



Date **February 8th 2019**

Subject **Galway Environmental Network's submission on the Draft Regional and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region Galway Environmental Network**

Galway Environmental Network

The Galway Environmental Network was founded in early 2018 to bring together individuals and organisations with a particular interest in the protection of the natural environment and the advancement of environmental sustainability.

This consultation on the draft RSES

While we welcome the opportunity to make a submission on the draft RSES our strong preference would have been to have had an opportunity to participate in a collaborative process as part of the preparation of the draft RSES. We want early and effective public engagement – collaboration in the preparation of strategies and plans rather than consultation after the major decisions have already been made.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is clear that “Business as Usual” will not achieve the objectives of the NPF – this consultation represents “Business as Usual”.

General comments on the RSES Document

The draft RSES for the Northern and Western Region is far too long at 312 pages. This is mainly because the document is too verbose and there is much repetition in it.

The length, verbosity, repetition and lack of cohesion make the document very difficult to read. It needs substantial editing to produce a final document which is succinct and accessible by the public. There should be a concise Executive Summary that members of the public can read more easily so that they can get an overall understanding of what is proposed. After that, they can read the sections of the main report that they have a particular interest in.

All the Key Policy Objectives should be put together in an Appendix for convenience of readers.

Vision

There should be a succinct vision statement which conveys to all concerned where it is that this strategy is designed to get us to.

In Section 2.1 NWRA: Approach to strategy, it is stated that “Strategy is concerned with getting from where we are to where we want to be.” The “we” should be those who live and work in the Northern and Western Region. The final document should contain up-front a shared vision statement, developed in collaboration with those who live and work in the region, which represents “where we want to be”. There may be a case for vision statements for each sub-region based on its particular strengths and assets. One way in which shared vision statements could be developed in collaboration with the public would be to engage with the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) that exist throughout the region who could in turn engage with their communities. There is no evidence in the draft RSES that there has been any collaboration whatsoever with the PPNs.

Sustainable, sustainability and sustainable development

What is meant by ‘sustainable’, ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’ in the draft RSES?

‘Prosperity’ is mentioned but is often qualified to ‘economic prosperity’. What is meant by prosperity?

These are critical questions that have not been addressed in the draft RSES.

The final RSES must clearly define what is meant by “sustainable”, “sustainability”, “sustainable development” and “prosperity”. These objectives will only be achieved if we all have a clear and unambiguous understanding of what they are.

A ‘Sustainability Framework’ is required rather than a ‘Growth Framework’

The draft RSES adopts a Growth Framework. This is a fundamental and fatal flaw. One cannot have infinite growth on a planet with finite resources! This fact is ignored in the draft RSES.

According to the Global Footprint Network, if everyone in the world used as much of the earth’s biocapacity as we in Ireland did in 2014, we would need 2.8 planets? The world’s current population would need 1.7 planets based on its current use of the earth’s resources - we have only 1 planet!

In 2018, humans used up more of Earth’s resources than it can regenerate within one year as of August 1, 2018, according to the Global Footprint Network. Last year’s Earth Overshoot Day was the earliest ever. <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint/>

We are currently stealing the earth’s resources from future generations to feed our unsustainable

lifestyles. The draft RSES will only perpetuate this into the future.

A ‘Sustainability Framework’ rather than a “Growth Framework” is what is required for the sustainable development of the Northern and Western Region. One such ‘Sustainability Framework’ is the One Planet Living® framework developed by UK charity Bioregional more than 20 years ago. It adopts a holistic approach and is based on 10 principles. <https://www.bioregional.com/one-planetliving>

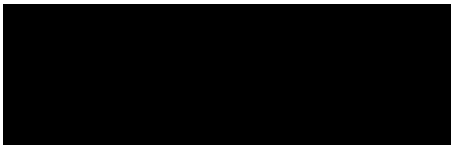
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In Section 1.8 of the draft RSES it is stated that the government is committed to the “implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs”.

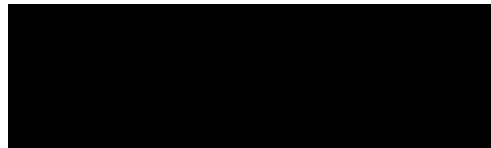
It must be clear from the RSES how each Regional Policy Objective will contribute to the implementation of specific SDGs.

We have recommended above that all the Regional Policy Objectives should be included together in an Appendix to the RSES and that should also show the specific SDGs that each Regional Policy Objective will contribute to implementing.

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08/02/2019