

DRAFT REGIONAL & SPATIAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR THE NORTHERN & WESTERN REGION

Monaghan County Council Submission
February 2019



more to
Monaghan

Introduction

Monaghan County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region. Monaghan County Council considers that the document is well structured and sets out the unique strengths and characteristics of the region as well as endeavouring to create a vision for the long term spatial and economic development of the region based on a vibrant, natural, inclusive, connected and smart place. The comments set out in this submission follow the structure of the draft strategy.

1.0 Context

- Monaghan County Council acknowledges that the Regional Assembly has a leadership role to play in co-ordinating initiatives as well as identifying regional policies to support the delivery and implementation of national planning policy, and the Council will work in collaboration with the Regional Assembly to ensure the best outcomes for the region.
- In terms of economic policy, Monaghan County Council would concur that there is a need to increase the emphasis on developing our Irish owned enterprises, particularly given the significance of indigenous enterprises in County Monaghan operating at the regional level and national level, and particularly those operating on a global scale, such as CombiLift and Monaghan Mushrooms. Key to this will be support provided to assist these enterprises in dealing with the consequences of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, given the proximity of County Monaghan to the Border and the intricate cross border ties in terms of supply chains and markets.
- Monaghan County Council would also agree with the emphasis on innovation and talent given the long tradition of the development small scale indigenous businesses in County Monaghan, many of which operate in the disruptive technology sector.
- It is also accepted that investment in place making to attract and retain investment and people is an important objective, and that raising Ireland's visibility and that of the region is key to establishing a global presence.
- In terms of 'Smart Places' the objective of digital enhancement of our communities is important in the context of a weak urban structure in the majority of the region and a rural based population.
- Monaghan County Council would agree that it is necessary to build critical mass in urban centres, enhance connectivity and access, seek the delivery of world class infrastructure, offer a viable third level education, provide smart and integrated transport systems, encourage and facilitate dynamic clustering, and build upon place making efforts. However, this should not just be focussed on the Atlantic Economic Corridor, but should be rolled out across all parts of the Region.

- Monaghan County Council would agree with the concept of further strengthening collaboration and clustering activities in the region between foreign and Irish owned enterprises.
- The ‘Smart Specialisation’ place-based strategy is welcomed, particularly the identification of priority settlements and the introduction of Technological Innovation Poles (TIPs). However, in the interests of balanced development these TIPs must be evenly distributed across the region.
- Recognition of the role of cross border networks is particularly welcomed. However, this should not be restricted to urban centres given the context of County Monaghan’s relationship with Northern Ireland and the acknowledgement of this as a core challenge is noted.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with the population projections set out on page 26.

2.0 Strategic Analysis & Vision

- Monaghan County Council would agree with the aims to strengthen collaboration, determine and prioritise enabling infrastructure, and attract, build and retain talent and business capability.
- It is also acknowledged that the challenges of distance and scale, loss or lack of skills, generating greater value, access to capital, infrastructure and accessibility issues and the perception of the region are key challenges to be addressed.
- Monaghan County Council would concur that the risk associated with the consequences of the United Kingdom’s departure from the European Union upon the region is significant and requires special attention in the Strategy.
- It is noted that the image of locations of existing wind farms on page 45 contains inaccurate information. There are two operational windfarms in County Monaghan at Mullanalt and Tossy, both approximately five kilometres south of Ballybay. Although there are two wind farms approved approximately seven kilometres northeast of Castleblayney and fifteen kilometres northwest of Monaghan Town, these are not yet operational.
- The focus on achieving higher economic growth from both the existing sectors of our economy as well as those that are new or emerging is considered important to a solid economic base.
- In terms of People and Places, it is considered that the pursuit of compact growth to ensure sustainable growth of more compact urban and rural settlements is preferable to continued sprawl and unplanned growth.
- In terms of Vibrant Ambition, it is acknowledged that focussing on scale, investing in connectivity and people whilst pursuing a low carbon approach is appropriate.
- In terms of Natural Ambition, it is critical that natural resources, landscape and heritage are afforded appropriate protection.

- In terms of Connected Ambition, the strengthening of digital networks is a priority in addition to improving the transport network.
- In terms of Inclusive Ambition, it is accepted that the aspiration to be one of the most liveable places in Europe based on sustainable and inclusive growth is legitimate.
- In terms of Infrastructure Ambition, the provision and maintenance of economic infrastructure is critical.

3.0 People and Places

- The acknowledgement of the influence of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor on counties Cavan and Monaghan is welcomed as is the relationship of these counties with Northern Ireland.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 1 to 8 set out on page 55.
- It is agreed that generating greater efficiency across our transport networks is key to achieving the transition to a lower carbon environment in tandem with more sustainable land use planning such as efficient use of land within existing urban footprints.
- It is noted that there is some text missing at the end of the right hand side column on page 59. It is assumed that the missing text makes reference to vacant dwellings.
- The identification of Monaghan as a Key Town with targeted growth of at least 30% over 2016 population levels is acknowledged and welcomed.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objective 10 set out on page 60 to deliver significant compact growth in Key Towns.
- The requirement to deliver critical enabling infrastructure and services to ensure the Key Towns grow as successful employment centres and service locations is also welcomed and acknowledged.
- The acknowledgement of the culture of living in smaller towns and the countryside built upon a strong connection with rural areas is welcomed particularly in respect of the Northern and Western Region.
- Monaghan County Council acknowledges that in the absence of updated guidance from central government in respect of rural housing, there is a necessity to distinguish between rural areas under strong urban influence and elsewhere. Also, the capacity for single rural houses should be retained for those with a demonstrable economic or social need to reside there. However, the concept of 15% commuter catchment to define these rural areas under strong urban influence is unclear and requires further clarification in the document. It is suggested that an area defined on a radial zone or by a development pressures area might be more appropriate.

- It is agreed that the provision of upskilling and reskilling of employees is necessary to enable employers to plan for and adapt to changing economic circumstances.
- The acknowledgement that a balance needs to be found between rural housing and ensuring the vitality and viability of towns and villages and the regeneration of smaller towns and villages is a major priority action is welcomed.
- The emphasis on regenerating the original core and main street areas initially through reuse of existing stock, and the development of brownfield and gap sites for appropriate housing as an alternative to one off rural housing is concurred with.
- Monaghan County Council would welcome the opportunity to partake in a peer learning programme delivered by the NWRA in respect of regeneration.
- Although there is merit in seeking to ensure that 20% of rural housing is delivered on brownfield sites, it is essential that clarity is provided within the strategy in respect of what is envisaged given the limited opportunities that exist in the rural area and the fact that one in five of all new houses must be on brownfield sites. The target to deliver 20% of all new rural housing on brownfield sites is questionable due to associated difficulties in the implementation of such a policy i.e. local needs, loss of traditional vernacular structures. Whilst the merit in promoting the restoration and reuse of rural brownfield sites is recognised, a target of 20% is considered very high and possibly unrealistic. There needs to be further consideration as to measures required to ensure this target will be delivered.
- Monaghan County Council acknowledges the inclusion of Regional Policy Objectives 11 to 13 set out on page 64 on the basis that they are also objectives within the National Planning Framework. However as previously mentioned there are concerns regarding the out workings of Regional Policy Objective 14.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 15 to 22 set out on page 64, particularly in respect of regeneration and renewal of small towns and villages, developing green infrastructure, and the monitoring of housing vacancy rates.
- In respect of the development of a local authority program for the provision of serviced housing sites in smaller towns and villages, Monaghan County Council would contend that this program should not preclude the provision of serviced sites in larger towns also. The Draft Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 – 2025 introduces a new policy in this regard for the larger settlements and it is considered that an objective should be included within the RSES to support local authorities in the urgent delivery of schemes of this nature where appropriate infrastructure exists given this will provide a sustainable alternative to the pressures of the rural housing challenge. Furthermore, the objective to develop a programme for delivery of serviced sites in

small towns and villages within one years of the adoption of the National Planning Framework should only be required upon the publication of revised guidelines for one off rural housing. It is imperative that that the development of one off rural housing is managed in a coherent, sustainable and consistent manner to assist in achieving this aim. The RSES and NPF must support and reinforce the application of the rural housing policy consistently across all local authorities so that the real challenge of dispersed population patterns and achieving critical mass within the settlements can be addressed in a meaningful way.

- The incorporation of a specific section on Monaghan Town within Section 3.7.6 (page 148) is welcomed. This section briefly highlights the main priorities for the town.
- It is recommended that additional Key Future Priority be included as follows:-
Promote cycling, walking and broader smarter travel initiatives in line with the Monaghan Land Use and Transportation Study in collaboration with the National Transport Authority and the Cavan Monaghan Transport Co-ordination Unit.
- It is noted that incorrect figures have supplied in the population graph on page 149. The 2016 population of Monaghan Town is 7,678 not 5,876 and the projected 2040 population should be in the region of 10,000 not 7,639. All of the figures in this graph are incorrect. In addition, as the Monaghan County Development Plan for the period 2019-2025 will be adopted before the adoption of the final RSES the figures for zoned housing lands should be updated in line with the development plan for the period 2019-2025.
- The inclusion of Carrickmacross in Section 3.7.9 on page 155 as performing an important sub regional function for employment, housing and services and its relationship with the Greater Dublin Area is acknowledged and welcomed.

4.0 Growth Ambition 1: Economy & Employment - Vibrant Region

- It is noted that there is no representation of Monaghan amongst the logos in the top right image on page 162. It is suggested that the 'More to Monaghan' or the 'Ulster Canal Greenway' logo be inserted amongst these logos to provide balance and representation.
- The identification of the Monaghan / Cavan Catchment with links to the Greater Dublin Area and Northern Ireland is acknowledged and welcomed.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with the identified primary emerging sectors and clusters across the region.
- The inclusion of Ireland's Ancient East is welcomed and the key elements of the tourism strategy including Candidate Destination Towns, supporting leisure amenity needs, shared provision of facilities, activity tourism and county based monitoring are concurred with.

- It is considered important that visitor experience development, visitor awareness and resources, capital programmes and capacity building are important to further developing the tourism offering in the region.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 24 to 26 set out on page 171 to protect tourism assets and deliver tourism initiatives.
- Monaghan County Council welcomes the incorporation of a specific section on Ireland's Ancient East within the strategy and would agree with the content of same. The reference to Patrick Kavanagh Trail should actually be Patrick Kavanagh Trail & Centre.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 28 to 30 set out on page 174, particularly in respect of establishing tourist attractions. Monaghan County Council is the lead in a collaboration with Cavan and Louth County Councils in the submission of a LEADER project to develop heritage sites in Cavan, Louth and Monaghan to complement Ireland's Ancient East initiative. A proposal has been submitted with Failte Ireland's support in order to provide a heritage cluster capable of attracting visitors to the northern most region of Ireland's Ancient East. By coming together to develop a cluster of sites the project seeks to pool resources to broaden the product base and to increase the attractiveness of the region as a place to visit with spin off economic benefits to all three counties.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 34 to 36 set out on page 176 in terms of developing and enhancing tourism assets.
- As previously stated, it is noted that the image of locations of existing wind farms on page 45 contains inaccurate information. There are two operational windfarms in County Monaghan at Mullanalt and Tossy, both approximately five kilometres south of Ballybay. Although there are two wind farms approved approximately seven kilometres northeast of Castleblayney and fifteen kilometres northwest of Monaghan Town, these are not yet operational.
- The four key pillars in relation to pursuing a low carbon future are appropriate and relevant and the acknowledgement of the potential for growth in renewables is welcomed.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 39 to 48 set out on pages 180 and 181, particularly in respect of developing the bio energy sector and the expansion of the gas supply network into the region.
- The section on Monaghan / Cavan on pages 182 and 183 is acknowledged and welcomed along with the emphasis on the expansion of the agri food sector, particularly small and medium enterprises. Monaghan and Cavan play a vital role in terms of food production, construction manufacturing and specialised engineering, all of which have significant cross border trading operations. Small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are central drivers in economic growth both

nationally and locally. They are the cornerstone of economies in rural counties such as Monaghan. The continued development of these rural counties is partially dependent on maintaining and enhancing the contributions that SMEs make to the economy through the provision of employment in small towns and rural areas.

- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 49 to 51 set out on page 183 in respect of expansion of the agri food industry. The Monaghan and Cavan sub region is home to many successful and innovative entrepreneurs who are operating in a highly competitive global marketplace. Both counties are heavily dependent on indigenous development as a source of wealth and job creation.
- Monaghan County Council considers Food Harvest 2020 to be an important element of the strategy. The agri-food industry accounts for over 60% of Monaghan's employment and 90% of the food produced within the county is exported. 14 of the top 100 food producing companies in Ireland are based in County Monaghan and over half of all poultry produced in Ireland is reared in County Monaghan. The food sectors include dairy and infant formula; poultry and eggs; red meat; mushrooms; water; value added and convenience foods; meat foodstuffs; food laboratories; food services including transport, distribution and temperature-controlled warehousing. It is imperative that the RSES encourages economic performance by, and builds upon, local strengths to drive growth in employment within this sector. The RSES should continue to support and promote these ongoing production and processing activities to ensure that the potential for further development is realised.
- The inclusion of the case study on Monaghan Bio-Connect Innovation Centre on page 185 is acknowledged and welcomed.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 52 to 55 set out on page 187 in respect of supporting agri-food and the bio-economy.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 65 to 71 in relation to Information & Communication Technology and Medical Technology set out on page 197 in respect of information technology industries.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 73 to 76 set out on page 199, particularly in respect of town and village revitalisation learning programmes.
- Notwithstanding Regional Policy Objective 6, a specific objective should be inserted in the RSES to encourage and support the Monaghan and Cavan LEO and IDA sectors in the provision of serviced sites at key locations for enterprise and employment uses, including those businesses who may relocate due to the UK leaving the EU.

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the infrastructure needs of the Cavan/Monaghan sub region. Specific projects include the improvement of N54 between Cavan/Monaghan Town to improve accessibility and connectivity between these Key Towns, improvements to Regional Roads particularly the strategic routes given their importance in context of indigenous industries in the sub region, the progression and delivery of the East – West link, the improvement of linkages and the road network in general, particularly as the Cavan/Monaghan sub region is wholly reliant on road transport. The enhancement of broadband and gas networks are also critical enabling infrastructure for the development of the Cavan/Monaghan sub region.

5.0 Growth Ambition 2: Environment - Natural Heritage

- The reference to the understanding of the roles the environment and natural landscape play in the well being of the region is welcomed.
- The unique character of the Monaghan (and Cavan) landscape with drumlins, interspersed with lakes, trees and woodlands should be referenced in ‘Our Landscape’ on page 206. This landscape form and pattern is a function of a range of physical characteristics and physical processes including solid geology, glacial processes, soil formation, hydrology, ecology and human activity.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 77 and 78 set out on page 206 particularly in respect of co-ordination between local authorities to protect the region’s landscapes.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 79 to 83 set out on page 208 in respect of protecting natural heritage.
- It is noted that there is an error on page 209 where Moorehall Estate is wrongly attributed to Co. Monaghan. It is assumed that this should be Co. Mayo.
- In addition, other amenity attractions in County Monaghan with region potential are Dartry Estate, near Cootehill and Sliabh Beagh, which straddles County Monaghan, County Tyrone and County Fermanagh and for which a management plan has been recent prepared collaboratively between the respective local authorities on both sides of the Border.
- Although there is no Gaeltacht in County Monaghan the Regional Policy Objectives 84 to 88 set out on page 211 are supported, particularly in respect of the provision of low cost shared workspaces for the cultural sector and the improvement of cultural facilities.
- It is assumed that Section 5.7 should be titled ‘Our Built Heritage’ as opposed to ‘Our Natural Heritage’.
- The number of visitors to OPW sites is provided on page 212. The relevance of this table is questionable given that the sites referenced only include six counties within the region. Bord Failte

visitor numbers to each county within the region as released in August 2018 may offer a more accurate measurement and at the very least would give an indicator how each county in the region compares with regard to visitor numbers, rather than isolating this measurement to OPW sites. Furthermore, Monaghan and Cavan are included within the 'Ireland's Ancient East' brand whereby built heritage is a significant attraction for visitors and for this table to highlight that there are no OPW sites within the two counties that fall into this branding is concerning.

- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 89 to 93 set out on page 213 in respect of built heritage.
- It is stated on page 215 that there are no dedicated long or short distance cycling / greenway routes which link Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland. However, the Sliabh Beagh Way section of the Ulster Way passes directly through County Monaghan between Aughnacloy and Lisnaskea and the Kingfisher Cycle Trail passes through counties Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Roscommon, Fermanagh. The Monaghan Way also crosses into County Armagh. (further details of trails can be viewed at www.irishtrails.ie). In addition, Meath, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth County Councils are collaborating in respect of the delivery of the 'Border Kingdoms Greenway' which is a long distance trail that runs from Drogheda along the Boyne River to Navan, onto to Kingscourt via the old rail line, into Carrickmacross and through Inniskeen to Dundalk, with connections onwards to Carlingford, Newry and Portadown.
- The reference to Mid Ulster Borough Council should in fact be Mid Ulster District Council.
- The mention of the Ulster Canal Greenway is acknowledged and welcomed, and Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 94 to 98 set out on page 216 in this regard.



- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 99 and 100 set out on page 217, particularly in respect of the reopening of the Ulster Canal.
- There is potential for the development of a blueway across the region via the Dromore River system extending from Ballybay to Cootehill and onto the Shannon Erne Blueway in Belturbet and it is considered this should be included in a list of potential blueways on page 217.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 101 and 102 set out on page 219, in respect of protecting peatlands and bogs.
- The Cavan/Monaghan sub region has a unique drumlin and lakeland landscape and consideration should be given to the development of a regional tourist attraction in the Cavan/Monaghan sub region. Examples could be the Dromore River System Blueway or the joint tourism ventures such as the Black Pig's Dyke / Worm Ditch tourism project.

6.0 Growth Ambition 3: Connectivity - Connected Region

- Monaghan County Council would concur with the key challenges set out on page 222.
- The high level transport principles and priority core outcomes set out on page 224 are appropriate and relevant to the region.
- Reference should be made to the jointly produced CBI / IBEC report '*Connected – A Prosperous Island of 10 Million People*'. This publication sets out a vision for transport on an island of 10 million people that includes inter-urban public transport needs to move beyond current definitions of planning, funding, provision and regulation of same.
- Monaghan County Council acknowledges and welcomes the intention under Regional Policy Objective 109 on page 231 to progress the N2 Clontibret to the Border scheme in the short term and deliver it within the lifetime of the strategy.
- The intention of the East West Road to be delivered incrementally in the short and medium term under Regional Policy Objective 112 is acknowledged, however it would be appropriate that a deadline for its delivery within the lifetime of the strategy is specified.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 120 to 124 set out on page 234, particularly in respect of the rural transport programme and improving connectivity between regional settlements.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 125 and 126 set out on page 235, particularly in respect of the delivery of the Ulster Canal Greenway.
- The introduction of Local Transport Plans for regionally important settlements is welcomed and Monaghan County Council has recently prepared a Land Use and Transportation Study of Monaghan town.

- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 128 to 134 set out on page 234, particularly in respect of provision of infrastructure for sustainable transport modes in urban areas and the rollout of recharging infrastructure for electric vehicles.
- The acknowledgement of the imbalance in access to digital services available to the citizens of Ireland and that available to business and the weakness/absence of high quality telecommunications infrastructure accessible to all parts of the region is welcomed.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objective 135 to further explore potential arising from the transatlantic cable connectivity set out on page 238.
- The need for retrofitting of existing building stock with modern communications as well as the need to identify mobile blackspots and develop initiatives to address these is welcomed.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 136 to 140 set out on page 243 particularly in respect of broadband roll out and utilisation of existing high speed networks.
- The four key areas in respect of innovation set out on page 250, particularly in respect of working with the third level education sector are considered vital and consideration of the Education and Training Board's apprenticeships and traineeships programmes should be referred to.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 141 to 162 set out on pages 253 and 254 in respect of the smart environment, the smart economy, smart mobility, smart government and smart people.
- Government agencies provide a variety of supports to job creation through the Industrial Development Authority, Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) provides a source of high quality jobs in Ireland but there has been a notable absence of investment in Monaghan, Cavan and the surrounding counties of this type of investment. It is apparent that a pattern is emerging where new FDI and employment creation gravitates towards existing centres already established in Ireland creating a clustering effect. Under current trends, this is of significant concern to Monaghan, where connections to Belfast and significant towns in Northern Ireland, as well as the north Dublin commuter belt, have the potential to attract such companies to the County. Monaghan has the capacity to provide suitable alternative locations for employers and employees to the Dublin commuter belt, where increasingly, issues like water supply, traffic congestion and lack of housing are acting as barriers to FDI as well as the offering of a better quality of life which includes less drive time and an available labour supply. It is recommended that this issue is referenced and an objective included to specifically target such locations as alternatives to the Dublin area as part of the implementation of RSES.

7.0 Growth Ambition 4: Quality of Life

- It is considered that the three horizontal aims of People, Place and Resilience are appropriate, particularly in respect of place making, liveability, delivery of housing, economic development and transport.
- It is noted that County Monaghan is truncated in the map of Pobal Deprivation Index on page 263.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 163 to 169 set out on page 264, particularly in respect of the provision of third level education in the Cavan/Monaghan sub region.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 171 to 179 set out on pages 265, 266 and 267 in respect of healthy places, age friendly measures and childcare, education and life long learning.
- Regional Policy Objectives 180 and 181 would appear to be omitted from the document.
- The approach set out on page 270 in respect of Ireland's future homes is acknowledged and welcomed as an appropriate balance and Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 182 to 186 set out on page 271 in respect of housing provision.

8.0 Growth Ambition 5: Infrastructure – Enabling Our Region

- The change from traditional infrastructural prioritisation and the concept of new roads as infrastructure corridors also is commended.
- Although there is concern regarding the impacts of overhead transmission lines, Monaghan County Council would concur in principle with Regional Policy Objectives 187 to 190 set out on page 278 which aim to deliver a safe, secure and reliable electricity network.
- Monaghan County Council would seek to ensure the objective of the expansion of gas networks in those counties within the region with a gas supply such as Monaghan, is explicitly stated in Regional Policy Objective 191 set out on page 279 and would suggest that there should time limits be provided for the extension of the gas network.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 192 to 195 set out on page 281 in respect of waste infrastructure.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 196 to 207 set out on page 285 in respect of water quality and the provision of related infrastructure.

9.0 All Island Cohesion

- It is considered important that the necessity to strengthen County Towns such as Monaghan is highlighted in the strategy and their important cross border links recognised.

- Monaghan County Council welcomes the recognition given in the strategy to cross border connectivity, particularly in terms of all modes of transport, energy, digital infrastructure and the potential for tourism.
- Monaghan County acknowledges the inclusion of the reopening of the Ulster Canal Greenway as a case study as well as the inclusion of the catchment study of the River Blackwater. The commitment of the strategy to support such developments over the lifetime of the RSES is welcomed and it is considered that the reopening of the Ulster Canal should be specifically mentioned as a Regional Policy Objective.
- Monaghan County Council would concur with Regional Policy Objectives 209 to 211 set out on page 295 in respect of cross border working groups and partnerships.

10.0 Implementation

- Monaghan County Council would agree with the approach set out in the implementation chapter that a shared sense of direction must be developed and that specific regional strengths need to be enabled while protecting the unique environment of the region.
- It is considered that more detail should be provided in terms of delivery of objectives, such as prioritising objectives based either on ease and/or speed of delivery or in terms of importance. Greater detail in terms of timescales would also focus delivery within time bound periods.

11.0 Comments by Elected Members

The Draft RSES was discussed by the elected members of Monaghan County Council at the February 2019 Council meeting and the following comments were recorded:-

- The members welcome the recognition of cross border links, the inclusion of the N2/A5 road scheme to be delivered within the lifetime of the strategy, the recognition of the Cavan-Monaghan sub region and its relationship with the Eastern Economic Corridor, the inclusion of Carrickmacross as having potential as a settlement of regional scale, the inclusion of Lough Muckno as an amenity destination with growth potential, the objective for enhanced third level education in Cavan-Monaghan, the objective requiring the delivery of serviced housing sites, and the mention of the Ulster Canal, Monaghan Bioscience Centre and Blackwater Catchment Care as case studies.
- In line with the wishes of the elected members of Monaghan County Council and their constituents, a specific Regional Objective Policy should be included within the RSES requiring that electricity transmission lines be delivered using undergrounding technology in line with EU best practice.

- The Regional Authority should ensure that features in the six counties in the north of Ireland are not truncated in mapping graphics included within the RSES. For example, the motorway network images on page 24 and 225 illustrating proximity to the motorway network need to include the line of the motorway in the six counties as well as the shaded areas. Similarly, the rail infrastructure image on page 233 should include all of the rail lines within the six counties, and all of the airports in the six counties should be indicated on the images on pages 25 and 162.
- A specific Regional Objective Policy should be included within the RSES requiring the extension of the railway network to the northwest through County Monaghan.
- The unique drumlin and lakeland landscape of the Cavan-Monaghan sub region should be referenced as a tourist attraction.
- The Dromore River System and Black Pig's Dyke should be referenced as potential tourist and amenity attractions.
- Consideration should be given to the jointly produced CBI / IBEC report '*Connected – A Prosperous Island of 10 Million People*'. This publication sets out a vision for transport on an island of 10 million people that includes inter-urban public transport needs to move beyond current definitions of planning, funding, provision and regulation of same.
- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the necessity of good broadband and digital connectivity to help deliver the Smart Economy.
- There are concerns regarding the proposals in respect of planning rural housing, specifically the use of the 15% commuter catchment method for identifying the rural areas under strong urban influence and the requirement for 20% of all new rural housing to be provided on brownfield sites.

12.0 Conclusion

It is considered that the draft RSES has provided a strategic overview of the challenges and issues that require direction and support in the context of the Regional Assembly and sets out a targeted approach to addressing these issues. It is trusted that these comments will be of assistance in the preparation of the final RSES and we welcome the opportunity to meet if further discussions/clarity on these matters are required.