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To: David Kelly <dKelly@southernassembly.ie>

Subject: RSES Review

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Mr David Kelly, Director,
Southern Regional Assembly,
Waterford.

Dear Director,

I have just finished reading proposed material amendments to the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategic for the Southern Region.. It is frankly appalling and wildly at odds with the sentiments expressed in the Ireland 2040 NPF and with the public statements of An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar. The almost absolute diminution of the role of Waterford city is incomprehensible and driven by politics the origin of which can only be imagined. It seems to have escaped everyone's attention that there are only five cities in the Irish Republic, of which Waterford is the only one in the south east. Its metropolitan area status under the Local Government Acts is not matched by any other urban area in the southeast, yet the Assembly now seems to want to proceed as if all the county towns across the south east had the same status as Waterford city. This is farcical nonsense. If the Waterford City and County Development Plan has to be drafted taking account of the proposals you now publish, should they be adopted into the complete strategy, it will be an utter disaster. It will effectively mean the end of any regional status the city has and accord it county town status. Is that they object of the exercise?

Whilst originally towns like Kilkenny, Wexford, Clonmel, Carlow, were described as key towns they are now to be promoted to self-sustaining Regional Drivers. This means these towns will have a comparable regional growth structure to that accorded to Waterford city in the NPF and is absolutely ridiculous. I do not know how the Assembly can stand over the publication of such nonsense. It reduces its role and input to that of an absurd quango and the outcome of the proposals will be that the South East, within your Southern Region, will continue to decline economically, medically and educationally. Does anyone on the Assembly even understand the idea of what a key regional driver is and how that role is now being annexed in the Assembly to Cork and Limerick whilst leaving the south east to stew in a sea of "self-sustaining regional drivers" none of which, under these proposals, will ever achieve that role.

I have read the various submissions to the RSES and despite many from Waterford there has been minimal enhancement of Waterford Airport's role in the document. The proposed amended actually dilutes its significance. Despite substantial submissions, the education chapter remains weak in relation to education. There is no mention no mention of WIT as main Technological University of South East campus but it emphatically states that the TUSE will be multi campus with a development of the Wexford campus. In the Waterford Metropolitan area, the only such area in the south east, there has been no endorsement of

the city as a University City, The North Quays development, the key enabler for Waterford in the NPF is demoted to an 'Innovation Centre' .

It is my understanding that Tramore is not included in the Waterford Metropolitan Area for the MASP purposes despite that town electing councillors to the City metro council. This seems to be done to deliberately understate the Waterford MA and its strategic needs and to create some sort of false equivalence between Waterford city and county towns like Wexford, Kilkenny ,Clonmel and Dungarvan. This may suit local politics and county council world views, but it is not an economic strategic regional policy in any sense or meaning of those words. I realise the fractured nature of the southeast in political terms and the difficulty in obtaining any sort of consensus around the regional centre, but that piece of work falls to you and the Assembly will be judged on that outcome.

I have to say, that I believe that the influences dominating the Assembly at this stage seem must be entirely inimical to the growth and well-being of the south east to even allow such document to appear. Its nett result, if implemented, will be to reduce the southeast and Waterford city as peripheral entities to the Dublin and Cork Limerick Galway axes that are currently emerging. Maybe that is the aim and intention of the policy emerging from Dublin that informs your inputs, but t is your duty to ensure that does not happen.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Des Griffin,
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