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

8th February 2019

RE: Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region

A Chara,

Further to your correspondence, the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) sets out below its observations on the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region (NWRA).

The observations of the SRA are issued in accordance with the role of the Southern Regional Assembly as set out under the Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 (S.I No 573 of 2014).

Consistency Between the Draft RSESs for the Northern and Western and Southern Regions

The SRA welcomes the Draft RSES and considers that it represents a strong body of work with a clear plan structure and demonstrates consistency with Project Ireland 2040: The National Planning Framework.

Co-ordination between the Assemblies and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has ensured a consistent approach across thematic chapters.

The SRA have published the Draft RSES for the Southern Region (public consultation runs until the 8th March 2019).

Complementarity between both strategies is evident. The SRA note and welcome the following:

- Complementary visions and priorities are demonstrated in both Draft RSESs. The NWRA Draft RSES has identified a Growth Framework in support of achieving its vision and five

strategic themes of sustainable growth, supporting infrastructure, lower carbon future, great place to live and compact growth. These themes are complimentary to the strategic vision and eleven points of the SRA Draft RSES (Section 2.2).

- Settlement strategy with an emphasis on consolidation and achieving compact and employment led growth of Galway City and Suburbs and the Galway Metropolitan Area. The SRA supports strengthened roles and improved inter-regional connectivity between the cities and metropolitan areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford and Galway in the NWRA as a compliment to the role of Dublin to achieve regional parity.
- The central pillars to the economic strategy in both regions places emphasis on place-based assets, sectors and clusters.
- The Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) places a strong emphasis on a connected city, enhanced transportation (Galway Transport Strategy) and sustainable mobility. This compliments the approach to the three MASPs for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford which seek stronger connectivity between the cities, the sustainable integration of land use and transportation planning and preparation of metropolitan area transport strategies.
- Both strategies integrate the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) initiative as a key economic growth enabler which is shared between both regions. The NWRA Draft RSES recognises the economic reach of Cork and Limerick-Shannon with the AEC. Both strategies identify the AEC as an opportunity for economic growth to accelerate regional development (our shared goals of regional parity). Both seek to strengthen the economic reach of the AEC, interactions between the cities, metropolitan areas, key towns, economic hubs, clusters and catchments on the corridor. Priorities for enhanced connectivity (digital and transport) along this spine are shared to enable this corridor.
- Identification of an inter-regional area of influence with the SRA for the Galway City Region and strategic importance of Galway-Shannon-Limerick Corridor as a shared regional component. This is a compliment to the SRA Draft RSES, especially Limerick-Shannon MASP Policy Objective 8 which seeks to deliver effective planning and investment into the Galway-Ennis-Shannon-Limerick (GESL) Economic Network. Excellent public transport connections along the GESL and strengthened interaction with the Shannon Estuary, North Kerry and Kerry Knowledge Triangle are included in this objective and will be of interest for the NWRA.
- Identification of the AEC and it's economic reach are also included in the SRA Draft RSES Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) for Key Towns including RPO 10 for Tralee, RPO 11 for Killarney, RPO 12 Mallow, RPO 14 Ennis, RPO 15 Nenagh. Further RPO's for the AEC include RPO 39 for a strong economy and Cork MASP Policy Objective 4 for strengthened Regional Interactions.
- Both strategies identify the economic importance of the EU TEN-T Corridor across our regions.

- Both strategies identify the importance of developing a regional freight strategy. The SRA note Objective 113 and opportunities for rail freight.
- Both strategies identify our Marine and Blue Economy as key enablers, with both regions possessing extensive coastlines, ports, and fisheries.
- Both strategies identify shared tourism corridors, the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East and Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands as key enablers.
- Both strategies place a high emphasis on transition to lower carbon future, renewable energy and provide good practice case studies and demonstrator projects.
- Both strategies place an emphasis on optimisation of digital infrastructure and pursue Smart Regions.

Conclusion

The SRA support the content of the NWRA Draft RSES. Continued co-ordination across the three Regional Assemblies to strengthen the role of the regional tier in the planning hierarchy will be supported.

The implementation stages of both RSESs will benefit from continued close collaboration to progress shared RPO’s and regional enablers (examples outlined above) between shared stakeholders.

Collaboration during the implementation stages will also ensure on-going monitoring of growth and investment in achieving NPF targets. Regional co-ordination will help assess performance towards achieving greater regional parity, especially in the compact and sustainable transport led growth of our cities and metropolitan areas.

The assets of both our regions are well positioned to help achieve this goal.

Platforms for exchanging good regional practices between our regions and encouraging innovation in approaches to addressing challenges and implementing RPO’s, across cities, smaller towns and rural areas, will be encouraged by the SRA.

The SRA trust the above comments will be of assistance in the preparation of the final RSES. We are available to assist and discuss any of the matters raised in this submission.

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Director