Strategy.

Collaboration with the Northern and Western Region (NWR)

There are a number of opportunities that enable collaboration with the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area. The strategic location of Athlone, centrally located between Dublin and Galway and partially located in the NWR, offers potential for both regions to work together for economic, social and environmental advantage, particularly through the Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP), maximising its contribution to inter-regional growth and creating a competitive settlement of sufficient scale to serve the wider area.

Longford acts as a strategic portal to the North-West, on the Dublin to Sligo rail corridor that also serves Mullingar and Maynooth. Enhanced rail services on the Dublin-Sligo line including DART to Maynooth, coupled with intended upgrades to the M/N4 route will improve linkages. Dublin to Cavan generally follows the N/M3 route, while development of the cross border A5 route connecting to the N2/M2 will improve connectivity between Dublin and the border counties to Derry and Letterkenny.

Sustainable transport options through enhanced development of the Blueway and Greenway networks will further enable strategic connections and heightened collaboration for the benefit of the tourism industry. Increased recreational use of the Grand Canal, completion of the Dublin to Galway Greenway which is designated as a trans-European Eurovelo Route and increased recreational use of the Royal Canal as part of a Dublin to Westport Greenway, will improve northwest connectivity.



Collaboration with the Southern Region (SR)

There are a number of avenues that facilitate collaboration with the Southern Region to ensure mutual benefit. Strategic linkages between Dublin and Cork allows the maintenance of a physical connection between the two largest cities in the state including the Dublin to Cork rail corridor, part of the EU TEN-T core network, which aims to protect and enhance strategical international connections between Belfast, Dublin and Cork. This rail corridor also provides commuter rail services to the Dublin hinterlands and the RSES supports a feasibility study for the provision of high-speed rail links between Dublin and Limerick/ Junction Cork. Likewise, linkages between Dublin and Rosslare Europort are supported as is the importance of inter-regional national routes such as the N80.

There is potential to promote sustainable transport links between the Grand Canal, the Barrow Line and to further develop the Barrow Blueway connecting Carlow- Graiguecullen on the boundary with the Southern Region and extending south to Waterford. This also supports an improved and consolidated approach to tourism development.

This Strategy also supports cooperation through soft measures that allow for the management of growth strategically for long term benefit in terms of economic and social development and environmental quality. This includes collaborative initiatives such as the 'All Ireland Smart Cities Forum' and cooperation with higher and further education institutes, including at local levels, such as Laois and Offaly ETB with Carlow IT.

CASE STUDY:

Regional Collaboration in Environmental Assessement of RSES

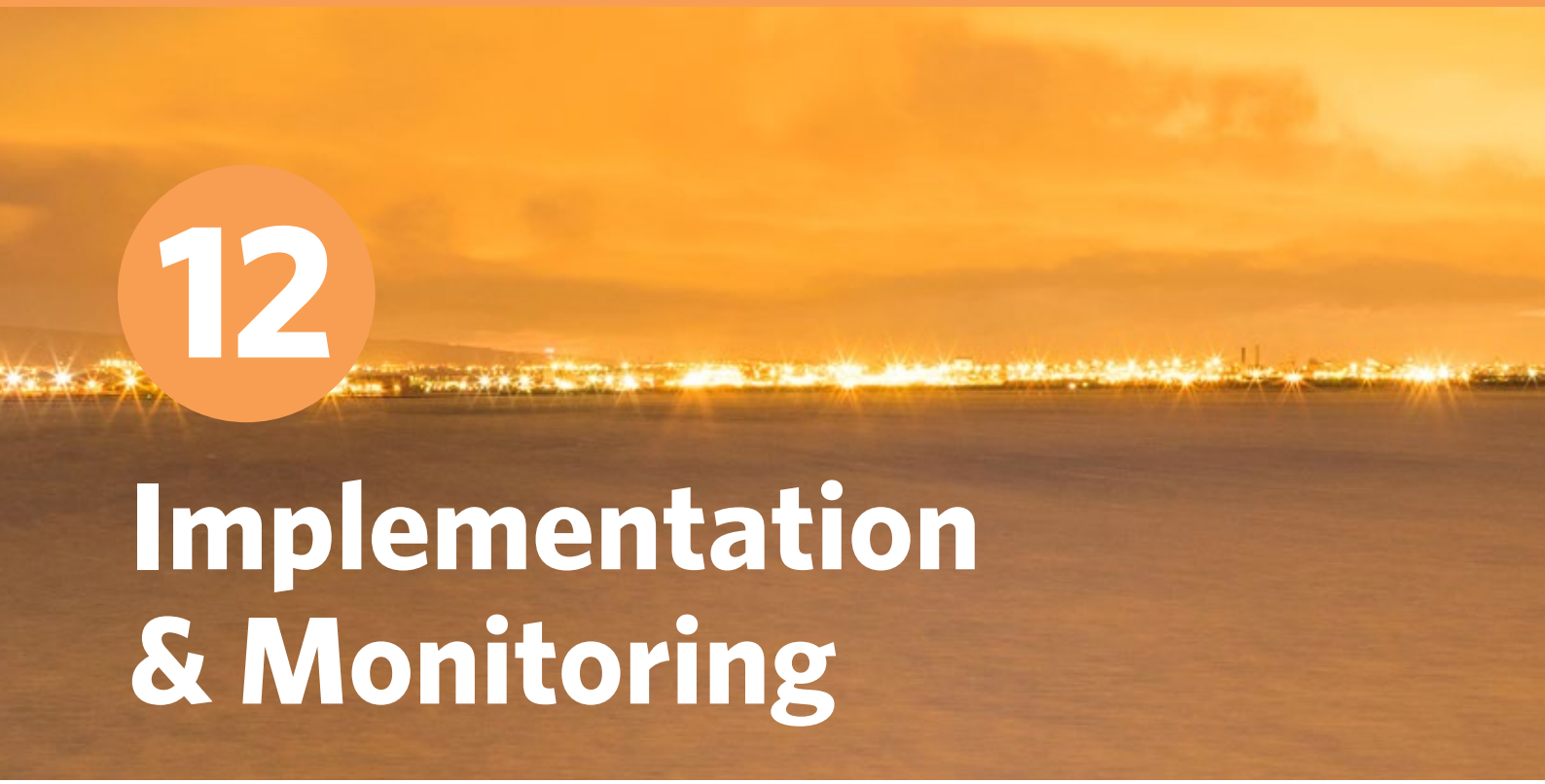
Having regard to the trans-boundary nature of the environment, a cross regional Environmental Management Team was established to ensure consistency across the three regions in the preparation of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Regional Flood Risk Assessment (RFRA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) to inform the development of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES).

During the iterative environmental assessment process regional project teams worked closely together to examine potential growth scenarios and the range of environmental issues to be considered at national, regional and cross sectoral level while also allowing for different approaches and local responses by the regions. The process was supported by evidence and mapping tools such as the National Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Webtool.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

All Ireland Approach

RPO 11.1: In co-operation with relevant departments in Northern Ireland, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, and where appropriate in association with the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, will support mutually beneficial policy development and activity in the areas of spatial and infrastructure planning, economic growth and related spheres.



12 Implementation & Monitoring

12.1 Introduction

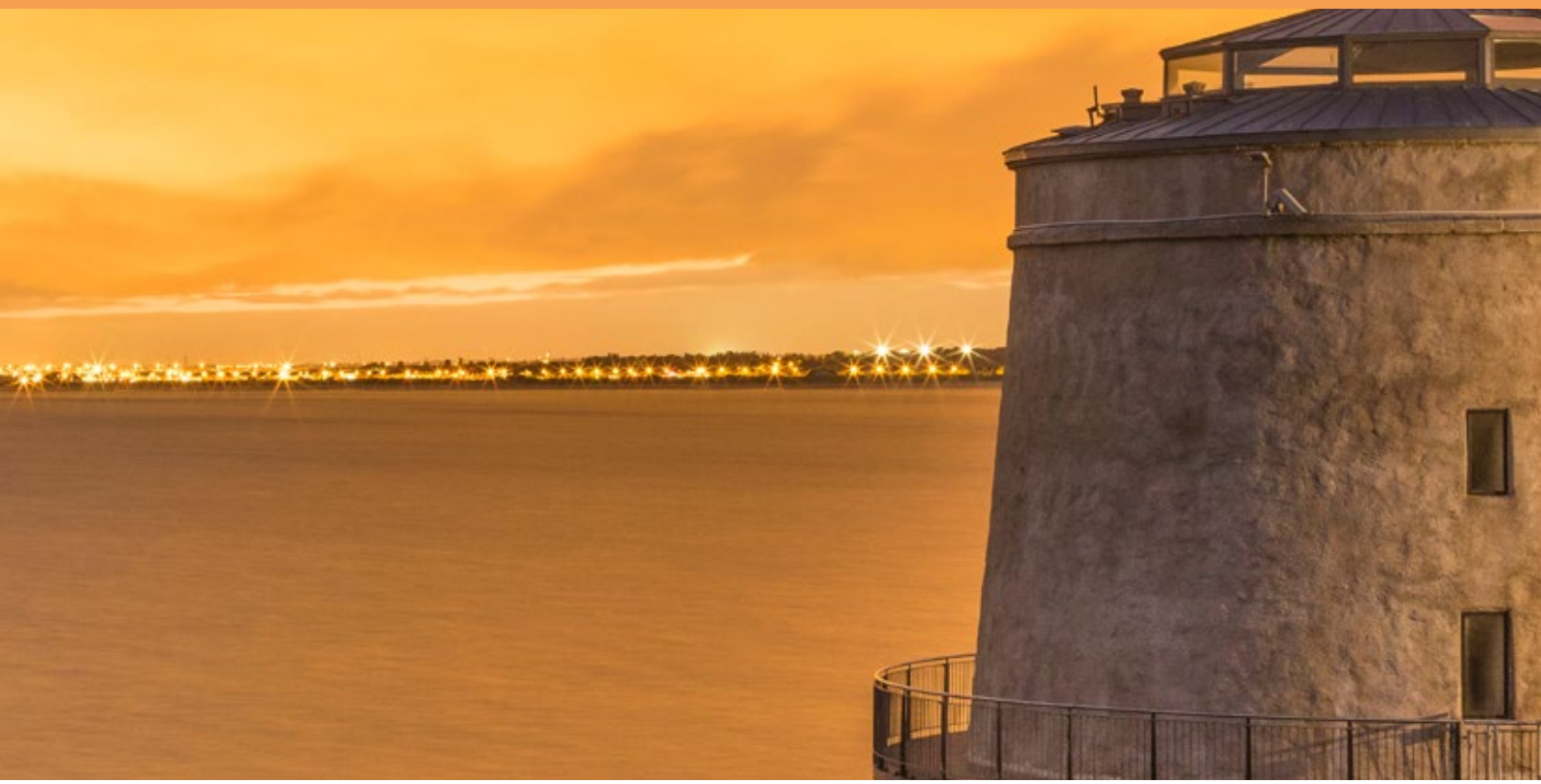
The primary objective of the Strategy is to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a twelve year long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Region.

The success of the Strategy depends on its policy and programme delivery at national, regional and local level. Implementation of the Strategy requires streamlined governance arrangements and focused public capital investment priorities. The RSES must be reviewed within 6 years of its adoption.

Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) for the RSES are set out in the preceding chapters and are in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and the economic policies and objectives of the Government.

Some of the key mechanisms included in the Strategy to support its implementation include a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), to facilitate improved coordination and delivery of strategic sites in Dublin's Metropolitan Area, and a development framework which sets out the context for the preparation of core strategies in local authority development plans, with which they must be consistent.

The RSES will also directly influence the content of Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) which must be formulated in accordance with the regional framework set out in the regional strategy, thereby providing for further implementation of national and regional policy at local level.



12.2 Legislative Background

The preparation, review and monitoring of the RSES, which replaces the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) 2010 – 2022, is underpinned by the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Local Government Acts.

Section 23 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 states "The objective of regional spatial and economic strategies shall be to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region for which the strategies are prepared which shall be consistent with the National Planning Framework and the economic policies or objectives of the Government." The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly commenced the statutory process of the formulation of the RSES in 2017 and the strategy was made by the elected members on June 28th 2019.



Consistency with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

Section 27 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 requires that a planning authority shall ensure, when making a development plan or a local area plan, that the plan is consistent with any regional spatial and economic strategy in force for its area. Under the Act, regional assemblies are obliged to prepare submissions or observations in relation to the making of, and variations to, local authority development plans stating whether, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly, the development plan, and in particular its Core Strategy are consistent with the RSES in force for the area of the development plan. If, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly a development plan and its Core Strategy are not consistent with the RSES, the submission or observations and report shall include recommendations as to what amendments, in the opinion of the Regional Assembly, are required to ensure that they are consistent.

Section 44 of the Local Government Reform Act (2014) includes a requirement that a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) shall be consistent with any Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy as well as the core strategy and the objectives of the development plan of the local authority concerned. Local authorities are required under the Local Government Reform Act to submit a draft LECP to the Regional Assembly for consideration and the Assembly is required to adopt a statement on the draft LECP.

Monitoring the Strategy

The following monitoring and reporting arrangements are required by legislation to measure progress:

- Public bodies under Section 22A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, and each local authority within the Regional Assembly are required, every 2 years, to prepare and submit a report to the Assembly setting out progress made in supporting objectives, relevant to that body, of the Strategy.
- The Regional Assembly is required, every 2 years, to prepare a monitoring report to monitor progress made in implementing the Strategy. This report shall specify the progress made in securing the overall objectives of the regional spatial and economic strategy, including any specific actions and outcomes, including actions specific to public bodies identified in legislation. The EMRA will submit its monitoring report to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) for consideration and the NOAC may make recommendations to the Minister in relation to relevant measures to further support the implementation of the Strategy.
- Public bodies are required to assist and co-operate as far as practicable in implementing the Strategy.
- In accordance with Article 10 of the SEA Directive, "monitoring will be carried out in order to identify, at an early stage, any unforeseen adverse effects due to implementation of a plan, and to be able to take remedial action." Measures to monitor significant environmental effects of the implementation of the RSES are included in Chapter 7 of the SEA Statement.

These arrangements will be supported by the Corporate Plan for the Regional Assembly and the annual Program of Works, both of which will be approved by the members of the Regional Assembly.

12.3 Implementation

Implementation of the Strategy will be focused on policies, actions and investment to deliver the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) set out in the Strategy.

Review of City and County Development Plans

Within the Eastern and Midland Region there are a total of twelve city and county development plans with varying review periods. Mechanisms intended to ensure that there is an efficient and effective process of alignment between all the levels of spatial planning in our planning process, from national to regional and to local have been provided for in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018. This either suspended or deferred county development plan processes, or requires plans to commence variation or review within six months of the making of the RSES in order to ensure alignment with national and regional policy.

These provisions mean that all city/county development plans will be subject to review during 2019/21, and broadly aligned to address a six-year period to 2026/27. It is expected that all local area plans, including those to replace town plans, will be similarly brought into alignment during or immediately after the 2019-21 development plan review period. In the interim, any amendments or reviews of local area plans (LAPs), particularly in urban areas, need to clearly reflect the approach and direction of the NPF and RSES.

Local economic and community plans will also need to be reviewed further to approval of the RSES, although review of city and county development plans should take precedence in the work programmes of local authorities.

RSES Implementation Group

EMRA will establish an RSES implementation group that will meet on a regular basis to review implementation of high level policy objectives and progress towards achieving identified Regional Strategic Outcomes of the RSES.

The Implementation Group will comprise cross sectoral representation operating at a sufficiently strategic level to provide an over-arching view and to drive funding and collaboration opportunities in the Region. The Group may also provide strategic guidance on any issues that affect the effective implementation of the Strategy and in relation to any proposed amendments of the Strategy.

Implementation of MASP

The Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan is a key policy tool for the consolidated growth of Dublin. The MASP has been prepared in conjunction with the constituent local authorities and a number of stakeholders, who will be critical in the delivery of the RPOs.

An implementation group will be formed consisting of the organisations who assisted in the delivery of the MASP to oversee and drive implementation of the MASP for Dublin.

Funding Implementation

Project Ireland 2040 (PI 2040) Resources and Funding

The launch of Project Ireland 2040 links planning and investment for the first time in Irish history through simultaneous publication of the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan, to provide for Government policy and investment to facilitate social and economic progress in the coming years.

The total investment of almost €116 billion under the National Development Plan (NDP) is designed to meet Ireland's infrastructure and investment needs over the ten years from 2018 to 2027, with strategic investment priorities aligned to each of the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in the NPF. The National Development Plan provides for five-year multi-annual capital allocations, which will facilitate departments[78] in planning their investment programmes over the medium term. There is also a shift towards integrated regional investment plans, stronger co-ordination of sectoral strategies and more rigorous selection and appraisal of projects.

A number of key structures have been put in place to ensure implementation of the NDP and NPF, including:

- A high-level Delivery Board of the Secretaries General from key departments to monitor and oversee the implementation and performance of NDP and NPF delivery.
- An Investment Projects and Programmes Office (IPPO), which has been established in DPER to drive value-for-money reforms in areas such as project appraisal and selection.
- The Construction Sector Group (CSG), comprising industry bodies, who are working to develop capacity and skills in the construction industry, to enable delivery of PI 2040.
- The Land Development Agency, which has been established to coordinate the use of State-owned lands for regeneration and development – primarily for new housing.
- The PI 2040 Investment Projects and Programmes Tracker and online mapping tool MyProjectIreland to provide key updates on the progress of priority projects.
- The four NDP funds; focussed on Rural, Urban, Technology and Climate Action; with the first round of successful applications announced in 2018.

Rural, Urban, Technology and Climate Action Funds

A major innovation in the reformed funding model for the National Development Plan is the establishment of four funds to drive the delivery of specific core priorities detailed in the NPF, that are subsequently translated into the RSES. The four funds, which will be allocated resources amounting to an estimated €4 billion over the 10 year period of the National Development Plan are the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund and the Climate Action Fund.

The funds are designed to stimulate renewal and investment in rural and urban areas, the environment and innovation and will complement other investment and funding opportunities outlined as part of the National Development Plan from Exchequer Funding Accounts and non-Exchequer State backed enterprises and bodies. There is also a significant focus on the environment with €22 billion allocated to tackling and dealing with climate change across transport, energy and commercial State agencies.

A key objective of the funds will be aligning with and achieving the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) outlined in the National Planning Framework and the Regional Strategic Outcomes outlined in the RSES.

Urban Regeneration and Development Fund

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government announced the establishment of a new Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), primarily to support the compact growth and sustainable development of Ireland's five cities and other large urban centres. In the first instance, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has responsibility for implementing the URDF, which has an allocation of €2 billion in the National Development Plan (NDP) to 2027. In line with the objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Fund is designed to leverage a greater proportion of residential and commercial development, supported by infrastructure, services and amenities, within the existing built 'footprint' of our larger settlements.

Within the EMRA Region the Urban fund applies to Dublin City and the Metropolitan Area, the Key Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda, towns with a population of more than 10,000 and Trim (as a town of fewer than 10,000 people but with more than 2,500 jobs). Further details on the types of proposals eligible for funding are outlined in Circular FPS05/2016 issued by the DHPLG[79].

78 Lead departments include DHPLG, DBEI, DTTAS, DRCD, DAFM, DCCAE, OPW, commercial SOEs, DCYA, DES, DH

79 http://gov.ie/en/urban-regeneration-and-development-fund/

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed to providing an additional €1 billion for a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund[80] over the period 2019 to 2027. The Fund provides investment to support rural renewal for suitable projects in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas. It is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development. This Fund aims to support sustainable community and economic development in rural Ireland, including through regenerating smaller towns and villages and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation to support job creation in rural areas. It will be a key instrument to support the objectives of the National Planning Framework, and in particular to achieve Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities – one of the NSOs of the NPF.

The Fund will support ambitious and strategic projects which contribute to sustainable rural regeneration and development. It will support investments of scale which would not otherwise be delivered without the additionality provided by the Fund, and projects that are outside the scope of existing schemes.

Climate Action Fund

The Climate Action Fund[81], under the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, aims to support initiatives that contribute to the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets which will leverage investment by public and private bodies. The Fund has an allocation of at least €500m over the period to 2027 and offers the potential for innovative interventions which, in the absence of support from the Fund, would not otherwise be developed.

The Climate Action Fund is planned to have a wide-ranging scope supporting projects that can contribute to Ireland's climate and energy targets and wider Government policy priorities, including the development of innovative and scalable solutions, projects that generate wider socio-economic benefits and leverage non-exchequer sourced investment.

Disruptive Technologies Fund

The Disruptive Technology Innovation Fund (DTIF) is a significant new initiative which aims to support Ireland's innovation ecosystem and to drive collaboration between public bodies, research, SMEs and industry. The DTIF is a competitive challenge-based fund for the development, deployment and commercialisation of innovative technology solutions to a broad range of challenge areas including health, services, energy and food and to achieve the NSOs of the NPF.

The Fund has an allocation of €500m over ten years and is implemented through the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) and its agencies working with other research funding bodies. The aim of the DTIF is to build on research and leverage for commercial impact, create new start-up companies and prepare Irish enterprises and public bodies to engage in European and global innovation partnerships.

80 https://drcd.gov.ie/about/rural/rural-regeneration-development-fund/
81 https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/CAF%20Call%20for%20Applications.pdf

Other Investment Mechanisms

Outside of the funding mechanisms provided for under Project Ireland 2040, the following organisations provide potential funding opportunities for delivery of the RSES:

European Funding Programmes

Europe 2020 Strategy is the European Union's (EU) agenda for growth and jobs, emphasising smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as a way to overcome the structural weaknesses in Europe's economy, improve its competitiveness and productivity and underpin a sustainable social market economy. By ensuring good policy alignment, the RSES can drive investment that is targeted towards identified priorities at European, national, regional and local scale, assisting local authorities and others in identifying partnership opportunities and leveraging funding from EU Regional Operational Programmes. EU funding and investment priorities will be revisited post 2020 and EMRA will seek to ensure continued policy alignment with EU policy.

Ireland Strategic Investment Fund

The Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF), managed and controlled by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), is an €8.9 billion sovereign development fund with a statutory mandate to invest on a commercial basis in a manner designed to support economic activity and employment in Ireland. The fund has a long investment time horizon and therefore can act as a permanent or patient source of long-term capital and drive innovation across multiple industry players to develop and deliver innovative opportunities that might otherwise go unrealised.

European Investment Bank and Council of Europe Development Bank

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is the European Union's bank representing the interests of the European Union Member States and working closely with other EU institutions to implement EU policy. The EIB provides finance and expertise for sustainable investment projects that make a significant contribution to growth and employment in Europe.

The Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) is a multilateral development bank that provides financing and technical expertise for projects with a high social impact, to promote social cohesion and strengthen social integration in Europe. The CEB contributes to projects in areas including sustainable and inclusive growth and developing climate action adaptation and mitigation measures.

Enterprise Funding Schemes

Enterprise Ireland is the state agency responsible for supporting the development of manufacturing and internationally traded services companies, providing a range of enterprise funding and supports from high potential start-sups through to large companies and to assist college-based researchers to commercialise researched technologies.

The €60 million Regional Enterprise Development Fund 2017-2020 aims to drive enterprise development and support job creation by co-financing collaborative projects by a range of enterprises and public bodies, including local and community enterprise initiatives, innovation and technology partnerships and enterprise-led Industry Clusters. Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) is an innovation pre-commercial procurement initiative, which supports small and emerging businesses by providing early-stage funding and a route-to-market for smart technology solutions to identified public sector challenges.

Enterprise funding and business supports are also available from other development agencies such as the local enterprise offices.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Implementation of the RSES

RPO 12.1: Following adoption of the RSES EMRA will establish a RSES implementation group to oversee progress on the implementation of the RSES and to identify opportunities to drive regional development and leverage new funding, partnership and collaboration opportunities in the Region.

RPO 12.2: Following adoption of the RSES the EMRA will establish a RSES implementation group to oversee progress on the implementation of the MASP for Dublin.

RPO 12.3: The RSES will support local authorities in promoting compact and sustainable development and in future proofing our cities and towns through the drawdown of investment funds including national, rural, urban, technology and climate funds, through EU Regional Operational Programmes and other internal and external collaborations and partnership opportunities.

RPO 12.4: The EMRA supports smart growth initiatives that develop new solutions to existing and future urban challenges, including climate risks in the Region and will support local authorities in the draw down of climate and smart technology funds.

12.4 Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting on the RSES, through various mechanisms and channels which includes obligations under the Planning and Development Act 2000, will ensure the development of a responsive RSES focused on delivery.

Office of the Planning Regulator

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) was established by government in April 2019. The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 established the legal basis for the OPR and outlines its role and functions, which include the assessment of all local authority and regional assembly forward planning, including regional spatial and economic strategies; organisational review of the systems and procedures used by any planning authority, including An Bord Pleanála, in the performance of any of their planning functions; and driving national research, training, education and public information programmes.

This office operates an independent monitoring role, advising the Minister, Government and the Oireachtas on implementation of the National Planning Framework under the statutory planning process, through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, local authority statutory planning processes and the decisions of An Bord Pleanála, and using a new set of indicators to be developed to assist effective monitoring.

Phasing of Population Growth

The NPF sets out phased regional population targets to 2026 and 2031. As outlined above, revisions to legislation under the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2016 provide for the broad alignment of city and county development plans to address a six-year period to 2026/27 following preparation of the RSES.

This aligns with census periods and the availability of census data following Census 2026 will allow for more effective monitoring of the RSES in the future.

Evidence Based Policy Making and Evaluation

The EMRA is strongly committed to the preparation of evidence-based strategies and plans and this is demonstrated in the baseline data gathering and the preparation of Regional Profiles, which informed the development of the RSES. As part of this commitment EMRA will make available the baseline data as a shared evidence base for the Region and encourages other public bodies and local authorities to use this data, particularly to inform the preparation and implementation of city and county development plans, local area plans, and local economic and community plans.

It is anticipated that the RSES evidence baseline data will be regularly updated as new data becomes available and the Regional Assembly will support the development and publication of a set of robust, relevant and timely Key Regional Indicators for policy making and evaluation. Baseline data shall be updated on at least a four yearly cycle to coincide with the EPA state of the environment reporting and shall take account of the monitoring requirements in the SEA.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Monitoring

RPO 12.5: EMRA will carry out a regular update of baseline data for monitoring purposes and will make this data publicly available to facilitate evidence-based policy making and evaluation in the Region.

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Photographs

In addition to the resources of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, images have been provided courtesy of the 12 Local Authorities within the Eastern and Midland Region and Maynooth University.

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