

Northern and Western Regional Assembly

Work Programme 2024

INTRODUCTION

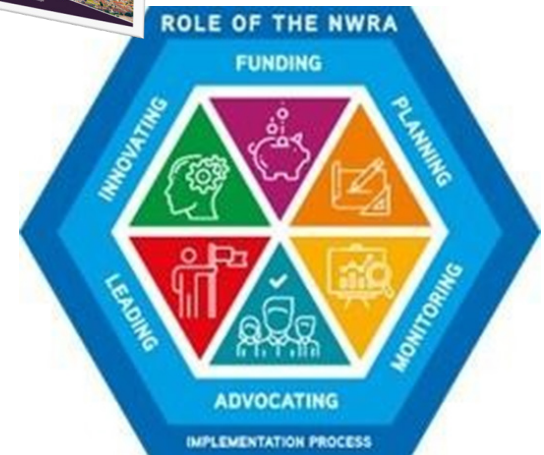
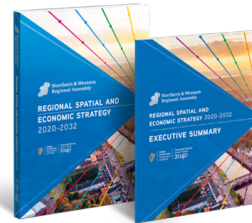
PLAN LED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our region boasts some incredible propositions, captured in our economic catchments, clusters, sectors, people and communities. These are captured within the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES), which provides the vision and policy framework to unlock these in a manner that delivers a planned and sustainable future for the Northern and Western Region of Ireland to 2032. The implementation of the RSES requires a collegiate approach by the NWRA and all our stakeholders, including local authorities and public bodies and agencies.

The RSES is a unique policy instrument in that it focuses on both spatial planning and economic development at a regional level. The Assembly is leading the ongoing oversight and implementation of the Strategy, through engagement with a range of Public and Private bodies at Local, Regional and National levels, as well as daily participation across the planning and economic policy hierarchy. The RSES is now entering its 4th year and its statutory review is to commence in 2024, building upon the outputs of the pending review of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and potentially being influenced by the emerging Planning and Development Bill 2023.

In practice, the Assembly is responsible for regional development, and for us this means:

1. Planning
2. Monitoring
3. Funding
4. Innovation
5. Leading
6. Advocacy



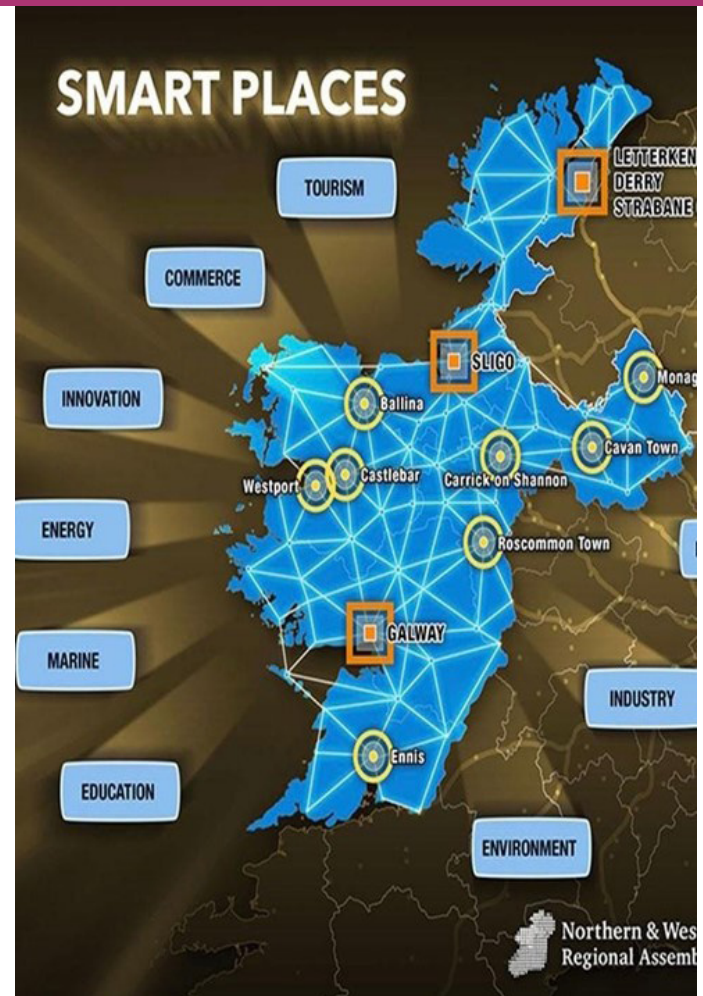
Coherent Regional Development

RSES

Our Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is our framework for both thinking about and planning for a successful and sustainable future for our Region. The RSES has been crafted through extensive engagement and is being delivered in partnership with associates locally, regionally, nationally and at an EU

Priorities for 2024 include:

1. Ensuring the role of the Regional Assemblies in the Policy hierarchy is fully reflected in the New Planning Bill
2. Advocating for the Region via the Review of the NPF (Ireland 2040).
3. Commence a Review of the RSES in collaboration with all stakeholders.
4. Initiating the Regional Renewable Electricity Strategy (RRES) as an integral part of the RSES Review.
5. Engagement with Local Authorities Development Plan Making Process through Section 27 Submissions (Draft Plans & Variations) and track Development Plan content.
6. Continue engagement with Local Authorities in the adoption of Local Economic and Community Plans
7. Complete Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan Governance review (Galway MASP).
8. Engage with public bodies in the formulation of their strategies, plans and programmes, to assist in achieving consistency with the RSES.

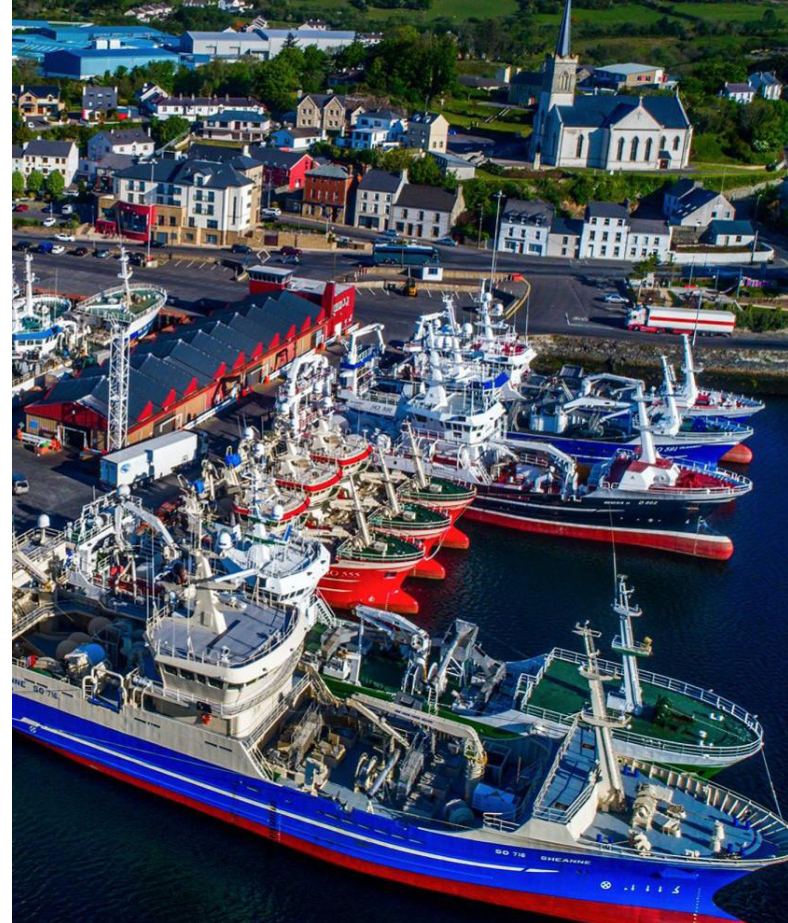


01 PLANNING & ADVOCACY

The NWRA continues to focus on Advocating for the needs of the Region, and does so in collaboration with International, National, Regional, and Local actors across a broad spectrum of policy areas - including Enterprise, Education, Transport, Renewable Energy & Planning Policy.

Priority areas during 2024 will include:

1. National Planning Framework Review 2024.
2. Commence review of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
3. All Island Rail Review (Ongoing 2023 – 2024).
4. Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy (2024).
5. Atlantic Technological University and Galway University.
6. National Ports Policy Review - Consultation (2024).
7. Engagement with the OECD (Towards Regional Attractiveness in Ireland).
8. Working Group on Infrastructure (Regional Enterprise Plan Teams, Dept of Enterprise, Trade & Employment).
9. Identifying unique opportunities through S.3 – Smart Specialisation
10. Pre Budget 2025 Submission.



OVERSEEING PERFORMANCE

The **Regional Development Monitor (RDM) Hub** is an Award Winning (IPI, 2023) collaborative project between the three Regional Assemblies in Ireland, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University and spatial infrastructure partners the Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) via the GeoHive platform.

The aim of the **RDM Hub** is to collate and visualise a range of relevant socio-economic and environmental indicators to present the performance of each of the three regions in terms of achieving the objectives outlined in their respective Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES).

Throughout 2024 the NWRA will engage with key stakeholders to expand the current RDM, as well as promote and demonstrate the monitor both locally and regionally.

This will include:

1. Development of Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) Dashboard
2. Develop National Census Mapping Viewer 2022.
3. Development and Delivery of RDM Training Workshops.

<https://rdm.geohive.ie>



EVIDENCE LED MONITORING

In an effort to signal whether various aspects of regional performance are currently trending in the desired direction, the RDM measures performance. However, monitoring other Regional Planning Objectives is also required, in order to assess targets, bottlenecks on delivery and output:

Upcoming projects include:

1. Undertake research to provide evidence based understanding of Economic Barriers to Regional Compact Growth in Urban Centres of Scale and to examine ways to resolve them, as they relate in particular to residential development. This is a major impediment to the expansion of our Key Centres.
2. Finalisation (Q.2 of 2024) of the Regional Energy Efficiency Analysis, with the view of promoting and supporting the uptake of energy efficient technologies – such as heat pumps, solar panels, retrofits etc. – by households in the Northern & Western Region
3. Working in partnership with the DETE (Regional Enterprise Division) to highlight the Critical gaps in the Regions infrastructure which is impeding enterprise growth across the Northern & Western Region.



INVESTING IN THE REGION

The NWRA is a Managing Authority for ERDF for 2014-2020 and has been appointed as Managing Authority for 2021-2027. Some of the work over 2024 shall include:

- Closure of the Programme for 2014-20 and continued implementation of the 2021-2027 Programme.
- Service the ERDF Programme Monitoring Committee, including scheduling meetings, the preparation of progress reports and the Annual Performance Report.
- Deliver training, guidance and support to Intermediate Bodies/Beneficiaries on all aspects of regulations and implementation requirements.
- Implementation of the 2024 Communications Plan and ERDF Evaluation Plan.
- Meet the N+3 target through declarations of eligible expenditure to the Certifying Authority.

Northern & Western Regional Programme 2021-27

The Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-2027 is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union

03 FUNDING

ERDF PRIORITY MILESTONES

- Launch of the THRIVE Programme in Q1:
 - Strand One applications (design /feasibility) received by Q2.
 - Strand Two applications (capital) by end of Q4.
- Launch of SFI Operation of Strategic Importance Q3.
- Continued engagement through the Programme Monitoring Committee meetings throughout 2024.
- Continued quarterly monitoring and oversight of implementation of 2021 – 2027 ERDF including:
 - Commission submission of cumulative data for the programme by 31 January, 30 April, 31 July, 30 September and 30 November.
 - Host high profile ERDF Conference in the region Q4.

FUNDING DEADLINES

The NWRA is both National Contact Point and First Level Controller for a number of INTERREG Programmes

- Atlantic Area Programme 1st Call closed 3rd March 2023. There are no calls currently scheduled for 2024.
- Northern Periphery & Arctic Programme 4th Call for main projects open 11th October 2023 to 2nd of February 2024. The 5th Call for Main Projects open 11th June 2024 to 30th September 2024.
- Interreg Europe 3rd third call for project proposals open 20th March to 7 June 2024.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The NWRA is both a producer and an enabler of regional innovation. Two targeted areas are:

4. National Contact Point for European Co-operation programmes -
 - Northern Periphery and Arctic,
 - Atlantic Area and
 - Interreg Europe
5. Direct project leader and stakeholder in a number of place based programmes

Our responsibilities for 2024 include:

- Represent Ireland on Monitoring & Steering Committees for the European Territorial Co-operation Programmes and EU Centrally Managed Programmes in which Ireland participates for the period 2021-2027. Corresponding with Joint Secretariat and Managing Authority on technical programme issues.
- Host and manage the National Contact Point for the Atlantic Area Programme and the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programmes, promoting and disseminating the programmes in Ireland and providing assistance to project promoters.
- Act as co-National Contact Point for the Interreg Europe Programme 2021-27 with our sister Assembly, the Southern Assembly (SRA).
- Proactively prepare bids for funding and participate as a partner in projects under the various INTERREG and other EU funded programmes. For 2024, this will include:
 - Engagement as a stakeholder with approved projects in the Region where the Regional assembly is not a project partner – Regional Enterprise Plan; Skills Forum and Atlantic Economic Corridor.
- First Level Control Function
- Manage and conduct the First Level Control function for approved projects for the following programmes:
 - Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme
 - Interreg Europe
 - Atlantic Area



Our research focus is on a green and digital region

Projects in 2024:

- **GREENHEALTH** - exploring the benefits of biodiversity in our rich natural region on citizen health (Leitrim County Council on board),
- **LIFE Wild Atlantic Nature Project** - Protecting and restoring Ireland's blanket bog Natura network along the Atlantic seaboard,
- **BIOWIND** - examining mechanisms to facilitate community buy-in for wind energy projects,
- **LOTTI** - examining smart specialisation in traditional industries with a focus on the creative,
- **UrbanCOOP** – Metropolitan Governance, examining inclusive urban development and continuous improvement of cooperation governance models (Galway City and County Councils as stakeholders),
- **TRANSPORT** - our research into sustainable transport models in partnership with the ATU,
- **Net Zero Cities**: Urban Sustainability & Carbon Reduction,



DIGITAL TRANSITION

The NWRA is involved in a number of region wide consortiums and projects driving the change required for the green and digital transition.

One of these is the establishment of the first European Digital Innovation Hub in our region – **Data2sustain**.

The Data2Sustain EDIH will deliver applied digital research, expertise and solutions from our region's universities through a network of customer-facing digital hubs, technology transfer and competence centres.

The NWRA is supporting a number of work packages that will service start-ups, SMEs and public sector clients.

The image shows a promotional graphic for Data2Sustain EDIH. At the top, the text reads "Data2Sustain" in a large, bold font, with "Delivering Data-Driven Transformation" underneath. Below this, a smaller line of text states: "Advance your digital competitiveness with sector-focused innovation, technology consultancy, capability building, and business development support." The graphic features several icons representing different sectors: "Agri-Food", "Manufacturing", "Healthcare", "Retail", and "Creative Industries". A QR code is positioned in the center, with the website address "www.data2sustain.ie" below it. At the bottom, the "FUNDED BY" section lists "Enterprise Ireland" and "Funded by the European Union". The "CONSORTIUM PARTNERS" section includes logos for "Northern & Western Regional Assembly", "Ultras na Geallaich", "Enterprise Ireland", and "WestBIC". The entire graphic is set against a dark blue background with a light blue molecular or network pattern.

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

Together, we have a collective voice speaking on behalf of the region. This voice:

6. Is focused on issues that are of regional significance that will create positive benefits and long term sustainability for the north and west
7. Raises the profile of, and promotes, the opportunities offered in the region
8. Is flexible to respond to emerging issues and opportunities that affect the Northern and Western Region;
9. Engages and involves stakeholders and people from across the region
10. Is conducted with integrity, accountability and respect; making sure it is evidence led and informing policy

Whilst the NWRA will continue, throughout 2024, to engage with both EU and National Policy formulation, our focus in Q1 & Q2 will be on the new Planning and Development Bill.



CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

PRIORITIES FOR 2024

During 2024 the NWRA will remain committed to ensuring 'excellence in Corporate Governance' and the values of public service are reflected across our operations.

On the completion of the term of the present Assembly in July 2024 the Assembly will prepare a new Corporate Plan which will following consultation with a range of stakeholders including our Elected Members outline our strategic objectives from 2025 – 2029 and how we propose to achieve them.

- Liaise with the Dept of Heritage, Local Government & Housing on delivery of greater regional autonomy and supports to deliver the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
- Oversee the recruitment process to fill all vacant posts
- Complete Workforce Plan
- Prepare and publish an Annual Report in 2024 on the activities of the Regional Assembly in 2023
- Complete review of the NWRA website
- Implement the Official Languages Act 2003 as it relates to the Assembly
- Update the work-place Safety Statement and keep it under review
- Publish a 'Training and Needs Analysis' plan
- Co-operate with the Southern and Eastern & Midland Regional Assemblies on operational issues
- Respond to Freedom of Information requests, as they arise, in accordance with the relevant legislation, and continue to participate in the FOI network
- Support representatives on all Monitoring Committees
- Prepare Financial Statements for 2023
- Prepare Budget for 2025
- Participate in the following committees:
 - Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee
 - Just Transition Programme Monitoring Committee
 - Atlantic Economic Corridor
 - Peace Plus Monitoring Committee
 - Interreg Europe Monitoring Committee
 - Seafood Development OP Monitoring Committee
 - Interreg IVB (Atlantic Area) Programme Monitoring and Steering Committees
 - Interreg IVB (Northern Periphery) Programme Monitoring Committee
 - COMREG Consumer Panel
- Develop, review and implement new Policies and Procedures, as appropriate (in accordance with legislation/best practice) for the Assembly's dynamic work environment, including the roll out of PMDS
- Continue to review the accommodation needs of the NWRA
- Continued participation and liaison with LGMA HR Network
- Undertake continuous improvement of our recruitment process including online recruitment
- Facilitate delegations and study groups visiting the Assembly and the Region
- Provide comprehensive financial administrative support for all Assembly activities
- Provide assistance and policy support to the Committee of the Regions members as required
- Facilitate attendance at relevant conferences by Assembly members
- Develop programme to sponsor two second level students through Graduate.ie – giving them the opportunity to visit the European Parliament

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Month	Date
January	19th
February	16th
March	15th
April	19th
May	17th
June	21st
July	19th and AGM
August	No Meeting
September	20th
October	18th
November	15th
December	20th



STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

FUNCTIONS - GENERAL

Article 20 of the Establishment Order sets out the general function of the Assemblies and complements Section 62 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 which assigns to the Assemblies the general competence to co-ordinate, promote or support strategic planning and sustainable development, and to promote effectiveness in local government & public services in different areas of the State.

In the performance of its functions, a Regional Assembly shall have regard to the general welfare, strategic planning and sustainable development requirements of the region, including:

- (a) the physical, economic, social, demographic, infrastructural and environmental situation of the region, its economic and other development potential and the protection or improvement of its environmental, heritage, amenity and cultural resources,
- (b) the programmes, plans, policies, proposals and objectives of the Government and of any Minister of the Government and of local authorities and other public authorities, as appropriate, and the need to promote coordination of or consistency with them,
- (c) the resources that are available, or are likely to be available, for the performance of its functions,
- (d) the particular need for coordinated action to promote effectiveness in local government and public services, to promote consistency with the programmes, plans, policies, proposals and objectives of the Government or Minister of the Government, and to ensure coherent spatial planning and sustainable development within and between regions.

FUNCTIONS – REGIONAL PLANNING MATTERS

Article 25 of the Establishment Order sets out the functions relating to the Planning & Development Acts 2000-14;

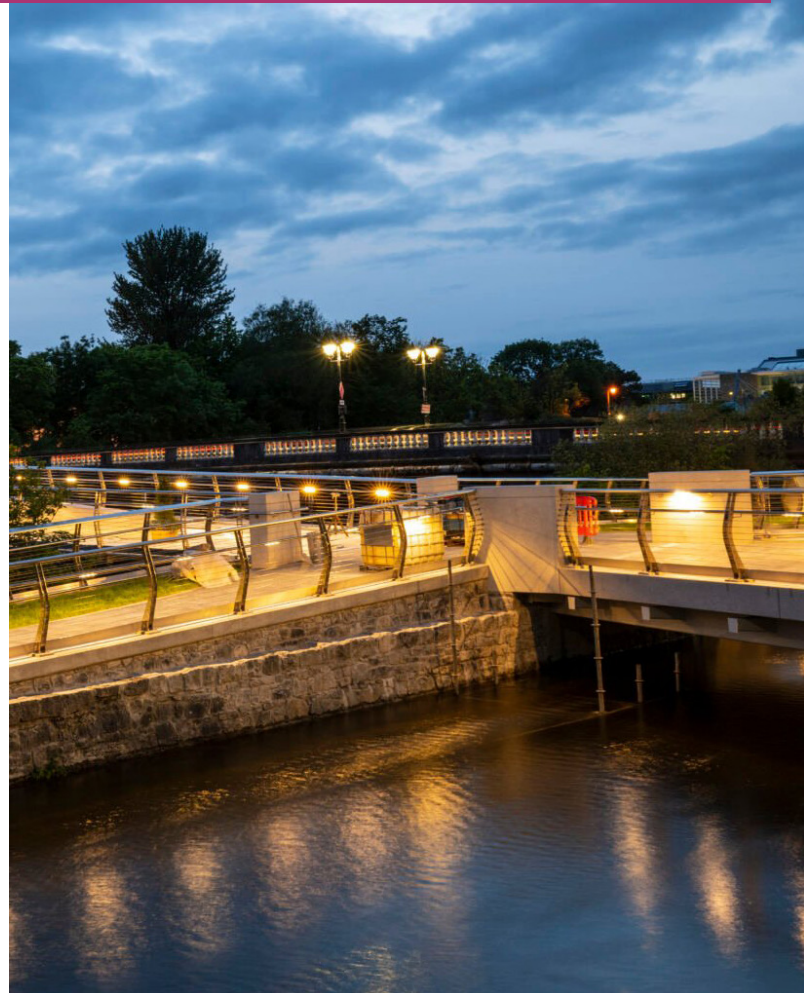
- (a) It shall be a function of a regional assembly to perform functions, in accordance with Chapter III of Part II of the Planning & Development Act of 2000 and any regulations or directions under that Act.
- (b) It shall be a function of a regional assembly to perform functions in relation to a local economic and community plan in accordance with Sections 66A to 66H of the Local Government Act of 2001.
- (c) A regional assembly shall, in accordance with such terms, conditions, requirements or procedures as the Minister may direct, facilitate and support coherent economic development at regional, strategic planning area and local authority levels, including through a regional economic forum in conjunction with relevant public bodies, local authorities, other relevant organisations or individuals.

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

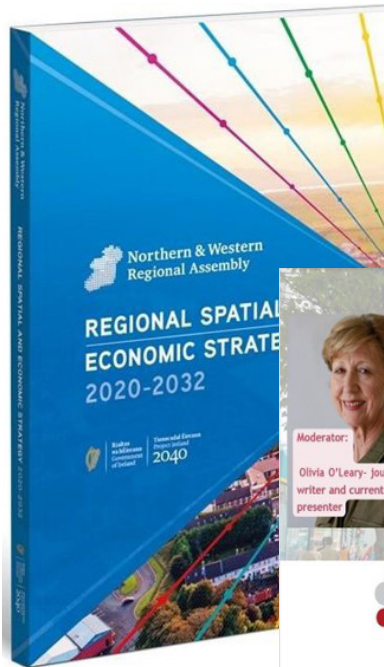
FUNCTIONS - EU AFFAIRS

Article 29 of the Establishment Order sets out the extensive range of functions the Assemblies have in relation to EU Funded programmes of Assistance, which include:

- (a) providing such proposals, recommendations, advice or information as may be required by the Minister, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform or any other Minister for the purpose of making or supporting an application to the European Union for financial assistance,
- (b) ensuring that that all applications for financial assistance referred to in paragraph (a) are consistent with the objectives of, and contribute to the implementation of, the regional spatial and economic strategy for the region or other relevant national or regional policy, objective or strategy,
- (c) preparing applications and proposals, managing and implementing programmes and projects, and performing all such other functions as are required under the relevant European Union Regulations governing European Union programmes of financial assistance and projects for which European Union financial assistance is provided,



REIMAGINING REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Plan led regional development

Moderator:
Olivia O'Leary- Journalist,
writer and current affairs
presenter

REGIONS IN FOCUS

THE ASSOCIATION OF IRISH
REGIONS' ANNUAL TRAINING
SEMINAR 2024

**IRISH REGIONS: BUILDING CAPACITY TO
ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF A CHANGING
IRELAND**

**February
7th-8th
2024**

Fitzgerald's Woodlands
House Hotel & Spa,
Co. Limerick
V94 F1P9

Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt
Southern Regional Assembly

Tionól Réigiúnach Tuaiscirt & Iarthair
Northern & Western Regional Assembly

Tionól Réigiúnach Oirthear agus Iar-Theas
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

Cumann Réigiún na hÉireann
Association of Irish Regions

Councillor Training



Advocating on behalf of our communities, sectors and people

2024 Work Programme