

Southern Regional Assembly Submission to the National Development Plan Review



January 2021

SRA Submission Ref: 20/GD007

1: Executive Summary

To achieve the National Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and enable the full potential of our Region, the NDP needs to commit funding to the Regions, especially funding to enable cities, towns, rural areas and economic corridors thrive as drivers for balanced regional development and growth.

The Southern Region has the State's most significant proposition to achieve the aim of Regional Parity. The NPF and Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) targets our three cities to grow by over 50% to 2040 as part of a structural realignment for the overall betterment of our society and environment in population, homes, and jobs away from the Greater Dublin Area with a 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midlands region and the Southern and Northern and Western Regions. **These are extremely ambitious targets which have never been accomplished in the State's history. Their achievement requires a structure change in the scale and nature of investment to the Regions and the Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick- Shannon, Waterford and Galway.**

The Region has a projected additional population of 380,000 by 2040 bringing the population of the region to almost two million with an additional 225,000 people in employment (880,000 in total). The Region has three of the State's four cities and metropolitan areas outside of Dublin with ambitious targets of over 50% accelerated and urban focused growth. A dual track strategy is pursued that builds on our Metropolitan Areas; Cork, Limerick - Shannon and Waterford as significantly scaled economic drivers and supports the Region (and each constituent Local Authority) as a strong network of economic corridors (Atlantic Economic Corridor and Eastern Corridor), Key Towns, Towns, villages and rural areas.

The Region's priorities for investment are identified in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford which came into effect on the 31st January 2020. They set a 12-year strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development of Southern Region to become one of Europe's most "**Creative and Innovative**", "**Liveable**" and "**Greenest**" Regions.

With the RSES and MASPs at implementation stage, integration of the regional tier to inform the next NDP is critical to underpin the achievement of national strategic outcomes at the regional and local level.

A strengthened emphasis on the Regions, supported with ring fenced funding packages for capital projects and initiatives, especially for project planning and to accommodate infrastructure led compact growth across our designated key settlements will build resilience for all locations in our Region. Strengthening urban and rural areas together is the core message of our RSES. The NDP needs to fund actions to enable diverse opportunities in our Region and support the implementation of the overall RSES strategy in seeking services, physical and social infrastructure investment and enterprise growth for all communities.

Our Local Authorities need support and pathways to funding to deliver on NPF, RSES and MASP priorities. This allows all our stakeholders and communities to retrofit infrastructure and plan for future growth to achieve the structural and transformative change required through Project Ireland 2040 at the regional and local level. The SRA have two key recommendations for governance and funding:

(1): The funding mechanisms to achieve NPF and RSES objectives need to change. Competitive bids should not be a primary source for funding the strategic change sought through the NPF and RSES. In parallel, new funding structures are needed to achieve funding for infrastructure and projects at the local level. Local Authorities need to be assisted to deliver on City and County Development Plan objectives and Core Strategies, especially the delivery of housing and employment targets aligned with national and regional projections and objectives. While there is merit to the competitive bid process more direct partnership and support to assist Local Authority initiatives is also needed to achieve NPF and RSES objectives.

(2): The establishment of dedicated long-term budgeting mechanism (10-year strategic fund) to drive the achievement of the accelerated growth of our three Metropolitan Areas and funding support for Key Towns is a key recommendation.

Regional Investment Priorities for the NDP have been identified and aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF, existing NDP Strategic Investment Priorities, RSES and MASP Strategy and Objectives and the Programme for Government Mission Statements. Our priorities are:

Climate Action

- Deliver action on Climate Change and transition to a low carbon future for all Sectors.
- Enhance and expand renewable energy infrastructure in the Southern Region
- Support the Region's Green Economy.
- Strengthen Biodiversity, Green and Blue Infrastructure in the Southern Region.

Placemaking for Sustainable Urban and Rural Communities

- Invest in infrastructure packages and placemaking initiatives for sustainable urban and rural communities:

Housing and Compact Growth

- Support the achievement of growth targets, delivery of housing and enabling infrastructure on key sites that contribute to compact growth targets in the Cork, Limerick-Shannon, and Waterford Metropolitan Areas.
- Support the delivery of housing and enabling infrastructure on key sites that contribute to compact growth targets in the Key Towns of the Southern Region.
- The funding mechanisms to achieve NPF and RSES objectives should be changed.

High Quality, High Capacity Digital Infrastructure

- Invest and enhance digital infrastructures across our Region

Rural Development

- Safeguard funding for the implementation of the National Broadband Plan in rural communities based in the Southern Region.
- Develop serviced sites within rural towns and villages to enable sustainable rural housing developments.
- Maintain and enhance the Regional and Local Road network of the Southern Region.
- Support the economies of rural communities/settlements based in the Southern Region.
- Support the Region's Marine Economy.



Sustainable Mobility

- Deliver projects under the Cork, Limerick-Shannon, and Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies.
- Deliver projects under Local Transport Plans in the Southern Region.
- Maintain, enhance and extend the existing rail infrastructure of the Southern Region.
- Strengthen the Region's bus networks and services.
- Enhance the use of smart transport technologies in the Southern Region.
- Increase the number of publicly owned EV charge points in the Southern Region.
- Enhance the cycling and pedestrian infrastructure of the Southern Region.
- Implement 10 Minute City and Town Concepts in the Southern Region.

Regional Connectivity

- Enhance the inter-regional and intra-regional strategic national road network and public transport corridors that connect the Southern Region's Metropolitan Areas, Economic Corridors and Key Towns.

Enterprise, Skills, and Innovation Capacity

- Deliver placemaking initiatives and infrastructure packages for enterprise growth.
- Deliver infrastructure and services that will grow knowledge diffusion and develop a Learning Region.
- Deliver infrastructure that will support Regional Smart Specialisation and Clustering
- Support and expand the Southern Region's network of co-working hubs
- Ring Fenced Funding for Designated Key Settlements in the Southern Region

International Connectivity

- Support our Regions Airport and Port Assets.

Culture, Heritage and Sport

- Support Culture, the Gaeltacht, Sports & Recreation and Heritage in our Region.

Water Infrastructure

- Invest in water resources and infrastructure led growth.
- Enhance the protection of water resources and deliver flood relief infrastructure.

Education, Health and Childcare

- Deliver investment to enhance the health and wellbeing of our Region's citizens.
- Strengthen investment and supports for childcare, education, and services for our Region's youth.
- Invest in infrastructure and services to build socially inclusive and international communities in our Region.

2: Introduction

The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) is part of the regional tier of governance in Ireland. It is primarily focused on the formulation, adoption, and implementation of its Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs), oversight and coordination of Local Economic and Community Plans, management of EU co-funded Programmes, EU project participation, supporting and promoting public sector participation in EU Programmes, implementation of national economic policy, and additional functions through working with the National Oversight and Audit Commission.

The RSES provides a statutory long-term, strategic development framework for the spatial, economic and social development of the Region, in line with vision and objectives for national change in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP).

The RSES vision is led by the need for transformative change. The NPF and RSES targets our three cities to grow by over 50% to 2040 as part of a structural realignment in population, homes, and jobs away from the Greater Dublin Area with a 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midlands region and the Southern and Northern and Western Region. **These are an extremely ambitious targets which have never been accomplished in the State's history.**

By 2040, the population of the Region is projected to rise to almost two million, requiring new homes and jobs. To accommodate this growth, the RSES recognises the strategic role played by all areas in achieving regional and national targets outlined in the NPF. The settlement strategy builds on the Region's three cities and metropolitan areas of Cork, Limerick -Shannon and Waterford as engines of growth supported by a network of 14 strategically located Key Towns namely Kilkenny, Ennis, Carlow, Tralee, Wexford, Clonmel, Killarney, Mallow, Nenagh, Thurles, Newcastle West, Clonakilty, Dungarvan and Gorey. The RSES identifies the important role of collaboration between the cities and metropolitan areas, collaboration across town networks and the potential for greater economic resilience across our diverse rural towns, villages, and communities to contribute to our Region's growth.

At least 50% of all new homes that are targeted in the region's three metropolitan areas are to be delivered within their existing built up footprints in accordance with NPF National Policy Objective 3b and a corresponding target of at least 30% within our key towns in accordance with NPF National Policy Objective 3c. **Achieving such ambitious targets – and by virtue the spatial objectives of the NPF – will require an equally ambitious alignment in funding priorities and mechanisms between the NDP and the Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) of the Southern Regional Assembly's RSES.**

The Assembly welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of the NDP. As the primary aim of the RSES is to implement *Project Ireland 2040* - the NPF at the regional level, it is essential that the overarching priorities of the NDP complement the vision and objectives of the Southern Regional Assembly's RSES. The NDP needs to deliver for the RSES and MASPs and enable the achievement of the transformative and structural changes required, especially achieving compact urban growth, regeneration and arresting the decline in rural areas. Aligning the NDP investment with our strategic frameworks will be a key component in tackling regional imbalances that exist in Ireland, allowing the Southern Region to develop critical mass and act as a counterbalance to and contribute to the easing of the congestion of the Greater Dublin Area. A revised and policy congruent NDP will play a significant role in contributing to effective regional development in Ireland, allowing our region to fulfil the vision of our RSES, namely, to become one of Europe's most "**Creative and Innovative**", "**Greenest**" and "**Liveable**" regions.

Key Enablers – What will success for the NDP and RSES look like in the Southern Region?

- **Taking the rights steps** towards more sustainable travel, energy and bioeconomy to **lead on Climate Action** in the states transition to a Low Carbon Society.
- Delivering ambitious, unprecedented and sustainable growth targets for our cities and Metropolitan Areas (50% plus) – **Cork, Limerick & Waterford,**
- Developing and consolidating our **Key Towns, Kilkenny City, Tralee, Carlow, Ennis, Wexford, Killarney, Mallow, Clonakilty, Newcastle West, Thurles, Clonmel, Nenagh, Dungarvan, and Gorey,**
- Developing the **Cork Docklands,**
- Regeneration of **Limerick-Shannon,** including the **Limerick Northern Distributor Route/ Smart Travel Corridor,**
- Achieving a balanced ‘concentric city’ model north of the river in **Waterford** with development of the North Quays and adjoining lands in **Kilkenny.**
- Creating an inclusive and Learning Region, building on our higher education institutions including establishing the new technological universities of **MTU** and **TUSE,** the TU application by Limerick IT with Athlone IT, a new **Learning Region Network** and developing a **Smart Region.**
- Positioning the Southern Region as **Ireland’s International Gateway** through our seaports and airports.
- Making the most of **Cork and Waterford Harbours** and the **Shannon Estuary** – our natural maritime assets.
- Improving and protecting **the quality of the environment** and our rich **heritage.**
- **Sustainably developing our tourism and recreational potential** along the Wild Atlantic Way, into Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands, through Ireland’s Ancient East, and along the Blueways and Greenways.
- **Revitalising our urban areas and spaces** through creative and regenerative place-making, to deliver on **Compact Growth and Housing Need,** and provide new vitality for City and Town Centres.
- **Revitalising Rural Areas** through readapting our small towns and villages and increasing collaboration between networks of settlements to seek higher value, diversified jobs for a higher quality of life.
- **Connecting our Region** – enhanced infrastructure from **North to South** and **East Coast to West Coast,** connecting to the **Atlantic Economic Corridor** & developing an extended **Eastern Economic Corridor to Rosslare Europort.**
- Creating the **Greenest** and **most Liveable Metropolitan Areas** for diverse communities, culture and enterprise –
- Investing in **Public Services** to tackle legacies, support planned population and employment growth, providing education, health, transport, community and social services and infrastructure.

3: Areas of Consideration

3.1 Level of Capital Funding

The scale of investment to transform and drive cities and metropolitan areas and Key Towns and rural areas as economic engines, needs a step change. The key objective of the NPF is the transformation of spatial development through our five cities: Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. Furthermore, the NPF calls for a move from the Dublin region by the accelerated growth of the other cities. **This is particularly relevant to the Southern Region which contains three of the countries five cities.** The requirement for change is that these should grow at an unprecedented rate of over 2.5 times – historic growth rates. **The focus of the NDP should move to how these will be achieved,** and it is recommended that long term packages and mechanisms are implemented.

The national level of funding for the Urban and Rural Regeneration Development Funds (URDF & RRDF) at €2 billion and €1 billion respectively is welcomed to date, but insufficient considering the level of opportunity and infrastructure interventions needed to transform our urban centres of all scales to deliver compact growth. For example, the NDP allocated €8.6 billion for sustainable transport, €5 billion of which was to projects in the Dublin Metropolitan Area. Since the NDP was published, Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies are completed for Cork, at advanced draft state for Limerick-Shannon and under preparation for Waterford. They are game changers for land use and transport planning in each city and metropolitan area.

The Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy includes a phasing timeframe, key projects at a costing of €3.5 billion and a benefit to cost ratio at 2.48. The Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Transport Strategy includes a costing at €1.4 billion and a benefit to cost ratio at 2.8. The Waterford Metropolitan Transport Strategy will have costing and cost ratios identified in due course. As a comparison, delivering on what is identified to date is more than two and a half times the total national fund for the URDF. Projects identified within these transport strategies are fundamental to unlocking brownfield regeneration sites and sustainable mobility in our largest centres of growth and need to be backed fully with dedicated funding for metropolitan transport strategies in each of the Region's cities and metropolitan areas in the NDP.

3.2 Share of Capital Funding across Departments

Each Department's expenditure priorities and portfolio of projects and initiatives are mutually reinforcing in the delivery of the interrelated National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and RSES Strategy Statements. Multi-functionality should be sought from investment projects and strategic cross departmental collaborations to ensure multiple benefits are harnessed from capital investment. This will ensure value for money and joined up thinking in the delivery of actions that address multiple objectives of the NPF, RSES and MASPs. For example, collaboration on multiple benefits from initiatives addressing Climate Change will drive actions and outcomes across many NSOs and RSES RPOs such as delivering for a Low Carbon Climate Resilient Economy & Society, Compact Growth, Sustainable Mobility, Enhanced Regional Connectivity, Strong Economy, a Healthy and Learning Region, Sustainable Planned Infrastructure Led Development inter alia.

3.3 Priorities for Capital Funding

Our Region’s priorities for NDP funding are identified in Section 4.0 below. All these priorities help to achieve the overarching goal of our RSES for a “Creative & Innovative Region”, “Liveable Region” and “Green Region” for all locations in our Region and need support.

3.4 Spatial Alignment: Capital Funding for Urban and Rural Areas

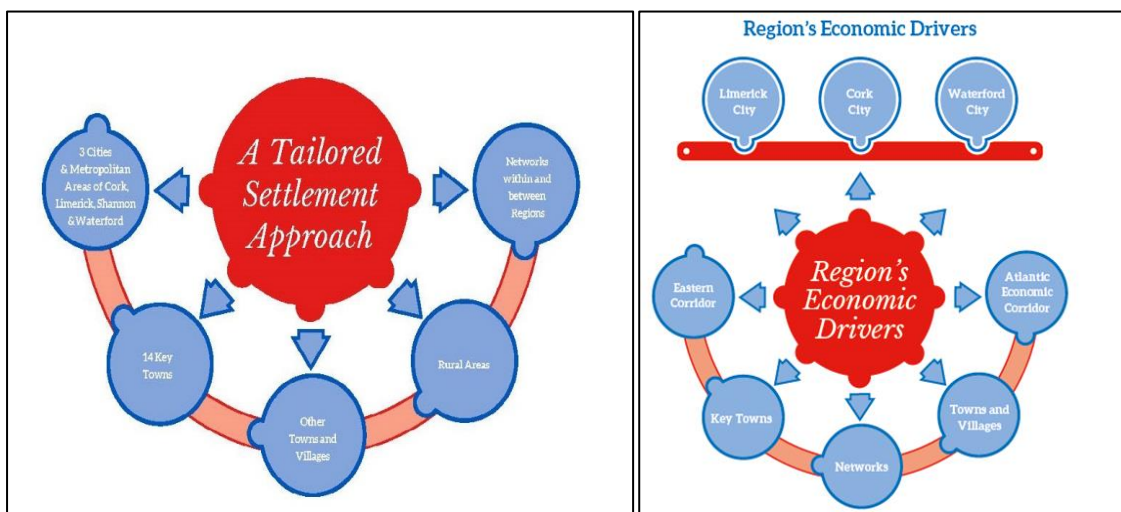
The RSES and MASP are the first step towards achieving a more sustainable settlement pattern for our Region which is projected to grow by an additional 380,000 people (2m in total) by 2040 and grow employment by 225,000 (880,000 in total). Each of our three cities of Cork, Limerick, and Waterford target between 50% to 60% growth over this period. Each of our fourteen Key Towns target 30% plus growth over this period. Compact Growth will see at least 50% of all new housing delivered within existing urban footprints for our cities through regeneration and infill development, with a Compact Growth target of 30% for all other settlements. The RSES sets the appropriate planning and economic framework and hierarchy for national investment into the Region to achieve this growth.

The essence of the approach is best captured through RPO 2 “Planning for Diverse Areas”. The overall strategy builds on cities and their associated metropolitan areas as engines of growth and seeks, in parallel, to re-position the Region’s strong network of towns, villages and diverse rural areas in an economically resilient way. Investment is needed in all locations to fulfil the role of the settlement strategy which, in turn, is aligned with the Region’s economic drivers.

Capital investment through the NDP needs to support economic drivers in our Region for balanced regional growth. In line with the Programme for Government, “all parts of Ireland must thrive if we are to prosper as a country”.

Funding for holistic cross departmental infrastructure packages should be ring fenced for the Region’s designated key settlements such as Cities and Metropolitan Areas to accelerate growth and Key Towns. This enables effective project planning and delivery. The diagrams below reflect the complementarity between investment in the settlement strategy and support for our Region’s economic drivers.

Diagram 1: RSES Settlement Strategy and Drivers for Economic Growth Align



3.5 Governance of Capital Funding: Reform the funding mechanisms to achieve NPF and RSES

The existing NDP is committed to reforming public investment and states this will be achieved through a decisive shift to integrated regional investment plans. The RSES and MASPs are at implementation stage and now is the appropriate time to support this through funding to the Regions to deliver key enablers to fulfil policy objectives under the NPF and actions through RSES, MASPs and City and County Development Plans. **The NDP should be more directly aligned to the achievement of the NPF, RSES and MASPs and lock within it a framework to fund projects and initiatives that emerge at the local level to deliver our national and regional objectives and priorities.**

The RSES emphasises that success rests on coherence at national, regional, and local level and the consequential programme of investments. In addition to the funding mechanisms provided for under the NDP and Project Ireland 2040, the RSES recognises funding sources to the Regions from a blend of sources including the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, European Funding Programmes, including ERDF and ESF prioritisation 2021-2027 and funding priorities under the EU Green Deal. The NDP should strongly support these pathways for increased funding into our Regions.

The competitive bid processes through Project Ireland 2040 have merit but should not be the primary source of funding for the extent and scale of projects in different locations needed to drive RSES and MASP implementation, especially under URDF and RRDF. LA's increasingly need to focus on stakeholder coordination, project planning and delivery. Enhanced ring-fenced funding, focussed on the achievement of strategic objectives and set within appropriate frameworks in tandem with targeted competitive bidding, would better achieve delivery of our Region's compact growth targets. This would include the establishment of dedicated long-term budgeting mechanism (10-year strategic fund) to drive the achievement of the accelerated growth of our three Metropolitan Areas.

The structure of national, regional, and local tier working in concert is robust and embedded through Planning and Development Legislation. The regional tier is an essential cog bridging national policy and detailed actions at the local level. While the alignment is in place through the RSES, the approach to implementation needs to be fit for purpose and tailored for effective delivery. Therefore, it is recommended that the Regional Assemblies are incorporated into the oversight structures and Governance models, explicitly as a key consultee and have a greater role and input into the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board to provide a strategic conduit between national, regional and local priorities, and funding alignment.

There is a need for a model that clearly focuses on the delivery of growth for cities and metropolitan areas with long-term secured budgets to fund infrastructure packages to achieve the transformative and structural change sought by national and regional policy (as recommended above) Funding packages will empower Local Government actions, securing citizens and sectoral stakeholders buy-in safeguarding the implementation of the RSES and MASPs.

The theme of collaboration (such as collaboration between cities and metropolitan areas to meaningfully drive Regional Parity as supported by RSES RPO 6) and awarding collaborative initiatives with funding for actions should be strengthened in the NDP.

4: Regional Investment Priorities

Regional Investment Priorities for the NDP have been identified and aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF, existing NDP Strategic Investment Priorities, RSES and MASP Strategy and Objectives and the Programme for Government Mission Statements. Our priorities are:

1. Climate Action
2. Placemaking for Sustainable Urban and Rural Communities
3. Housing and Compact Growth
4. High Quality, High Capacity Digital Infrastructure
5. Rural Development
6. Sustainable Mobility
7. Regional Connectivity
8. Enterprise, Skills, and Innovation Capacity
9. International Connectivity
10. Culture, Heritage and Sport
11. Water Infrastructure
12. Education, Health and Childcare

4.1: Climate Action

- **Deliver action on Climate Change and transition to a low carbon future for all sectors:** A commitment to targets and actions that transition all our sectors and communities to a low carbon future to address the climate change emergency is needed. The SRA support the implementation of national policy on climate change, mitigation and adaptation and actions under the new Climate Action Bill. The SRA seek support for the initiatives of Climate Action Regional Offices in their important coordination with sectoral stakeholders and Local Authorities in delivering meaningful local actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation and the implementation of Local Authority Climate Change Adaptation Strategies. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 56, 89 and 90.
- **Enhance and expand renewable energy infrastructure in the Southern Region:** The SRA support implementation of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and investment to improve energy efficiency, retrofit and future proof our Region's building stock. Support renewable energy generation, specifically the need for significant upgrading of energy transmission infrastructure to integrate increased on shore and offshore renewable sources onto the National Grid to meet our targets. The development of international energy interconnections and upgrading power stations for renewable technologies are priorities for security of energy supply. Support actions through future Regional Renewable Energy Strategy and Regional Decarbonisation Plans. The SRA also support local and community renewable energy networks, micro renewable generation, climate smart countryside projects and connections from such initiatives to the grid. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 87, 91-106 and 219-224.
- **Support the Region's Green Economy:** The SRA recognise the transition to a low carbon economy can offer significant opportunities to achieve sectoral diversification in the Green Economy and the need for a Just Transition for employment to a greener future. However, it requires support, structures, and investment. In this regard, the SRA supports funding for research and development in Green Economy sectors and support for centres of excellence such as the National Bio-Economy Hub in Lisheen in the Southern Region. The NDP should support innovation in the bioeconomy as a major contributor to our indigenous renewable energy resources and as an economic driver for our rural areas. The SRA also support social enterprises and the circular economy within local communities to benefit environmental protection, employment generation and community development. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 56-60.

- **Strengthen Biodiversity, Green and Blue Infrastructure in the Southern Region:** A requirement for strengthened Ecosystem Services approaches, Sustainable Urban Drainage Solutions and Nature-Based Design Solutions for all capital projects and works by Local Authorities and infrastructure agencies is supported. Initiatives for that bring Local Authorities and stakeholders together to enhance the biodiversity of the Regions need to be driven. Specifically, the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and National Biodiversity Action Plan are supported. The SRA also support the on-going maintenance, enhancement, and extension to our network of Greenways and Blueways, National Parks, Forest Trails, Mountain Trails, Peatland Trails, and other designated locations for natural habitat, recreation, and enjoyment. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 110, 122-128, 200-201 and 218

4.2: Placemaking For Sustainable Urban and Rural Communities

- **Invest in infrastructure packages and placemaking initiatives for sustainable urban and rural communities:** If we do not invest in the quality of our places for communities, our population growth targets alone are meaningless. The NDP needs to fund the delivery of placemaking initiatives and infrastructure packages by Local Authorities in coordination with stakeholder agencies and local communities. It is important that in addition to delivering physical utility infrastructures for growth, investment should also be provided for retrofitting infrastructure and services for existing communities. Investment to improve and enable placemaking attributes holistically are essential to improve the liveability of our cities, towns and villages for both our existing and future communities to live and work in. Such initiatives can be cost effective but deliver real value to local communities and deliver for the NPF and RSES. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 31-38 and RPO 175.

4.3: Housing and Compact Growth

- **Support the achievement of growth targets, delivery of housing and enabling infrastructure on key sites that contribute to compact growth targets in the Cork, Limerick-Shannon, and Waterford Metropolitan Areas:** It is essential that at least 50% of all new homes that are targeted in the Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford Metropolitan Areas are delivered within their existing built-up footprints, in accordance with NPF National Policy Objective 3b. The provision of capital investment should aim to support the delivery of housing developments and enabling infrastructure on key sites along proposed public transport corridors that have the potential for high density development and regeneration of brownfield and infill sites in the Cork, Limerick-Shannon, and Waterford Metropolitan Areas. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 4,8, 9, 68, 175, 227, Cork MASP Objectives 5 and 6, Limerick -Shannon MASP Objectives 4 and 5 and Waterford MASP Objectives 3 and 4.
- **Support the delivery of housing and enabling infrastructure on key sites that contribute to compact growth targets in the Key Towns¹ of the Southern Region:** It is imperative that at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in the Key Towns of the Southern Region are within or contiguous to their existing built-up footprints, in accordance with NPF National Policy Objective 3c. The provision of capital expenditure for housing developments and enabling infrastructure on key sites within the Key Towns of the Southern Region should

¹ The Key Towns of the Southern Region include Kilkenny, Ennis, Carlow, Tralee, Wexford, Clonmel, Killarney, Mallow, Nenagh, Thurles, Newcastle West, Clonakilty, Dungarvan and Gorey



support the regeneration of underused town centres and brownfield / infill lands while also supporting the development of housing on existing zoned and serviced lands to facilitate significant compact growth in these settlements. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 4, 11, 12-15, 26, 29, 175 and 227.

- **The funding mechanisms to achieve NPF and RSES objectives should be changed:** The Southern Regional Assembly believes that the funding mechanism for large and complex regeneration projects that will support the compact growth targets of the Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford Metropolitan Areas and the Key Towns of the Southern Region should be simplified. The competitive bid process for funds through the Urban and Rural Regeneration Development Funds encourage action on projects. In the context of the step change needed for increased funding under URDF and RRDF and to deliver projects to the level required, LAs increasingly need to prioritise their resources on stakeholder coordination, project planning and delivery. Local Authorities will require a more simplified funding mechanism to accelerate the transformational change required for our Cities, Metropolitan Areas and Key Towns. Bidding process under an enhanced URDF/RRDF should not be the sole funding mechanism. Large scaled brownfield regeneration projects in Cities, Metropolitan Areas and Key Towns, require action and merit funding as they are identified by the RSES and MASP as transformative projects and key enablers. As identified in Section 3.5, the establishment of dedicated long-term budgeting mechanism (10-year strategic fund) to drive the achievement of the accelerated growth of our three Metropolitan Areas are strongly recommended. Enhanced ring-fenced funding, focussed on the achievement of strategic objectives and set within appropriate frameworks in tandem with targeted competitive bidding, would better achieve delivery of our Region's compact growth targets. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 4,8, 9, 10, 11, 12-25, 68, 70, 175, 227, Cork MASP Objectives 5 and 6, Limerick -Shannon MASP Objectives 4 and 5 and Waterford MASP Objectives 3 and 4. It is recommended funding mechanisms are reviewed to align more effectively with the achievement of the spatial objectives of the NPF and RSES.

4.4 High Quality, High Capacity Digital Infrastructure

- **Invest and enhance digital infrastructures across our Region:** It is essential for our economic competitiveness and resilience to provide new and continual re-investment in the quality of our digital infrastructure networks across cities, towns, villages and rural areas. The implementation of actions arising from Local Authority Smart Cities and Smart Town initiatives, actions under Local Authority Digital Strategies and investment and upgrades under the National Broadband Plan, in fibre technologies, wireless networks, Metropolitan Area Networks and other integrated digital infrastructures will provide a significant economic dividend for our Region. The recent publication by the three Regional Assemblies "Regional Co-Working Analysis" sets out eight key considerations for policy makers to realise the economic potential and benefits of remote working and should be further consulted and considered by the Department. This priority aligns with RSES RPOs 46, 48 and 133-138 (link to the report of the three Assemblies is at: <https://www.southernassembly.ie/news/news-article/regional-co-working-analysis>)



4.5: Rural Development

- **Safeguard funding for the implementation of the National Broadband Plan in rural communities based in the Southern Region:** Further to priority 4.4 High Quality High Capacity Digital Infrastructure, the provision of high-speed broadband to rural communities will be a key component in transforming the economic and social wellbeing of rural towns and villages based in the Southern Region, and it is imperative that this digital infrastructure is delivered in a timely and efficient manner. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 26, 46, 48, 134, 136 and 138.
- **Support the economies of rural communities based in the Southern Region:** It is imperative that appropriate levels of capital expenditure develop and diversify rural economies by supporting sustainable and efficient sectors. Funding packages to improve placemaking qualities and service infrastructure (especially water and waste water infrastructure for rural towns and villages) for Irish Water and each Local Authority should be identified (see also Sections 4.5 and 4.9 below). Additional capital investment should aim to support stakeholders in developing sustainable initiatives involved in solar energy, wind energy, forestry, retrofitting of properties and sustainable agriculture projects in rural communities based in the Region. The support and development of sustainable sectors will be an important component in growing rural economies and supporting retail and other services in rural communities in the coming years. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 40, 45, 46, 48, 49 and 50.
- **Develop serviced sites within rural towns and villages to enable sustainable rural housing developments:** Additional resources should be provided to initiatives – such as the Rural Serviced Sites Scheme – which assist Local Authorities in encouraging families and individuals to build their own homes on service sites within rural towns and villages. This would provide a sustainable alternative to one-off rural housing and provide a mechanism to develop rural populations in line with the spatial objectives of the RSES. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 26, 27, 29, 34 and 35.
- **Maintain and enhance the Regional and Local Road network of the Southern Region:** Adequate levels of capital investment should be provided for both steady state maintenance and enhancement of existing regional and local road networks for connectivity, public transport, and delivery of services to rural areas in the Southern Region. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 26, 53, 68, 158, 168, 171, 172 and 173.
- **Support the Region's Marine Economy:** The RSES supports the potential to grow the marine economy of the Southern Region. The NDP should give strengthened support to marine sectors and support the Regions to be first movers in the marine economy including investment and support for our Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports (vital in the context of their role post Brexit and as drivers for Marine Sectors under the National Marine Planning Framework), fishing harbours, coastal towns and villages and research and innovation sectors, especially in areas of Off-Shore Renewable Energy, Marine ICT and Biotechnology. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 76-86 and 142-147.



4.6: Sustainable Mobility

- **Deliver projects under the Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies:** From the regional perspective, the preparation, implementation and follow through investment in delivering these strategies for our largest economic drivers, centres of scale and targeted growth cannot be over-stated and is fundamental to the achievement of the NPF target of balanced regional growth. An increased rate of capital expenditure should be deployed to deliver sustainable public transport priorities outlined in each of these strategies which provide costed infrastructure projects and a delivery schedule for transport projects across all modes with a focus on public transport, active travel and greater transition to sustainable mobility. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 160-165, 170, 171, 174, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.
- **Deliver projects under Local Transport Plans in the Southern Region:** An increased rate of capital expenditure should be deployed to deliver forthcoming Local Transport Plans that facilitate a shift to more sustainable transport modes in the Key Towns of the Southern Region. Capital expenditure should have a particular focus on delivering infrastructure that will allow for multi-modal travel integration and sustainable mobility, reducing the reliance on private car journeys and achieving a shift to more sustainable forms of transportation, namely cycling, walking, public transport, and car sharing. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 11, 12-25, 157 and 160-163.
- **Maintain, enhance and extend the existing rail infrastructure of the Southern Region:** The delivery of capital investment to maintain, improve and extend the existing rail network of the Southern Region is prioritised. Specific investment should target inter-city rail and the potential for electrification of rail for higher speeds and efficient journey times between our cities, key towns and along economic corridors, target opportunities for rail-based freight distribution. Invest in commuter rail stations and services, especially in cities, suburbs, and metropolitan areas. Investment is required to develop multi-modal interchange with rail (including Park and Ride facilities), transitioning the fleets to renewable or low carbon sources, and improving the passenger facilities and services². This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 91, 140, 141, 160-166, 170, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.
- **Strengthen the Region's bus networks and services:** Flexibility of bus routes and services to deliver cost effective public transport access and services for all locations in our Region in the shorter and medium terms which will help meet the urgent need for action for climate change and modal shift to low carbon transport. Investment is needed for strategic bus network projects in cities and towns (including Bus Connects projects in our cities), inter-city and inter-urban bus services, rural bus services (Local Link and the Rural Transport Programme), modal interchange facilities and transition of fleets to low carbon fuel sources. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 91, 157, 160-165, 171, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.

² Subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the outcome of the planning process



- **Enhance the use of smart transport technologies in the Southern Region:** Transport infrastructure capital expenditure in the Region should involve a systematic integration of ICT in the planning, design, operations, and management of transport services of the Region's settlements. Investment should leverage intelligent low carbon e-mobility systems. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 157, 160-164, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.
- **Increase the number of publicly owned EV charge points in the Southern Region:** An increased rate of capital expenditure to facilitate and encourage greater use of electric vehicles by developing more publicly owned recharging facilities in the Southern Region. Additional resources in this regard should aim to develop EV "Fast Charge" points or EV "High Powered Charge"³ points in strategic and accessible locations across the Region. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 91, 92 and 160-164.
- **Enhance the cycling and pedestrian infrastructure of the Southern Region:** Capital investment should aim to deliver safe cycling routes and enhance pedestrian facilities across settlements of all scale in our Region, with packaged investments to Local Authorities and transport agencies to action cost effective local walking and cycling infrastructure improvements and developing Greenway and Blue Way projects in the short term. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 151, 152, 160-165, 174, 176, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.
- **Implement 10 Minute City and Town Concepts in the Southern Region:** The NDP should support the implementation of sustainable 10 Minute City and Town concepts as a key principle of sustainable mobility policy and support the initiatives of Local Authorities, transport agencies and communities with investment packages to achieve projects that enhance permeability to achieve sustainable 10 Minute City and Town concepts. Such projects can be cost effective and delivered in the short term. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 151, 152, 160-165, 174, 176, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.

4.7: Regional Connectivity

- **Enhance the inter-regional and intra-regional strategic national road network and public transport corridors that connect the Region's Metropolitan Areas, Economic Corridors and Key Towns:** Capital investment in the steady state maintenance and enhancement of road networks deliver for sustainable transport as a critical enabler for economic resilience (completion of the TEN-T Core and Comprehensive Networks vital to our international connectivity in the context of Brexit), public transport (bus) corridors, connectivity "life lines" extending access to services to peripheral locations and enabling urban regeneration in city and town centres (allowing new traffic management solutions to unlock large scale brownfield sites for regeneration including docklands). Delivering the Region's outstanding road projects as identified under the NPF and existing NDP, the RSES and MASPs, Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS)⁴, the draft Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS)⁵ and the forthcoming Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (WMATS), align with the spatial and economic objectives of the RSES and MASPs. In terms of

³ Fast chargers can get an 80 percent charge to most EVs in 30 minutes, while high powered chargers can give a charge of 100km in as little as six minutes. Source ESB: <https://esb.ie/ecars/how-to-charge-your-ev/fast-charging>, <https://esb.ie/ecars/how-to-charge-your-ev/high-power-charging>

⁴ <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/planning-and-investment/strategic-planning/regional-transport-strategies/cork-metropolitan-area-transport-strategy/>

⁵ <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/consultations/publication-of-the-draft-limerick-shannon-metropolitan-area-transport-strategy-2/>

the RSES, this priority aligns with RSES RPOs 140, 141, 156, 158, 166-168, 171, 172, Cork MASP Objective 9, Limerick-Shannon MASP Objective 8, and Waterford MASP Objective 7.

4.8: Enterprise, Skills, and Innovation Capacity

- **Deliver placemaking initiatives and infrastructure packages for enterprise growth:** An infrastructure led approach to planning for jobs growth needs funding support. Infrastructure is the key factor to support new business formation, especially in attracting a diverse enterprise base within our existing settlements. Placemaking as a key ingredient of both quality of life and enterprise development which are interdependent. Investments in infrastructure packages to address Health Place Audits and enable co-ordinated placemaking initiatives between Local Authorities, infrastructure agencies and the development sector are supported to create a platform for enterprise creation and innovation for settlements at all scales. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 11, 26, 30, 40-42, 61, 62 and 68.
- **Deliver infrastructure and services that will grow knowledge diffusion and develop a Learning Region:** Knowledge diffusion is a key enabler to our Region's economic resilience and growth. Supports to Higher Education Institutes and Education and Training Boards, the Regional Skills Fora and funding actions for life-long learning are needed. The SRA supports Lifelong Learning initiatives as essential components of a strong economy, as exemplified in Cork and Limerick's attainment of the UNESCO Learning City status and extend the UNESCO Learning City status to Waterford city, to create a regional knowledge triangle. The SRA supports the Technological University for the South-East (TUSE) and the Munster Technological University (MTU). These priorities align with and achieves RSES RPOs 63 and 184-190 in addition to Cork MASP Objectives 10 & 20, Limerick-Shannon MASP Objective 18 and Waterford MASP Objectives 14, 22 & 23.
- **Deliver infrastructure that will support Regional Smart Specialisation and Clustering:** A strong focus on Smart Specialisation and Clustering offering an innovative approach to kick-starting regional economies is supported. The SRA seeks to leverage existing enterprise ecosystems across national, regional, and local level by funding initiatives that drive a regional approach to Smart Specialisation. Strengthened funding for research and innovation sectors and for the actions of enterprise agencies and Regional Enterprise Plans is recommended to support enterprise growth, innovation and diversity within our Region's sectors of strength. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 40, 51, 67 and 75.
- **Support and expand the Southern Region's network of co-working hubs:** Further to priority 4.4 High Quality High Capacity Digital Infrastructure, the degree to which urban and rural communities can capitalise on the potential economic benefits of remote working will depend on a variety of factors including the availability of co-working hubs with high quality facilities and the provision of high-speed broadband within such hubs. Therefore, sufficient capital investment should be provided to deliver more co-working hubs in line with the Region's settlement hierarchy with a focus on cities and Key Towns while delivering an appropriate level of hubs in targeted rural communities/settlements serving a wide hinterland area within the Southern Region. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 26, 46, 48, 134, 136 and 138.
- **Ring Fenced Funding for Designated Key Settlements in the Southern Region:** Dedicated funding mechanisms are needed for effective project planning and delivery. As identified in Section 4.3,

the competitive bid process through the Urban Regeneration, Rural Regeneration, Disruptive Technologies and Climate Action Funds are successful and encourage action on projects but in themselves cannot be the sole model for the scale of funding needed to drive RSES and MASP implementation. Ring-fenced funding packages for Local Authorities to co-ordinate to enable action on RSES and MASP objectives, simplified processes to draw down funding and the removal of the need for match funding by Local Authorities, who are financially constrained from the financial impact of Covid-19, are important measures in ensuring urban and rural renewal schemes and enterprise schemes are adequately utilised. As recommended in Section 4.3, the establishment of dedicated long-term budgeting mechanism (10-year strategic fund) to drive the achievement of the accelerated growth of our three Metropolitan Areas is needed. Funding packages to deliver key infrastructure, services and project in Key Towns are also needed. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 7-9, 11, 12-25, 40, 68, 70, 75, 175, 227, Cork MASP Policy Objective 5 & 6, Limerick Shannon MASP Policy Objective 4 & 5 and Waterford MASP Policy Objectives 3 & 4.

4.9: International Connectivity

- **Support the Ports and Regional Airport Assets:** Greater priority is needed towards Ports and Airports in the Southern Region recognising these ports and airports as a collective strength for international connectivity and economic growth, with a key role for EU, UK, and international trade post Brexit. In particular, it has become clear that the ports in the Southern Region have become a vital link for the state as a whole with the rapid development of new shipping routes to France and the Netherlands generating new patterns of freight movement. Optimising the capacity of these assets for economic competitiveness advances Regional Parity and provides a counterbalance to pressures on Dublin's infrastructure. Improved regional connectivity (including use of the extant rail network) and guaranteed journey times (see also Section 4.2) for moving people and logistics to and from our Tier 1 and Tier 2 Port assets (Ports of Cork, Shannon- Foynes, Waterford-Belview and Rosslare Europort), National Airports (Cork and Shannon) and Regional Airports (Kerry and Waterford) is important for our international connectivity and economic resilience. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 140-150 and RPO 166.

4.10: Culture, Heritage and Sport

- **Support Culture, the Gaeltacht, Sports & Recreation and Heritage in our Region:** The SRA support the development of a vibrant cultural and creative sector (measures under Culture 2025 and Creative Ireland Strategy 2017- 22) , our unique Gaeltacht areas (initiatives of Údaras na Gaeltachta under the Gaeltacht Act 2012 , sports and recreation (investments into sports and community organisations through the Sports Capital Programme) and the protection and interaction with heritage in our Region (fund initiatives of Local Authorities, the Heritage Council, local communities, heritage property owners for the revitalisation of historic cores and built heritage). This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 191-199 and RPOs 203-205.

4.11: Water Infrastructure

- **Invest in water resources and infrastructure led growth:** The NDP needs to support Irish Water, Local Authorities, other stakeholders, and communities with funding to service all settlements at different scales within settlement hierarchies with sustainable water and waste water

infrastructure services to underpin growth projections, enable compact growth and regeneration, to protect our water quality and the environment. Strengthened funding to deliver strategic infrastructure projects under Irish Water Investment Plans to service the settlement hierarchy is critical, including funding for rural water and wastewater projects to enable regeneration and serviced site initiatives in rural towns and villages. Strengthened integration of Green Infrastructure and Nature Based Design Solutions to water and drainage infrastructure also needs to be supported. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 208-218.

- **Enhance the protection of water resources and deliver flood relief infrastructure:** The SRA support the implementation of initiatives under the River Basin Management Plan, requirements of the Floods Directive and the Water Framework Directive and initiatives of Local Authority Waters Programme. The SRA support the completion of flood relief schemes and development of capital works under the flood capital investment programme, integrating green infrastructure techniques, projects to protect from coastal erosion and support for Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 111-124.

4.12: Health, Education and Childcare

Refer to Strategic Investment Priority: Enterprise, Skills, and Innovation Capacity for investment priority on Knowledge Diffusion and a Learning Region which compliments the below priorities for education.

- **Deliver investment to enhance the health and wellbeing of our Region's citizens:** Investments to deliver actions that promote healthier communities are supported. Gaps in the national healthcare infrastructure need to be addressed to meet this objective. The SRA support funding to implement the healthcare service investment programme, the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan. In response to population ageing, the SRA supports Age-Friendly communities and implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. The SRA also supports funding to implement the Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan. Our Region's three cities are WHO Healthy Cities and form part of the Healthy Cities and Counties Network. The SRA supports such initiatives and funding for Local Authorities to implement healthier cities, towns, villages, and communities. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 175, 178 and 182.
- **Strengthen investment and supports for childcare, education, and services for our Region's youth:** The SRA supports the provision and enhancement of facilities and amenities for children and young people, such as childcare, schools, playgrounds, parks, and sports grounds. Provision of quality affordable childcare places is critical, both developmentally for children and as an effective labour market intervention. The SRA supports the existing NDPs commitment to investment for primary and post-primary education services. Locating new school facilities and improving access to existing school facilities to be accessible by active walking and cycling and public transport is critical for healthy communities. The multi-use of school facilities for wider use by communities and co-location of childcare and school facilities is also supported. Education, training, and skills development can tackle legacies due to deprivation. The SRA support funding for actions through Children and Young People's Services Committee Plans to realise the

ambitions of our Region's youth. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 63, 175, 177, 185-190.

- **Invest in infrastructure and services to build socially inclusive and international communities in our Region:** Growth projections under the NPF and RSES are dependent on welcoming people to live and work in our communities and offering a higher quality of life for all. The SRA support funding to deliver actions under Local Authority Local Economic Community Plans (LECPs), volunteering and active citizenship initiatives, regeneration of disadvantaged areas including RAPID initiatives and implementing Government policy "The Migrant Integration Strategy". The SRA also support disability awareness initiatives and fund initiatives to improve equal access for all through universal design. This priority aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs RSES RPOs 179-183, Cork MASP Objective 22, Limerick-Shannon MASP Objective 22, and Waterford MASP Objective 24.

Conclusion

The SRA as a key stakeholder welcome this consultation opportunity with the Department on the review of the NDP. Balanced regional development must remain central to the NDP. The focus of the review should be on how we can effectively deliver on this ambition. With the RSES and MASPs now in place and at implementation stage, a re-focussed NDP can ensure that we achieve, through our stakeholders, the National Strategic Outcomes under Project Ireland 2040 and deliver on the regional priorities identified in this submission through investment in the Regions.

An approach for Integrated Regional Investment was envisaged at the outset of the NPF and NDP and the Regional Tier supports the Government to achieve National Strategic Outcomes, Strategic Investment Priorities and Programme for Government Mission Statements which are aligned with RSES and MASP implementation.

The SRA are committed as a key stakeholder to help drive actions on our regional investment priorities through our own RSES and MASP implementation structures and are a key consultee for the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board.

The SRA would welcome the opportunity to engage with the Department on this submission and are available for future consultation and clarities as required regarding this submission.

Mise le meas,



David Kelly,

Director

Appendix A: Evidence Base

The following content provides a brief profile of the Southern Region, which has been used to inform the investment priorities outlined within this submission.

Placemaking Profile

- 1. Population Estimates:** The total population of the Southern Region stood at 1.6 million as of April 2020, accounting for about a third of Ireland's population⁶. By 2040, it is estimated that the region's population will rise to around 2 million⁷.
- 2. Commuting Patterns:** As of Q2 2019⁸, residents living in the Southern Region experienced below average commute times, compared to the national average of 28 minutes for a one-way commute. Of the eight sub-regions, residents in the Mid-West had the shortest one-way commute time in Ireland – at 22 minutes – with residents in South-East and the South-West recording an average one-way commute time of 24 minutes.
- 3. Deprivation Rates:** As of 2019, 17.1% of the Southern Region's population were experiencing enforced deprivation, which was marginally below the corresponding national rate of 17.8%⁹.
- 4. Education Attainment:** Third level attainment rates in the Southern Region stood at 43% in 2019, which was below the corresponding State average of 47%. Encouragingly, third level education enrolments¹⁰ in the Region have risen from 62,176 in 2009 to 80,978 as of 2019.
- 5. Public Transport Accessibility:** As of 2016¹¹, 64.2% of Cork City's population was served with high frequency public transport, (i.e. bus or train with over 50 departures a day), well above the corresponding State average of 29.6% of the population. Outside of Cork City, the remaining counties in the Southern Region registered below average proportions namely, Limerick (23.9%), Tipperary (12.9%), Cork County (9.2%), Kerry (6.3%), Clare (3.6%), Kilkenny (1.3%), Waterford (0.8%), with no residents in Wexford or Carlow being served with high frequency public transport.
- 6. Household Energy Efficiency:** As per the latest figures¹², 19% of the homes audited in Ireland registered either a BER of "A" or "B" between 2009 and Q3 2020, with below average proportions recorded in Tipperary (11% of homes to register either a BER of "A" or "B"), Clare (11%), Wexford (12%), Limerick County (12%), Limerick City (13%), Carlow (14%), Kilkenny (15%), Kerry (15%), Waterford City (15%), Cork City (17%), and Waterford County (18%). Cork County – where 23% of the homes audited registered either a BER of "A" or "B" – was the only Local Authority in the Southern Region to register an above average proportion.
- 7. EV / Hybrids Sales:** As of 2019, EV and Hybrid cars accounted for 13.9 per cent of all new cars licensed for the first time in Cork, which was the only county in the Southern Region to record a proportion above the corresponding national ratio of 12.7%. EV and Hybrid cars accounted for below average proportions of new car licenses in Limerick (11.6%), Carlow (11.5%), Kilkenny (11.3%), Kerry (11.2%), Tipperary (11.1%), Clare (10.8%), Wexford (7.3%) and Waterford (7.1%).

⁶ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2020/>

⁷ <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS111.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/br/b-1fstb/labourforcesurveybulletinmainplaceofworkandcommutingtimein2019/>

⁹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionsilc2019/>

¹⁰ Higher Education Authority enrolment data. Includes enrollments from undergraduates, postgraduates, FETAC Advanced Certificate, FETAC Certificate, and remote learners

¹¹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2019/measuringdistancetoeverydayservicesinireland2019/>

¹² <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/dber/domesticbuildingenergyratingsquarter32020/>

- 8. EV Public Charging Infrastructure:** As of December 2020, there was 27 ESB EV “Fast Chargers” in the Southern Region, with each of these chargers having three sockets of different varieties, while there was no ESB EV “High Powered Chargers” based in the region¹³.

Economic Profile

- 9. GDP:** The Southern Region’s economy was valued at €127 billion as of 2018, accounting for 39.2% of the economic output generated by the Irish economy¹⁴.
- 10. Labour Market Conditions:** Total employment in the Southern Region amounted to 740,100 as of Q3 2020, which accounted for 32% of Ireland’s employment base. By 2040, it is estimated that the region’s employment base will expand to around 880,000¹⁵. A total of 101,500 residents in the Southern Region were in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) as of the 3rd of January 2021¹⁶. The total number of employees that were in receipt of the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme and working for an employer based in the Southern Region amounted to 86,713¹⁷, as of the end of December 2020.
- 11. Enterprise Base:** As of 2018, there was 269,687 SMEs operating in Ireland; 265,890 of which were registered in a specific county in Ireland¹⁸. Of this total, 83,596 SMEs were based in the Southern Region, highlighting the Region’s importance to Ireland’s SMEs market.
- 12. Multinational Companies:** As of 2019, a total of 1,549 companies were supported by the IDA Ireland, with 26% of these firms based in the Southern Region¹⁹. As of 2019, IDA Ireland supported companies employed a total of 245,096 jobs in the State, with just under a third or 78,795 of these jobs located in the Southern Region.
- 13. COVID-19 Impact:** From a commercial market perspective, 47.2 per cent of the Southern Region’s commercial units were operating in the sectors most likely to be the worst affected from the economic disruption caused by COVID-19, implying that just over 27,583 commercial units in the region were likely to be severely impacted as a result of the public health measures. This was above the corresponding “COVID-19 Exposure Ratio” for the State as a whole, which was 46 per cent. Out of the 9 counties based in the Southern region, 6 recorded above average “COVID-19 exposure ratios”, with the highest exposure ratio in Ireland recorded in Kerry, with 53.8 per cent of its commercial units operating in the sectors likely to be worst affected²⁰.

¹³ Fast chargers can get an 80 percent charge to most EVs in 30 minutes, while high powered chargers can give a charge of 100km in as little as six minutes. Data provided by the ESB

¹⁴ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/cirgdp/countyincomesandregionalgdp2017/>

¹⁵ <https://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://data.cso.ie/product/LR>

¹⁷ <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/registrations/covid-19-support-schemes-statistics-14-january-2021.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/bd/businessdemography2018/>

¹⁹ Data obtained from the IDA

²⁰ <https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/CV19-Regional-Economic-Analysis.pdf>