



Port of Waterford

8th February 2019

'RSES Submissions',
NWRA,
The Square,
Ballaghaderreen,
Co. Roscommon.
F45 W674

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: NORTHERN AND WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY DRAFT REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY(RSES) – CONSULTATION SUBMISSION

Port of Waterford (PoW) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the next stage of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) process, as provided by the Draft RSES Document, published in November 2018.

The preparation of the Draft RSES document represents an opportunity to develop an effective policy for the sustainable spatial and economic development of the Northern and Western Region and, as outlined by the National Planning Framework, to provide a more effective balance of growth between the regions. The reorganisation of the regions and the subsequent development of the RSES offers an opportunity to co-ordinate policy, development and action at an effective scale.

The National Planning Framework 2040 states that Irish ports are critical infrastructure for international trade, with over 90% of our international trade moving by sea. Ports also serve as logistics and distribution hubs and they must be capable of delivering additional port capacity in a timely manner to maintain economic growth. The NPF refers to the importance of Belview Port which is a Tier 2 port - based on its potential to grow traffic, proximity to key trading partners and strategic transport roles. The Port is designated as a Comprehensive Port on the Ten-T Network.

Belview Port is the centre of operations within the Port of Waterford. Located on the south east coast it is the closest multi-modal port to Europe. The Port handles substantial vessels with ships drafts of up to 9.0 metres and lengths of up to 190 metres and has excellent inland connectivity with direct access to the M9 motorway and rail freight connections. In terms of throughput, Belview Port currently handles over 1.5 million tonnes of bulk products (mainly agri-related) together with another 100k+ tonnes of break bulk (mainly timber and steel). The Port also operates in the Container/Lo-Lo sector handling 40k TEU annually and it is one of only two ports in the country with operational rail freight infrastructure.

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3ú Urlár, Pointe na Mara
Calafort Belview
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For over 40 years the Port of Waterford has used rail freight for imports and exports. During this time, containerised rail freight to and from Waterford Port served Irish Rail railheads each weeknight at Cork (North Esk, Glanmire), Mallow, Limerick, Dublin (Kingsbridge and North Wall), Dundalk, Belfast, Longford, Ballina, and Sligo eliminating over 150 trucks from the roads each day and reducing road congestion, road traffic accidents, road maintenance costs and local pollution. This solution competitively serviced major companies throughout the island of Ireland until some of the rail freight depots ceased to operate.

Up until May 2018, a twice-weekly service rail freight service operated between Ballina and the Port of Waterford. This carried containerised cargo (to/from Rotterdam) between Belview to Ballina and was the result of an effective collaboration between DFDS, Port of Waterford and Irish Rail. Whilst the service has since ceased, a comprehensive review of Irish Rail's commercial charging structures around rail freight, particularly in relation to track access charges, should result in viable future solutions, particularly when factoring in a wider consideration of benefits that rail freight can offer in relation to CO2 emissions and human health factors in particular.

The Draft RSES document identifies gaps to the region's rail network and the key role of a multi-modal policy with regional hubs for freight transfer combined with improved freight routes. It is indicated that the Regional Transport Strategy will include policies and actions to *"co-ordinate the efficient movement of freight and goods through the region and to ports and airports"*. The Port of Waterford is supportive of this approach.

The Draft RSES identifies the need to;

- 'Ensure that quality rail infrastructure and service capacity continue to be a priority for Ballina, as it represents the most significant rail freight activity outside of Dublin, providing a vital service to commercial/industry in the town and supports the transition to a low carbon region.
- 'Remove barriers to development through the priority upgrade of the N26/N58 linking Ballina and the northwest of the county to the N5 and through the continued investment in rail freight facilities in Ballina.'

The Port of Waterford is fully supportive of this analysis as well as policies and measures identified to address these infrastructure priorities. In this regard, the PoW welcomes and supports the inclusion of Objectives 113 and 115 into the Draft Northern and Western RSES report which seeks

- Commencement and completion of the review of the Western Rail Corridor project as a priority for passenger and freight transport. (Objective 113)
- To deliver the Athlery-Tuam-Claremorris-Sligo- Rail to an appropriate level of service and to a standard capable of facilitating passenger and freight transport. (Objective 115)

The RSES for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly should clearly identify and map the strategic rail freight routes within and without the region. It should also seek to identify the role these routes will play in any national strategy for supporting rail freight including the reactivation of the link between Waterford and Ballina in particular, which would bring new options and reduce any over-reliance on Dublin Port.

The potential for this approach to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, address road congestion and improve road safety should be assessed within the Strategic Environmental Assessment being carried out in parallel with the RSES. This would very clearly demonstrate the benefits for such an approach.

In summation, this submission

- Welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly
- Wholly supports the inclusion of Objectives 113 and 115.
- Seeks further objectives in the RSES to ensure that the Regional Assembly takes a proactive role in driving the development of the rail freight connection from the Port of Waterford to Ballina to act as a facilitator of and driver for economic growth in the north west.



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