



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

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Proposed Material Amendments to the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Regional Assembly

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) notes the publication of the Proposed Material Amendments to the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) and sets out hereunder observations on behalf of the Assembly. The submission has been reviewed by the executive and approved by the members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly at the meeting of 11th October 2019.

The Assembly acknowledge the publication of the proposed material amendments and are cognisant of the ongoing work by the Southern Assembly in working towards the completion of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region. The SRA will be aware of the finalisation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region which was made on 28th June 2019. Accordingly, EMRA welcome the advancement of the RSES for the Southern Region and look forward to the completion of a document that appropriately addresses the policies and objectives of Project Ireland 2040 - the National Planning Framework (NPF) at a regional level.

Whilst the comprehensive list of proposed material amendments is fully noted, the scope of this submission mainly focuses on issues directly linked to the Eastern and Midland Region.

Inter-regional and International Connectivity

EMRA acknowledge and support the inclusion of additional regional policy objectives that promote global and inter-regional connectivity through the development of a strategic 'corridor' approach as reflected in the new regional policy objective "RPO C: Inter-Urban Networks as Regional Drivers of Collaboration and Growth" which recognises the significance of the Eastern Corridor (Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor extending to Rosslare Europort).

In addition, the new regional policy objective "RPO D: Eastern Corridor" supports enhancing the Eastern Corridor through the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and strengthening economic links with the South East extending to Rosslare Europort (including public transport connectivity and optimising the potential for rail freight), which is an important economic and transport link, particularly in the post Brexit scenario. This strategic connection is also recognised and promoted within the EMRA RSES Growth Strategy.

EMRA welcome the inclusion of additional supporting narrative to “RPO 135: International Connectivity” which aims to reinforce the importance of the role of our strategic road and sustainable transport networks including connectivity to the TEN-T Core and Comprehensive Network, connecting to each of the region’s metropolitan areas, key towns, ports and airports with the Atlantic Economic Corridor, extended Dublin-Belfast Eastern Corridor and other urban networks. Of relevance, and in addition, RPO 8.12 of the EMRA RSES supports the delivery of a higher speed rail connection between Belfast and Dublin and Cork.

Policy Alignment and Terminology: Carlow

EMRA acknowledges the proposed amendment to “RPO 19: Carlow” to include additional measures to strengthen Carlow’s role as a Key Town in the region. Carlow/Graiguecullen is also designated a Key Town within the EMRA RSES, with a boundary shared between both the southern and eastern and midland regions. RPO 4.75 of the EMRA RSES sets out that a cross-boundary Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) shall be prepared for Carlow by Carlow County Council and Laois County Council. In this regard there should be consistency of approach on land use terminology across both strategies. In addition, the narrative should acknowledge that the distribution of population between the two local authorities should be decided by both local authorities in the joint local area plan, and this distribution should be commensurate with existing population levels. .

EMRA note the inclusion of additional measures within RPO 19 relating to the River Barrow, in particular parts (x) and (xi) that relate to development of lands and infrastructure along the River Barrow. In order to achieve policy alignment between the two strategies any additional measures should be consistent with RPO 4.76 of the EMRA RSES which states the following: “support the sustainable development of environmentally sensitive, low intensity amenity development associated with the Barrow Blueway subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive and Floods Directive.”

Conclusion

The Regional Assembly welcome the publication of the Proposed Material Amendments to the Draft Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy for the Southern Region and the advancement of the RSES process towards finalisation. The Assembly look forward to working with the SRA over the lifetime of both RSES documents in order to ensure implementation of shared policies that will deliver mutual and tangible benefits for these Regions of Ireland.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line and a small upward tick.

Jim Conway

Director

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

11th October 2019