



8<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Submission & Observations by [REDACTED] – Waterford City East**  
**On**  
**Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES)**

## **1. Introduction**

Waterford is the fifth largest city in Ireland and the largest urban area in the East of the Southern region. Supported by the content within the National Planning Framework, Waterford City and County has the potential to be a strategically placed heart fuelling population growth to facilitate the Eastern area of the Region achieve its full potential.

The citizens of the region can potentially enjoy a better quality of life through a Regional City focus that will see the towns, villages and outlying rural areas play their part supporting Regional focused economies and infrastructures.

To achieve this, the City must have the capital investment priority to ensure that it can directly influence the economic growth in tandem with the projected population growth of the Region. In essence, Waterford City can be the economic hub and the primary driver of economic and population growth within the South East but needs to have the infrastructural weight of the RSES.

## **VOLUME 1**

### **2. Section 1, Introduction**

- a. Para 1.1.b** Education should be placed as a key issue to be identified as a Priority in the Spatial Component Section. Education should be a standalone component above Retail Development in the Order of Hierarchy. As, we try to rebuild our economy in the South East, education is a fundamental and vital aspect with the Technological University being a necessary ingredient to stemming the 'brain drain' and ensuring a well educated and readily available skilled work force, in the South East.

### **3. Section 2, Strategic Vision**

- a. Para 2.2 The Strategy.** In this discussion the weakened nature of Waterford and the south East's contribution as a key component must also incorporate weaknesses that need addressing. In this aspect, the Third Level Education conundrum of addressing the University and Health Infrastructural deficiencies must be mentioned. An equitable and well resourced health infrastructure in the East of the Region is vital for attracting National & International

investment of substance. In addition, the necessary infrastructural investment in these weak pillars in the East of the Region must be addressed strategically. Accordingly, Education and Health must form important action points on the diagram on Strategy on page 22.

#### **4. Section 3, People & Places**

**a. Para3.3 A Tailored Approach** Tramore with a population of just under 11K should be considered for inclusion as a key town. In addition to being a part of The Waterford Metropolitan Area, it plays a key role in supporting the City as a housing and support hub for workforce in addition to being a key strategic town for opening up the Copper Coast's & Coastal Communities accessibility to Urban infrastructural support from the West of the County coming from Clonea on the Greenway. Dungarvan then services the Coastal Communities beyond towards Cork.

#### **b. Para3.4 Cities – Metropolitan Areas**

##### **i. WATERFORD MASP**

**1. Attributes, Vision & Guiding Principles** Whilst there is a vision to develop a concentric City North and South of the River including the areas within South Kilkenny, reference to the elephant in the Room is missing! There needs to be a reference to the immediate establishment of an appropriate administrative entity, in the absence of autonomy being passed to Waterford Council, to ensure the necessary infrastructural, housing, community, public transport and business supports can be planned for the hinterland as the Ferrybank Strategic Development Zone is driven to fruition.

**2. Employment & Enterprise** Consideration should be given to including support and facilitation of new innovative City/Urban working methods. For example, in Waterford City, collaborative co working has become an instrumental way forward for building use and bringing the high earners back into the City Centre. Boxworks, such a centre opened in a refurbished derelict building on Patrick Street now houses 137 City Centre professionals working from the building. Being a success and at capacity, Boxworks 2 has now opened in John's Lane in a derelict and empty casino from prior recession!

**3. Environment** Consideration should be given to facilitating the establishment of a Three Sisters 'Blue Way' centred on Waterford City as the hub with supports reaching out and opening river accessibility for recreation and estuary economical advantage to Carrick, Mount Congreve, Mooncoin, The Island, Ckeekpoint, Passage East and up into New Ross and beyond into Kilkenny.

- c. **Para 3.5 Key Towns** Tramore Town with a population of just under 11,000 people should be considered as a key coastal town for connecting the Eastern Coastal Resources of the Waterford estuary to the Copper Coast. It is a key town in supporting and influencing coastal tourism. In addition, it plays a key role in supporting the Waterford Metropolitan Area with a work force with International firms such as Redhat initiating the location as a new location with potential for Information Communication Technology Industries.
  - i. **Dungarvan** A key Infrastructural Requirement in addition to overarching Key Towns Infrastructure for Dungarvan must be the dredging of the harbour and the improvement and expansion of the much sought after town side berth facility for recreational vessels, such as visiting yachts up to a minimum maintained depth of 1.5 metres.
  - ii. **RPO 23** Enhancement of the bus service provision must ensure improved rural connectivity to stem social isolation and support the evening and night time recreational economy.
- d. **Para 3.11 Regeneration** An RPO should be included in relation to supports to convert vacant and defunct commercial premises in the existing settlements to residential use and ensuring compact growth and revitalisation of existing settlements.
- e. **Para 6.3.6.7 Rail** The statement that the region is relatively well served in terms of rail connectivity is not true within the case of Waterford City and its environs and the permitted deterioration of services through non use rather than incentivising their use by efficient, relevant timetables. In Waterford City, less than 1.9% are using public transport and this is a statistic that must be changed into the future. The Waterford to Limerick train line must be maintained and efficiently improved to ensure maximum commuter use into the heart of the City as a part of the North Quays Train Station move.
- f. **Para 6.3.6.9 Rural Transport PRO 164** This should contain a point reinforcing the necessity of addressing the public transport aspects of the social and recreational connectivity needs of those living in rural Ireland. Whilst alluded to in the leading paragraph, this must be a specific action to be addressed by The Local Link Rural Transport.
- g. **DRAFT WATEWFORD Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan**
  - i. **Waterford MASP 2** To support Waterford as the main driver of the South East's Economy, it is necessary that the need for a fully functioning Airport is identified in creating a Regional Gateway to mainland Europe from the South East.

Waterford has an excellent infrastructure from a roads, port, water, wastewater, sewage and broadband. However, lack of international connections at Waterford Airport is a challenge that restricts the International development of the Airport and must be faced head on. A planned forced doubling of the population of Waterford City and the County over the next twenty years will require increased International movement

of our citizens and an airport of the future must be invested in now. The sustainability of the Airport is closely linked to a runway extension and the minimum seats that will make the routes viable. In the aftermath of Brexit, a viable route to London is a necessity with the South East having the potential to be the Gateway to Europe.

- ii. **Para 6.1 Technological University of the South East (TUSE)** The Corporate Headquarters and Main Campus of the TUSE must be emphatically stated as necessary to be located in Waterford City.

Compared to 2011, the 2016 Census confirms that whilst Waterford's population has seen a growth of 2.3% or 2,606 people, the figures show a net migration of minus 496 for the City and minus 1,145 for the County, giving a total of 1,641 people who have left the City and County. With our third level attainment also unbelievably low, compared to the national average.

Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) is one of Ireland's most highly regarded third level institutes with approximately 10,000 students. It has a number of strong research support activities, most notably Telecommunications Software & Systems Group (TSSG) and Arc Labs and there are a number of examples of collaboration with local businesses and successful spin-off companies, the most notable being the relatively recent Feed Henry success.

The process of upgrading the merged WIT and Carlow Institute of Technology (CIT) to a Technological University of the South East is underway with a sense of lethargy, political unwillingness and non progress that is unacceptable. Waterford has traditionally been a workforce engaged in manufacturing and encouragement of a higher uptake of 3<sup>rd</sup> level education in the Region is vital. Investment in a University of the South East will help stop the 'brain drain' and ensure that the high level of unemployment within the under 25s is tackled.

Developing a bespoke human resource capital for the South East with Waterford City as the economic hub and provider, the establishment of a Regional Technological University, with its HQ based in Waterford City is vital. The presence of a strong University is a necessity for any core City and Regional development. This was proven in the role that TSSG played in ensuring the West Pharma Pharmaceutical related industry located in Waterford City providing up to 300 high quality and high paid jobs. The political differences that are slowing the merger of WIT with CIT to develop the Regional Technological University of the South East must be

terminated at National level and the RSES is a suitable platform for this.

- iii. **Para 6.2 Development of the Port of Waterford as a major International Gateway.** Part of the Ports expanded growth should include the analysis of the cost effectiveness of a deep water berth at Dunmore East running in parallel with the current pier as a potential for expanding Cruise Line business based upon the successful commercial model employed at Dublin Port.
- iv. **Waterford MASP Policy Objective 15** In an objective of supporting investment in infrastructure, a feasibility study should be completed on the increased tourism capacity potential that would be achieved by a deep water berth established for Cruise Liner Business at a deepwater berth running parallel to the current Dunmore East berthing Pier.
- v. **Para 6.6. Strategic Employment Locations**
  - 1. **Sub Para 6.** The former Waterford Crystal Site on the Cork Road should be identified as a site for the expansion of the TUSE Main Campus and location of the Corporate Headquarters and not a Strategic Employment Area but more a Strategic Education Area
  - 2. **Additional Para 10.** The Applemarket/John Street area should be identified as a key employment location as a part of the Evening & Night Time Economy Employment Location where according to UK figures, provides 5% of a City's Employment.

## 5. A Regional City of the Future

Our City and region needs immediate action. Action that will, at the very least, instil a sense of confidence that Waterford will be championed as the lead City of the South East region. A strong Southern Region of the future must ensure a South Eastern Regional aspect incorporating Waterford City as the economic hub of a successful area that includes Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary and Waterford.

Submitted for Consideration

  
**Waterford City East Electoral Area**