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From: Fiona O'Loughlin TD 
Organisation: Public Representative

Message Body:
Please find attached my submission,

Kind Regards,
Fiona

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This e-mail was sent from a submission form on Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (<http://emra.ie>)

Submission for the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) Plan

The pace of development in Kildare over the last decade has been remarkable even with the crash of the Celtic Tiger. Progress has been uneven across the county, with some areas developing faster than others. This has led to rapid development and congestion in some places, but underdevelopment in others. The Plan of this new framework is for spatial planning and economic development for the eastern and Midlands Regions. Many people feel Kildare is a suburb of Dublin however, we must ensure that services are maintained here to encourage continuous investment and growth to the towns.

Spatial Strategy -

Rural Kildare has lost many services of the years and has resulted in less young people living in the area and people having to travel further for goods and services.

Garda stations in Ballytore and in Ballymore Eustace were closed during the downturn while other stations had reduced personnel on duty each day.

Primary care service waiting lists in Kildare are at an all-time high which is resulting in more people travelling for services to Dublin.

Economic Strategy –

Key towns- Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres

Kildare town is located on the strategic road and rail network and is adequately serviced from a waste water perspective unlike other towns in County Kildare such as Naas (which is identified as a key town in the draft RSES) and Newbridge where a waste water treatment plant upgrade is being undertaken/required before any further development can take place and Kilcullen, which is not served by intercity rail services.

Kildare Town can play an important strategic role in the realization of a coherent regional planning strategy and should be identified as such in the upcoming Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Over half the working population in Kildare leave the county for work yet, we have umpteen amounts of land that could be used to encourage more Foreign Direct Investment through the IDA. Last year the IDA visited Kildare 10 times in 2017 and just 6 visits in 2018. It is also vital to encourage the return of businesses to vacant sites within the towns in urgent need of regeneration. Small units are ideal for start-up businesses and would bring custom back into the town for food outlets etc.

For those reasons, it is critical that the needs of the South Kildare are looked at from a wider perspective than previously. Kildare has one of the youngest populations in the country with many

having children and needing facilities for their young. The people of Kildare contribute greatly to society so services must be maintained to ensure future prosperity for Dublin and the greater Kildare area.

Metropolitan Plan –

We are living in a continuously changing society with globalisation having huge impacts on indigenous businesses. Kildare must learn to transition and grow with these changes so we are not left behind. The announcement of Coca Cola closing in Athy and the job losses in Bord Na Mona are two examples of places where we must adapt and encourage new training and ideas to maintain employment within the county.

Investment Framework –

Kildare can be easily accessed and can easily access all areas of the Island. The Draft plan sets out an Investment Framework to prioritise the delivery of key enabling infrastructure and services by government and state agencies. Locally, Newbridge has needed a second bridge into the town for over a decade and still funding has not been secured. The Athy Southern Distributor Road has been in the pipeline for years and only recently, funds have been allocated for this project which will help reduce traffic congestion in the town. These are key developments that are critical for current and future generations.

Sustainable growth along the SDR is also needed. We must take advantage of the work being done on provision of services and improved transport links.

Ideal location for external investors in Athy are:

Athy Business Campus

Woodstock Industrial Estate

Gateway Business Campus

Ideal locations in Kildare are:

Kildare Town Business Park

Whitesland West Business Park

Ideal locations in Newbridge are:

Tougher Business Park

Newbridge Business Park

The key challenges for spatial planning in Ireland as identified in the RSES and Smarter Travel - A Sustainable Transport Future are centred on economic competitiveness, appropriate design and environmental sustainability. We have the opportunity to enhance our public transport system to make it faster, safer and more economically friendly however, crippling costs of transport for South Kildare commuters must be accounted for when we see the statistics of the Kildare population travelling for work and the amount traveling via cars each day

Climate Action Strategy – to accelerate climate action, ensure a clean and healthy environment and to promote sustainable transport and strategic green infrastructure is paramount within the strategy and in order to do this we must commit to localizing services, to providing sustainable travel options for work and creating an environment where people do not have to travel as far for goods and services.

