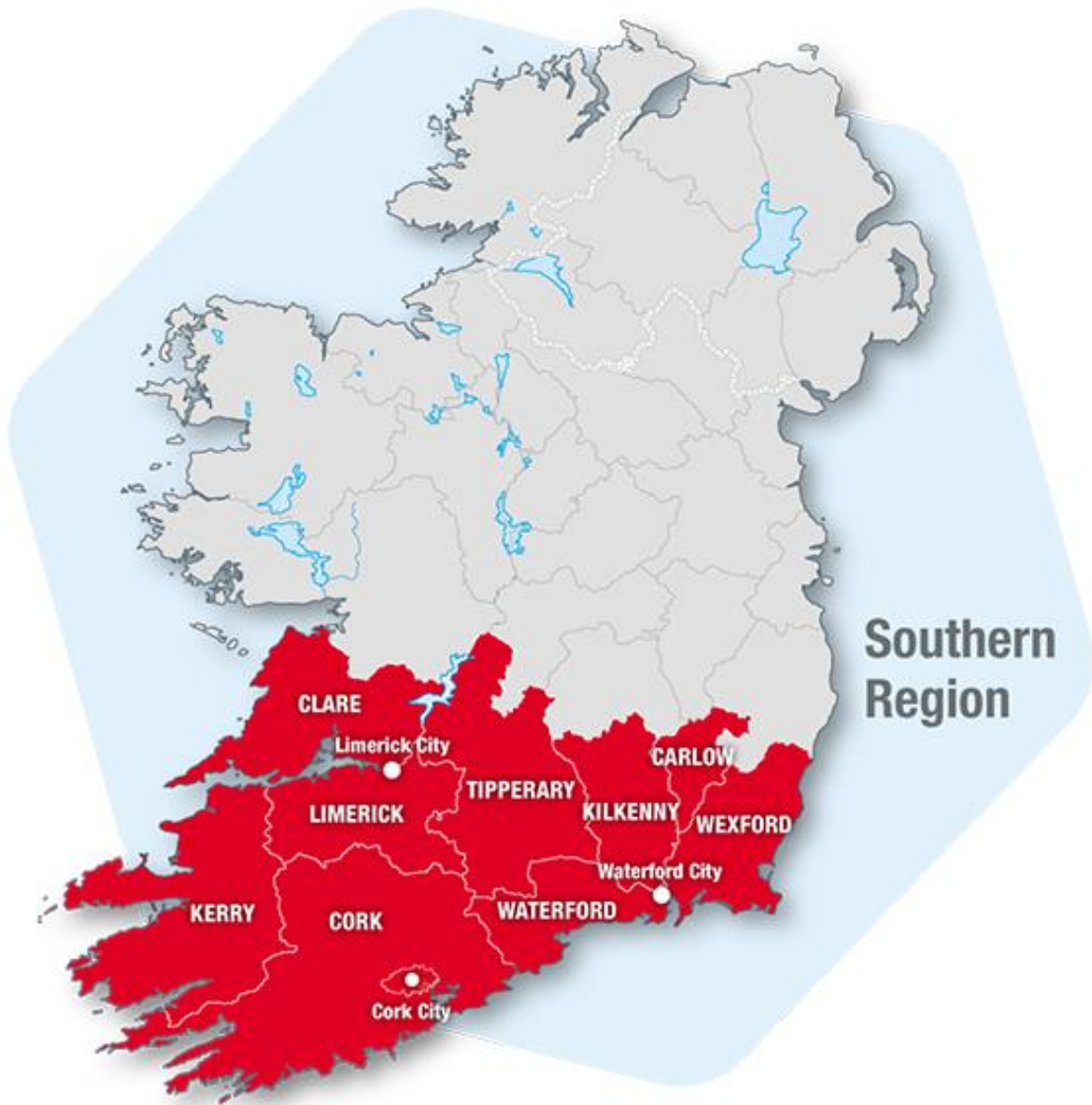


Southern Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy



Issues Paper

Initial Public and Stakeholder Consultation

November 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The National Planning Framework (NFP) – Ireland 2040
- 1.2 The Southern Region and the Southern Regional Assembly
- 1.3 What the NFP means for the Southern Region
- 1.4 What exactly is a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy?
- 1.5 Initial Pre-Draft Consultation
- 1.6 Making a Submission

2. Regional Challenges and Opportunities

3. Our Cities and Towns

- 3.1 Regional Cities
- 3.2 Larger Urban Centres
- 3.3 Towns with populations of less than 10,000 people

4. Our Rural Areas

- 4.1 Rural Settlement
- 4.2 The Rural Economy
- 4.3 Rural Services

5. People, Homes and Communities

- 5.1 Population Profile
- 5.2 Housing
- 5.3 Sustainable Communities

6. A Sustainable Economic Future

- 6.1 The Regional Economy
- 6.2 Productivity
- 6.3 Employment
- 6.4 Human Capital and Innovation
- 6.5 Ireland 2040 Employment Targets

7. Environment, Natural Heritage, Coastal Areas and the Marine

- 7.1 Environmental and Sustainability Goals
- 7.2 Resource Efficiency and Transition to a Low Carbon Economy
- 7.3 Coastal Areas and the Marine Environment

8. Critical Enabling Investment and Infrastructure

9. Implementation and Monitoring

10. Summary of Key Issues to be addressed

11. Next Steps

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The National Planning Framework (NPF) – Ireland 2040

The scale of Ireland's growth since the early 1990's has been unprecedented, notwithstanding the impact of economic recession. Our population has increased by more than 1.1 million people, to 4.75 million. Our housing stock has expanded by more than 750,000, to just over two million homes. Numbers in employment have also grown by more than 660,000, to more than two million people in 2017.

Current trends suggest that the Republic's population could increase by a further one million people over the period to 2040. This is going to require an enormous shift in thinking in how and where people live, work, recreate and travel. The development pressures arising, along with the need to address development legacies from the past require innovative and long-term thinking.

To address these challenges the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is leading the preparation of the National Planning Framework, or 'NPF', on behalf of Government, with input from other Departments and Agencies. This high-level framework (*Ireland 2040 Our Plan*) will guide and direct future development and investment in Ireland and will be the overall Plan from which other, more detailed plans will take their lead. *Ireland 2040* will articulate shared national development goals, including improved living standards, quality of life, prosperity, competitiveness and environmental sustainability and will provide greater clarity for private sector investment (the Draft NPF and supporting reports can be viewed and downloaded on the following website: www.npf.ie).

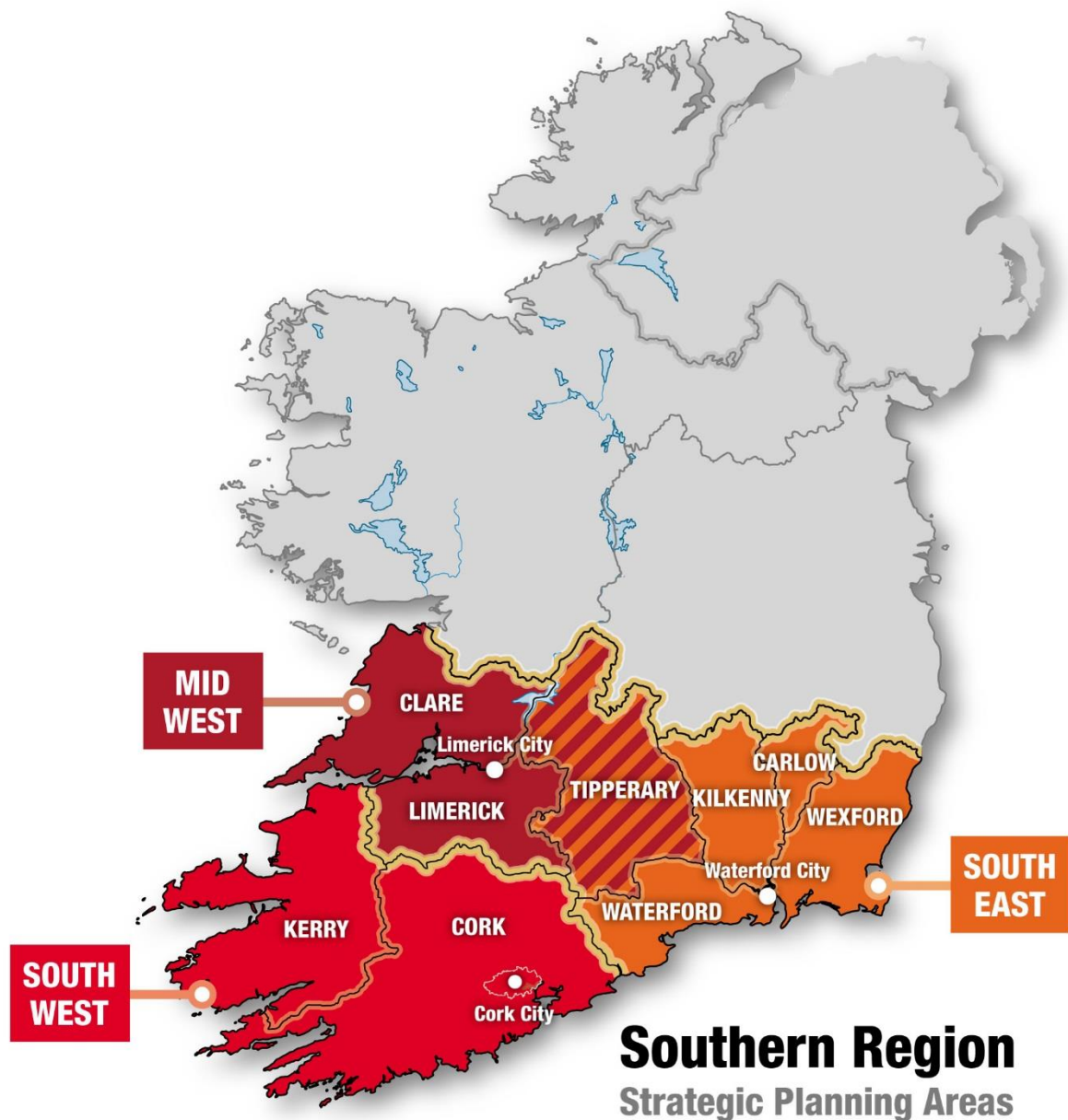
The Draft NPF was placed on public display from 27th September to 3rd November and written submissions on the published *Draft* were invited from all stakeholders and members of the public. Therefore, it is worth noting that the published *Draft* may be subject to change before final adoption by Government of the new National Planning Framework for the state.

1.2 The Southern Region and the Southern Regional Assembly

Since 1st January 2015, three Regional Assemblies have been tasked with specific functions regarding spatial planning and economic development as well as EU funding programmes, oversight of local authority performance and Local Economic and Community Plans, and implementation of national policy.

The membership of the Regional Assemblies consists of members of the local authorities within each of the three regions and each of the Assemblies has been given a clear a leadership role to play in identifying regional policies and coordinating initiatives that support the delivery and implementation of national planning policy. It is also the role of the Regional Assemblies to co-ordinate local authorities to secure shared national and local objectives.

The **Southern Region** consists of the administrative areas of Carlow, Cork, Clare, Kerry, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Wexford County Councils, Limerick City and County Council, Waterford City and County Council and Cork City Council. The region covers about 42% of the total land area of the country and had a total population of almost 1.6 million people at the time of the 2016 census.



The region is sub-divided into three Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) and separate strategic planning area committees have been established in respect of each strategic planning area within the region. These committees have been set up to assist Assembly with the development of policy and advise the Assembly generally on matters in relation to regional spatial and economic strategy at a sub-regional level.

1.3 What the NPF means for the Southern Region

The Southern Region is endowed with a number of significant advantages such as:

- Three out of four Regional Cities (Cork, Limerick and Waterford) located within the region
- Positive population growth of almost 3% over the last five years
- Rural areas characterised by resilient rural communities supported by a strong network of towns and villages
- Good quality farm land with high agricultural yields and strong food processing capabilities
- A modern and diverse industrial base with established cluster and specialisms in high value sectors such as pharmaceuticals, life sciences, aviation, precision engineering, ICT, food and beverages
- An impressive record of employment growth with 62,600 new jobs created in the last five years
- Two Universities and five Institutes of Technology with a combined full-time student population of approximately 55,000 with an additional 12,000 part-time students
- Two out of three state airports at Shannon and Cork as well as two regional airports in Kerry and Waterford
- Four out of five Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports of National Significance at Cork, Shannon Foynes, Waterford and Rosslare
- Net energy exporter with an abundance of clean renewable energy growth potential
- An extensive coastline with significant Marine Resource potential

The Draft NPF recognises these inherent advantages and sees the Southern Region as having a significant role to play in accommodating projected demographic and economic growth in the most optimal and sustainable manner.

A renewed focus on “Regional Parity” in the Draft NPF is being promoted to address anti-competitive pressures on Dublin by offering more sustainable choices and options for people, businesses and communities that can positively influence more sustainable patterns of living and working which benefit our entire society and make our economy more equitable and resilient.

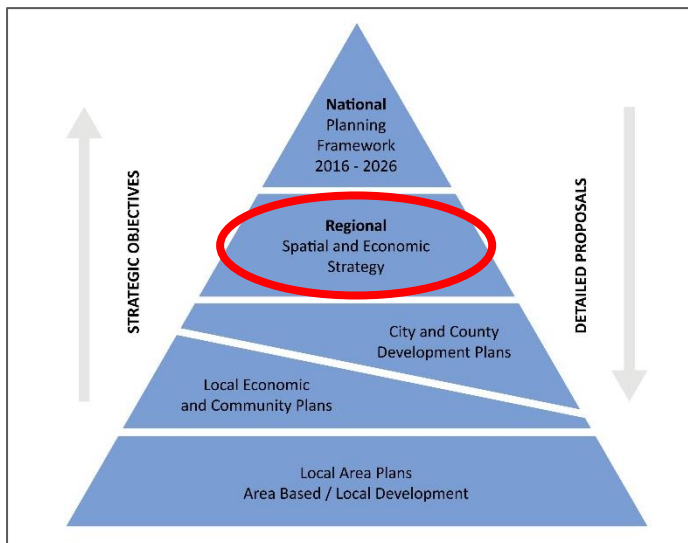
Key targets identified for the Southern Region include:

- Population increase of between 350,000 and 375,000 people between now and the year 2040
- Creation of 220,000 new jobs to support the above level of population increase
- Population and jobs growth to be aligned to occur within the same functional area to minimise unsustainable commuting patterns
- Cork City and suburbs population increasing by 115,000 additional people (an increase of more than 55%) from a population of 209,000 in 2016 to 324,000 by the year 2040
- Limerick City and Suburbs population also increasing by more than 55% with an additional 52,000 people raising the population from 94,000 in 2016 to 146,000 by 2040
- Waterford City and Suburbs population to increase by 30,000 people
- Population growth for large towns with >10,000 population in 2016 should generally be 20-25%, which is ahead of projected national average growth.
- Population growth of Ireland’s smaller towns and rural areas of 15%

1.4 What exactly is a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy?

Effective regional development is about embracing the spatial development opportunities specific to each of the regions. This requires choices to be made which will reflect the differing needs and potential of the regions and will therefore result in economic and spatial strategies which differ from one region to another. These tailored regional strategies are to be developed and implemented by the Regional Assemblies through new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs).

The principal purpose of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is to support the implementation of the emerging National Planning Framework (Ireland 2040 Our Plan) 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.



Just as the RSES must be supportive of and compliant with the National Planning Framework (NPF), each local authority development plan must be consistent with the RSES. To achieve this consistency, each planning authority in the region will formally review their existing development plans once the RSES has been completed to determine whether any variations are required to achieve the objectives of the RSES.

Section 23 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) sets out in detail the required content and objectives of every regional spatial and

economic strategy. However, in general terms, the issues to be addressed by a regional spatial and economic strategy can be summarised as follows:

The **economic elements** will focus on:

- Creating and sustaining quality jobs
- Identifying regional strengths and opportunities
- Identifying the regional attributes that are essential to enhancing regional economic performance including:
 - the quality of the environment
 - the qualities of cities, towns and rural areas
 - physical infrastructure, and
 - social, community and cultural facilities and
 - Proposals for augmenting the economic performance of the region

The **spatial strategy** will address the location and provision of:

- Employment, industrial and commercial development
- Retail development
- Housing
- Transportation, including public transportation, water services, energy and communications networks, waste management facilities
- Educational, healthcare, sports and community facilities
- The preservation and protection of the environment and its amenities and landscape qualities
- The promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas, including the promotion of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change



The principal purpose of economic success is to ensure sustained improvement in living standards and quality of life for all of our citizens. This also provides the best possible platform from which to pursue key social and environmental goals, such as tackling disadvantage and responding to climate change. Continued progress will require us to identify new ways to enable improved performance to achieve outcomes that make a difference at a national scale. Preparing and implementing a National Planning Framework that can influence the spatial pattern of development throughout the Country, presents such an opportunity.

The Draft NPF clearly recognises many key roles for the RSESs in developing distinctive regional planning strategies which will build on the broad policies set out in the Draft NPF and which will guide the plans and policies of local authorities, state agencies and private sector investment over the years ahead. Some of more significant of these policy directions include:

- Co-ordination and alignment of population and jobs growth at a regional level
- Preparation of Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for the Cork, Limerick and Waterford Metropolitan areas as part of the RSES.
- Identification and quantification of locations for strategic employment growth in the cities, their immediately adjoining suburbs and other suitable locations including brownfield industrial sites, and sites immediately adjoining rural natural resources.
- Identification of a number of large regionally distributed towns where (in addition to and in support of our cities and their immediately adjoining suburbs) future population and jobs growth will be focused
- Ensure that the RSES provides for and guides targeted population growth of Ireland's smaller towns and rural areas at an average rate of 15% across the region
- Ensure that the RSES considers and addresses relevant maritime spatial planning issues and the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports
- Identification and prioritisation of key future growth enablers required to deliver our full regional potential in the interest of both the region and the state as a whole

1.5 Initial Pre-Draft Consultation

This *Issues Paper* is a consultation document that has been prepared in advance of drafting a new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the entirety of the Southern Region. Consultation is a critical step in the preparation and drafting of the RSES and this initial consultation seeks to prompt debate and discussion in relation to the future development of the region and the nature of the regions relationship with the rest of the state.

This paper has been designed to provide members of the public and all interested parties an overview of some of the main planning issues that affect the region today. It also provides the opportunity to submit comments and suggestions on the issues raised and other topics that are considered relevant to the RSES and that:

- are strategic in nature;
- are of regional significance; and
- have a spatial (place based) or economic focus.

1.6 Making a submission

Written submissions at this first stage of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process can be made by 5pm on Friday 26th January 2018.

Details of how to make your submission are set out at the end of this paper.

2. REGIONAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

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

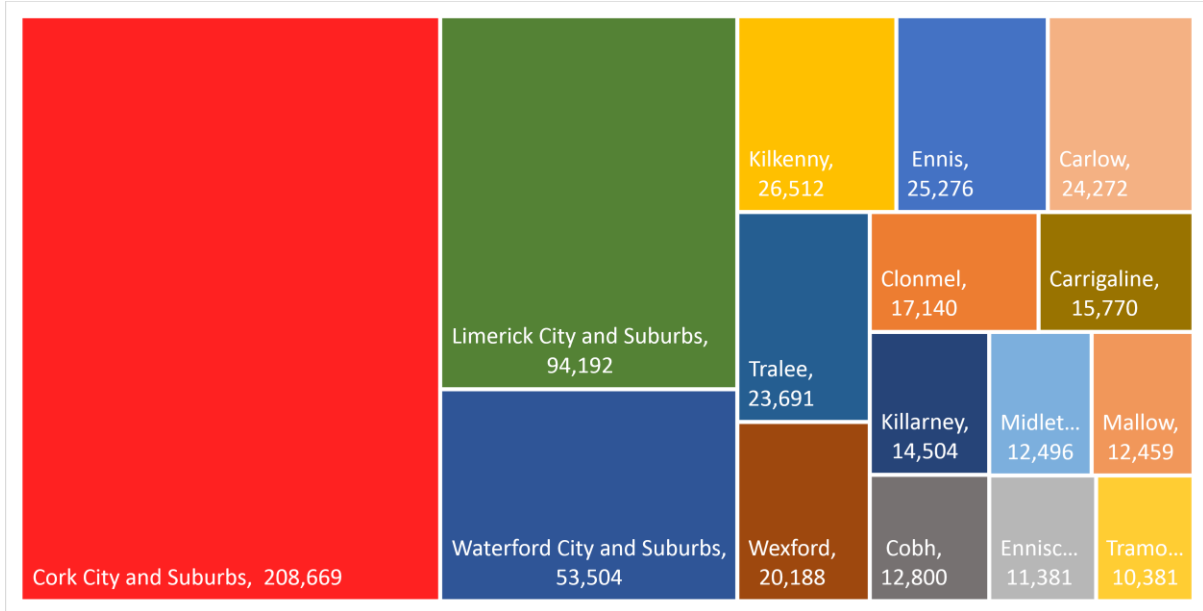
Given the well-established strengths of the region, the SRA contends that the Southern Region presents the most significant potential for the development of an effective counter-balance to the Greater Dublin Area, driven by our regional cities, our county towns and our broad rural base supported by an established and resilient network of smaller towns and villages.

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

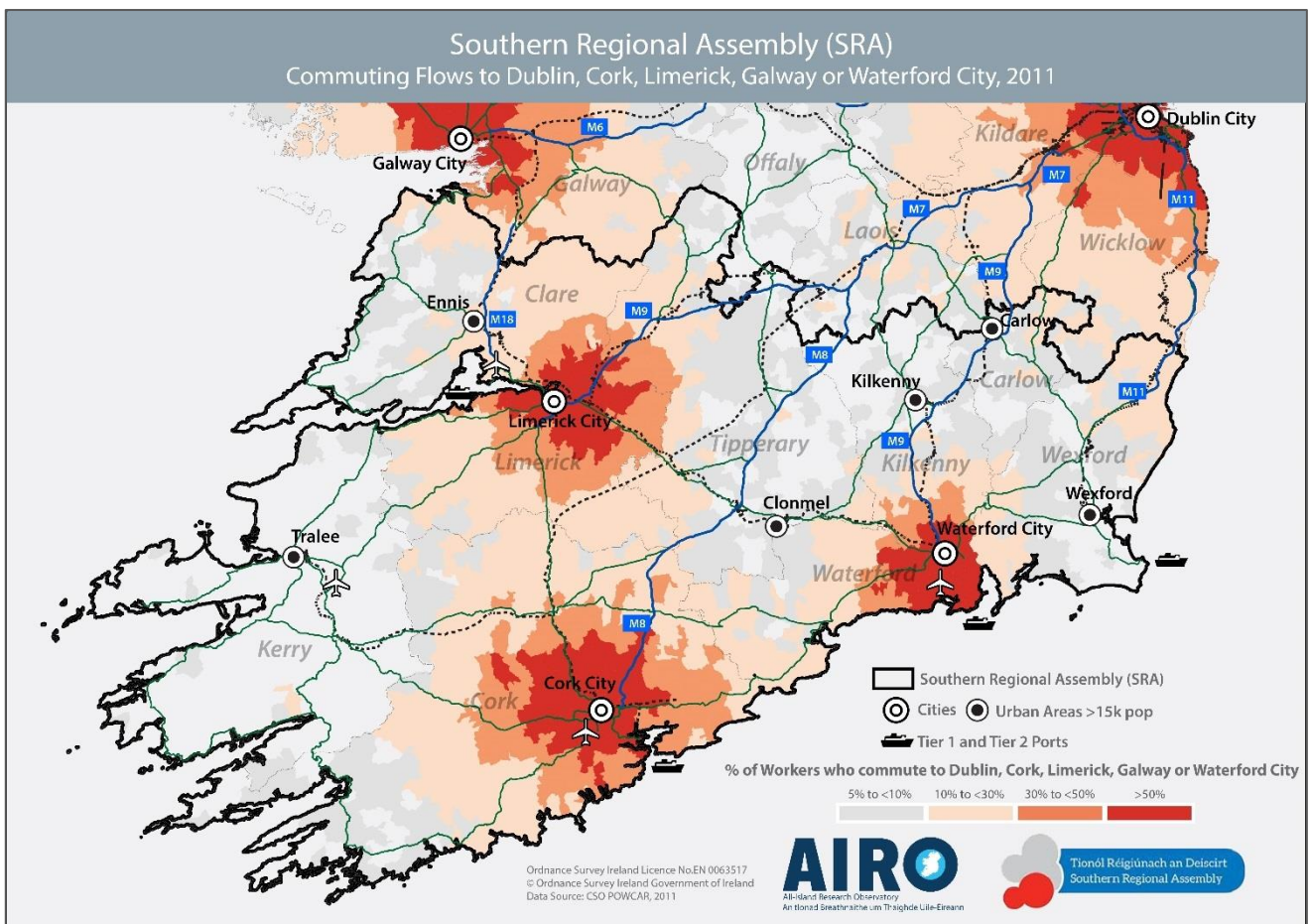
If sufficient critical mass can be achieved in our larger urban centres, the availability of an educated and skilled workforce, coupled with a competitive living and working environment and a well-developed regional infrastructure, will ensure that there is no sector of the economy where the Southern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

3. OUR CITIES AND TOWNS

The Southern Region includes strong network of urban centres with three cities (Cork, Limerick and Waterford), one in each of the three Strategic Planning Areas, and thirteen larger settlements with populations in excess of 10,000 people.



Relative population of these larger urban centres in 2016



3.1 Regional Cities

The Southern Region has three of the State's five cities including Cork, the State's second largest city, which the Draft NPF identifies as an emerging international centre of scale, and Limerick and Waterford which are recognised by the Draft NPF as important national and regional drivers of growth.

In 2016, the three cities and suburbs accounted for 22% of the region's total population. Growth in the cities and suburbs outpaced overall Regional and State level growth between 2011-2016 (2.9% and 3.8% respectively), showing encouraging signs that our cities are strengthening their population base. The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) note the importance of a regional drive for economic initiatives at a local level through the RSES to drive regeneration in our cities and larger urban centres and support actions of other agencies and actors including Local Enterprise Offices, Chambers of Commerce and Local Authority led actions, policies and plans including the Local Economic and Community Plans.

The Draft NPF recognises the strategic role of our cities and their hinterlands as the main engines for national and regional population and economic growth. Ambitious targets are set for cities outside Dublin to each grow by at least 50% to 2040 and to enhance their potential to become cities of scale.

A strategic focus on each of our city regions will be made through the preparation of co-ordinated Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) by the appropriate authorities for Cork, Limerick and Waterford in tandem with and as part of the RSES. These plans will be provided with statutory underpinning to act as twelve-year strategic planning and investment frameworks for the city metropolitan areas. High level long term strategic development issues will be addressed including strategic growth areas, infrastructure (particularly transport and water services), regeneration, the location of housing and employment and metropolitan scale amenities such as regional parks and cycle networks. Defining the appropriate boundaries for the MASPs (for example the Cork Area Strategic Plan includes an example of an existing defined Metropolitan area boundary) will be an important step in preparing the RSES.



The cities and their functioning metropolitan areas, together with the wider city regions, are envisaged as the building blocks for regional development and platforms for future investment into our region. The role of cities in the context of their urban and rural hinterlands needs to be understood and

sustainably planned for, ensuring compact urban settlements, efficient public transport networks and essential physical and social infrastructures are provided in tandem with future projected growth targets. This will make our cities and their catchment areas more sustainable and efficient locations, offering quality options for living and working within our region. This is important on an international and national stage to position our region's largest urban centres, and their catchments, as competitive and well planned for locations to retain and attract future inward growth.

Key Questions for our Cities:

- What must the RSES do to facilitate the cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick and Waterford in achieving their full potential at international, national and regional level and to act as the main "engines" of economic growth in our region?
- What are the potential barriers to achieve the targeted levels of 50-60% growth in our cities and what must be done to ensure that at least half of that projected growth occurs within the urban core on infill and brownfield sites?
- What are the key transformational projects that will further assist our cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick and Waterford to grow and prosper as vibrant urban communities with an enhanced quality of life?
- How can Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) effectively co-ordinate sustainable development patterns and delivery of key infrastructure?
- How can the City Regions assist in the economic growth of the three cities in the Southern Region?

3.2 Larger Urban Centres

The Draft NPF defines larger towns as settlements of 10,000+ people. The Southern Region, in addition to three cities, has thirteen towns with populations in excess of 10,000 people.

Building on the Draft NPF, the RSES is required to determine the appropriate growth rate for larger towns framed by a growth target of 20-25% for towns with a population of more than 10,000 people between 2016-2040. Some settlements may grow at rates above this target where justified, but all locations cannot. To ensure sustainable patterns of growth are achieved and encourage town centre revitalisation, 30% of all new housing is to be achieved on infill/brownfield sites within our urban settlements. It will be a key challenge for the RSES to determine, with Local Authorities and other stakeholders, the appropriate rates of growth for different settlements adhering to national targets.



Underpinning the achievement of these growth rates is the need for investment in key infrastructure to facilitate urban revitalisation and compact settlements. A significant intervention of the Draft NPF in how we plan sustainably for our settlements is the Smart Urban and Smart Rural Initiative. This is a process whereby funding is applied for on a competitive basis for urban development projects in settlements that meet compact, smart growth criteria. An emphasis is placed

on improved liveability in town centres, economic uplift, enhanced accessibility and sustainable travel. Identifying the “package” of related infrastructure requirements that will achieve these objectives is encouraged so settlements achieve funding to achieve regeneration and their full potential.

Aligning future population growth with smart growth interventions will ensure settlements in our region are positioned “ahead of the curve” in encouraging inward population growth and economic investment to progress the region. This is important to address issues of urban decay and provide quality alternatives to unsustainable “one off” urban generated housing outside of settlements.

Key Questions for our Large Towns:

- What are the potential barriers to achieve the Draft NPF targeted levels of 20-25% growth for larger centres (with populations in excess of 10,000) and how can the RSES address these barriers?
- Are there examples of infrastructure “packages” which would be strong integrated growth enablers capable of transforming our larger regional settlements?
- How can the RSES assist the work of Local Authorities and other stakeholders in incentivising urban centre renewal and achieving targets for 30% of new housing on infill/brownfield sites?
- How can the RSES support the development of high quality and socially inclusive urban communities which can become locations of choice to live, work, visit and invest in?

3.3 Towns with populations of less than 10,000 people

Within the Southern Region, there are a further 15 towns between 5,000 and 10,000 in scale and a further 45 settlements between 1,500 and 5,000 which act as key service centres for their hinterlands.



The growth of small and medium enterprise as an extension of activity generated by world leading companies (for example pharmaceutical, medical devices, technology, business services, financial services, engineering, agriculture and food sectors) embedded and forming clusters in the Southern Region represents a significant opportunity. In particular, if communications and transport infrastructure are enhanced, the ability for enterprise to be mobile to work from a variety of locations is facilitated. 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.

Key questions for towns with populations of less than 10,000

- What are the key challenges and barriers to the achievement of sustainable economic and population growth for towns less than 10,000 population and rural areas?
- How should we define the hinterlands or functional areas of towns with populations of less than 10,000 people?
- What are the most suitable criteria for determining the range of services which would be necessary for towns of between 1,500 and 10,000 people?
- What is the most appropriate form and density of residential development in these existing towns?

4. OUR RURAL AREAS

The Draft NPF places a key focus on the role of towns and villages as sub regional growth drivers. Key focus areas for the RSES to assist the development of our region's rural fabric include:

- Reversing rural population decline.
- Regenerating smaller towns and villages
- Supporting environmental services for sustainable levels of growth proportionate to the existing scale of settlements.
- Support for existing rural economic sectors, enhanced competitiveness and the sustainable diversification of the rural economy.
- Investing in quality infrastructure that improves connectivity (in particular digital connectivity) to the wider region and State.

The Draft NPF recognises pressures on rural land resources and environment exerted by urban generated one-off housing and the consequential erosion of vibrancy in town centres and seems to support the revitalisation of rural settlements and protect rural areas under strong urban influence. The RSES will assist implementing policy that protects the open countryside for those with a demonstrable economic need to live in the rural area and assist policy that supports the role and service functions of towns servicing wide catchments within the region.

Ireland 2040 sets an overall population growth target of 15% for smaller towns of less than 10,000 people and rural areas in the Southern Region to 2040. This growth allocation is part of the overall settlement strategy and is to be applied regionally (through the RSES) and locally (through County Development Plans). The growth rate is intended to arrest both the decline of less accessible rural areas and the rapid growth of more accessible rural areas.

4.1 Rural Settlement

The 2016 Census recorded 49.15% of the population of the Southern Region as living in the "aggregate rural area" (persons living in the open countryside or in settlements of less than 1,500 people). There



is a higher extent of the population living in aggregate rural areas in the region compared with the State (37.3%). It is clearly recognised in the Draft NPF and by the Southern Regional Assembly that planning for the sustainable growth of our rural locations and for the future vitality of smaller scaled settlements that drive the economic development

of our rural region will be an important focus and complement to the goals set for our region's larger towns and cities.

4.2 The Rural Economy

Key objectives relating to support for enterprise and employment in rural areas, as set out in the Department of Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Action Plan for Rural Development, include:

- Grow and attract enterprise and jobs through the implementation of the eight regional Action Plans for Jobs and the development of an Atlantic Economic Corridor to promote balanced regional development
- Support sectoral growth through the continued development of the agri-food sector through the implementation of Food Wise 2025 and roll out initiatives to develop the renewable energy sector and International Financial Services sector in rural Ireland.
- Ensure rural communities have the necessary skills to meet the needs of the labour market and to encourage innovation and maximise assets.
- Support rural jobseekers through the Intreo offices and initiatives such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, Tús and Community Employment
- Support farm and fishing incomes through CAP payments, the Rural Development Programme and other Government supports.

Recognising the important role of agriculture as the building block of our rural economy and communities, the 2011 CSO Agricultural Census recorded 55,640 farms across the Southern Region in 2010, 40% of the state total. Regarding output from the agriculture sector, the Southern Region contributed 71% of the value of all state livestock products, 45% of the value of all State crops, 53% of the value of the state's agricultural output at basic prices and 54% of the value of state agricultural Gross Value Added at basic prices in 2015¹.

Our region's forestry industry is an area of significant economic potential. Over 6% of the total land area of the Southern Region is within Coillte forest estates (a total area of c1898.9 km²)² and there are 108 forests under Forest Management Plans in the region. The forests in the region fall within five Coillte Business Area Units, for which strategic plans 2016-2020 are prepared.

Tourism is a significant economic sector throughout our rural region. In 2014, over 4.6m overseas visitors came to counties in the Southern Region, 39% of the State total visitors. Overseas visitors generated €1.3bn in revenue in the Southern Region, 36% of total overseas visitor revenue generated in the State. Domestic tourism, growth and diversity in the sector across the region, which is within both the *Wild Atlantic Way*, *Ireland's Ancient East* and Ireland's lakelands, provides significant potential for economic growth in diverse locations across the region³.

The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) note the importance for a regional drive through the RSES in the sectors of Agriculture (Food Wise 2025), delivery of broadband infrastructure under the National Broadband Plan, the marine economy (Harnessing our Ocean Wealth and future Marine Spatial Plans), forestry (Growing for the Future and Business Area Unit Strategic Plans), energy (White Paper-Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030), tourism (*Wild Atlantic Way* and *Ireland's Ancient East* initiatives) and the regional enterprise development actions under IDA Ireland (Winning: Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019), Enterprise Ireland (EI Competitive Funding) and actions under the Regional Action Plan for Jobs.

¹ Statistics calculated from CSO Statbank: Business Sectors, Regional Accounts, Table ACA01 Value for Output, Input and Income in Agriculture by Statistic, Year and Region.

² Area calculated by collecting data from Forest Facts by County at www.coillte.ie and the land area km sq. per county from CSO Census 2011 Population Classified by Area.

³ Statistics from Fáilte Ireland, Regional Tourism Performance in 2014 published Feb 2016.

The SRA further note the importance of a regional drive for economic initiatives at a local level through the RSES, which can synergise with leading sectors in the rural economy including Údarás na Gaeltachta, Local Enterprise Offices, Chambers of Commerce, Local Economic Community Plans and economic policies and actions by Economic Development Units of Local Authorities.

4.3 Rural Services

To support sustainable rural communities, the Action Plan for Rural Development has identified the following priorities:

- Make rural Ireland a better place in which to live and work by revitalising our town and village centres through the implementation of initiatives such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the CLÁR and RAPID Programmes and measures to support people to live in town centres.
- Enhance local services in the community through the provision of support for rural GPs, through ongoing development of the primary care sector to deliver better care close to home in communities, through support for the rural post office network to adapt to a changing business environment, and through continued access to schools for children in rural Ireland.
- Empower Local Communities, including through the development and support of the Public Participation Network and Local Community Development Committees, to ensure that a diversity of voices is heard and included in local decision-making processes and that communities continue to identify their own needs and solutions.
- Build better communities through ongoing investment in the LEADER Programme and support vulnerable rural communities through initiatives such as the Rural Social Scheme.

Key Questions for our Rural Region

- What are the key infrastructure priorities (physical and social) to address to achieve tangible population and employment growth in rural areas, in particular to assist vibrant regenerated town and village centres which are competitive and attractive locations of choice for living and working?
- How can the RSES support growth and diversity in rural economic sectors which are successfully embedded in our region, particularly agriculture, marine, forestry, tourism, energy and the green economy? What are the examples of other emerging sectors that will further drive the rural economy and what are infrastructure requirements that will assist their success?
- How can the RSES strengthen protection of the rural environment and rural resources in tandem with objectives for sustainable growth in the rural population and employment?

5. PEOPLE, HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

5.1 Population Profile

The population of the Southern Region grew by over 44,000 to over 1.5 million between the 2011 and 2016, a 2.8% increase in this period which was lower than State growth of 3.8%. All local authorities in the region recorded growth between 2011-2016. Notably, Cork City reversed a decline of -0.2% from the previous Census period to growth of 5.4%, the highest rate of change in the region.

The age dependency ratio⁴ of the region in 2016 was recorded as 55.0, higher than the State (52.7). The 25-64 year old age cohort constitutes a significant proportion of the population available for work and extends an influence on demand/supply side factors for the labour, housing markets and generates commuting patterns. In 2016, the 25-64 cohort represented 52.55% of the population in the Southern Region, lower than the State (53.36%). Achieving growth in this cohort, a combination of being able to retain the region's population in these age groups and attracting additional people of working age into the region, will be key to achieving regional population and employment targets.

The 2016 Census recorded 14.7% of the Southern Region's population as having been born outside the State, an increase from 14.5% recorded in 2011⁵. Within the region in 2016, Cork City has the highest percentage of the population in a local authority born outside the State at 18.6% (comparable state figure – 17.3%).

5.2 Housing

The Draft NPF suggests that there will be a need for the development of an additional 175,000-190,000 new homes in the Southern Region between now and 2040 and prioritises the provision of new housing units within the built-up areas of our regional cities and larger town with at least 50% of all new housing in the cities to be located on infill/brownfield sites (i.e. urban centres) and 30% of all new housing in larger town to be developed within existing the built-up areas or edge of centre locations.

The 2016 Census identified 693,783 residential units in the Southern Region with a vacancy rate of 14.14% as compared to a state-wide vacancy rate of 12.3%. Although the region's vacancy rate is higher than the state, it has reduced from a rate of 16.6% in 2011. There were 575,820 private households in permanent housing units in the Southern Region in 2016⁶, an increase of 3% from the 2011 figure which is a similar rate of growth as that recoded for the state as a whole.

There was a total of 919 homeless adults and 284 homeless children in May 2017. However, there is evidence to suggest that there is a hidden homeless dimension (e.g. people who are living in squats or 'sofa surfing' with friends as well as women and children in Domestic Violence Refuges) which is not included in these figures.

⁴ Age dependency ratio is the age population ratio of those typically not in the labour force (0-14 and 65+) and those typically in the labour force (15-64). It indicates the pressure on the productive population to support services for younger and older age cohorts of the population.

⁵ Calculated from CSO Census 2016 Small Area Population Statistics, Theme 2, Usually resident population by place of birth.

⁶ Calculated from CSO Census 2016 Table E1011: Private Households in Permanent Housing Units by Persons per Household.

5.3 Sustainable Communities

The Draft NPF highlights the importance of sustainably planning for and investing in the changing character of our communities, which in the near future will include higher proportions of older age groups and people from diverse cultural backgrounds, as net inward migration to our region will be required to grow to the levels targeted. A range of complementary infrastructures, important social facilities and services, will be required to ensure we plan for integrated and socially inclusive communities.

The Draft NPF states that “place” is intrinsic to achieving good quality of life. In supporting the development of sustainable communities in our region, delivering high quality physical, social and environmental infrastructure, at the proportionate scale for different character settlements, is key to retain and attract people to live, work and invest in our region. Our region’s population growth must be planned for in a sustainable way by delivering these complementary infrastructures and services, so our region is successful in reaching growth targets.

To develop integrated and sustainable communities in our cities, towns, villages and rural area, the RSES will need to prioritise enhanced sustainable mobility, the digital economy, enhanced amenities, green infrastructure, sustainable energy sources, sustainable management of water and environmental resources and access to quality childcare, education and health services and ensure that funding is secured. For the Southern Region to excel and grow in a sustainable manner, it is essential the RSES supports the delivery of these outcomes throughout the region, assisting the initiatives of all other stakeholder agencies, local authorities and communities in achieving such goals.

Key Questions for the RSES to address

- Population and economic growth within our region will require inward migration. What are the key priorities at a regional level for service and infrastructure provision that will make the region a high quality and competitive location by choice to attract and retain people from a variety of cultural backgrounds to live and work here?
- Noting the Draft NPF targets for the Southern Region, what are the key challenges to achieving 175,000-190,000 new housing units in the region by the year 2040?
- In strengthening the evidence base to determine future housing needs, what are the key regional level issues the RSES should address to support the delivery of quality homes for diverse and socially inclusive communities, adhering to the goals of creating compact, sustainable places?
- What are the key supporting infrastructures that will ensure the supply of strategic housing locations to succeed in attracting residents and workers to our region?

6. A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC FUTURE

6.1 The Regional Economy

The Southern Region has a dynamic and vibrant economy. It possesses almost a third of the national workforce, a third of State jobs and it contributes almost a third of the national economic output. Over 64,000 new jobs have been created in the region in the last five years alone. Employee productivity and disposable income are higher than State levels within the region. Economic specialism exists across a diverse range of sectors including pharmaceuticals, life sciences, aviation, precision engineering, ICT, food and beverages. The region is well positioned as a pioneer in the future economy across emerging economic sectors including Big Data, Internet of Things, 3D Printing Materials, Sharing Economy, Cyber Security, Smart Aging, Agriculture Technology, Medical Technology, Financial Technology, Marine Economy, Arts and Culture and Energy Supply.

In investment decisions, international investors seek locations and regions which offer urban centres,



supply of skilled people, international connectivity, energy infrastructure, telecommunications, R & D capabilities, sub-supplier and services infrastructure. In these areas, the region has significant economic potential. It can build upon the existing scale of Cork, Limerick and Waterford and a network of regional towns. Our region can leverage on the strength of our region's existing industries, the innovativeness of our region's education, research and development facilities, the skills and quality of our

region's labour force, and connectivity to Dublin and other regions on the Atlantic Economic Corridor. In addition, we enjoy the presence of international ports and airports. We have land and property assets, natural resources including energy and water supply, rich natural and cultural heritage assets and a high quality of life to offer.

Adequate investment in, and management of, the region's infrastructure, both physical and social, and skills and human capital will assist our regional economy to achieve its full potential. We are in a strong position to complement the economic growth in other regions in the Greater Dublin Area, particularly in sectors where the Southern Region excels.

The following sub-sections provide further economic context for our region, from which key issues and questions emerge to consider for the preparation of the RSES.

6.2 Regional Productivity

As an indication of overall economic activity and output performance, the Southern Region contributed almost €53 billion (31% of State total)⁸ in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA)⁹ in 2014. The South-West contributed to 53% of regional GVA, followed by the South-East (25%) and Mid-West (22%).

⁸ Statistics calculated from CSO: StatBank, County Incomes & Regional Accounts, Table RAA01, 2014.

⁹ GVA measures the contribution to an economy of an individual producer, industry, sector or region.

6.3 Employment

Our regional labour market is continuously improving. The region added 74,700 additional persons employed over the past five years. In the second quarter of 2017, 681,500 persons aged 15 years + were recorded in employment in the Southern Region, 33 per cent of the State total¹⁰.

Unemployment figures are dropping. There were 45,600 unemployed persons aged 15 years and over in the Southern Region in the second quarter of 2017, this is 61 per cent less than the number of unemployed five years ago. The average ILO unemployment rate for 15-74 year olds across the region is 6.3 per cent, slightly lower than the State figure of 6.4 per cent. Within the region, the South-West has a lower unemployment rate than the State (4.8%). The Mid-West is marginally above (6.7%) and the South East is higher (8.1%). The region's unemployment rate has reduced significantly over the last five years (where it was recorded at over 16.3% in 2012), but is still above the unemployment rate ten years previously (where it was recorded just under 4.7%, with the State rate at 4.8%).

The 2016 Census recorded locations at Electoral District level where unemployment (on a Principal Economic Status basis) exceeds 27 per cent. A total of 79 unemployment blackspots have been identified across the State, of which over half of these are in the Southern Region, with a significant concentration in some parts of our cities. Within our forthcoming regional economic strategy there is a significant opportunity for improving the economic status of our region's population within areas of socio-economic disadvantage, and promoting the renewal of areas, particularly town and city centres.

6.4 Human Capital and Innovation

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)¹¹ highlights the problem of focusing the formulation of regional development policies only on physical infrastructure, as it is not alone a sufficient condition for growth. Economic growth and development increases where investments in human capital and innovation are also present. The Southern Region has significant education, research and innovation assets, with networks and collaborations in place across public agencies, academia and private enterprise creating world-class innovations across a diverse range of economic specialism.

Our Higher Education assets include two universities (University College Cork and University of Limerick); five Institutes of Technology (Waterford, Carlow, Limerick, Cork, Tralee); and proposals for two technological universities (Muster Technical University and Technological University for the South-East).

Further student training and skills development are undertaken by other colleges, Education and Training Boards (of which there are five across the region) and Skillnets training networks. The economic development units of local authorities, Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices (of which there are eleven across the region) provide further entrepreneurship mentoring and they assist local business development across the region.

The Southern Regional Assembly will continue to partner with key education and training stakeholders, the Regional Action Plan for Jobs and Regional Skills Forums to ensure that policies under the RSES are integrated with the actions of stakeholders developing human capital and innovation assets within our region.

¹⁰ Statistics calculated from CSO: StatBank, QNHS Table QN Q22, Persons Aged 15 years + by NUTS 3 Regions, Statistical Indicator and Quarter.

¹¹ OECD "Supporting Growth in All Regions" 2012.

6.5 Ireland 2040 Employment Targets

The Draft NPF targets an additional 220,000 jobs in the Southern Region, with a strong emphasis on close alignment between where people live and work, strengthening existing high density employment locations, servicing existing and future strategic employment locations with sustainable infrastructure including enhanced public transport connectivity and promoting urban focused employment growth to drive city, town and village regeneration, to strengthen the economic performance of the whole region (urban and rural areas).

A key challenge for the RSES will be to ensure all locations have potential to play to their economic strengths, in both urban and rural contexts, with opportunities to work close to home and for citizens to have an ability to connect with and network with the key economic drivers with high quality, sustainable, modern infrastructure.

Economic opportunity needs to be equitable, ensuring that within locations of higher than average unemployment, our region's citizens have enhanced opportunities to access jobs and services.

How we will work, where we will work and how we will connect with the economy are key influences that will improve our region's competitiveness, improve our quality of life and help our region prosper into the future.

Key economic questions for the RSES to consider:

- What are the barriers to achieving 220,000 additional jobs in our region by the year 2040?
- What are the existing strengths of the region's economy, particularly the specialisms that distinguish the region nationally and internationally as an economic location?
- How do we maximise opportunities in the emerging sectors of the economy for the benefit of the region as a whole and what can we do to address those sectors that are in decline?
- What needs to be done to ensure that the benefit of increased economic activity in our cities and larger urban centres is transferred into the rest of the towns, villages and more rural parts of the region?
- Are there parts of the Southern Region that are notably underdeveloped? What reasons are there for this and what can we do to overcome such blockages?

7. ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL HERITAGE, COASTAL AREAS AND THE MARINE

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

A good quality environment is recognised as being a key influence on the Health and Wellbeing of the population and Quality of Life. The quality of the environment interacts with all aspects of our lives. As a society we rely on good quality water, clean air and a green environment free from pollution and an environment that supports agriculture and the wider economic activity of the region.

7.1 Environmental and Sustainability Goals

Water Quality

The Draft National River Basin Management Plan 2018 – 2021 published earlier this year seeks to ensure full compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD). This requires the prevention of deterioration in water quality, implementation of objectives for designated protected areas and an overall focus on improvements in water quality.

The EPA Report *Ireland's Environment – An Assessment'* (2016) found that targets for improving the quality of surface waters was not achieved with the two main causes of pollution being agriculture and municipal discharges into rivers. While the Marine environment has remained relatively unpolluted, challenges such as marine litter, over-fishing and the discharge of untreated sewage will have to be addressed.

To date Government action has focussed on the main sources of pollution - a nitrates actions programme to address agricultural runoff and investment to address pollution from Urban waste water treatment discharges. Additional measures to meet Irelands obligations under the WFD will include increased investment in Waste Water Treatment Plants, changes or restrictions on agricultural processes and discharges, restrictions on developments such as dwellings in rural areas which rely on on-site waste water treatment systems and increased inspections and enforcement.

Water Infrastructure

The Irish Water Strategic Plan and Capital Investment Plan will be required to align delivery with the spatial planning framework set out in the RSES and the needs and priorities identified in that strategy.

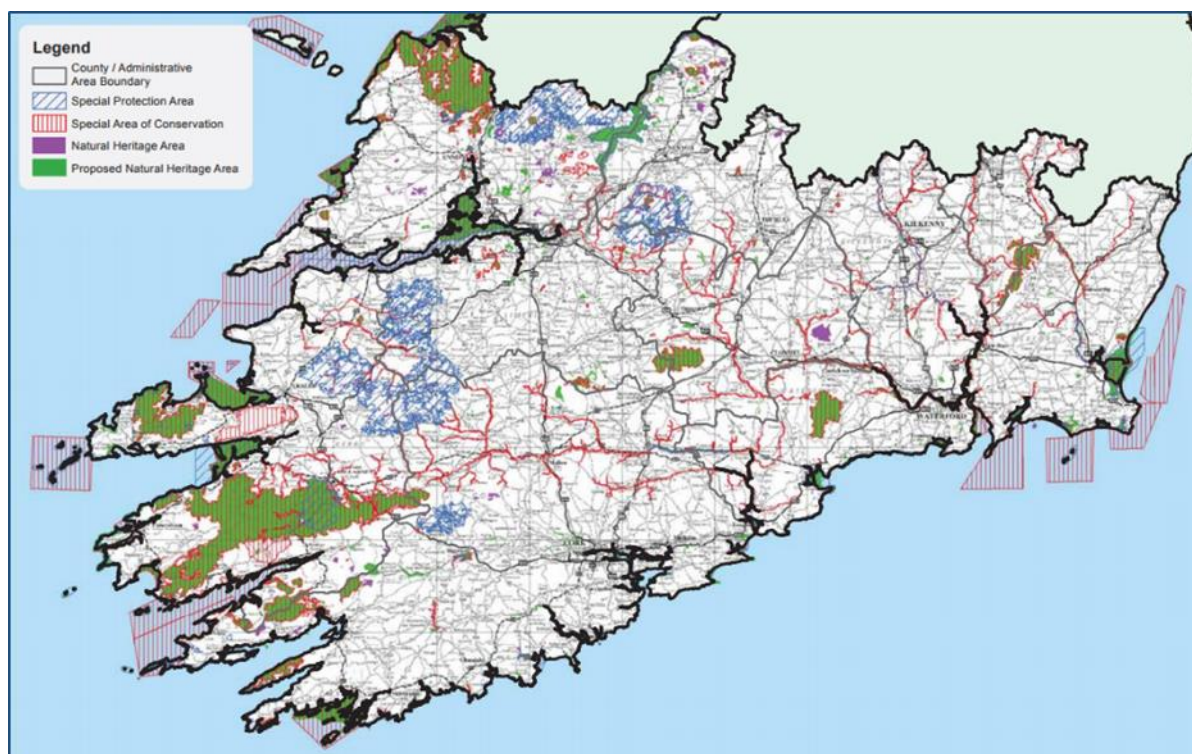
Flooding

The development of Flood Risk Policy has resulted in agreed principles which are now well established and integrated into the planning process and which underpin the OPW's current CFRAM (Catchment Flood Risk Area Management) Programme. The policies and measures identified in the Flood Risk Management Plans which are emanating from the CFRAMS Programme will need to be fully integrated into the RSES to ensure that future settlement patterns and public investments in infrastructure are not threatened by likely future flooding events.

Landscape

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

adjoining local authorities and the Regional Assemblies have a key role to play in co-ordinating these matters.



Environmentally Sensitive and Protected Areas

Environmental Sustainability

The importance of maintaining and improving environmental standards requires rigorous environmental assessments, particularly through the AA, SEA and SFRA processes in order to ensure that all environmental issues are adequately addressed in drafting the RSES. The work of the EPA in monitoring environmental standards across a comprehensive range of environmental issues is invaluable and their published annual assessments - also known as the 'State of the Environment Report' can assist in measuring of progress across all the issues.

7.2 Resource Efficiency and Transition to a Low Carbon Economy

Climate change is a critical issue which will dominate our future environment, economy and the way our communities function.

With Irish per capita Green House Gas (GHG) emissions among the highest in Europe and the wider global climate challenge, Government has identified 'Climate change as the most important long-term challenge facing Ireland' and is committed to 'the transformation required to achieve a low carbon resilient future'. The EPA State of the Environment Report 2016 states that Agriculture is the largest source of total national GHG emissions amounting to 33.3% and that the Transport Sector accounts for approximately 20% of GHG emissions, a reflection on the transport sector being very fossil fuel dependent.

Climate Change will be addressed through the twin approaches of (a) Mitigation – A *National Mitigation Plan* has been published to tackle the causes of climate change and (b) Adaptation – a *National Adaptation Framework* has been prepared to tackle the effects of climate change and ability of systems and the environment to adjust to climate change.

The Government has stated that Climate Change is to be addressed at all levels of Government and Society and across all sectors of the economy. As such, the RSES will need to have regard to a number of integrated policy responses which will cut across all other areas of spatial planning and economic policy which will support national policy in relation to a future low carbon economy/society.

In transitioning to low carbon economy/society the RSES will have to address issues relating to renewable energy generation potential in the Southern Region, given that the region:

- Is already a significant contributor of renewable energy to the national grid
- Has consistently high wind speeds
- Has extensive tidal and wave generation potential
- Has a well-developed energy transmission network

7.3 Coastal Areas and the Marine Environment

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



The Maritime Spatial Planning Directive requires a coordinated, integrated and transboundary approach in order to promote the sustainable development and growth of the maritime and coastal economies and the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources. In advance of the adoption by Government of a Maritime Spatial Planning system, the RSES will have to address these issues in developing policies for coastal and marine areas.

One example of how this might be achieved is the *Shannon Integrated Framework Plan* which sets out an innovative approach to sustainable development and environmental protection of the Shannon Estuary and such an approach might be extended to the other coastal parts of the region.

All principal ports in the Southern Region (Cork, Shannon-Foynes, Rosslare Europort and Waterford) play vital economic roles for the region and the proximity to continental Europe after Brexit will only increase the importance of the location of these ports for the state. The RSES gives the Southern Region an opportunity to develop the ports as regional and national assets and to develop a Regional Policy for multi-modal logistics so as to identify regional logistics hubs for freight transfer, in combination with identified improved freight routes to port with reference to the TEN-T Core Network through Ireland.

County	Ports
Cork	Cork, Cobh, Ringaskiddy, Tivoli, Kinsale, Castletownberehaven, Youghal
Clare	Kilrush, Moneypoint
Limerick	Limerick, Shannon-Foynes
Kilkenny	Belview Port
Waterford	Waterford, Dungarvan, Dunmore East
Wexford	Rosslare, New Ross
Kerry	Tralee-Fenit, An Daingean

In addition, fishing and aquaculture play a significant part in the economy of the coastal areas and islands in the Southern Region and the Fishing Local Area Group (FLAG) Development Strategies provide a framework for community and economic development which can inform the RSES on policies to support coastal and island communities.

Given the strategic location of the Region in relation to the Atlantic Ocean and our extensive maritime territory, development of diverse elements of the Marine Economy will be critical to realising the potential opportunities for diverse maritime related activities and sectors. To build on existing strengths in the marine sector, the Southern Regional Assembly has consistently promoted the development of a research driven marine cluster in the Southern Region to support development of marine energy, marine ICT and biotechnology. Further diversification of this sector could see significant development of marine related engineering and services related to the off-shore energy industry, energy infrastructure and supporting facilities (such as the proposed Celtic Interconnector electricity power line) as well as maritime commerce and ship leasing.

Furthermore, as a major tourist destination the Southern Region has seen the successful development of *the Wild Atlantic Way*, *Ireland's Ancient East* and our lakelands which link to our coastal and industrial heritage. There is significant additional potential for further development of marine tourism in the areas of water based activities, walks, and cycling trails, the development heritage trails, seafood trails and cultural information and development of sustainable spatially linked community based economic Corridors/Projects following coastal routes has the potential to deliver opportunities to support viable settlements in more peripheral coastal locations.

A number of questions for the RSES in relation to these topics might include:

- What are the key threats to water quality and how can investment in water and wastewater infrastructure be focussed so as to achieve the greatest possible return on investment and support the economic growth and health of citizens?
- Given the high level of emissions from agricultural activity and the transport sector, what are the key changes that need to be made to bring these sectors into line with national targets?
- How can the Southern Region become a leader in renewable energy production together with research and development into next generation technology?
- What are the key changes which need to be made to grow the bioeconomy in the Southern Region?
- Given the strategic location of the Southern Region's ports the region could become even more important strategic gateways to continental Europe after Britain leaves the EU, what are the steps required to realise the potential of our key ports?
- What are the key economic and environmental issues to be addressed for our coastal and marine areas and how should we develop an integrated approach to support our coastal and marine areas?

8. CRITICAL ENABLING INVESTMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The RSES will strongly inform strategic regional investment, including in infrastructure as its provision is both influenced by and influences spatial development. Infrastructure can be provided in areas where demand already exists or is predicted to increase. Alternatively, infrastructure can also be provided in strategic areas in order to encourage development but in general, the higher the density of the population in an area, the easier it is to spread the fixed costs of an infrastructure project and to ensure that delivery is viable.

There is broad consensus that public infrastructure investment is an important aspect of a competitive location policy, impacting on an economy's or region's cost structure and competitiveness. Research also highlights the scope for public capital investment to influence the regional dispersion of economic activity and influence the rate at which regions accumulate various productive factors, particularly infrastructure.

Taking into account the spatial development outcomes sought by Ireland 2040, the new National Investment Plan will:

- Deliver a stable profile of public investment yielding greater certainty to the infrastructure delivery and investment sector
- Strengthen the economy's resilience in terms of key risks
- Address existing critical infrastructure deficits
- Invest to maintain the quality and performance of existing public infrastructure
- Support the achievement of critical climate change goals including the recently published National Mitigation Plan
- Secure more effective regional development on an on-going basis

The Fiscal Council have observed that current spending plans to 2021 "return public investment to levels that are comparatively high in the international context". These substantial resources should enable real progress to be made in developing and maintaining national and regional infrastructure.

The National Investment Plan will build from core elements of Ireland 2040 including:

- Addressing the implications of an additional 1 million people and 550,000 new households by 2040, half of which will be in cities;
- Provision of 25,000 homes each year, half of which will be in the five cities and half of those on infill/brownfield sites;
- Enabling a limited number of large towns that emerge from the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) process as potential regional growth drivers for their surrounding catchments;
- Reversing small town and rural population decline.

A number of key questions for the RSES in this regard might include:

- What are the principal infrastructural and investment deficits preventing progress on the achievement of national planning policy objectives
- What key infrastructural investment is needed to drive the development of the three cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford
- How can the RSES seek to improve the coordination and governance of public investment
- What role can the Regional Assembly play in more explicitly aligning the investment plans of State Owned Enterprises with Government objectives
- What key infrastructural investment is required to facilitate the development of the towns and villages in the Southern Region?

Sustainable Mobility

It is a National Policy Objective of the Draft NPF to support enhanced public transport connectivity between and within our large urban areas, improve services and guarantee journey times, as well as vastly improved public transport within our cities and metropolitan areas. A national strategic outcome for consideration in the National Investment Plan is Sustainable Mobility. Objectives seek to expand public transport networks as an alternative to private car use and deliver improved high quality public transport networks in tandem with population and employment growth. Consistency between spatial, economic and transport planning in our region, importantly within our cities where population and employment is concentrated, is a key objective of the Draft NPF.

Improving Regional Accessibility

The Draft NPF states once Smart Growth objectives are being achieved, further development of connectivity between large centres of population will support the objectives of Ireland 2040, particularly accessibility between each of the cities to be on par with accessibility to Dublin. Key future growth enablers for our metropolitan areas also include strategic road projects that improve accessibility to our metropolitan cities and to strategic national and regional economic assets such as our Ports.

The Draft NPF also highlights the need for continued investment in our regional and local road networks, which are important for connectivity to key services from remoter locations to larger urban centres. Such corridors are essentially “life lines” that require continued investment for the economic and social development of the wider region and ensure corridors are of sufficient quality to accommodate rural public transport services.

Strengthening International Connectivity

For our national and regional economic competitiveness, investment in the sustainable development of our port and airport assets is essential. This is critical so our State and region can adjust to the changing international economy, especially important for our region in the context of BREXIT. Our region’s ports and airports are identified as key infrastructure, to be supported by nationally and regionally as strategic economic assets. Key future growth enablers for our metropolitan cities include improved connectivity to ports and airports. The Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans which will be prepared as part of the RSES are required to address the long-term infrastructure requirements, especially transport infrastructure, such as our Tier 1 & 2 Ports and our airports in Cork, Shannon, Kerry & Waterford.

Regional Transport Strategy

The RSES will be supported by a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) which will include policies to address all transportation issues in the region. Key elements in the RTS will include: -

- Policies to support and develop sustainable travel in the main urban centres by public transport, walking and cycling, including provision for commuter rail, bus priority, Rapid Transit Systems, Park and Ride and improved facilities for cycling and walking.
- Improvements to Strategic Transport Corridors linking our region’s cities, ports, airports and other regions.
- Policies to provide improved access from rural areas and smaller towns and villages to access the main urban centres and intercity bus and rail services.
- Policies and actions to co-ordinate the efficient movement of freight and goods through the region and to the ports and airports.

Digital Connectivity

Access to high quality broadband services and delivery of the National Broadband Plan within our region is a required step change to transform our region's economic and social development, a critical element to achieve the revitalisation of cities, towns, villages and rural areas across our region. There are positive examples within our region showing the possibilities for our digital economy which include the Ludgate Hub, participation of our cities in Smart Gateway initiatives and securing a direct connection from Ireland to the fibre optic cable connection between North America and Europe (the Hibernia Express Link). This connection provides the potential for direct high speed transatlantic internet connectivity and a major economic catalyst for the south of the country.

Key Questions

- What are the key infrastructure investments needed to support sustainable connectivity (including modal shift to sustainable transport modes) throughout our region including infrastructure between our large urban areas, within our metropolitan cities, towns and villages?
- How best can the Regional Transport Strategy ensure that strategic road projects enhancing accessibility between our large urban centres compliment sustainable mobility goals for our region?
- How can our airports and ports become economic drivers for the Southern Region?
- Is digital infrastructure sufficiently prioritised as an essential infrastructure for the economic and social development of communities throughout our region's cities, towns, villages and rural areas? What are the main barriers to the successful implementation of the National Broadband Plan and other digital economy initiatives throughout our region and how can the RSES address this?

9. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Once the regional strategies are adopted, each Regional Assembly will be required to put in place effective implementation and monitoring arrangements including through the Office of the Planning Regulator. To assure consistent monitoring across regional assemblies and all relevant public bodies, RSES monitoring will be based on an agreed set of key indicators and all government agencies and public bodies will be required to design their timely data collection and analysis in such a way as to support and inform these key indicators at regional, SPA, metropolitan and county level.

Current planning legislation requires each local authority within the regional assembly area, and each of the public bodies prescribed in the legislation, to prepare and submit a report to the assembly every two years setting out progress made in supporting objectives, relevant to that body, of the strategy. The regional assembly is then required to prepare a monitoring report and to submit that monitoring report to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) who may make recommendations to the Minister in relation to necessary measures to further support the implementation of the RSES.

Realising the ambitious growth strategy for different parts of our country and cities and towns in particular will require new approaches in relation to (1) Metropolitan Area planning, (2) City Regions, (3) sustainable planning and development of other large urban areas and (4) reforming the land management and land use zoning and development prioritisation processes.

Accordingly, in tandem with and as part of the RSES process, arrangements will be put in place to enable the preparation of co-ordinated metropolitan area strategic plans (MASPs) for the Cork, Limerick and Waterford Metropolitan areas. In line with the RSEs, the MASPs will be provided with statutory underpinning to act as twelve-year strategic planning and investment frameworks for the city metropolitan areas addressing high-level and long-term strategic development issues including:

- physical development patterns and strategic growth areas;
- strategic infrastructure, particularly in the transportation and water services areas;
- large scale regeneration and the location of housing and employment;
- metropolitan scale amenities such as regional parks and walking and cycling networks;
- Metropolitan areas' relationship with their City Regions

MASPs will align with and inform national-level sectoral investment plans to guide and coordinate investment within the metropolitan areas, and their city regions, coordinating land use planning and strategic infrastructure.

Choices about how places are planned and designed ('spatial' planning) and choices about the delivery of transport infrastructure and services (transport planning) are very dependent on each other, and achieving a close linking of the two can be to their mutual benefit and lead to more coherent outcomes for society. The Southern Regional Assembly will work closely with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to prepare a Transport Strategy for the region which will be fully integrated into the RSES – thus ensuring that spatial planning and transport planning for the area are appropriately aligned.

Questions which must be now be addressed as part of the Draft RSES preparation process include:

- What measures need to be put in place at a regional level to ensure full implementation of the National Policy Objectives in the Draft NPF and the more detailed policies and objectives of the RSES?
- What would be the most appropriate form of political and administrative leadership to support the Regional Assembly in the preparation and oversight of metropolitan area strategic plans?
- What are the key indicators that could be used to determine the level of success of the adopted strategy?

10. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

What must the RSES do to facilitate the cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick and Waterford in achieving their full potential at international, national and regional level and to act as the main “engines” of economic growth in our region?
What are the potential barriers to achieve the targeted levels of 50-60% growth in our cities and what must be done to ensure that at least half of that projected growth occurs within the urban core on infill and brownfield sites?
What are the key transformational projects that will further assist our cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick and Waterford to grow and prosper as vibrant urban communities with an enhanced quality of life?
How can Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) effectively co-ordinate sustainable development patterns and delivery of key infrastructure?
How can the City Regions assist in the economic growth of the three cities in the Southern Region?
What are the potential barriers to achieve the Draft NPF targeted levels of 20-25% growth for larger centres (with populations in excess of 10,000) and how can the RSES address these barriers?
Are there examples of infrastructure “packages” which would be strong integrated growth enablers capable of transforming our larger regional settlements?
How can the RSES assist the work of Local Authorities and other stakeholders in incentivising urban centre renewal and achieving targets for 30% of new housing on infill/brownfield sites?
How can the RSES support the development of high quality and socially inclusive urban communities which can become locations of choice to live, work, visit and invest in?
What are the key challenges and barriers to the achievement of sustainable economic and population growth for towns less than 10,000 population and rural areas?
How should we define the hinterlands or functional areas of towns with populations of less than 10,000 people?
What are the most suitable criteria for determining the range of services which would be necessary for towns of between 1,500 and 10,000 people?
What is the most appropriate form and density of residential development in these existing towns?
What are the key infrastructure priorities (physical and social) to address to achieve tangible population and employment growth in rural areas, in particular to assist vibrant regenerated town and village centres which are competitive and attractive locations of choice for living and working?
How can the RSES support growth and diversity in rural economic sectors which are successfully embedded in our region, particularly agriculture, marine, forestry, tourism, energy and the green economy? What are the examples of other emerging sectors that will further drive the rural economy and what are infrastructure requirements that will assist their success?
How can the RSES strengthen protection of the rural environment and rural resources in tandem with objectives for sustainable growth in the rural population and employment?
Population and economic growth within our region will require inward migration. What are the key priorities at a regional level for service and infrastructure provision that will make the region a high quality and competitive location by choice to attract and retain people from a variety of cultural backgrounds to live and work here?
Noting the Draft NPF targets for the Southern Region, what are the key challenges to achieving 175,000-190,000 new housing units in the region by the year 2040?
In strengthening the evidence base to determine future housing needs, what are the key regional level issues the RSES should address to support the delivery of quality homes for diverse and socially inclusive communities, adhering to the goals of creating compact, sustainable places?
What are the key supporting infrastructures that will ensure the supply of strategic housing locations to succeed in attracting residents and workers to our region?

What are the barriers to achieving 220,000 additional jobs in our region by the year 2040?
What are the existing strengths of the region's economy, particularly the specialisms that distinguish the region nationally and internationally as an economic location?
How do we maximise opportunities in the emerging sectors of the economy for the benefit of the region as a whole and what can we do to address those sectors that are in decline?
What needs to be done to ensure that the benefit of increased economic activity in our cities and larger urban centres is transferred into the rest of the towns, villages and more rural parts of the region?
Are there parts of the Southern Region that are notably underdeveloped? What reasons are there for this and what can we do to overcome such blockages?
What are the key threats to water quality and how can investment in water and wastewater infrastructure be focussed so as to achieve the greatest possible return on investment and support the economic growth and health of citizens?
Given the high level of emissions from agricultural activity and the transport sector, what are the key changes that need to be made to bring these sectors into line with national targets?
How can the Southern Region become a leader in renewable energy production together with research and development into next generation technology?
What are the key changes which need to be made to grow the bioeconomy in the Southern Region?
Given the strategic location of the Southern Region's ports the region could become even more important strategic gateways to continental Europe after Britain leaves the EU, what are the steps required to realise the potential of our key ports?
What are the key economic and environmental issues to be addressed for our coastal and marine areas and how should we develop an integrated approach to support our coastal and marine areas?
What are the principal infrastructural and investment deficits preventing progress on the achievement of national planning policy objectives
What key infrastructural investment is needed to drive the development of the three cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford
How can the RSES seek to improve the coordination and governance of public investment
What role can the Regional Assembly play in more explicitly aligning the investment plans of State Owned Enterprises with Government objectives
What key infrastructural investment is required to facilitate the development of the towns and villages in the Southern Region?
What are the key infrastructure investments needed to support sustainable connectivity (including modal shift to sustainable transport modes) throughout our region including infrastructure between our large urban areas, within our metropolitan cities, towns and villages?
How best can the Regional Transport Strategy ensure that strategic road projects enhancing accessibility between our large urban centres compliment sustainable mobility goals for our region?
How can our airports and ports become economic drivers for the Southern Region?
Is digital infrastructure sufficiently prioritised as an essential infrastructure for the economic and social development of communities throughout our region's cities, towns, villages and rural areas? What are the main barriers to the successful implementation of the National Broadband Plan and other digital economy initiatives throughout our region and how can the RSES address this?
What measures need to be put in place at a regional level to ensure full implementation of the National Policy Objectives in the Draft NPF and the more detailed policies and objectives of the RSES?
What would be the most appropriate form of political and administrative leadership to support the Regional Assembly in the preparation and oversight of metropolitan area strategic plans?
What are the key indicators that could be used to determine the level of success of the adopted strategy?

11. NEXT STEPS

Local authorities, state agencies, public and private agencies, interest groups and the public generally are invited to make written submissions at this first stage of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy process by 5pm on Friday 26th January 2018.

These submissions will be taken into consideration prior to the preparation of the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

In order to facilitate the strategy formulation process you are asked to please make your submission as early as possible.

Submissions and observations should be marked Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and should state your name and, where relevant, the body represented and can be submitted:

1. In writing to the following address:

**RSES Submissions,
Regional Planning Unit,
Southern Regional Assembly,
Assembly House, O'Connell Street,
Waterford X91 F8PC.**

or,

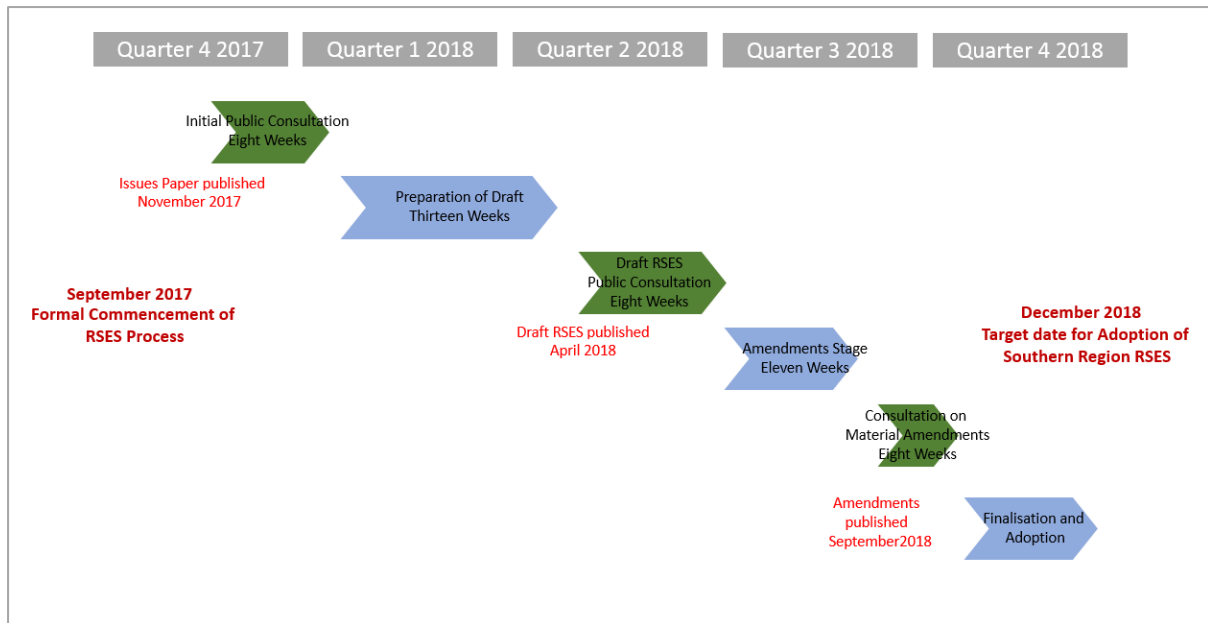
2. By Email to the following address rses@southernassembly.ie

A full copy of this Issues Paper can be accessed online at www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning along with details as to how you can participate in the process.

Please make your submission by one medium only, either electronic or hard copy. All submissions must include the following:

- Your name and details of any organisation, community group or company you represent
- An address for correspondence
- Your submission on relevant planning issues for the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Southern Regional Assembly intends on publishing a Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, and associated environmental reports, in the second quarter of 2018 and this Draft will be placed on public display for at least ten weeks during which time submissions and observations will again be invited. Following consideration of observations on the Draft the Regional Assembly will consider appropriate amendments and will subject the Draft and any proposed amendments to a rigorous environmental assessment process. Once all of these steps have been taken, the Southern Regional Assembly will adopt and publish a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the whole of the Southern Region, including three Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans for Cork Limerick and Waterford, by the end of 2018.



Proposed Project Timeline

Once the RSES is adopted by the members of the Regional Assembly, each planning authority and public body within the region will be obliged to review their plans and programmes and consider whether any variations to those plans are necessary in order to achieve the objectives of the RSES.

Please note:

This initial pre-draft consultation is only the first step in the process of preparing and adoption a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region and that there will be other opportunities later in the process for you or your organisation to further express your views and make additional submissions.