

Feedback on DRAFT Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, NWRA
from
Connacht-Ulster Alliance
January 2019

General Observations

- Overall, the report is quite aspirational in its language with lots of reference to ‘potential’ and ‘capacity for’. We do appreciate the process of approval by the NWRA Board and input from public representatives makes it challenging to be specific at this stage. However, there is a lot of work to be done before there is a plan that could be critiqued, financed and resourced.
- 1) There are a total of 211 Regional Policy Objectives. These are written in somewhat general terms and many of the policy statements could apply to any region. To be relevant to this region, the policies will need to be articulated in more specific detail in any action plan to identify deliverables, timelines and persons responsible for each sector, and expressed in a way that indicates how this region is taking actions to address its needs.
 - 2) Education is not addressed in a meaningful way. Overall, there is a surprisingly little commentary on what should be a crucial element of the RSES: the development of talent in, and for, the region. Of the 211 Regional Policy Objectives, 7 mention education, 1 mentions technological university, 3 refer to Higher Education and there are 2 mentions of training. The document acknowledges that a highly skilled workforce will bring greater social and economic benefits to the region, but nowhere is there a commitment on how the implementation of the proposed RSES will help to deliver this highly skilled and versatile workforce. This could be interpreted as a lack of vision in regional policy for the importance/role of education and training in developing and growing the workforce, and of young people and those out of work.
 - 3) The importance/role of entrepreneurship should be specifically dealt with in the document as this is critical to the growth of the region.
 - 4) The section on Realising opportunities lacks any vision for some of the key sectors currently driving rural growth such as tourism instead focuses on ‘technologies of the future’.
 - 5) All-Island cohesion: There is little mention of Brexit and little context provided for the potential impact on this region of any changes in the trading conditions. The focus is on the development/justification of the Letterkenny-Derry City Region, should be expanded out to show context for the wider region.
 - 6) Inclusive Ambition: There should be some reference to Healthy living and the need to ensure that the elderly and those needing medical care are adequately supported.