



Better Places

In late 2017 the NWRA commenced the drafting of our first Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. A game-changer in Regional Development. The Assembly Members have worked tirelessly to demonstrate collaborative leadership by engaging widely and challenging our stakeholders to produce an ambitious but effective strategy that reflects our vision. **See inside for more detail**

Competitiveness

The NWRA is managing its 3rd Regional Operational Programme (ROP) for the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) Region. A €320 million programme from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Irish exchequer between 2014 and 2020

Collaboration

Did you know? The NWRA has an established EU Engagement Unit to assist your local authority navigate the complex EU funding model. In 2017 the NWRA launched its Diploma in EU Studies (Funding) which entails a 5 day intensive course split between Ballaghaderreen and Leuven Institute in Brussels. Subsidised by the NWRA more information is available by emailing bmooney@nwra.ie



Chairperson's Briefing

One of the challenges we face as a Regional Assembly is communicating with our constituent local authorities and my elected colleagues. As Cathaoirleach in 2018 I am committed to addressing this, principally for two reasons:

- 1/ Firstly, there is some incredible work underway in the NWRA and we need to create more effective and stronger linkages with local representatives in order to promote this.
- 2/ Secondly, this is your Regional Assembly and we need to encourage more collaboration and participation so that we can leverage the full extent of resources for our communities.

Recently I launched our new website at www.nwra.ie and I would encourage you all to log on and register for updates relating to national planning issues; EU funding instruments and regional projects.

It is impossible to capture all of the work underway across the region. The purpose of this short briefing is to capture some of the highlights and I intend to keep you briefed throughout the year with regular communications.

Cllr. Patsy O'Brien (Mayo), Cathaoirleach



Regional Tourism Think Tank

On Tuesday the 27th of February 2018, Regional Tourism leaders and stakeholders, throughout the Northern and Western part of Ireland meet in the Glasshouse Hotel in Sligo.

Presentations from Failte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Donegal Co Co and The Northern & Western Regional Assembly, were followed by a workshop on regional alliances.

The meeting explored current regional partnerships, potential areas of collaboration, available national and EU funding sources.

The challenge now is how do we collaborate more effectively to increase both domestic and overseas visitors?



EU Cooperation Funds

In my opinion the reason we are so successful at drawing significant EU funds down is that the NWRA holds the National Contact Point (NCP) in Ireland for three European Cooperation Programmes - Interreg Europe, Northern Periphery and Atlantic Programme as well as for the Atlantic Area.

The role of the National Contact Point is to give personalised support to project applicants from Ireland through:

- Guidance on choosing programme priority and types of action
- Advice on administrative procedures and contractual issues
- Training and assistance on proposal writing

The National Contact Point may be contacted at nationalcontact@nwra.ie

We need to keep EU Cooperation Funds in the region and I would encourage each and every local authority to register support for the Cohesion Alliance.



Atlantic Area Programme now open for your Council

The NWRA is delighted to announce the second call of the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme.

The call will be open from 15th March to 1st June 2018. More information on www.nwra.ie



On Your Bike

Our members have challenged the EU Engagement Unit to develop projects aligned with regional priorities. In March 2018 we secured three projects worth over €500,000.

Brendan Mooney, EU Executive said its now 'time to get on your bike', referring to the success in securing funding through the OUR WAY project; a Greenway project to support a regional investment strategy and connect green infrastructure with natural heritage and cultural sites'.



Acknowledgement

Throughout 2017 the NWRA with its constituent colleagues collaborated extensively to ensure our communities and 'Places' were properly recognised and invested through Project Ireland 2040.... The National Planning Framework will now enable us to deliver our vision for this region through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.



It is extremely important to recognise the role played by the Planning Team, led by Denis Kelly in the NWRA. On behalf of my colleagues I would like to extend a sincere level of gratitude to them for their hard work and dedication. 2040 will be a better place because of them.

"As Cathaoirleach I was incredibly proud to see the level of partnership across the region and is testament to what we can achieve together"

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

In October 2017, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government directed that the three Regional Assemblies commence the preparation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for their individual regions, as a replacement to the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) 2010-2022.

On 16th February 2018 Project Ireland 2040, National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan 2018-2027 was launched in Sligo and it has largely reflected the Regional Asks that were made by the NWRA. The focus now shifts to the region.

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly commenced a pre-draft consultation on the RSES which concluded on 16th February 2018.

Four focused stakeholder workshops were held in January and the 'Report on Pre-Draft RSES Stakeholder Workshops January 2018' which summarises the outputs of those workshops was provided to the Elected Members.

On 4th April 2018, members considered a report on submissions received as part of the Pre Draft Consultations and it is available on www.nwra.ie under RSES. The next stage is to develop a Draft Strategy by June / July 2018

The NWRA is consulting extensively with constituent local authorities, senior stakeholders and infrastructural providers and our expectation is to be considering a draft strategy by June / July 2018.... More information on www.nwra.ie/RSES

European Entrepreneurial Region 2018

Another incredible title for this region to celebrate.

As Cathaoirleach I am looking forward to celebrating and promoting this award with our entrepreneurs and business people.

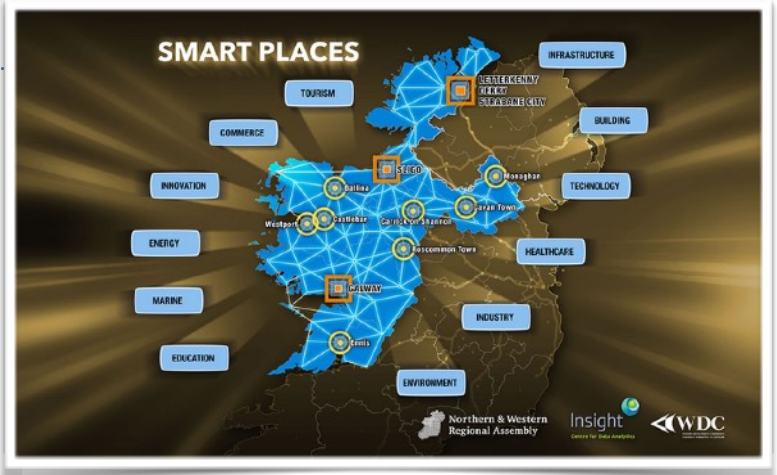
Our promotional campaign commences in April with national Ambassador for EER **Pat McDonagh** (Supermacs) launching the initiative.



SMARTPLACES

As Cathaoirleach I encourage innovation at all levels. Smart Places aims to enhance the reputation of this region of Ireland as an attractive place to live, work, visit and do business. Adopting Smart City principles, and applying to a Regional Model.

An incredibly ambitious research project in partnership with the Insight Centre (Galway) and the WDC. Can we be the next Helsinki?



Atlantic Economic Corridor

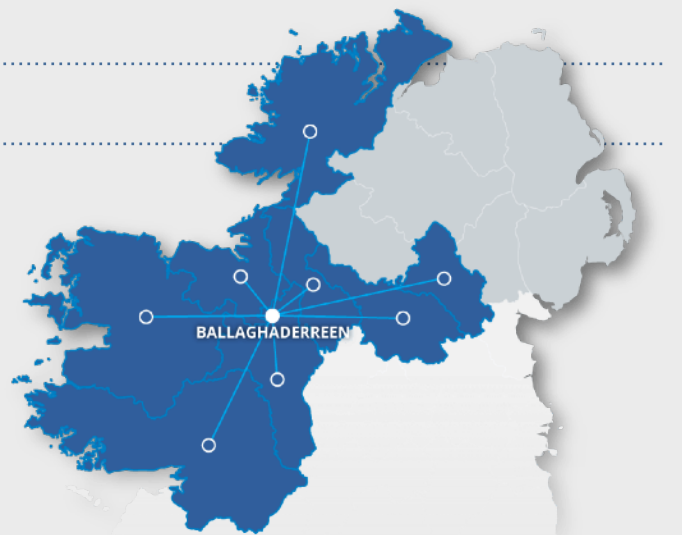
The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) is driven by business representatives, communities and supported by national / local government and State agencies. The Members of the Regional Assembly have pushed for the NWRA to play a leadership role in supporting the Task Force achieve its objectives. The staff deserve great credit in supporting the Infrastructure Sub Group and developing the new website; to be launched shortly.

OUR ASSEMBLY

Location

The Headquarters of the NWRA is located in Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon and we have a workforce of 15 people.

The NWRA is comprised of 25 elected Members nominated by the 9 local authorities within the region. The NWRA covers eight counties – Galway, Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo, Donegal, Monaghan, Mayo and Cavan and works closely with the nine local authorities (Galway City Council and Galway County Council cover one county) who manage these counties.



BMW Regional Operational Programme: In Focus

The NWRA plays a key role addressing the competitiveness of our region by delivering the Border, Midland and West Regional Operational Programme. A placed based investment programme spanning 2014-2020.

The total fund is €320 million which is 50% co-funded by the ERDF. The priorities for the BMW Regional Operational Programme are:

1. Strengthening Research, Technological Development & Innovation (RTDI) in the BMW Region
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of ICT
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs
4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
5. Sustainable Urban Development

As Chairperson I want to commend the Assistant Director Caitlin Conneely and her team on their continued successful management of our programme. It is incredibly important that we work together as a region to ensure these funds continue to be invested 'in the region; by the region'.

Supporting SME's

Priority 3 of the BMW Plan seeks to promote entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms and business

Designated Urban Grant Scheme

The Designated Urban Grant Scheme is a €14m fund to support local authorities in improving and revitalising urban areas.

Case Study on Impact

Kinvara Skincare was set up five years ago in Galway, specialising in natural plant powered skincare, avoiding irritating ingredients and providing affordable products.

Supported by their Local Enterprise Office through mentoring and grant aid the company has grown quickly. From kitchen table the company has recently moved to a 5,000 square foot building and developed three new products.

This has enabled the company to move their focus from the domestic market to the export market



Case Study: Athlone in Focus

Under the Scheme Athlone has been awarded €1.5million for the Church Street Enhancement Project.

The Church Street Enhancement Project will improve flow of pedestrians and traffic around the town, enhancing interactions with public spaces and create synergies in an important town centre area.

Under a previous version of the designated urban grant scheme, Athlone received €1.45 million towards the redevelopment of the Luan Art Gallery.





Committee of the Regions (CoR) Update

European Committee
of the Regions

Who is it?

The Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR) represents local and regional government in EU policy formation and decision-making processes. The Committee is an advisory body established in 1994 to ensure that the public authorities closest to the citizen, in Ireland i.e. the local authorities, are consulted on European Union policies of direct interest to them. The CoR representatives from the NWRA are notably active and are currently engaged in detailing the consequences of **Brexit** on trade and the economy.

Update

In recent weeks the NWRA CoR members engaged in debates on Brexit and the next multiannual financial framework of the EU. In commissions, they have discussed the future of Europe and of several policies and programmes such as cohesion policy, the European Social Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the EU forest strategy.

Cllr. Lundy and Cllr. Stenson participated in several events as follow-up activities to the adoption of their respective opinions on the "Atlantic strategy" and "Smart villages". Finally, all NWRA CoR members have joined the newly established interregional group on Brexit that will enable its members to discuss the impact of Brexit on their territories and exchange good practices and solutions to support regional and local economies.

Full Members of the CoR on the Assembly include:

Cllr. Enda Stenson, Leitrim County Council, Cllr. Jerry Lundy, Sligo County Council, Cllr. Gerry Murray, Mayo County Council.

Alternates are Cllr Declan McDonnell, Cllr Neil McNelis and Cllr Jimmy McLearn.



Brexit:

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) published a report last month in Brussels detailing the consequences of Brexit on trade and the economy in the EU27 regions and cities.

It highlights the scale of the economic effect of the UK's withdrawal from the EU on EU27 regions. Clearly the report demonstrates the impact will depend on the sectors which form the basis of a given local economy, the exposure of those sectors to the UK, and the reallocation of production and exports between sectors which will result from disruptions in trade flows. Most importantly this is an EU wide issue and not just local to the island of Ireland"

Click here to read the full report from the Committee of the Regions.

(<http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Documents/ECON/Final-Report-on-the-UK-withdrawal.pdf>)

Announcement: Masterclass Sessions



MAY 19TH 2018 | BALLINA

The ONE VISION ONE REGION series is delighted to announce the worlds most preeminent economist, futurist and thought leader. A three hour digital audience with Jeremy Rifkin. Capacity of the Masterclass is 50.

This Masterclass session with the author of 20 bestselling books about the impact of scientific and technological changes on the economy, the workforce, society, and the environment is being held as part of Digital Transformations in Ballina (19-20th May).

According to The European Energy Review...
"perhaps no other author or thinker has had more influence on the EU's ambitious climate and energy policy than the famous American 'visionary' Jeremy Rifkin."

For this region to prosper we need to learn from leading international experts. Hear and contribute to a conversation around tangible actions which can drive economic prosperity and inform our Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies in a digital future.

Lionbridge

Northern & Western Regional Assembly

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS
 Ballina | 19 - 20 May 2018

In association with

MAYO.IE Ballina Chamber
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Location:

Northern & Western Regional Assembly
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Northern & Western Regional Assembly

www.nwra.ie
connected
 BETTER PLACES • COMPETITIVENESS • COLLABORATION

Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020
 Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union

European Union
 European Regional Development Fund