

Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly

Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy



Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



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

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1

Introduction

1.1 Vision

'The Draft 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 Fig.1).

One of the principal functions 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.

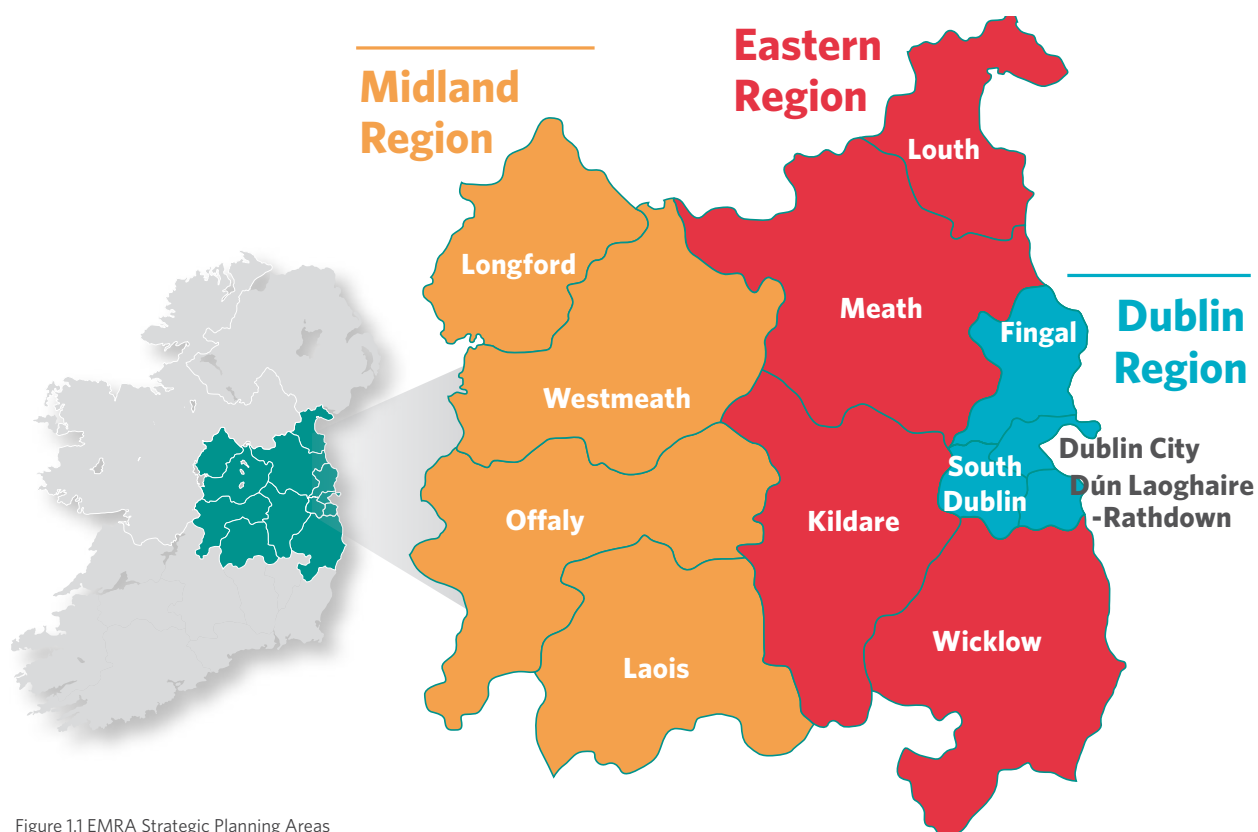


Figure 1.1 EMRA Strategic Planning Areas

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. 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 Regions. The RSES is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) 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 will replace 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. There are three RPGs currently 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 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.



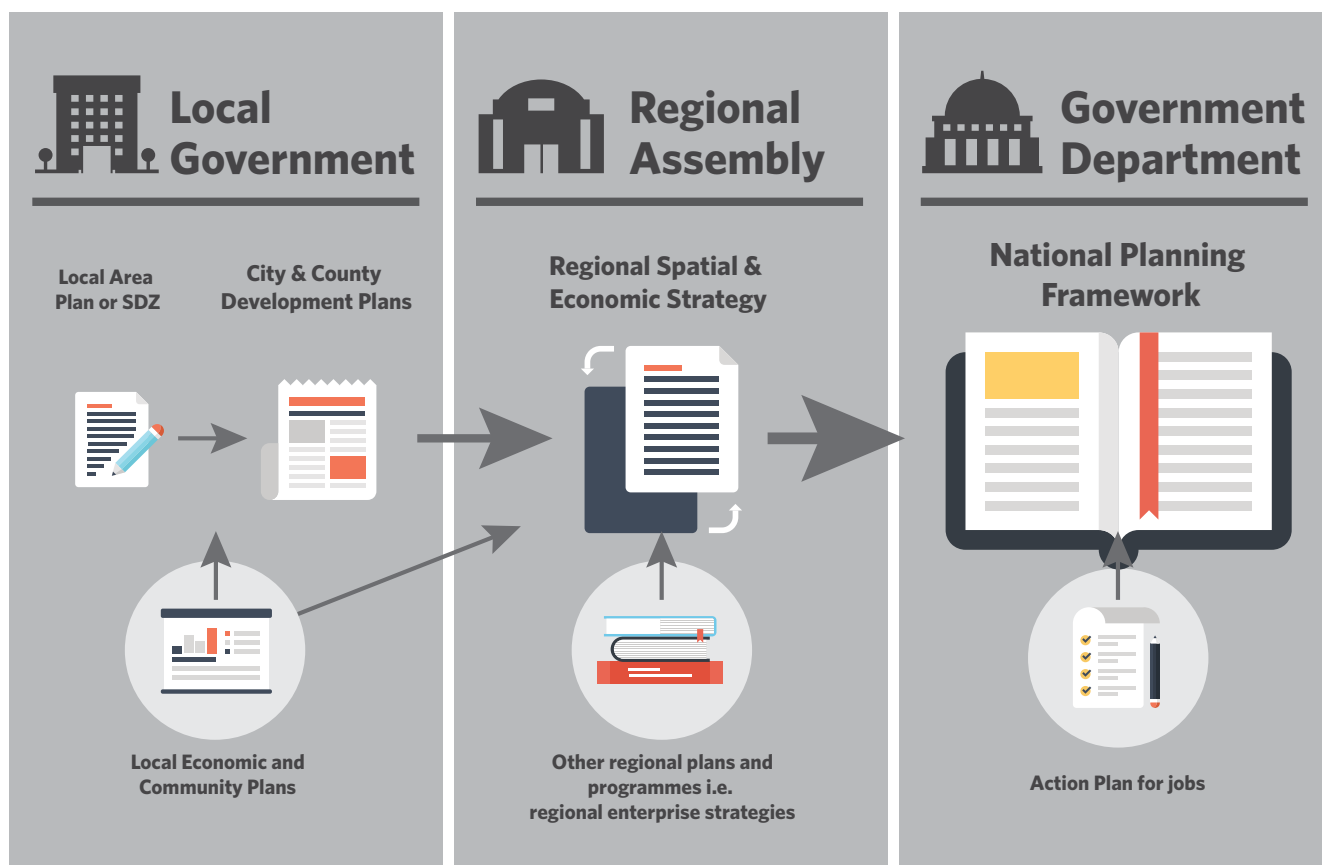


Figure 1.2 Spatial Planning Hierarchy in Ireland

The Draft 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** - Initial Public and stakeholder consultation process with an issues paper and 171 submission 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.

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 policy, the draft RSES can ensure that investment is targeted towards identified policy and objectives.

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 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.

The next EU programming period 2021-2027 is currently 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).

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.

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework and National Development Plan 2019-2027

With the publication of a new national spatial policy in February 2018 with Project Ireland 2040 (PI 2040)– National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan (NDP), Ireland is undergoing a review of planning and economic policy from the national level, to the regional and the local. The preparation of the draft 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 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.

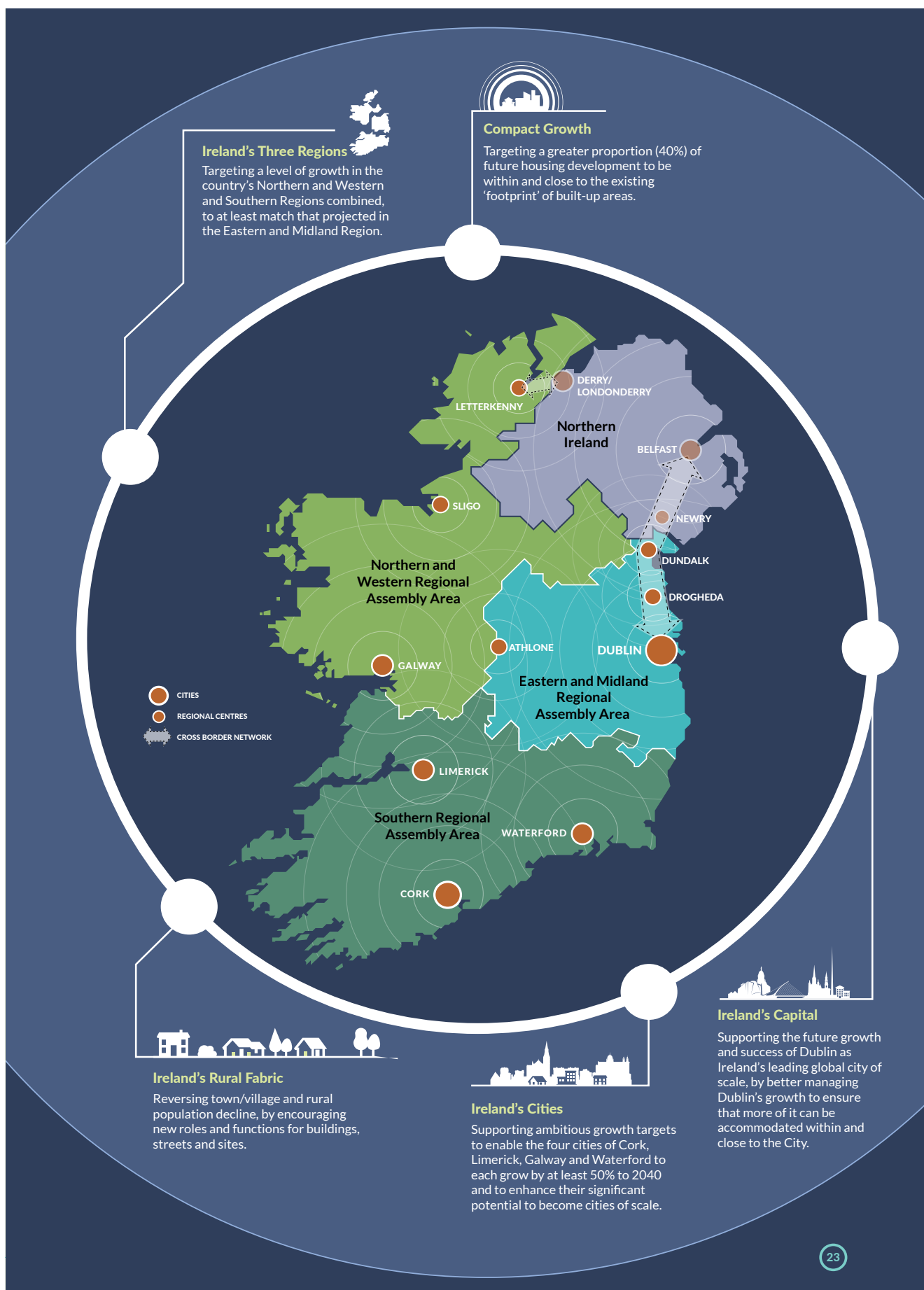


Figure 1.3 NPF map

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 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 provide 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 Process to date



Figure 1.4 RSES Process

EMRA engaged in the process of preparing the draft RSES by undertaking a significant evidence gathering exercise. 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.

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.

The evidence gathered during this period, and the comments received, was assessed and incorporated into the making of the draft RSES.

A series of consultations were undertaken during the process including meetings with Local Authorities, State Agencies and other public bodies. Five Technical Working Groups were set up under the four themes and in relation to the Dublin Metropolitan Area (MASP) and a series of workshops were held with relevant stakeholders.

The Assembly is also arranged into three Strategic Planning Area (SPA) Committees consisting of elected members, which feed into the RSES process. There is also a Senior Officials Advisory Group, made up of representatives from Local Authorities, Government Departments and public agencies that provides a strategic advisory role during the process.

1.6 Regional Profile

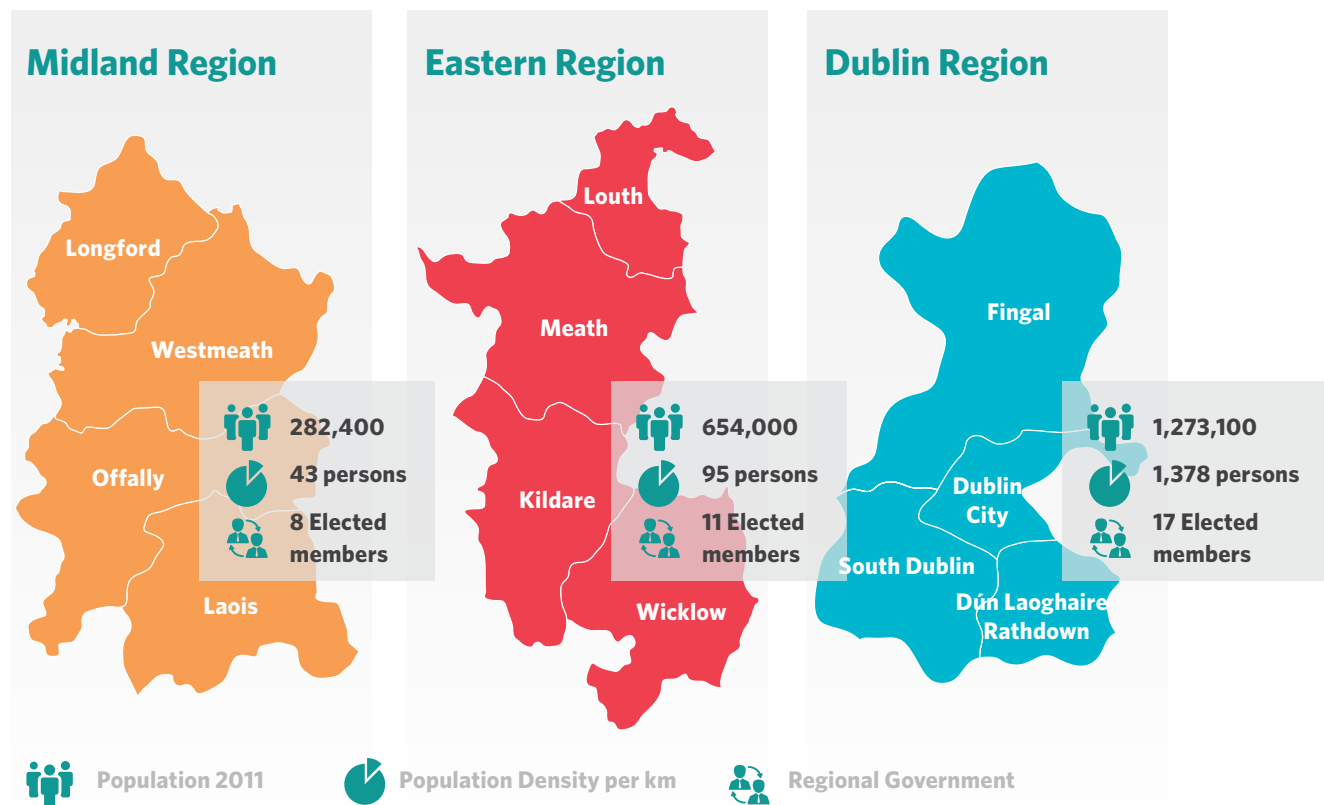


Figure 1.5 Our Strategic Planning Areas: Vital Statistics, CSO 2016

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.

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 Dublin region is the main global gateway to Ireland, with Dublin airport one of the fastest growing in Europe and continued growth in international exports through Dublin Port. The Eastern (mid-east) 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 are 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.

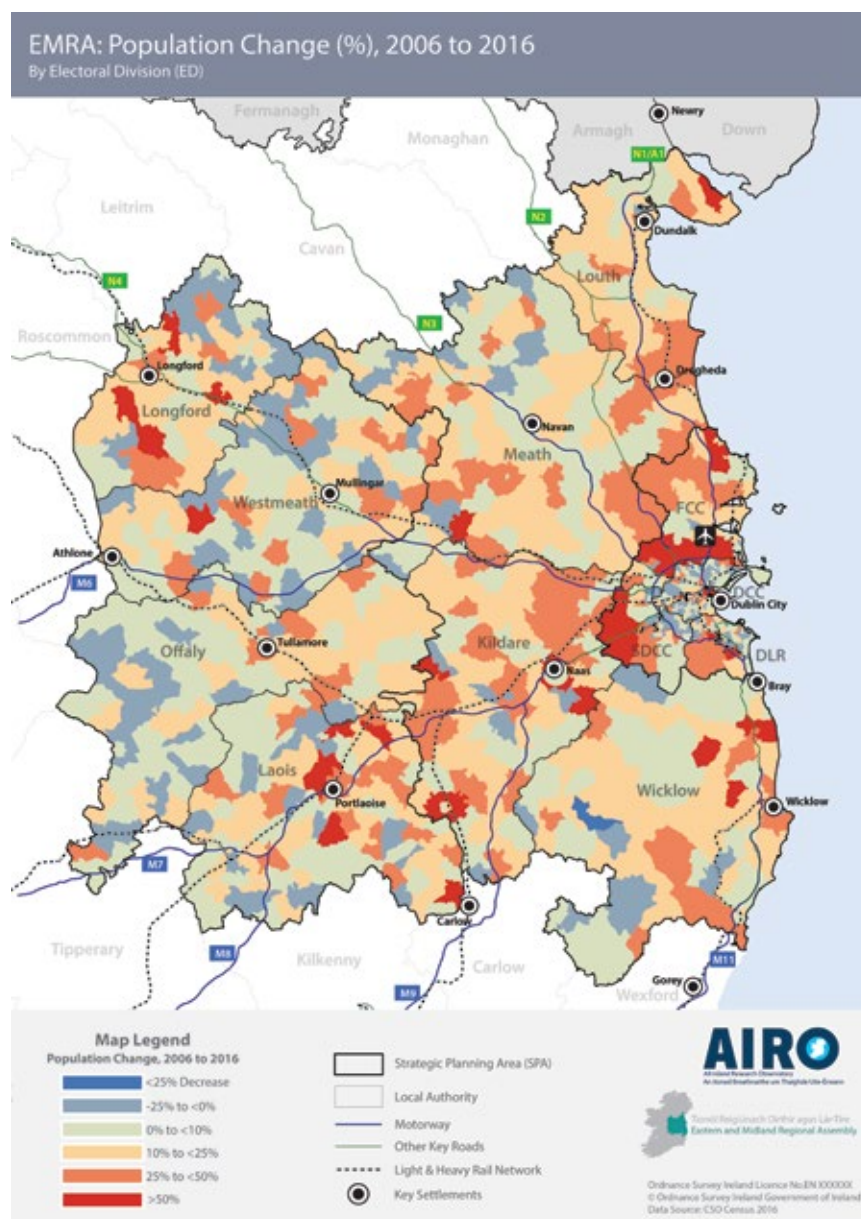
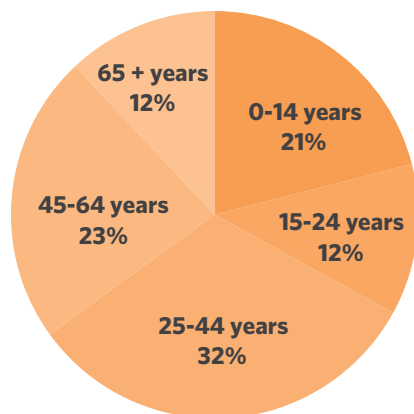


Fig 1.6 Population Change (%) 2006-2016

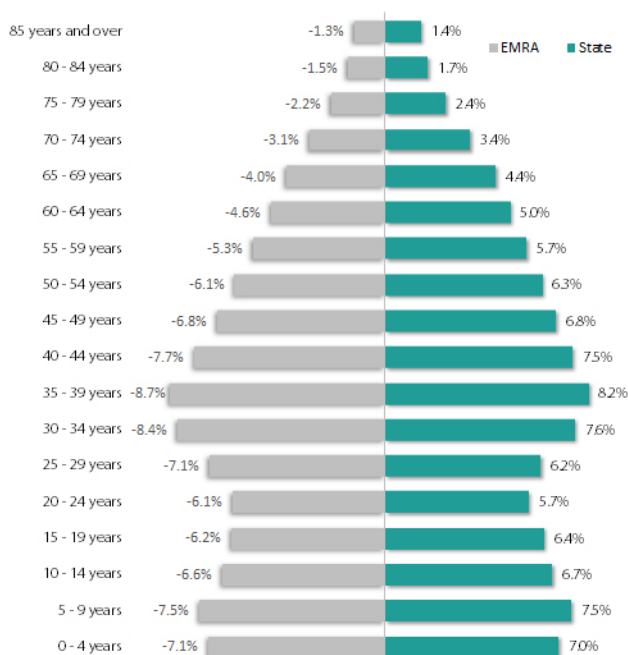
Young and diverse

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.

EMRA Age Profile (CSO, 2016)



1.7 Age structure – EMRA and State, CSO 2016



Young: 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. Currently 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: The Region is currently 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% of 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 pockets of affluence and deprivation in the region. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown is the only county that would be classified as advantaged, with parts of Longford that are extremely disadvantaged, see Fig 9.2 (Chapter 9). Education and skills are closely related to employment opportunities, with rates of third level education highest in Dublin and lowest in the Midlands, however there are pockets of social disadvantage and poor educational attainment across the region sometimes in close proximity to areas of relative affluence.

Travel patterns; Where there is a mismatch between the locations of jobs and where people live, it leads to long distance commuting, see Fig 1.10 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, see Fig 1.11. 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.

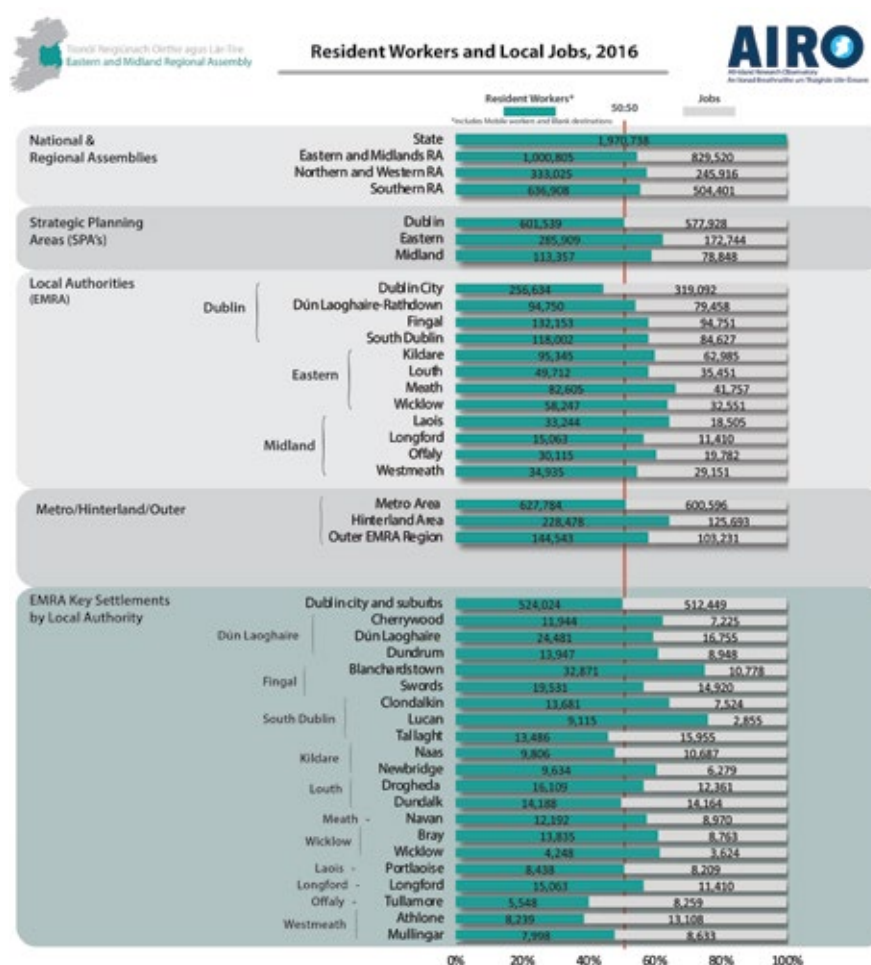


Fig 1.8 Resident Workers and Local Jobs, CSO 2016

Urban Structure

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’¹.

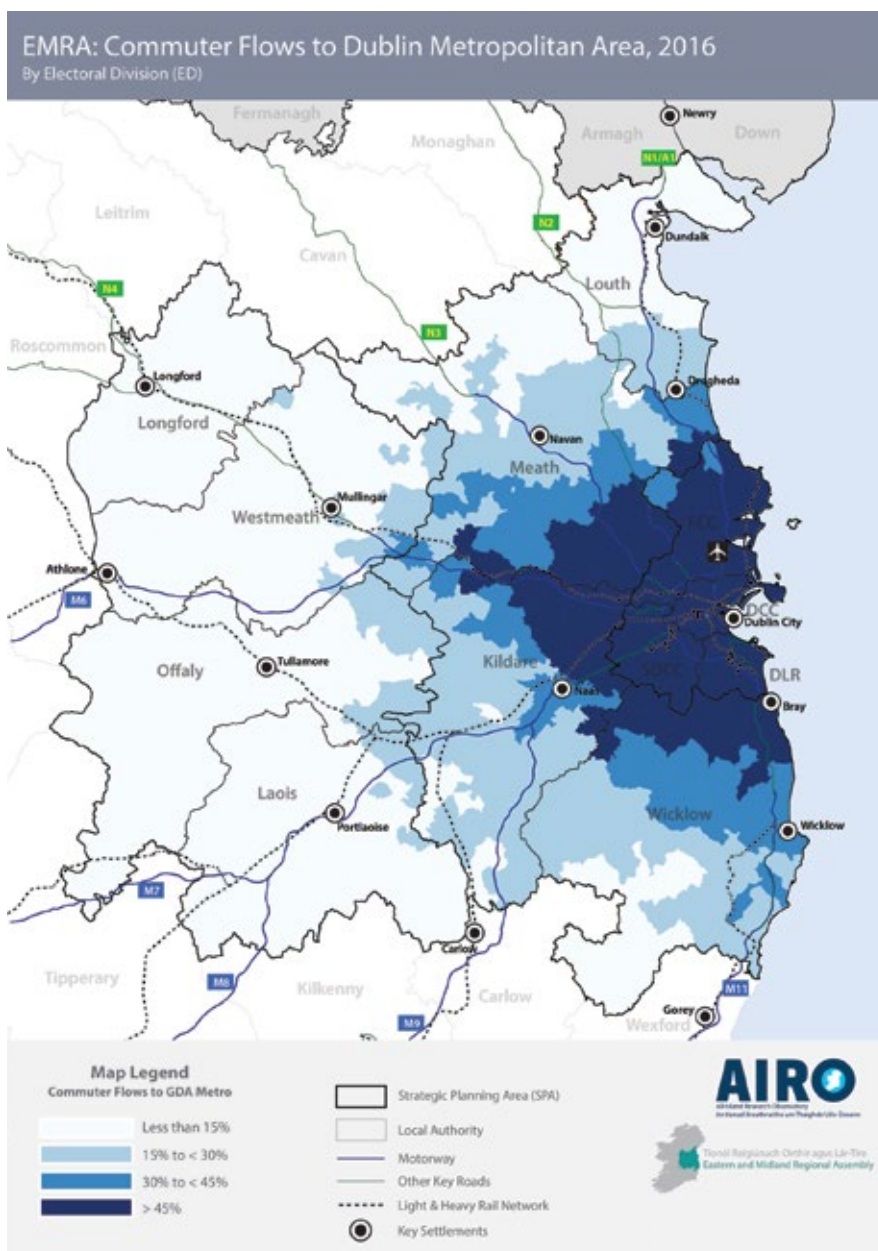


Figure 1.9 Commuting flows to Dublin

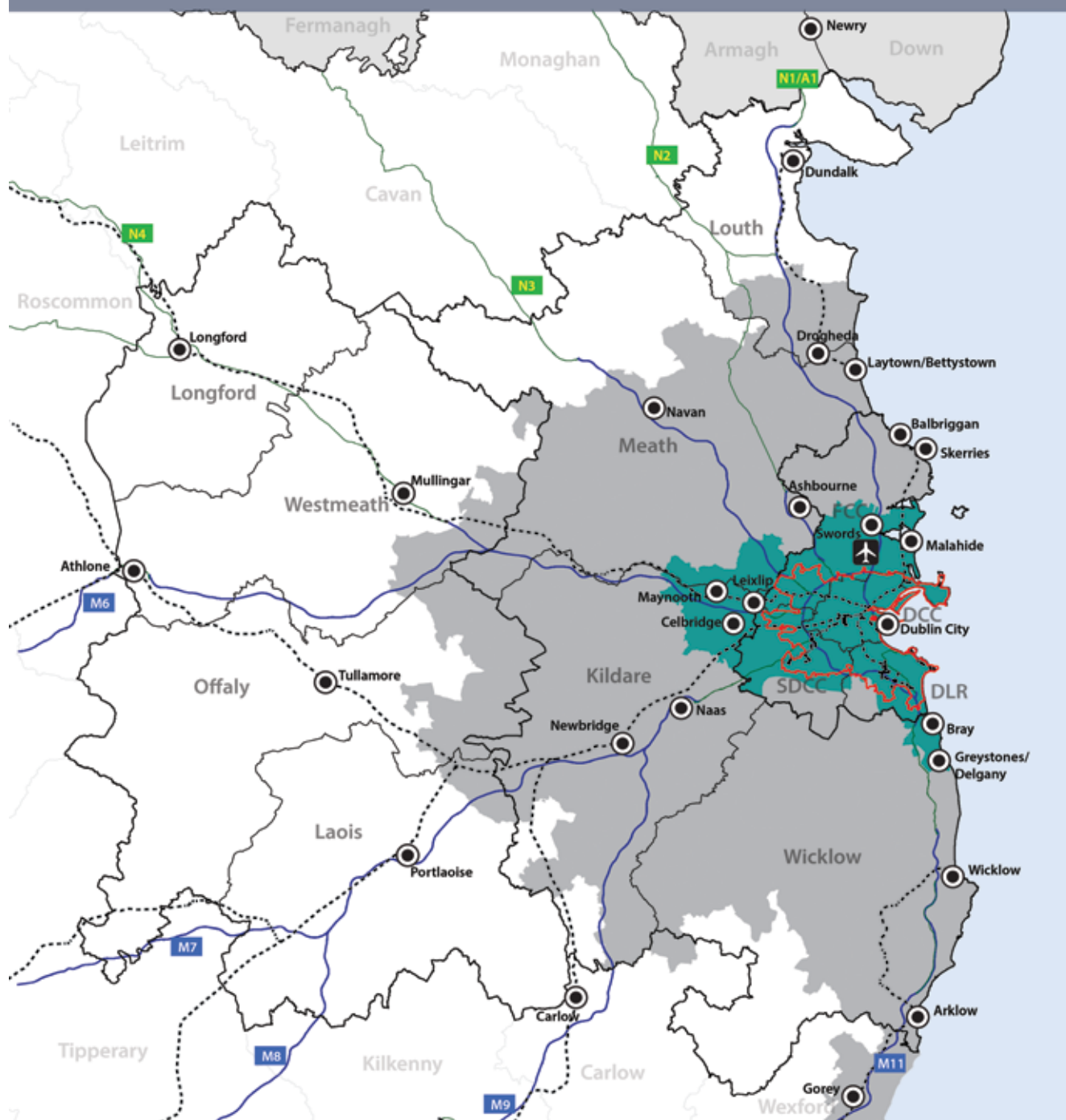
This includes Dublin city and suburbs² or the continuous built up area of Dublin, which has a population of 1.17 million (CSO, 2016). The Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA), which is home to 1.4 million people, includes Dublin city and suburbs and a number of surrounding metropolitan settlements that have close functional links to the city. The Hinterland is home to 550,000 people and includes the peri-urban and rural areas and a number of towns in the wider commuting catchment around Dublin. The Outer region, home to 370,000 people, includes an extensive rural area that is supported by key regional towns, which provide important economic and service functions for their own catchments.

¹ 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.

² Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines 'Dublin city and suburbs' in the five-yearly census of population

EMRA: Defining Functional Areas, 2016

Local Authorities, SPAs, EMRA, City Hinterlands and Dublin Metropolitan Area



2

Strategic Vision

At its core, the draft RSES sets out a settlement and economic growth strategy that seeks to ensure that the needs of the Regions' 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 draft 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 draft 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.

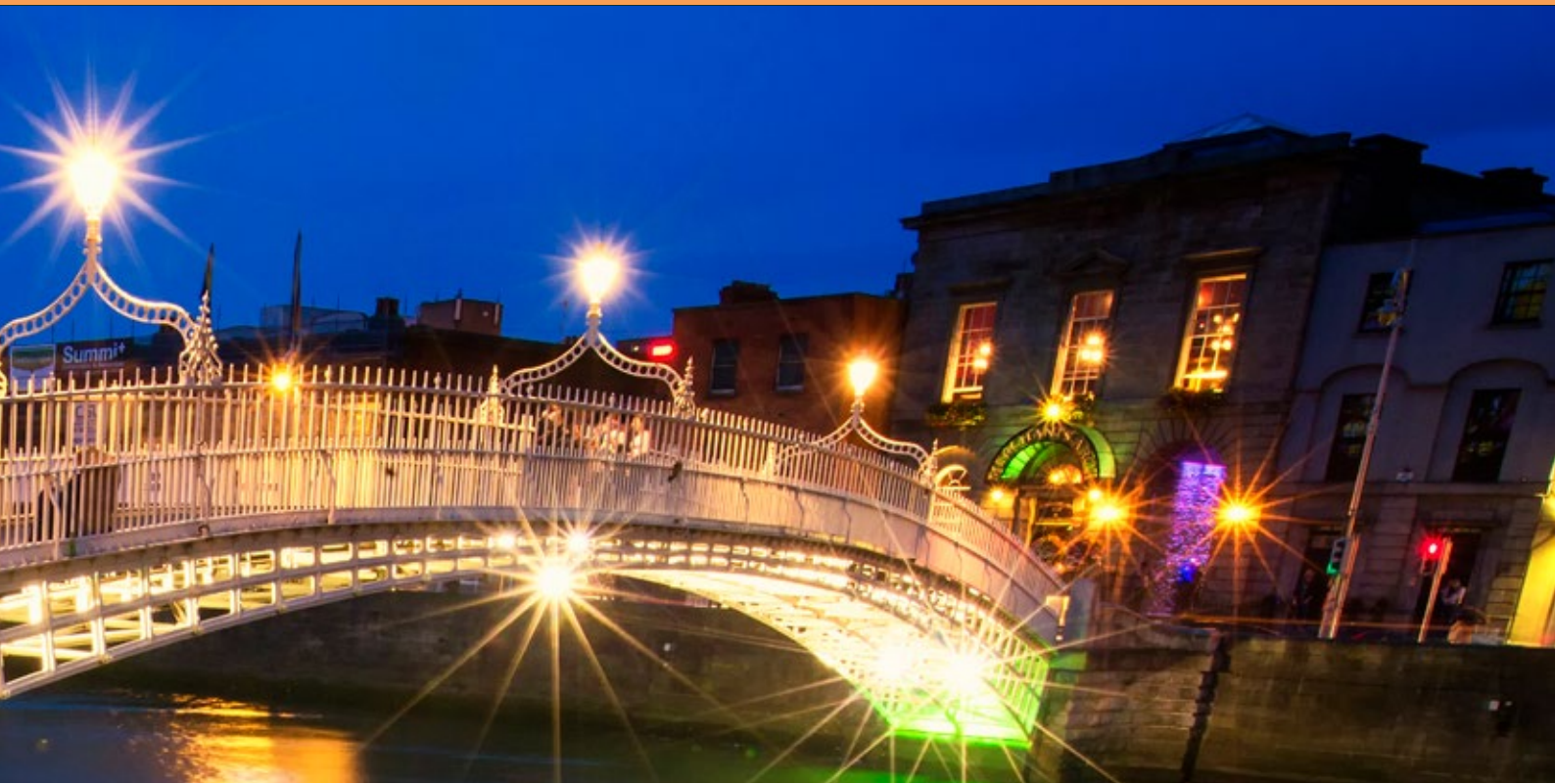
2.1 Our Shared Goals

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



Figure 2.1 EU Thematic Objectives

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 draft RSES is also closely aligned and supportive of the NSOs.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Figure 2.2 UN Sustainable Development Goals³

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

National Planning Framework and its National Strategic Outcomes and Priorities of the National Development Plan



Figure 2.3 National Strategic Outcomes. Source: Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)⁴

4 <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/09022006-project-ireland-2040/>

2.2 Vision and Guiding Principles

In developing the Vision for the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (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 Enterprise 2025: Innovative, Agile, Connected.

In addition to the above 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:

- spatial development patterns which 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.

The draft 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 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.

2.3 Regional Strategic Outcomes

The draft 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 draft 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.

The 16 RSO's set out in Figure 2 and below are 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.

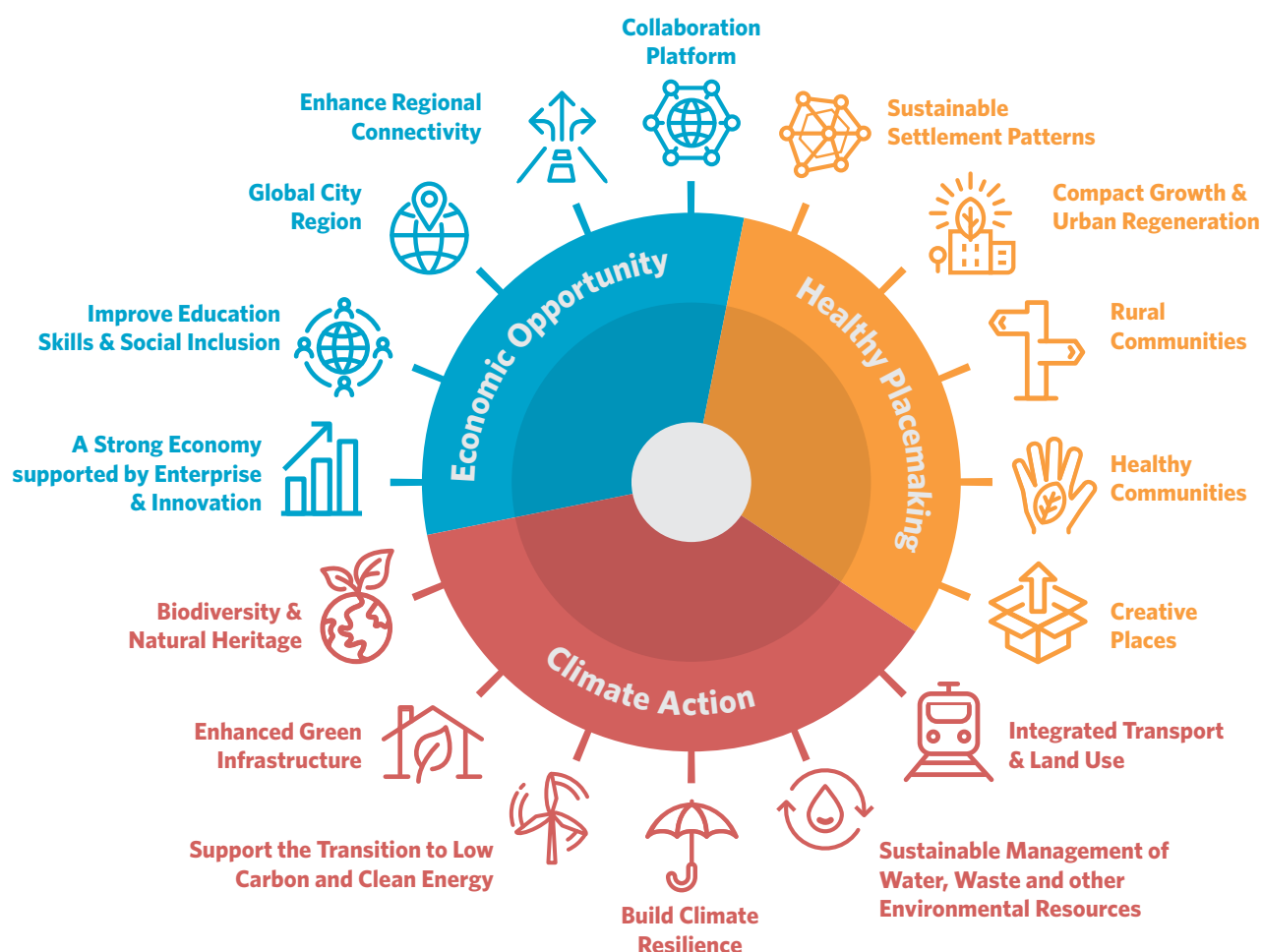


Figure 2.4 Regional Strategic Outcomes

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 by managing urban generated growth in areas under strong urban influence and by encouraging sustainable growth in areas that have experienced decline or stagnation. (NSO 1, 3)

4. Healthy Communities

Support the protection of the healthy natural environment to ensure clean air and water for all, and the provision of 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 Regional Connectivity

Develop and enhance regional accessibility between key Regional Growth Centres to 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 draft 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. In determining the optimum spatial hierarchy, the draft RSES must consider national policy as defined by the NPF, a review of current policy as set out in the RPGs, and what spatial and socio-economic policy research and trends tells us about the Region as it is today.



Overview of Growth Strategy

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 corridor
- Embed a network of key towns through the Region to deliver sustainable regional development.



3.1 Developing a growth strategy for the Region

The draft 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. 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 draft RSES is robust, evidence based, and driven by clear sustainability and quality of life objectives.

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 potential to become a focus for population and/or employment growth. In developing the spatial and economic strategy for the Region, there has been a strong recognition of the need to integrate an evidence driven asset-based approach to ensure that all places can meet their full potential.

Chapter 2 of the draft RSES identifies a number of key Regional Strategic Outcomes that feed into the development of the Growth Strategy including the need for compact growth, support for rural communities, integrated transport and landuse.

Development of an Asset-Based Approach

In developing the Growth Strategy for the Region, there has been a strong recognition of the need to integrate an evidence driven asset-based approach to the identification of settlements which have the greatest capacity and potential for growth and to act as engines for wider regional growth.

Asset-based approaches recognise and build on a combination of the social, economic and natural capital that exists and set out an evidence-led methodology to identify and enhance the resource potential of the Region, while ensuring that the future growth is sustainably managed within the capacity of identified settlements. Assets and resources need to be fully realised to enable optimum functioning of places.

Settlements may be identified for significant population and/or employment growth subject to a co-ordinated strategy that ensures alignment with investment in infrastructure and the provision of employment, together with supporting amenities and services. Central to this is the development of an evidence-based methodology or toolkit that sets out a number of steps, which can be used to identify and evaluate assets at settlement level across a number of criteria. It is also anticipated that the development of an asset-based approach will contribute to the regional evidence baseline and enable the measurement of key assets as part of an evidence-based policy cycle.

The asset-based criteria outlined in table 3.1 was developed to identify an (emerging) spatial hierarchy of settlements in the Region (for additional information see Appendix A):

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 & performance of settlements, including economic assets.
HUMAN CAPITAL Talent attraction and skills development.	Access to third level education and schools are key to develop employment opportunities.	Availability of Labour force demographics, skills matching, and talent attraction policies.
PLACEMAKING High quality vibrant public spaces and enhanced quality of life.	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.
ECO SYSTEM ENTERPRISE Enterprise clusters and networks.	Better alignment of population and housing growth and strategic employment locations.	Spatial economic engines and areas of influence, & Eco-systems 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 and assets.	Integration of SEA/AA/RFA supported by regional Green Infrastructure Strategy 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

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.



Growth Strategy

Rural Fabric

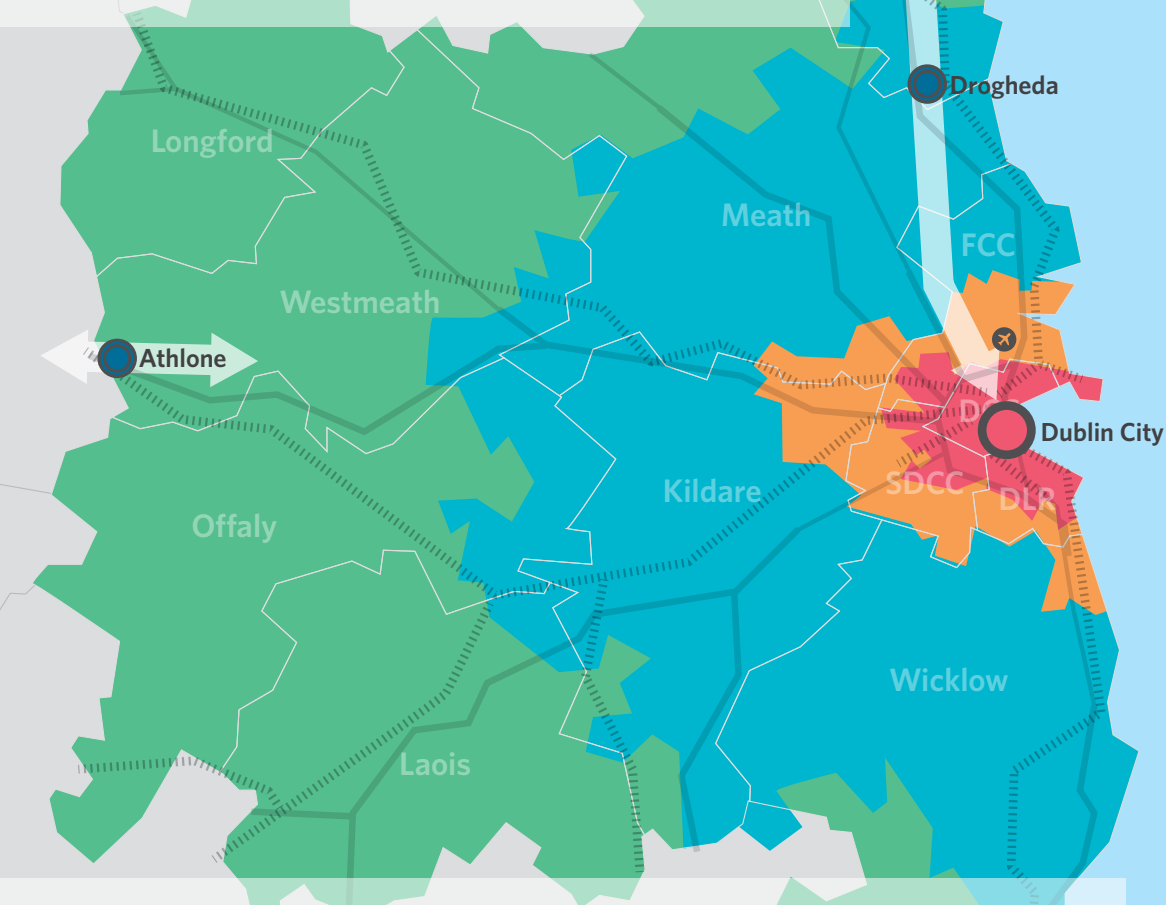
Support the sustainable growth of vibrant rural areas by promoting regeneration projects in rural towns and villages and support new economic opportunities through the diversification of rural economies.

Compact Urban Growth

Targeting a greater proportion of future housing development (up to 50% in Dublin, up to 30% in other towns) to be accommodated within and close to the existing built up urban areas.

Dublin-Belfast Corridor

Promote economic growth and improved connections between Dublin and Belfast and support cross border networks to drive synergy in services and functions.



Outer Region

Promote Athlone and Dundalk as self-sustaining regional drivers supported by key towns and a focus on the regeneration of small towns and villages and their surrounding rural areas.

Hinterland

Promote the development of Drogheda as a regional growth centre supported by a number of key towns and focus on improving local economies and quality of life to attract investment.

Dublin Metropolitan Area

Prepare a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) to ensure a steady supply of serviced development lands throughout the metropolitan area to support Dublin's sustainable growth and continued competitiveness.

Capital City

Support the future success of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale by better managing strategic assets to increase opportunity and to sustain national economic growth.

- Dublin City & Suburbs
- Metropolitan Area
- Dublin-Belfast Corridor
- Regional Growth Centres
- Hinterland Areas
- Key road
- Outer Region
- Rail

Figure 3.1 Growth Strategy

3.2 Growth Enablers for the Region

Growth Enablers

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.

Dublin Metropolitan Area

The Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA) is focused on the national capital city, which is the lead settlement in the country, the main gateway into the nation and the largest economic contributor in the state. Dublin leads the settlement hierarchy for not only the Region but also the state, with no other comparable settlement within the urban structure. In terms of population it accounts for 50.4% of the EMRA's population with a total population of 1,173,179 (Census 2016).

The DMA includes the continuous built up city area and the highly urbanised settlements of Swords, Malahide, Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge, Bray and Greystones, that have strong connections and synergy with the city in a polycentric metropolitan area. It is home to 1.4 million or 3 out of 5 people in the Region. Whilst Dublin preforms on an international scale, it has significant problems that the RSES shall address, in areas such as transport, housing, amenities, sprawl and liveability. The Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) as part of this draft RSES seeks to focus on a number of large scale strategic sites, based on key corridors that will deliver significant development in an integrated and sustainable fashion. This is expressed in detail in Chapter 5.

Growth enablers for the Dublin metropolitan area include;

- 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
- To realise ambitious compact development targets at least 50% of all new homes within or contiguous to the existing built up area in Dublin and at least 30% in other metropolitan settlements
- To deliver identified strategic development areas along high-quality public transport corridors in tandem with the delivery of infrastructure and enabling services to ensure a steady supply of sites.
- Re-intensify employment within the city and deliver strategic employment development areas to strengthen enterprise ecosystems and sustain national economic growth
- Enhance co-ordination across Local Authorities and relevant agencies to promote more active land management and development of under-utilised, brownfield and public lands.
- Protect and improve access to the global gateways of Dublin Airport and Dublin Port



The Dublin Belfast 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 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.



Hinterland Area

The Hinterland Area includes the peri-urban areas in the commuter catchment around Dublin, which covers much of the Region extending into parts of the Midlands, into Louth to the north and beyond the Region south into Wexford. The Hinterland includes key county and market towns such as Drogheda, Balbriggan, Navan, Naas, Newbridge, Wicklow and Arklow.

Some areas and towns have in the last 20 years emerged mainly as commuting towns, with a weak level of services and functions for their resident population. These areas are heavily reliant on their accessibility to the metropolitan area for their workforce and for education. Towns where over half of all trips to work or education are to Dublin's urban core include Donabate, Skerries, Rush, Lusk, Dunboyne, Celbridge, and Ratoath. Other areas have produced more self-sustainable towns where there are thriving local economies and a level of services and amenities that serves not just the town but a wider area.

Growth enablers for the Hinterland area include;

- Compact and sustainable growth of towns with 30% of all growth to develop within the existing built up areas
- Above national average growth rates to continue, in a more sustainable rate
- Consolidation and improvement in the services and sustainability of those areas that have experienced significant population growth
- Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre that will become a self-sustaining regional driver
- Focus on improving existing economies and creating the quality of life to attract investment
- High value assets and amenities to be protected and their use enhanced for all the Region.

The Outer Region

There is a more traditional rural nature in the Outer Region where the population is dispersed and over 400,000 people reside. Outside of Athlone and Dundalk, there are a few key county towns of scale, but not at the level in the other areas. However these towns function at a much higher level than their resident population and play a key regional role in providing employment and services for their own hinterland. These are county towns such as, Longford, Mullingar, Portlaoise and Tullamore.

An extensive network of sub county towns and small towns and villages have varying assets and support the wider rural and agricultural area. This area contains many natural assets and unspoilt features that contribute to the unique landscape in this country.

Growth enablers for the Outer Region area include;

- Key focus on Athlone and Dundalk as self-sustaining regional drivers
- Compact and sustainable growth of towns with 30% of all growth to develop within the existing built up areas
- A key focus on the regeneration of small towns and villages to bring vibrancy to rural areas
- Diversification and specialisation of existing industry and business to sustain local economies.



Local Authorities, in developing their Core Strategies and development of urban settlement hierarchies will consider the growth enablers for all parts of the Region. The guiding principles for growth in the Region include;

- **Economic Growth** – Ensure that potential and opportunities for economic growth are harnessed and maximised across the Region, whilst supporting agglomerations and synergy between talent and place.
- **Aligning population and housing growth** – More emphasis on consolidating the development of places that grew rapidly in the past decade or so experiencing large scale commuter driven housing development with a particular focus on addressing local community and amenity provision in many of the larger commuter towns.
- **Compact and sustainable growth** – A focussed approach to compact, sequential and sustainable development of urban areas from large to small with targets for 30-40% of new homes to be built on land within the built up area. Placemaking to realise sustained economic growth and employment including the integration of better urban design, public realm, amenities and heritage to create attractive and liveable places that support active lifestyles and human health.
- **Regeneration and Development** – Identification of significant ready-to-go urban regeneration projects which could harness publicly owned lands, former healthcare, military, transport and other untapped assets with community and wider private and public-sector support and investment.
- **Regional Accessibility** – To enhance regional accessibility and enable the development of key towns on the strategic and public transport corridors. To promote the best use of existing and planned transport infrastructure and to promote sustainable and active modes of travel.

Collaboration

The draft 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 draft 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.

Development of scenarios

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 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.

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 selection of scenarios and sub-scenarios to be examined is informed by the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) of the draft RSES along with key issues identified in the RSES engagement process and the SEA scoping report. Good practice points to the need to consider a hierarchy of alternatives which can include elements of discrete alternatives (one spatial alternative versus another) and/or more value-driven scenarios (climate and economic scenarios can be complementary and integrated at different levels spatially or sectoral). See table 3.2;

Strategic scenarios agreed at national level in the NPF will set the parameters for alternatives that can be reasonably considered at regional level, based on; regional parity between the growth of our Region and the two other regions (NWRA and SRA); 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.

Type	Alternatives discussed for Eastern and Midland RSES
1. Spatial	<p>Regional concentration and consolidated urban growth has been identified as the most sustainable approach to growth patterns in the NPF. The following alternatives assess where growth is either concentrated or dispersed throughout a number of towns in the Region;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Concentrated growth in Dublin and Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda b. Continued dispersal of growth in all large settlements across the Region c. Continued growth of Dublin and regional centres supported by a limited number of large towns based on their strengths and assets.
2. Climate and biodiversity	<p>The RSES engagement and the SEA process highlight the need to integrate a range of measures to drive transition to low carbon/climate resilience and adaptation/mitigation of likely impacts, the following scenarios were considered;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Climate action achieved through the inclusion of national strategic policies to drive transition to low carbon/climate resilience at the regional level b. Climate action achieved through the inclusion of national policies supported by a regional green infrastructure and eco-system services approach c. Climate action achieved through the inclusion of national policies supported by site based alternatives for adaptation/mitigation in the context of flooding in strategic development locations informed by evidence baseline.
3. Economic	<p>The following scenarios for economic growth are dictated by different policy approaches to enterprise development, sectoral specialisation and the distribution of investment across the Region;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Specialise and focus on the most competitive sector and channel all available resources into this sector b. Dispersal of efforts and resources to all sectors and settlements c. Smart Specialisation strategies based on identified strengths and competitive advantages.

Table 3.2 Alternatives for RSES

ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE IMPACTS

The assessment of possible impacts of scenarios and sub-scenarios is informed by the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) of the SEA and an evidence driven asset-based approach that considers the resource potential and social, economic and natural assets that exist while ensuring that the future growth is sustainably managed within the capacity of the Region. Further information is contained within the Environmental Report on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process for the draft RSES.

1. Spatial Scenarios

Option a) looks at concentrated growth in a small number of centres and has the potential to result in further spatial inequities across the Region as only Dublin, Athlone and Drogheda-Dundalk realise growth. Consolidation of population in a small number of settlements can also have indirect impacts on the natural and built environment as a result of increased recreation needs.

Option b) promotes a dispersed growth throughout a number of towns within the Region, and is closer to a 'business as usual' approach with a continuation of market led dispersed growth, which would lead to increased encroachment on designated environmental sites and increased pressure on infrastructure and services in the Region.

Option c) promotes a more selective growth strategy focused on the consolidation of Dublin, the Regional Growth Centres and a limited number of towns with a larger population and asset base. This option offers the greatest opportunity to align services with population and economy, to maximise the use of infrastructure such as public transport where available and reduce transport related emissions, in tandem with facilitating consolidated growth in urban settlements, thereby improving regional connectivity and services outside of the city.

2. Climate Scenarios

Option a) represents a business as usual approach to climate and GHG emissions. In a national context, Ireland's National Policy objective is to achieve the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy by 2050. However, the EPA's 2018 projections report indicate a growing emissions trend across most sectors (both with current measures and without) therefore it is anticipated that this option alone will not be sufficient to meet climate targets and additional regional actions are needed.

Option b) applies national policy but in addition seeks to develop Green Infrastructure (GI) and Ecosystem Services (ES) solutions at the regional level. GI and ES can deliver biodiversity, population and economic benefits, including promotion of walking and cycling and greenway development, food production/security, enhanced flood protection, protection of carbon sinks and harnessing of renewable energy.

Option c) applies national policy and also addresses site-based alternatives for adaptation/mitigation in the context of flooding focussed on strategic development locations. This approach is considered to be reactive in terms of a climate response at the regional level, however it can inform settlement level policy to avoid inappropriate development in areas of flood risk or coastal erosion. The preferred alternative in this instance is a combination of Options b and c.

3. Economic Scenarios

Option a) seeks to focus investment on the most competitive sector. This represents over-specialisation which may overexpose the Region to fluctuations and eventual contractions in the business cycles of the chosen sector leading to employment crises. There is the further potential for negative environmental impacts depending on the Region's carrying capacity for the sector activities.

Option b) provides a more equal spread of resources which has the potential for positive impact on employment opportunities locally however this may also give rise to a dilution effect where the critical mass to sustain a sector is not available in terms of resource and / or skills, thus leading to a long-term loss of competition in a given sector. The greater spread may also lead to inefficiencies given the spread of effort across a higher number of settlements.

Option c) promotes smart specialisation and cluster development policies. There is recognition of the potential benefits of efficiency from clustering, and when economies of scale and network effects arise in certain locations they should be facilitated while also ensuring clustering of enterprises does not lead to cumulative negative impacts on the environment. This is the preferred option offering a strategic approach to investment based both on the analysis of the strengths of the Region and potential of the economy.

Selection of preferred scenario

1. Spatial; The preferred spatial strategy for the Eastern and Midland draft RSES promotes the consolidation of Dublin plus the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda, supported by planned focussed growth of a limited number of self-sustaining settlements that have the assets and capacity to grow in a sustainable manner while minimising impacts on the receiving environment (Option c). These include the key towns of Bray, Maynooth, Swords, Navan, Naas, Wicklow-Rathnew, Graiguecullen (Carlow), Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore and Portlaoise. It is important to ensure that the services capacity is delivered in tandem with or in advance of growth.

2. Climate; The preferred climate strategy seeks to integrate support for National Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Policies (Option a) with additional specific GI and ES policies to accelerate climate action at the regional level (Option b) in combination with site based adaptation/mitigation measures to guide sustainable development at settlement level (Option c). This blended option is likely to maximise economic and environmental benefits by actively integrating regional GI and ES policies into regional policy making, supported by adaptation policies to increase flood resilience and protect the natural environment. Climate mitigation options include integrated transport and land use; reduction in energy consumption; increase energy efficiency and renewable energy; reduce resource use and protect carbon sinks (e.g. peat bogs).

3. Economic; The preferred economic strategy is the adoption of smart specialisation based on the identified strengths and competitive advantages of the Region combined with cluster development underpinned by placemaking to prioritise investment. This requires embedding resilience in our enterprise base, enhancing productivity and delivering quality jobs – including supporting companies to navigate their way through Brexit and any other emerging challenges. The development of economic strategy offers a framework to involve regional stakeholders in defining a shared vision for regional innovation, skills development and talent attraction.

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 draft 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 (EclA),
- Environmental Report (ER),
- 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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Environmental Assessment

RPO 3.2: 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.

RPO 3.3: 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.



Ecosystems Services

Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human wellbeing, there are four main types; provisioning, regulating, habitat 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. Habitat 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 values⁵.

The incorporation and consideration of an ecosystem services approach can lead to significant enhancements in relation to planning policy as well as a project stages and is recommended to be used by Local Authorities in the preparation of Development Plans and other statutory land use plans.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Ecosystems Services Approach

RPO 3.4: Local Authorities shall promote an Ecosystems Services Approach in the preparation of statutory land use plans.

⁵ <https://biodiversity.europa.eu/topics/ecosystem-services>

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 (RPG) 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 draft 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.

As indicated below, 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).

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 Draft 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 draft 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 Hinterland Area and The Outer Region. Within these areas the urban structure has different pressures and opportunities. This difference in context is reflected in the policy responses of the draft RSES. Also, given the wide number of medium to large towns in the Region (defined as over 5,000 population in the Metropolitan and Hinterland Areas and 4,000 in the Outer Region), there is a requirement to consider a varying typology of large towns in the Region and to tailor policy accordingly.



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.

Settlement Typology	Description	Areas		
		Metropolitan	Hinterland	Outer 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.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drogheda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bray ▪ Maynooth ▪ Swords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Navan ▪ Naas ▪ Wicklow-Rathnew 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Graiguecullen (Carlow) ▪ Longford ▪ Mullingar ▪ Tullamore ▪ Portlaoise
Medium to Large Towns	<p>i) Medium to large sized 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.</p> <p>ii) 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.</p>	To be defined by Development Plans		
Small towns and villages	Small towns and villages under 5000 population (4,000 population in the Outer Region) and above 1500 with local service and employment functions.	To be defined by Development Plans		
Rural	Rural villages less than 1,500 and the wider rural region	To be defined by Development Plans		

Table 4.1 Settlement Hierarchy

The further breakdown of population projections to county level are in 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.

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

Table 4.2 NPF Population projections

Settlement Strategy

Settlement typology

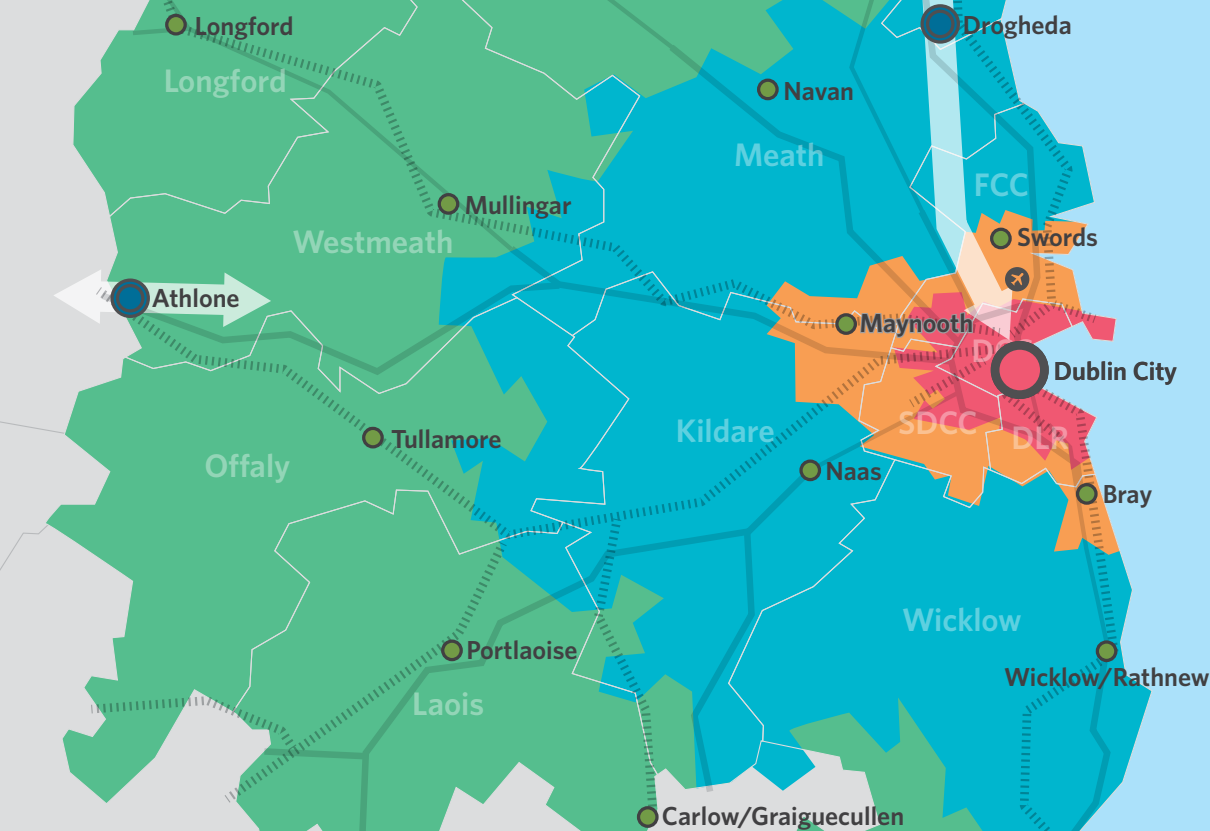
The draft RSES identifies an asset-based settlement typology to provide guidance for local authorities in the preparation of Core Strategies in their City and County Development plans and to ensure sustainable compact urban growth at a level appropriate to their position in the hierarchy.

Dublin city and suburbs

Support the consolidation and re-intensification of infill, brownfield and underutilised lands with 50% of all new homes to be provided in the existing built up area of Dublin City and Suburbs in tandem with the delivery of key infrastructure to achieve a population of 1.4 million people by 2031.

Regional Growth Centres

Support urban regeneration and the delivery of strategic development areas in tandem with key enabling infrastructure, with at least 30% of all new homes to be provided in the existing built up areas to enable Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk as significant regional drivers.



Key towns

Support the sustainable compact development of identified key towns with at least 30% of new homes to be provided for within the built up area, through regeneration of identified town centre sites so that key towns can act as economic drivers and employment centres for the region.

Medium to large sized settlements

Promote consolidation coupled with targeted investment where required to improve local employment and services, in line with a development strategy to be determined by local authorities to ensure that towns grow at a sustainable level appropriate to their position in the hierarchy.

Small towns, villages and rural areas

Support the sustainable growth of rural areas by promoting the regeneration and revitalisation of rural towns and villages coupled with investment where required to support local employment and services and targeted rural housing policies to be determined by local authorities.

- Dublin City & Suburbs
- Metropolitan Area
- Dublin-Belfast Corridor
- Regional Growth Centres
- Hinterland Areas
- Key road
- Key Towns
- Outer Region
- Rail

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 draft RSES considered the following in the development of the Settlement Strategy:

- Whether a settlement is located inside or outside the Dublin City-Region catchment
- The scale of employment provision and net commuting flows
- Accessibility and influence in a regional context
- The extent of local services provision i.e. administration; education- particularly third level, health, retail, arts, culture and amenities
- Particular sub-regional interdependencies, for example, where a settlement may be located in relation to a number of nearby settlements
- Local ambition, initiative and commitment to achieve compact growth.

The draft RSES identifies a third tier of Key Towns which are Swords, Maynooth, Bray, Navan, Naas, Wicklow-Rathnew, Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore, Portlaoise and Graigueculen (Carlow). They are large economically active 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 medium to large 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 over 5,000 population in the Region (4,000 population in the Outer Region), 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 increase 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 Medium to Large Towns be defined in the Core Strategies of Development Plans, and be reflective of local conditions and place potential. Similarly, the designation of smaller towns and villages with a population below 5,000 (4,000 population in the Outer Region) is to be set at local level.

Guiding Principles for 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.

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 medium to large towns, smaller towns, and villages that is commensurate to the existing built environment.

Settlement Typology	1. Dublin city and suburbs	2. Regional Growth Centres	3. Key Towns	4. Medium to large sized Settlements	5. Small 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	Medium to large sized towns, some of which have experienced rapid population growth and require 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining.	Small 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 (Outer 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	Small 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.

Table 4.3 Settlement Typologies and Policy Responses



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.

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) will have been completed 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 applicable 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 (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.

The level of transfer may be determined at the regional or metropolitan levels and means that in addition to the 16 local authorities referenced on page 5 of the NPF Roadmap document, two further local authority areas adjacent to cities, but not subject to provision for headroom, Clare and Kilkenny, may target additional population growth in a metropolitan context, where this can be prioritised for delivery.

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 draft 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.

RPO 4.2: Infrastructure investment and priorities shall be aligned with the spatial planning strategy of the draft 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 draft 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.

The NPF also sets out ambitious target 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 of over 700 hectares 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 draft 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 draft Strategy sets out a strategic development framework for their future growth to allow them to reach sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth.

Athlone

Due to its strategic location and scale of population, employment and services, Athlone acts as a key regional centre for the Midlands SPA within the Region, whilst also extending its influence beyond the Region into counties Roscommon and Galway.

Due to its location the town also has an intra-regional functional aspect for the Northern and Western Region as part of the functional urban area⁶ extends into County Roscommon. Athlone's central and accessible location nationally at a key nodal point between Dublin and Galway and at a principal crossing point on the River Shannon further enhances its role and potential.

Athlone has an established economic base, with the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC) together with Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and Athlone Business and Technology Park, these are an important focal point for the development and strengthening of industry and higher education links in research and development (R&D).

Athlone's strong historic and cultural core, along with its attractive natural environment along the banks of the River Shannon, provides for significant tourism opportunities and an enhanced quality of life for both residents and visitors to the town.

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, the preparation and adoption of a Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be a priority for Westmeath County Council and Roscommon County Council following the adoption of the RSES. This will 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. It will require a focused approach and coordinated action amongst Local Authorities and other agencies. The availability of zoned and serviced lands within the existing town boundary in the key development areas of Lissywollen, Cornamagh, Cornamaddy, Monksland, and Monksland/Bealnamulla provide for future residential development to serve the town's growth.

The vision provided for in the draft RSES is that Athlone will act as the lead town for future development in the Midlands to become a Regional Growth Centre with a population target in the Region of 30,000 by 2031.

⁶ Based on the EU/OECD defined commuting catchment from which 15% of the workforce is employed in the urban core.

Athlone (continued)

The population target expressed in the draft RSES is for the population within the entire town boundary of Athlone and includes lands within counties Westmeath and Roscommon. The distribution of population between the two Local Authorities should be agreed by both Local Authorities in the Joint UAP and this distribution, in the first instance should be commensurate with existing population levels.

The Joint UAP shall support and provide for an enhanced urban environment and improve sustainable modes of transport with a particular focus on the following key objectives:

- Support the extension of existing public realm enhancement scheme in the town centre to the westbank of the town, focusing in particular on Market Square, Barrack Street, Castle Street and extending along The Quay and consider the introduction of an incentive scheme to refurbish shopfronts.
- Support the implementation of the Athlone Waterfront Strategy (2011) to provide for a strategic approach to waterfront management, amenity provision, tourist related developments and environmental awareness along the waterfront within the town.
- Support construction of a new pedestrian and cycleway bridge across the River Shannon in Athlone as part of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.
- Support the role of lands on the Western Bank as a Cultural and Tourism Quarter.
- Support public realm enhancement works along the River Shannon's waterfront at The Quay and along The Strand to maximise tourist footfall along the river.
- Provide for a public park within the Monksland / Bellanamullia (Athlone West) LAP lands.
- Provide a walkway and nature park adjacent to the Cross River.



Existing opportunity sites that have been identified for redevelopment in the town include the Texas Site, Irishtown, Dunnes Stores, the Strand, St. Mels Loughanaskin, the existing Bus Garage and adjoining CIE lands and lands at Ranelegh. Sites for potential retail development have also been identified to further grow Athlone's retail role, potential and profile within edge-of-centre sites in the Eastern Bank of the town centre. These include lands adjacent to Southern Station Road, Loughanaskin, the former shopping centre off St Mary's Square (Texas site), lands between Sean Costello Street and John Broderick Street, the Dunnes site and carpark (Irishtown), Lloyds Lane and the Strand and Golden Island. There is an identified need to address vacancy rates in the Merchant/ Shopping Quarter in the core of Athlone, particularly on the axis extending through Dublin Gate Street / Church Street / Pearse Street / and Connaught Street. A strengthening of connectivity between Athlone Town Centre and Golden Island Shopping Centre would also strengthen the retail and commercial function and coherence of the town centre along with strategic environmental enhancement and upgrading of the area around the Golden Island Shopping Centre.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Athlone Regional Growth Centre

RPO 4.4: A cross-boundary Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be prepared by Westmeath County Council and Roscommon County Council to provide a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas for the future physical, economic and social development of Athlone and the Monksland/ Bealnamulla area. The Joint UAP shall ensure that Athlone achieves targeted compact brownfield / infill growth of a minimum of 30%. The Joint UAP 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.

Future development required to achieve the growth vision for Athlone included in the Joint UAP shall:

- Support the regeneration of underused, vacant or derelict town centre lands for residential development to facilitate population growth.
- Support the renewal of lands at St. Mels and Loughanaskin to optimise the potential of this town centre opportunity to facilitate a mixed residential scheme with supporting services and facilities which will support the commercial core of the town, reinforce neighbourhood identity and enhance the physical character of the area.
- Support residential development within the Lissywollen South Framework Plan area to develop this strategically located land bank as a highly sustainable and integrated new urban quarter extending from Athlone town centre.
- Support residential development on existing LAP lands at Curragh Lissywollen, Cornamagh, Cornamaddy and Monksland / Bellanamullia.

RPO 4.5: Promote the expansion of the existing enterprise ecosystem in Athlone and creation or expansion of distinct industrial specialisms that have developed through collaboration with the relevant enterprise agencies including AIT, IDA and the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre and support the provision of physical infrastructure and zoned lands to realise this objective. In this regard, recognise the following strategic economic areas:

- Garrycastle IDA as a centre of excellence for education, research, enterprise and innovation with potential for clustering with Athlone Institute of Technology
- Blyry – incorporating indigenous and existing industries
- Creggan – greenfield site identified for future development of an innovative business park
- Monksland – support the continued development of the existing industrial sectors at this location.

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: Promote Athlone as an urban tourism destination while protecting the natural resources on which it relies with a particular focus on capitalising on the following assets:

- Amenity potential of the waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree
- Athlone's attractive built and cultural heritage including the Western bank of the river as a cultural and tourism quarter
- Fáilte Ireland Lakelands and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands designations
- Existing and planned Greenways and Blueways including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.

Drogheda

Drogheda is an established centre of agglomeration strategically located on the Dublin-Belfast rail corridor and M1 Motorway and in proximity to both the metropolitan centres of Dublin and Belfast.



Drogheda, along with Dundalk has 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 town's location 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.

Drogheda will benefit from the proposed DART expansion programme identified in the NPF which will provide for a fast, high-frequency electrified rail service to the town to enhance the existing heavy rail service.

Census 2016 identified Drogheda as the fastest growing town in the country, some of this growth is predicated on the good transport links for workers to Dublin and there has been further commuter led growth outside of Drogheda in Laytown, Bettystown and Mornington. There is a need to promote self-sustaining economic and employment-based development opportunities in the town to match and catch up on rapid phases of housing delivery in recent years to provide for employment growth for the existing population and to reverse commuting patterns whilst also working towards combating social exclusion.

Drogheda should promote further employment growth based on the attractiveness of its assets and the quality of life offering for workers and residents. This can include high value jobs to provide for a greater jobs to residents ratio.

Drogheda offers significant heritage 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 draft Strategy seeks to prioritise regeneration of town centre sites in Drogheda to promote revitalization and redevelopment of the Heritage Quarter, promote regeneration of opportunity sites and surrounding areas and promote sustainable development through integration of existing facilities. This can also present opportunities to address social exclusion in the town.

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 Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be a priority for Louth County Council and Meath County Council following the adoption of the RSES, 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 vision provided for in the draft RSES is that Drogheda will act as a Regional Growth Centre with a population target in the region of 50,000 by 2031.

The population target expressed in the draft RSES is for the population within the entire town boundary of Drogheda and includes lands within counties Louth and Meath. The distribution of population between the two Local Authorities should be agreed by both Local Authorities in the Joint UAP and this distribution, in the first instance should be commensurate with existing population levels.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Drogheda Regional Growth Centre

RPO 4.8: A cross-boundary Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be prepared by Louth County Council and Meath County Council to 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 co-ordinated 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 Corridor. The Joint UAP 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.

Future development required to achieve the growth vision for Drogheda included in the Joint UAP shall:

- 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 to new development on greenfield sites.
- Facilitate the regeneration of lands at McBride Station and environs as an employment hub 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.

RPO 4.9: 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 4.10: 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 4.11: 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 4.12: 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 Ireland's Ancient East designation.

RPO 4.13: 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 4.14: Support the proposed Drogheda Flood Relief Scheme, subject to the outcome of the planning process and appropriate environmental assessment.

Dundalk

Dundalk, like Drogheda, is an established centre of agglomeration strategically located on the Dublin-Belfast rail corridor and M1 Motorway and in proximity to both the metropolitan centres of Dublin and Belfast.

Dundalk has 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. 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.

Dundalk has also been identified as one of the fastest growing towns in the country in the most recent inter-census period. Dundalk has a strong economic and employment base with a healthy equilibrium between resident workers and jobs and an established 'Louth Pharma Hub'. Furthermore, the presence of Dundalk Institute of Technology provides a key driver for an enterprise ecosystem along with the existing sectoral clusters. 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.

The Strategy seeks to prioritise regeneration of town centre opportunities in Dundalk to promote revitalization and redevelopment of the town centre, promote regeneration of opportunity sites and surrounding areas and promote sustainable development through integration of existing facilities. This can also present opportunities to combat social exclusion in the town. The preparation and adoption of an Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be a priority for Louth County Council following the adoption of the draft RSES, 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.

The vision provided for in the draft RSES is that Dundalk will act as a Regional Growth Centre to achieve a target population in the region of 50,000 by 2031.



REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Dundalk Regional Growth Centre

RPO 4.15: An Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be prepared by Louth County Council for Dundalk to 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 shall:

- Support development on key town centre infill/ brownfield sites include Long Walk Shopping Centre, Carroll's Village Shopping Centre, Williamson's Mall, and Dunne's Park Street
- Improve accessibility and sustainable mobility in the town centre by enhancing modal choice through integration of rail, bus and taxi services
- 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.

RPO 4.16: 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 4.17: 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 4.18: Support the role of Dundalk Institute of Technology as a centre of excellence for education.

RPO 4.19: Enhance potential for economic development and regeneration at Dundalk Port / Harbour area subject to a feasibility study and appropriate coastal zone management.

RPO 4.20: 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 4.21: 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

These towns, both within and outside of the Metropolitan Area, are located on high quality public transport corridors and are important in a regional context. They have undergone relatively sustainable levels of growth in recent decades, where the ratio of jobs to resident workforce has remained high due to a more sustainable balance of employment and population. These growth settlements have the capacity and future growth potential to accommodate above average growth, with commensurate employment growth on high quality public transport corridors 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;

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- Swords, Maynooth and Bray in the Metropolitan Area
- Navan, Naas and Wicklow-Rathnew in the Hinterland Area
- Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore, Portlaoise and Graigecullen (Carlow) in the Outer Region.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Key towns

RPO 4.22: 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 4.23: 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 directly related to Dublin city, 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 lead town for Fingal, which is one of the fastest growing and the youngest parts of the State, and is a major town centre which provides a strong economic and service function for its catchment. The redeveloped Swords Castle is a key visitor attraction while the Broadmeadow/Malahide Estuary is an important environmental asset to the east of the town.

The Oldtown-Mooretown lands are located on the western edge of Swords and can deliver significant residential development as part of the westward expansion of the town along with a new regional park extending into the Broadmeadow River Valley Linear park. The development of a mixed-use urban district on the northern side of Swords at Lissenhall, has potential to deliver significant housing, along with high tech, research and development-based employment within a campus setting at Lissenhall East. There are also opportunities in the wider Swords-Airport area for significant airport related economic development, linked to protection and enhancement of access to Dublin Airport.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Swords Key Town

RPO 4.24: Support the continued development of Swords as part of an emerging 'Green City' concept, building on its strategic location near Dublin Airport and linked to the delivery of Metrolink to provide for high density and people intensive uses in locations that are accessible to quality public transport nodes, existing and planned.

RPO 4.25: Future development required to achieve the growth vision for Swords shall:

- Support the regeneration of underused, vacant or derelict town centre lands for residential/mixed use development to facilitate population growth.
- Provide for the sustainable, compact and sequential infill of yet-to-be developed Masterplan and Local Area Plan zoned lands along the R132 and future MetroLink corridor.
- Require the preparation of a Local Area Plan at Lissenhall to inform policy for the longer-term strategic area of Swords, in accordance with Your Swords: An Emerging City Strategic Vision 2035 or any update thereof.

RPO 4.26: Facilitate the strategic regeneration of Swords to increase the resilience of the local economy and provide for an enhanced urban environment with a particular focus on the following key objectives:

- Enhance the identity of the town centre 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 Swords Town Centre, in accordance with a new healthy placemaking strategy to provide a prioritised, programmed and impactful package of measures to co-ordinate investment and decision making across multiple stakeholders.
- Facilitate the creation of a new street fronting the river walk to the west of Main Street and support co-ordinated infill development on key strategic sites along Main Street and North Street.
- Promote core recreational and amenity spaces, utilising in particular Ward River Valley Park, Swords Cultural Quarter including Town Park, Ward River Walk west of Main Street area.

Maynooth

Maynooth is a large economically active town that provides a number of services and facilities for north Kildare and is strategically located on the Dublin-Sligo railway line and M4 motorway. Maynooth is a vibrant university town with a young demographic as many students are living in and travelling to the town to attend NUI Maynooth. The town enjoys high relative rates of sustainable travel including public transport, walking and cycling. The University, the Canal and the nearby demesne landscape of Carton are key assets and tourist attractions. The Maynooth Business Park is located south of the M4 motorway and is one of the main employment areas.

Growth areas include the Railpark lands, with significant residential development potential located to the south east of the town, with potential links along the Royal Canal towpath to the town centre. Railpark lands are subject to LIHAF funding for a new relief road and bridge over the railway line. The further development of agricultural lands at Crewhill and Newtown would provide for significant residential development, extending the boundary to the north and west of the town. It is also proposed to develop a new Research and Technology Park adjoining Maynooth University campus and subject to a new road linking the south and west of the town.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Maynooth Key Town

RPO 4.27: Support the continued development of Maynooth, co-ordinated with the delivery of strategic infrastructure including DART expansion to support future population growth and build on synergies with Maynooth University to promote research and economic development opportunities.

RPO 4.23: 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.

Bray

Bray is a large economically active town strategically located on the DART/rail line that provides a wide range of services, education and employment opportunities for north Wicklow. Bray is a significant visitor and tourism destination with attractions such as Bray Seafront, Bray Head and Kilruddery House. Growth in Bray has been modest compared to other similar settlements in the metropolitan area and challenges remain in relation to public transport investment and congestion on the M/N11.

Bray Golf Course and Harbour lands are identified as part of a mixed-use development with enhanced town centre functions and development of the seafront. The development of lands at Fassaroe to the west of the N/M11 requires significant upgrades to transport infrastructure including new public transport connections to Bray and to Dublin. These are currently being addressed in a joint transport study between the Local Authorities and transport agencies.

Fassaroe also has the potential to deliver significant employment growth and along with the development of the IDA strategic site in the nearby town of Greystones, offer an opportunity to strengthen the employment base and reduce commuting pressures in North Wicklow.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Bray Key Town

RPO 4.28: Support the continued development of Bray including the enhancement of town centre functions, increased employment opportunities and the westward extension of the town, linked to the delivery of key infrastructure including Bray-Fassaroe public transport links.

RPO 4.23: 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.

HINTERLAND REGION KEY TOWNS

Navan

Navan acts as the county town for Meath and has experienced significant population growth as one of the country's fastest growing large towns between 1996 and 2016, where the population has grown rapidly without the equivalent increase in jobs.

As such, consolidation and regeneration shall be a key priority and objective for the development of Navan town with a focus on the regeneration of the town centre, in particular on sites such as the former County Council Offices at Railway Street.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Navan Key town

RPO 4.29: Support delivery of the distributor road at Farganstown to release strategic residential and employment lands for development.

RPO 4.30: 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 4.31: Support development of a regional hospital to serve the north east of the country.

RPO 4.32: 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 4.23: 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.

Naas

Naas is the county town of Kildare and acts as a strong employment base which is evident from its high ratio of jobs to resident workers of 1.122.

It is recognised that 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. The draft RSES supports enhanced links to Sallins train station to provide for more sustainable transport choices by those living and working in Naas.

Consolidation and regeneration shall be a key priority and objective for the development of Naas town with at least 30% of all development to be delivered on Brownfield and infill lands with a focus on the regeneration of the town centre, in particular on sites such as the Castle Quarter, Devoy Quarter, Corban's Lane and the Canal Quarter.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Naas Key Town

RPO 4.33: 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 4.34: Support the use of the Grand Canal for amenity, recreation and sustainable transport purposes.

Wicklow - Rathnew

Wicklow-Rathnew incorporates both the county town of Wicklow and the town of Rathnew.

Located on the coast and in proximity to the M11 motorway, the town acts as a key population and employment centre for the surrounding hinterland. The town has experienced an increase in population growth in recent years and consolidation and regeneration shall be a key priority and objective for the development of the town, including consolidation of economic function and supporting services to meet population growth

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Wicklow-Rathnew Key Town

RPO 4.35: Support an enhanced role and function of Wicklow-Rathnew as the County town, particularly as a hub for employment, training and education.

RPO 4.36: Support Wickow-Rathnew's role in the provision of third level education in association with Institute of Technology Carlow.

RPO 4.37: 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 4.38: Support the development of Wicklow-Rathnew as a tourism hub having regard to its accessibility to key tourist destinations in the Region.



OUTER REGION KEY TOWNS

Longford

The County town of Longford, located on the Dublin to Sligo rail line, acts as a key employment centre for the surrounding hinterland. Whilst the town has a particularly high ratio of jobs to resident workers, evidence indicates that there are social exclusion issues with high levels of deprivation.

High levels of vacancy in Longford town centre needs to be addressed and therefore consolidation and regeneration shall be a key priority and objective. At least 30% of all development is required to be delivered on brownfield and infill lands with a focus on the regeneration and densification of Longford town centre, with a particular emphasis on regeneration of the Barracks and shopping centre sites.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Longford Key Town

RPO 4.39: Improve accessibility and sustainable mobility in the town centre by enhancing modal choice through integration of rail, bus and taxi services.

RPO 4.40: 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 4.41: 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 4.42: Support the proposed Longford Flood Relief Scheme subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

Mullingar

The town of Mullingar, located on the Dublin to Sligo rail line and motorway, acts as a key population and employment centre for the surrounding hinterland.

The town has a high ratio of jobs to resident workers. Consolidation and regeneration shall be a key priority and objective for the development of Mullingar with opportunity sites identified including Columb barracks and St Iomands regeneration sites. Town centre enhancements and public realm improvements are required to enhance the town centre and improve opportunities for sustainable transport choices.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Mullingar Key Town

RPO 4.43: 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 4.44: Promote the plan led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in the town for employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities.

RPO 4.45: Support the development and expansion of the Midlands Regional Hospital.

Tullamore

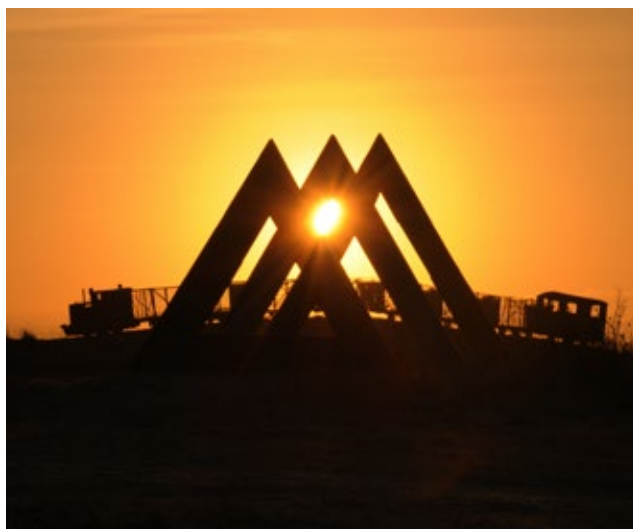
Tullamore, located on the Dublin to Galway rail line, acts as a key population and employment centre for the surrounding hinterland.

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. Consolidation and regeneration shall be a key priority and objective for the development of Tullamore and future development plans will be required to identify opportunity sites for town centre regeneration such as regeneration of the Shannon canal harbour in the town which has potential for commercial and tourism related development.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Tullamore Key Town

RPO 4.46: Support Tullamore's role as a tourism hub having regard to its accessibility to key tourist destinations including proximity to natural amenities and recreational opportunities including Grand Canal Greenways and Blueways and outdoor recreation parks.



Portlaoise

Portlaoise is strategically located on the Dublin to Cork / Limerick rail line and the M7 Motorway.

The town has experienced significant growth levels in the past 20 years being one of the country's fastest growing towns between 1996 – 2016. Evidence shows that whilst the town has a strong economic base including Togher Inland Port National Enterprise Park and an established agri-business sector in the town, commuting is highly car based. There is a need for job creation in Portlaoise on lands zoned for enterprise, employment and industrial use within the town of Portlaoise with particular emphasis on the Togher / Junction 17 Enterprise and employment land bank. Rapid expansion of new housing areas and retail centres outside the town core needs to be counter balanced with a major focus on regenerating the original town centre area. 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. As part of the renewal of the town centre there is a need to enhance the public realm and historic assets within the town.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Portlaoise Key Town

RPO 4.47: 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 4.48: 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.

Graiguencullen – Carlow

Whilst Carlow is largely located within the Southern Regional Assembly’s functional area, part of the town around Graiguencullen 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 Urban 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 Urban Area Plan and this distribution should be commensurate with existing population levels.

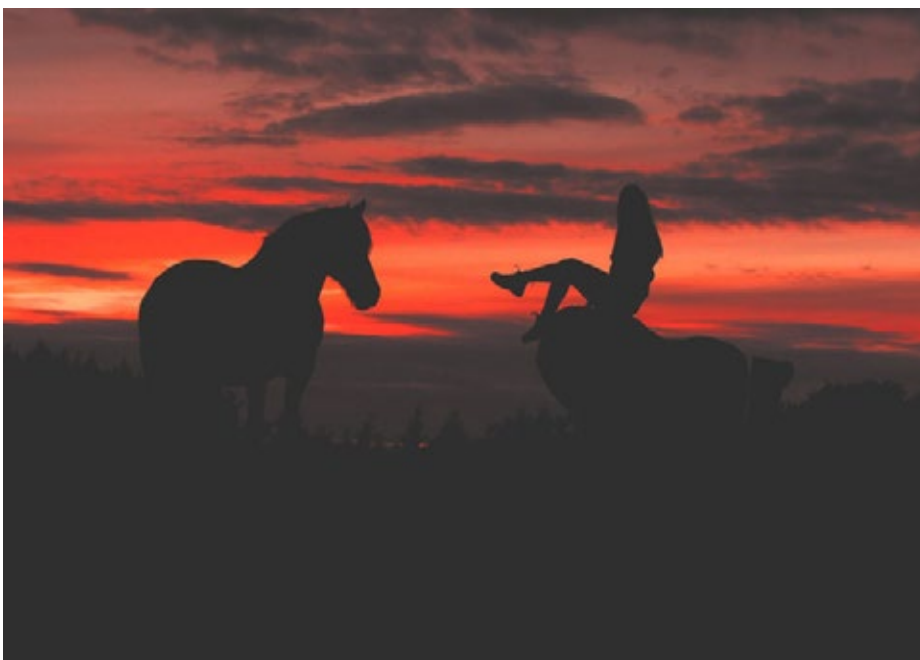
Carlow is home to two well established institutions, the Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC) and Carlow College (St. Patricks), both of which have substantial links with the surrounding regions.

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 Graiguencullen Urban Area 2012 -2018.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Graiguencullen – Carlow Key Town

RPO 4.49: A cross-boundary Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) 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 UAP 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 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 town to ensure that it has the capacity to grow sustainably and secure investment as a Regional Growth Centre. The Joint UAP 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.



4.7 Other towns

These are towns that in the context of the Region are medium to large in scale and they vary in function between sustainable settlements and commuter towns.

The more sustainable have a moderate level of jobs and services and includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining. Other towns which have experienced high levels of population growth but have a weak employment base and which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining are consolidation towns.

Towns in the Dublin Metropolitan and Hinterland areas tend to have experienced strong commuter focussed growth but 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.

Towns in the Outer Region, such as 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.

A number of settlements within the Metropolitan and Hinterland areas 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. They shall have a more contained focus with a drive for investment in services, employment growth and infrastructure whilst balancing housing delivery. Population growth in these towns shall be at a rate in order 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.

As indicated in Table 4.2, medium to large towns will be identified by the relevant Local Authorities at County Development Plan stage.

Small towns and villages

Small towns and villages under 5,000 population in the Metropolitan and Hinterland and under 4,000 population in the Outer Region with local service and employment functions, vary across the Region.

These towns generally support the surrounding rural area and provide services for the rural population. Those in proximity to the large urban centres have experienced significant growth and urban generated pressures and require the levels of growth to be managed and 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 require support for the existing population and to regenerate the existing cores. The development strategy for these small towns and villages are to be set out in the Core Strategies of County Development Plans, in accordance with the key principles in the draft RSES.

4.8 Rural Areas

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines 'rural' as the areas outside settlements with a population of 1,500 or more people. This includes smaller settlements of fewer than 1,500 people and individual dwellings in the countryside.

The rural region is characterised by a diverse range of natural amenities and landscapes, including rich agricultural lands, bog lands, mountains and uplands, rivers and streams and coastal areas. The draft Strategy recognises the major contribution that the rural areas 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 provide significant natural resources, biodiversity, environmental qualities and landscape features. In terms of economic development, the agri-food and tourism sectors are key employers in rural parts of the Region. The draft RSES supports tourism development and promotional branding to ensure that areas like the Midlands and Lakelands are developed and promoted to tap into the economic potential of rural areas (see chapter 6 in relation to the development of tourism in the Region).

Rural areas are also facing 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 and sets out measures which will directly benefit rural towns and villages, as well as the enterprises which operate within them, with over 270 specific actions to be delivered over a three-year period to 2020.

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, while avoiding over-spill development from urban areas and urban generated housing. Planning for rural areas must provide a balance between managing demand in the most accessible rural areas in proximity to Dublin and larger towns, whilst supporting the sustainable growth of rural economics and rural communities.

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed to providing an additional €1 billion for a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund⁷ 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.

Local Authorities should support the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and by creating policies that can arrest decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, whilst sustaining vibrant urban communities. Support for housing and repopulation taking place within rural towns and villages will help to act as a counterbalance viable alternative to rural one-off housing and will contribute to the principle of compact growth, with serviced sites acting as a viable alternative to the house in the countryside. This will be further supported by the Irish Water scheme for small towns and villages.

⁷ <https://drcd.gov.ie/about/rural/rural-regeneration-development-fund/>

A key objective of the NPF is to enable all parts of the country – both urban and rural – to achieve their full potential. The draft Strategy 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 and in relation to digital connectivity Chapter 8).

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 draft Strategy and the DEHLG Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, 2005 or any successor thereof and should be delivered through a Housing Needs Demand Assessment, accommodating the housing needs of the county as a whole.

The NPF and draft 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 and protect the rural resource for rural communities.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Rural Areas

RPO 4.50: In Development Plan Policy Local Authorities shall prioritise the regeneration of rural towns and villages through identification of significant ready-to-go 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 4.51: In Development Plan policy Local Authorities shall identify small towns and villages that have the potential for serviced sites as an alternative to one-off rural housing.

RPO 4.52: Local Authorities shall identify and provide policies to support and protect existing rural economies such as valuable agricultural lands to ensure sustainable food supply, and to protect the value and character of the open countryside.

RPO 4.53: 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 4.54: 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 4.55: Local Authorities shall ensure that economic development that is urban in nature should be in the first instance located in urban areas.

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 draft RSES is set out for the first time in Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF). It provides a 12-year strategic planning and investment framework for the Dublin metropolitan area.

The MASP is aligned with a number of Regional Strategic Outcomes in the draft 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 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 Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and parts of Fingal, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow.

Dublin city and suburbs has a population of 1.2 million people, 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.

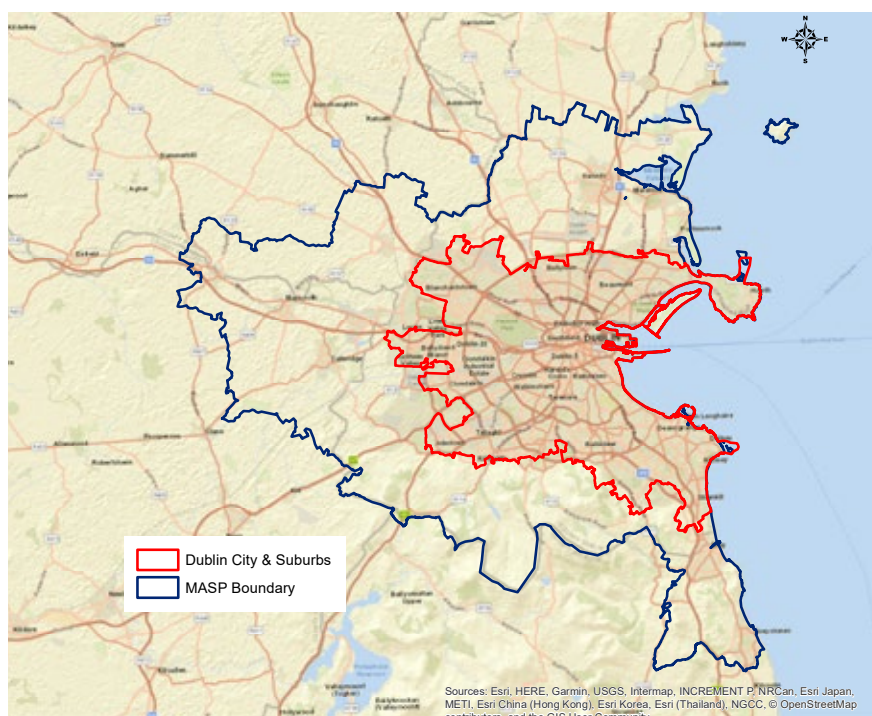


Figure 5.1 MASP Boundary Source: EMRA

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 draft 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 and benefit from smart technologies.

While Dublin has generally performed well in recent years, there is a need to better manage its sustainable and compact growth as a city of international scale and to address key challenges related to housing affordability, transport, sustainability and liveability to ensure Dublin can sustain its competitiveness and continue to attract and retain talent and investment on a global scale.

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 key to Dublin's success.

However, there are issues in relation to a perception of crime, dereliction and a poor-quality public realm in the city centre. There is a need to enable regeneration and employment opportunities for established communities where redevelopment and re-intensification occurs, particularly in areas of deprivation. While the metropolitan area is young, diverse and multi-cultural changing age structures and areas of on-going deprivation will 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 as set out in Chapter 4 and sets out an integrated land use and transportation strategy for the consolidation of Dublin and a number of metropolitan settlements based on their capacity for sustainable compact growth and accessibility to high quality public transport corridors, existing and planned.

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** – Improve access to Dublin Airport by public transport and road and facilitate the continued growth of Dublin Port and improved access to/from the southern port area.
- **Compact sustainable growth** – Promote consolidation of Dublin city and suburbs, refocus on the development of brownfield and infill lands to achieve a target of at least 50% of all new homes within or contiguous to the existing built up area in Dublin and at least 30% in other settlements.
- **Integrated transport and land use** – Target growth along high quality public transport corridors and nodes linked to the delivery of key public transport projects including BusConnects, DART expansion and Luas extension programmes and the Metro Link, along with better integration between networks.
- **Accelerate housing delivery** – Activate strategic residential development areas and support the steady supply of sites to accelerate housing supply and the adoption of performance-based standards to achieve higher densities in the urban built up areas, supported by better services and public transport.
- **Employment density in the right places** – Re-intensify employment within the city and suburbs, activate strategic employment opportunities to complement existing employment hubs in the city centre, and near third level institutes.
- **Better alignment of growth**. Target ‘catch up’ investment to support employment, infrastructure and amenity provision and/or sustainable transport links in towns that have experienced a high level of population growth but are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services.
- **Social regeneration** – Realise opportunities for social as well as physical regeneration, particularly in areas of relative deprivation including parts of the Dublin Docklands and inner city, Ballymun, Ballyfermot, and the western suburbs.
- **Future development areas** – having regard to the long lead in time for planning and development, identify future growth areas such as Dunsink, Swords-Lissenhall and Naas Road that may be delivered beyond the lifetime of the draft RSES within the long term 2040 horizon of the NPF.
- **Metropolitan scale amenities** – Provision of regional parks and strategic Green Infrastructure including greenways / blueways along the canals, rivers and the coastal corridors as part of the implementation of the NTA Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan.
- **Enabling infrastructure** – Identify infrastructure capacity issues and ensure water / waste water needs are met by national projects and improve sustainability in terms of energy, waste management and resource efficiency and water, to include district heating and water conservation.
- **Co-ordination and active land management** – enhanced co-ordination across Local Authorities and relevant agencies to promote more active urban development and land management policies that focus on the development of under-utilised, 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.

- City centre within the M50 (multi-modal)
- North-South Corridor (DART expansion scheme)
- North -West Corridor (Maynooth/Dunboyne line and DART expansion scheme)
- South-West Corridor (Kildare line-Luas red line)
- Metrolink Corridor (Metrolink - Luas Green Line extension)

A phased sequence of infrastructure investment is identified to enable their accelerated delivery both within the short term to 2026; medium term in the lifetime of the draft 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 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.

The criteria for the identifying the corridors involved a selection of strategic development opportunities proposed by Local Authorities that 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.

The MASP supports the overall Settlement Strategy as set out in Chapter 4 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

The delivery of identified strategic development areas should be facilitated, where practicable, in a sequential manner to promote sustainable compact growth in co-ordination with the provision of enabling infrastructure and services. A number of sustainable transport projects will also be delivered within the period to 2027. The delivery of key infrastructure is a significant change parameter to drive increased metropolitan densities and this has been factored into the clustering and prioritisation of strategic development areas, based on their accessibility to high quality rail based public transport corridors.

Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan



Figure 5.2 Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan

STRATEGIC CORRIDORS INCLUDE;

City centre within the M50 ring (Multi modal)

The ongoing regeneration of Dublin Docklands and the Poolbeg peninsula, coupled with the redevelopment of older social housing (former PPPs), industrial and underutilised lands in the city centre, can create new sustainable communities and support the continued growth of Dublin as the primary business and retail core in the short to medium term. The proposed DART Underground and LUAS extensions to Finglas and Lucan will support densification of sites subject to appraisal and delivery post 2027, unlocking the long-term capacity of strategic landbanks at Naas Road and Dunsink.

North – South Corridor (Northern/south-eastern commuter lines and DART expansion programme)

The DART Expansion Programme proposes electrification of the Northern commuter line, which is estimated to be delivered by 2027 and will support increased capacity at key nodes, including ongoing large-scale urban expansion of the North Fringe of the city served by Clongriffin Station and continued residential development in Donabate. On the south-eastern line, there is capacity for new residential communities served by a new station at Woodbrook - Shanganagh, for consolidation of Bray town centre and extension westwards to Old Conna and Fassaroe, linked to improved public transport connections.

North western Corridor (Maynooth/Dunboyne commuter line and DART expansion programme)

There are strategic development opportunities along the Dunboyne/M3 parkway commuter line to drive economic growth at the Dublin Enterprise Zone in Blanchardstown and for significant residential growth at Hansfield SDZ lands along with the sequential development of lands in Dunboyne and Dunboyne north, which is served by the M3 Parkway station. Along the main line, the proposed electrification to Maynooth will open up opportunities for sequential growth in Leixlip and Maynooth, with an estimated completion date of 2027.

South western Corridor (Kildare line and DART expansion programme, N81 and Luas redline)

The consolidation and western expansion of the city can be achieved through the development of strategically located sites at Clonburris, Kilcarbery and Adamstown SDZ, linked to increased capacity and electrified services on the Kildare rail corridor, to be delivered by 2027, with employment lands at Grangecastle supported by additional bus connections. There is further capacity for regeneration of major brownfield lands at Naas Road, Tallaght and to create new residential communities at Fortunestown near to the emerging town of Saggart/Citywest, served by the LUAS redline.

Metrolink Corridor (Metrolink and LUAS greenline extension)

The development of the proposed Metrolink project, which is subject to appraisal and delivery post 2027, will unlock significant long-term residential development capacity in Swords and Swords-Lissenhall and can support economic growth in future Metro Economic Zones in South Fingal and at Dublin Airport, subject to the protection of airport capacity and accessibility. The proposed Metrolink route will continue via the city centre and onwards to Sandyford using the existing LUAS Greenline and the proposed upgrading of this line will support new and emerging districts in the south county at Sandyford, Cherrywood and Ballyogan.

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 enabling new connections, grid balancing, energy management and micro grid development, see also Chapter 10 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 also Section 5.4 for more information on Infrastructure and Phasing



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.



KEY TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS IN THE METROPOLITAN AS SET OUT IN NATIONAL POLICY INCLUDE;

Dublin -Belfast Economic Corridor

The draft Strategy supports the development of the Dublin to Belfast 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 on the Northern Line, Celbridge-Hazelhatch 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
- LUAS Green Line Capacity Enhancement in advance of Metrolink; and
- Appraisal, planning and design of LUAS network expansion to Bray, Finglas, Lucan, and Poolbeg.

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 MASP, 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
- Adamstown and Nangor Road Improvements.

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 provide new connections between Dublin and the towns in Fingal, Kildare, Meath, and Wicklow.

Primary urban cycle arteries include the Royal Canal and Grand Canal ring and the Rivers Liffey, Tolka and Dodder, see Fig 5.3 (Primary urban cycle network shown in red). Outside of the city an inter-urban cycle network extends to the surrounding metropolitan towns creating 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 generally segregated from traffic, and often 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.

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. They include:

- East Coast Route from Sutton to Sandymount and extending north to link into the Fingal Way with potential to create 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 the Dublin Mountains at Bohernabreena
- Western Canals Loop; a 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 local links and enhanced recreational opportunities, see Fig 5.3 (Greenway Network shown in green).



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

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

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

MASP Sustainable Transport

RPO 5.2: Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including Metrolink, DART and LUAS expansion programmes, Bus Connects 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.

TABLE 5.1 Strategic Development Corridors, Capacity Infrastructure and Phasing

Corridor	Residential	Employment/ Mixed Use	Phasing/Enabling infrastructure
Docklands and City centre (Multi-modal within M50) Population capacity Short 35,000 Medium 10,000 Long 15,000 Total 60,000	Docklands build out of North Lotts and Grand Canal Docks SDZ 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 LIHAF Dodder bridge, LUAS extension to Poolbeg, WW upgrade and district heating.
	City centre regeneration of older social housing projects (former PPPs), Parkwest-Cherryorchard, Ballymun, Ashtown-Pelletstown and St James – Heuston lands	Regeneration of Diageo lands, health and education related employment at St James and Grangegorman campus	Short term LUAS cross city and extension to Finglas, Metrolink, roads and social infrastructure. DART underground for long term capacity
	Naas Road – significant landbank adjoining South Dublin with long term potential to become a major district centre.	Re-intensification of underutilised lands including Naas road and older industrial estates, subject to feasibility study.	Medium to Long term Multi-modal public transport and WW upgrades, site assembly required.
	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, LIHAF 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, LIHAF Distributor Road and railway bridge and social infrastructure
	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 LIHAF access road and new station at Woodbrook - Shanganagh. Access to Bray station and PT bridge.
	Bray Fassaroe – westward extension of Bray at Old Conna-Fassaroe (Dun Laoghaire) and Bray -Fassaroe (Wicklow) lands	New mixed use residential and employment district at Fassaroe, west of Bray Greystones Strategic site	Short term Bus links, Distributor Road, N/M11 upgrades, new bridge to Old Conna. Long term LUAS extension to Bray.

TABLE 5.1 Strategic Development Corridors, Capacity Infrastructure and Phasing

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 SDZ linked to the future development of Barnhill and Kellytown landbanks to the south and east of the SDZ	Further development of large-scale employment in Dublin Enterprise Zone in proximity to Blanchardstown IT.	Short term Public transport, Clonsilla station and WW upgrades.
	Leixlip – strategic greenfield lands near Confey station with capacity for phased development, poor 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, link to WWT and community and social infrastructure.
	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 LIHAF relief road and bridge, road upgrades, sewer connection, LUAS extension to Maynooth.
	Dunboyne – Sequential development prioritising zoned and serviced lands near the railway station and town centre, followed by development at Dunboyne North at 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 and additional watermain.
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 Grangecastle Business Park	Short to medium term LIHAF roads and railway bridge, new rail station, DART expansion to Cellbridge- Hazelhatch (Adamstown, Clonburris). LIHAF access road and WW upgrades (Kilcarbery). Public transport and access to station (Grangecastle)
	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	Short to Medium term Brownfield conditions and site assembly. WWT upgrades and Citywest junction link at Tallaght/Fortunestown.
Metrolink Corridor (Metrolink/ LUAS greenline) Population capacity Short 28,000 Medium 25,000 Long 18,000 Total 71,000	Dun 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 Metrolink, LUAS green line upgrades. Public transport and roads upgrades. LIHAF road and bridge and N11 junction (Cherrywood)
	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 - Medium term Public realm, pedestrian and cyclist provision. LIHAF road improvements, BusConnects. Additional runway and improved access (Airport)
	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	Long term Metrolink, roads improvements and expanded internal road network

Table 5.1 Strategic Development Corridors, Capacity Infrastructure and Phasing

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 MASP⁸. 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.

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 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 draft 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 for more information on the strategic development of Dublin and the Key Metropolitan Towns of Swords, Bray and Maynooth.



⁸ 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.

5.7 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 25,000 annual new homes required nationally to satisfy housing needs, this translates to an approximate housing target of 7,500 units per annum to be provided in the metropolitan area. 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 draft 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 focussed 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', 'Sustainable Urban Housing; Design Standards for New Apartments' Guidelines², and Draft 'Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities'.

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



9 Department of Housing Planning and Local Government, 2009

10 Department of Housing Planning and Local Government, 2018

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 and provide for high tech and research and development employment at strategic employment hubs such as Dublin Enterprise Zone in Blanchardstown and Grangecastle Business Park.

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 Lexlip (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.

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.



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 Portan. 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
	Grangecastle Business Park	Space intensive uses e.g. IT, research, pharmaceuticals in a campus style setting
Metrolink Corridor (Metrolink)	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

Table 5.2 Strategic Potential of Employment Sites in Dublin Metropolitan Area

5.9 Green Infrastructure and Amenities

Green Infrastructure (GI) is the 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. Metropolitan scale GI includes natural features such as rivers and canals, our coastline, regional parks, agricultural lands and amenity sites.

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 sites of Dublin Bay Biosphere and the Historic city of Dublin (tentative list); 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: Coordinate across Local Authority boundaries to identify manage and develop regional green infrastructure to enhance strategic connections and develop a regional greenbelt 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.

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.

The Dublin Local Authorities have zoned green infrastructure, greenbelt or rural/agricultural land uses and these suggest the baseline for a metropolitan greenbelt covering;

- 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).

EMRA supports the further development of Green Infrastructure and Green Belt 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 see Figure 5.5 and Chapter 7 - Guiding Principles for GI.

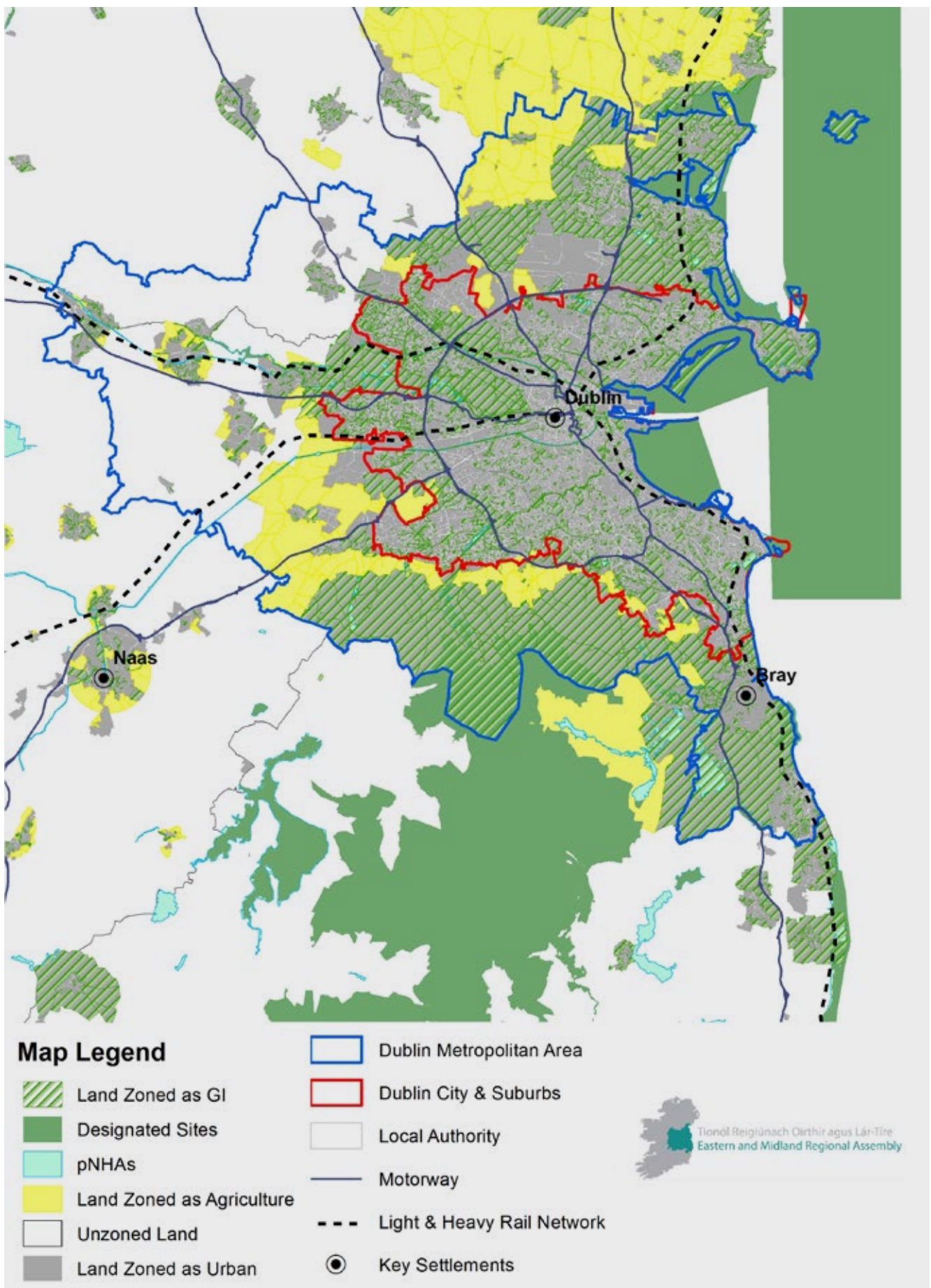


Figure 5.5 Green Infrastructure in the MASP area

6

Economy & Employment

6.1 Introduction

The Eastern and Midland Region (EMR) is the epicentre of the country's economic progress providing more than half of what is produced and it is home to one in two people living in the country. The Eastern and Midland is a strong region that drives national progress.



This draft RSES – as a regional expression of the national enterprise policy Enterprise 2025 Renewed – is a principle-based framework which sets out regional policy objectives for the Region and guides relevant actors that support the development of the Region. As a statutorily based document the draft RSES informs effective planning and investments in placemaking throughout the Region that facilitate enterprise development among other objectives.



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, 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 D (I & II) provides an overview of the enterprise development agencies, and an account of the range and nature of activities currently underway within the Region that support enterprise development.

This chapter is driven by the key principle of economic opportunity. The draft RSES has identified a number of Regional Strategic Outcomes 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. In accordance with Project Ireland 2040 the Region will accommodate around 320,000 additional people in employment.

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.

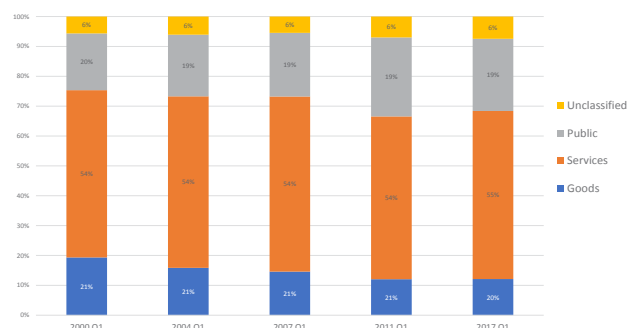


Figure 6.1 Eastern & Midland Region Total Employment. Source: DBEI

The classification of economic activity into goods (manufacturing) and services facilitates an insight into the infrastructure requirements of these sectors for the draft 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 areas¹¹.

Strengths and opportunities¹² for the EMR

Dublin 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 area has strong concentrations of foreign and Irish owned companies in manufacturing - predominately 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 draft 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 settlement strategy presented in Chapters 3 and 4. 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² The current RAPJs and LECs in the region have enabled coordination of local stakeholders to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to each locality and sub-region.



% Local Jobs by Industry, Census 2016

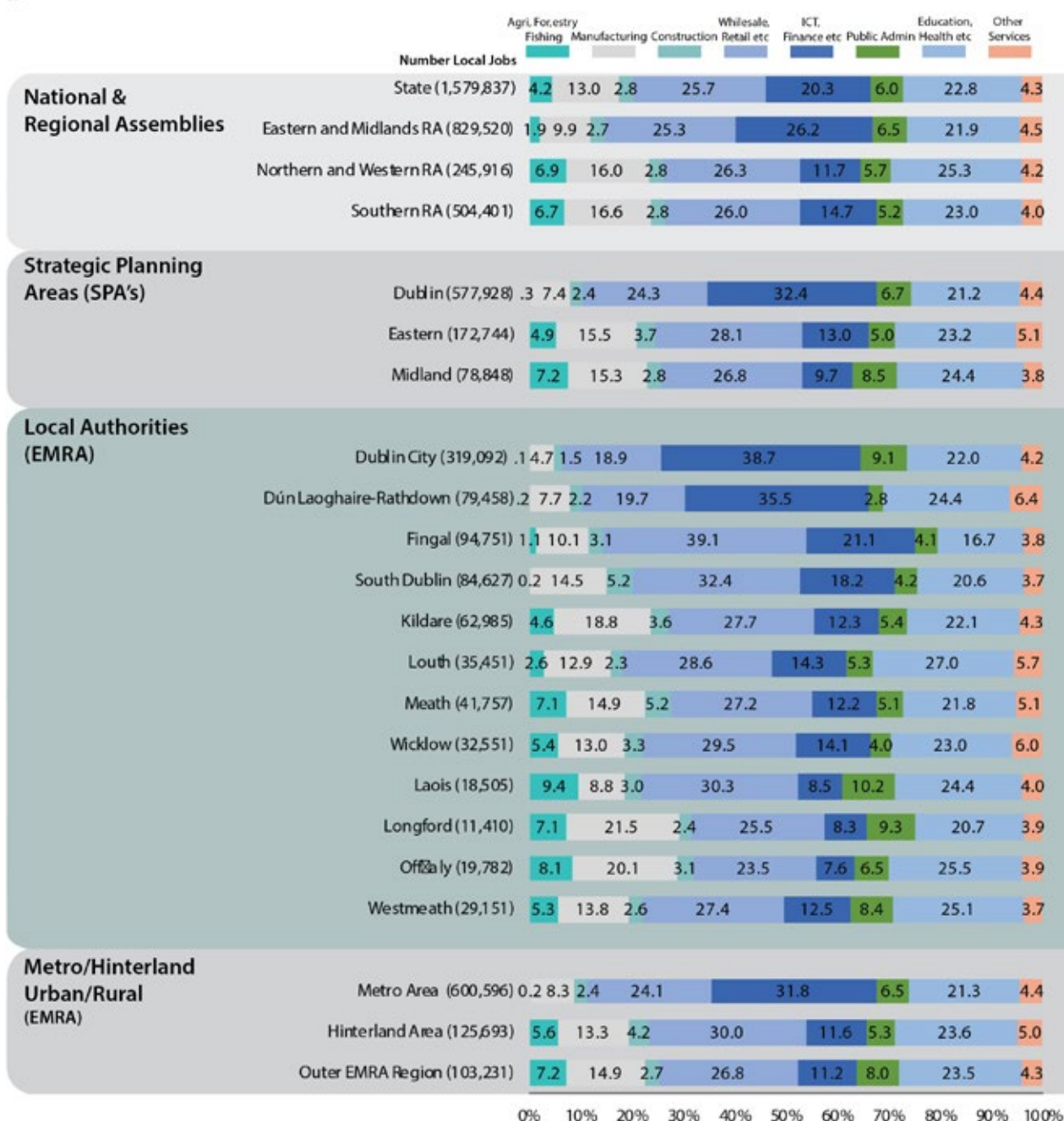


Figure 6.2 Percentage of Local Jobs by Industry

6.3 Economic Strategy: Smart Specialisation, Clustering, Orderly growth and Placemaking

Smart Specialisation: 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 Action Plans for Jobs (RAPJs) and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), where 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 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 specialisation¹³. 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 and our growth and settlement strategy the compact growth will be achieved. This involves managing and facilitating the growth of Dublin and to increase the scale of our regional 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.

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 to the RSO 2 of Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration, there is 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.

¹³ 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'.



Figure 6.3. The 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 draft RSES adopts a threefold approach:

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

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 and Climate elaborates on the approach the draft RSES adopts to achieve sustainability for the Region.

Developing a competitive and resilient Economic Base

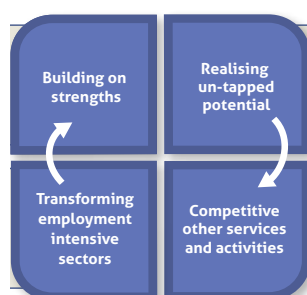


Figure 6.4: Enterprise 2025 Renewed Sectoral Cohorts (Portfolio approach). Source: DBEI (2018).

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.

The draft 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 draft 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 innovation centres, incubators, community enterprise centres, accelerator development schemes, local enterprise offices, research and innovation infrastructure 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 D IV provides a complete list of these assets.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Competitive and resilient economic base

RPO 6.1: Support the national economic agencies, Local Enterprises Offices, Regional Action Plan for Jobs implementation committees and Local Authorities with their plans for job creation 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 businesses
- 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 draft RSES.

Sustainable Growth

RPO 6.2: 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.

Guiding principles to identify Locations for strategic employment development

These considerations were used as principles to identify the locations for strategic employment development in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Local Authorities in Development Plans and through LECPs should apply the same principles. The MASP has identified some of these in the metro area.

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 locations where significant job location can be catered for through infrastructure servicing and proximity to public transport corridors.

Guiding principles for investment prioritisation in placemaking for enterprise development

- Local Authorities, RAPJs, and LECPs in their preparation of projects to bid for funds, shall give due regard to factors already identified as enablers of enterprise development¹⁴, 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 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.

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



Figure 6.5 EMRA's Enterprise Development and Innovation Assets Map



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 draft 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, Bio-economy – 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 RAPJs, 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 RAPJs, 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 host 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) already identified 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 RAPJs 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 draft RSES (see Chapter 3). 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 European 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. 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.

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, advanced manufacturing, experiential tourism, and Fintech.

Regional Growth Centres: Dundalk, Drogheda and Athlone

The role of these Regional Growth Centres within the draft RSES is to serve as 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). 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 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, sustainable foods, meat products, agri-biologicals, bio-refining, bio-conversion, biotechnology, smart construction, experiential tourism, precision farming, global engineering services outsourcing, drug delivery services.

Key towns and Medium to Large Towns

The RSES growth strategy set out in Chapter 3 and settlement hierarchy in Chapter 4 identifies the settlements and medium-large towns. 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, the Strategy will support their sustainable growth.

Small Towns and Villages

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 smaller towns and rural areas 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.

Rural Areas

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.

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, local Enterprise Centres and LECs 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.

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 network, Chambers of commerce and business networks to expand and diversify their rural enterprise base (see map of enterprise development and innovation assets available in the Region, and Appendix D II for the list).

The Assembly in 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.

Sectoral Opportunities key towns, large, medium, Small Towns and rural areas

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

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 draft 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.



REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:**Unexpected Opportunities for Enterprise Development**

RPO 6.3: 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 6.4: 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 6.5: Local Authorities shall identify measures in LECPs for regeneration in small towns and villages cores.

RPO 6.6: 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 6.7: 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 6.8: 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 bio-economy 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.

6.5 Specific sectors: Retail, Tourism, Marine, Agriculture

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 to update this hierarchy and apply floorspace requirements for the Region.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Retail Strategies and Retail Planning Guidelines

RPO 6.9: EMRA will support the preparation of a Retail Strategy / Strategies for the Region in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 to update the retail hierarchy and apply floorspace requirements for the Region.

RPO 6.10: Future provisions of significant retail development within the Region shall be consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 and the retail hierarchy for the Region, expressed in the RSES, until such time as this hierarchy is updated.

Retail Hierarchy for the EMRA

LEVEL 1	METROPOLITAN CENTRE Dublin City Centre
LEVEL 2	MAJOR TOWN CENTRES & COUNTY (principal) TOWN CENTRES Fingal: Swords, Blanchardstown Louth: Drogheda, Dundalk South Dublin: Tallaght, Liffey Valley Longford: Longford Dun Laoghaire: Dun Laoghaire, Dundrum Laois: Portlaoise Wicklow: Bray, Wicklow Westmeath: Athlone, Mullingar Meath: Navan Offaly: Tullamore Kildare: Naas / Newbridge, Maynooth
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 Dun 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, Lexlip Laois: Portarlinton, Graiguecullen Louth: Ardee, Drogheda District Centre : Mathews 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

Table 6.1 Retail Hierarchy for the EMRA

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 for additional policies in relation to placemaking.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Town Centre Renewal

RPO 6.11: 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 6.12: 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 6.13: 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. 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;-

- 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. 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). 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 – a breath of fresh air, 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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Natural and Cultural Tourism Assets

RPO 6.14: 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 6.15: 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 6.16: Support the maintenance of, and enhanced access to, state lands such as National Parks, Forest Parks, Waterways, etc for recreation and tourism purposes.

RPO 6.17: 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.

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.

Fáilte Ireland is currently working on a framework for working with and investing in destination towns across Ireland. The framework 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 functionality:

1. 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 be considered to be the main hub for the Region.

2. Seasonal destination towns offer a full range of smaller-scale seasonal facilities. They will 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 6.18: 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.

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 resource provide many non-commercial benefits too, for example amenity, biodiversity and mild climate. Given the increasing demand for marine space, the forthcoming National Marine Spatial Plan will enable stakeholders and the public to use 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 with integrated land and marine planning.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Marine Economy

RPO 6.19: 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 7.6 - climate change – provides further detail on the approach the draft 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 to our National Adaptation Framework.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Low Carbon and Circular Economy

RPO 6.20: 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.



6.6 Drivers for resilient and sustainable 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 managers¹⁵ foster stronger links between employers and the education and training sector.

Although progress has been made with Apprenticeship and traineeship programmes¹⁶, 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.



¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

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 out 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 below:

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

Table 6.2 Themes and Priority Areas

The Region is home to a wide range of organisations engaged in innovation, such as education institutions and research centres¹⁷, 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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Skills and Innovation

RPO 6.21: Support RAPJs, LEOs and Local Authorities to collaborate with the Regional Skills Fora managers, Education and Training Boards and local stakeholders to address skills shortages and lifelong learning challenges in the Region.

RPO 6.22: Support and foster the collaboration of industry and research to identify areas of research, development and innovation, and to identify projects for funding.

Technology and Innovation Poles – anchors: Regional Scientific Centres.

The creation of Technology and Innovation Poles provided for under the NPF envisages building facilities, developing the expertise and supportive capabilities of the Institutes of Technology (IoTs) and universities (DCU, UCD, Trinity and NUI Maynooth). Working with Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Regional Skills Fora plays a key role in 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 6.23: Support the development of sites where high-tech and high potential start-ups (HPSU¹⁸) can thrive, in conjunction with IoTs and Universities, to create collaborative and innovative growth.

¹⁷ <http://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/Find-a-Research-Partner/Research-Map-of-Ireland/>

¹⁸ 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.

The smart city¹⁹

There are opportunities for greater innovation in and around our more consolidated areas. This is the case of SMART cities.

The smart city 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 for the benefit of the citizen. Smart cities boost the location's attractiveness for people and business, especially those who want to innovate²⁰.

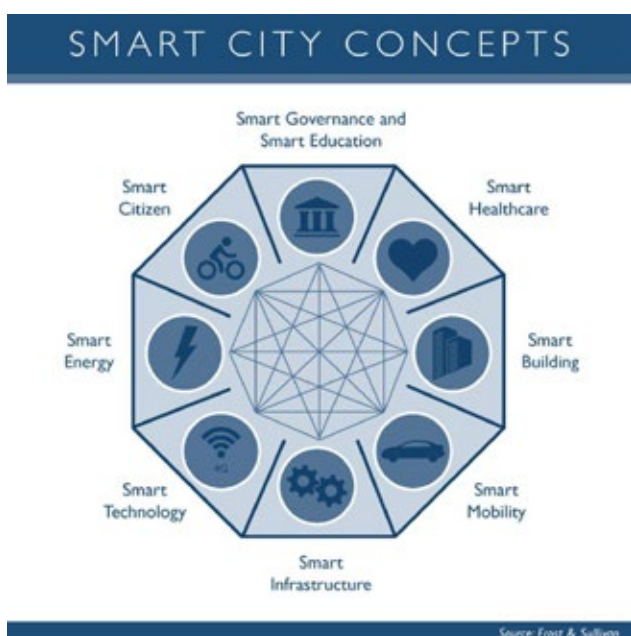


Figure 6.7 Smart City Concepts

'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.

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 and Derry and includes the two regional initiatives of Smart Dublin and Cork Smart Gateway.

To leverage the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, EMRA will support and identify and support 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 context²¹.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Smart Cities

RPO 6.24: 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.

¹⁹ 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/>

²⁰ 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)

²¹ 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 draft RSES to create a business environment that is conducive to business start-up 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 evidence²² points to the availability of human capital²³; proximity to a third level institution; transport infrastructure; broadband infrastructure²⁴; and finally, a diverse local sectoral mix as being key factors in the development of start-ups.

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 enterprises²⁵. 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 patterns²⁶.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Innovation Capacity

RPO 6.25: 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.

²² McCoy et al. (2018) the impact of broadband and other infrastructure on the location of new business establishments. Journal of Regional Science.

²³ Measured as the percentage of the population with a third level qualification.

²⁴ Which needs to be coupled with availability of Human capital to have a significant effect.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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

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 6.26: 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 6.27: With the allocation outcomes from the competitive calls EMRA, in co-ordination 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 6.28: 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 6.29: 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 RAPJs, LAPs, LECs and CCDPs.

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 RAPJs, LAPs, LECs and Development Plans. 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 6.30: 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.



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 Assessment²⁷ 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 provides preparedness and readiness for the economy of the Region.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Economic Risk Management System

RPO 6.31: Prepare and operate an economic risk management system, with preventive action plans, considering social and environment factors.

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 losses. 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 6.32: Support enterprise agencies, RAPJs, LECPs, Regional Skills 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.



²⁷ 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.

7

Environment

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 draft 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; 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 of 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, territorial seas, the Exclusive Economic Zone, and international co-ordination.

More detailed regional maritime spatial plans may be required at a later date²⁸, offering an opportunity for further stakeholder engagement and integration of marine and territorial plans over the lifetime of the draft 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.

²⁸ The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is implementing MSP in Ireland, the Marine Institute provide technical and scientific advice.

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 Chapter 10 Infrastructure.

The development of strategic coastal flood and erosion hazard maps for the national coastline²⁹, 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 Section 7.4 for more on Coastal 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.

²⁹ 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 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 (Ports) for additional policies.

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 sector in the Region, 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.

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 natural assets from which people derive a wider range of services, called ecosystem services, which includes clean air and water, the food we eat, and the resources we use for fuel, building materials and medicines. 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 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 currently 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

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

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.

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, Airport Noise.

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.

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 7.6 Strategic Green Infrastructure Assets. The aim of the Water Framework Directive 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), Wetland and River Restoration initiatives can play a role in regulating the flow and water filtration and can help in meeting our obligations under WFD and Climate adaptation.

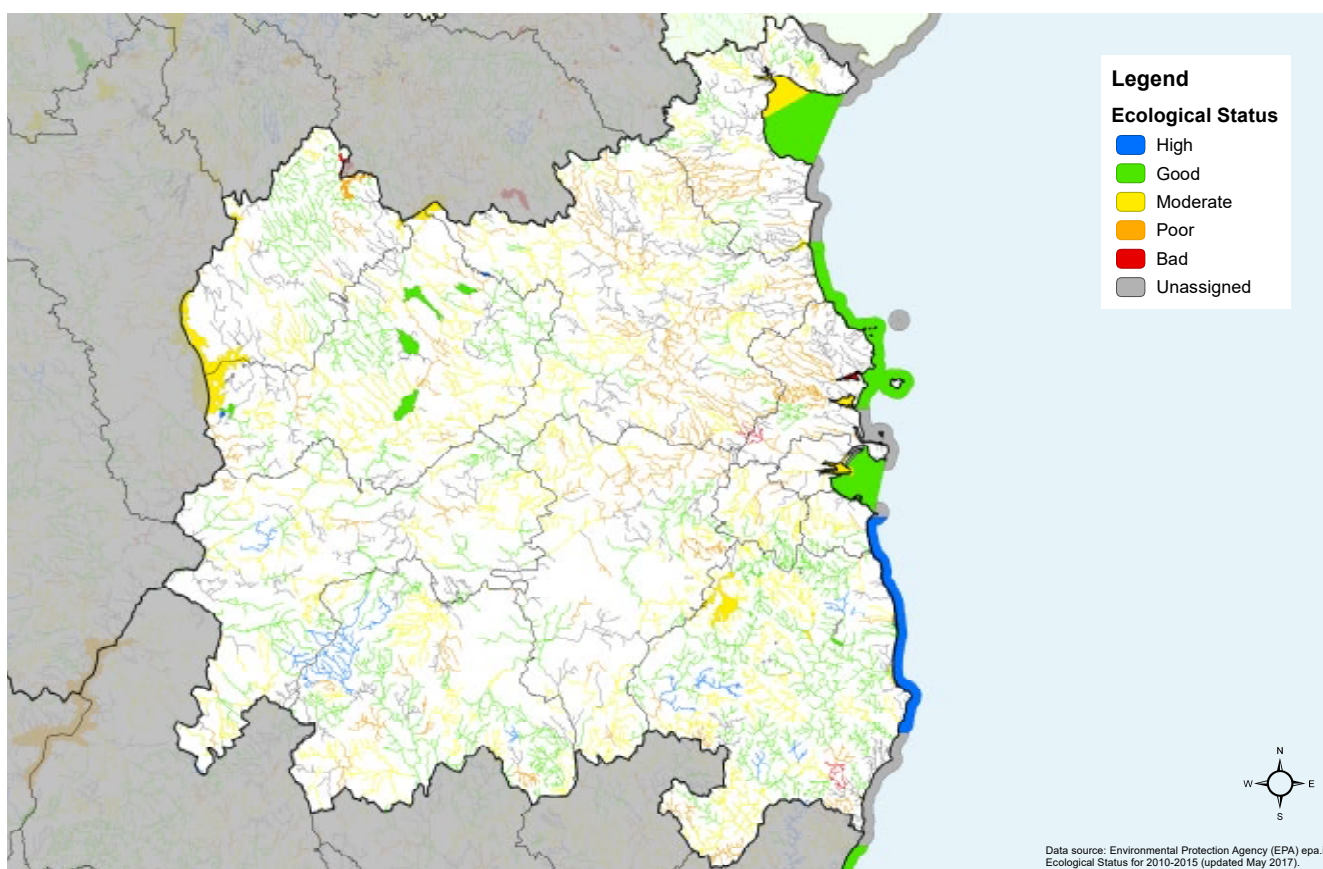


Figure 7.1 Status of Water Bodies

Integrated Catchment Management

Compliance with the 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 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 currently developing a Regional Integrated Catchment Management Programme for the period of this RBMP (2018– 2021) which will 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 Development Plans.

RPO 7.11: Local Authorities shall incorporate 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 Management³⁰ 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 7.6 - Green and Blue Infrastructure and Chapter 10 - SUDS for more detail).

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).

³⁰ Flood Risk Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009, jointly developed by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) and the OPW

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 RSES³¹. See Appendix H for a list of new Flood Relief Schemes in the Region to be advanced in initial 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 draft 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 consideration 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 draft 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 landuse 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.



³¹ 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.

Designated Sites

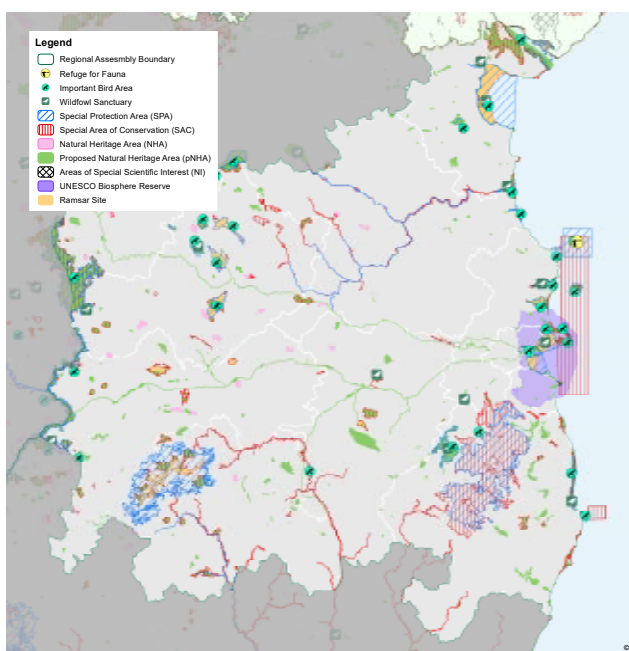


Figure 7.2 Designated Sites in the Region

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 massive 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 recent 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.

Biodiversity and Climate Change

Climate change poses a real threat to the functions of ecosystems, 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 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.

Non-designated sites supporting biodiversity

In addition to sites that are designated under the Birds and Habitats Directives, other biodiversity supporting sites in the Region 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 7.6 Green and Blue Infrastructure).

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 our Region, located in close proximity to Dublin and it is estimated that at least 1.5 million people access the park each year. Currently the Wicklow Mountains National Park share a visitor centre with the nearby monastic site of Glendalough.

The 2018 National Parks Tourism Interpretive Masterplan sets out an investment framework³² 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.

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 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 improved visitor experiences and facilities in the Wicklow National Park.

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.



³² Jointly funded by the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Failte Ireland

7.6 Green and Blue Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure 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 however for the purposes of the draft RSES, the term Green Infrastructure is used as it seeks to enhance the interrelationships between green (ecology) and blue (hydrology) eco-systems.

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. see figure 7.3 for zoned lands and designated sites.

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 (GBIHealth). Internationally, large amounts of evidence suggest that access to green and blue spaces provide significant health benefits. GBIHealth examined and confirmed the positive influence green and blue spaces have on health and wellbeing in an Irish context.

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 below identifies the strategic GI and cultural heritage assets in the Region.

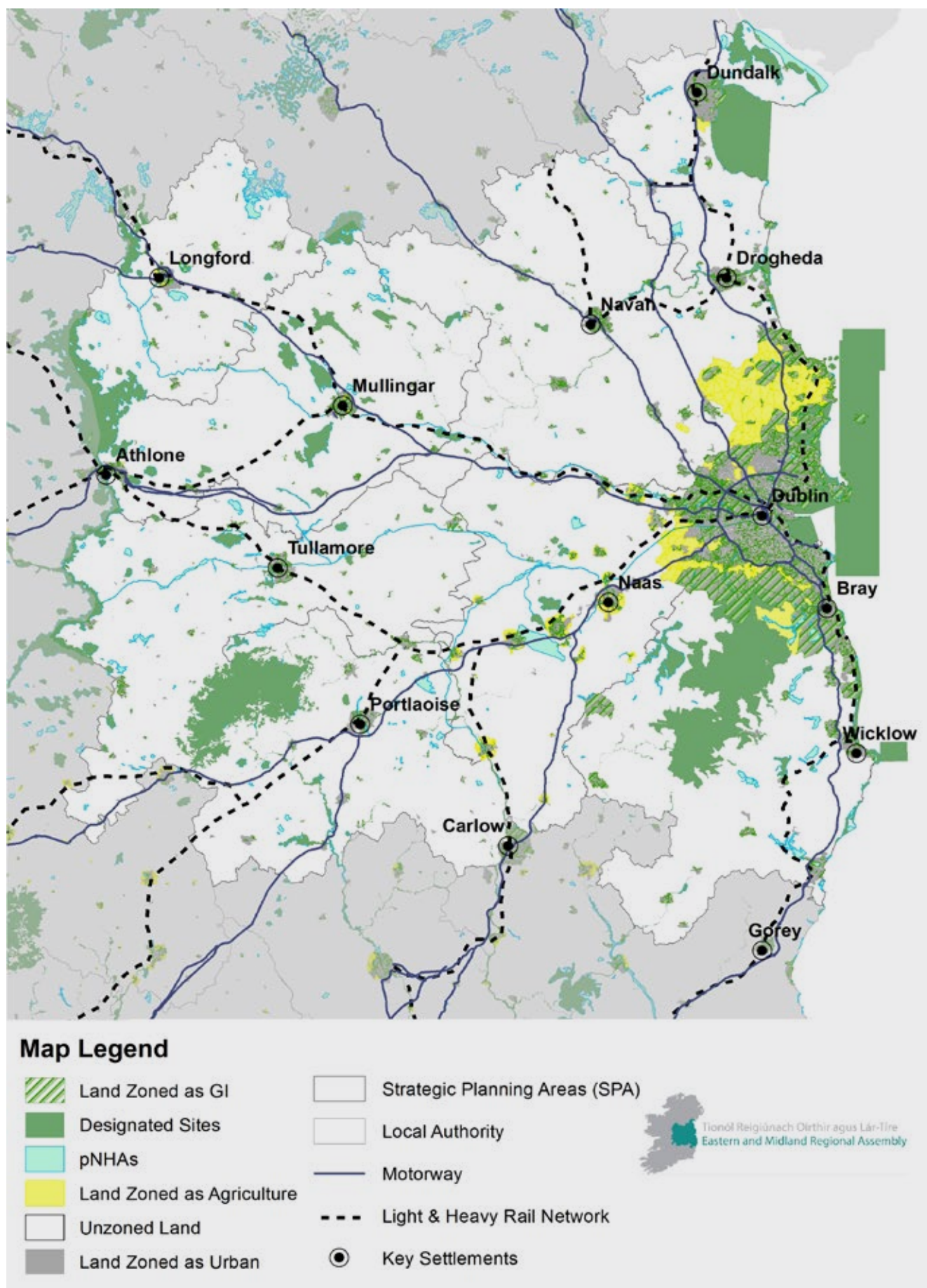


Figure 7.3 Zoned as GI and designated lands within the Region. Sources: NPWS, MyPlan.ie

EMRA Strategic Green Infrastructure and Cultural Heritage	
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, Maharamore, Brittas, Clogga, Arklow
Lakes, Rivers and canals	Loughs Sheelin, Derrvaragh, Ennel, Blessington, Gowna, Owel and Ree. Rivers Avonmore, Aughrim, Avoca, Boyne, Barrow, Blackwater, Brosna, Clodagh, Fane, Dee, Dodder Dargle, Glyde, Inny, Liffey, Nore, Nanny, Poddle, Slate, Santry, Shannon. Tang, Tolka and Vartry, Canals; Grand Canal and Royal Canal
Greenways, blueways and peatways	Dublin to Galway Eurovelo Route, Shannon Wilderness Corridor, East Coast Trail, Newry to Carlingford, Royal and Grand Canal Ways, Wicklow Way, Peatways (Corolea, 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	Red Bog, Mouds , Ballynafagh, Moneybeg And 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, 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
Medieval, historic and walled towns.	Medieval towns of Carlingford, Drogheda, Trim and Athlone. Historic planned towns of Birr, Abbeyleix, Castlepollard and Tyrellspass. Walled towns of Ardee, Carlingford, Drogheda, Castledermot, Athy, Athlone, 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. See also Record of National monuments

Table 7.1 Strategic Natural, Cultural and Heritage Assets in the Region

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.
- **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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Green Infrastructure

RPO 7.21: 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 7.22: 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.

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 for greenways in the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

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. 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, Clonmacnoise 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.
- **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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Greenways, Blueways and Peatways

RPO 7.23: 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.

RPO 7.24: 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.



7.7 Landscape

The draft 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 1.a 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 Acts 2000 – 2018 (as amended) 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 section 10.2 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 Regional Assembly working 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 Mona 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 7.6 Greenways.

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 7.25: 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 7.26: 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 7.27: Support collaboration between Local Authorities 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 Mona 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.



7.8 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 draft 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 Appendix D.







Parameter	Observed	Projected	Example of Biophysical Impacts
 Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 7.4 Observed and projected climate changes and impacts for Ireland. Source: National Adaptation Framework

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.

Current Situation

The EPA's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections Report 2017-2035³³ 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 draft 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 draft RSES will need to address the built environment (mainly residential) sector.

Estimates of GHG emissions at a regional level using 2015 CO₂ 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 CO₂ emissions – these areas represent carbon sinks, or areas which can remove CO₂ 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 (CARO's). The Dublin Metropolitan Region Climate Change Office (run by the four Dublin Local Authorities assisted by Codema) and the Eastern and Midland Region Climate Change 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.

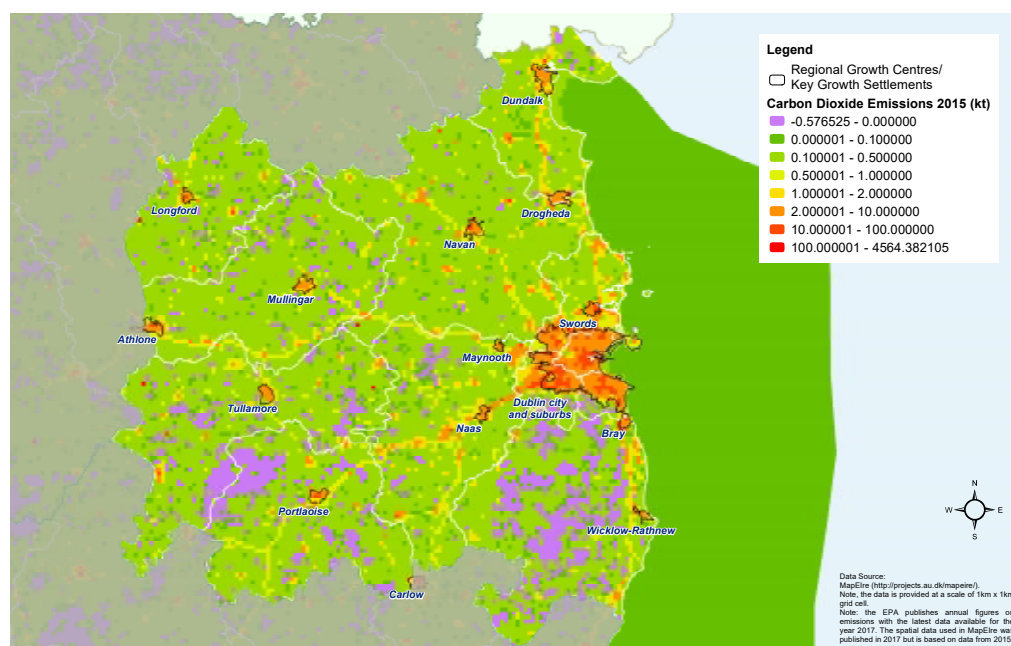


Figure 7.5 Carbon Dioxide Emissions in the Region

³³ http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghgprojections2017-2035/EPA_2018_GHG_Emissions_Projections_Summary_Report.pdf

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 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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Climate Change

RPO 7.28: 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 7.29: Within one year of the publication of the RSES, the Climate Action Regional Offices shall compile a greenhouse gas emissions inventory for the Region to allow for planning of strategic mitigation action through a Regional Decarbonisation Plan. The Climate Action Regional Offices shall track the success of the Plan through annual inventories completed each year. Annual reporting of the inventories and critical analysis of the proposed measures will be undertaken to track progress within the Region and to track progress with national targets on a regional basis.

RPO 7.30: On publication of the first regional emission inventory, the EMRA in conjunction with the Climate Action Regional Offices shall identify the sectoral emissions and assign a series of sectoral emissions reductions targets for each sector within the Regional Decarbonisation Plan. These emissions reductions targets will be based on an aggregate 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in line with the EU 2030 Framework.

RPO 7.31: Local Authorities shall develop, adopt and implement local climate action strategies which shall assess local vulnerability to climate risks, quantify the emissions produced within their jurisdictions, and identify, cost and prioritise adaptation actions in accordance with the guiding principles of the National Adaptation Framework.

RPO 7.32: Climate Action Regional Offices shall provide guidelines and support to the Local Authorities on the development, adoption and implementation of local climate action strategies (both mitigation and adaption). These guidelines shall include the specific actions and obligations and timescales for same that must be undertaken by the Local Authorities to comply with national policy.

RPO 7.33: EMRA supports the National Policy Statement on Bioeconomy (2018) and supports the exploration of opportunities in the circular resource-efficient economy including undertaking a bio-economy 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.



Decarbonising Electricity Generation

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 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 draft 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.

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 currently 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 draft Strategy seeks to support the micro-generation and storage of heat and energy.

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 Electricity Generation

RPO 7.34: 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 should be developed to support delivery of projects within the Strategic Energy Zones.

RPO 7.35: 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 7.36: A bio-economy 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 7.37: 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.



Building Standards Energy Performance

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 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:

Building Standards

RPO 7.38: 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 7.39: 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 7.40: Support and promote structural materials in the construction industry that have low to zero embodied energy & CO2 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 CO₂ emissions – and promoting modal shift towards low-carbon travel alternatives such as public transport, walking and cycling. Chapter 8 of this strategy puts forward a Transport Strategy which provides for a shift towards alternatives to the private car, 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, CO₂ 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 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 as well as implementation of the National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland and on Parking (when published).

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Decarbonising Transport

RPO 7.41: Local Authorities shall include proposals in statutory land use plans to facilitate and encourage an increase in electric vehicle use, including measure 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 7.42: Climate Action Regional Offices and Local Authorities should consider the identification of critical infrastructure within their functional area, 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 draft RSES. The thematic approach taken in preparation of the draft 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 draft 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 paper³⁴ 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.



³⁴ <http://www.dttas.ie/sites/default/files/publications/corporate/english/cost-congestion-main-report/cost-congestion-main-report.pdf>

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.

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 Transport 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 Climate Change.

The Draft 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 draft 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.

The following table sets out the hierarchy of policies and plans, against which transport policy in the EMRA area is formulated and implemented.

International	The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)
National	National Planning Framework, Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future).
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.

Table 8.1 Hierarchy of Plans and Policies

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.

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 CO2 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.



Figure 8.1: EMRA Strategic Transport Infrastructure

Guiding Principles for Integration of Land Use and Transport

The draft 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.
- The predicted impact of the potential land use and transport infrastructure on modal split and transport greenhouse gas emissions should be assessed to deliver on national and regional 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.
- Support reverse commuting for those living in urban centres and commuting to work elsewhere.
- 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 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.

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 informed by the guiding principles expressed in the transport strategy of the draft 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 outside of the GDA shall be informed by the guiding principles expressed in the draft RSES.

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, Portlaoise, Mullingar, Tullamore, Longford, Balbriggan, Navan, Naas, Newbridge, Wicklow-Rathnew, Ashbourne and Arklow, and certain large settlements or development areas within the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:**Local Transport Plans**

RPO 8.5: 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.

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 8.6: 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

- Delivery of DART Expansion Programme - delivery of priority elements including investment in new train fleet, new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines. Provide fast, high-frequency electrified services to Drogheda on the Northern Line, Celbridge-Hazelhatch 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 at 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 Dunshauglin and Navan
- Support construction of Metrolink (from Swords to Sandymount)
- LUAS Green Line Capacity Enhancement in advance of Metrolink
- Undertake appraisal, planning and design of LUAS network expansion to Bray, Finglas, Lucan, Poolbeg

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 8.7: 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 draft 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 draft 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 draft RSES and the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Investment in Improved Strategic Road Connectivity

RPO 8.8: 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
- N52 Ardee Bypass
- N2 Slane Bypass
- Sallins Bypass
- Adamstown and Nangor Road Improvements
- Portlaoise Southern Distributor Road
- Laytown to Bettystown Link Road
- Athy Southern Distributor Road
- N2 Rath Roundabout to Kilmoon Cross
- N2 Ardee to south of Castleblaney
- M4 Maynooth to Leixlip
- N4 Mullingar to Longford (and Sligo)
- M11 from Jn 4 M50 to Kilmacanogue
- N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan
- N3 Clonee to M50
- M50 Dublin Port South Access

A number of significant regional road schemes will also be supported, including those listed below, 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 draft Strategy, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

Significant Regional Road Schemes:

- Adamstown and Nangor Road Improvements;
- Portlaoise Southern Distributor Road;
- Laytown to Bettystown Link Road;
- Athy Southern Distributor Road;
- Portlaoise Southern Distributor Road.
- N80 Improvements including inter regional and intra regional accessibility.
- N81 Tallaght to Hollywood scheme including linkage roads from Baltinglass and Dunlavin to N9 from N81.

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 a nationally 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).

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:**Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor**

RPO 8.9: Support the improvement, and protection, of the EU TEN-T network and the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast road network.

RPO 8.10: 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 8.11: Support the Local Link Rural Transport Programme throughout rural areas of the Region.

Park and Ride

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Park and Ride

RPO 8.12: The draft 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: Strategic Park and Ride Projects for the Region

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| ▪ Swords | ▪ Naas Road |
| ▪ Finglas | ▪ Carrickmines |
| ▪ Dunboyne | ▪ Woodbrook |
| ▪ Liffey Valley | ▪ 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, 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 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 8.13: The critical role of 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 8.14: 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 county 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 2018³⁵. 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 Green House 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.

35 http://issuu.com/daapublishing/docs/daa_annual_report_2017?e=5056106/60531841

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Dublin Airport

RPO 8.15: Support the National Aviation Strategy and the growth of Dublin Airport to include its status as a secondary hub airport, in particular the provision of a second runway and improved terminal facilities. 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 and in the longer term, consideration of heavy rail access to facilitate direct services from the national rail network in the context of potential future electrification.

RPO 8.16: Improve cycle access to Dublin Airport and surrounding employment locations.

RPO 8.17: Spatial planning policies in the vicinity of the airport shall recognise and reflect the airport noise zones associated with Dublin Airport. In particular 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.

RPO 8.18: 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.

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 EMRA 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, Dun 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. 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). 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 25% over the last four years. In 2017 there was a record throughput of 36.4 million gross tonnes, a 4% 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 draft 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 draft RSES as important centres of economic activity, and the draft RSES seeks to protect and support the role of regional ports as economic drivers for the Region. This includes ports located at Arklow, Drogheda, Dundalk, Dun Laoghaire, Greenore, Howth, Wicklow and Warrenport in Northern Ireland.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Ports

RPO 8.19: 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 8.20: 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 8.21: 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 8.22: 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 8.23: 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 8.24: 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 and Policy Context

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 RSES population growth and changing demographics will require a planning 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.

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, see fig 9.1



9.2 Context

Demographic change

The age profile of the Region is in general very similar to that of the the country as a whole and it is expected to follow similar trends over the coming years, most notably an increasing ageing population.

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 housing needs today and into the future.

Age friendly communities

There is an urgent need for responsive planning policy to avoid an ageing population crisis. Currently, 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 draft 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 all³⁶.

³⁶ National Disability Authority 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach'. www.universaldesign.ie

Migration and diversity

The CSO population projections highlight demographic pressures that will remain a feature in the Region, as migration will be the key driver of future population growth over the lifetime of the RSES. The Region is currently the most demographically diverse in the State - over 1 in 8 citizens are non-Irish nationals rising to more than 1 in 5 in the towns of Longford, Portlaoise and Athlone. As more immigrants become Irish or dual citizens, the numbers of non-Irish in the Region have fallen in the last intercensal period. However the rates of citizens who were born outside of Ireland is 19% of the regional population rising to nearly 1 in 3 people in Longford town and in the small towns of Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon, also in Longford.

While Dublin's inner city and suburbs such as Blanchardstown and Saggart also have high rates of non-Irish nationals, 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 2017³⁷ 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 with the current programme operating from 2014-2018.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Promoting Healthy and Attractive Communities

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.

37 http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/National_Traveller_and_Roma_Inclusion_Strategy_2017%E2%80%932021

9.3 Housing

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 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.

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 settlements³⁸. 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 living 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 draft 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. Housing affordability and supply issues are impacting upon health and wellbeing, due to overcrowding, with people residing in substandard accommodation and homelessness.

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.



³⁸ 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.

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 2.8 in the Region, 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.

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 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 37³⁹, requires each Local Authority to undertake a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) for their administrative area. A HNDA is aimed at informing housing policies, housing strategies and land use zoning policies, by providing a robust evidence base to support the future location, typology and tenure of housing needs, including single houses in the countryside. There is an acknowledgement that this 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 EMRA 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).

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.

39 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.

9.4 Placemaking

The design of healthy and attractive places should also seek to protect and enhance the unique identity and character of that place and consider the quality of life that comes from the interaction of people and their environment. Urban placemaking is about improving the attractiveness of the public realm, transforming the spaces between buildings into vibrant urban spaces that offer comfort, safety and inspiration. Effective public realm interventions can dramatically improve human wellbeing and are also a key factor in enhancing the attractiveness of places for increasingly mobile talent and business investment as well as creating greater demand amongst visitors, workers and shoppers to Good urban design seeks to create public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and welcoming 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.

There is a need to ensure alternatives to the car in the design of streets and public spaces and 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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Placemaking

RPO 9.7: 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 9.8: 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.



9.5 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. 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 Regeneration and Development Fund and Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

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 settlements⁴⁰.

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.

Urban/Brownfield Regeneration Sites – Guiding Principles:

- Local Authorities should consider undertaking a study of potential contamination of zoned brownfield sites in order to inform all stakeholders in the development of sites the scope of potential for contaminated lands.
- In association with assessing contamination of brownfield sites, Local Authorities should consider the establishment of a database of brownfield sites as part of the active land management process, incorporating other relevant databases such as the Derelict Sites Register and the Vacant Sites Register so that brownfield re-use can be managed and co-ordinated across multiple stakeholders.
- For larger scale regeneration sites, site briefs should demonstrate as far as practicable where consultation has been undertaken with the relevant waste management permitting and licensing authorities, as required, so that the method(s), programme and timescales for site remediation processes are identified early and considered by all stakeholders within brownfield masterplans.
- 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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Compact Urban Development

RPO 9.9: 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 at least 30% of all new homes within or contiguous to the built-up area of metropolitan settlements within the wider Dublin metropolitan area.

⁴⁰ 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.

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 66⁴¹). It is further envisaged that the Agency will access the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund in order to achieve these goals.



REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Regeneration

RPO 9.10: 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 9.11: 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 9.12: Local Authorities shall, in their Core Strategies, set out specific objectives relating to the delivery of development on urban/ brownfield regeneration sites in line with the Guiding Principles set out in the Draft RSES.

RPO 9.13: To support, at a National level, efforts to explore ways to deal effectively with waste and contamination relating to brownfield regeneration.

Refer to Chapters 4 and 5 for additional policies in relation to regeneration.

⁴¹ 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

9.6 Social Inclusion 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 Region⁴². Figure 9.2 shows the Pobal HP Deprivation Index scores for the Region.

The Economic Strategy of the draft 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. The Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), developed by Local Authorities in the Region highlight a number of local policy and actions to provide opportunities for participation by marginalised communities and social groups at risk of exclusion.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Social Inclusion

RPO 9.14: Support the implementation of Local Authority Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) 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.

Childcare and schools

The draft RSES aims to address mis-alignment in the Region across a range of factors including school provision, facilities and child-friendly amenities.

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 employment⁴³.

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.

⁴² <https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2018/06/The-2016-Pobal-HP-Deprivation-Index-Introduction-07.pdf>

⁴³ 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

EMRA: Pobal HP Deprivation Index - Relative Score, 2016

By Small Area (SA)



Figure 9.1 Pobal HP Deprivation Index

Third level education and lifelong learning

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 (33.4%), 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. Third level education should be complemented by further education and apprenticeship training.

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. 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.

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 9.15: 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 9.16: In areas where significant new housing is proposed, an assessment of need regarding schools provision should be carried out and statutory plans shall designate new school sites at accessible, pedestrian, cycle and public transport friendly locations.



9.7 Social Infrastructure

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.

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.

It is important that Local Authorities work collaboratively with service providers and stakeholders including the local community to effectively plan for social infrastructure needs through Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and the Local Economic and Community Plans (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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Access to Social Infrastructure

RPO 9.17: EMRA shall work collaboratively with stakeholders including the wide range of service providers through the LECPs to effectively plan for social infrastructure needs.

RPO 9.18: 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.



9.8 Healthy Communities

Recreation and Open Space

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 residencies, 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. Green infrastructure in all its forms and multifunctionality is addressed separately in Chapter 7 of this strategy.

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 9.19: 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 9.20: 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.

Health care

The availability and access to 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)

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Provision of Health Services

RPO 9.21: 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 9.22: 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 draft RSES settlement strategy and core strategies of development plans.

9.9 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 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, they 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).

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 draft 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, simple 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.



Language

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 balanced regional development objectives⁴⁴.

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.

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 including the walled towns of Ardee, Carlingford, Drogheda, Trim and Dublin 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..

⁴⁴ The NPF supports the implementation of language plans in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks (National Planning Objective 29).

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 including the Navan Town Centre Health Check and Wicklow and Balbriggan historic public realm plans, which linked to the statutory Local Area Plans. Community led village design statements were piloted in Julianstown (rural pilot) and Sandymount (urban pilot), in partnership with Meath County Council and Dublin City Council.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Arts, Culture and Heritage

RPO 9.23: 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 9.24: 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 9.25: 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 9.26: 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 9.27: 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 9.28: Support the designation of the UNESCO candidate sites in the Region.

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. The draft 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, building climate resilience.



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.

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.

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 Midlands Region to supply water to Dublin and towns in the EMRA including Athlone
- 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.

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 10.5: 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 10.6: 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 10.7: 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 10.8: EMRA shall support appropriate options for the extraction of energy and other resources from sewerage sludge in the Region.

RPO 10.9: EMRA supports the servicing of rural villages (served sites) to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside.



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 bodies⁴⁵. 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.

The following guiding principles shall be incorporated into Development plans and LAPs:

- Include policies and actions to encourage the integration of 'soft' measures including SUDs, green space 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.

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 10.10: 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 10.11: Implement policies contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS), including SuDS.

RPO 10.12: Implement the specific recommendations of the GSDSDS in relation to Climate Change Regional Drainage Policies for all relevant developments within the Region.

RPO 10.13: 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.

⁴⁵ <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 section 10.6 Climate Change 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. Increased connectivity with other grids is also needed and projects such as the North South interconnector are of great importance for the Region.

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. Part of the Eastern Region is within the Greater Dublin Area and is similarly 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.



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.

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
- 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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Energy Infrastructure

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.

RPO 10.14: Support roll-out of the Smart Grids and Smart Cities Action Plan enabling new connections, grid balancing, energy management and micro grid development.

RPO 10.15: 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 including the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

RPO 10.16: Support an Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM) as a key priority for Ireland.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Energy Infrastructure

RPO 10.17: 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 10.18: 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 10.19: 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 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 10.20: Development Plans shall identify how waste will be reduced, in line with the principles of the circular economy and how remaining quantum 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.



11

All Island Cohesion

11.1 Introduction

The draft Strategy recognises the strong links between our Region and Northern Ireland. 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 draft 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 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 draft 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 draft Strategy supports a drive in the linkage between Dundalk and Newry to strengthen a cross border synergy in services and functions between these town and to ensure that drivers and policy are complimentary and not competing 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.

The Corridor has the capacity to provide the only potential paired city European 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.

The draft Strategy promotes the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast 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 included in this Strategy.

In the information age, telecommunications networks play a crucial role in enabling social and economic activity. This draft 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.



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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

All Ireland Approach

RPO 11.1: In co-operation with relevant departments in Northern Ireland, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly will support mutually beneficial policy development and activity in the areas of spatial and infrastructure planning and related spheres.

12

Implementation & Monitoring

12.1 Introduction

The primary objective of the draft 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 draft 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.

Goals and 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 to facilitate improved coordination and delivery of strategic sites in Dublin's Metropolitan Area. Also included is a development framework which sets out the context for the preparation of Core Strategies in Local Authority development plans and with which they must be consistent. The RSES will also directly influence the content of Local Economic and Community Plans which must be formulated in accordance with a 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 are to replace the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) 2010 - 2022 is underpinned by the Planning and Development Acts (as amended) and the Local Government Acts (as amended).

Section 63 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (which amends the Planning and Development Act 2000Sec.23) states "The objective of regional spatial and economic strategies shall be to support the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy 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 Spatial Strategy 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.



Section 27 of the Planning and Development Act (as amended) 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.

In respect of the evaluation and reporting of the Strategy, the following monitoring and reporting arrangements are required by legislation to measure progress:

- Public bodies to which Section 22A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and each local authority within the regional assembly is 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.



12.3 Implementation

Implementation of the Strategy will be focused on policies, actions and investment to deliver the Regional Strategic Outcomes set out in the Strategy.

Review of City and County Development Plans

Within the EMRA 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 2016.

This facilitates Local Authority Development Plan review processes underway within the RSES preparation period to be paused until such time as they can benefit from the latest data and policy contexts from the RSES. It also provides that recently adopted plans, which ordinarily last for six years, shall be brought forward for review or variation in order to ensure alignment with regional policy. These provisions mean that most 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 previously extended 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.

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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Implementation of MASP

RPO 12.1: Following adoption of the RSES the EMRA will establish a RSES implementation group to oversee progress on the implementation of the MASP for Dublin.

Investment 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.

Project Ireland 2040 includes four new funds totalling €4 billion designed to stimulate renewal and investment in rural and urban areas, the environment and innovation. 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 Objectives outlined in the National Planning Framework and the Regional Strategic Objectives 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 DHPLG⁴⁶.

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 Fund⁴⁷ 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 National Planning Framework, and in particular to achieve Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities – one of the National Strategic Outcomes 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.

Key outcomes will be 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.



⁴⁶ <http://gov.ie/en/urban-regeneration-and-development-fund/>

⁴⁷ <https://drcd.gov.ie/about/rural/rural-regeneration-development-fund/>

Climate Action Fund

The Climate Action Fund,⁴⁸ under the auspices of 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 will have an allocation of at least €500m over the period to 2027. This includes the objective of funding initiatives that contribute to the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets in a cost-effective manner. It also offers the potential for innovative interventions which, in the absence of support from the Fund, would not otherwise be developed.

In addition, the Fund will seek to facilitate projects that contribute to other Government policy priorities including to:

- support innovation and capacity building towards the development of climate change solutions capable of being scaled and delivering benefits beyond a once off impact;
- generate wider socio-economic benefits such as job creation, air quality improvements, reduction in fuel poverty, bio-diversity and community resilience and development; and leverage non-exchequer sourced investment.

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.

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, our research base and industry. The DTIF is a competitive challenge-based fund for the development, deployment and commercialisation of innovative technology solutions to global challenges across a broad range of areas including healthcare, services, energy and food production and to achieve the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) of the NPF.

The Fund will have 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. From 2019 to 2022 the fund will invest in collaborative partnerships involving enterprises and research partners, with SME participation a requirement in all consortia. The aim of the DTIF is to support enterprise in Ireland to collaborate together, 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.

Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027

Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's sectoral plan under Project Ireland 2040, sets out the overarching vision for a vibrant heritage and culture sector, as well as concrete investments to preserve and promote the national language and to protect natural heritage and biodiversity. As part of Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027, the government has allocated almost €1.2 billion to Ireland's culture, language and heritage. This 10-year strategy recognises the essential role the RSEs have in directing and informing future investment across the Regions

48 <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/CAF%20Call%20for%20Applications.pdf>

DRCD Funding Schemes and Programmes

The Department of Rural and Community Development provides support for rural towns and villages by virtue of a suite of schemes and programmes that includes:

- Town and Village Renewal Scheme
- Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme
- LEADER programme
- CLÁR programme
- Local Improvement Scheme
- Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)
- Communities Facilities Scheme
- RAPID
- Community Services Programme.

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:

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. The Fund will seek to invest in transactions where it can make a difference, where its characteristics can enable commercial investment transactions with positive economic impact and can make it an attractive “investor of choice” for company and project sponsors and advisors. The ISIF is uniquely positioned to make connections and drive innovation across multiple industry players developing and delivering innovative opportunities that might otherwise go unrealised.

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 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.

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 contribute to EU policy objectives supporting projects that make a significant contribution to growth and employment in Europe.

The Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) is a multilateral development bank with an exclusively social mandate. Through the provision of financing and technical expertise for projects with a high social impact in its member states, it actively promotes social cohesion and strengthens social integration in Europe. The CEB represents a major instrument of the policy of solidarity in Europe. It participates in financing social projects, responds to emergency situations and contributes to improving the living conditions of the most disadvantaged population groups. The CEB contributes to the implementation of socially oriented investment 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-ups through to large companies and to assist college-based researchers to commercialise researched technologies.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) launched the €60 million 2017- 2020 Regional Enterprise Development Fund to support the ambition, goals and implementation of the Regional Action Plans for Jobs. The aim of this Scheme is to drive enterprise development and job creation by co-financing the development and implementation of projects that can sustain and add to employment at a national, regional and county level. The Scheme supports collaborative and innovative projects involving a range of enterprises and public bodies, including local and community enterprise initiatives, innovation and technology partnerships and enterprise-led Industry Clusters, which must comprise of at least five companies. Applicants can be promoted by public bodies and Local Authorities.

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) is the national innovation pre-commercial procurement initiative administered by Enterprise Ireland. SBIR's aim is to drive innovation across all sections of the Irish Public Sector through the co-funding of competitive challenges that support engagement between technology companies and public bodies. SBIR also supports small and emerging businesses by providing early-stage funding and a route to market, whilst risk is reduced through a phased technology development programme. A number of Local Authorities have run SBIR challenges to identify and develop smart solutions to challenges such as digital engagement, sustainable mobility, water quality and flooding.

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 12.2: The Draft 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 12.3: 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

Office of the Planning Regulator

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2016 provides for the establishment of an independent Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR). This new office will have 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 draft 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 County and City 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.



RSES Implementation Group

EMRA will establish a RSES implementation group who will meet on a regular basis to review implementation of high level policy objectives and progress towards achieving identified Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) of the RSES. The Implementation Group will comprise cross sectoral representation operating at a sufficiently strategic level to provide an over-arching whole of EMRA 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.

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Monitoring

RPO 12.4: 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 12.5: 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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Project Ireland
2040



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