
Proposed Material
Amendments to the Draft
Regional Spatial and Economic
Strategy for the Southern
Region

Submission from Wexford
County Council

October 2019

Introduction

Wexford County Council (WCC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Material Amendments to the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) and acknowledges the positive changes which are presented therein. WCC understands that some of the amendments referred to in this submission may not have been considered as 'Material' by the Regional Assembly but in the interests of thoroughness have included all such amendments.

WCC respectfully requests that the following issues are taken into account before the Regional Assembly makes the RSES.

Material Amendment 3

With regard to Amendment Number 3 WCC note that this amendment was proposed as a result of a Motion 81 from the Members of Wexford County Council which stated:

Motion 81

That the RSES shall be amended to include a section and objectives detailing the mechanisms by which the MASPs as centres of scale will drive development in the Region. Reference should be made to the provision of appropriate and synergistic employment, education and supporting infrastructure.

The response from the Director of the Regional Assembly noted that it *'will be the task of Local Authorities through the Development Plan process to drive development in their own areas and to make provision for appropriate and synergistic employment, education and supporting infrastructure.'*

However, Wexford County Council is dependent on the enterprise and employment agencies, the Department of Education, Irish Water and other infrastructure providers to provide the appropriate employment, education and supporting infrastructure. These bodies will be guided in the first instance by the RSES and as such it is vital that support is shown in the RSES. WCC therefore request the following minor modification to Amendment Number 3:

Recommendation 1: Minor Modification to Material Amendment 3

The RSES recognises the strategic role played by all areas, urban and rural, in achieving the targets and objectives of the NPF and RSES. Support for sustainable growth of all communities, urban and rural, are supported by the RSES. A strategy is pursued that builds on cities and metropolitan areas

as engines of growth and ~~seeks in parallel to reposition~~ *seeks in parallel to create synergistic employment, educational and infrastructural growth* in the region's strong network of towns, villages and rural areas in an economically resilient, imaginative and smart manner to create a sustainable competitive advantage for the region'.

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

Material Amendment 1, 2, 3 & 34

Motion Number 82 from the Members of Wexford County Council proposed that:

Motion 82

That the RSES shall be amended to include a specific section and objectives on tackling legacies, employment blackspots and areas of social disadvantage and other issues identified in the regional demographic profile prepared out by AIRO. The section shall include a narrative and RPOs with regard to economic development and employment, education and quality of life. This section shall be linked to appropriate funding packages.

The Directors response recorded in the minutes of the meeting of the Regional Assembly on the 10th of May 2019 was:

AGREED. *Additional content on tackling legacies, unemployment blackspots and areas of social disadvantage can be provided in the chapters 2 -Strategy, 4 Economy & 7 Quality of Life. RPO 167 amended to address legacy issues specifically:*

The Director recommends policy in support of improving regional quality of life be strengthened in the following RPO by the following additional text:

RPO 167 Improving Regional Quality of Life through Infrastructure-led Planning

To support sustainable infrastructure-led planning for future population and jobs growth in our region, ensuring social infrastructures are developed in tandem with population and jobs growth to reflecting the RSES settlement strategy and key principles to tackle regional disparities and the legacies of disadvantage in the region. Local Authorities should ensure that decision making in relation to new development/infrastructure is informed by an appropriate level of environmental assessment.

The Directors response was recorded as agreed in the minutes.

However the changes have not been made to Chapters 2 and 4 and the change to Chapter 7 does not implement the changes agreed.

WCC therefore respectfully request that 2 modifications/non-material amendments are made to Chapter 2¹:

Recommendation: 2 Add bullet point

Section 2.1 Setting the Context for our Regions Vision (page 18 Draft RSES)

The RSES Vision is to:

- *Tackle legacies, unemployment blackspots and areas of social disadvantage*

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

Recommendation 3: Add additional objective

Section 2.2 Strategy (page 22 Draft RSES)

The Southern Region's Strategy is to build a strong, resilient, sustainable region by:

No 12

Development of a region in which regional disparities are targeted, where all individuals are enabled insofar as possible; to participate in the workplace, access housing, health and other public services and amenities.

The Change agreed under Motion 82 RPO167 (above) does not appear in the Material Amendments and should be added to Chapter 7 Quality of Life. WCC therefore request Chapter 7 is amended to include this revised objective.

Recommendation 4: Add revised RPO 167 to Chapter 7

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

As well as the changes to Chapter 4 which were to be undertaken by the agreement of Motion Number 82 above, the Members of Wexford County Council had also proposed amendments to RPO59 and the associated Guiding Principles under Motion 90 as follows:

¹ Amendments to Chapter 4 and 7 are listed below.

Motion No 90

That RPO 59 and the Guiding Principles to identify locations for strategic employment development (page 99) be amended to include the following elements:

- *areas which would address employment blackspots/legacies*
- *support existing sectoral and location-based strengths and synergies with existing employers*
- *availability of 'ready to go' property solutions*
- *local ambition*
- *Potential for rail borne freight*

The Directors Response was:

Agreed. RPO and the Guiding Principles can be amended to address the additional bullet points identified/issues raised.

While it is noted that Material Amendment 34 added the following wording to RPO59:

c) It is an objective to reduce the number of unemployment blackspots in the Region through a greater understanding of their nature and causes to assist in identifying inappropriate responses and revert reinforcing negative patterns.

it is considered that the wording and spirit of the objective are inadequate and do not correspond with that which was agreed under Motion 91. The objective should be further amended to provide a positive presumption in favour of locating appropriate employment where it would address unemployment blackspots, would support sectoral and location-based strengths and synergies with existing employers, take advantage of 'ready to go' property solutions, local ambition and the potential for rail borne freight.

Recommendation 5: Amend RPO59

Locations for Employment

Development

a. It is an objective to ensure employment locations follow the hierarchy identified in Chapter 3, and ensure they are built fit-for purpose. This includes the provision of access to utilities, connectivity, and other enterprise development factors.

- b. It is an objective to identify future locations for strategic employment development having regard to accessibility by sustainable transport modes and environmental constraints.
- c. It is an objective to adopt a positive presumption in favour of locating appropriate employment where it would address unemployment blackspots, support sectoral and location-based strengths and synergies with existing employers, take advantage of 'ready to go' property solutions, local ambition and the potential for rail borne freight.

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

Recommendation 6: Add the following bullet point to Guiding Principles (on Page 99)

Guiding principles to identify locations for strategic employment development

The following provide guiding principles for location of employment development and underpin the settlement strategy in Chapter 3. The MASPs have identified some of these in the metropolitan areas.

Selection Criteria

Planning to accommodate strategic employment growth at regional, metropolitan and local level should include consideration of:

- unemployment blackspots, sectoral and location-based strengths and synergies with existing employers, availability of 'ready to go' property solutions, local ambition and the potential for rail borne freight.

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

Material Amendment 6

With regard to the amendments to Section 3.5 (Key Towns) made under Material Amendment number 6 Wexford County Council reiterate the view that Enniscorthy and New Ross should be added to the Key Towns in the Region as both clearly comply with the NPF definition of a Key Town. They are both strategically located urban centres with accessibility and significant influence in a sub-regional context.

Recommendation 7: Add New Ross and Enniscorthy to the list of Key Towns. Narrative, Attributes and Key infrastructural Requirement are included in Appendix 1.

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

Material Amendment 7 & 8 amendment to 3.5.a

Further clarity is needed in the narrative in Amendment 7 and the RPO in Amendment 8 to ensure consistency of application. The narrative in Amendment 7 states that ‘Key Towns *‘will be the focus of significant growth (more than 30%)’*². In paragraph 2 it states that within the 6 larger scale/regional driver Key Towns *‘local authorities should plan for population growth of more than 30% by 2040’*. There is no reference in the narrative in paragraph 3 to the percentage growth which should be targeted to sub-regional or smaller Key Towns. It may be the intention to allow flexibility for local authorities to plan for growth above or below 30% in these centres or it may be that it is intended that these centres are covered by the reference to ‘more than 30%’ growth in the first paragraph (in which case it is fixed at more than 30%). Clarity of intentions is requested to facilitate application.

Amendment 8 to RPO9 3.5a. states that local authorities *‘should target growth of 30% for each Key Town subject to a capacity analysis including historic growth levels’*. This objective should be amended to ensure consistency with the narrative in Amendment 7 i.e. that they should target growth of **‘more than 30%’** if that is the intention. As per amendment 7 it should be clarified whether a different percentage growth is intended between the two types of Key Towns. Finally the objective should state that the growth of 30% refers to growth to 2040 and not growth during the RSES period.

Recommendation 8: Clarify the growth rate for Key Towns in the Narrative and RPO3.5a and set a timeframe for the achievement of this growth.

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

² First paragraph

Material Amendment 8, 9-19

It is noted that the Director's Report on Submissions on the Draft RSES (pg 101 (ix)) refers to submissions requesting amended narrative, Attributes and Key Infrastructural Requirements for 9 of the Key Towns but it does not reference the fact that a revised narrative, Attributes and Key Infrastructural Requirements for Wexford Town which was provided in Appendix 1 of the Submission of Wexford County Council on the Draft RSES. WCC consider that inconsistency has been introduced between the Key Towns and that the text for Wexford Town should be amended to reflect the wording of the original submission (attached in Appendix 1 – minor updates have been made). It is imperative that the Key Infrastructural Requirement are linked to the RPO for Wexford Town as they have been for the other Key Towns.

It is considered that the making of these additional non-material amendments would improve consistency between the Key Towns in the Region which will compete for investment under the various available National Development Plan and EU funds.

Recommendation 9: Replace narrative, Attributes and Key Infrastructural Requirements of Wexford Key Town with that contained in Appendix 1.

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

Material Amendment 23

WCC welcome the inclusion of references to a network link to New Ross/Waterford in New RPO C in Section 3.8. In the interests of consistency this should be added in all instances where the Eastern Economic Corridor is referenced.

Recommendation 10: Reference the network link from the Eastern Economic Corridor to New Ross and Waterford in all locations where reference to the Eastern Economic Corridor appears in the RSES.

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

Material Amendment 52

Smart Region/Cities/Towns

With regard to Material Amendment 52 Wexford County Council consider that the concept of SMART Cities and Regions is wider than the Digital Technology Section of the Strategy. This EU initiative envisages places 'where traditional networks and services are made more efficient with the use of digital and telecommunication technologies for the benefit of its inhabitants and business.' But also that 'A smart city goes beyond the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for better resource use and less emissions. It means smarter urban transport networks, upgraded water supply and waste disposal facilities and more efficient ways to light and heat buildings. It also means a more interactive and responsive city administration, safer public spaces and meeting the needs of an ageing population.' This concept should be extended to other sections of the plan including, but not limited to, the Strategy, A Strong Economy and Quality of Life.

Enniscorthy Town has taken the initial steps towards achieving Smart Town status and should be used as a regional exemplar of this approach.

Recommendation 11: Expand/Include text on Smart Region, Cities, Towns in Chapter 2 Strategy, Chapter 4 A Strong Economy and Chapter 7 Quality of Life. In one of the above Chapters add the following Text:

A smart city goes beyond the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for better resource use and less emissions. It means smarter urban transport networks, upgraded water supply and waste disposal facilities and more efficient ways to light and heat buildings. It also means a more interactive and responsive city administration, safer public spaces and meeting the needs of an ageing population.

Enniscorthy Town has taken the initial steps towards the achievement of Smart Town Status with the establishment of the FAB LAB in 2017, the development of a Technology Park for smart business and the establishment of the National NZEB training center. The Town has commenced a Healthy Town Programme under Healthy Ireland. Subject to appropriate environmental appraisals it is also proposed to develop a Blueway from Enniscorthy to Wexford town and up river to Bunclody.

It is considered that this amendment is not material.

Material Amendment 94

Material amendment 94 introduced additional text to RPO193 National trails, Walking Routes Greenway and Blueway Corridors which is welcomed by Wexford County Council. Wexford County Council note that at the meeting on the 10th of May under Motion 91 the Directors response stated:

In situations where a greenway proposal concerns a disused railway, interim greenway uses developed along rail corridors with a clearly stated provision that rail use will be reactivated when the rail service on that section becomes viable can provide solutions to support sustainable mobility, using the asset of the corridor while longer term rail use is being scoped...

The Directors response was agreed and it was agreed that the term 'railway lines not in use' be used rather than 'abandoned railway lines'. However there is no corresponding Material Amendments.

Recommendation 13: Amend text in Section 7.27 and follows:

*The RSES supports the development of green infrastructure along ~~abandoned~~ **disused** railways and canals to become part of the growing network of Greenways and Blueways, as well as improving access to rivers for recreational purposes.*

Conclusion:

The RSES will play a crucial role in the development of a cohesive, inclusive and resilient region. Wexford County Council looks forward to working with the Regional Assembly and the constituent local authorities on the implementation of the Strategy.

Appendix 1 Key Towns Wexford, Enniscorthy and New Ross

Enniscorthy

Enniscorthy is the second largest town in County Wexford with a recorded population of 11,381 persons in 2016. The town is set on the banks of the River Slaney and is strategically located on the N11 Dublin to Rosslare and the N30 Enniscorthy –New Ross/Waterford national primary roads. The N80 also connects the town to Carlow, while the R702 connects the town with Kilkenny City. The town is serviced by rail and bus services with daily commuter services to Dublin.

The town is well placed to accommodate additional economic growth to become a self-sustaining town of regional significance. There has been significant investment in infrastructure in recent years including the Enniscorthy by-pass which has made the town more accessible to Rosslare Europort, Dublin City and airport. The wastewater treatment plant has also been recently upgraded to accommodate additional residential and economic growth. The Enniscorthy Business and Technology Park, which is currently under construction, will house the UN Centre of Excellence in nearly Zero Energy Building (nZEB).

Enniscorthy provides a range of services to the residents of the town and the wider rural hinterland including primary, post-primary and further education (with links to Waterford IT and Carlow IT), health care, retail, employment, cultural and recreational facilities. The town also offers a unique tourism product, being home to Vinegar Hill battlefield site, Enniscorthy Castle and the National 1798 Rebellion Centre. The town's rich architectural heritage, Pugin Cathedral, proximity to beaches, angling, greyhound racing and a number of annual festivals also play an important role and offer tourism growth potential.

Attributes

- Strong **National and International connectivity** with direct links to Rosslare Europort, Dublin City and Airport, Waterford City and Airport, towns of County Wexford, Wicklow, Carlow and Kilkenny and the Eastern Economic Corridor.
- Developing **affordable housing** capacity.
- **Property solutions** to facilitate economic development including the Enniscorthy Business and Technology Park which will house the first Centre of Excellence focusing on **international training** in nearly Zero Energy Building (nZEB) compliance.
- **Wastewater treatment capacity** capable of accommodating significant population and economic growth.
- A **unique tourism product** and potential for growth in this sector.

Key Infrastructural Requirements

- i. Investment in the Dublin-Enniscorthy-Rosslare Europort Rail line to protect the line and increase speed and frequency of services.
- ii. Completion of the M11 Enniscorthy bypass and progression of the Oilgate to Rosslare Europort N11 to Motorway standard.
- iii. Transport measures through a Local Transport Plan which will include investment in sustainable transport modes, particularly walking and cycling in the town.
- iv. Completion of the Enniscorthy Flood Relief Scheme due to commence in late 2019.
- v. Funding to progress the development of the public realm and Templeshannon Regeneration Project.
- vi. Economic funding package in partnership with private investors for the further development of the Enniscorthy Business and Technology Park as a Strategic Employment Location for Enniscorthy.
- vii. Delivery of educational and amenity facilities to keep pace with growth in population and demographic trends.
- viii. Delivery of natural gas to the town.

Objectives

- a. To strengthen investment in existing rail infrastructure to ensure its continued upgrading, renewal and maintenance to high level in order to provide quality levels of safety, service, accessibility and connectivity.
- b. To strengthen the role of Enniscorthy as a centre of excellence in nZEB and develop industrial, commercial infrastructure and residential development in Enniscorthy Town.
- c. To seek investment in sustainable transport measures through a Local Transport Plan and improvements to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure throughout the town.
- d. To improve the public realm and attractiveness of the Town Centre as a place to live, work and visit through the development of key urban regeneration projects and environmental improvement schemes.
- e. To support the delivery of the infrastructural (including education, amenity, social and cultural) requirements identified for Enniscorthy to keep pace with recent and future planned population growth.

f. To support the delivery of the infrastructural requirements identified for Enniscorthy subject to the outcome of the planning process and environmental assessments.

g. Future growth of the town should be planned for on a phased basis in consultation with the local authority and Irish Water to ensure that sufficient water and wastewater capacity is accounted for and that further growth does not contribute to degradation of the water environment and, in particular, the Slaney River Valley SAC.

New Ross

Located on the banks of the River Barrow, New Ross had a recorded population of 8,040 in 2016.

The town is strategically located on the N25 Rosslare Europort/Wexford to Waterford route and the N30 connects the town with Enniscorthy where it joins the N11 Wexford to Dublin route. The town is serviced by bus providing services to Waterford and Dublin, via Enniscorthy.

New Ross provides a range of services to the residents of the town and the wider rural hinterland including primary, post-primary and further education, health care, retail, employment, cultural and recreational facilities. The town has a strong industrial base and transport and logistics sector. It has the potential to expand into emerging sectors linked to Waterford IT and Wexford Campus of Carlow IT.

The Dunbrody Famine Ship provides a dominant feature in the town centre and this, together with the town's links to John F. Kennedy, attracts a huge number of domestic and non-domestic visitors every year. The Norman way also culminates in the town at St. Mary's Church. Greenways are planned along the old railway line from New Ross to Waterford and the Red Bridge Loop to the north of the town. New Ross also has a rich architectural heritage and, in particular, has a large number of original shopfronts which add to the attractiveness of the town.

Attributes

- **Strategic location** on the N25 Wexford to Waterford route.
- Direct access to **Rosslare Europort, Waterford City and Airport** and Belview Port via the N25.
- **Property solutions** to facilitate economic development including serviced sites and available wastewater treatment capacity.
- Proximity to **Waterford IT** and available skills base.

- Affordable housing.
- **High quality amenities** including the recently refurbished Quay front, the Three Sisters Marina, planned greenways to Waterford and the Red Bridge Loop.
- Part of a **tourism cluster** with the **Dunbrody Famine Ship** located in the town centre and links to **JFK Homestead and Arboretum**, Hook Head and a number of nearby beaches.

Key Infrastructural Requirements

- Completion of the New Ross Bypass providing ease of access to the town within the catchment of Waterford Airport, Belview Port and Rosslare Europort.
- Enhanced provision of bus services to enable improved inter-regional connectivity.
- Transport measures through a Local Transport Plan including continued investment enhancing sustainable transport modes, particularly walking and cycling in the town.
- Funding to progress the development of public realm and regeneration projects.
- Development of a Technical University for the Southeast.
- Delivery of natural gas to the town.

Objectives

- To promote New Ross as a key location for investment and choice in the region and enhance its role as a centre of employment and economic activity within the region.
- To support the delivery of the infrastructural (including education, amenity, social and cultural) requirements identified for New Ross to keep pace with future planned population growth.
- To improve the public realm and attractiveness of the Town Centre as a place to live, work and visit through the development of key urban regeneration projects and environmental improvement schemes.
- To support the continued development of New Ross as a Tourist Centre located in Ireland's Ancient East and on the Norman Way and to support the development of the planned greenways.
- Support the development of a Technical University for the Southeast as a priority to ensure that there is an available skills base for emerging and diversifying businesses.

e. To seek investment in sustainable transport measures through a Local Transport Plan and improvements to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure throughout the town.

f. To support the development of freight rail services and facilities at the ports.

g. To support the development of under-utilised lands along the River Barrow. Any future development of underused lands along the River Barrow will include an assessment of any impacts that may arise on the River Barrow SAC.

h. Future growth of the town should be planned for on a phased basis in consultation with the local authority and Irish Water to ensure that sufficient water and wastewater capacity is accounted for and that further growth does not contribute to degradation of the water environment and in particular the River Barrow SAC.

Wexford

Wexford Town had a population of 20,188 in 2016 and is a Regional Centre for employment, education, retail, health and public services. The town is strategically located on the N11 Dublin to Rosslare Europort and the N25 Cork/Waterford to Rosslare Europort national primary routes and has daily rail and bus services to Dublin and Waterford.

The town is well placed to accommodate additional economic growth to support its role as a County Town and to capitalise on its proximity to Rosslare Europort, which will be an important entry point for the country post-Brexit. The proposed Trinity Wharf Project, which has recently been approved funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, will provide a major boost to the town by facilitating a new urban quarter with a mix of uses and a high-quality public realm, serving new businesses and the local community as well as making Wexford a viable location for FDI investment.

The town has a vibrant Arts and Cultural Sector with the National Opera Festival attracting large numbers every year. It also has very high quality amenities including an attractive quay front, good sporting facilities and proximity to beaches.

Attributes

- **International connectivity** – direct access to ports of Rosslare and Waterford and airports of Dublin and Waterford.
- **Good connectivity** with N11/M11 Motorway to Dublin and N25 to Waterford/Cork and rail links to Dublin with daily services.
- **Major employment centre** in finance, health/life sciences, technology, retail and tourism with total jobs of 11,961 recorded in 2016.
- A strong **vibrant town centre** with fashion retail, food and cultural services.
- **Regional centre for healthcare** with Wexford General Hospital and Ely Hospital.
- **Third level education** opportunities with IT Carlow Campus and its further development in association with the Technological University of the South East
- Vibrant **Arts and Cultural** Sector Proximity with the National Opera House, Wexford Arts Centre and annual festivals.
- Developing affordable housing capacity.
- Proximity to beaches for **tourism and recreation**.

Key Infrastructural Requirements

- i. Completion of the M11 Enniscorthy bypass and progression of the Oilgate to Rosslare Europort N11 to Motorway standard.
- ii. Investment in the Dublin-Enniscorthy-Rosslare Europort Rail line to protect the line and increase speed and frequency of services.
- iii. Transport measures through a Local Transport Plan which will include investment in sustainable transport modes, particularly walking and cycling in the town.
- iv. Economic funding package in partnership with private investors for the further development of Trinity Wharf as a Strategic Employment Location for Wexford.
- v. Delivery of the inner orbital and distributor roads
- vi. Delivery of educational and amenity facilities to keep pace with growth in population and demographic trends.
- vii. Funding to progress the development of the public realm, including the Quay front and regeneration projects.
- viii. Delivery of natural gas to the town
- ix. Provision of high quality cultural facilities and quality passive and active spaces including the redevelopment of the Quay front, Trinity Wharf, Min Ryan Park and Forth Mountain Activity Centre which will allow for appropriate increases densities.

Objectives

- a. To strengthen the role of Wexford as a Strategic Employment Location in the region, with specific focus on financial services and to provide sustainable high value industrial, commercial, retail and tourism related employment.
- b. To ensure the efficient use of central sites and maximise residential densities as appropriate close to the town centre and public transport nodes.
- c. To strengthen investment in existing rail infrastructure to ensure its continued upgrading, renewal and maintenance to high level in order to provide quality levels of safety, service, accessibility and connectivity.
- h. To seek investment in sustainable transport measures through a Local Transport Plan and improvements to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure throughout the town.

i. To development the Wexford Campus of the Technical University for the Southeast and associated student accommodation and synergistic employment uses.

j. To improve the public realm and attractiveness of the Town Centre as a place to live, work and visit through the development of key urban regeneration projects and environmental improvement schemes.

k. To support the delivery of the infrastructural (including employment, education, amenity, social and cultural) requirements identified for Wexford to keep pace with recent and future planned population growth subject to the outcome of the planning process and environmental assessments.

l. Future growth of the town will be planned for on a phased basis in consultation with the local authority and Irish Water to ensure that sufficient water and wastewater capacity is provided for and that further growth does not contribute to degradation of the water environment and in particular designated sites.