



7th March 2019

To whom it may concern,

Please find attached a submission to the Public Consultation of the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy for the Southern Region.

Submission by [REDACTED] to Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

Enniscorthy – a key town for the South East

The Government's commitment to Enniscorthy has been demonstrated through significant investment in recent years.

From the ring-fencing of €45 million for flood protection measures to the development of a new Technology Park, there has been significant progress and enhancement of the town to the benefit of the population of nearly 12,000 people.

But like many towns outside of Dublin, Enniscorthy faces both opportunities as well as challenges.

As Minister, I strongly support calls by the likes of Enniscorthy and District Chamber of Commerce to have Enniscorthy included as a **key town** in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Below, I will outline some of the examples of investment in Enniscorthy, as well as some of the challenges posed by the likes of Brexit.

Taking these examples and challenges combined, in my view, strongly supports the case for designating Enniscorthy as a **key town**.

Flood Defence

Enniscorthy has a long history of flooding. Extreme floods have occurred in 1924, 1947, 1965, 2000, 2002, 2009, 2011, 2014, and more recently in December 2015. Flooding represents a risk to health and safety, and has resulted in significant property damage and traffic disruption in the town.

Efforts to deliver on the Enniscorthy flood relief scheme have been ongoing for many years now.

Some €45m in Government funding has been secured to deliver on this scheme. This money is ringfenced and will not be touched for other causes.

The scheme covers a 3.5km stretch of the River Slaney, extending from 1.5km upstream of Enniscorthy Bridge to 2km downstream.

The expected timetable of the scheme is as follows:

- Public Exhibition to begin March/April 2019.
- Tender Process to begin in June 2019.
- Construction to start in December 2019/January 2020, following the construction of the new road bridge.
- The overall works will take approximately three years to complete.

Technology Park

The first phase of the construction of the new €1.7m Enniscorthy Business and Technology Park is underway that will see the construction of an internal roadway, services, landscaping, fencing and walkways which will link in with the new bridge being constructed as part of the flood defence scheme to provide access to the town centre.

All of this will service an initial three plots. Private investment will then be sought to construct industrial units within the park and negotiations are already well underway with at least two expanding local companies to locate there.

This is the first part of a big change for the town. The tech park, the bypass and the flood relief are all part of a totally different Enniscorthy and will see more people come to live, work and raise their families here.

Employment

In terms of job creation, agencies such as Enterprise Ireland have provided huge supports to businesses and entrepreneurs who have made huge successes of start-up companies in manufacturing and internationally traded services.

In February of 2017, a major contract was signed between Enniscorthy firm Taoglas and the European Space Agency (ESA) in the area of research technology.

Founded in 2008 by two Irish entrepreneurs, Ronan Quinlan and Dermot O'Shea, Taoglas is a provider of antenna products and radio frequency solutions, particularly within the internet of things (IoT) ecosystem. Taoglas is a major player in IoT antenna technology with subsidiaries and design, engineering and testing facilities in Enniscorthy, as well as the US, Germany and Taiwan.

To land such a contract demonstrates the huge potential for firms in Enniscorthy to operate on a global stage.

Enniscorthy Enterprise & Technology Centre, which has been funded by Enterprise Ireland under the Community Enterprise Centre Schemes, plays a hugely important role in terms of commerce.

Under the Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme 2015, the Centre was supported toward a project to expand the level of services of Enniscorthy Enterprise & Technology Centre by creating an Innovative Hub within the Enterprise Centre where innovative start-ups can work together and receive mentoring from the Centre's staff.

Double by-pass

The planned double by-pass, due to be completed in mid-2019, will hugely strengthen links between Enniscorthy and Dublin.

It will drastically reduce commute times and enhance connectivity between Enniscorthy and all of the surrounding urban areas, including Waterford and Kilkenny.

Brexit

As Minister, I have placed significant time and energy in ensuring Enniscorthy and indeed the entire county of Wexford are Brexit-proofed to the greatest degree possible.

Naturally, much of this focus has been placed on developing Rosslare Europort – a key strategic port not just for Wexford or the South East, but also Ireland as a whole.

Huge concern has been raised across the county following the announcement by Irish Ferries that it is unlikely to continue its service between Rosslare and Cherbourg.

In February, I led a delegation from Wexford to Brussels in order to raise concerns about the future of Rosslare Europort.

I took this initiative to ensure that all Wexford and Rosslare Europort stakeholders are working together to be fully prepared for whatever Brexit scenario comes our way.

In our meeting with Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc and Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan, discussions took place surrounding the need for investment in Rosslare.

Central to the wishes of the stakeholders in Rosslare would be completing the link road into the port.

Given the uncertainties surrounding the outcome of the Brexit negotiation, consideration must be given to placing Wexford towns such as Enniscorthy at the fore of this spatial strategy.

Conclusion

Enniscorthy is the second largest town in Co Wexford which, in itself, should be considered as key factor to include the town in this spatial strategy.

The arrays of positives, as well as opportunities and challenges detailed above, demonstrate the need for Enniscorthy to be at the centre of this spatial strategy.

I believe the arguments that undoubtedly will be made in the form of submissions from a number of key stakeholders are compelling.

Therefore, I ask that you give strong consideration to including Enniscorthy as a **key town**.