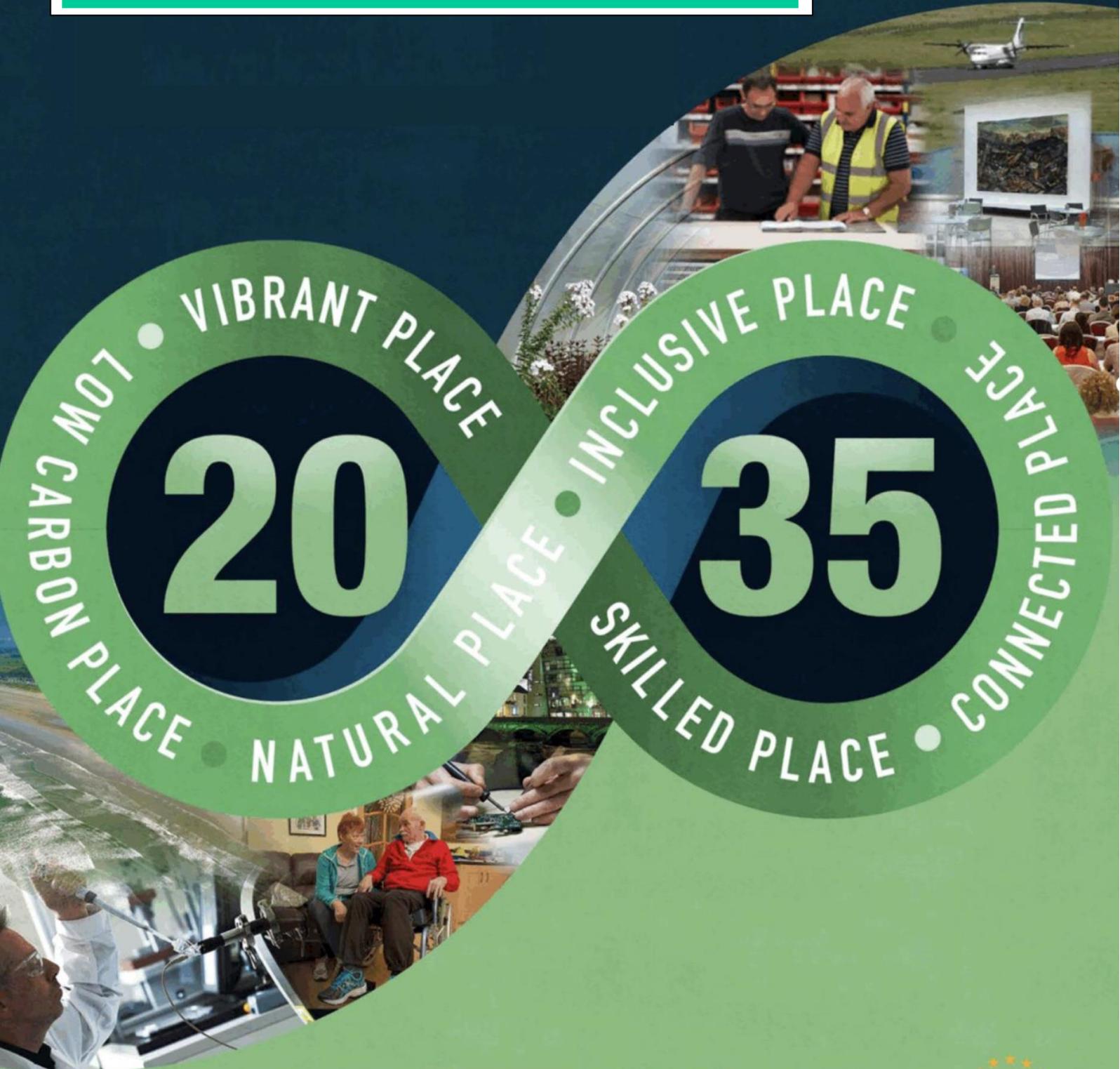




Northern & Western
Regional Assembly

***DIRECTOR'S REPORT ON
SUBMISSIONS TO
PRE-DRAFT RSES CONSULTATION***



VIBRANT PLACE •

LOW CARBON PLACE •

20

NATURAL PLACE •

INCLUSIVE PLACE •

SKILLED PLACE •

35

CONNECTED PLACE •

DIRECTOR'S REPORT ON SUBMISSIONS TO
PRE-DRAFT RSES CONSULTATION

The Director's Report following the period of Public Consultation on the Pre-Draft RSES Consultation as required by Section 24 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

March 2018

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Introduction and Context

The purpose of a Regional Spatial and economic Strategy is to provide a long-term strategic framework for the development of the region that implements and amplifies the National Planning Framework for a period of not less than 12 years and not more than 20 years. Upon completion of this RSES, it will be necessary for Development Plans, Local Area Plans, Local Economic and Community Plans and strategies of public bodies to be made consistent with this RSES. Thus, it will provide a clear vision to guide future development and investment decisions. The RSES process is being led by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and will be adopted by the Members of the Assembly and some of the key issues to be considered are set out in Table 1 below:

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. The Northern and Western Regional Assembly commenced a pre-draft consultation on the RSES on 27th November 2017, which concluded on 16th February 2018, coinciding with the publication of Project Ireland 2040 (National Planning Framework) and the National Development Plan 2018-2026. 124 submissions/observations being received to this consultation.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a list of the names of persons that made submissions or observations, summarise the issues raised and to enable them to be considered and inform the preparation of the Draft RSES. It will enable Members to have an opportunity to advise the Director of any considerations that they may wish to be included, which are consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the whole of the region, any relevant policies or objectives for the time being of the government or of any minister of the government, including the National Planning framework.

When consideration of this Director's Report is complete, the Draft RSES shall be prepared and issued to Members for their consideration before being placed on public display for a period of not less than 10 weeks.

Structure of Report

This report will comment upon the submissions and observations received under three sections:

Section 1 – This consists of a list of persons or bodies that made submissions.

Section 2 - This summarises the issues raised by those 'prescribed bodies' under the planning acts;

Section 3 - This summarises the issues raised by persons/bodies other than prescribed bodies and is given under the following 4 separate themes:

- (A) Vibrant Place – (Economy & Jobs) which focuses principally on economic drivers for the region and its sub-regional catchments including emerging sectors and clusters and future jobs and skills needs.
- (B) Connected Place – (Infrastructure & Utilities) which focuses on the strategic infrastructure gaps and needs of our region from road and rail to air and sea ports and energy and digital infrastructure that will support and promote sustainable regional development into the future.
- (C) Inclusive Place – (Health & Communities) which focuses on the future priorities for healthcare, education, sports & recreation and community provision to meet the forecast population growth and demographic shifts over the next 20 years.
- (D) Natural & Low Carbon Place – (Sustainable Future) – which focuses on the strategic environmental assets and opportunities for our region including quality of our environment and its conservation to natural resources such as renewable energy and water management.

Section 4 – Directors Consideration and Recommendation

Section 1- List of Persons and Bodies who made submissions

A full list of persons and Bodies that made submissions or observations is provided in Table 1, Appendix 1. Each submission has a unique identification number that shall be used in Sections 2 and 3 to identify the person/body that made the submission.

Section 2 - Summary of the issues raised by Prescribed Bodies

Summary of Issues Raised in Submissions

(A) Transport Infrastructure Ireland: Submission No 5.

TII identifies that the RSES should consider four key themes in respect of national roads and light rail, namely:

- I. **Maintaining condition and investment in rail and road assets.** TII advise that the RSES should recognise and include as a priority the need to maintain and renew strategically important elements of the existing system and in doing so protect investment and maintain its essential function. The ability to provide for accessibility and sustainable mobility that is safe, clean and affordable, is seen as key to providing access to opportunities, services, goods and amenities. It confirms that sustainable mobility has different interpretations in an urban and rural context and that the motor vehicle may in many cases be the sustainable mode in the transport system. Nonetheless, the RSES should clarify and further embed wider sustainable mobility principles to reflect the needs of regional, urban and rural communities. In this regard it is suggested that urban congestion needs to be addressed through encouragement of a modal shift to public transport, cycling, and walking for commuting and short distance trips. Furthermore, it confirms that congestion on National Roads will be addressed, to the extent allowable, through traffic management and demand management measures and a number of schemes have been addressed, including for Galway. Given the existence of regional imbalances there is a need to strike an equilibrium between the themes of urban consolidation and regional accessibility which TII says should be seen as complimentary for sustainable development.
- II. **Identification of key TII projects contributing to the delivery of the RSES.** It acknowledges the need for improved regional connectivity and references the journey times between Dublin and Regional Cities as against inter-regional city connectivity. It advocates that the RSES identify the major infrastructural investments required and to develop a framework for infrastructure investment decision making in accordance with best practice.
- III. **Implementation of Transport measures for RSES.** It recommends that the RSES look at the implementation and monitoring aspects carefully when developing policy. It is advised that the RSES would benefit from ensuring that cross sectoral considerations are given, that the key infrastructural requirements of each County should be set out and County Plans required to incorporate them. It also recommends that in preparing the RSES, cognisance should be given to the long lead in timelines in bringing a project to fruition and to also ensure that investment commitment is available.

IV. **TII as an enabler for the delivery of the RSES.** TII offer to support the RSES preparation, co-ordination and implementation as part of advisory and technical working groups, assisting with preparation of MASPs and preparation of Spatial Transport Plans for Cities with the NTA. TII's multi-modal interurban model of the national transport network (National Transport Model-NTpM) is available for the preparation of the RSES.

(B) National Transport Authority: Submission No. 10

The submission details the statutory responsibility of the NTA for securing the provision of public transport services and investment in sustainable transport infrastructure and services. It goes on to recommended that the transport investment priorities of the NTA and other state agencies, should be to:

- support improved strategic and local connectivity;
- expand attractive public transport and other alternatives to car transport;
- recognise the role of the car and cater appropriately for it;
- reduce congestion; and
- cater for the demands associated with longer term population and employment growth, in a sustainable manner

It recommends that the RSES consider a series of actions that would include compact urban areas with increased densities and building heights in appropriate locations and delivering greater intra-regional connectivity between Galway, Dublin and other cities and towns, with improved public transport services and reliable journey times. It specifically identifies the need to strengthening public transport, walking and cycling accessibility/ connectivity within Galway City and to provide a network of safe cycling routes in the city and in other towns and villages, where appropriate. The submission states that it is critical that Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) is implemented in full.

The strengthening of inter-regional connectivity is raised as a significant issue to be addressed, through the improvement of inter-urban road and rail connectivity, with a particular emphasis on improving connectivity between the largest urban centres and access to ports and airports, for the movement of both people and goods. As with the TII submission, it references the need to provide a suite of measures such as effective traffic management and transport demand management which complements investment in transport infrastructure and services. The submission also identifies that public transport connectivity between the large towns needs to be strengthened, with improved services and reliable journey times achieved through the provision of public transport infrastructure and services necessary to meet the needs of smaller towns, villages and rural areas.

Having regard to the extensive nature of the Northern and Western Region's rural hinterland, it is considered critical that the RSES acknowledges the role rural transport services can perform in providing for social and economic connectivity between small villages/ rural areas and larger towns. Thus, it meets the needs of rural communities and support the role of towns in serving their rural catchments and this needs to be incorporated into the strategy as a key issue.

The NTA says that the NTA will assist in the development of a MASP for Galway and suggests that given the future population projections, in conjunction with the cross boundary growth synergies, there may be a requirement to look at the need for a MASP to be prepared for Letterkenny (in conjunction with Derry City) and Athlone.

The submission is supportive of the development of policy to retain and preserve publicly owned disused rail corridors, which can be utilised in future for walking routes, greenways, whilst at the same time, not precluding their potential return to rail use.

It identifies that a key objective of the RSES should be to facilitate the consolidation of urban-based development and the optimal use, location, pattern and density of new development should be guided by the RSES. It recommends a series of guiding principles that would provide for the development of lands proximate to proposed high capacity public transport and that development would proceed sequentially, whereby lands which are, or will be, most accessible by walking, cycling and public transport, including infill and brownfield sites, are prioritised. Developments, such as offices and retail, should primarily be focused into central locations within urban centres and trip intensive developments or significant levels of development should not occur in locations not well served by existing or committed public transport, except in limited exceptional circumstances. In areas where the highest intensity of development occurs it is recommended that consideration be given to an approach that caps car parking on an area-wide basis and that all major employment developments and all schools should be required to develop travel plans.

The submission requests that the RSES ensure the development of priority sites in a planned and sustainable manner and in particular the RSES should make reference to the large-scale development opportunities within Galway City Centre (Docklands, Ceann Station, Galway Harbour) and Ardaun on the outskirts of Galway City as locations where a clear, coordinated and phased approach to the implementation of land use development and complimentary transport would facilitate sustainable planning.

The submission asks that the RSES consider strongly promoting development which supports the rural economy and the rural social fabric. It also asks urban-generated development and population growth in rural areas, which ultimately requires significant investment to serve this population and to facilitate long-distance commuting, should be addressed in the RSES, with a view to limiting a continuation of this trend and at the same time, supporting the NPF objective of 'smart compact growth' in cities, large and smaller towns.

(C) Department of Agriculture Food and Marine: Submission No.8

The submission relates to the SEA and AA, advising that the RSESs are relevant to the terrestrial interaction of key DAFM marine areas of responsibility such as fishery harbours and aquaculture. It acknowledges that the Assembly is cognisant of the proposed Marine Spatial Plan which is also being developed and that it should also be cognisant of the "National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development 2015".

(D) Department of Culture Heritage and Gaeltacht: Submission No.102

A detailed submission has been received that identifies a suite of issues to be considered. The high quality of the environment associated with nature conservation sites, as well as their international scientific importance and educational values are key issues that need to be articulated within the RSES so that they complement the regional benefits to be harnessed through tourism, employment and economic growth.

The anticipated growth shall present challenges to our environment and in this regard specific mention is made to the 50-60% increase in population for Galway city that will bring significant new development and infrastructural pressures for the city and environs. It will require the various environmental constraints and challenges in the wider Galway city area, including, but not only, European sites and other nature conservation sites to be taken into careful consideration. It identifies that the strategy could usefully include a set of steps or measures that would guide the planning and design of future projects to maximise their likely success. These steps or measures should dovetail with the SEA measures and any mitigation from the NIR (or NIS) and SEA measures should include a monitoring programme that is clearly set out to identify the effects on the environment that will or may arise, and to monitor the effectiveness of any mitigation measures. The submission identifies the need to integrate biodiversity, flora and fauna, and associated obligations into the Strategy considerations in a positive, proactive and precautionary way, moving towards no net loss of biodiversity. Where Appropriate Assessment identifies mitigation then this must amend the strategy and be reflected in the content and objectives of the final strategy wherever necessary.

The submission highlights obligations placed upon the Assembly to address scientific uncertainties or discrepancies, including matters raised by other parties, particularly in relation to the implications for European sites and their conservation objectives in the appropriate assessment. It also identifies that a key challenge will be to develop effective land use management strategies that help us balance competing land uses in planning for the growth of our region including:

- urban (driven by demand for housing, employment and transport)
- agriculture (driven by demand for food)
- our wild and natural places (help us maintain a clean and healthy environment)

(E) An Taisce, The National Trust for Ireland

(i) National Submission: Submission No.101

Cities/Towns:

The submission provides for a detailed account of the issues to be addressed in a manner that is consistent with the NPF. It identifies that it is essential that the RSES acknowledge a global environment of increasing climate impact and ecological destruction and deals with the challenge of accommodating the projected increase in the Region's population in a way that ensures the needs of the region's current and future population are met. This will require access to high quality housing, jobs, sustainable modes of transport and provision to be made for the overall health and wellbeing and advances in the citizens quality of life both now and in the future.

Urban development needs to be of high quality and density close to public transport nodes., with attention being given to the 'liability' factor, which is key to drawing activity into cities and towns. These areas require the development of key physical and social infrastructure necessary to provide for the needs of the citizens and to enhance the overall health and wellbeing of people. The submission suggests that the RSES should include targets on the percentage of new housing and employment locations which will meet smart growth criteria including for public transport accessibility within existing or expanding urban areas and that all new housing and employment development should be within 15 mins walking distance of basic public services. The RSES should be charged with determining such services and locations, and where there is a deficit, they must be upgraded in tandem with housing development.

The utilisation of vacant properties, brownfield and gap sites are identified as an important issue for the RSES. It is suggested that 'Vacant Homes Action Plans' should be used to inform future housing provision in the core urban area and levers such as Land Value Tax, CPOs and other powers must be used where private landowners and developers will not build. It advocates that there should be a sequential requirement to show that there is no capacity within the existing urban settlement before green field development is permitted. Greenfield development should only be permitted as urban settlement extensions at densities that can sustain efficient public transport infrastructure.

The submission also highlights that historic urban centres are an irreplaceable social, cultural and economic asset which generates a sense of place and should not be compromised. It says that the RSES should incorporate a commitment to protect historic centres from high rise and other inappropriate development and it references a report commissioned by the Heritage Council in 2011 'Economic value of Ireland's Historic Environment' which it says demonstrates that Ireland's historic environment generates a range of important wider economic, social and community benefits.

The submission is concerned that inter-regional urban roads are not allowed to become commuter corridors, as has occurred with the national motorway network. It recommends that New Smarter Travel targets should be adopted to require that

the majority of inter urban and inter regional travel be through enhanced rail and bus modal share and that freight be targeted for a modal shift from road to rail. Further road investment should be limited to locations where urban and village bypassing, and enhanced safety provision is required. It takes the view that urban consolidation measures should first be put in place before new investment in regional interconnectivity, to curtail the current trend towards sprawl.

Rural Areas:

The submission asks that the RSES advocate a decisive shift away from current polluting and carbon-intensive agriculture and settlement patterns towards a new re-localised vision for rural Ireland focused on our historic network of rural towns and villages. The submission refers to the decline in many Irish towns that it says has been caused in part by the building of one off houses in the open countryside. To address this issue serviced sites should be made available and the required physical infrastructure be put in place (e.g. sewers, water, roads, communications etc.). It envisages that Ireland's low population density and rural areas can be our most precious resource for a post-carbon world in terms of sustainable local food production, native forestry, and decentralised energy generation through, for example, small-scale wind, hydro, biomass, geothermal, combined heat and power, and solar.

The submission also asks that the RSES:

- Introduce effective climate, biodiversity and sustainability proofing for all Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and other rural development funding.
- Provide a clear target for Rural Broadband under the National Broadband Plan.
- Ensure an effective target level of houses for rural communities to be in villages and smaller towns with walkable access to services.
- Identify the constraint and capacity level for any additional one-off houses in the open countryside.

Health:

Our current settlement pattern and expected shift in demographics is referenced as a significant issue to be addressed through a suite of measures that reshape our built environment to reverse our inactivity levels. Measures include compact towns and cities that include a mix of housing types and encourage opportunities for physical activities with walking, cycling, access to local services and schools, public transport access to employment locations and availability of recreation facilities.

It raises concern that factors such as habitat fragmentation, biodiversity loss and agricultural land loss is having detrimental impacts on Climate Change and that the RSES needs to set a clear strategy for the protection of our biodiversity to ensure that we meet the EU Commission's overarching objective of no net biodiversity loss.

It refers specifically to the impact of peatland development and to the need to ensure the full application of the Habitats Directive and conservation management of all Natura 2000 protected peatlands. The submission also refers to our maritime environment and the need to promote action on the overriding threats to the global marine environment through climate change, ocean warming, ocean acidification, overfishing, marine litter waste and pollution. It also identifies the ongoing

intensification of agriculture in areas with high status water bodies as a major concern that should be addressed in the RSES.

The availability of suitable wastewater treatment facilities is highlighted, and it recommends that point source discharges and wastewater discharges be eliminated from important freshwater pearl mussels, Atlantic salmon and shellfish waters. It also recommends that lands be zoned only where appropriate wastewater treatment infrastructure will be in place in tandem with new development.

Climate change:

The need for the RSES to align with the overall objectives of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 is outlined and that it must provide measured targets to reduce transport emission; energy demands; sea level rise; flood risk; and infrastructure vulnerability. It advocates a positive approach to identifying suitable areas for renewable energy generation and its supporting infrastructure, and that opportunities for community-led and decentralised energy production must be maximised and encouraged. It also suggests that natural land management offers greater potential for flood attenuation, coastal zone management, woodland creation, peatland restoration and local bio-energy resources to fuel, relocalised energy networks and sustain relocalised rural economies.

New builds should take account of landform, orientation, and massing to minimise energy consumption and the energy efficiency of our existing stocks of homes and businesses should be improved through retrofitting. It also recommends that no new development should not be permitted without reaching 'nearly zero energy' building standard.

ii) An Taisce (Galway Association): Submission No.55

The submission by the Galway Association is a detailed one and deals with many of the broader issues raised by An Taisce HQ submission but with a Galway focus. Some of the issues raised include the following:

- Flood Protection and Flood Prevention are now an urgent consideration which cannot wait until further significant damage is done to more vulnerable parts of Galway City.
- Particular attention must be given to the increased use of energy efficient public transport and to reduce the continued use of cars being used as a primary form of access into the city. A move to build an urban Light Rail network with which to move people around Galway City in an environmentally sustainable manner, is beyond urgent. Relying on promised improvements in bus services is not considered likely to gain enough public ridership support.
- Greater effort is needed to promote planting and to preserve all existing urban forestry around Galway, which would also act as a Carbon sink while at the same time creating a Green Belt around Galway city.
- Building of more urban low-rise, low density housing with no, or very little low energy efficient features, together with edge of town retail shopping centres with their accompanying cars parks, should cease.
- Concerned about thousands of new houses being built in the countryside all around Galway City, whilst most employment opportunities are located within the city, thus promoting long unsustainable commuting patterns.

- Energy efficient properly located housing must be constructed, with access to services such as schools, colleges, leisure and employment opportunities.
- Encourage the County and City into working under a new - Regional Transportation & Planning Unit, operating with TII and the Department of Transport, not simply another roads Planning Unit.
- Investment in rail-based solutions is not currently high enough on official Irelands agenda.
- Existing historic rail track infrastructure must be kept in public ownership while plans are put in place to link Western rail towns back into the mainline, with Galway City, through to Athenry, Tuam, Claremorris towards Sligo and into Donegal, must be looked at.
- The city must link homes and employment via new transport systems that are energy saving and environmentally efficient. This can only be afforded by investing in better bus services, plus provision of a Light Rail Transit.
- Is the newly opened motorway surface water drainage system fit for purpose.
- Need for the Galway docklands development. A plan that develops the Docks/Ceannt Station area - in concert with both the Harbour Company, CIE & involving all other Stakeholders and Civic Society is necessary.
- In addition to quality residential infill development in the city we need to focus a lot more on planning walkable neighbourhood models where residents can attain most of their daily needs on foot. We need to build more urban and suburban villages like Salthill, for example.
- Places like Parkmore should be planned as an urban quarter with a healthy mix of residential, schools, shops, and parks together with places where people work.

(F) Inland Fisheries Ireland: Submission No. 71

The principal function of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the protection, management and conservation of the inland fisheries resource. The agency is also responsible for sea angling in Ireland. IFI is of the view that the RSES in considering the protection of the quality of the aquatic environment must address not only water quality but also include the protection of the physical environment, hydrological processes and biodiversity.

The submission identifies that a significant issue for the efficient treatment capacity must be available both within the receiving sewerage systems locally and downstream of waste water treatment plants over the full duration of the plan in order that the ecological integrity of the ultimate receiving waters are protected. This capacity must be coupled with an effective sludge management strategy/policy. IFI would highlight the importance of building a comprehensive and robust assessment of both local infrastructural needs and Irish Water/Local Authority capacity to meet those needs into the plan. Should particular WWTPs fail to provide expected capacities during the life of the plan, IFI would highlight the risk of associated significant environmental impacts which may result from local development.

(G) Sligo County Council: Submission No.95

Sligo County Council's submission confirms that Sligo has the capacity, and willingness to grow, and whilst it's Gateway Status / potential was not realized under the NSS, the daytime population of Sligo can be as high as 40,000, owing to thousands of workers commuting to Sligo from County Sligo, and surrounding Counties during weekdays.

The submission identifies that the Sligo & Environs Plan of 2004 identified 5 major growth zones within the town, and these have the capacity to add 27,000 people, bringing a potential population of Sligo up to 47,000 in total. It says that Sligo is well served by Rail, National Road, and references its proximity to IWAK. In addition, Sligo is home to 3 third level institutions, with a student population in excess of 7,000 and there is additional capacity to expand this offer and create a business start-up culture & environment around these facilities.

The submission identifies the importance of Place-Making & the potential for brownfield development. It confirms Sligo County Council's commitment to place-making, and that a number of key projects have been fully appraised, and the Local Authority are committed to moving these public realm & cultural projects forward subject to the provision of funding. It is also committed to a Compact & Liveable City environment, which discourages sprawl, and encourages Regeneration. The Docklands area is a potential regeneration zone, with the possibility of over 1,000 residential units being developed there. New Public Spaces are planned for Quay Street, and Stephen's Street.

In terms of employment it alludes to a number of initiatives to create additional employment including the IDA Technology Park being developed at Caltragh / Oakfield and that an Economic Development Forum is in train, facilitated by Sligo County Council.

(H) Donegal County Council: Submission No.110

This submission identifies that the Letterkenny – Derry – Strabane NW City Region should be a key component of the RSES Policy and that it is the most effective mechanism to deliver effective regional development in the NW Region of Ireland. The development of a metropolitan Region of scale (the 4th largest in Ireland) is key to mitigate the unknown effects of Brexit, and this will involve the ongoing cross boundary work of all local authorities, public bodies, and stakeholder on an ongoing basis. Other matters of note within the submission include:

- There are a number of key infrastructural projects (including the TenT Network which are long overdue and must remain a priority for the RSES.
- An uplift in the overall population of Donegal to 200,000 to 2040
- An uplift in the population of Letterkenny to 35,000 by 2038.
- The RSES should support the preparation of a Metropolitan Area Plan for the NW City Region, incorporating Letterkenny – Derry – Strabane.

- Tourism as an industry will continue to be a focus as an area for growth, and this must be enhanced by a network of National, and Regional Trails which link Donegal to the rest of the Country.
- The Gaeltacht and its communities must be protected and strengthened and these areas are marked out by a unique sense of place.
- The RSES should provide for and support the collaboration between LYIT and 3rd level institutions in Northern Ireland, this should be done in conjunction with support for the IT to become part of the network of Tech. Universities. Student retention mechanism are a priority, and links should be created between 3rd level education, and skills-based employers.
- The RSES can be the mechanism for further cross border vehicles and collaboration in areas of land based, and environmental planning, particularly having regard to our climate change obligations.

(I) Cavan: Submission No. 82

Cavan County Council has identified important principles and objectives to be included in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and say that it is essential that the population and employment targets set in the National Planning Framework are achieved by harnessing the naturally occurring growth of each county in a sustainable manner and facilitating designated individual settlements to develop beyond the generally targeted rate of growth as set out in the National Planning Framework. The submission asks that the RSES recognise Virginia, Kingscourt, Ballyjamesduff and Baileborough, which are proximate to Dublin and Coothill and Ballycommell being proximate to the North as they are well connected and accessible to a significant labour force and a good quality of life.

It identifies the need for investments, including an Institute of Technology for Cavan/Monaghan, extension of the M3 to Cavan Town and upgrade of the Dundalk/Cavan/Sligo East West strategic route. It also supports the concept of a border fund and that Broadband roll-out be on a pro rata basis for the Northern and Western region.

The key growth areas of the area are identified as Food Production, Engineering, Building Materials, Insulation Products, Green Technologies, Financial, ICT and Tradable Services Sectors and these need to be supported together with emerging areas such as agri-tech, value added food production and the digital knowledge economy. It also identifies that the Tourism offer of Cavan is significant, including the Cavan Burren Park, fishing, Erne/Ulster Canal, and food to mention but a few.

It highlights the need to deliver on the revitalisation of rural towns and villages by supporting their renewal and the adaptation of older buildings, public realm, walkways, smarter travel and community ownership and pride. In tandem it asks that the RSES recognise the different rural types and support their sustainable growth.

(J) Monaghan County Council: Submission No.113

Summary of Issues Raised: The RSES Issues Papers recognises the significance and relationships of the sub-regions (i.e. Cavan / Monaghan) and therefore the RSES should place a focus on developing and focusing on the Sub-Regions individually. Monaghan is as well connected to the Craigavon / Lisburn / Belfast region via the M1 and is as well connected to this conurbation as it is to Dublin via the N2 / M1. This should be reflected in any revised catchment map.

The Submission states that it is Monaghan's CoCo's view that towns which do not have a population of 10,000 should still be recognised, as a number of these towns, Monaghan Town included) have a vital role and function. Towns such as Monaghan should therefore be recognised within an urban hierarchy in the RSES. This key message was also contained within Monaghan County Council's submission to the Draft NPF (Ireland 2040). Monaghan Town should be permitted to grow at the same rate as some of the Regional Towns within the NWRA which have a population of over 10,000 (Roscommon and Carrick on Shannon are also mentioned as similar towns). Along within Monaghan Town, Carrickmacross and Castleblaney have potential to grow, and they are well placed relative to the Eastern Economic (Dublin-Belfast) Corridor.

The submission references a need to focus on the retention of the Region's Graduates, and in order to do this, there is a need to provide employment for graduates, and skilled young workers. The need for outreach facilities from the Region's Institute's of Technology in locations such as Monaghan is referenced.

The submission references one off rural housing, and the need to retain a flexibility to allow those from Rural Area's with a social need to live there to be permitted to do so.

Projects: The Restoration of the Ulster Canal, and the creation of the Ulster Canal Greenway are projects which Monaghan Co Co consider can be completed before the end of the RSES process. The N2 / A5 upgrade to full motorway status should be prioritised from Ardee to Derry given the lack of rail infrastructure in the Border Region.

The RSES should make some mention of the East / West road corridor, that is the Sligo – Dundalk route, which traverses Monaghan and Cavan. The essential role of Broadband, and the NBP is vital to the advancement of the Border Region.

The Elected members of Monaghan County Council discussed the RSES Issues Papers in January 2018, and resolved to make a number of additions to the Monaghan Submission, including the following:

- The East- West, Sligo - Dundalk route should adopt a focus on improving existing sections of the current route.
- Need to extend the Rail network into County Monaghan.
- Planning on re-opening of the Ulster Canal has already commenced.
- Monaghan as a County Town should not be left behind under RSES.

- Specific measures for Towns such as Ballybay and Clones are needed to tackle dereliction and deprivation.

(K) Galway City Council: Submission No.84

The City Council have endorsed the approach of the Assembly and the concept of sub-regional planning including the incorporation of MASP. They do, however, express concern on the lack of clarity in the NPF for MASP preparation, the uncertainty engendered arising from indecision on amalgamation and the appropriateness of 15% rule for a definition of Galway City's influence.

The city provides a comprehensive list of regional projects which should be supported by the RSES including the AEC, A5, improved rail network, ports upgrade, NBS Regional Branding, increased densities and age friendly design. They also provide a similar list for projects particular to the city such as regeneration, GTS, Ardaun, GEWWTP, City of Culture, New Acute Hospital and flood defences.

There are 3 particular concerns identified from the NPF surrounding the sources of funding and monitoring the implementation in the regions. The delivery of 40% growth (brownfield) is considered to be very challenging.

(L) Galway County Council: Submission No.93

This submission was prepared prior to the publication of the NPF and it uses the Draft NPF to inform some of the content. This is particularly the case in relation to the definition of rural as being less than 10,000 population which did not transfer to the final NPF document.

The submission asks for a definition of 'immediately adjoining suburbs' which is a concept in the NPF related to intensified development targets. This is a matter on which guidance may be sought from the DHPLG and a consistent interpretation at a national level would benefit collaboration between all RSES. This submission, similar to the City identifies 40% brownfield development as overly ambitious with the potential to limit development. Similar to the City submission it supports the GCRR, GEWWTP and the Galway Transportation Strategy. It also identifies and promotes St. Brigid's Hospital in Ballinasloe as a 'key strategic site'.

The submission refers to rural housing and its importance in supporting rural communities and their cohesion. The submission identifies tourism, port development and greenways as economic drivers.

(M) Roscommon County Council: Submission No.105

The submission identifies urbanisation and development in the east resulting in the separation of residential and employment uses. This phenomenon has produced urban sprawl and car-based commuting. The Northern and Western region has not fully embraced the above scenario and contains many peripheral areas characterised by vacancy, population decline, unused infrastructure and stagnation.

Roscommon County Council propose the concept of regional cities and include Sligo and Athlone in this category and are for all intents and purposes akin to Galway. They also propose 'Town Centre First' as a solution to problems identified above and that densities of 50 units/ha should be the target. The submission goes on to provide a high-level analysis of Athlone's potential based on quantum of zoned land and AIT as a research centre.

The submission proposes two growth scenarios if no population targets used 'Town Centre First' if population targets are to be used 30% growth targets for town, with a default of 15% with potential to double if potential exists. They suggest that the National Investment Plan and Smart Growth initiatives as vehicles for transformation.

There is a profile given for Roscommon Town and an account given of zoned land quantum (based on density of 20 units/ha). The present projection in the Roscommon LAP would see growth of 70% by 2040 and based on this recommends projections of 30-60% as being appropriate. There is analysis of Boyle as a Regional Service Centre with the Development of 1st floor vacant space and amalgamation of adjoining properties as desirable. The development of Lough Key and the Shannon Wilderness Park are seen as flagship tourist projects.

(N) Leitrim County Council: Submission No.103

This submission commences with a short review of the Draft NPF and concludes that there is no strategy for the North West and that the absence of any mapping is disappointing. It also suggests that a regional employment strategy would be a worthwhile goal.

Leitrim County Council is advocating 'Parity of Esteem' for county towns and observes that larger towns are receiving a disproportionate share of projected population increases. Leitrim County Council express disappointment with the treatment of Sligo in the Draft NPF they also suggest provision/upgrading of N4 Bypass/N16 as important in their part of the region. The development of the NBS and Blueways are critical pieces of infrastructure. In relation to rural housing reference is made to the 'Flemish Decree' and the subject of social need. They also suggest that the social consequences of forestry should be given increased prominence. The opportunities arising from BREXIT could become a reality in large unused facilities in Carrick-on Shannon.

(O) Mayo County Council (MCC) Submission No. 123

Mayo County Council record that their submission on the NSS is still valid even at this remove. The national bias of investment in the east needs to be addressed as a critical issue. It strongly supports the AEC and the designation of Sligo as beneficial for the development of the region.

It recommends MASP style planning for towns with a population >10,000. Claremorris, Ballyhaunis and Ballinrobe could be regional growth drivers. The support of the RSES for emerging sectors is critical as is the potential of energy production, the Gaeltacht culture and tourism. The submission also supports infrastructure projects such as national roads, WRC, IWAK SDZ and greenways.

(P) Irish Water: Submission 100

This submission identifies water infrastructure as a key issue for RSES especially in the efficient use of resources. They will use the Draft NPF to inform future investment by Irish Water. The growth projections given for Galway will require significant upgrading of infrastructure, there are plans in train for water supply improvements and the completion of a Drainage Area Plan (DAP). The provision of the GEWWTP is supported by Irish Water. The separation of combined sewers could be a limiting factor in relation to densification proposals for Galway and other large towns. Irish Water have adopted a general growth rate of 15% to assess the capacity of smaller towns.

The submission provides a high-level account of potential constraints to projected development. These include the discharge environment in Letterkenny, Westport and Donegal, and the extraction limits in Lough Mask, Lough Talt and Lough Gill. The existing priorities for Irish Water are reduction of untreated discharges, collaboration on investment in rural settlements, SUDS and reductions in leakage. They confirm that the growth proposed in the twelve largest towns in the region can be accommodation for the next twelve years in respect of water supply.

The subject of medium term funding, and the timelines for investment and development consents are critical in relation to ongoing development of the region.

(Q) ESB: Submission 94

This submission gives an overview of the ESB as an organisation and its role in power generation and distribution. It also describes other roles as communications and gas networks owner.

The submission offers support for emissions reductions, increased power generation from wind and the development of EV infrastructure. The provision of infrastructure is

identified as a key requirement for delivery of the NPF and consultation in relation to such is of the utmost importance.

The ESB has responsibility for electricity networks in Northern Ireland and points out the importance of cross-border co-operation and integration of both networks.

(R) ESB Networks: Submission No. 64

In their submission, ESB Networks advise that the investment in the electricity network in the North & West over the last 90 years has been an enabler for economic and social development in the region. They commit to working with the communities and agencies within the region to continue this partnership into the future. It advocates a co-ordinated regional and national strategy to tackle Climate Change and the continued facilitation of the development of a clean energy system is vital in achieving this aspiration. It will continue to work to expand and develop the electricity network to meet this shared objective.

The submission highlights that their Innovation Strategy was launched in September 2017 and that it sets out how ESB Networks will meet the challenges of the changing energy landscape, including deploying new technology, engineering, and innovation tools to facilitate the transition to a low carbon future. ESB Networks has designed roadmaps to continue to drive change and these concentrate on a range of themes including:

1. Connecting renewables,
2. Further developing the electrification of heat and transport,
3. Optimising the current network infrastructure,
4. Creating flexibility within the network,
5. Making the network more resilient,

The ESB Networks say that it is investing on existing and new electricity network to provide adequate electrical capacity to meet the social and economic development needs of the region. This is triggered when demand grows organically in the region or specific targeted network investment to meet the electricity demand requirements of a new commercial activity. In addition, there is an ongoing range of technical plans to upgrade and replace their assets as they become obsolete or suffer from performance degradation. The submission advises that there are significant ongoing investments in the network in the region:

- Ardnagappery 110/38kV new substation development providing major reinforcement in Northwest Donegal to cater for increased renewable generation, load growth and security of supply in the area.
- Uprate and improvements in Donegal Town 38kV substation to improve security of supply.
- Reinforcement of the Letterkenny – Rossgier – Stranorlar 38kV lines to improve security of supply.
- Significant improvements in Sligo 110/38kV substation to improve security of supply
- Reinforcement and improvements in Ballyjamesduff 38kV substation to improve security of supply.
- Reinforcements in the Cloon-Glenamady area in Galway to cater for increased load growth and improve security of supply.

ESB Networks confirms that it is committed to the decarbonisation of the energy system which in a large way will be facilitated by the transition to a renewable generation system over the coming years. It considers that the North West is a region with an abundance of natural wind resources and ESB Networks is working with renewable energy developers in the region to make electricity network connections available to these developers to harvest the wind generation capability of the area. ESB Networks is working towards connecting enough renewable generation across Ireland to meet Ireland's energy targets by 2020. In 2017 ESB Networks connected over 400MW of wind generation to the Distribution System with projects such as Tullynamoyle in Roscommon and Meenaward in Donegal.

ESB Networks identify their commitment to the provision of electricity connections to telecommunications facilities across the region. It is working towards the use of the existing electricity network assets by telecommunications providers to provide the fibre connectivity to towns and cities in the region and reference ongoing works in towns like Sligo where telecommunications companies are using the electricity network to connect fibre communications to people in the town.

(S) Failte Ireland: Submission No.106

Failte Ireland take the view that the Tourism should be central to the RSES and it must identify locations, linkages, and set the priority goals for this Sector. The RSES should facilitate linkages and services in Towns and Villages which support wider economic reach and activity. It believes that there is scope for significant growth within the North-West and Western Region. This growth must be carefully managed, and requires a tailored approach based on local conditions, differences etc.

The approach in Tourism Policy should be Tiered, and there should be a hierarchy, including the identification of attractions / towns, whether 'Always on' or 'Seasonal' as set out in the Failte Ireland Draft 10 year vision for National Tourism Development. It advocates that the RSES should establish a Framework which would integrate visitor access, and public transport in reaching key sites across the board. This should be done in the context of Climate Change, and modes of Sustainable Transport.

Failte Ireland's Draft 10 year vision aims to provide a Regional Spread of tourists and provide a seasonal spread. Further building upon the success of the WAW. The success of Regional growth, and the spread of tourism growth more evenly is linked to access and allowing people to get around the Country easily. It also highlights that global growth in tourism provides diversity, and opportunity to make Irelands presence felt in new markets and that the Region will be covered by 3 brand propositions, with the Wild Atlantic Way, Irelands Ancient East, and the new (as yet unnamed) proposition for the Midlands. The submission identifies that:

- Prioritising access to our Region's uplands, and marine attractions should be a priority for the RSES.
- Identify and strengthen destinations towns, and work on a hierarchy of these towns as part of an overall strategy (factors include Transport Links, Bed supply, public realm attractions etc.)
- Develop 'must see' and 'must do' visitor experiences, based on locations, and place-making propositions.

- Develop recreational infrastructure such as walks, greenways, blueways etc. which will facilitate greater access to our landscapes, and waters. Bed numbers will have to increase by 50% to cater for the projected rise in visitor numbers. (200k to 300k) over the next 10 years.
- The WAW needs to be designated as a National Touring Route, and there should be a dedicated maintenance and upgrade roads budget to reflect same, the route could be managed by TII, and this would alleviate pressure on Local Authorities.

(T) Department of Infrastructure (NI) - Submission No.70

The submission outlines that the emergence of a Northern & Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy represents further opportunity to develop collaborative working between Government North and South in order to support outcomes of mutual benefit in the long term public interest of current and future generations. It believes that this is an opportunity for the RSES and their Regional Development Strategy to encourage the development and growth of functional relationships between settlements and interactions at local and regional level to their mutual benefit and economic advantage. It confirms that the Department is considering the development of a Regional Infrastructure Delivery Plan for Northern Ireland. It is envisaged that it will have a long term spatial focus on "hard" infrastructure including transport, waste, water, energy and telecommunications and presents an opportunity to consider how it can link to the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and the wider National Policy Objectives in the National Planning Framework.

The numerous benefits to pursuing a co-operative approach are alluded to, particularly in relation to shared challenges such as transportation, other infrastructure, environmental management, economic opportunities and tourism. A new suite of transport plans are currently being prepared by the Department and this includes a North West Transport Plan (NWTP), which incorporates the natural catchment of the Derry City Region which extends to Letterkenny and wider County Donegal.

The Department is keen to ensure continued high levels of co-operation between Letterkenny, Derry and Strabane as evidenced by the creation of the North West Partnership Board. It believes that planning for physical development, social infrastructure, physical infrastructure and economic development is central to the development of a strong North West and that Derry is well suited to provide a regional level of service to much of the western part of Northern Ireland and to a substantial part of County Donegal. Transport, energy and telecommunication connections are important to the economic and social fabric of the North West Region as a consequence of it's geographic peripherality. Foyle Port is identified as the key marine gateway to the North West of Ireland for both commerce and tourism. It makes a vital contribution to the North West regional economy, serving as a vital gateway for high volume of trade between Ireland and Britain, mainland Europe and elsewhere. The submission considers that the Port has the potential to act as a catalyst to improve wider infrastructure and services in the North West Region.

The A5 improvement works has been identified as presenting a potential economic corridor from Monaghan to North Donegal via Omagh and Derry through strengthening the locational advantage of these settlements. Furthermore, it is considered that Enniskillen presents an inter-regional gateway function being only one hour's drive to Sligo on the main transport route and offering opportunities for Enniskillen and Sligo to provide services on a cross-border basis.

Cross-border tourism initiatives should be considered to provide an opportunity to get the maximum benefit from our wealth of environmental and heritage assets; our waterways, landscapes, coastline and built-heritage. Greenways are specifically referenced as having the potential to link up on a cross border basis and that there are other potential cross border tourism initiatives involving the Foyle Estuary, the Sperrins and Fermanagh Lakelands.

(U) Newry and Mourne District Council: Submission No.35

The submission identifies the importance that the RSES fully recognises and takes account of issues which are important to the District Council from an economic, infrastructure and planning context. It is through cross border cooperation and collaboration that it believes that the economic, social and environmental interests can be accounted for in an appropriate way.

The Dublin-Belfast economic Corridor, which is a regional and international gateway is key within their catchment. The significant role it plays within the whole of the island of Ireland context needs to be reflected within the RSES. Newry/Dundalk is a spatial location within the economic corridor where there is opportunity to further develop the critical mass and this needs to be articulated within the RSES.

(V) Causeway Coast and Glens: Submission No.62

The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council identify their interconnectivity with this region through the common water body (lough Foyle) and also through education, travel to work and tourism. Within the context of the Regional Development Strategy, 2035, for the north, it advises that sustainability is the key message for the provision of housing land, employment land, infrastructure and public utilities.

It references the need for transboundary consultation in respect of the SEA/AA/SFRA process and that collaborative working as key to ensuring appropriate social, economic and environmental issues relevant to all are addressed.

(W) Mid Ulster District Council: Submission No.67

The Council submits that Mid Ulster's location is a key gateway on the border and its economic strengths includes its agri food industry, mineral extraction, quarry products and related engineering. It identifies a key strength being its central position and its relationship with industry in Fermanagh, Cavan and Monaghan.

The critical enabling road infrastructure necessary to deliver a connected place, as referenced in our Issues paper is recognised as playing an important role in delivering vibrant places. The submission is supportive of the N2/A5/N14 upgrade and advises that the A29 upgrade would be important to link the cluster towns of Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt with Armagh, Newry and beyond to Dundalk.

The importance of sustaining our environmental and heritage assets is shared within their community plan and forthcoming Local Development Plan. The importance of disused transport routes within their district is alluded to and specifically historic waterways such as the Ulster Canal, which was a significant transportation waterway, running from the Erne Shannon system to Lough Neagh via counties Fermanagh, Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh and Tyrone. The submission views it as important that there would be strong support for the protection and potential reuse of this important industrial heritage. It considers collaboration to protect environmental assets as an important cross border link.

(X) Derry City and Strabane District Council (Submission No.87

The submission embraces fully the concept and practice of cross-border working as our part of the North West Region and they support the NW City Region / Metropolitan Area. It identifies many joint-interest aspects, potentialities and complementarities including the proposed population growth, the connectivity (esp. A5, A6 & A2 road projects to N13, Derry airport and port, rail link, electricity, gas, fibre /broadband), employment initiatives / emerging sectors, tourism (Wild Atlantic Way meets Causeway Coast at Historic Derry city and the Sperrins), 3rd – level education (and 2nd), health, well-being, marine, sustainable development / resource efficiency / circular economy, green infrastructure, low carbon economy (esp. renewable energy – wind, solar, wave / tidal, biomass), resilience, environment protection / enhancement / utilisation. It is notes Brexit and whilst it may be considered as a 'potential disrupter', it could also present itself as an opportunity. The submission references the recently published Strategic Growth Plan (SGP, Community Plan) and the Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper (LDP POP) as being potentially informing the RSES.

(Y) Udaras Na Gaeltachta Submissions No: 104:

Summary of Points:

The RSES framework should fully consider and plan for the socioeconomic, regional development and sociolinguistic dimensions of a sustainable model for Gaeltacht development. The submission suggests the RSES framework should also clearly guide the prioritisation and deployment of strategic planning interventions across different sectors and policy domains by different public authorities in support of Gaeltacht development, as well as the targeting of relevant public investment measures. The approach to be implemented should become integral in a structural and operational sense to the overriding rationale and prioritisation measures to be prescribed through the RSESs and in a manner which respects and reinforces the overall provisions of the Gaeltacht Act (2012).

The 2016 census returned an overall Gaeltacht population of 96,090 (Census, 2016). Of this overall Gaeltacht population, 80,351 (c. 83.6 percent of the national Gaeltacht population) are located in the NWRA region. Drawing on the same census data, the population in the different Gaeltacht counties in the NWRA region are set out below:

Donegal	Mayo	Galway
22,608	9,056	48,687

Based on the 2016 annual employment survey administered by An tÚdarás, full time employment within client enterprises located within the region and supported by the agency stood at 5,774.

Full-Time Employment in Donegal	Full-Time Employment in Mayo	Full-Time Employment in Galway
2,193	648	2,933

Local Gaeltacht Plans will be prepared in Mayo, Galway & Donegal, and the Local Area's are listed by County within the submission.

The Udaras naGaeltachta submission goes onto summarise their vision for these Gaeltacht Area's in a number of area's including:

- **Economic Regeneration:** Upgrade Regional Enterprise infrastructure with specific funding Digital Hubs – Towns identified.
- **Infrastructure:** National Broadband Plan is the most critical project to assist Gaeltacht communities.
- **Marine** Currently 900 employed in this area AquaCulture / Seafood sector
- **Cultural Tourism** The RSES should put in place funding priorities, and development goals around tourism growth.
- **Renewable Technologies** Udaras involved in developing projects with SEAI at present.

- **Education & Skills Development** The RSEs should develop action plans and delivery mechanisms to facilitate and increase access to training and development programmes within the Gaeltacht. Support should also be prioritised for the development of mediated access through localised centres (including the Digital Hub Network) to increase participation rates in flexible learning and distance education.

(Z) The Housing Agency: Submission No: 80

Summary of the issues raised: The Region is diverse, a one size fits all strategy is not the best approach. There should be a cross county / national mechanism for sharing of best practice / success stories / policies which have worked etc. Conversely such a platform could include challenges where policy has not worked, and why.

The RSEs should support towns and villages with a sufficient density to support jobs, and vibrancy, and should discourage one off housing in the countryside.

RSEs should support a built environment that works for all, including:

- How can ageing rural communities be supported?
- How can we make our villages, and towns child friendly places?
- Measures to ensure housing needs of the travelling community are met.

RSEs should commit to good design, and high quality place making, masterplans, and design codes should form a part of this policy.

The RSEs should elaborate on how its policies can support local business across the Region. The RSEs should be Implemented, and Monitored, and there should be an Implementation Task Force that operates at a National & Regional Level.

Section 3 – Thematic response by persons/bodies other than prescribed bodies

(A) Vibrant Place

Submissions No. 1, 11, 50, 63, 69, 74, 76, 77, 92,97, 98,107, 124

The Assembly received submissions on the above theme outside of those from prescribed bodies, which to a large extent reflected the Issues Papers.

Submission No.97 (WDC) says that investment needs to happen in Galway, Sligo and Letterkenny to ensure their role's as Regional drivers becomes a reality. Specific roles should be outlined for the other main towns within the Region's hierarchy of settlements. Sectoral Planning and policy by sector is the real driver of Regional development. The RSEs should be monitored through a range of indicators, including Employment, Demographics, economic output etc.

The submission goes on to advocate that the solution to growing the Region's population is the availability of employment, and for this to happen, there must be targeted investment in infrastructure projects, and a focus on educations and skills. Sligo, and Letterkenny are well placed to grow ahead of most of our other regional

towns, but a key to enabling this will be an improvement in intra-regional connectivity. The growth of Galway since 1996 is an example of how growth can be achieved, and to allow Galway to grow as set out in the NPF targets, further investments are required urgently.

The submission identifies that the Region has a number of value propositions, including a strong manufacturing base and a strong tradition of entrepreneurship. The submission states the RSES should be explicit on jobs growth in the Region, and this would include a breakdown of jobs to be provided in Galway, then Sligo & Letterkenny, in addition to larger Regional Towns. There are a number of vital service towns below this layer, and these provide a key service role, and they include the likes of Belmullet, Carndonagh, Roscommon Town, and Clifden. The submission outlines specific steps which should be taken in a bid to revitalise smaller villages and towns.

Submission No.77 identifies that vast societal changes have taken place over the last 20 years and are likely to do so again up to 2040. Ireland requires a new model of flexibility, which should be incorporated into RSES. Outside of our infrastructure priorities, and increasing connectivity between our large urban centres, we also need to examine trends such as ageing population, future living models, and the increased speed of transferring goods across the country. It believes that the growth estimates of 1 million additional people by 2040 is far too conservative, and their estimates forecast there may be an additional 1.1m people by 2030 (based on recent ESRI forecasts). Therefore, it suggests that the RSES should be regularly reviewed, should state targets for our larger towns and these targets should not be used as a tool to restrict growth. Early infrastructure development in our main centres should be the aim of the RSES to enable growth in the medium term.

The submission says that the Housing Crisis remains a reality and the RSES should focus on ensuring a supply of serviced land in our large towns, both for residential development & for commercial / industrial development. It believes that the Ireland 2040 - 40% target for brownfield development in towns, will necessitate allowance of highest density with multi floor buildings in our larger centre's. It also suggests that a breakdown of the number of new homes needed in each region should be provided through the RSES. The submission takes the view that the Country needs to establish an independent National Infrastructure Authority.

Submission No.107 (RIAI) considers there to be a need for a longer-term vision, and that the Plan should be 100 years, and not approx. 20 years as proposed. This would enable the country to envision how our cities, and towns could look in the longer term, and properly plan for sustainable growth. Good Design is the Key to success and each Regional Assembly should have an Architect to contribute to the vision for Urban Spaces, Rural Housing, Sustainable policies, quality of the built environment, and to contribute to Funded Programme's under the NPF across all areas of the Region. Municipal Architects can contribute greatly to communities, and there is a need for more examples include Westport, and Clonakilty.

The submission says that 80% of new housing within the NPF should be within existing urban settlements and that the targets as set out in the Framework are too low. Outside of Galway, we should aim to consolidate Letterkenny, Sligo, Ballina, Castlebar, Cavan & Athlone, and these towns can serve as economic drivers for the

wider hinterlands. It also considers that the introduction of a National Regeneration & Development Agency is a very welcome development.

Submission no 97 (WDC) advise that work patterns are likely to change significantly by 2040, more women in the workplace, and with increased connectivity, the internet of things etc. there are likely to be a significantly increased number of the labour force working at home. Brexit is a key strategic challenge for the entire Border Region. If for example co-operation in health (cross-border treatment of patients) was to be discontinued, and this will have knock on impacts for citizens, especially in Donegal, and therefore the expansion of Sligo UH should be considered. The submission outlines measures for the assistance of self-employment, including the provision of fibre broadband, and the provision of serviced, shared workspaces. Emerging sectors are set out in the submission and include (i) Creative Industry. (ii) Tourism (iii) agri-food (iv) Med-Tech (v) ICT (vi) Marine.

Submission No 11 & 107 emphasise that the proposed population uplift for Sligo Town as outlined in the NWRA Issues Papers at 8,000, bringing the total pop. to around 28,000, which is not ambitious enough. There is an opportunity to grow the population of Sligo by more than 20,000 up to 2040-2050. The population is already 25,000 when Strandhill, and Ballincar etc. are taken into account. The Sligo & Environs Plan 2010 – 2016 has enough Strategic Residential Reserve supply of land to cater for 25,000 new residents, and the Sligo Main Drainage System can cater for a population equivalent of 50,000.

It suggests that Sligo must target a number of key public realm projects under the €2bn regeneration fund outlined in Ireland 2040. The Town is already served by world class internet connectivity, and this has the potential to attract additional jobs and companies to Sligo Town Centre. All gaps in road infrastructure, including the N-4 Castlebaldwin project, and upgrade of the N-4 to Mullingar must be treated as priority. There exists a real opportunity to utilise the WRC as a Greenway, and there are numerous benefits arising which could further boost's Sligo's offer, and economy. Sligo IT should be made a central part of the network of Technological Universities. Sligo University Hospital should be improved and expanded as an acute hospital serving the wider North West.

Submission No.1 (Mayo Plus) suggests the regional structure is not appropriate and that Local Authorities as economic developers is not working. The West is characterised certainly in rural areas by micro businesses (<10) and that FDI will not be a visitor. Tourism is significant potential in the region, but the offer is fragmented and county marketing company is a solution to this problem. The submission regrets the reduced effectiveness of LEADER. It proposes a group based retail structure to promote local areas with a suggestion that pop up shops could improve the town centres.

Submission No. 69 (Shannon Chamber) contends that the issues paper emphasis on the AEC is not strong enough and there is too much emphasis on roads.

Submission No. 74 (Cement Manufacturers) suggest that support for indigenous businesses such as themselves will go towards retaining existing jobs. They are protective in the business of improving/upgrading their technology to achieve more efficiency particularly in the use of alternatives to fossil fuels.

Submission No. 76 (IWAK) provides a history of its development, its running activity levels and the potential of the SDZ to contribute to regional development.

Submission No.98 (Coillte) states that Coillte Land Solutions is one of the biggest developers of renewable energy in the state and that their lands possess some of the best wind regimes in Europe due, inter alia, to their altitude, expansive area, aspect and location. They are also particularly suitable for wind farms, large scale solar and energy storage projects due to their remoteness, already established accessibility, distance from dwellings, proximity to the national grid infrastructure and visibility relative to areas with high scenic amenity. The submission also alludes to the recreational potential of their lands and reference that their recreational facilities generate €300 Million of visitor spend on accommodation, retail and guided services in the rural economy. It also states that they have demonstrated the high value-add potential of some of their properties, for instance through the co-location of forestry, nature conservation, renewable energy, recreational facilities and community schemes in the one single location. The submission asks that these opportunities are harnessed through the provisions of the RSES

Submission 92 (Gas Networks Ireland) GNI say that the RSES should support the production of renewable gas as it is an excellent way for the agricultural sector to create employment in rural areas, develop a new source of revenue and address its emission levels. Local employment is key to maintaining population in rural areas. It suggests that renewable gas industry will provide substantial rural employment opportunities, not only in the production of renewable gas, but also in attracting new companies who wish to reduce their carbon emissions. There is significant demand for renewable gas from industry as a heating and transport fuel.

(B) Connected Place

Submissions 2, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59, 65, 66, 68, 72, 75, 78, 79, 81, 89, 111, 60, 18, 34, 124, 96, 97, 7, 11, 91, 116.

The issue of the utilisation of the Western Rail Corridor has been the subject of multiple submissions. The submissions include those that advocate a Greenway along the Western Rail Corridor and those that advocate for a re-opening of the Western Rail Corridor and the re-use of the line for Rail Freight, and passenger facilities.

Submission No.97 (WDC) provide a detailed submission that reflects other submissions and in it they say that Car dependency is for the vast majority of our Region a necessity, and policy interventions are required around public transport. Public transport interventions on bus routes for examples might be explored. (Continued subvention of PSO routes, and potentially 'bundling' some of these routes for funding purposes. The submission identifies the Regions critically enabling infrastructure, including additions to those set out in the Issues Paper, with a list of 8-9 National Secondary Road projects. The submission says that in terms of Brexit, the RSES should identify potential bottlenecks, and potential solutions around the same. The submission contends that a to bring a better spatial balance, and even distribution to the NPF, a different appraisal on projects such as new road investment will be required. The submission argues the assessment / study on the expansion of Rail Freight should be carried out ASAP, with 3 out of 4 rail freight routes originating in County Mayo. The submission argues increased service provision, and facility improvements are need at IWAK, and Donegal Airport. The expansion of the gas network to serve Letterkenny and Sligo is vital, along with the delivery of the NBP, particularly to rural areas, where Census 2016 illustrates provision of Broadband is significantly lower in rural area's than that in Urban Areas.

The following Submission's advocate for a Greenway along the Western Rail Corridor: 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59, 68, 72, 75, 78, 111.

The submissions take the view that in the absence of a current plan to utilise the Western Rail Corridor, the route should be utilised as a Greenway in the Short to Medium term. They say that there are many benefits for putting what is a state asset to immediate use should it not be utilised as a Railway.

The submissions take the view that the prospects of the WRC being used as a Rail Route are extremely low and not economically viable. They include a variety of points including the following:

- The Greenway along the WRC should be placed as a high priority under RSES (2018 & 2019).

- That the disused Railway Line between Athenry & Collooney be utilised as a greenway in the absence of any investment in the Route as a Railway Line. There is a distinct lack of walking trails in this area, and this is an asset that should be put to use as a Tourism attraction, and the RSES should reflect this.
- There are multiple benefits for locals, and to replicate the Tourist draw, as has been done very successfully in Waterford, and Mayo.
- Towns like Tuam and Athenry could benefit hugely as a result of a Greenway. This line is a scar running through the heart of Tuam at present, and there is public apathy towards the restoration of a Railway Line along the Route, and there are multiple benefits which would arise.
- The Western Rail Trail consisting of at least 7 voluntary community Groups in Sligo, Mayo & Galway have commissioned a Report setting out in comprehensive detail the options relating to corridor, which include (inter-alia) the feasibility, and cost (approx.) of the reinstatement on the route of a Rail service, the possibility of utilising the line as a greenway route.
- The conclusion of the report recommends the use of the line as a Single Line Greenway.
- The long-term goal should be the re-establishment of a rail service along the route.
- There are numerous appendices annexed to the Report, and these include numerous signatures from advocates of the Greenway along the Route, and the argument is that a greenway along this route is overwhelmingly the wish of the people of Sligo and beyond, and there are community gains associated with a greenway which far outweigh the use of the line for Rail.
- Over 20million Europeans p/a take cycling holidays, and there is a huge potential in the development of Greenways.

The contrary view has also been made through submissions No: 9, 23, 31, 36 & 57 which advocate for a re-opening of the Western Rail Corridor and the re-use of the line for Rail Freight, and passenger facilities. The points therein can be summarised as follows:

- The Western Rail Corridor is critical to the advancement of the Atlantic Economic Corridor, which represents organisations with a workforce of 80,000.
- The project is a piece of Critically Enabling Infrastructure for the advancement of the Regional Economy.
- The potential for a number of towns including Castlebar, Tuam, Claremorris & Sligo to be linked by rail to Galway would be prejudiced by a greenway along this route.
- The route should be protected within the Policy framework of RSES.
- Despite the opening of the M18 motorway from Tuam to Galway there is additional scope for expanding the rail network, as commutes from Tuam, and Athenry are still largely car based, and this is not sustainable.
- Athenry – Galway line should be expanded, and additional stations should be created at Oranmore, and Merlin Park Hospital.
- There appears to be a 2 tier vision for Ireland within the NPF, with high speed rail between Dublin – Belfast & Dublin -Cork, but this ignores rail links in the

West & NW. Our critically enabling projects, as set out in the RSES cannot be exclusively roads based.

- Rail Freight leaving Mayo (Ballina / Westport) are currently not subsidised, and despite this, they are the only Rail Freight routes operating at a profit across the Country.
- The WRC already has 60miles of the line fully operational.
- The entire WRC is highlighted in all relevant Local / County Development Plans as a strategic asset, which should be restored.
- The RSES should incorporate as an economic strategy priority, the Athenry – Claremorris route as a 80mph standard, for passengers, and freight, and analysis of potential from Claremorris – Sligo.

Submission No. 7 advocates that the National Greenway Network include a link from the Grand Canal to the Royal Canal.

The theme of Rail infrastructure is given detailed consideration in a submission by Iarnród Éireann (Submission No.60). It references the Western Rail Corridor and takes the view that whatever the policy adopted in RSES or elsewhere, it requires multiple stakeholder engagement, and agreement. Any new transport capital expenditure projects will require a business case in line with current Public Spending Code and Transport Investment Appraisal Guidance.

The submission confirms that it will continue to advocate for targeted network expansion where a positive economic case exists. Given the competing interests for funding, IE will prioritise those projects with the greatest national benefit in the years ahead. It advises that with the exception of Donegal, Cavan & Monaghan, the rest of the N&W region is relatively well served by network connections at present.

In the submission, Iarnród Éireann advise that a Rail Review is currently underway at the DTT&S, and this will inform future projects, as well as retain the focus on maintaining current lines, fleet, and ongoing investment in upgrading same. Inter-City Rail connectivity improvements are a priority, and this includes aims to reduce travel times between the large urban centres.

Submissions from No.18, 33, 34, 96 & 124,91, refer to other aspects of infrastructure that can improve connectivity and reflect the contents of the Issues Paper and submissions made by the Assembly to the Draft NPF in respect of the upgrading of the national roads network as being critically enabling infrastructure. They also reflect that the Atlantic Economic Corridor should be enabled with roads to motorway standards and broadband provision for every town with greater than 1000 population. Submission No. 96 (NUIG) advocates for GLUAS (Galway Light Rail System), while Submission no. 33 (Cootehill Chamber) supports the East-West Dundalk to Sligo road upgrade.

Additionally, Bord Na Mona (Submission No. 91) considers that the RSES reflect that electricity transmission development will continue to be required to facilitate the connection of renewable energy projects of scale. Similar to other leading countries in terms of renewable penetration, there should be a focus on delivering grid access

to the best renewable projects in those locations with the optimum capacity factor. It believes that the country's cutaway bogs are suitable to facilitate same.

Eirgrid in its submission (Submission No. 116) refers to EirGrid's (2017a), recently published, 'Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios 2017: Planning our Energy Future', which it says identify forthcoming projects planned for the region including the type of project, its location and the length of line (where applicable). They request that EirGrid's projects are referenced specifically and generically in the RSES and the importance of their timely and efficient delivery is emphasised. It makes specific asks of the RSES to ensure that policies and objectives which support a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity are expressed explicitly in order to assist EirGrid in the successful implementation of its Grid Development Strategy, which is imperative to meeting national targets for electricity generation, climate change targets, and security of energy supplies.

The submission highlights that the Assembly should note that in September 2017 EirGrid announced plans to replace the Grid West electricity transmission project with a smaller -scale development.

Construction Sector Submissions 79, 81, 89
Enterprise Ireland, Construction Industry Federation, Irish Academy of Engineering

These 3 submissions were grouped as they are broadly from professional bodies associated with the construction sector.

The submission from Engineers Ireland compliments the structure of the Issues Paper. They agree that the AEC could be a vehicle to deliver effective regional development. They point out that the development of Galway City is constrained by congestion and that the GTS is an imperative. The submission fully supports the concept of a North West city region (Derry/Limerick)

They support many of the infrastructure projects in the Issues Paper and other NWRA submissions. They recommend that greater prominence be given to National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework.

The submission from the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) suggest the NPF is too prescriptive in terms of population growth. It supports the provision of the critical infrastructure deficits identified, it makes particular reference to IWAK SDZ, the WRCD and GLUAS and urges that sectoral development plans be aligned and co-ordinated with the planning hierarchy.

The submission from Irish Academy of Engineering (IAE) provide a synopsis of the NPF. They ponder on the viability of the Limerick/Derry link post BREXIT. They agree that poor infrastructure is a characteristic of the region.

The influence of Galway is limited in the region and the GTS is of the utmost importance. They conclude the WRC is not justified. They consider upgrading ports important and they recommend the creation of a National Infrastructure body and regional investment autonomy.

(C) Our Inclusive Place

Submissions 58, 61, 85, 98, 108, 109, 119, 121, 124

The Assembly received submissions on the above theme outside of those from prescribed bodies. The topics included were very focused from and dealt with particular aspects of Health (§ 5.1 of Issues Papers) and Education (§ 5.2 of Issues Papers).

Submission No. 97 (WDC) identifies that good access to Health Care, both primary, and secondary is vital. GP services at a local level are central to this. Increasing the number of tertiary services to the wider Region should be encouraged, Services to people, rather than the other way around. In terms of education provision, the submission details a comprehensive strategy on addressing those not in the labour force, and addressing training and skills needs (improving employability). The submissions states that a Tech University in the Region could serve as a driver, and attractor of inward investment, and partner with industry. It should be multi-campus, with a strong centre.

Submission 58 (Research and Education Foundation, SUH) refers to Sligo University Hospital advising that it has also become a regional centre for ongoing professional development and training for many and varying roles in the Health Services. It is a well thought out and coherent submission and would be worthy of further consideration and possible inclusion as a specific objective in our Draft. The creation/development of a Clinical Services Support Centre would open opportunities in both areas (health and education) in the region. In addition, there was support for the hospital facilities in Sligo to be upgraded.

The Assembly received a very focused submission on children's education, from a cultural and publishing viewpoint. These are subjects which are outside of popular or mainstream thinking and are welcome additions to the overall process and are indicative of the benefits of consultation. Reference was also promoted the development of the Technological University for the region and the need to provide for upskilling.

Irish Rural Link (Submission 119) is a network of community groups, representing 600 community groups, and 25,000 people committed to socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable rural communities across the Country. Irish Rural Link identify a number of measures to increase inclusivity and raise a number of policy elements which would assist those at the edges of our communities. The economic and demographic growth the country has experienced over recent years has been 2 tier, with the East coast growing in population, and economic output, and the Midlands & North West suffering at best a stagnation, and in some cases population reduction due to lack of employment, and out migration.

It is suggested that the IDA, the Third Level institutions, and Local Authorities should be co-ordinating a strategy to break down barriers which exist in the area of job

creation. IDA created employment should continue to grow regionally, and enhanced conditions for SME's, and start up's should be created through the RSES.

It is stated that Government are in the process of preparing a report on Local Public Banking, based on the German 'Sparkassen Model', and this will be critical for rural area's, and involve our Banking Network, Post Offices, and Credit Unions. These LPB's would operate regionally, and there may be 8-10 networks; there would be a similar business model for all; and they would primarily assist SME's, farmer's etc. They will not be dividend driven, and will have a public policy remit.

The Local Link transport facility is identified as often the only public transport provision serving some of the most remote areas of the Country (including communities in the Border Counties) Local link companies should be allowed to expand and grow routes with the input and support of the DTTS & the NTA. Local Link should be recognised as an integral part of the overall public transport strategy for the Country, and not just as an optional extra.

In terms of Health & Wellbeing it is advised that Ireland has an ageing population, with the number over 65 set to double in the next 30 years. Therefore, the future focus of health should be primary, and community focused, so that elder people in the NWRA region can access facilities locally. Home care, and meals on wheels are a critical components of any future strategy. The cost of keeping older people in their homes is less than providing care in centre's / nursing homes. The RSES should examine the cost of healthcare, and the cost of accessing healthcare from remote locations.

The submission asks that the RSES ensure that those left behind in the economic crash are now assisted, in terms of access to education, training, and meaningful employment, and it should focus on balance across the entire region. **This is a concern that is also identified in** Submission 85 (Mayo Age Friendly), whereby it urges that the needs of the elderly be accommodated in design of buildings and settlements. They also suggest that consultation with the elderly as a societal group be undertaken as part of RSES.

Submission No.98 (Coillte) believes that Ireland has the potential to become a world leader in outdoor recreation and that it is perfectly positioned to lead in this area. They view their facilities as the most innovative, attractive and engaging recreation facilities in the country and that they are seen as the thought-leaders in this area, and that they can do more. The submission recognises that the proper treatment and disposal of waste water is a key challenge to the sustainable growth and health of our region. It suggests that Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICWs) can provide an environmentally friendly and cost-effective solution to help address this problem, particularly for small agglomerations in rural locations, while also providing an enhanced recreational amenity such as that provided by the existing ICW at Castle Leslie in Co. Monaghan. It suggests that certain Coillte lands can provide locations for the development of this proven technology across a range of sectors including agriculture, food, residential and rural towns. Integrated Construction Wetlands can provide waste water treatment solutions that resolve existing water quality issues and can provide solutions for next generation, strategically planned rural population zones.

Submission No: 121 (IT Sligo) also addresses inclusivity and states that there is an overemphasis on private industry development when the stability and growth of the region has been based as much, if not more, on public, community and voluntary sectors. A development strategy is required for each sector and it advocates that a number of actions are required to be addressed:

- Public jobs- ensure the continued provision of public services to the area, increase this where possible through both effective management of current service provision and clear strategic plans for their future.
- The region should go after the allocation of more public sector jobs.
- Retail and wholesale is one of the biggest industries in the region, however historical costs of commercial rental have actively contributed to the ghost retail area that has evolved in this region. Commercial rental needs to be managed and controlled, particularly for SMEs.
- Well-known retail brands need to be attracted to the area, through real and tangible incentives, to increase footfall into Sligo and subsequent spend in the area.
- The community and voluntary sector needs to be prepared and skilled to meet the demands of shrinking available public spend, the implications of the Local Government Reform Act 2012, the implications of BOB F etc... Education providers could support this skill development at an affordable fee.
- Organisations across the region need to ensure that they have clear and equitable recruitment policies and procedures.

Submission No: 121 (IT Sligo) is also concerned that acute care be retained and provided for in large urban areas. It believes that the region requires a flexible care provision to accommodate emerging and existing life patterns. For example, the introduction of Caredoc to the Northwest has been the most successful healthcare initiative in the region. It has a positive impact on health and has reduced the non-emergency footfall to A&E departments. This needs to be extended to more community-based minor-op and more out of hours' service opportunities for service users. It argues that there needs to be more out of hours' care service opportunities. It is noted that whilst these are currently available within the private sector but they are not available within the public system. It also advocates that the recent MedX initiative at IT Sligo, in collaboration with SUH and HSE (providing necessary on-going exercise to people in post surgical and long term illnesses) should be replicated elsewhere.

Submission No: 121 (IT Sligo) reflects upon education and say that there needs to be more joined up provision of education across all levels. Our second level pupils need to be directed towards the suite of programmes provided by the regional ETBs and HEIs so as to reduce the exodus of these pupils to study outside the region. (e.g. the IT Sligo 'Pathways' project identifies opportunities for students from Sligo College of Further Education to gain advanced entry to HE programmes. It also highlighted the need for a co-ordinated approach to programme design between the ETB sector and third level providers to allow the exploitation of more opportunities like this). In addition the submission provides that:

- Based on the population projections, there will be a requirement for more primary and second-level schools and for more teaching facilities at higher education level.
- The provision of relevant and appropriate Undergraduate educational opportunities should be based on real market interest. This interest can be determined by ISCED analysis and by engaging with local businesses and organisations (the current migration out of the region of large numbers of youth for study reasons is correlated to their non-return to the region once graduated. Industry is attracted to areas with diverse skills available, a brain drain reduces the attractiveness of the region).
- While students benefit from onsite campus learning, they need to be supported to access HE through affordable accommodation, good public transport infrastructure and the use of online learning, where is it appropriate. Any regional plan needs to take this into consideration and put a system in place to allow for educational opportunities for all (Goal 2 of the Action Plan for education 2016–2019 is to, 'Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs').
- The Technological University for the West/North-West will be the destination of choice for 2nd level pupils. Students and employers can expect a consistent high calibre educational service to be provided by the TU across the region. The TU will provide a range of programmes to cater for a wide range of educational ambitions. It will also facilitate access to HE from persons who traditionally find it challenging to access and remain in HE. It will work closely with employers to ensure that the graduates are meeting the employment needs of industry and regional businesses. The TU will also support the research and development needs of existing businesses and will support new business start-ups. The Institute has a strong track-record of providing supports to a wide variety of organisations in the region in the form of applied student projects. These projects benefit the organisations involved by providing resources and expertise, and also help to develop the skills of the students who undertake the work, while enhancing their learning experience

(D) Our Natural & Low Carbon Place

Submissions 3, 4, 8, 33, 55, 71,73, 91, 92, 97, 111, 112, 116, 117, 118, 122

The Assembly received submissions (aside from prescribed bodies) which principally dealt with the theme above. The topics referred to were wide ranging and included many of the subjects contained within our issues papers.

Submission No 97 (WDC) says that the Region has a wealth of environmental assets, and these sites should be viewed as key attractions, and managed and protected simultaneously. Measures to support the growth of a low carbon place suggested in the submission include:

- (i) Wood Energy Sector, and supply chain co-ordination to deliver Regional dividend.
- (ii) The RSES should provide a clear strategy on Transport, and Low Carbon targets towards 2040,

- (iii) The RSES should provide for the further development of the Gaeltacht, inc. linguistic identity.
- (iv) Marine Area's for Renewable Energy should be designated under RSES, and
- (v) Tourism / Greenway projects should be developed in places of interest, and the routes should be targeted to link North South from Donegal into Leitrim etc. The Assembly were requested to consider for inclusion in the Draft RSES policies to promote Greenways and Blueways (s 4.6 of our Issues Papers). They were similarly asked to promote use of and protect our archaeology and landscape assets and make them as widely available as possible to the public (S 4.5 or our Issues Papers).

The Assembly was requested to consider for inclusion in the Draft RSES policies to promote Greenways and Blueways (s 4.6 of our Issues Papers). They were similarly asked to promote use of and protect our archaeology and landscape assets and make them as widely available as possible to the public (S 4.5 or our Issues Papers).

In relation to renewable energy and electricity generation (S4.2 of Issues Papers) detailed submissions were received on the environmental and societal benefits of increased harvesting of these resources, currently onshore wind and into the medium term offshore resources. The region has the potential to become a net exporter of energy and the integrated development of transmission grids were critical in achieving this worthwhile goal. The subject of community gain as an integral part of these large infrastructure projects was postulated as desirable and necessary for project delivery and completion.

A number of submissions acknowledge and endorse the need for a transition to a low carbon future, referenced within the context provided by the Government White Paper on Energy entitled "Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future – 2015-2030". It provides for a vision whereby greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the energy sector will be reduced by between 80% and 95%, compared to 1990 levels, by 2050, and will fall to zero or below by 2100. Furthermore, the 2020 EU Energy and Climate Framework includes a 20% reduction in GHG emissions by 2020 and a 16% renewable target for Ireland for 2020, which Ireland is seeking to meet through 40% renewable electricity, 12% renewable heat and 10% renewable transport.

There is strong support for the intention outlined in the RSES Issues Paper for this region to lead on the Transition to a Low Carbon Economy, emphasising the importance of identifying 'energy' as one of the 'emerging sectors' within the RSES. Examples include Submission No.92 (Gas Networks Ireland), which says that the RSES should support the production of renewable gas (see Vibrant Place also) as the circular economy benefits will deliver a major decarbonisation benefit for agriculture and industry. Investment in infrastructure for CNG vehicles is identified as a key priority in order to reduce emissions from buses and heavy duty vehicles (HDVs) and they are actively supporting the development of Compressed Natural Gas for use in transport vehicles.

The role of the Public Sector is also picked up in the submissions, including Submission 122, whereby it says that the Public Sector has a key leadership role to play in taking steps towards reaching Ireland's energy and climate targets. It points to the requirement for the public sector to introduce Nearly Zero Energy Buildings from 31 December 2018 – which will require increased energy efficiency and the

electrification of heat. It also speaks about the benefits energy efficiency brings for residential customers and those in the fuel poverty bracket and would encourage its inclusion as an underlying principle of the RSES. Reference is also made to smart energy systems which will revolutionise the way we use energy solutions.

It is also noted that the Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment has published a Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy (PSEES) which outlines various actions to be taken in relation to energy efficiency, including the need for procurement frameworks for energy efficiency works to State owned buildings occupied by Government Departments and Agencies.

Submission No.4 by IWEA is a renewable energy representative body and it takes the view in its submission that Ireland is on course to fall well short of our Renewable Energy targets for 2040, and there are a number of projects which if realized could make a major contribution towards reaching the required targets. It is therefore vital the RSES contains strong and realistic renewable energy targets, particularly for wind, both on shore, and off shore. There is merit in moving to a Regional Policy framework on renewable energy, (and electricity) having regard to (inter-alia) the strategic infrastructure projects legislation.

It is stated that there is an ongoing programme of Cost Reduction in off shore wind energy, and the RSES should provide for its expansion, and development. The NWRA Issues Papers do not sufficiently recognize the important role of wind energy in contributing to Ireland's striving to meet our Renewable Energy targets.

Their key message is essentially that Wind Energy Policy, and Renewable Energy Strategy at a Regional Level, as opposed to a County by County Strategy would be a more efficient policy mechanism, and would ensure consistency in the delivery of international, and National Policy in this area. An Open, transparent, and evidence-based framework is the best way to inform the site selection process.

Submission No. 91 (Bord Na Mona) is also supportive of energy development. It suggests that the proposed RSES should signpost the energy infrastructural changes and developments that will be needed to facilitate a low carbon and climate resilient Ireland. Renewable energy development objectives should be detailed, clear and concise so that it is evident to all stakeholders what is required in order to develop a secure energy future for an increased population in the future. It considers that the location of future national renewable energy generation will, for the most part need to be accommodated on large tracts of rural land and Bord na Mona believe that the country's cutaway bogs are suitable to facilitate large scale renewable energy projects which would contribute significantly to National and European targets, having regard to their close proximity to the national grid and having good road access. Examples are given as Oweninny Bog Group in North Mayo and the Attymon and Blackwater bog groups in County Galway.

Eirgrid in its submission (Submission No. 116) identifies that the West region is particularly rich in renewable energy resources whilst the Border region also has significant renewable energy resources, but it has an excess of generation in the area. Developing the grid will enable the transmission system to safely accommodate more diverse power flows from surplus regional generation and also

to facilitate future growth in electricity demand. These developments will strengthen the network for all electricity users, and in doing so will improve the security and quality of supply.

The Border region's existing local transmission network facilitates limited inter area power flows between Northern Ireland and Ireland via the existing 275 kV Tandragee – Louth interconnector. The major project in this region is the proposed North South Interconnector between Turleenan and Woodland substations. We are also investigating the need to reinforce the grid in the north-west. The need for reinforcement is predicated on the level of renewable generation in both Donegal and western Northern Ireland. The solutions, technology and timing of this work are currently being reviewed. We will, in time, consult with relevant stakeholders on the needs, and the range of solutions that address these needs.

The submission received from the Local Authority Arts Officers Association generally describes our widely varied environmental infrastructure as important assets from the viewpoints of quality of life and source of employment. The Assembly will take on board these views and attempt to incorporate them into a coherent Draft.

Good Energies Alliance (Submission No. 73) are an NGO with a remit for education, energy use and climate change. They identify that the potential in rural communities can be harnessed through job creation and that there is significant community gain available through energy ownership. It also advises that the management of forestry alongside other rural land uses needs to be given high priority.

Submission No.111 (Keep Ireland Open) asks that the RSES promote greater access to existing, and planned forestry projects, and that recreational amenity become a central part of this strategy. It identifies the opportunity presented by disused railway routes, and the lands on both sides of lines (often owned by IE), to be utilized as walkways and greenways. It asks that the Plan, promote and develop a waymarked coastal path along the full length of the Region's coastline, in conjunction with the other councils, landowners and other partner agencies as a recreational and tourism facility. The value of such pathways is evidenced through reference to the English Example in England, whereby it is stated that the Cornwall/Devon cliff path brings in annual revenue of £325M and in Wales there is a coastal path around entire 870 mile-long coastline which attracts 100,000 tourists annually.

The submission also promotes and supports the development of an inter-county coastal path linking Galway Mayo and Sligo and the designation of Traditional, and historical walking routes as Public Rights of Way. It also suggests that we create a Historical Landscapes Classification & create trails within and between all of the National Parks in our Region. It alludes to an increased practice in recent years to the provision of fencing within upland areas and asks that policies be included in RSES prohibition this.

The submission also supports that Monuments that are National Monuments in State ownership or guardianship and monuments subject to a Preservation Orders should be identified and zones of visual amenity be defined for them.

In relation to renewable energy and electricity generation (\$4.2 of Issues Papers) detailed submissions were received on the environmental and societal benefits of increased harvesting of these resources, currently onshore wind and into the medium term offshore resources. The region has the potential to become a net exporter of energy and the integrated development of transmission grids were critical in achieving this worthwhile goal. The subject of community gain as an integral part of these large infrastructure projects was postulated as desirable and necessary for project delivery and completion.

Section 4: Director's Consideration and recommendation:

The above is a short synopsis of the submissions which examine the principles of sustainable development in respect of particular parts of s23 of the Act. The submissions received endorse and validate much of the collaborative actions undertaken by the Assembly thus far in developing a vision for this region, which has been articulated in the NWRA's submission to the draft NPF; Issues papers for the Pre-Draft RSES consultation; and in the Report on Pre-Draft RSES Stakeholder Workshops January 2018. The input received in respect of the foregoing shall assist in informing the development of a Draft RSES. The Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is also being undertaken and it will inform and shape the RSES process on an iterative basis. When consideration of this Director's Report is complete, the process of preparing a Draft RSES shall be progressed and issued to Members for their consideration before being placed on public display for a period of not less than 10 weeks.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1, TABLE 1

LIST OF PERSONS AND BODIES WHO MADE SUBMISSIONS ON THE PRE-DRAFT CONSULTATION TO THE RSES

Submission No.	Name	Organisation
1	John Moran	Mayo Plus
2	John McCarrick	Individual
3	Michael Ewing	Horizontal Pillar
4	Harry Barrett	Wind Energy
5	Tara Spain	TII
7	Andrew Murray	Offaly Co Co
8	Liz McDonnell	Dept of Agriculture
9	Richard Logue	Network Rail
10	Owen Shinkwin	National Transport Authority
11	Gail McGibbon	Sligo BID
12	Denise Glavin	NUIG
13	Anne Monaghan	Individual
14	James O' Dowd	Individual
15	Sara Walls	Athenry
16	Xperia Xhale - Stephen Doggett	Individual
17	Micheál Waldron	Claremorris
18	Niall Reilly	Castlebar
19	Padraig King	Galway
20	David Campbell	Coolaney
21	Jonathan Weavers	Kiltimagh Greenway Group
22	Deirdre Cleary	Kiltimagh Greenway Group
23	Chris Carroll	Western Rail Corridor
24	Carly Hillier	Individual
25	Brendan Quinn	Western Rail Trail
26	Gearoid O'Foighil	Individual
27	Martin Glavin	NUIG
28	Owen Jennings	Ordnance Survey Ireland
29	Francis Meenaghan	Individual
30	Liam Shannon	Individual
31	Colman O'Raghallaigh	West on Track
32	Enrico Lionello	Individual
33	Malachy Magee	Cootehill Chamber of Commerce
34	Johnny Markey	Individual
35	Andrew Hay	Newry and Mourne District Council
36	Management Team	Claremorris Chamber of Commerce
37	Dorothy Cassidy	Individual
38	Murray Nolan	Individual
40	Jim Grady	Individual

Submission No.	Name	Organisation
41	Jessica Grehan	Individual
42	Mike Bowens	Analog Devices Limerick - Mayo man
43	Gwendoline O'Kelly	Individual
44	Kevin Quinn	Individual
45	Mary Cleary	Individual
46	Patricia O'Beirne	Individual
47	Seamus O'Dowd	Individual
48	Valerie Dellar	Individual
49	Suzanne Gilsenan	Individual
50	Gerard O'Brien	Individual
51	Katie Delaney	Individual
52	Judith Meskers	Individual
53	John Mulligan	Individual
54	David Pents	Individual
55	Derrick Hambleton	An Taisce
56	Fiona Morrisroe	Individual
57	Peter Bowen-Walsh	WRC
58	Sally Browne	Research and Education Foundation, Sligo University Hospital
59	Jeff Ashby	Claremorris
60	Brian Wylie	Iarnrod Eireann
61	Brendan Flaherty	Individual
62	Denise Dickson	Causeway Coast and Glens
63	Ronan Gilroy	Grange, Co. Sligo
64	Sean J Murphy	ESB Networks
65	Frank Dawson	West Inter County Railway Committee
66	Martin Lavelle	Individual
67	Sinead McEvoy	Mid Ulster Council
68	John Frawley	Individual
69	Dympna O'Callaghan	Shannon Chamber
70	Angus Kerr	Dept for Infrastructure - Belfast
71	Gregory Forde	Inland Fisheries Ireland
72	Alan McGrath	Individual
73	Francesca Franzetti	Good Energies Alliance
74	Brian Gilmore	Cement Manufacturers Ireland
75	Colin C Callanan	Hewlett Packard Enterprise Galway
76	Bryana Hindle	Ireland West Airport Knock
77	David Howard	IBEC
78	Brendan Monaghan	Individual
79	Richard Manton	Engineers Ireland
80	Isoilde Dillon	Housing Agency
81	Justin Molloy	CIF

Submission No.	Name	Organisation
82	Nicholas O'Kane	Cavan Co Co
83	Shane Garvey	Galway Harbour Co - TA Port of Galway
84	Brendan McGrath	Galway City Council
85	Mary Blowick	Mayo Age Friendly Alliance
86	Toni Forrester	Letterkenny Chamber
87	Proinsias McCaughey	Derry City & Strabane District Council
88	David Rouse	Apartment Owners Network
89	Gabriel J Dennison	Irish Academy of Engineering
90	Katrin Ostwald	WiFor Economic Research
91	Caitriona Carter	Powergen Development - Bord na Mona Plc
92	Fiona O'Connor	Gas Networks
93	Hazel Fox	Galway Co Co
94	Colm Cummins	ESB
95	Frank Moylan	Sligo Co Co
96	Padraig O'Donoghue	NUIG
97	Helen McHenry	WDC
98	Valerie Brennan	Coillte
99	Brian Barrett	Galway Co Co - Economic Dev
100	Suzanne Dempsey	Irish Water
101	Ian Lumley	An Taisce
102	Joanne Lyons	Dept of Culture, Heritage & Gaeltacht
103	Kathleen Ellis	Chief Executive Office - Leitrim Co Co
104	Éamonn O'Neachtain	Údaras na Gaeltachta
105	Pio Byrnes	Roscommon Co Co
106	Mary Stack	Fáilte Ireland
107	Peter Andrews	Royal Insitutie Architects of Ireland
108	Jo Holmwood	Kid's Own Publishing Partnership
109	Traolach ó Fionnáin	Local Authority Arts Officers Association
110	Eunan Quinn	Donegal Co Co
111	Roger Garland	Keep Ireland Open
112	Caroline Kelleher	Shannon Group
113	Toirleach Gourley	Monaghan Co Co
114	Aidan Sweeney	IBEC
115	Finbar McDonnell	RF Property Management
116	Tomas Bradley	Eirgrid
117	Stella Burke	Irish Wind Energy Association
118	Tadhg O'Mahony	EPA
119	Louise Lennon	Irish Rural Link
120	John McGrath	Athlone Chamber of Commerce and Industry
121	Catherine Kennedy	IT Sligo
122	Elizabeth Swanwick	SSE
123	Martin McNamara	Mayo Co Co
124	Finbarr Filan	Individual