



Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly  
Ballymun Civic Centre  
Main Street  
Ballymun  
Dublin 9

07/02/2019

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

**Re: Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly**

Dear Director,

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

These observations were prepared by the executive and approved by the Director of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA).

The Draft RSES for the Northern and Western Region is a comprehensive document that sets out the strategic vision for the development of the region, aligned with national planning policy as expressed in Project Ireland 2040, clearly setting out growth ambitions for the region to 2031 and beyond.

It is welcomed that the draft RSES layout and contents is reflective of that in the draft RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region (which was published on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018), it is considered that this is important to align the policy making and delivery of regional policy across Ireland.

At a strategic level is encouraging to see key policy drivers being complementary in the NWRA and EMRA draft RSES, such as the economic strategy that is smart, place based, focused on clustering and specific sectors this is demonstrated in both Strategies. Furthermore there are complementary policy drivers in People and Place, on placemaking, effective integration of land use and transport, compact growth and the setting out of a settlement typology for the region.



With regard to policy alignment, the RSES's for each of the three regions should ensure a consistent approach to the regional manifestation of national policy as expressed in Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework (NPF). The NPF identifies the primacy of the existing five cities with National Policy Objective 67 introducing a new policy provision in the form of Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans for the five cities, namely Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford, in tandem with and as part of the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

The Draft RSES for the Northern and Western Region contains a Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan that sets out a strategic vision for the metropolitan city with population parameters, identifies key regeneration opportunities, residential, employment and economic opportunities and key infrastructure requirements. This plan is a coherent multi sectoral approach to strategic planning for the metropolitan city of Galway and is reflective of the approach taken by this assembly to the MASP for the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

In the NPF, NPO 7 identifies the regional centres of Athlone, Sligo and Letterkenny and the Letterkenny – Derry and Drogheda – Dundalk – Newry cross border networks. This is reflected in the designation of these settlements as regional growth centres. Again it is key that there is consistency between the regional assemblies in the policy focus of these settlements to ensure a balanced application of national policy at regional level.

In respect of the “Strategic Plan for Letterkenny, with Derry City and Strabane Cross Boarder City Region” which at various locations is referenced as a “Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan” and “North West Metropolitan Area”; and the “Sligo Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan” this is considered to be an enhanced policy provision on these settlements in relation to their designation in national policy.

In this regard the identification of a ‘strategic plan’ for these centres is addressed in the provision for joint urban / local area plans utilising the existing Local Area Plan legislation (both the NPF and the Implementation Roadmap circular refer). These plans are intended to be (jointly) prepared after the approval of the RSES, by the relevant local authority, through LAP legislation prior to determination by the relevant full Council(s). The role of the RSES is to address the high level strategy approach to the future of each of these centres, and should state a strategic vision, profile and strategic needs for these centres. The RSES for the NWRA could reflect this requirement in addressing the needs of the designated regional growth centres by providing a policy response at the relevant strategic scale.

The approach to the regional growth centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk in the ERMA draft RSES is consistent with the provisions of the NPF and the NPF Implementation Roadmap circular and has enjoyed the support of the constituent local authorities.



The policy and drivers under All Island cohesion should be consistent between the three Regional assemblies and between the NWRA and EMRA with regard to Northern Ireland. In this regard strategic cross regional corridors and enhancement of inter-regional connectivity should be consistent in the case of Dublin to Galway, Dublin to Sligo and across the border to Northern Ireland, with particular focus on the TEN-T network.

The role of the Assembly in implementing and monitoring the RSES's once they are adopted requires consideration in the draft RSES and this role should be consistent between the three Assemblies, with particular reference to the Implementation Groups membership and function.

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly will continue to collaborate with our sister Assemblies in the formulation of our regional strategies and welcome ongoing engagement during the implementation of the RSES for the betterment of all our regions.

Regards,



Jim Conway  
Director  
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly