

Southern Region Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy Submission

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Enniscorthy is a town that has enjoyed strong growth over the past 20 years. In a post-Brexit scenario, the town's location is unrivalled: Enniscorthy is in the heart of County Wexford, linking roads from the Western and Midlands regions to Rosslare Europort while also within a 120km drive to Dublin. As well as boasting efficient rail and bus commuter services, the town is home to strong businesses, which provide sources of employment for the town's residents and wider rural hinterland. The town serves a large district's primary, post-primary and further education needs. The town boasts terrific healthcare and recreational facilities.

- National and international interconnectivity along Euroroute One linking key national roads (N11/N80/N30) with Rosslare Europort and Dublin.
- Bustling town with renowned cultural and retail services.
- Good quality of life with a strong set of recreational facilities.
- Planning for significant increases in residential housing estates.
- Strong economic development growth with the construction of the world-leading Enniscorthy Business and Technology Park to complement the existing Business Park on the Old Dublin Road.
- UN Centre of Excellence in the global challenge to curb carbon emissions – one of only 3 centres worldwide with New York City and Vancouver.
- Newly built Water/Wastewater Treatment Plant costing €16 million allowing population capacity to grow to 26,000.
- Town serves a large natural hinterland of circa 60,000 people.
- Regional centre for healthcare, including St. John's Hospital.
- Important base for regional tourism.

Enniscorthy in County Wexford deserves key town status within the Draft Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy for the Southern Region. Enniscorthy is a county town in a strategic location serving a strong sub-regional role. The addition of Enniscorthy to the Spatial Strategy gives regional balance, based on the town's merits within the county's geographical, economic and social context. Including Enniscorthy within the Spatial Strategy ensures that County Wexford will sustain growth within its urban development areas.

County Wexford Geography

County Wexford's geography and population distribution are unique. Four medium-sized towns take a share in the county's population of 149,722. Three towns have populations of roughly 10,000 while Wexford town has a population of 20,188.

The Draft Spatial Strategy includes three key towns in County Tipperary, namely Thurles, Nenagh and Clonmel. Therefore, there is no impediment to the Spatial Strategy's inclusion of a third key town in County Wexford. The Draft Strategy recommends development of an extended East Coast Corridor with Enniscorthy at its centre, joined by fellow county towns Wexford and Gorey. This worthy suggestion confirms the scope to include three County Wexford towns.

Enniscorthy Geography

Enniscorthy is strategically located in the heart of County Wexford. The town enjoys immediate access to the M11, N11, N80 and N30, which connects Enniscorthy to Dublin, Wexford, Rosslare Europort, Waterford, Kilkenny, Carlow and Portlaoise. Iarnród Éireann's Intercity rail line and bus services offer commuter services to Dublin. The town boasts strong international connectivity linking Rosslare Europort, Waterford Airport, Dublin city, Dublin Airport, and the East Coast Corridor.

Enniscorthy is the best-connected town in the county. The Cathedral town will soon benefit from the opening of the Enniscorthy bypass, shortening commute times to Dublin to roughly 80 minutes. In the context of Brexit, the N80 is a pivotal road corridor, facilitating access from the Midlands and Western regions to the N11 and onto Rosslare Europort.

Enniscorthy has experienced sustained growth in the last 20 years. In 1996, the town recorded a census of 7,640. The 2016 census ranked Enniscorthy as the second largest town in County Wexford with a population of 11,381.

The town holds a strong influence within the region. The town is accessible and caters for a wide area from coastal Blackwater to the Blackstairs Mountains on the Carlow border. The town has significant sub-regional interdependencies. Enniscorthy serves as a municipal district administrative centre. Bunclody and Ferns serve as satellite towns. St. John's Hospital holds an important role in providing healthcare in the region. A very significant hinterland lies beyond its administrative borders.

Enniscorthy's Geographical Merits for Key Town Status

Comparatively, County Wexford's key towns represent the lowest percentage of representation based on metropolitan areas and key towns. Wexford and Gorey represent 20% of County Wexford's population whereas Kilkenny city represents 26.78% of the county's population. Including Enniscorthy as a key town brings County Wexford's percentage of representation up to 27.65%.

Enniscorthy can be added as a stand-alone town on its merits. It is growing and does not fall within the catchment area of any other town or city. The population of three key towns noted within the Draft Spatial Strategy fell between the 2011 and 2016 censuses: Clonmel (17,908 to 17,140); Dungarvan (9,427 to 9,227); Clonakilty (4,721 to 4,592).

Enniscorthy's exclusion from the Draft Spatial Strategy has several negative effects for its town and large hinterland. The town has a population greater than 10,000. Without key town status, this large town will not be able to attract funding as a key town, nor will it be small enough to attain funding for rural town funding.

Future-proofing Enniscorthy

Enniscorthy is well-placed to accommodate additional self-sustaining economic growth. A number of international life-science and technological companies are based in Enniscorthy, including BD Enniscorthy, a life science company employing approximately 400 people.

Contrary to page 63 of the Draft Spatial Strategy, Enniscorthy town will soon be home to a UN Centre of Excellence in curbing carbon emissions. This development, namely Enniscorthy Business and Technology Park, includes one of only three NZEB (Nearly Zero Energy Building) centres worldwide, joining with New York and Vancouver. Stakeholders are acutely aware of the development's scope for economic growth in Enniscorthy. Good flood risk management will be established, once the Enniscorthy Flood Defence Scheme reaches completion. Property solutions are in place, with planning permission for over 400 residential houses granted to facilitate the economic development. Numerous sporting clubs confirm the wonderful levels of positive social inclusion in the Enniscorthy area. Wexford County Council is currently advancing plans for urban regeneration in Templeshannon, Enniscorthy.

Enniscorthy Heritage

Enniscorthy has a strong track record in harnessing its environmental and historical potential. Founded by St. Senan in 510, Enniscorthy is a Cathedral town, centred on a Market Square and Norman Castle. The bustling town is in Ireland's Ancient East and forms part of a tourism cluster based on linked coastal resorts. The town attracts visitors to its Norman Castle, built in 1190, while Vinegar Hill holds historical importance as a 1798 Rebellion battle site.

The town has developed a name for hosting the Wexford Literary Festival, setting the film location for 'Brooklyn', and encouraging writers with the Colm Tóibín Short Story Award. Annual events bring a festival-like atmosphere to the town, including The Strawberry Fair, The Blackstairs Blues Festival, Enniscorthy Street Rhythms and Dance Festival, the Rockin' Food Festival, and the All-Ireland Farmers' Market.

The Presentation Arts Centre regularly hosts both national and up-and-coming musical artists. The town's Athenaeum serves as a heritage hub of the town, preserving a building that served as the headquarters for the town's rebels during the 1916 Rebellion. Enniscorthy is the location of the landing of the first successful flight from Britain to Ireland. The town served as the homeplace of renowned furniture designer and architect Eileen Gray. Annie Jameson was well-known as the mother of Guglielmo Marconi and the granddaughter of Jameson's Distillery's founder. The family built a distillery just outside the town, the location of which is known locally today as 'The Still'.

Enniscorthy is an important base for tourists. Monart Spa is a five-star destination spa ranked in the top three in the world by Condé Nast. Irish Tatler awarded Monart 'Ireland's Best Destination Spa' for several consecutive years. Significant town attractions include Enniscorthy Castle, the Vinegar Hill 1798 battle site and 1798 visitor centre. The town offers direct access to tourist sites including the Irish National Heritage Park, Dunbrody Famine Ship, the John F. Kennedy Homestead and Arboretum and to the historical cities of Kilkenny and Waterford.