Framework for Co-operation

Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland



Department for Regional Development
www.drdni.gov.uk

Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government

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ChapterOne

This document examines the key planning challenges faced by both jurisdictions on the island and discusses the potential for co-operation in spatial planning. It sets out a framework for co-operation at different levels within the public sector which should result in mutual benefits. These benefits can be at the local border area level and at the wider level.

1.3

1. Introduction

1.1 Issues, opportunities and challenges in relation to spatial planning and future development are frequently shared, in both jurisdictions. Understanding this relationship can help economic recovery through more effective planning and prioritisation of investment.

1.2 Effective planning means creating competitive and sustainable places and bringing about better balance between meeting development needs and protecting our shared environment. Prioritisation of investment means targeting resources where they will create the greatest competitive advantage.

1.3 This document examines the key planning challenges faced by both jurisdictions on the island and discusses the potential for co-operation in spatial planning. It sets out a framework for co-operation at different levels within the public sector which should result in mutual benefits. These benefits can be at the local border area level and at the wider level.

1.4 The two spatial strategies – the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 in Northern Ireland and the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) in the Republic of Ireland are key foundations on which future strategic investment decisions in each jurisdiction will be made. These strategies highlight the need for co-operation on issues which transcend boundaries and they emphasise the importance of working together for the development of urban and rural areas and for the efficient provision of infrastructure and services.

The Framework Approach and Status

1.5 The Framework is a non-statutory approach to providing advice and guidance at relevant spatial or geographical scales. It seeks to encourage policy makers in the public sector to take account of the wider impact of their work, to recognise and exploit opportunities for a wider perspective and to avoid "back to back" planning.

The European Union View of Spatial Planning and Co-operation

1.6 Co-operation between regions for territorial development is widely accepted as good practice within the European Union (EU) and is promoted in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), and the EU Territorial Agenda (EU TA).

1.7 Research shows that co-operation is important to:

- help solve cross boundary issues that cannot be dealt with by regions on their own;
- provide policy support for action or fiscal measures needed to achieve co-operation;
- help ensure consistency of policy at different levels ; and
- foster networking on decisions about cross boundary issues and projects.

1.8 Both the ESDP and the EU TA promote connectivity between Member States as a way of promoting a stronger Europe in the face of global challenges.

1.9 The concept of connectivity includes people and freight transport, energy supply and digital communications infrastructure as well as linkages for social or community reasons. Connectivity therefore has implications for where jobs are located, accessibility to services and for spin off economic activity. Benefits will be felt most at the points where connectivity networks touch or cross.

The Experience of Co-operation Across Europe

1.10 Both the EU and the wider Council of Europe supports practical research on how spatial and territorial co-operation can be achieved. The European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (known as ESPON) manages research projects on behalf of the EU to provide information and reliable data on EU development trends and comparisons with the wider world.

1.11 The ESPON 2013 programme has further developed the relevance of the research programme for policy makers by introducing a stream of research projects driven by the needs of ESPON participants. Details are available at http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/

1.12 The majority of co-operation projects to date have involved regional or local authorities in France, Germany, Belgium and Spain. Co-operation initiatives are most often funded by INTERREG.

1.13 The INTERREG IVA Programme for Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland is an EU supported Structural Funds Programme which seeks to address the economic and social problems resulting from the existence of borders. It supports strategic cross-border co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable Region. The INTERREG IVA Programme is worth €256 million (€192 million from the EU with further national contributions of €64 million). This programme covers the period 2007-2013.

1.14 The programme is being delivered through 2 priorities:-

Priority 1: Co-operation for a more prosperous cross-border Region by helping to diversify and develop the economy through innovation and enterprise.

Priority 2: Co-operation for a sustainable cross-border Region by supporting activities that promote cross border co-operation in policy development and delivery of services.

1.15 The current European Territorial Co-operation programmes which the Special EU Programmes Body manages - PEACE III and INTERREG IVA, will end in 2013. A new programme cycle will start in 2014 and end in 2020. The (SEUPB) has been requested by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland to help develop the content for two new programmes.

These programmes are:

- EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2014 – 2020 (PEACE IV);
- EU Programme for Cross-Border Territorial Cooperation (Ireland / Northern Ireland / Scotland) 2014 -2020 (INTERREG V).

Existing Arrangements in both Jurisdictions

1.16 Co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is not new. The Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government are already co-operating on a range of projects for economic, social and environmental benefit. This has happened for example through the creation of the Single Electricity Market, joint investment in the City of Derry Airport, and by significant road and rail investment on routes linking Dublin and Londonderry and Dublin to Belfast and Larne Port and Project Kelvin and electricity grid strengthening proposals.

1.17 Other ongoing co-operation themes include agriculture and plant and animal health policy and research, education, environmental protection and waste management, in a cross border context. There is also joint working on animal and plant disease prevention and contingency planning, accident and emergency planning, health promotion and co-operation, energy matters, transport planning, road and rail infrastructure, and public transport services and road safety.

1.18 These and other projects are advanced both through the North South Ministerial Council and through other contacts between Departments and Agencies, in both jurisdictions for example the North West Gateway Initiative.

1.19 Local authorities from both jurisdictions are working with ILEX, the urban regeneration company in the North West. Local authorities in the Newry-Dundalk area have also come together to deliver the Twin City Region project and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to the benefit of both communities. The Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN), a network of Councillor's, is also working together to respond to unique economic and social needs of the central border region.

1.20 The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD), an academic partnership, has been working closely with central and local government, in both jurisdictions in information gathering, skill and policy development.

1.21 On a wider basis, co-operation North, South, East and West is also being addressed in a British Irish Council Spatial Planning work stream.

ChapterTwo

The RDS 2035 reflects the objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government and provides a spatial context for the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy.

2.2

The NSS aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across the Republic of Ireland, supported by more effective and integrated planning.

2.6

2. Existing Spatial Strategies

Regional Development Strategy 2035 (NI)

2.1 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 is the spatial strategy for Northern Ireland and has a statutory basis. It covers the period up to 2035. Its purpose is to provide an over-arching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public sector in respect of those elements of their strategies which have a spatial development perspective.

2.2 The RDS 2035 reflects the objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government and provides a spatial context for the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy. The Strategy:

- Supports strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of the Region.
- Strengthens Belfast as the regional economic driver and Londonderry as the principal city of the North West.
- Support towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential.
- Promotes development which improves the health and well-being of communities.
- Improves connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information between places.
- Protects and enhance the environment for its own sake.
- Takes actions to reduce the carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate change.

2.3 In addition to the seven aims above the Strategy also aims to strengthen links between neighbours, North – South, East and West, with Europe and the rest of the world.

2.4 Under the proposals for planning reform as part of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) in Northern Ireland, applications for regionally significant development will be determined by central government. The RDS 2035 considers that projects which are regionally significant will be those which:

- deliver strategic improvements in external and internal communications;
- contribute to the achievement of renewable energy targets;
- contribute to the achievement of waste management and climate change targets; and
- raise issues of more than regional importance.

National Spatial Strategy (ROI)

2.5 The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is the spatial strategy for the Republic of Ireland and has a strong influence over the legislative and policy framework for planning, through the Planning and Development Act, and through delivery mechanisms such as the Regional Planning Guidelines, local plans and through capital spending. The purpose of the National Spatial Strategy is to:

- identify broad spatial development patterns for areas; and
- set down indicative policies in relation to the location of industrial development, residential development, services, rural development, tourism and heritage.

The existing NSS covers the period 2002-2020.

2.6 The NSS aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across the Republic of Ireland, supported by more effective and integrated planning. In order to drive development in the Regions, the NSS requires that areas of sufficient scale and critical mass be built up through a network of gateways and hubs.

2.7 Nine gateways are identified to act at national level, through their large scale and critical mass, to both drive development over the urban and rural areas they influence, and support more balanced patterns of development nationally. The NSS identifies nine Hubs to hold a strategic position in support of gateways, energising their own immediate areas and establishing a link between the larger urban areas and more rural areas. It also identifies an important need to support the role of smaller towns, villages and rural areas at the local level.

2.8 The Strategy outlines a framework within which transport and other linkages can be integrated with Ireland's future spatial structure.

2.9 The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in the Republic of Ireland (DECLG) has published a report reviewing experience in implementing the NSS since its publication in November 2002. The NSS Update and Outlook Report states renewed implementation priorities that both take account of that experience and respond to the considerably more challenging economic context facing implementation in the years ahead.

2.10 In this regard, key implementation priorities include:

• continuing to influence the spend on capital investment from available resources in a spatial planning context;

• ensuring that the regions and strategic locations such as the gateways have good arrangements to deliver strategic vision and leadership in their planning and development; and

• implementation of reforms of the planning system under recent 2010 legislation to ensure good consistency of approach between national (NSS), regional (Regional Planning Guidelines), and local (City and County) planning.

Diagrams 1 and 2 show the main elements of each of the Strategies.

Diagram 1: **The Regional Development Strategy 2035**

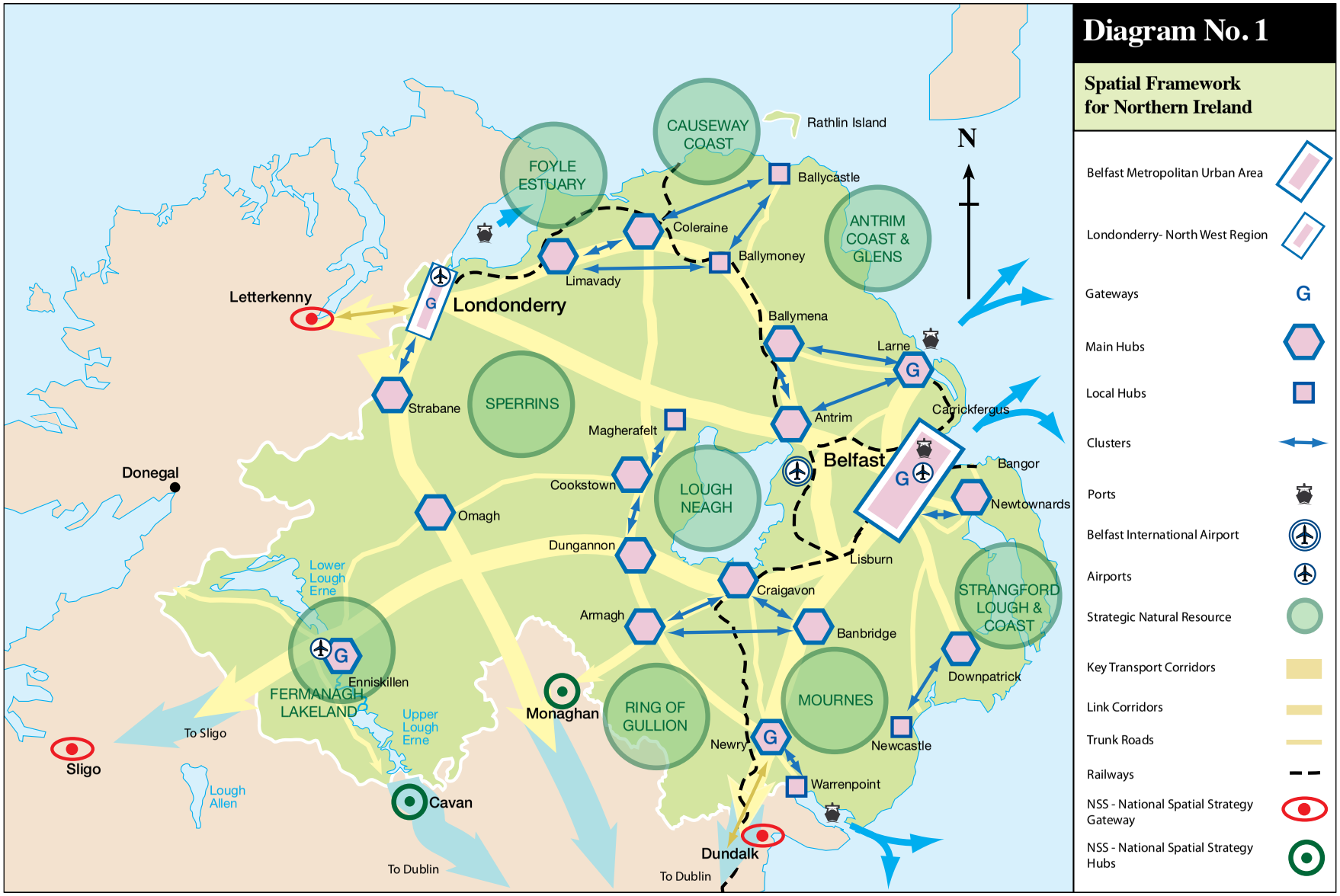
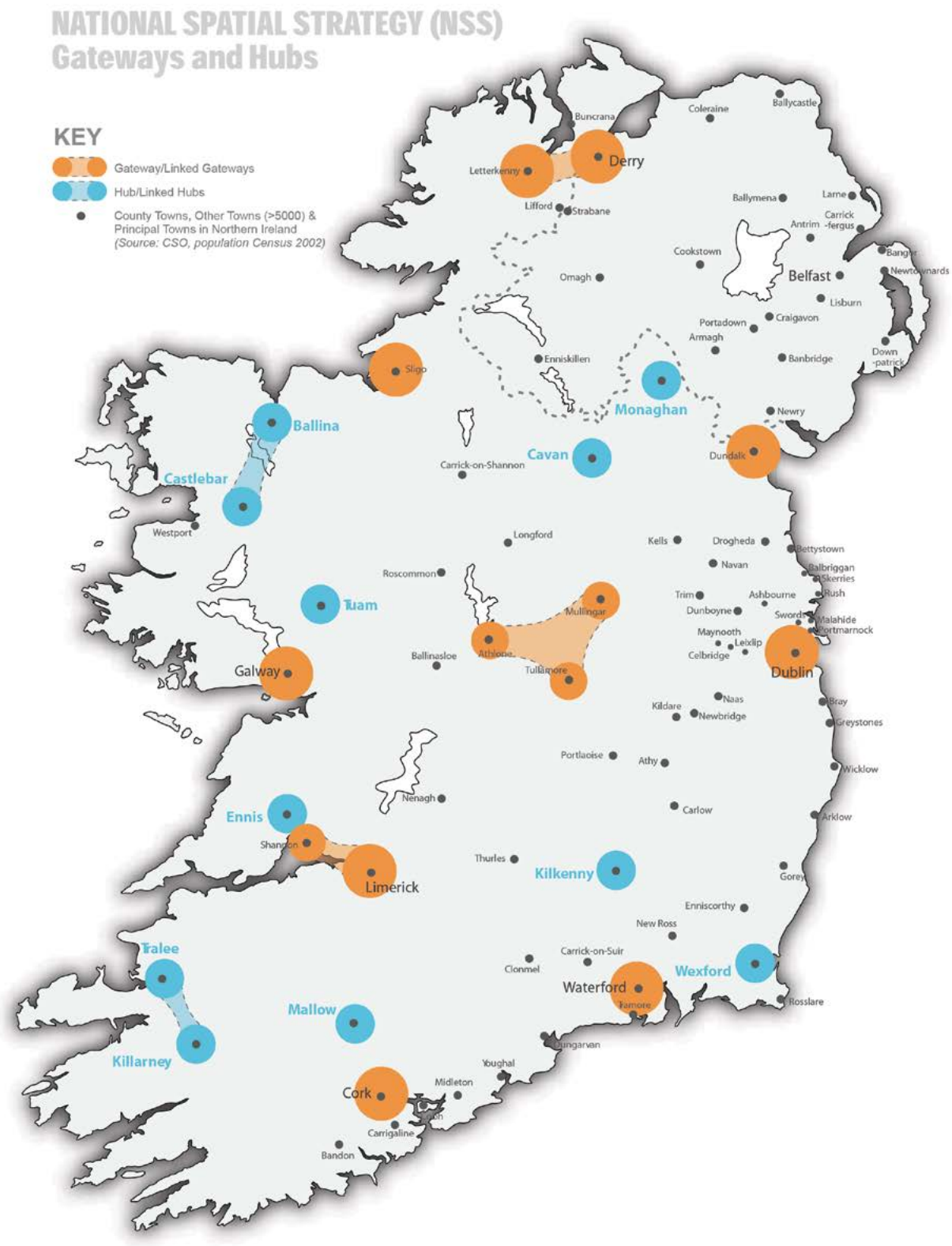


Diagram 2: **The National Spatial Strategy**



Comparison of RDS and NSS

2.11 There are differences between the Strategies that reflect their context. For example:

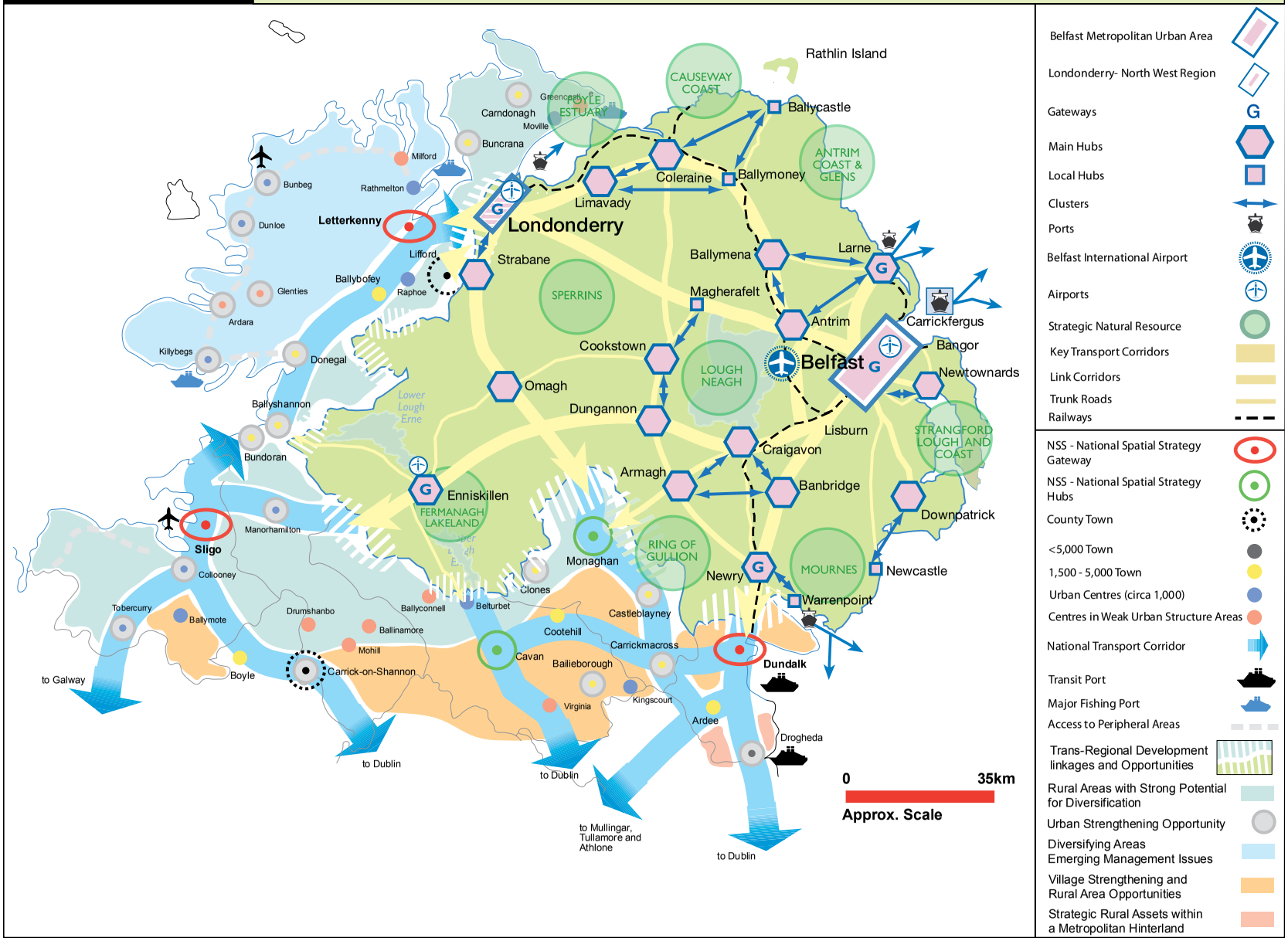
The RDS has a legislative basis with Government Departments in Northern Ireland having to have regard to it in their development functions, while the NSS is specifically referenced in planning legislation through the 2010 Planning (Amendment) Act for the purposes of consistency of regional planning guidelines and planning at local level.

In practice the NSS has been more strongly built into the development of government policy through, for example, its influence on the National Development Plan, and other capital investment plans and programmes.

2.12 The two Strategies are similar in their spatial approach and provide very similar messages. Both Strategies:

- have sustainable development at their core;
- promote more balanced regional development;
- recognise the differing but complementary roles the various regions have;
- recognise the critical role that metropolitan centres play as key focal points and drivers of economies in an international context;
- promote tiers of urban centres, gateways and hubs; and
- promote a more broadly based rural economy and strong rural communities.

Diagram No. 3 RDS and NSS Spatial Frameworks



Cross Border Issues

2.13 Both Strategies recognise the importance of their nearest neighbour and cite similar areas where co-operation can be mutually beneficial.

2.14 The Strategies:

- recognise the potential of the Dublin/ Belfast corridor to become a significant axis of development within the wider European context;
- point to the need for the development of the Dublin/Belfast corridor to include development of the wider eastern seaboard corridor, including the Newry/Dundalk area;
- promote the development of the Londonderry/ Letterkenny Gateway and the wider North West area;
- suggest the potential for developing further co-operative action in other parts of the border area;
- encourage the development of an integrated sustainable transport network; and
- encourage the potential for further co-operation on cross border energy inter-connections and on economic co-operation and enterprise.

2.15 Furthermore, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government and local authorities are actively engaged in cross border co-operation on a wide range of other matters.

Conclusion

2.16 Whilst there are important differences that need to be recognised, overall there is a strong commonality of themes and approaches in both Strategies. This provides a sound basis upon which to build a framework for co-operation that will guide and aid the development between the jurisdictions to help fulfill their potential and in particular assist border regions.

ChapterThree

This section looks at the spatial challenges and recognises where those challenges are different between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and also where there are similarities.

3.1

3. Spatial Challenges

Introduction

3.1 This section looks at the spatial challenges and recognises where those challenges are different between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and also where there are similarities.

3.2 Cross-border co-operation provides opportunities to boost the economic performance and competitiveness across the island. More can be achieved through co-operation than competition.

Settlement Patterns

3.3 The two main cities of Dublin and Belfast, pose significant challenges in spatial planning and infrastructural provision. Their continuing growth in economic terms is fundamental to prosperity. The city region concept places them at the centre of our economies.

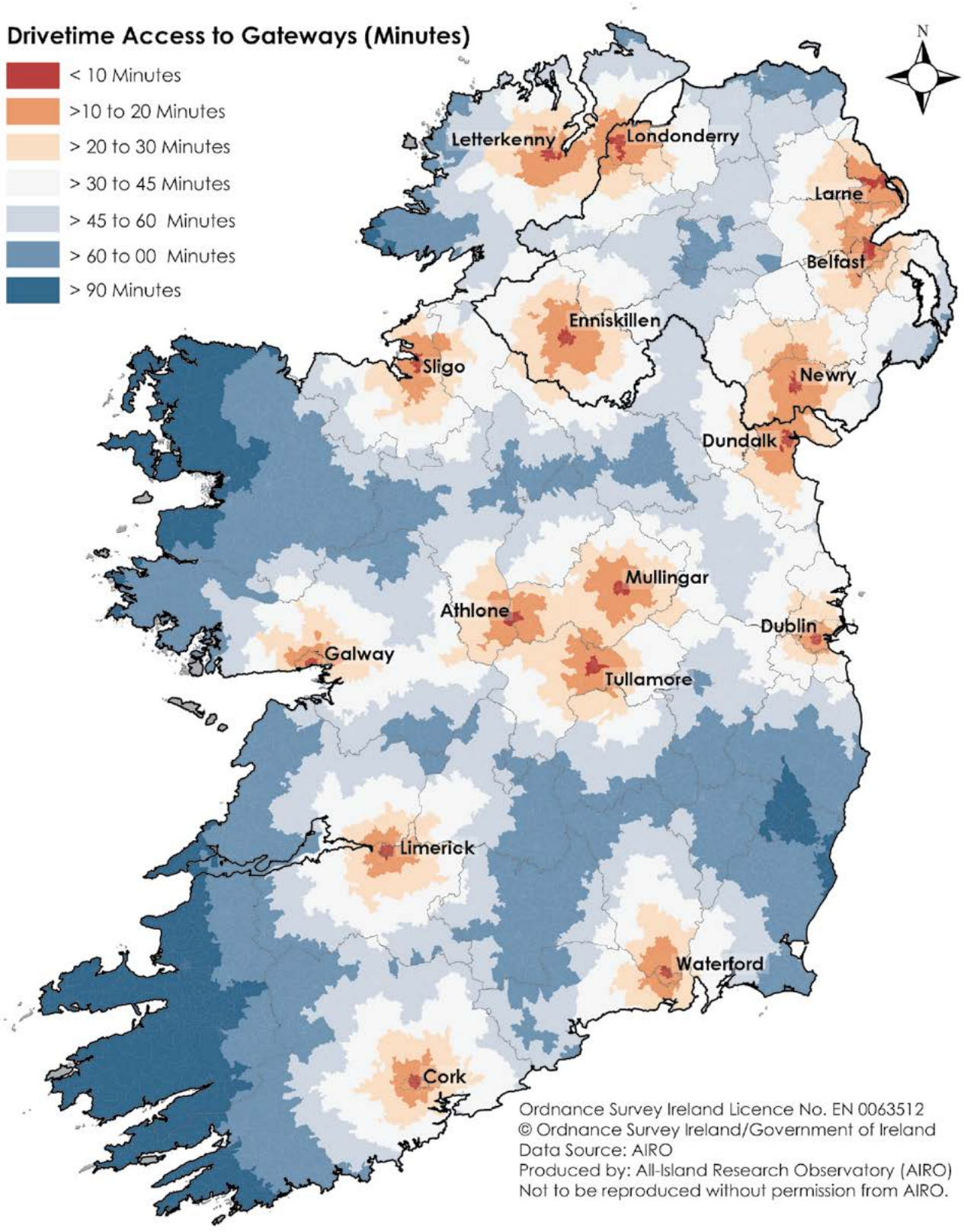
3.4 The growth of Dublin in the past two decades reflects the previous growth of the Irish economy before the economic downturn. However, there is now an understanding that continued expansion of the physical extent of the city is not a sustainable development path and will work against the long-term competitiveness and attractiveness of the city as well as significant ongoing investment in public transportation and urban regeneration, which has continued to transform the city core through riverside and dockland regeneration.

3.5 In Belfast the core city area has seen population decline over many years and a decrease in population density, although there are indications that this trend may reverse. The city centre is undergoing a transformation with the completion of a number of significant regeneration schemes, for example the Victoria Square and Titanic Quarter developments.

3.6 Cork in the South West and Londonderry in the North West are the next largest urban centres, both serving wider hinterlands. . The travel time to the Gateway locations in both the NSS and RDS are shown in Diagram 4.

3.7 Beyond the principal cities, other cities and main towns perform the important function of providing services to a wide hinterland, including rural areas. They are the focus of transportation networks and will be the optimum locations for potential for job creation, economic development, health and education services.

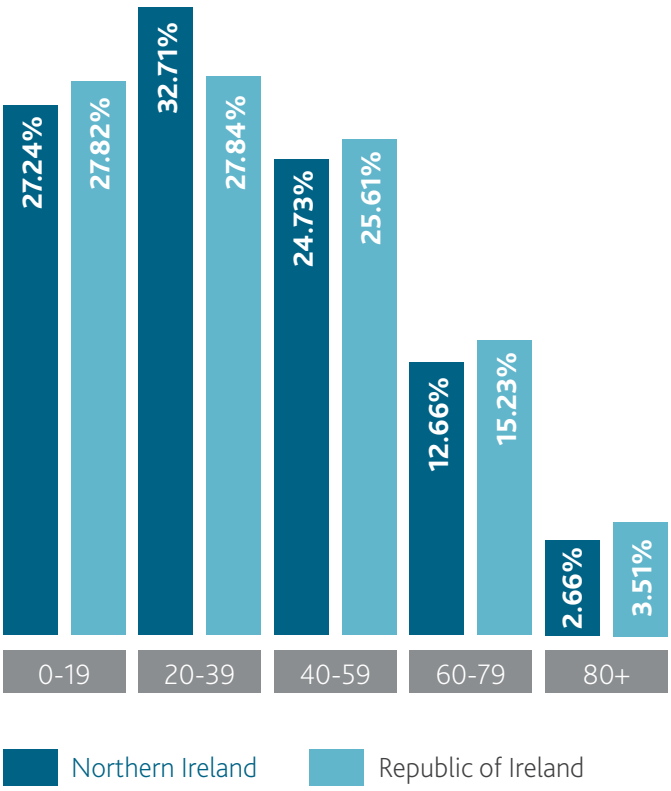
Diagram 4: **Travel Time to NSS and RDS Gateway Locations**



Population

3.8 The total population in both jurisdictions was just over 6.4 million in 2011, with around 4.6 million in the Republic of Ireland and about 1.8 million in Northern Ireland. The age structure of the island is broadly similar between both jurisdictions.

Figure 1: Percentage of population per age group in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland



3.9 The large percentage of younger people highlights the pressures on education and skills development but also the positive impact on the local labour market.

3.10 Official forecasts show that a combined population of just over 7 million by 2021 made up of just over 5 million in the Republic of Ireland and close to 2 million in Northern Ireland. By 2030 it is forecast that the combined population will be around 8 million.

3.11 In the Republic of Ireland past population growth has been in the smaller towns rather than in the cities. Significant population growth has taken place in the Mid East, Midland and West Regions of the Republic of Ireland over the last 10 years. The population of the Mid East is forecast to rise by around 24% to 2022.

3.12 Accommodating future population growth predominantly outside the main cities poses a number of challenges. The vitality and attractiveness of urban areas, the provision of essential services and the quality of the receiving environment will be affected. At risk will be water quality and habitats. The continuation and extension of car-based commuting and continuing increases in transport sector related CO2 emissions will work against becoming more sustainable and achieving climate change targets.

3.13 Similarly, whilst the total population in Northern Ireland is predicted to increase, if past trends continue, the main growth will be in smaller towns and villages with minimal growth in cities and larger towns. This raises challenges for cost effective delivery of services, providing sustainable integrated transport networks, and building the critical mass of skilled people needed by new knowledge intensive service jobs replacing those in traditional industry.

3.14 Official forecasts for both jurisdictions show that the population is ageing. This also has implications for amongst other things, housing supply, transport provision and care systems.

Housing

3.15 Where people choose to live is influenced by the availability of and accessibility to jobs, facilities and services. Local housing markets cross borders, and authorities can benefit from working together when preparing future area plans and housing policies.

3.16 House building has slowed down on both parts of the island and there is now an oversupply of housing, particularly in the Republic of Ireland. It is quite likely that the level of house building will be low over the next few years with 25,000 houses completed in the Republic of Ireland in 2009 as opposed to a peak of around 90,000 in 2007. In Northern Ireland house building also showed a decline from a peak of 15,000 new dwelling starts in 2005/2006 to 8,400 new dwelling starts in 2009/2010.

3.17 Planning for future housing needs should take account of any oversupply and the cross-border nature of housing markets. Those working on core strategies of development plans, in both jurisdictions need to take account of the changed circumstances and both will benefit from sharing housing market assessments to determine realistic future housing and land use zoning requirements.

Economy

3.18 The two economies face similar challenges arising from the need to secure economic recovery while addressing the increasing pace and intensity of global competition.

3.19 Both economies had performed strongly until the recent global economic recession. Between 1996 and 2006 GVA in the Republic of Ireland increased by over 186 per cent, in Northern Ireland the increase was almost 71 per cent. Growth has been greatest in the East and closest to Dublin and Belfast where urban structures and communication links are strongest.

3.20 The contribution to the economy of business and financial services has grown particularly in the Republic of Ireland whilst the numbers involved in the agriculture sector has declined on both sides of the border. However the growing contribution of the agri-food sector in terms of sales, exports and GVA is significant. The challenge is to support this transition and sustain rural communities while reducing the carbon intensity of produce across the agri-food sector and maintain the rich environmental resources of our countryside. In Northern Ireland the Executive's Economic Strategy is seeking to rebalance the NI economy by tackling those long-standing structural weaknesses which have hampered growth. Key drivers will be innovation R&D and skills. The NI Economic Strategy, and related Economy & Jobs Initiative also include actions aimed at rebuilding the local labour market to address the impact of the global economic downturn.

3.21 Both jurisdictions now face the challenge of recovery from economic recession. Many of the 'new economy' jobs in professional services have sought out large pools of labour in cities. Reliance cannot be placed on foreign direct investment alone to provide employment growth. Indigenous skills development and support for indigenously owned small and medium sized enterprises will also be necessary. Job forecasts suggest that the strongest growth opportunities are in graduate hungry service sector jobs in a dynamic and fast growing knowledge-based economy.

3.22 Data on the mobility of the workforce on a North/South basis and the retention of graduates would assist a better understanding of labour issues which is needed for better planning. Evidence also suggests that the labour force of border areas, in both jurisdictions, was disproportionately dependent on the construction industry. The challenge is to co-operate on re-skilling and training the workforce. This will help to support the emergence of competitive regions.

Environment

3.23 The environment plays a key role in attractiveness and the quality of life of its inhabitants and can act as an economic driver.

3.24 Rivers, lakes and mountains often transcend the border. The management of the above environmental assets and the landscape in general cannot be undertaken in isolation. We also have to achieve the same EU air quality limit values and manage environmental noise from transport and there is a certain amount of mutual cooperation on both these issues.

3.25 Likewise, other EU Directives create duties on all to protect our shared rich biodiversity. Through co-operation it could be possible to create ecological networks, which help the protection of priority species and conserve biodiversity.

3.26 Our built heritage too is coming under pressure from development on both sides of the border. Such structures can provide the focus for regeneration and contribute to the character of a place and to its identity. The built heritage sits within a landscape context, and with moves towards a national landscape strategy in the Republic of Ireland, the management of the landscape and its various components and elements on a cross border basis is an important emerging planning issue.

Climate Change

3.27 Greenhouse gas emissions in the Republic of Ireland rose by around 23% between 1990 and 2008 (based on 2008 figures). The most significant and sustained increase has been in the transport sector, where emissions have increased to over 2¾ times their 1990 levels, due almost entirely to road transport. Whilst in Northern Ireland total emissions decreased by around 15% on the 1990 baseline, the transport sector showed an increase of 26% relative to the 1990 figures (based on 2010 figures).

3.28 The longer term targets that the EU has set for 2020 are stringent, seeking a 20% reduction in total EU greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 (relative to 1990 levels) and at the same time to increase to 20% the share of renewable sources in electricity production. The Northern Ireland Programme for Government sets a target for a 35% decrease in total greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. The Northern Ireland Executive has committed to targets of 40% of electricity consumption from renewable resources and 10% renewable heat by 2020. In addition an interim target of 20% electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2015 has also been set by the Northern Ireland Executive. In the Republic of Ireland, Government is committed to introducing appropriate targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to be framed within Climate Change legislation, and a 40% share of renewable sources in electricity production by 2020.

3.29 Both jurisdictions have challenging targets to meet, the achievement of which will have significant implications for planning. There is potential for actions in one jurisdiction to impact on the other.

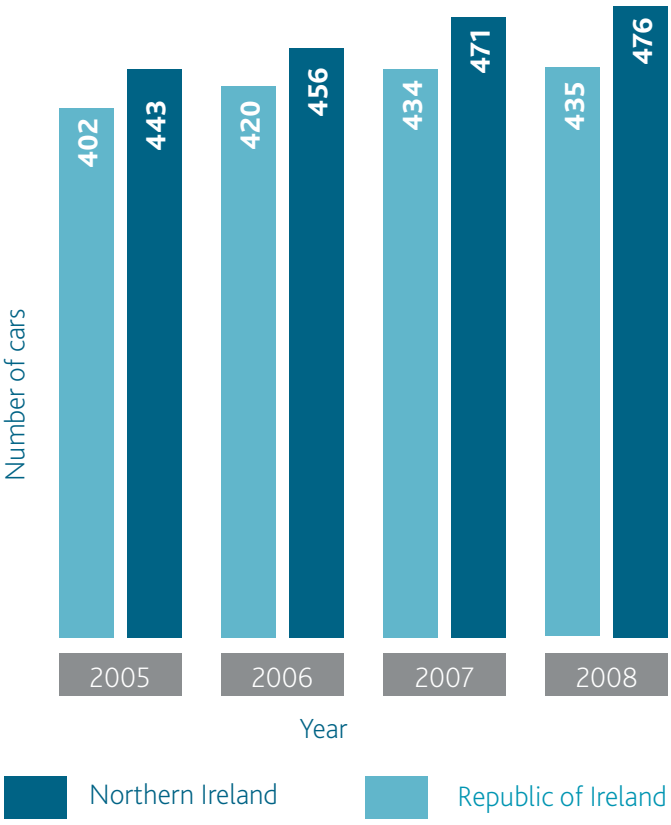
Connectivity

3.30 Connectivity is about transport, energy and telecommunications and is essential to modern competitive places and regions.

Transport

3.31 A growing population places new demands on transportation infrastructure. In the last 5 years there are 732,000 more vehicles on our roads. The car is the main method of travel with approximately 70% using it to travel to work. Whilst the number of cars registered has been rising in both jurisdictions, Northern Ireland has more cars per head of population than the Republic of Ireland.

Figure 2: Number of cars per thousand of population



Sources: Central Statistics Office and Driver Vehicle Agency

3.32 As well as more cars on the roads further pressure is being put on the transport infrastructure by the rise in freight carried. All freight exports and imports come through the ports and the volume of freight has been increasing, for example between 2000 and 2005 the volume increased by more than 6 million tonnes.

3.33 The movement of people and goods is important for the future growth of the economy. Transportation networks help to deliver balanced economic growth and good connections to air and seaports are vital.

3.34 More traffic leads to more congestion particularly in the larger urban areas. This adds to greenhouse gas emissions and can have adverse impacts on health. Co-operation on solutions to these problems such as investment in public transport, the co-ordination and planning of development will reduce the need to travel to jobs, schools, services and facilities. In addition, providing real time information about traffic conditions and public transport journey interchange should benefit the island as a whole.

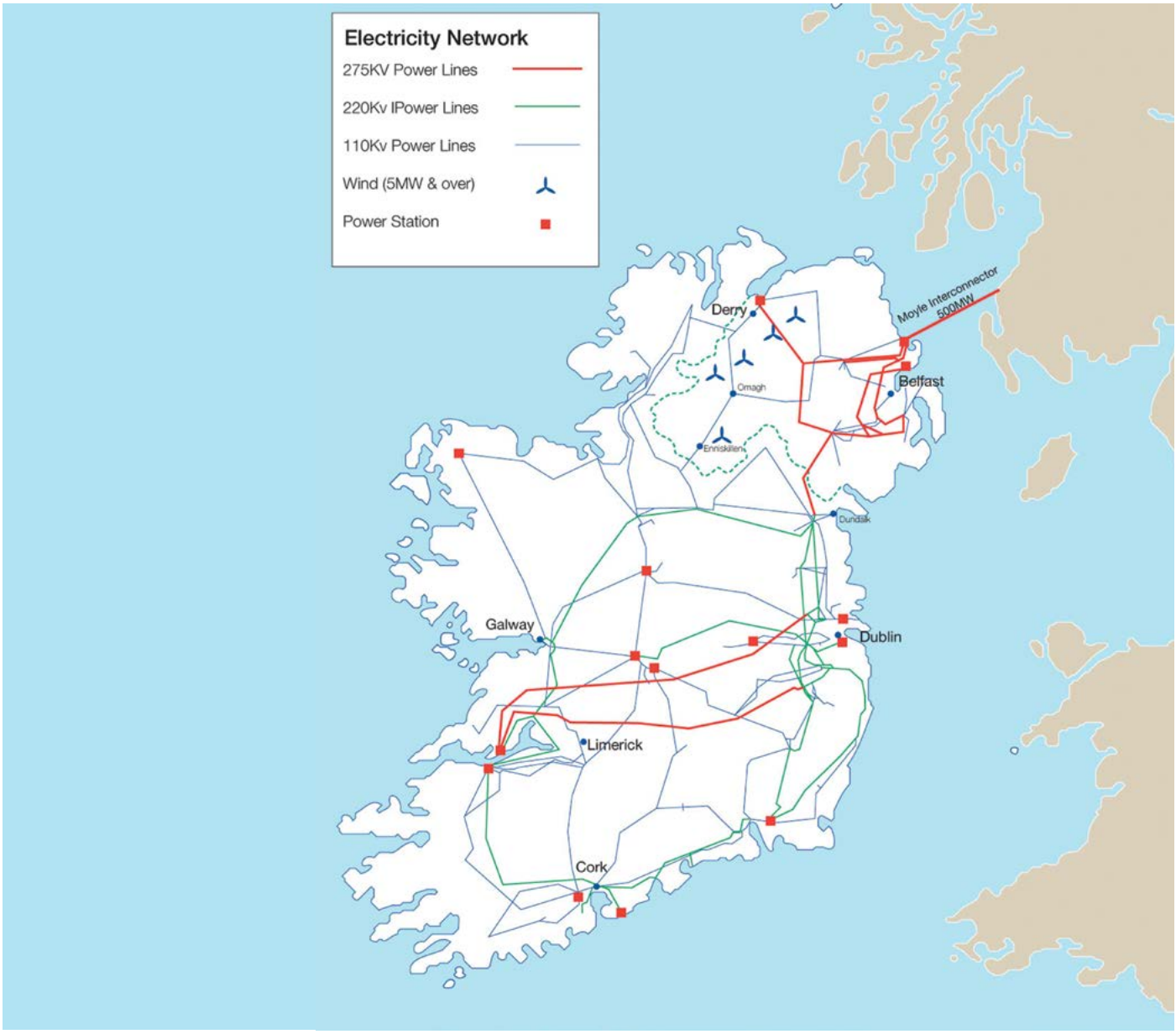
Energy

Electricity

3.35 The electricity networks are integrated through the existing North South interconnector. Already through co-operation there is a single cross jurisdictional wide wholesale electricity market. To maximise the benefits from a Single Electricity Market (SEM) and improve security of supply, a second North South electricity interconnector is planned. This interconnector will enhance diversity and security of electricity supply and further growth of renewable generation.

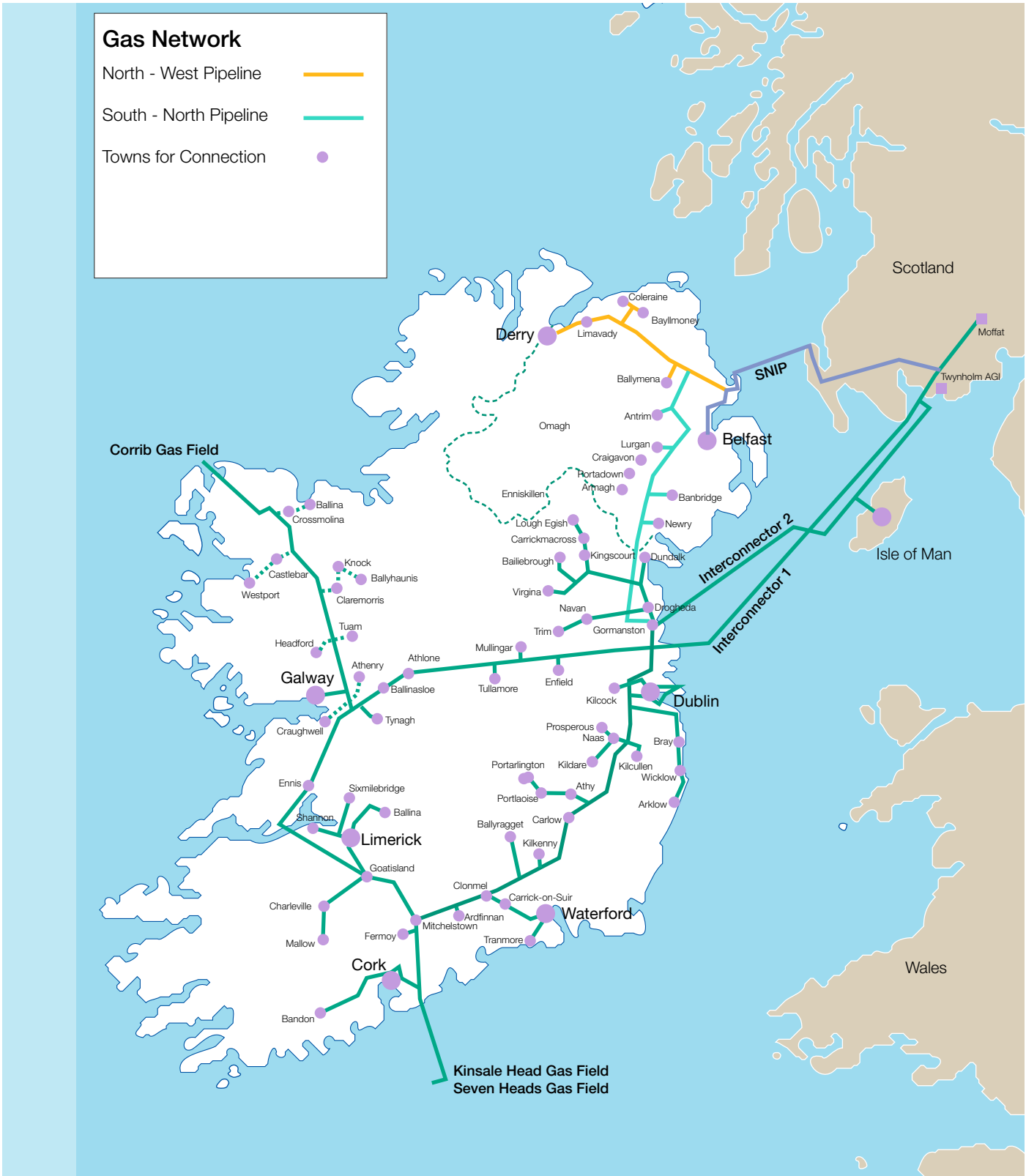
3.36 In addition, the Moyle interconnector links Northern Ireland to the electricity grid in Britain bringing additional competition to the electricity generation market. A new interconnector between Dublin and Wales has recently been built and further links to France are under consideration. Significant investment in grid infrastructure, paid for by the main consumers in both jurisdictions, will be essential to meet the ambitious renewable electricity targets set by both jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland the Utility Regulator announced in December 2012 that £44m of investment in grid infrastructure was approved to facilitate renewable electricity generation. The Utility Regulator estimates that this will increase renewable electricity production from renewable sources to 27%. Further grid reinforcement is required to meet the 40% target.

Diagram 5: **The Electricity Network**



3.37 The developments above are contributing to a more stable and secure energy transmission and distribution system in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and are essential in unlocking the potential for further contributions from the renewable sector both in onshore and marine based development. For these reasons, marine spatial planning will become a more important issue for the future. Good co-operation regarding wind, wave and tidal stream developments in both Irish and UK territorial waters could lead to mutual economic benefits. Work on marine research and offshore grid developments are also ongoing under the auspices of the British Irish Council.

Diagram 6: **The Gas Network**



Gas

3.38 The South North gas pipeline completed in 2006 along with enhanced East West interconnection between the island, GB and European gas networks, and work to harmonise gas transmission arrangements on the island, are paving the way for meeting EU requirements for greater gas market integration. Governments, in both jurisdictions, are also investigating the long-term possibility of natural gas and liquefied natural gas storage to provide increased security of energy supply. A major Liquefied Natural Gas terminal has recently been approved by An Bord Pleanála in the Republic of Ireland on the Shannon Estuary and planning approval has recently been granted to facilitate an underground gas storage project in County Antrim. Additionally, work is ongoing in the development of proposals for extension of the natural gas network to towns in the West and North West of Northern Ireland and to East Down.

Telecommunications

3.39 Effective communications infrastructure is a requirement for the development of a knowledge-based economy. There is a need to ensure that the opportunities provided by access to high quality telecoms services are fully exploited.

3.40 The recent direct international telecommunications link to North America offers companies a competitive edge. However, there will be a need to co-operate in both jurisdictions on alternative technologies if higher broadband speeds are to be achieved.

Conclusion

3.41 The challenges presented in this section demonstrate that many key planning and development issues between jurisdictions are similar. These include the regional differences between the urbanised East and the more rural West, the economic challenge of recovery from the recession, and the need to meet environmental targets.

3.42 A key factor in facilitating better joint working is more detailed and consistent information at a local level. This means that we need to work together to provide a more comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to integrating datasets in areas such as population, employment, transportation, housing and the environment. This information needs to be made widely available in a form that is understood and capable of analysis by stakeholders at all levels. Meeting the standards set out under the INSPIRE Directive will ultimately improve access to and interoperability of, cross border data.

ChapterFour

This Framework is a means of co-operation to address the challenges set out in Chapter 3. It should encourage policy makers in the public sector to take account of the wider impact of their work and the potential benefits of avoiding "back to back" planning.

4.1

4. The Framework for Co-operation

Introduction

4.1 This Framework is a means of co-operation to address the challenges set out in Chapter 3. It should encourage policy makers in the public sector to take account of the wider impact of their work and the potential benefits of avoiding "back to back" planning.

4.2 This Framework identifies four priority areas for co-operation. These have been identified from shared issues where practical solutions are likely to bring mutual benefit in both jurisdictions. Future work areas may emerge after practical experience and a review of either spatial strategy.

4.3 The priority areas for co-operation are:

A. Enhancing Competitiveness

4.4 In order that both jurisdictions can compete in the global market, spatial plans, in both jurisdictions, have an important role to play in ensuring that we meet our infrastructure needs in a strategic, plan-led, integrated and sustainable manner.

4.5 Where, and when, we provide infrastructure, services and facilities will shape the economic, social and cultural future of our communities. The provision of cost effective and environment friendly infrastructure will also influence future development patterns.

4.6 From an island-wide perspective this means continued progress in enhancing physical connectivity to allow sharing of scarce and expensive infrastructure, such as ports and airports. Improving access to the North West, and Londonderry, will help to ensure that its potential as a principal city is maximised. To enhance the conditions necessary for global competitiveness and sustainable economic development it will be necessary to continue to develop the energy and communication grids.

B. Competitive Places

4.7 Both spatial strategies identify Dublin and Belfast as key economic drivers. The linked cities and towns of Londonderry and Letterkenny, and Newry and Dundalk are important locations because of their role as administrative, educational or commerce centres and also as gateways to other places and regions.

4.8 The value of these key locations will be enhanced through an integrated planning process where Departments, Agencies and Authorities work together to secure a co-ordinated and agreed approach to their development and the spaces between them. Current examples include; the co-operative working between Londonderry and Letterkenny, the Newry and Dundalk Twin City Project, and the North West Gateway Initiative. Other important partnerships may be developed and agreed from time to time.

C. Environmental Quality

4.9 The quality of our environment is highly prized. It is important because it is the backdrop to our way of life on a daily basis and because of the significant contribution that tourism makes to the economies of both jurisdictions. It is also increasingly relevant as a deciding factor for those in a more mobile workforce. EU Directives on the environment have had a major impact on locational decision making as they protect places with high natural asset value.

4.10 Co-operation at a strategic level, and in line with relevant EU Directives, can secure the careful conservation and enhancement of shared natural and cultural heritage assets, especially in relation to water quality, habitats, environmental noise, air quality, archaeology and architectural heritage.

4.11 There is a statutory obligation arising from the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive regarding trans-boundary consultation in relation to spatial and land use plans. EU Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment required for plan making on either side of the border will benefit from an inclusive approach to the identification of issues and responses. Early and continuing engagement during plan preparation is required to inform that process in a timely way and avoid later difficulties in resolving any emerging issues. Relevant Departments in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland working together can ensure a more coherent and consistent approach to addressing environmental issues emerging from spatial planning processes and where appropriate on strategic planning applications.

4.12 Supporting the need to protect and enhance the built heritage, development at all levels must be sustainable. This requires: i) protection of the distinctive character of areas which is worth preserving, ii) developments which are in harmony with the existing natural landscapes, and iii) the creation of places valued by people. All factors including those which contribute to the shaping of settlements and their origins need to be considered including those which contribute to their unique or distinctive identity.

D. Spatial Analysis

4.13 Both spatial strategies are founded on an evidence based approach that promotes management action. They also inform government processes which allocate resources. Gathering data and information on common trends provides a ready basis for understanding where co-operation may be beneficial.

4.14 The spatial planning process in both jurisdictions will benefit from a continuation of the sharing of key datasets such as population, employment, transportation, housing, retailing and environmental indicators. There have been huge strides recently in giving datasets added value by making data available using a geographic address. This approach allows data to be visualised using internet portals which can be accessed with little or no expense or expertise and widens the benefits of "being informed" to a much wider audience. For example, the Northern Ireland Geographic Information (GI) Strategy 2009-2019 aims to increase the use and exploitation of GI as a vital element in the enhancement of service delivery within both the public and private sectors. In the Republic of Ireland, the "Myplan" project has established an electronic portal through which forward planning information across different local authority areas can be viewed and analysed.

4.15 Co-operation on analysis of geographically addressed data will allow spatial planners to identify and manage development trends in a more timely and informed way. Those trends may be the result of global influence or have long term economic consequences such as the current huge oversupply of housing in some areas.

4.16 Operation of the framework in practical terms should embrace the future examination of relevant practical topics and possibly including topics such as the marine environment, river basin management and air quality.

4.17 It is also important to acknowledge the early work carried out by Intertrade Ireland in the area of cross border co-operation. They commissioned and published their report into this subject in June 2006. This explored the possibility for co-operative action that we now experiencing.

Levels of Engagement and Co-operation

4.18 The priority areas identified above will require working at 2 levels.

Level 1 - The Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government. Government Departments will continue to co-operate at the strategic level.

Level 2 - Local Authorities in both jurisdictions. These will be responsible for achieving national and regional spatial planning objectives through the delivery of local plans, programmes and projects that are well integrated in a cross-border context. When the transfer of planning functions within Northern Ireland takes place in 2015 responsibility for the preparation of local development plans and development schemes will transfer to local councils.

Level 1 – Government Departments

4.19 Government Departments will continue to work at a strategic level to share approaches in the development and implementation of the RDS in Northern Ireland and the NSS in the Republic of Ireland. Working together will allow spatial plans to understand and prioritise patterns of sustainable development and to maximise investment.

4.20 Spatial plans should promote patterns of development that ensure more sustainable travel and transportation patterns. In this way we can maximise current and future investment in public transport and avoid unnecessary use of non renewable energy sources.

4.21 Certain key infrastructure, such as sea and air ports, road and rail, energy and telecommunication connectivity bring mutual benefits to both jurisdictions. Co-operation at strategic planning level will help to ensure that the greatest added value is extracted from investment in shared infrastructure.

4.22 Co-operating at a strategic level, in line with relevant EU Directives can assist in meeting climate change targets. It will also help to conserve and enhance energy resources and shared natural, cultural and landscape assets, and ensure a co-ordinated approach to emerging areas of interest such as the potential for marine spatial planning.

4.23 The spatial planning process will benefit from integrated datasets such as population, employment, transportation, housing, retailing and the environment harnessing the benefits of the census of population undertaken in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in 2011.

4.24 Sponsorship and guidance of research programmes, participation in capacity building and joint conferences and workshops will contribute to the building up of knowledge and expertise across the public, private and academic sectors in spatial planning.

Level 2 - Regional and Local Authorities

4.25 At the local level it will be important that the guidance in the RDS and NSS is incorporated into regional planning guidelines, development plans, community plans and regeneration schemes and that there is support for cross border projects and initiatives for both urban and rural areas.

4.26 Integrated planning processes at the local level, where agencies and authorities in both jurisdictions work together on a cross border basis, are essential in enhancing the potential and quality of strategic places on the island, that straddle such cross border locations. Such networks already exist for example, the East Border Region (EBR), Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) and the North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG).

4.27 It is important that the co-operative approach to the designation or protection of key environmental assets for example, landscapes, designated sites and river basin management plans continues.

4.28 Local actions can deliver strategic objectives in a practical way such as identifying and exploiting potential created by new infrastructure and progressing specific cross border projects for urban and rural areas. Co-operating in the development of cross border datasets, to inform local planning in areas such as housing, retail, and travel, and the potential to share services.

Progress

4.29 Action to support progress will be taken forward between the Department for Regional Development in Northern Ireland and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in the Republic of Ireland. This work will be reviewed periodically. Reports on co-operation will be made available through the existing monitoring arrangements for the NSS and RDS. Regular reports on spatial planning work streams will be prepared for the British Irish Council meetings.

Targets and Actions

Both Departments agree to:

- Review and monitor existing co-operative mechanisms so that their outputs can be measured and reported on biennially.
- Consider additional areas / mechanisms where co-operation in spatial planning could be beneficial.
- Ensure all targets are compatible with the Europe 2020 objectives.
- Develop datasets in conjuction with specialist academic and government experts to illustrate trends in a range of appropriate topic areas.

Conclusion

4.30 The value of practical day-to-day co-operation is already evident. The task now must be to ensure that co-operation is used to influence planning outcomes in both jurisdictions for the benefit of our communities.

4.31 This Framework is an overview of the issues and potential for progress in co-operation on spatial planning between both jurisdictions.

AnnexOne

E U Directives applicable to both Jurisdictions include -

Directive 2001/42/EC -	Strategic Environmental Assessment
Directive 92/43/EEC -	Habitats Regulation Assessment
Directive 2008/98/EC -	Waste
Directive 1999/31/EC -	Landfill of Waste
Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006 -	Shipments of Waste
Directive 2000/76/EC -	Incineration of Waste
Directive 2010/75/EU -	Industrial Emissions
Directive 86/278/EEC -	Protection of the Environment, and in particular of the soil
Directive 2006/66/EC -	When sewage sludge is used in agriculture
Directive 2006/66/EC -	Batteries and accumulators and waste batteries and accumulators
Directive 91/271/EEC -	Urban Waste Water Treatment
Directive 2000/60/EC -	Water Framework Directive
Directive 2006/21/EC	on the Management of Waste from the Extractive Industries (The 'Mining Waste Directive')
Directive 2004/35/CE -	Environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage
Directive 2007/60/EC –	Flood Directive
Directive 2002/96/EC -	Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive
Directive 2003/30/EC -	Biofuels Directive
Directive 2007/2/EC -	INSPIRE Directive

Framework for Co-operation

Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland