

An Roinn Pleanála

Comhairle Contae Chiarraí,
Áras an Chontae,
Trá Lí, Co. Chiarraí.



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHIARRAÍ KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL

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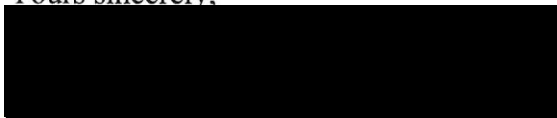
Dear David,

Please find attached submission from Kerry County Council in respect of the Draft RSES. The submission is based on internal consultations, views of the Economic and Enterprise SPC and the full elected Council.

I also enclose the Council's submission to the issues paper which still reflects the views of the Council and which supports this most recent submission.

I wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the SRA in meeting with the members at the recent Council meeting and the significant engagement by Mr. Robert Fennelly over the course of the development of the strategy. The Council is appreciative of the process and will continue to engage with the assembly through the final stages of the process and its subsequent implementation.

Yours sincerely,


*Director of Services / Stiúrtóir Seirbhísí,
Economic & Community Development /
Forbairt Eacnamaíochta & Pobail*

Tralee Municipal District Manager - Bainisteoir Cheantair Bardasach Thrá Lí

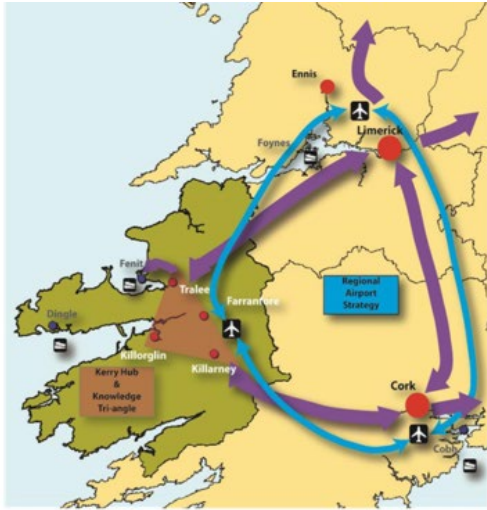
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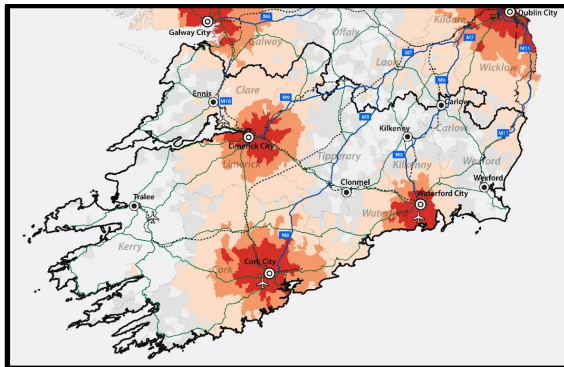


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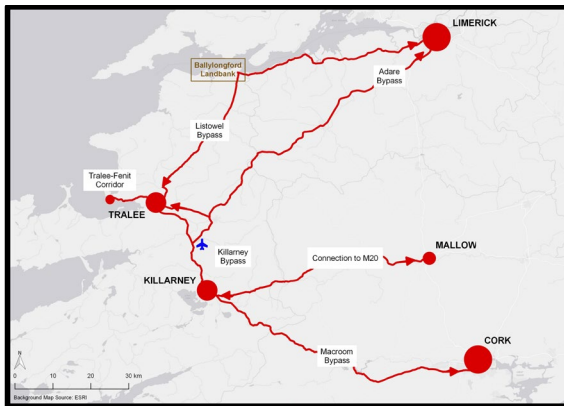


Kerry County Council

Submission on DRAFT Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy



Commuter flow influence of Metropolitan Areas for Employment Purposes



Critical roads infrastructure Links for Kerry

Kerry County Council Submission on the Draft RSES for the Southern Region

Kerry County Council welcomes the opportunity to take part in the public consultation process on this important medium range planning and economic framework for the Southern Region. The Council recognises the importance of this Strategy in shaping the region over a twelve-year period and the implications it will have for the growth and potential of the Region. In considering this the Council is also mindful of the influence this Strategy will have on future County Development Plans and on the range of opportunities that will be created in the County and Region. In evaluating these issues the Council is firmly of the view that the Strategy should clearly focus on the current limitations and experiences of the region in the areas of economic and spatial development and as a result that the Strategy should be progressive in meeting these challenges and ensure that the entire region has the opportunity to grow and reach its full potential and to articulate for the necessary supports to achieve this.

As part of this submission I enclose herewith copy of the original submission of this Council to the issues paper in 2018. The key issues outlined in that submission remain equally relevant today.

The Council recognises that the Southern Regional Assembly has considered this submission and that the submission has influenced the draft Strategy with important inclusions in the areas of infrastructure deficits and the recognition of the importance of the economic engine of the county as described in the Knowledge Triangle incorporating the key employment centres of Tralee, Killarney and Killorglin. The following references to the county are also acknowledged;

- Key Town of Tralee as an economic driver for the Southern Region and its strategic role for the region within the Kerry Hub Knowledge Triangle and Atlantic Economic Corridor.
- Key Town of Killarney as an economic driver for the Southern Region and its strategic role for the region within the Kerry Hub Knowledge Triangle and Atlantic Economic Corridor.
- Networks- Kerry Hub (Tralee, Killarney and Killorglin) and North Kerry (Listowel as a strategic settlement)/Shannon Estuary recognised as strategic opportunities for regional economic growth.
- The Atlantic Economic Corridor as a key enabler for economic growth across the region and a complementary counter balance to Dublin and the East.
- The economic strategy under Chapter 4 supports investment and innovation across several sectors which are strong in Kerry including Tourism, Agri-Tech, Fintech, Marine, R & D centres of excellence inter alia.
- Case study reference to Kerry Hub as a good practice example.
- Innovation Good Practice in Kerry
- Fenit Port
- Kerry Airport
- Ch 6 connectivity- inter-regional road and rail connections from Kerry Cork and Limerick are referenced and the R558 strategic route Tralee to Fenit.
- Support for the role of IT Tralee and the Munster Technological University
- Support for the Kerry Gaeltacht

- Support for Greenway Corridors
- Energy hub potential Tarbert.
- Strengthened interactions and connectivity between the Kerry Hub and Cork Metropolitan Area
- Strengthened interactions and connectivity between the Kerry Hub and North Kerry with the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area
- Appendix 1 has the Local Authority population targets as set by the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government (166,500 to 170,500 by 2031, representing a population uplift of between 19,000 to 23,000 by 2031).
- Appendix 3 recognises the strategic assets of County Kerry in the context of the South West Strategic Planning Area.

This submission will reinforce the County's ambitions that have been consistently outlined in the previous submissions to the development of the National Planning Framework and the Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Framework.

This paper will focus on a number of key themes that Kerry County Council consider will have an important influence in developing the region and extending the influence of the Metropolitan Centres into the wider region and ensuring that sustainable population and economic growth can be realised both within and outside the three metropolitan areas. The following areas will be considered;

- Regional and International Connectivity
- Robust Internal Economies – dynamic Hub Sub Region
- Scale & Opportunity - Key Towns
- Developing sense of place and revitalising Town Centre Brownfield Sites/Mixed Use Traditional Streets
- Key Role of Regional Towns and Access Points
- Impact of Tourism on infrastructure requirements
- Diversity of Rural Areas

Regional & International Connectivity

The Draft Strategy identifies the major transport nodes and connections throughout the region and speaks to the necessary investment across air/rail/port and road infrastructure as well as continuing to highlight the importance of high-speed broadband as an aid for economic activity particularly important for rural areas.

The Council believes that the strategy should seek to influence a more dispersed regional Air and Port access through influencing national policy in the diversion of some international traffic from Dublin to the airports of the Southern Region, particularly to major international hubs creating direct access into the Region both for business and tourism traffic.

While both the National Development Plan and the Draft RSES outline the major road infrastructure projects for the Region, the continuing delays in relieving inter-city and major town-metropolitan road links currently stand as economic blockades to regional centre developments. In the instance of the Kerry the quality of the access links to both Cork and Limerick and the future M20 are major inhibitors to attracting significant outside investment to the county.

Robust Internal Economy – Dynamic Hub sub-region

As outlined in previous submissions the influence of the Metropolitan Centres of both Cork and Limerick both as economic drivers for Kerry and in providing employment opportunities for the resident Kerry population is limited. Sustaining population growth in the County and retaining graduates requires a dynamic internal economy based on expanding indigenous industries, enhancing the reputation of the County through the development of centres of excellence and in attracting industry to the County. The recognition of the Hub and Knowledge Triangle in the Draft RSES as an economic driver for the Region is important and its future growth is key to the sustainable development of the County through the provision of employment opportunities, high level training and research opportunities as well as being a catalyst for further economic activity in the more peripheral areas of the County.

Scale & Opportunity Key Towns

It is noted that the selection of key towns within has been extended and within the named settlements are a number of centres with relatively small populations of less than 10,000. The Council while not attempting to undermine the role of individual settlements, is mindful of the need not to diminish the potential of regional drivers such as Tralee and Killarney and other major settlements in the Region by seeking to include additional settlements that may have an important influence in their surrounding areas are unlikely to have the potential for the wider regional impact that is being sought in this Strategy.

The Strategy needs to highlight the importance of regional centres of scale that are remote from metropolitan areas (>1Hr Commute), to ensure parity of opportunity in the Region. The Elected Council and Economic & Enterprise SPC have both called for the need for specific financial incentives for companies to locate in these regional centres as current policies has seen the continued attention being focused on the greater

Dublin Region and more recently on the other metropolitan centres. While the national and even regional unemployment statistics all show positive declines, they mask continuing underlying high levels of unemployment in regional centres. The response of the rising tide lifting all boats is not an adequate or appropriate response to deal with these issues. The following additional objectives associated with the Key Kerry towns are appropriate.

Tralee

Support the regeneration of opportunity sites Island of Geese, Fels Point, underused, vacant or derelict town centre lands for residential and enterprise development to facilitate population and employment growth.

Promote the development and delivery of infrastructure for the delivery of additional employment through modern office, enterprise and manufacturing space.

Promote Tralee as an urban coastal tourism destination while protecting the natural resources on which it relies with a focus on capitalising on the following assets: • Amenity potential of the Wild Atlantic Way, Tralee Bay Nature Reserve, nearby beaches, hill walking, Kerry Camino, golf courses, planned greenways and built tourism infrastructure as well as being gateway to the Dingle Peninsula.

Killarney

Support the regeneration of opportunity sites including the Sara Lee, Aras Phadraig and St Finians sites to encourage compact growth in the town and provide residential, enterprise, tourism and amenity facilities.

Provide both for the resident population and extensive influx of visitors the necessary road infrastructure including Killarney By-pass, inner relief routes, carparking and smarter travel opportunities for improved access to the town centre.

Provide for the opening up and development of lands to the North of the existing by-pass in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development objectives including the appropriate master-plans for this important area.

Listowel

While not identified as a key town within the Draft RSES Listowel provides an important role in a wide geographical area of North Kerry and West Limerick and has a significance in relation to the access of industrial lands to the North of the county and the Shannon Estuary.

The delivery of the Listowel by-pass is critical to the sustainable future of this area and has the potential to provide a catalyst for tourism development within the town, building on the potential of the existing literary and cultural traditions of the area and the planned Greenway from Fenit to Limerick.

Killorglin

The role of Killorglin in the Draft Strategy in the context of its important economic and employment contribution is acknowledged in the context of the Hub and Knowledge Triangle and its strong associations with both Tralee and Killarney and the regional

third level institutions. The opening up of lands for further residential development is critical to its future as is the necessity for a second crossing of the River Laune to relieve congestion and serve the wide tourism attractions of South Kerry.

Developing sense of place and revitalising Town Centre Brownfield Sites/Mixed Use Traditional Streets

Challenges facing our towns and villages have been well highlighted throughout the process.

1. Online Retail
2. Decline in high street footfall
3. Demise of rural shops and services
4. Vacancy and dereliction
5. Decline of traditional streetscape mixed use developments - at edge of centre locations in larger towns - and in villages centres
6. Closure of factory/warehouse developments in central locations leaving potential for significant brownfield developments
7. Decline of certain traditional industrial estates
8. Retention and opportunities for young skilled population

While the above have been referenced in the Draft RSES, the Council would like to highlight the importance of investment in the renewal of these areas as key to their continued attractiveness for residential and commercial development. Pilot projects for town and village renewal schemes should be supported to create innovative solutions in the re-use of existing buildings, providing solutions to modern building control and fire regulations. The importance of support for the retention of historic centres with architectural value should be a focus of investment to retain the character of these settlements, while providing for sustainable uses for these buildings into the future.

Key Role of Regional Towns and Access Points

As outlined in previous submissions the towns of Dingle, Caherciveen and Kenmare, because of the peninsular nature of the county, are of an importance and provide services over a wide geographical area and are also important tourist destinations on the WAW and have the potential with the necessary infrastructure development to add significantly to economic development. Some also have a high ratio of jobs to resident workforce attracting workers from a wide catchment. Projects include Dingle Relief Road, Dingle Creativity Hub, Public Realm and Car parking; Kenmare Waste Water Treatment Extension, Car parking; Caherciveen improved access to the River Marina, South Kerry Greenway and removal of dereliction from town core area.

Towns and Villages

The sustainable development of rural areas requires the reimagining of our towns and villages to reinforce their role as vibrant centres to rural community life. To achieve this basis water and waste water infrastructure investment is required.

Impact of Tourism on infrastructure requirements

As outlined in the County's initial submission to the RSES Kerry is different from all other counties in the region in the extent to which the levels of employment and economic activity are boosted by visitors that significantly augment the de facto census population total. Tourism makes a disproportionately large contribution to the enterprise mix and employment in Kerry. In this context annual visitor numbers to the county are at a ratio of 12 to 1 in relation to the resident population. In comparison the ratio in the neighbouring counties of Cork and Limerick is between 4 and 5 to 1. The RSES needs to reflect this dependence by ensuring that the distinctive natural resource base of landscapes and seascapes, as well as the very rich cultural and historical heritage, is appropriately managed for the benefit of both the usual residents and the visitor population.

The innovative REDZ McGillicuddy Reeks upland path repair and management enterprise involving training local land owners to carry out the work is a sustainable model involving stewardship of the Ireland's largest mountain range by those who farm them. Continued support for such initiatives is essential for maintaining a sustainable hill walking enterprise in our most scenic regions. The partnerships involved in Failte Ireland's Visitor Experience Development Plans showcases the wealth of activities and growth potential in tourism in areas where communities are working together with a common vision and with the potential of support from relevant agencies.

The Council again wishes to emphasise that the significant influx of visitors to Kerry in comparison to other regions has major implications for the infrastructure needs of the county, particularly intra-regional transportation links, water/waste water infrastructure and the supporting network of facilities required to adequately serve the natural attractions of the county many of which are in peripheral areas.

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and other funding models in the Action Plan for Rural Development should support the provision of key infrastructure along the Wild Atlantic Way, including the provision of beach services, car parking, relieving congestion on well trafficked routes, as well initiatives to improve the attractiveness of these locations through undergrounding of cables, public realm improvements and the creation of attractive beach front locations in towns and villages.

Diversification of the Rural Economy

The rejuvenation of rural towns and villages requires that appropriate job creation can be supported in rural areas. While the traditional sectors such as agriculture, tourism, extractive industries and forestry remain important sources of economic activity increasingly diversification is required in rural areas to retain population and supplement income. Diversification in sectors such as food, renewable energy and opportunities provided from improved digital connectivity are critical to the survival of rural populations. The conclusion of the broadband roll-out in the intervention areas is a necessity at this point to provide opportunities for basic enterprise development.

As outlined in Kerry County Council's submission to the issues paper there are significant contrasts between different types of rural areas within the Region. The contrasts are related to differences in natural resources, varying levels of accessibility,

different cultural traditions, a mixture of adaptation patterns to the modernisation of farming which in some cases has resulted in increased marginalisation and vulnerability, and demographic profiles that are very dissimilar between different areas. The RSES should take account of this diversity, and tailor initiatives that are most appropriate for each type of area – this requires a commitment to implementation of integrated place-based strategies with objectives for outcomes that are greater than might be expected from the sum of uncoordinated sectoral initiatives.

The potential of the living landscape providing an education resource both to Irish and international students has in conjunction with the higher education sector the potential to bring graduates to rural areas throughout the year. Models such as the Sceilig Cri initiative between University College Cork, Kerry County Council and South Kerry Development Partnership establishing a outreach third level location in Caherciveen, and the Sacred Heart University Connecticut using Dingle as the campus classroom, students live the Irish experience through hands-on seminars led by accomplished scholars and local experts, add to the reputation of these local areas and support the local economy.

The critical challenges for Rural Communities both in towns and villages remains the retention and attraction of a sustainable population and the key to achieving this remains the provision of services and jobs. Kerry County Council views the capacity to alter migration patterns (immigration into Ireland and internal migration in Ireland) as central to achieving the required growth. It is very much in doubt that natural increase based on the current regional demographic profile will deliver the target increases for the MASPs. The critical age group to target are those aged 20-34. This cohort will need to be reassured that they can develop their careers within the region in whatever sectors they wish to work and also that the region has much to offer in terms of quality of life which can far exceed that experienced in larger city regions.

Opportunities for remote working in shared work spaces /hubs in rural towns and villages remains an important vehicle for local employment opportunities and as stated previously the roll out of broadband infrastructure in the intervention areas must be achieved in the short term.

Summary

Kerry County Councils welcomes many aspects of the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the aspirations that are contained within. While it is recognised that the three metropolitan cities supported by the MASPS are essential for providing a counterbalance to the greater Dublin Region, the larger towns which have a significant regional influence (In Kerry's case Tralee & Killarney) are equally important as engines to drive economic growth across the region. Without dedicated policies to attract investment to these regional centres and to the wider rural communities that population growth and investment will continue to be drawn to the larger population centres replicating the Eastern Regions challenges. Kerry County Council recognises that every town in the Region cannot have the same services or employment opportunities but the Regional drivers of scale (the Key towns) require targeted growth through national and regional policies to ensure the survival of surrounding rural areas of smaller towns and villages and dispersed rural population. The fabric of rural Ireland requires this patchwork of settlements to possess the necessary modern services to

provide for sustainable futures for these areas. The scale of agreed services should reflect geographical location and distance from major centres.

Kerry County Council's submission to the Issues Paper for the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

Kerry County Council, having considered the Draft National Planning Framework and the initial invitation to make submissions on the Issues Paper published on the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy, offer the following contribution as an overview of the strategic position of Kerry in the Southern Region and also observations on key principles which both the RSES and NPF should include.

Hereunder, the Council sets out general observations on the current context in which the RSES is being developed and the challenges that will be faced in relation to delivering on the ambition of the Draft NPF and realising the economic and social potential of the entire country irrespective of location.

National Planning Framework/Regional Spatial Economic Strategy – General Observations

1. The Southern RSES is being developed in the context of the National Planning Framework which includes an ambitious target in relation to rebalancing the geographical distribution of population and economic development. Central to this is realising the potential of the second tier cities, including Cork, Limerick and Waterford in the Southern region. It is envisaged that each of these cities will grow at a much faster pace (>50%) than that which occurred over recent decades. Such growth, supported by polycentric networking and collaboration, has the potential to ensure that second tier cities play a constructive role in promoting balanced regional development and in ensuring that Dublin transitions, from being a **primate** city, to assuming the status and function of a capital city, such as pertains in most small and medium-sized EU states.

The NPF also envisages that the city-based approach will be complemented by a prioritisation of centres with populations in excess of 10,000 for which the targeted increases in this region are set at 20-25%. The proposed rebalancing in the NPF therefore seeks to lessen or reverse the divergent trends of recent decades between the three regions. The Council is cognisant, while pursuing this objective, that there is a risk of increasing the variability in the prospects for different parts of each region and this risk is particularly high in the Southern region which has three of the four middle tier cities outside Dublin. The RSES must carefully assess the capacity of the three cities to achieve their targets along with the risks inherent in this strategy if the targets are not achieved, and at the same time ensure that it does not lead to an increase in variability of opportunity and performance between different parts of the region. In particular, the proposed metropolitan-led strategy for the Southern region must ensure that the unsustainable features of metropolitan-driven expansion that occurred in the east and midlands over recent decades are not repeated – curbing sprawl from the cities must be a priority. It is also important to set out, in their development trajectories, the anticipated new and increased roles, forms and functions of these cities. An increase in size will, on its own, not do anything to enhance the cities, and may well have the negative agglomeration consequences, particularly environmental, for adjoining areas and counties.

2. Metropolitan areas have many important roles that include, inter alia, enabling international / transnational connectivity. The status of Cork and Limerick/Shannon is particularly important in that regard. The fundamental importance of direct connectivity from the Southern region to the European mainland is likely to be accentuated by Brexit. Thus, investment in European connectivity nodes, supported by intra-regional connectivity to those nodes, is fundamental to the Region's competitiveness.
3. Polycentric networking and inter-metropolitan collaboration are advantageous and conducive to the growth of the region. These include collaboration in respect of governance and institutional arrangements, and the RSES ought to underpin mechanisms to enable such collaborations and efficiencies to be promoted.
4. Beyond the metropolitan areas there needs to be a distinction maintained between towns that are part of the city commuter hinterlands and those towns that have a strong regional or local function independent of the cities. The preparation of the RSES should be guided by a set of maps to illustrate the hinterlands /functional areas of the large and small towns that would complement those already prepared for the cities. These maps will also demonstrate those rural areas that are located beyond the hinterlands of all towns. In addition to identifying the hinterlands of all towns it would be highly desirable to prepare demographic, social and economic profiles of each hinterland. This baseline information will assist with the identification of those centres that can have a significant regional level role in the future, whilst at the same time pinpointing centres for inclusion in county plans.
5. There are significant contrasts between different types of rural areas within the Region. The contrasts are related to differences in natural resources, varying levels of accessibility, different cultural traditions, a mixture of adaptation patterns to the modernisation of farming which in some cases has resulted in increased marginalisation and vulnerability, and demographic profiles that are very dissimilar between different areas. The RSES should take account of this diversity, and tailor initiatives that are most appropriate for each type of area – this requires a commitment to implementation of integrated place-based strategies with objectives for outcomes that are greater than might be expected from the sum of uncoordinated sectoral initiatives.
6. There is some evidence that rural areas in proximity to county boundaries may exhibit weaker scores on development indicators. The RSES should be cognisant of this possibility and it should consider how to address the particular issues that may arise in such borderlands. In the first instance the issue might be explored via a pilot study. Suitable areas have already been identified on the borders between Kerry and Cork and Kerry and Limerick.
7. The RSES needs to identify how and where it can bring added value at the regional scale through regional level initiatives and strategic coordination.

Kerry Submission

The Kerry Submission to the National Planning Framework reflected the importance of Kerry in driving regional development, both in the context of its functional and economic links with Limerick and Cork and in the context of the internal economic core of the county with Tralee, Killarney & Killorglin acting as a regional driver for the wider dispersed geographical area. The observations outlined hereunder should be considered in the context of the previous submissions to the NPF at both initial consultation and draft stages.

1. The map of commuter hinterlands in the SRA Issues paper (p.7) demonstrates very clearly that County Kerry is a distinctly different place from the hinterlands of Cork and Limerick cities. Neither of the hinterlands extends into the county. This was highlighted in the Kerry submissions to the NPF both at the initial public consultation stage and following publication of the Draft NPF. Of course, this does not mean that there is no interaction between Kerry and the two cities; rather the intensity of interaction is weaker than for other areas more proximate to the cities. Furthermore, recent analysis by the ESRI demonstrates that under a continuation of recent trends most of the population gains beyond the metropolitan areas will be in the rural areas between Cork and Limerick. A map compiled by Teagasc (2017) of drive times to the main cities illustrates, very clearly, the drive times from west and southwest Kerry are the highest in the entire Southern Region and even in the east of the county there are significantly higher drive times in a zone extending from Tarbert in the north to Kenmare in the south of the county.
2. An enhanced level of connectivity between Kerry and the Cork – Limerick axis is essential to enabling the county to achieve its potential and sustain its growth. This is most acute in respect of transnational and inter-regional connectivity, which is integral to Kerry playing its part in contributing to the economic profile and standing of the region. Kerry's economic profile and its growth potential especially in Tourism, Agri-food, and Large Scale Manufacturing are shaped and determined by accessibility and connectivity to large external population bases. Improved access to international airports and ports will be determining factors in the county's and region's success in developing their economic base. Commercial and educational growth cohesion throughout the region requires infrastructural investment to ensure the regions potential is realised.
3. It is essential that the distinctiveness of County Kerry is recognised in the broad structure of the RSES. There should be no barriers imposed on the future development of the county. It would be **potentially** negative in the long term if the growth of population for Tralee and Killarney were to be artificially curtailed to 20-25%. As indicated in earlier work by KCC, these two towns and their commuting hinterlands constitute the hub of the County. The hub area with a population of 77,554 in 2016 represents 52.5% of the population of the County and it accounted for 82% of the county increase between 2011 and 2016. Over the 25 years between 1991 and 2016 the combined populations of Tralee and Killarney increased by 10,383 or 37.3%.

The economic development strategy for the County envisages further concentration of activity into the hub area and it is therefore reasonable to anticipate a need to cater for an increase of at least 40% in population over the period to 2040. Most importantly, it is essential that the development and growth of the Tralee – Killarney Hub, and by extension, the entire Knowledge Triangle – incorporating Killorglin, is enabled to make an enhanced contribution to the Southern Region so that it can become a stronger counterbalance to the Greater Dublin Area conurbation as envisaged in the draft NPF. In this way strategically located support for growth within the Southern Region, such as in the Kerry Knowledge Triangle, will add to, rather than detract from, the potential of other parts of the country.

4. A dynamic hub sub-region in the County is also important for the future development of all other parts of the County. The places beyond the hub which currently account for almost half of the population of the county are essentially the outer nodes of a hub and spoke model. The usually resident population of each of the local nodes are very much dependent on the range of opportunities and services provided within the Hub. Therefore, intra-county connectivity and the development of infrastructure, particularly ICT, merit investment. The success of key smaller regional towns serving wide rural catchments particularly in Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas is paramount to sustain communities in these areas.
5. Kerry is different from all other counties in the region in the extent to which the levels of employment and economic activity are boosted by visitors that significantly augment the de facto census population total. Tourism makes a disproportionately large contribution to the enterprise mix and employment in Kerry. In this context annual visitor numbers to the county are at a ratio of 12 to 1 in relation to the resident population. In comparison the ratio in the neighbouring counties of Cork and Limerick is between 4 and 5 to 1. The RSES needs to reflect this dependence by ensuring that the distinctive natural resource base of landscapes and seascapes, as well as the very rich cultural and historical heritage, is appropriately managed for the benefit of both the usual residents and the visitor population. This is particularly the case in the Gaeltacht areas of South and West Kerry. The significant influx of visitors to Kerry in comparison to other regions has major implications for the infrastructure needs of the county, particularly intra-regional transportation links, water/waste water infrastructure and the supporting network of facilities required to adequately serve the natural attractions of the county many of which are located in peripheral areas.

The recently commissioned Killarney Tourism Economic Impact Review reinforces the economic benefits of the tourism industry to both Killarney and the wider region which benefits from the visitors that use Killarney as a base. The scale of the tourism impact is reflected in higher level statistics – including 1.56ml bed nights annually, overall economic impact of €410ml, supporting 7,000 jobs, with exchequer returns on the economic impact of tourism being €133ml.

6. A sustained capital investment programme for infrastructure in the region as a whole is required in order to improve connectivity, reduce travel times and to accelerate the growth of the prioritised areas.

As outlined above, connectivity to the Cork/Limerick Axis and their associated ports and airports is paramount to the economy of the County. The N21 & N22 provide critical infrastructure to the major regional centres for the county. Improved access to the M20 (Mallow) will provide an additional link to the Western Motorway Corridor. In Kerry, the Killarney (including Killarney bypass) –Tralee-Fenit route is particularly important. Opportunities for increased use of public transport and freight by rail on this route should be examined. Linkages including the Listowel By-Pass to the important landbanks in the County which form part of the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan and the Deep Sea Port of Foynes are strategic links for the economic infrastructure of the county. The importance of the WAW as an economic driver for the peripheral areas of the county is undisputable and appropriate investment is justified.

7. The roll-out of the National Broadband Strategy is highly important. There are significant ‘cold spots’ in Kerry (recent map by Teagasc) which have left a digital divide in the county. Key economic drivers in the county/region Fin-tech and Agri-tech have the potential of providing both a major economic national and regional contribution and also serve as a catalyst for supporting micro-industries in the rural south west region. In order to capitalise on the opportunities which can be derived from improved communications technologies there will be a need for the regional digital strategy to accelerate the take-up and application of information technologies. The Institute of Technology might be a key enabler for an initiative in this area.
8. The emphasis on place-based strategies for development in the NPF and RSES will require some investment in capacity building to bring about changes in the practice of plan design and implementation. A new model of integrated planning that is more inclusive of all stakeholders may be required in some areas.
9. There will be a need to future-proof both the RSES and the Kerry Strategy, particularly in respect of environmental sustainability, ameliorating the effects of climate change and preventing any further environmental degradation. This implies investing in environmental protection infrastructure in advance of, and in parallel with, any provisions for population growth in the Metropolitan Areas and indeed, in Kerry’s case, in the Knowledge Triangle. It also implies greater support for public transport infrastructure and ICT. At a more local level, there is a need to environment-proof the infrastructure and function of all settlements.
10. Among the factors that have contributed to Kerry’s successes to date, and which will be integral to its future growth, are those relating to quality of life. So-called ‘soft infrastructure’ is likely to be increasingly valorised by those residing in Metropolitan zones, thereby adding to Kerry’s distinctiveness and potential competitive advantage.

Specific Comments on the Issues Paper

These comments refer to specific sections of the Issues Paper.

The Council welcomes on page (3) the broad concepts on regional distribution including;

- (a) The renewed focus in the NPF on ‘regional parity’ as an approach to addressing the anti-competitive pressures on Dublin
- (b) The target to align population and jobs growth within the same functional area to minimise unsustainable commuting patterns (In this regard Kerry is a distinctive functional area in the Southern Region - see above)
- (c) Choices will need to reflect the differing needs and potential of the region.

The Council requests that issues to be addressed at Regional level by the RSES should include under the Economic Elements on pg (5) ;

Human Resources/Capital

Leadership & Governance

Also under the spatial strategy bullet point (6) the inclusion of **cultural heritage and built environment** would benefit the overall strategy.

Place Based Approach to Regional Development

The key factors to be included in analysing regional potential as outlined on pg (6) second last paragraph should include institutional capacity to support a place-based approach to regional development.

Kerry County Council was one of the first local authorities in Ireland to introduce local area plans, and the Council has been consistent in promoting a ‘sum of the parts’ rather than a homogenised approach to planning and development. Thus, in planning within and for the geographies represented by the current municipal districts, it is important to take cognisance of the geographies of functional area and town catchments. In addition, and in particular in the case of the South and West Municipal District (the largest in Ireland), it is essential to make specific provision for local characteristics, profiles and distinctive potentials.

Regional Cities

Mapping Influence of Urban Centres

The Commuting patterns illustrated in respect of the cities as outlined on the AIRO map on pg (7) are very demonstrative of the influence of these centres. A similar profile of the larger towns and their commuting hinterlands in the Southern Region on a separate map would be equally beneficial to the analysis.

Planned Growth of Cities

The objective that each of the regional cities will grow by at least 50% is very challenging and will require a significant break with trends over past 25 years. The RSES needs to assess the implications for the rest of the region and have alternative strategies in place in the event the targets are not achieved.

The Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPS) are critical to the meeting of these targets. Their boundaries need to be well defined for statistical purposes in order to establish a proper baseline for future monitoring. The MASPs on their own will not bring about regional parity within the whole region – the larger towns beyond the commuting zones, such as Tralee & Killarney will be the building blocks in the sub-regions such as Kerry. Kerry County Council, while recognising the pivotal role of the Regional Cities, equally contend that strategically located independent regional towns are critical for the overall success of achieving regional growth targets and providing opportunity for communities throughout the region.

Barriers to Growth

The Issues Paper correctly raises the question regarding the most significant potential barrier to achieving the targets. Kerry County Council views the capacity to alter migration patterns (immigration into Ireland and internal migration in Ireland) as central to achieving the required growth. It is very much in doubt that natural increase based on the current regional demographic profile will deliver the target increases for the MASPs. The critical age group to target are those aged 20-34. This cohort will need to be reassured that they can develop their careers within the region in whatever sectors they wish to work and also that the region has much to offer in terms of quality of life which can far exceed that experienced in larger city regions.

Large Urban Centres

As previously outlined it would be unwise to artificially impose a cap on growth of Tralee and Killarney as currently envisaged in the Draft NPF. The historic growth of these centres and their hinterlands demonstrate that higher levels of population growth can be achieved. The Smart Urban Initiative should not be restricted to within the boundaries of individual towns but could be utilized as a vehicle for preparing a plan on how to achieve a more sustainable settlement and transport plan for strong geographical and economic centres such as the Kerry Hub and Knowledge Triangle. It is important that plan development process is based on preparing integrated place-based strategies that enable all stakeholders, including local communities, to participate and genuinely supplement and complement the efforts of the statutory agencies and the private sector.

Towns with Population of less than 10,000 People

The Council, in assessing settlements, hold a strong view that there is a need to differentiate between local service centres and fast growing commuter towns as they perform very different roles. These smaller centres are very important in Kerry as they are the nearest service centres for almost half the population and also enjoy important roles in relation to tourism being located along the Wild Atlantic Way and are remote from the large centres of population due to the peninsular nature of the county.

When considering the future of these towns it will be necessary to take account of their diversity of profiles - there is no single model that can be applied to each of these towns.

At the outset it is critical to identify the extent of their hinterlands, review trends in population by age groups and also in employment by detailed sectors, along with social shifts in education levels and participation in the labour force to get a clear profile of each town and hinterland. There may be opportunities for sharing

experience (what has worked well and what has not) between towns in the region as a whole as also with similar towns in other regions.

The growth target of 15% may be too restrictive over the period to 2040 for smaller settlements that have been in decline. For example, if a significant turn-around in the Cahersiveen broader area is achievable an increase of 15% over 25 years would still leave it much smaller than it was a few decades ago. The text should be flexible enough to enable local prioritisation based on criteria that are appropriate for the area and its recent history. There may be instances where curbing recent rapid expansion would be the correct option in order to maintain the distinctive character and attractiveness of particular settlements.

Rural Economy

The rural economy section draws heavily upon the Action Plan for Rural Development. Recognising the positivity of the Action plan it is however a short term three year strategy that seeks to provide a new approach to rural development. The RSES should endorse the overall approach of the APRD and request that it be extended and adequately resourced. The EU co-funded National Rural Development Plan is an important potential source of funding. This Plan attracts a very considerable amount of public resources which for historical reasons are almost entirely targeted to one sector in the rural economy and society. Going forward to 2040 it may be appropriate to commission a review of how public resources for rural development are allocated and to determine the benefits from different types of interventions.

The selection of key infrastructure priorities for the economic and social development of Rural Areas should be guided by a comprehensive evaluation based on multiple criteria with an emphasis on what is strategically best for the county rather than any particular location. Infrastructure provision should support both economic and social activity. Rural broadband rollout is critical for sustained economic activity across the region. Key infrastructure supporting tourism road access (WAW), critical environmental water/waste water infrastructure to allow for additional growth in smaller settlements, and provision to supporting shared services – e.g. in the medical area re GPs.

Demographic Structure

It will be very important to have an in-depth understanding of the changes occurring under the demographic structure and how they relate especially to the labour force, households and housing. Much of the data presented relates only to 2016 and changes since 2011. It is too early to decide if the trends over that period are the beginning of a new phase in Ireland. For some of the key indicators it would be useful to review the trends over the 25 years 1991 to 2016 and compare them with those of the 5 or 10 years. The NPF and RSES are planning for the 25 years after 2016.

The benefit of looking back over the longer term is that it includes phases of boom and bust which we can reasonable expect will recur again within the next 25 years.

Higher Education

Human capital formation and promotion of an innovation culture are vital. The role of the higher education institutions is particularly important in that regard, and Tralee IT is a crucial asset for Kerry that needs to be safeguarded. This must be an important consideration in any future discussions re the organisation of the HE sector in Ireland

and specifically in the Southern Region. The ETB also has a role to play in this regard, particularly in promoting outreach and access.

Appendix A: Recent trends in employment in Kerry

Kerry: Labour Force Participation Rates

- 1991 Kerry female participation rate was 31% compared to 36% for the State. By 2016 the Kerry rate reached 53%, < 3 percentage points behind the State average
- Between 1991-2016 total employment in the county increased by 23,363 (62%), almost entirely between 1991-2006 after which the losses between 2006-11 were off-set by an increase of almost 5,500 in the 5 years to 2016
- Over the period 1991-2016 females accounted for 70% of the total increase
- 1991 – 2016 increase of 23,363 (62%) –female share of total increased from 31.6% to 46.1%

Kerry: Employment by broad industrial sectors 1991-2016

- Decline of 4,700 in no. employed in agric, forestry and fishing
- 2016 employment in AFF < 5,000 for the first time; only 8% of total
- Manufacturing peaked in 1990s followed by construction peak between 2002-2006. But by 2016 their combined share of total was 16.5% compared to 23-25% between 1991-2006
- AFF, manufacturing and construction all male dominated and more strongly represented in more rural parts of the county
- Most significant employment gains were in sectors where females are in majority
- Increase of 8,628 (165%) in professional services – females accounted for 81% of increase in sector
- Increase of 5,873 (88%) in commerce sector that includes retail trade, hotels & restaurants, real estate renting & sales, - females represented 61% of increase
- Largest increase (9,622) in sector that includes community, social and personal services and those that did not state an employment sector – 53% of increase female

1991-2016 Summary

- Major change in gender profile of workforce
- Shift from primary and secondary sectors (Aff, mfg and construction): from 49% to 25% of workforce
- Growth sectors predominantly in larger urban areas and strong tourism locations
- Implicit in trends noted above is a large increase in households with two or more occupations which has contributed to recent changes in the geographical distribution of population.