

RSES Submissions,
Northern and Western Regional Assembly,
The Square,
Ballaghaderreen,
Co. Roscommon

04/02/2019

**Iarnród Éireann submission to the Northern & Western Regional Assembly –
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy ‘Draft Strategy’**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the RSES Draft Strategy of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly. Iarnród Éireann welcomes the Draft Strategy which we have reviewed in detail. Our response is summarised below and this follows previous interactions with the NWRA which included a submission to the initial ‘Issues Paper’ and participation in the RSES Workshop relating to Infrastructure & Utilities held in Sligo on 18th January 2018.

The Draft Strategy reflects the view that the Iarnród Éireann heavy rail network is a very valuable national asset which can contribute positively and directly to:-

- Enhanced and efficient mass mobility and reduced traffic congestion
- Regional and national economic development
- National climate change targets

Iarnród Éireann, as the national railway operator, is well positioned to play a key role in providing high capacity sustainable public transport solutions to cater for the expected increase in travel resulting from the anticipated future population and employment growth in the region, and nationally.

One of the key themes in the Draft Strategy is connectivity both within the Northern & Western Region and to the other two key regions, the Eastern & Midland and the Southern Region. The Draft Strategy sets out a number of strategic regional rail policy objectives and Iarnród Éireann welcomes the support for further investment in the railway contained in the Draft Strategy. Iarnród Éireann’s immediate focus for the development of the railway are the priorities contained in the National Development Plan 2018-2027, including;

- Protecting the quality and value of past investments through funded maintenance and renewal programmes
- Completing the construction of a new National Train Control Centre
- Investing in the national inter-urban rail network e.g. Dublin-Galway and Dublin – Sligo/Westport/Ballina to deliver more competitive journey times and frequencies
- Completion of the independent review of the Western Rail Corridor section from Athenry – Claremorris
- Park and Ride / Rail Station improvement programme including accessibility

It is clear that Ireland is out of step with many countries in terms of addressing climate change targets and we are locked into a pattern of rising CO₂ emissions; most notably in the transport sector. While the transport sector is clearly underperforming in terms of meeting GHG reductions, due primarily to the increased contributions from the road sector, it should be noted that the railway has exceeded its targets and can contribute even further with the appropriate level of investment. Railways are acknowledged internationally as one of the greenest forms of land transport, and particularly electrified rail.

Iarnród Éireann will continue to advocate for optimisation and targeted expansion of rail infrastructure and services across the region where a positive economic business case exists and in support of regional development.

Yours sincerely,

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