

Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly

# Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy

(RSES) 2019-2031

Executive Summary



Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040



Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre  
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

**The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape the future development of our region to 2031 and beyond.**





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## Introduction

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), one of three Regional Assemblies in the Republic of Ireland, works with key stakeholders at EU, national, regional and local level to enable regional development. Our functions include policy making, monitoring and oversight and promoting enhanced co-ordination in our Region. A key function is the delivery of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for our Region, which covers twelve local authorities and is organised into 3 Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), which have an administrative sub-regional planning remit.



### What is a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)?

The primary statutory objective of the Strategy is to support implementation of Project Ireland 2040 - which links planning and investment through the National Planning Framework (NPF) and ten year National Development Plan (NDP) - and the economic and climate policies of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the Region.

The RSES identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. At this strategic level it provides a policy framework for investment to meet current and future needs in the Region.

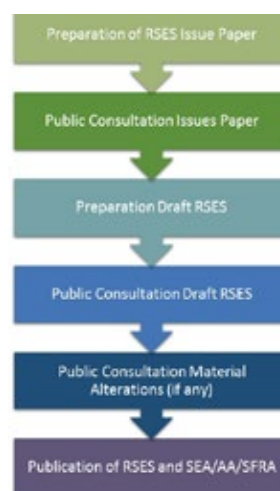
The RSES is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) to address Employment, Retail, Housing, Transport, Water services, Energy and communications, Waste management, Education, health, sports and community facilities, Environment and heritage, Landscape, Sustainable development and climate change.

#### The RSES provides a:

- **Spatial Strategy** – to manage future growth and ensure the creation of healthy and attractive places to live and work
- **Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)** – to ensure continued competitiveness of Dublin and a supply of strategic development for sustainable growth
- **Economic Strategy** – that builds on our strengths to create a strong economy and jobs, that ensures a good living standard and economic opportunity for all
- **Climate Action Strategy** – to accelerate action and ensure a clean and healthy environment, sustainable transport and green infrastructure.
- **Investment Framework** – to prioritise the delivery of infrastructure and enabling services by government and state agencies

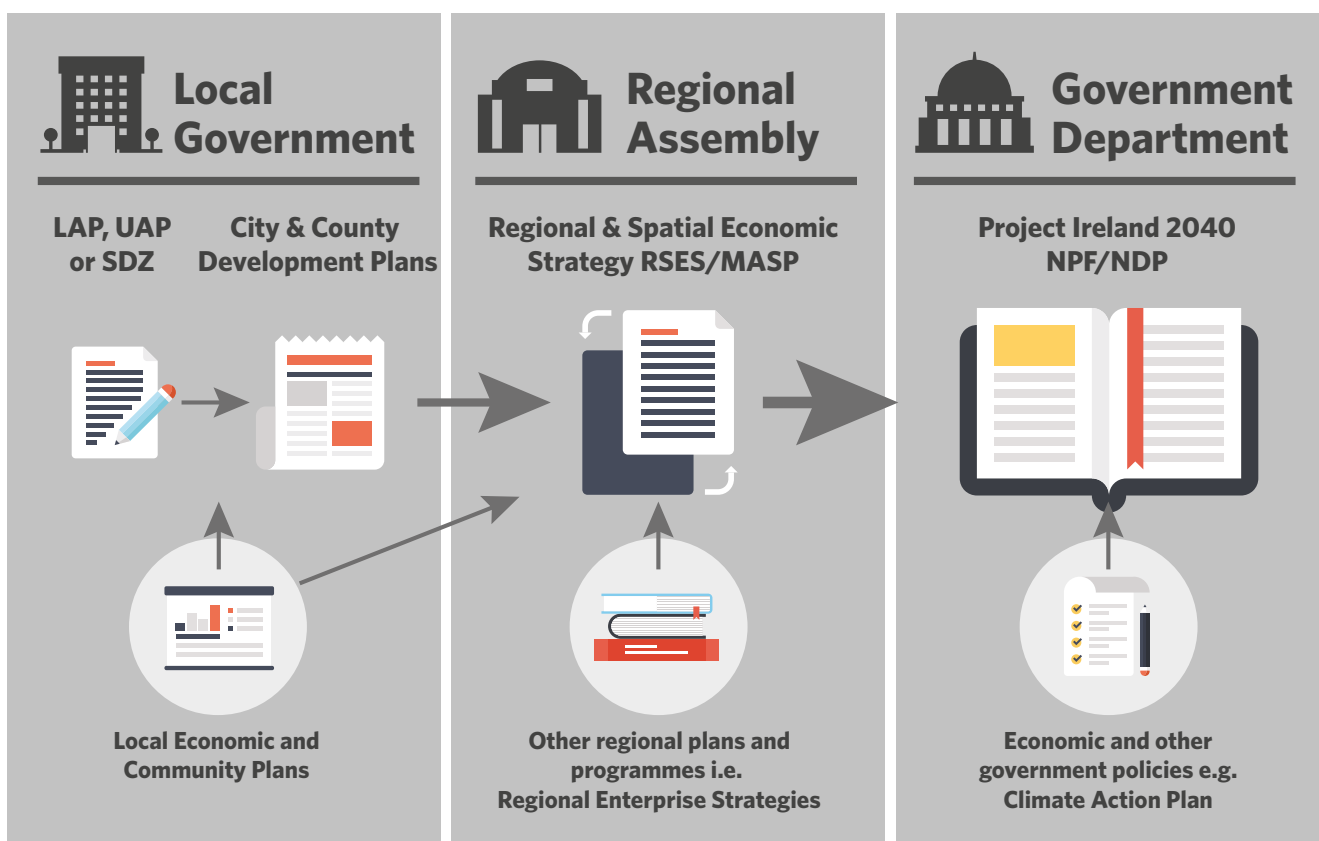
#### Process of Making an RSES

EMRA engaged in a significant evidence gathering exercise in the preparation of a **Regional Socio-Economic Profile and Issues paper**, which was published in November 2017. This commenced the 18 month long statutory plan making process, which included three public consultations, a parallel iterative **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** and extensive stakeholder engagement. At each stage, the elected members of the Assembly considered submissions received along with the Director's Reports and environmental reports to inform policy making. The elected members agreed to make the **Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031** on 28th June 2019.



#### Spatial Planning Hierarchy in Ireland

The regional tier of governance in Ireland sits in the middle of the planning hierarchy. The RSES will be implemented in policy by way of review by local authorities of all development plans and **Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs)**, to ensure their consistency with national and regional policy. Key state agencies and sectoral bodies will also have to consider their strategies and investment plans in light of the adoption of the RSES.



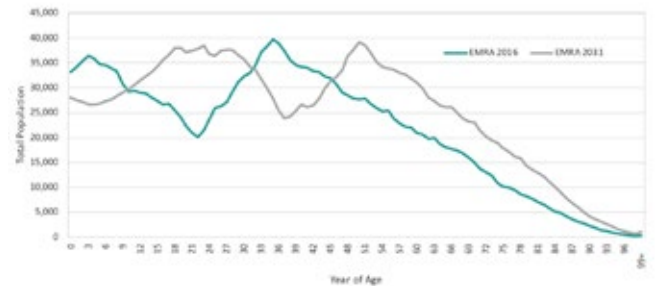
## A Young, Diverse and Growing Region

The Region is the smallest in land area of the three Irish Regions but the largest in population size, with over 2.3 million people. The main settlement is the capital city of Dublin, which is supported by a network of regional and county towns and an extensive rural hinterland.

Our people are our greatest asset and the Region is home to some of the youngest, most diverse and fastest growing communities in the country. The provision of childcare, education and health services and access to quality jobs, housing, travel options and amenities - to meet both the current and future needs of our people - will be key to achieving good quality of life in the Region.

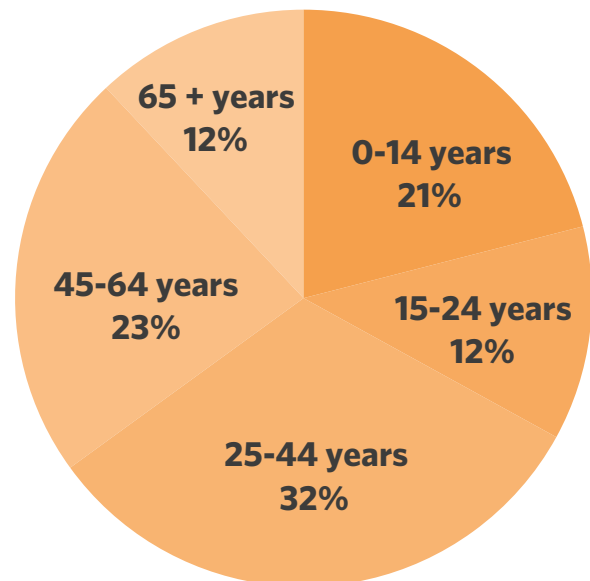
Between 2006 to 2016 the Region grew by 15%, an increase of over 300,000 people, and this population growth is set to continue over the lifetime of the RSES. However growth varied significantly across the Region, with higher growth in the areas surrounding Dublin and some of our large towns, while other parts of our Region - including urban centres as well as more remote areas - experienced population decline. Some rural areas are also facing challenges ranging from urban generated pressures to an ageing population, changes to economic structure, and lack of access to infrastructure and new technologies. Laois and Fingal were the fastest growing counties, with ten year growth rates of 26% and 23% respectively to 2016.

The region is young and diverse, with 1 in 5 people under 14 years of age and more than 1 in 8 residents who are non-Irish nationals. By 2031 there will be a significant increase in people over 65 years of age and a key challenge will be to ensure positive health outcomes and a good quality of life for our older people. There will also be an increase in the 15-24 year age cohort and a continued long term trend towards smaller and one person households. Population growth and changing demographics will require careful planning to meet the changing needs of our older people, for children, families and young people, and to support the integration of migrants and address social exclusion and isolation.



Changing Demographic Profile – Age Structure 2016 to 2031 Source: CSO

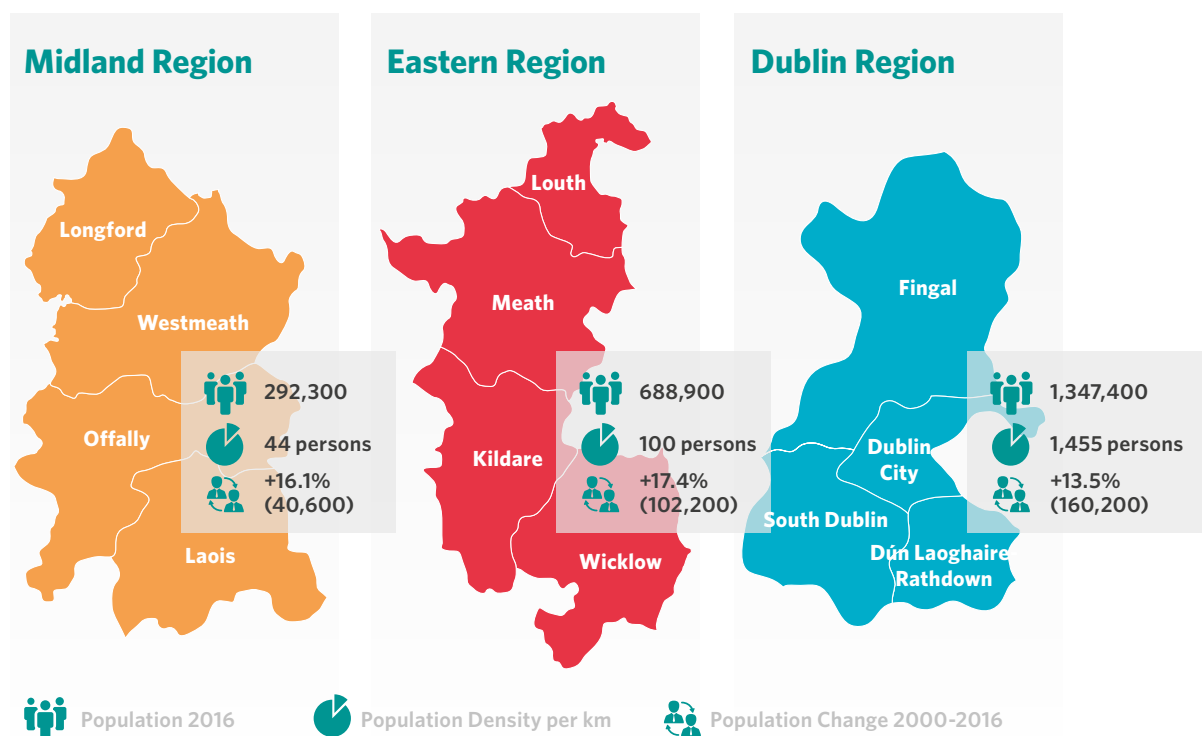
### EMRA Age Profile (CSO, 2016)





## An Economic Engine

The Eastern and Midland Region is the primary economic engine of the state, home to the capital city, with nearly half the Country's population and more than 1 million jobs. While the RSES seeks to plan for jobs growth and economic development across the Region, new and unexpected opportunities for enterprise development are also likely to arise during the lifetime of the strategy, based on local strengths, assets and resources, and underpinned by the quality of life offering.



The Midlands is a dynamic region, centrally located in the heart of Ireland with a high-quality environment and quality of life and unparalleled connectivity to national transport networks.

The Midlands has strong concentrations of foreign and Irish owned companies in manufacturing - predominately in medical devices, pharma/bio, food and engineered products, and is strategically located with excellent access to national road and rail networks, and a third level institute in Athlone. The Midlands has a relatively unspoilt landscape presenting a broad range of tourism related opportunities, however there is a need to improve skills and to ensure a just transition for the future use of Bord na Móna peatlands, while leveraging clean energy and green economy opportunities.

The Eastern counties enjoy proximity to Dublin with good international and national connectivity, and a strong track record of attracting large scale and second site foreign direct investments (FDI).

The Eastern SPA has a well educated labour force, a number of third level and research institutes and strong manufacturing, technology and pharmaceutical sectors, with potential to develop food, maritime, equine, film and creative industries and to leverage the high quality natural environment and heritage to promote the tourism and leisure offer. However, there is a need to address car based commuting and skills gaps between in county/ outbound workers to improve quality of life for all.

The Dublin region is a global gateway to Ireland and the Dublin-Belfast Corridor is the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland and part of the trans-European transport network.

Dublin is the State's only city of global scale, with access to national and international markets through Dublin Airport and Port, a varied enterprise base, vibrant arts and culture and a young well-educated population. The concentration of multi-nationals, ICT and services and large number of third level institutes and research centres make the region an ideal innovation test bed. However, capacity constraints in housing and infrastructure must be addressed to ensure the regions continued competitiveness as a national economic driver.

## Natural and Cultural Assets

The Region's natural and cultural assets are part of our unique identity, form the basis of our tourism and leisure industry and are key to our 'place marketing' potential to attract talent and investment based on quality of life. The Region is home to areas of rich heritage and natural beauty, with over 270km of coastline from Carlingford Lough in County Louth to Kilmichael Point on the Wicklow-Wexford border.

**Table 7.1 Strategic Natural, Cultural and Green Infrastructure Assets in the Region**

Bays, estuaries, headlands, islands and reefs	Carlingford Lough, Clogher Head, Dundalk Bay, Boyne Coast and Estuary, Rockabill, Skerries islands, Rogerstown Estuary, Malahide Estuary, Portmarnock, Baldoyle Estuary, Irelands Eye, Lambay Island, Howth Head, Dublin Bay and Tolka Estuary, Bull Island, Booterstown nature reserve, Dalkey Island, The Murragh wetlands, Wicklow Head, Wicklow reef, Maherabeg and Brittas dunes
Maritime towns and beaches	Clogherhead, Laytown / Bettystown, Balbriggan, Loughshinny, Rush, Skerries, Portrane, Rush, Donabate, Claremont, Donabate, Malahide, Portmarnock, Dollymount, Sandymount Seapoint, Sandycove, Dalkey, Killiney, Bray, Greystones, Wicklow Town, Maharamore, Brittas, Clogga, Arklow
Lakes, Rivers and canals	Loughs Sheelin, Derrvaragh, Ennel, Blessington, Gowna, Owel and Ree, Lough Tay – Lough Dan on the Cloghoge River.  Rivers; Avonmore, Aughrim, Avoca, Boyne, Barrow, Blackwater, Brosna, Clodagh, Fane, Dee, Dodder Dargle, Glyde, Inny, Liffey, Nore, Nanny, Poddle, Slate, Santry, Shannon, Slaney and tributary Derry River Tang, Tolka and walks around the Vartry Reservoir,  Canals; Grand Canal and Royal Canal
Greenways, blueways and peatways	Dublin to Galway Eurovelo Route, Green & Silver triangular navigation route encompassing Dublin Royal Canal, River Shannon and Grand Canal, Shannon Wilderness Corridor, East Coast Trail, Newry to Carlingford, Royal and Grand Canal Ways, Canal loop Greenway (linking the Grand and Royal Canals)** Wicklow Way, Dublin Mountains Way, Liffey Valley, Dodder*, Lakelands Greenway, Newgrange to Newbridge Greenway**, Blessington Greenway, Coastal Greenway from Wicklow to Greystones**, Arklow – Shillelagh recreation trail* <sup>1</sup> , Peatways (Corlea, Boora), Barrow and Boyne Blueways
Uplands, woodlands and designated sites	Uplands; Cooley Peninsula, Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, Slieve Blooms  Woodlands; Knocksink, Glen of the Downs, Charleville Wood  SPAs, SACs NHAs and pNHAs, Ramsar sites See Appendix F
Bogs and Peatlands	Abbeyleix Bog, Red Bog, Mouds , Ballynafagh, Moneybeg And Clareisland, Mount Hevey , Scragh, Crosswood, Carn Park , Garriskil, Derragh, Wooddown, Girley (Drewstown), Killyconny, Brown Bog , Clooneen , Ardagullion , Mount Jessop, All Saints, Clara, Raheenmore, Ferbane , Sharavogue , Moyclare , Mongan, Derry, Coolrain, Lisbigney, Knockacoller , Holdenstown, Carriggower Bog
National and Regional Parks	Wicklow Mountains National Park, The Curragh Plains, Japanese Gardens, Birr Castle, Lough Boora Discovery Park, Charleville, Emo Court, Heywood Gardens, Tullyally Castle and Belvedere House and gardens. Ardgillan House and Gardens, Castletown house and attendant demesnes, Newbridge demesne, Oldbridge demesne, Phoenix Park, Ward Valley Park, Tymon Park, Marlay Park, Killiney Hill, Dodder Valley Park, Griffreen Valley Park, and Corkagh Park. Avondale and Kilmacurragh, Lough Ree and Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park and Lanesborough Commons North Park.
Medieval, historic and walled towns.	Medieval towns of Carlingford, Drogheda, Kildare, Naas, Trim and Athlone. Historic planned towns of Birr, Abbeyleix, Castletown and Tyrellspass. Walled towns of Ardee, Carlingford, Drogheda, Castledermot, Athy, Athlone, Naas, Trim and Dublin.
Heritage sites	Bru na Boinne-Boyne Valley UNESCO World Heritage Site, Dublin Bay UNESCO biosphere, Proposed; Historic city of Dublin, Monastic sites at Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Kells, Monasterboice and Glendalough. Royal sites of Ireland at Dun Ailne, Hill of Uisneach and Tara Complex. Curragh Plains, Baltinglass cluster of hillforts, Clondalkin (Clondalkin Round Tower), and Rathfarnham (Rathfarnham Castle).  See also Record of National monuments

<sup>1</sup> \*under development \*\*proposed



## Living and Working in the Region

Where there is a mismatch between the locations of jobs and where people live, it leads to long distance commuting and poor quality of life. A key priority for the Region is to ensure that future development is planned in such a way that people can live closer to where they work, and to support a move away from car dependency towards more sustainable modes of transport.

The Region is home to over 800,000 households in 2016, with 4 out of 5 living in conventional housing and around 18% in apartments. Home ownership is the dominant tenure in the Region, with more than 2 in every 3 households but the rental market is growing, with 1 in 5 households in private rented and 1 in 10 households in social rented accommodation. One of the challenges facing the Region is the continued growth of household formation coupled with a severe slowdown in new housing stock during the economic recession, leading to housing supply and affordability pressures, particularly in Dublin and urban areas but affecting all of the Region.

The Dublin metropolitan area is a global hub for multi-national corporations (MNCs), investment and high value jobs, and its influence extends across much of the Region. However, it is micro-enterprises and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that provide vital employment across the whole of the Region. Private vehicles remain the primary mode (55%) of travel to work or education across the whole of the Region, with only Dublin City and suburbs having higher rates of sustainable transport than private modes. Long distance car-based commuting is a key challenge leading to congestion of transport networks and negative impacts on people's quality of life and on the environment.

## Functional Urban Areas

The places where people live and work often extend across local or regional boundaries. An understanding of these cross boundary 'functional urban areas' (FUAs), based on actual travel patterns rather than administrative boundaries, helps us better plan for the future provision and better alignment of transport, housing and infrastructure in our Region.

These functional urban areas (FUAs) complement the Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), which provide for a sub-regional planning remit, recognising similarities and differences between areas;

- **The Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA)**, home to 1.4 million people in 2016, includes the continuous built up area of Dublin city and suburbs and a number of highly urbanised surrounding settlements in a polycentric metropolitan area i.e. with more than one centre.
- **The Core Region**, home to over 550,000 people, includes the peri-urban 'hinterlands'<sup>2</sup> within the commuter catchment of the Dublin metropolitan area, which extends into parts of the Midlands, Louth and beyond the Region into Wexford, with some of the youngest and fastest growing towns in the Country.
- **The Gateway Region**, home to over 400,000 people, includes the midlands and north east border areas located outside the influence of Dublin, which is home to a number of large towns<sup>3</sup> and county towns that provide employment and services for a large catchment population.

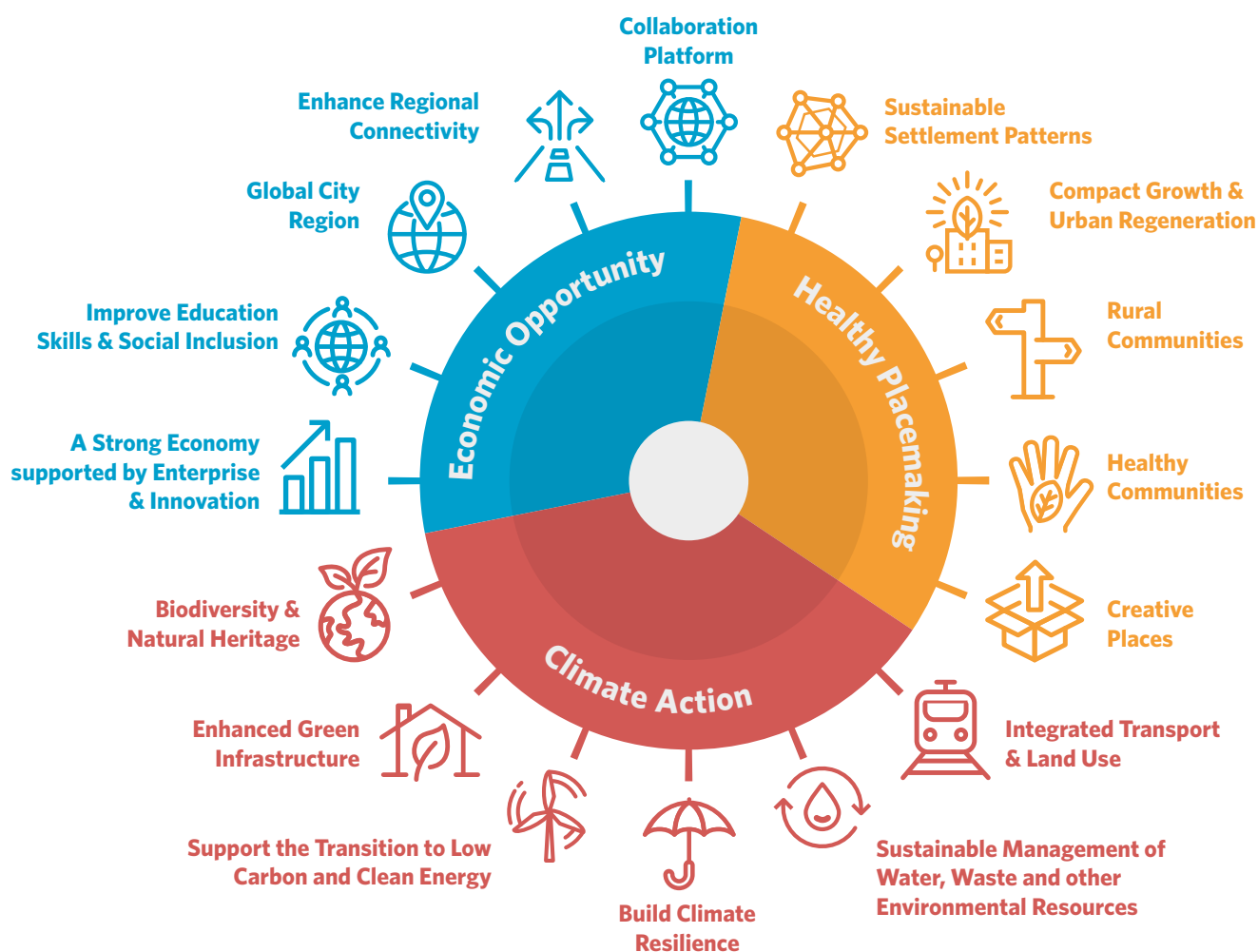


<sup>2</sup> The standardised EU/OECD definition of a city region or urban 'hinterlands' is the commuter catchment from which are least 15% of the relevant 'urban core' workforce is drawn.

<sup>3</sup> Large towns are defined in the NPF as settlements with a population over 10,000 people or 2,500 local jobs.

## Strategic Vision and Key Principles

“To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all”



## KEY PRINCIPLES

### Healthy Placemaking

To promote people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit and study in.

### Climate Action

The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon economy recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.

### Economic Opportunity

To create the right conditions and opportunities for the region to realise sustained economic growth and employment that ensures good living standards for all.

The RSES will be realised by the delivery of European and National funding that will achieve the strategic outcomes expressed in the Strategy. To embed a coherent policy hierarchy and to ensure that future investment is targeted towards identified policy objectives the 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) are aligned to the;

- UN Sustainable Development Goals,
- EU thematic objectives<sup>4</sup>, and
- NPF National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs)

## Growth Enablers for the Region

The growth strategy is aligned with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and further informed by the spatial mapping of cross boundary 'functional urban areas', the integration of an evidence driven asset based approach and the examination of different growth scenarios in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The NPF sets the overall policy framework which includes; regional parity between the growth of our Region and the two other regions; regional concentration toward cities and larger urban areas; a focus on compact urban growth in existing built-up areas; and provision of enabling infrastructure to promote investment.

### The optimum growth scenario for the Region sets out a;

- **Spatial Strategy;** to better manage the growth of Dublin and the regional centres of Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda, supported by a selected number of large self-sustaining settlements with the greatest identified assets and capacity to to act as regional drivers for growth
- **Economic Strategy;** to promote smart specialisation and cluster policies based on identified strengths and competitive advantages, combined with investment in placemaking and diversification of local economies to support inclusive growth throughout the Region
- **Climate Strategy;** to support achievement of our national climate obligations, and also to develop regional Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services together with site-based alternatives for adaptation/mitigation of impacts in strategic development locations.

### The key enablers for growth for each part of the Region to meet its potential include;

1. Promote global connectivity and regional accessibility as part of an integrated land use and transport strategy, with a focus on protecting national assets and enhanced inter-regional connectivity.
2. Support the future success of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale by better managing strategic assets to increase opportunity and sustain national economic growth and competitiveness.
3. Deliver strategic development areas identified in the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) to ensure a steady supply of serviced development lands to support Dublin's sustainable growth.
4. Facilitate collaboration to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, to drive synergy in the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross border network and strengthen economic links with the south east extending to Rosslare Europort.
5. Target significant growth in the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk to enable them to act as regional drivers, with a focus on improving local economies and quality of life to attract investment and the preparation of urban area plans (UAPs).
6. Promote compact urban growth to realise targets of at least 50% of all new homes to be built, to be within or contiguous to the existing built up area of Dublin city and suburbs and a target of at least 30% for other urban areas.
7. Embed a network of Key Towns throughout the Region, which have the capacity to deliver sustainable compact growth and employment for their catchments in tandem with enabling public transport, infrastructure and services.
8. Promote balanced growth in a limited number of economically active settlements which have the identified capacity and potential for self-sustaining growth.
9. Promote targeted 'catch up' investment to support self-sustaining local employment, and in services, sustainable transport and amenities in places that have experienced rapid commuter driven population growth.
10. Promote regeneration and revitalisation of small towns and villages and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for their surrounding rural areas.
11. Support rural areas by harnessing natural resources to develop renewables, recreation and tourism opportunities including green infrastructure planning and the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways.

4 New priorities for EU funding 2021-27; A Smarter Europe, A greener, low-carbon Europe, A more connected Europe, A more social Europe, a Europe closer to citizens.

## Strategic Connectivity

The growth strategy seeks to align services, population and economic growth and make the best use of infrastructure including public transport to reduce emissions and to strengthen the Region's strategic connectivity as part of an integrated land use and transportation strategy.

### International Connectivity

High quality accessibility to international gateways, both within and outside the Region, is key for economic competitiveness and addressing opportunities and challenges from Brexit through investment in our ports and airports, the trans European TEN-T network and the Dublin-Belfast Corridor, which is a key growth enabler for our Region.

The RSES seeks to protect and enhance access to Dublin Airport, including delivery of Metrolink and to Dublin Port, including the Southern Port Access Route. The future role of regional ports as strategic marine related assets is recognised, whilst supporting complimentary economic uses including facilitating offshore renewable energy. The Strategy supports the improvement and protection of Dublin – Belfast road and rail links, including feasibility for high speed rail between Dublin and Belfast, the ongoing development of the N11/M11 to improve connectivity to Rosslare Europort and improvements to the Dublin-Wexford Rail line on the Eastern Corridor, which is an important economic and transport link, particularly in a post Brexit scenario.

### All Island Cohesion

The Strategy recognises the strong links between our Region and Northern Ireland. The Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor is the largest economic agglomeration and national entry point to the island of Ireland, connecting Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry, with major airports and ports in Dublin and Belfast. Notwithstanding the future uncertainty surrounding the border, EMRA recognises the need for cross boundary collaboration in areas such as economic development, transport, tourism and the environment and to progress key energy projects including north-south interconnection of electricity grids, gas pipeline and enhanced East-West interconnection and full interconnection between fibre communications networks in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

### Regional Accessibility

A key strategic outcome of the RSES is the need to protect and enhance regional accessibility to support economic development, build economic resilience and support strengthened rural communities and economies including the blue-green economy and tourism.

#### Connections to the North Western Region

Athlone is strategically located in the centre of Ireland as a gateway to the west, while Longford acts as a strategic portal to the northwest on the Dublin to Sligo rail corridor, also serving Mullingar and Maynooth. Cross boundary co-ordination of future development will support enhanced rail services on the Dublin-Sligo line including DART to Maynooth and completion of greenways along the Royal and Grand Canals, including the Dublin to Westport Greenway and Dublin to Galway Eurovelo Route, along with planned upgrades to the national road network including the M/N4 and development of the cross border A5 route to the N/M2.

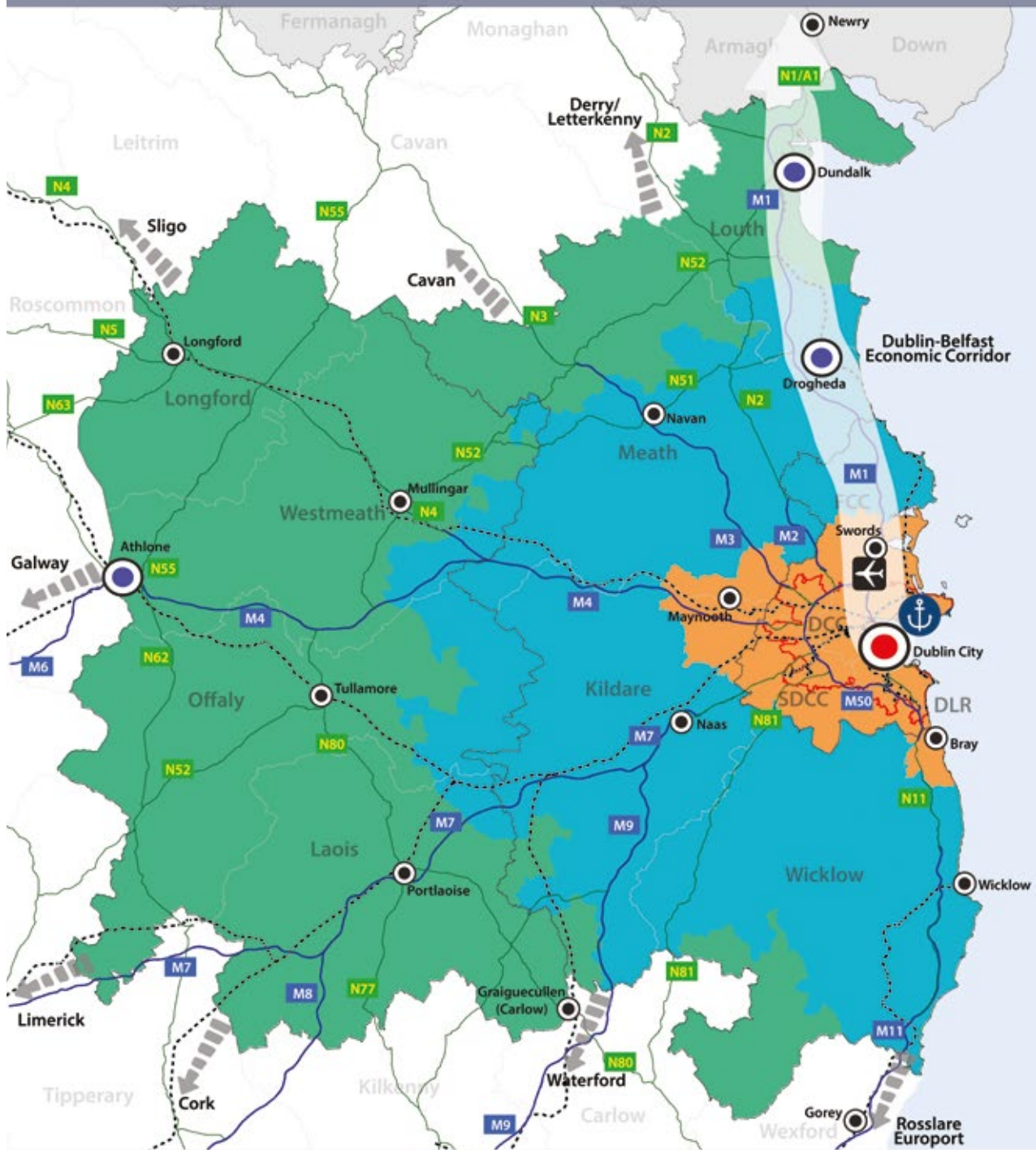
#### Connections to the Southern Region

The Dublin to Cork rail corridor is strategically important linking the two largest cities in the State, and part of the EU TEN-T core network between Belfast, Dublin and Cork. The Dublin to Cork rail corridor also provides commuter rail services to the Dublin hinterlands. The RSES supports a feasibility study for high-speed rail between Dublin and Limerick Junction/Cork and the extension of the DART to Cellbridge/Hazelhatch in north Kildare, along with increased recreational use and links between the Grand Canal and the Barrow connecting Carlow-Graiguecullen with the Southern Region.



# EMRA Growth Strategy - Strategic Connections

International and Interregional Connections



## Map Legend

Dublin Metropolitan Area

Core Region

Gateway Region



Port (TEN-T Core)



Airport (TEN-T Core)

Dublin City and Suburbs (CSO)

Strategic Planning Area (SPA)

Local Authority

Motorway

Primary Roads

Rail Network

● Dublin City and suburbs ● Regional Growth Centres ● Key Towns

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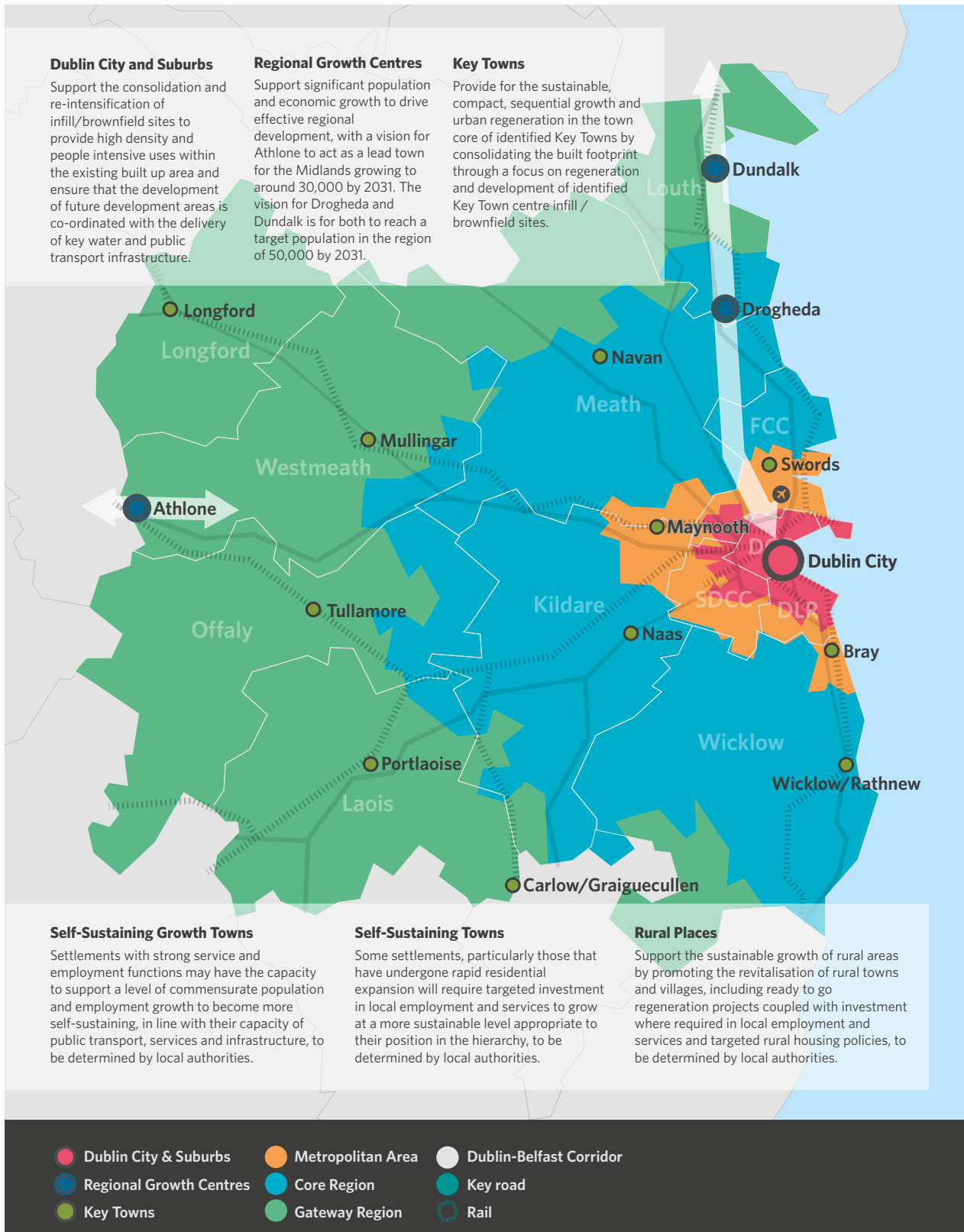


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Data Source: CSO Census 2016

## Spatial Strategy

At the core of the RSES is a settlement strategy for the Region, which will set the framework for local authority development plans in setting out key locations for strategic population and employment growth, coupled with the requisite investment in infrastructure and services.



## Settlement Hierarchy

The NPF sets the policy parameters for the Region to better manage the growth of Dublin as a city of international scale supported by the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda, which form the upper two tiers in the settlement hierarchy. The RSES identifies a third tier of Key Towns, which have the greatest identified assets and potential to act as regional drivers for population and/or employment growth, see Table 4.2.

Settlement Typology	Description	Areas		
		Metropolitan	Core Region	Gateway Region
<b>Dublin City and suburbs</b>	International business core with a highly concentrated and diversified employment base and higher order retail, arts, culture and leisure offer. Acts as national transport hub with strong inter and intra-regional connections and an extensive commuter catchment.	Dublin City and suburbs		
<b>Regional Growth Centres</b>	Regional Growth Centres are large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area.		Drogheda	Athlone Dundalk
<b>Key Towns</b>	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.	Bray Maynooth Swords	Navan Naas Wicklow-Rathnew	Graiguescullen (Carlow) Longford Mullingar Tullamore Portlaoise
<b>Self-Sustaining Growth Towns</b>	i) Self-Sustaining Growth Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.	To be defined by development plans.		
<b>Self-Sustaining Towns</b>	ii) Self-Sustaining Towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining.			
<b>Towns and Villages</b>	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions.	To be defined by development plans.		
<b>Rural</b>	Villages and the wider rural region	To be defined by development plans.		

### The RSES considered the following using an evidence driven asset-based approach in the development of the Settlement Strategy:

- The scale of population, growth rates and local ambition for sustainable compact growth
- The scale of employment provision and commuting flows
- Particular sub-regional interdependencies and influence, for example whether a settlement is located within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, Core Region or Gateway Region
- The extent of local services provision i.e. administration, education- particularly third level, health, retail and amenities
- Levels of relative affluence or deprivation
- The availability of economic development assets and clusters
- Transport accessibility and trip profiles, including internal trips
- Environmental sensitivities, resources and assets
- Current and planned infrastructure capacity

## Guiding Principles for Core Strategies

Local authorities are required, in their development plans to include a core strategy that sets out a settlement hierarchy and evidence-based population and housing targets for all towns, villages and the open countryside. They should maintain consistency with the RSES settlement hierarchy and typology and apply a similar asset-based approach to the consideration of lower-tier settlements.

The Key Towns of Swords, Maynooth, Bray, Navan, Naas, Wicklow-Rathnew, Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore, Portlaoise and Graiguecullen (Carlow) are large economically active county towns, with high quality transport links that play an important service role for their catchments. Further to this, it is acknowledged that there are number of settlements, which also have strong service and employment functions, some of which may have the potential and ambition to become drivers for growth in the county or to play a key role in providing services and employment to their local catchments.

Towns in the lower tiers should provide for commensurate population and employment growth, providing for natural increases and to become more economically self-sustaining, in line with the quality and capacity of public transport, services and infrastructure available. It is considered appropriate that population targets for these towns be defined in the core strategies of development plans, and be reflective of local conditions and place potential. Local authorities should also carefully consider the nature and scale of development, including residential densities and the phasing of development lands, to ensure that towns grow at a sustainable level appropriate to their position in the hierarchy.

**The Implementation Roadmap for the NPF sets out targeted phased population projections to county level for use by local authorities in the formulation of the core strategies of their development plans, see Table 4.3.**

The approach taken in core strategies to realise these population targets should be informed by the transitional population projections methodology set out in the Roadmap, and a robust evidence based Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) that will inform housing policy and land use decisions.

**Table 4.3 NPF Population Projections**

Local Authority	2016	2026 low - 2026 high	2031 low - 2031 high
<b>Dublin City</b>	554,500	613,000 - 625,000	638,500 - 655,000
<b>Dun-Laoghaoire Rathdown</b>	218,000	241,000 - 245,500	250,500 - 257,000
<b>Fingal</b>	296,000	327,000 - 333,000	340,000 - 349,000
<b>South Dublin</b>	279,000	308,000 - 314,000	320,500 - 329,000
<b>Subtotal (Dublin SPA)</b>	<b>1,347,500</b>	<b>1,489,000 - 1,517,500</b>	<b>1,549,500 - 1,590,000</b>
<b>Kildare</b>	222,500	249,000 - 254,000	259,000 - 266,500
<b>Meath</b>	195,000	216,000 - 221,000	225,500 - 231,500
<b>Wicklow</b>	142,500	155,000 - 157,500	160,500 - 164,000
<b>Louth</b>	129,000	139,000 - 144,500	144,000 - 151,500
<b>Subtotal (Eastern SPA)</b>	<b>689,000</b>	<b>759,000 - 777,000</b>	<b>789,000 - 813,500</b>
<b>Westmeath</b>	89,000	96,500 - 98,500	100,000 - 102,500
<b>Laois</b>	84,500	92,500 - 94,000	95,500 - 97,500
<b>Offaly</b>	78,000	85,000 - 86,500	88,000 - 90,000
<b>Longford</b>	41,000	44,500 - 45,500	46,000 - 47,000
<b>Subtotal (Midland SPA)</b>	<b>292,500</b>	<b>318,500 - 324,500</b>	<b>329,500 - 337,000</b>
<b>TOTAL (EMRA)</b>	<b>2,329,000</b>	<b>2,566,500 - 2,619,000</b>	<b>2,668,000 - 2,740,500</b>



## Housing and Regeneration

The NPF identifies a national target of at least 25,000 new homes, half of which are expected in our Region, being required annually in order to satisfy the State's housing needs up to 2040. Achieving this level of supply will require significantly increased national output of 30,000 to 35,000 homes per annum in the years to 2027, to deal with a deficit that has built up since 2010, and will be subject to monitoring and review.

The population projections targeted in the NPF Roadmap are the current benchmark against which delivery may be measured. One of the key elements of the NPF relates to the need for compact growth, with a focus on the regeneration of infill and brownfield sites. Achieving compact growth will require active land management measures by planning authorities, in addition to land zoning. Local authorities will be required to establish a database of strategic brownfield and infill sites so that a 'pipeline' of development opportunities can be kept under review through monitoring and reporting.

The role of regeneration in the delivery of Project Ireland 2040 is acknowledged by the provision of the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds. The National Land Development Agency (LDA) will also support the consolidation and development of strategically located land banks, particularly publicly owned lands, to unlock housing<sup>5</sup> and regeneration opportunities. EMRA will work with local authorities, government departments and relevant agencies to promote co-ordination in the delivery of increased urban densities in city and towns centres.



### Asset Test for the strategic location of new residential development;

- **SCALE** - Is there potential for compact sustainable development, based on the settlements scale, rates of growth, local ambition and availability of serviced lands?
- **FUNCTIONS** - Is there a good level of local employment provision, based on its jobs ratio and net commuting flows, and/or potential to develop complementarities with other places?
- **SERVICES** - Will local services and amenities including community, education, health, leisure and retail be accessible as set out in the '10-minute settlement'<sup>6</sup> concept?
- **PLACEMAKING** - Will the development re-enforce a sense of place and character, and create a healthy and attractive environment in line with good urban design principles?
- **ECONOMIC** - Is there potential for better alignment of housing and employment provision, to strengthen local economies or drive economic development opportunities?
- **CONNECTIVITY** - Is the development accessible to existing/planned public transport and is there potential to improve modal share of public transport, walking and cycling?
- **ENVIRONMENT** - Does the environment have the carrying capacity for development? Is there potential to enhance environmental quality and/or support transition to low carbon/climate resilience?
- **INFRASTRUCTURE** - Is there a requirement for improvements to water, waste water, utilities and/or digital infrastructure and services to support the proposed development?

<sup>5</sup> With a target of delivering at least 40% social and affordable housing on public lands

<sup>6</sup> Accessibility to community facilities and services by walking/cycling from homes or by high quality public transport in larger settlements

## Healthy Placemaking

**Placemaking is an essential link between spatial planning and economic strategy, facilitating improvements to the public realm and people's quality of life and playing an increasingly important role in attracting talent and investment. The creation of healthy and attractive places requires improvements to both physical and social infrastructure and prioritises the incorporation of physical activity in people's daily lives.**

Healthy placemaking, one of three key principles in the RSES, seeks to create vibrant urban centres with a diverse mix of retail, residential and commercial functions and high quality public spaces that are accessible across all societal needs, ages and abilities. Placemaking is also underpinned by the integration of good planning and urban design principles, as set out in Departmental Guidelines 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)'. The RSES introduces a Health Place Checklist to assess the quality of places that make it attractive for business, such as critical mass and urbanisation, connectivity, talent and innovation, networks and policy co-ordination.

NPF Urban and Rural Regeneration Funds supports projects that promote town centre regeneration, address vacancy, public realm improvements and sustainable mobility. The focus on compact growth and increased urban densities will also require a greater focus on the provision of open space and amenities, to prioritise walking and cycling in the design of streets and public spaces, and for new schools and workplaces, and the provision of social infrastructure to address social deprivation<sup>7</sup> and improve health outcomes. Arts and cultural heritage is a key in highlighting distinctiveness of place, with significant potential for creative industries, cultural tourism, and heritage led regeneration.



## Green Infrastructure

**Green Infrastructure (GI) can be broadly defined as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental feature, which is designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings<sup>8</sup>.**

GI can include areas of high biodiversity value grasslands, wetlands, waterways, peatlands, woodlands and uplands, landscape elements such as trees, hedgerows, gardens, parks and open space and blue infrastructure such as rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, ponds and wetlands. Integration of GI into planning requires an understanding of where strategic natural assets are located, the plants and animals that live there and the human activities that take place. Green Infrastructure policy land use zonings are already embedded in some local authority development plans, allowing for the consideration of GI in local planning policy and decision making.

Green Infrastructure is not only key to human health and wellbeing, but also provides multiple benefits which are recognised in national policy documents. The National Biodiversity plan sees GI as crucial to achieving biodiversity targets and developing ecological corridors that allow the movement of species through their entire natural habitat. The Strategy for National and Regional Greenways focuses on the economic and social benefits of creating and connecting greenways, particularly in rural areas, while the Flood Risk Management Guidelines highlight its key role in managing flood risk and adapting to climate change.



### In the preparation of Green Infrastructure Strategies, local authorities shall follow these Guiding Principles;

- Identify and protect existing GI Assets - before development (including spatial mapping where appropriate) and enhance the potential of the existing network through the development of new GI assets during development processes.
- Connectivity is key - interconnect GI assets with each other and with people, providing linkages from built up areas to the countryside. This includes wildlife corridors between areas of high biodiversity value and the development of greenways, blueways and peatways.
- Consider the ecological impacts of greenways - while the development of greenways and blueways has positive health and wellbeing benefits, there is also potential for habitat loss and disturbance due to increased movement of people. Therefore there is a need to strategically plan, deliver and manage our GI networks and ensure appropriately designed infrastructure to reduce the impact on the natural environment.
- Integrate an ecosystem services approach - addressing biodiversity protection, water management and climate action in the planning and management of green spaces, for example provision of street trees, roadside hedges, planting wildflower meadows, introducing wildlife under- and over-passes, permeable surfaces and SuDS along connecting routes and green walls and roofs on buildings.
- Design GI strategies that function at different scales and across boundaries - to this end local authorities should work with their neighbouring authorities to co-ordinate GI strategies and with infrastructure providers to seek out opportunities to develop GI along strategic infrastructure corridors.
- Carbon Sequestration - local authorities should consider the potential for carbon sequestration in GI Strategies, whereby certain areas can be considered as strategic and integral mechanism for the long-term storage of carbon to mitigate the contribution of fossil fuels emissions and combat climate change.
- Integrate built and natural heritage - provide links between walking and cycling routes particularly in areas of high amenity, uplands, lake shores, river banks, forests with built heritage sites, areas of historic or archaeological importance and National Monuments. The development of waymarked ways and looped walks can maximise recreation and tourism benefits to local populations but may require the creation of new rights of way either by agreement or by the use of compulsory powers.

<sup>8</sup> European Union (2013): Building a Green Infrastructure for Europe.

## Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)

The Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) has been prepared in collaboration with local authorities<sup>9</sup> and transport and infrastructure providers and sets out a 12-year strategic planning and investment framework for the Dublin metropolitan area to 2031, with a long term horizon to 2040. The MASP envisages a population of 1.65 million, an additional 250,000 people<sup>10</sup> in the metropolitan area by 2031.

### VISION STATEMENT

**“To build on our strengths to become a smart, climate resilient and global city region, expanding access to social and economic opportunities and improved housing choice, travel options and quality of life for people who live, work, study in or visit the Dublin metropolitan area”**

This high-level vision is underpinned by a spatial framework that supports the overall RSES Settlement Strategy focussed on:

- Consolidation of Dublin city and suburbs
- Key Towns of Swords, Maynooth and Bray
- Planned development of strategic development areas in Donabate, Dunboyne, Leixlip, and Greystones

The supply of quality affordable housing plays a key role in underpinning economic growth and competitiveness. The strategy seeks to ensure a steady supply of serviced sites to achieve compact growth targets of 50% of all new homes within or contiguous to the built-up area of Dublin city and suburbs, and at least 30% in other metropolitan settlements, and to realise opportunities for social as well as physical regeneration.

The MASP is an integrated land use and transportation strategy for the Dublin Metropolitan Area that sets out:

- **A Vision for the future growth of the metropolitan area** and key enablers to achieve compact growth along key public transport corridors and nodes, existing and planned.
- **A number of strategic development areas** to be delivered in tandem with Metrolink, DART and LUAS expansion programmes, Bus Connects and the Greater Dublin Metropolitan Cycle Network, along with the provision of metropolitan scale Green Infrastructure and amenities
- **A sequence of infrastructure priorities** to enable the phased delivery of strategic sites to 2026 (short term); to 2031 (medium term); and to 2040 (long term)

Guiding Principles for the location of strategic employment, are identified that include access to:

- **suitable locations** (depending on the extent to which an enterprise is people or space intensive or subject to environment constraints);
- **served sites** (based on whether an industry is dependent on a particular infrastructure such as energy, water, transport or communications networks);
- **connectivity** (including access to international markets that requires proximity to an airport/port);
- **skilled labour force** (proximity to third level education and lifelong learning) and
- **local strengths** (a diverse sectoral mix, research, innovation and technology centres, start-up hubs and incubators, emerging clusters or cross industry value chains),

See Section 6.3 for full list of Guiding Principles in the RSES.

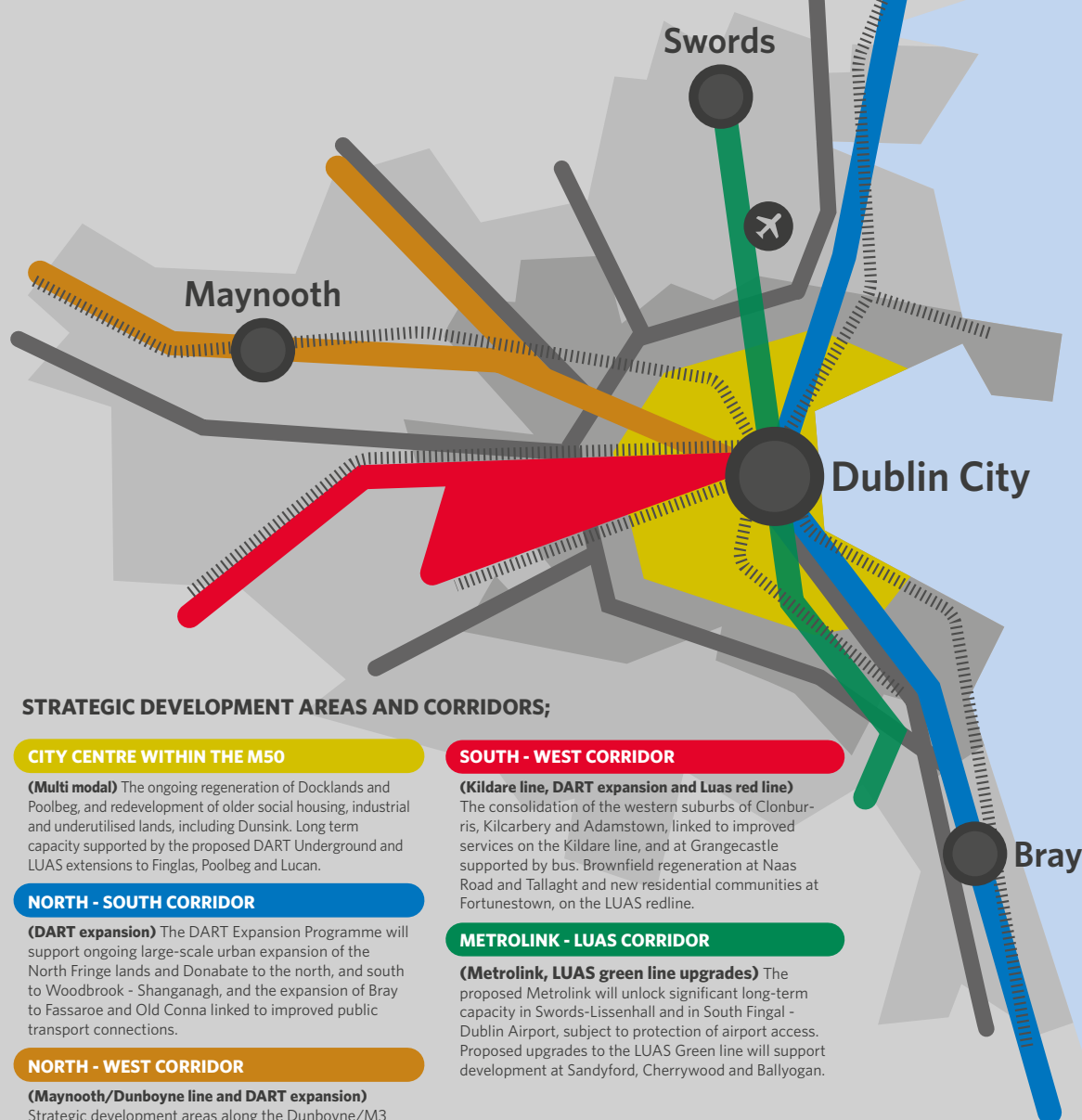
<sup>9</sup> There are seven local authorities in the MASP; Dublin City Council and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Fingal, South Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow County Councils.

<sup>10</sup> Based on a population of 1,403,726 in the Dublin Metropolitan Area in 2016



## Strategic Development Corridors (See Map and Table 5.1);

# Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan



**TABLE 5.1 Strategic Development Areas and Corridors, Capacity Infrastructure and Phasing**

Corridor	Residential	Employment/ Mixed Use	Phasing/Enabling infrastructure
<b>City Centre within the M50</b> (Multi-modal)  <b>Population capacity</b> Short 35,000 Medium 10,000 Long 15,000 <b>Total 60,000</b>	<b>Docklands</b> build out of North Lotts and Grand Canal Docks with further physical and social regeneration of Poolbeg and northeast inner-city lands	Further development of people intensive high tech and services-based business districts in Docklands and Poolbeg	<b>Short to Medium term</b> Dodder bridge, LUAS extension to Poolbeg, local and wider area water upgrades, Waste water upgrades and district heating
	<b>City centre</b> regeneration of older social housing projects (former PPPs), Parkwest-Cherry Orchard, Ballymun, Ashtown-Pelletstown and St James - Heuston lands	Regeneration of Diageo lands, health and education related employment at St James and Grangegorman campus	<b>Short to medium term</b> waste water upgrades, social infrastructure  <b>Long term</b> Long term capacity supported by DART underground
	<b>Naas Road /Ballymount</b> - significant brownfield lands in South Dublin and Dublin City Council areas, with potential for residential development and more intensive employment/ mixed uses	Re-intensification of underutilised lands including Naas road and older industrial estates, subject to feasibility study	<b>Medium to Long term</b> Multi-modal public transport, new Luas stop, site assembly, waste water upgrades and local area water network upgrades
	<b>Dunsink</b> - major greenfield landbank with long term potential to develop a new district centre	Subject to feasibility	<b>Long term</b> LUAS extension to Finglas, access, site conditions, feasibility
<b>North-South corridor</b> (DART)  <b>Population capacity</b> Short 31,000 Medium 13,000 Long 7,000 <b>Total 51,000</b>	<b>North Fringe</b> - large scale urban expansion creating new communities at Clongriffin-Belmayne (Dublin City) and Baldoyle-Stapolin (Fingal)	Completion of mixed-use districts with retail and service provision	<b>Short to medium term</b> Access to rail station, bus upgrades, new road connections, drainage, parks and social infrastructure
	<b>Donabate</b> - significant residential capacity in this strategically located rapidly growing coastal village	Consolidation of economic and service base in tandem with population growth	<b>Short term</b> DART expansion, distributor road and railway bridge, social infrastructure, local area water network and storage upgrades
	<b>South County Dublin - North Wicklow</b> - development of new residential communities at Woodbrook- Shanganagh and Bray Golf course and Harbour lands	Strengthening commercial town functions in Bray, developing IDA strategic site in Greystones to strengthen economic base in North Wicklow	<b>Short term</b> Access road, new station at Woodbrook - Shanganagh. Access to Bray station and PT bridge.
	<b>Bray Fassaroe*</b> - westward extension of Bray at Old Connaught-Fassaroe (Dún Laoghaire) and Bray -Fassaroe (Wicklow) lands	New mixed use residential and employment district at Fassaroe, west of Bray  Greystones Strategic site	<b>Short to medium term</b> High capacity bus between Bray and Fassaroe, distributor road, N/M11 upgrades, new bridge to Old Conna. Waste water upgrades. Local and wider area water network and storage upgrades  <b>Long term</b> LUAS extension to Bray

Corridor	Residential	Employment/ Mixed Use	Phasing/Enabling infrastructure
<b>North-West corridor</b> (Maynooth/ Dunboyne commuter line /DART)  <b>Population capacity</b> Short 24,000 Medium 10,000 Long 3,000 <b>Total 37,000</b>	<b>Dublin 15 lands</b> – continued development of Hansfield linked to the future development of Barnhill and Kellytown landbanks to the south and east	Further development of large-scale employment in Dublin Enterprise Zone** and synergies with Blanchardstown IT	<b>Short term</b> Public transport, Clonsilla Station, water network and waste water upgrades.
	<b>Leixlip</b> – strategic greenfield lands near Confey station with capacity for phased development, improve links to Leixlip and adjoining Dublin/Meath lands	Large scale former Hewlett Packard site and Collinstown site to strengthen employment base for North Kildare	<b>Short to Medium term</b> LUAS extension to Maynooth, roads upgrades, community and social infrastructure, waste water and local water network upgrades
	<b>Maynooth</b> – Significant strategic residential capacity at Railpark lands and to the north and west of the town near Maynooth University	New Research & technology Park adjoining Maynooth University	<b>Short to Medium term</b> DART expansion, road upgrades, bridge, Maynooth Outer Orbital Route, waste water and local water network upgrades
	<b>Dunboyne</b> – Sequential development prioritising zoned and serviced lands near the railway station and town centre and at Dunboyne North / M3 Parkway station	Space intensive 'big box' employment at Portan. Mixed use 'live - work' development at Dunboyne North	<b>Medium to Long term</b> Outer Orbital road, distributor road, additional watermains and waste water upgrades
<b>South western corridor</b> (Kildare line/ DART and LUAS redline)  <b>Population capacity</b> Short 45,000 Medium 21,000 <b>Total 66,000</b>	<b>Western suburbs</b> - Continued development of Adamstown SDZ and the phased development of Clonburris located strategically between the west Dublin suburbs of Lucan and Clondalkin. New residential community at Kilcarbery near Clondalkin.	Promotion of high tech, manufacturing and research and development in Grange Castle Business Park	<b>Short to medium term</b> New roads and railway bridge, new rail station, DART expansion to Cellbridge-Hazelhatch (Adamstown, Clonburris)  Access road and waste water upgrades (Kilcarbery). Public transport and access (Grange Castle). New water network infrastructure to supply Clonburris SDZ and local network upgrades
	<b>LUAS red line</b> - Regeneration of brownfield lands in Tallaght. New district at Fortunestown near emerging town of Saggart/Citywest	Re-intensification of older industrial estates at Naas Road/ Ballymount. Intensification of industrial lands and mixed-use development at Tallaght Town Centre/Cookstown	<b>Short to Medium term</b> Brownfield conditions and site assembly waste water upgrades and Citywest junction link at Tallaght/Fortunestown
<b>Metrolink / LUAS Greenline Corridor</b> (Metrolink/ LUAS)  <b>Population capacity</b> Short 28,000 Medium 25,000 Long 18,000 <b>Total 71,000</b>	<b>Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown</b> – New and emerging mixed-use districts of Cherrywood and Sandymount. New residential communities in Ballyogan and environs and Kiltiernan-Glenamuck	Continued development of high-density business districts at Cherrywood and Sandymount. New mixed use centres in Ballyogan and Kiltiernan	<b>Short to Medium term</b> LUAS green line upgrades. Public transport and roads upgrades. New road and bridge and N11 junction (Cherrywood) and water upgrades
	<b>Swords</b> – sequential development of strategic residential sites within Swords and development of Oldtown-Mooretown lands	Airport related, commercial facilities and employment linked to development of Metrolink	<b>Short to Medium term</b> Public realm, pedestrian and cyclist provision. Road improvements, BusConnects. Additional runway and improved access (Airport). Waste water upgrades. Local and wider area water network upgrades
	<b>Swords – Lissenhall</b> – new mixed-use urban district on the northern side of Swords linked to delivery of Metrolink	Development of high-tech research and development employment within a campus setting at Lissenhall East	<b>Medium to Long term</b> Improved bus connections, Metrolink, roads improvements and expanded internal road network and waste water upgrades

\*Development at Fassaroe will be undertaken in collaboration between Wicklow County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and the transport agencies

\*\*Dublin Enterprise Zone is not directly served by existing or planned rail and will require improve bus connections and demand management measures

## Economic Strategy

This is the first time that Irish planning is required to deliver an economic strategy intrinsic to a regional spatial plan. The strategy promotes smart specialisation and clustering policies to develop a strong economic base in the Region, underpinned by orderly growth in our settlement strategy and investment in 'placemaking' to create places that are attractive to live, work, study, visit and invest in.



### Spatial Enterprise Strategy

Smart specialisation strategies involve extensive stakeholder engagement to identify the strategic assets and potential of different places, to encourage collaboration between industry and research and to drive the commercialisation of science and technology innovation. This is supported by 'cluster' policies to strengthen networks between key sectors, to capitalise on economies of scale and develop a favourable ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship. There is also potential to strengthen collaboration between foreign and Irish owned enterprises, and between public bodies, industry and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

### Regional Economic Drivers

To ensure Dublin continues to fulfil its role as an economic driver, while at the same time addressing the economic potential of the rest of the Region, the Strategy is underpinned firstly; by an orderly growth strategy, through the managed growth of Dublin, increased critical mass in the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Dundalk and Drogheda, and supported by an integrated network of key towns, and secondly; by investment in placemaking and human capital (skills and talent), to create the right conditions for enterprises and people to thrive, which is key in a competitive global environment where talent and investment are increasingly mobile in their location choices.



## Economic Opportunity for All

To create the right conditions and opportunities for the Region to realise sustained economic growth, is one of three cross cutting principles underpinning the RSES. EMRA will work with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DEBI), the economic agencies (Enterprise Ireland, IDA), Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), Regional Skills Fora and other stakeholders to diversify local and rural economies and create quality jobs that ensure a good standard of living for all.

To support inclusive growth throughout the Region, particularly in deprived or underperforming areas and areas that have a higher risk from disruptive technologies, the RSES sets out policies that seek to diversify local economies, address skills shortages and lifelong learning, and promote SMEs and indigenous enterprise to support sustainable job creation and local enterprise development. The strategy recognises the role of the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) and Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), in supporting and stimulating a pipeline to sustain inclusive growth including supports for start-ups, SMEs and social enterprises.

The Action Plan for Rural Development 2020 aims to promote investment in and the diversification of rural economies. The RSES supports investment in rural broadband and the provision of serviced sites and co-working/incubator space in towns and villages of all sizes in order to develop the potential offered by improved connectivity and digitisation and to drive innovation and enterprise development in all parts of the Region. Key opportunities for the diversification of rural economies include the development of agriculture, tourism, food, forestry, marine, energy, bio economy and low carbon sectors. The development of greenways can contribute to unique tourism offerings that support the rural economy and job creation, as well as protecting and promoting natural assets and biodiversity.

## Skills, Enterprise and Innovation

A strong future economy is underpinned by skills, innovation and enterprise development.

In the face of emerging global challenges, such as Brexit, tax and trade developments, climate change and disruptive technologies, the RSES seeks to sustain what we have in the immediate term, transform our enterprise base for longer term resilience, and build on our strengths in international trade while managing potential vulnerabilities to external risks. EMRA will work with key stakeholders to promote the development of skills and entrepreneurship, sites for high-tech and high potential startups, smart city programmes and collaboration between public bodies, industries and research to leverage competitive funds including NPF Regeneration, Disruptive Technologies and Climate Funds.

The place-based approach is supported by regional policies to develop key employment intensive sectors which are of particular importance to the Region;

- Retail;** The retail sector is a significant employer that also plays a key role in creating attractive liveable places. The RSES supports urban design and placemaking initiatives to promote town centre renewal and the preparation of a new retail strategy for the Region that reflects current economic conditions. Until such time, significant retail development shall be consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 and the retail hierarchy for the region as expressed in Table 6.1
- Tourism;** Our landscapes and heritage are key drivers for tourism in the region, which has three of the four Failte Ireland's regional tourism brands (Dublin- Surprising by Nature, Ireland's Ancient East and Hidden Heartlands). The RSES supports the preparation of local tourism strategies that seek to protect and enhance our natural and cultural tourism assets to drive experiential and activity-based tourism and drive investment in destination towns that serve as hubs for their rural hinterlands.
- Marine;** The marine sector is a growing sector that includes shipping and maritime transport, energy, tourism, fisheries, seafood, aquaculture and offshore renewables. The RSES supports the preparation of the National Marine Spatial Plan and will work with key stakeholders to promote integrated land and marine planning and to align 'blue growth' with the sustainable use of shared marine resources.
- Agriculture;** Agriculture is a key sector in the Region, but one which faces challenges from encroaching urbanisation, Brexit and CAP reform and in meeting climate obligations. There is an opportunity to support more sustainable farming practices in the Region such as local agri-food, biomass, permaculture, agri-forestry and anaerobic digestion to produce renewable energy from farm wastes, and to develop on farm and on farm activities as part of a unique tourism and leisure offer.
- Low carbon /circular and bioeconomy;** The Climate Strategy sets out policies to accelerate a shift from fossils fuels to a range of low and zero-carbon sources, including renewable energy and secondary heat sources. The EMRA will work with enterprise development agencies, LEOs and other stakeholders to realise regional opportunities for a low carbon / circular economy and to support the development of clean energy and green technologies.

## Climate Strategy

Climate change is a global challenge that requires a strong and coherent response at national, regional and local level. Observed and projected climate impacts in Ireland include sea level and temperature rise, more intense rainfall and frequent weather extremes and increased pressure on our natural eco-systems and water resources. The RSES is underpinned by three cross-cutting key principles, one of which is the need for accelerated climate action.

The National Mitigation Plan specifies measures to reduce emissions with a focus on energy, the built environment and transport. However, no matter how successful efforts to reduce emissions are, there will still be a need for climate proofing to reduce our vulnerability to climate risks. The National Adaption Framework sets out measures to reduce impacts and take advantage of new opportunities at sectoral and local level. Project Ireland 2040 also includes a dedicated Climate Action fund and a ten year capital investment plan to achieve national strategic outcomes that include compact growth, sustainable mobility and transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society.

A key element of the Climate Strategy is the need to monitor progress towards achieving our national commitment to reduce GHG emissions by 40% to 2030 and to support a transition to a low carbon society by 2050. EMRA will work with the Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO's) to establish a regional GHG emission inventory and agree reduction targets in accordance with national sectoral plans. Climate policy objectives are integrated throughout the RSES, including the following priorities;



## Energy and Waste

The Region is the major load centre on the Irish electricity transmission system. The Strategy supports development of smart grids to accommodate more diverse power flows from renewable generation harnessing on-shore and off-shore potential from wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to major demand centres. Reducing energy emissions will require transition from fossil fuels (including peat-fired stations in the Midlands) and high embodied carbon products, towards renewable energy and biobased products. The RSES supports a 'just transition' in the Midlands, the development of Strategic Renewable Energy Zones (SEZ), 'sustainable energy communities' and District Heating in the Region and to promote better waste management and circular economy opportunities, in line with the Regional Waste Management strategy.

## Flood Resilience and Water

The Region has experienced a number of severe flooding events in recent years, particularly on flood plains and in coastal areas, with flood risks predicted to climate change. This is addressed through the provision of Flood Risk Management Plans and Regional Flood Risk Assessment prepared as part of the SEA of the RSES. The Strategy supports implementation of CFRAM flood alleviation measures and priority flood relief schemes and will work with CAROs to identify projected Climate Impact Areas and support future proofing of critical infrastructure. Conserving and enhancing water resources is a key priority for the Region, including delivery of national water supply and waste-water infrastructure and incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and improved storm water infrastructure to address flooding in line with the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans.

## Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services

Natural eco-systems provide us with vital services such as food, clean air and water, that are key to human health and wellbeing and provide water attenuation and flood protection. High biodiversity habitats such as wetlands, woodlands and peatlands also act as important biodiversity and carbon sinks. Climate change and biodiversity loss pose a significant threat to the functions of ecosystems with warmer temperatures also leading to the spread of invasive species. The strategy promotes the incorporation of eco-system services and natural management measures in landuse plans to ensure that land use changes do not adversely impact the ability of the natural environment to absorb climate impacts. The development of multi-functional Green Infrastructure (GI) and blueways / greenways will also require careful routing and design to protect areas of environmental sensitivity.

## Built Environment

The RSES provides a spatial framework to promote compact growth as an alternative to continued urban sprawl, which is having a negative impact on both the environment and people's health and wellbeing. Significant growth is directed towards designated settlements with ambitious targets for at least 50% of all new homes to be built, to be within or contiguous to the existing built up area of Dublin city and suburbs, at least 30% for other urban areas, and to promote better use of under-utilised, brownfield and public lands. Policy objectives also support retrofitting of existing public buildings and housing stock to achieve NEEAP energy efficiency targets, and for all new buildings to achieve near zero energy (NZEB) standards.

## Sustainable Transport

The RSES promotes the integration of land use and transport to ensure future development is planned in a manner which reduces the impact of the need to travel on people's lives and reduces emissions. This is supported by policies that prioritise development that is, or will be, most accessible by walking, cycling and public transport and to promote a shift towards sustainable modes of transport, and to support a transition to lower carbon and electric vehicles. EMRA will prepare a regional inventory to monitor and agree targets to reduce emissions from road transport in the Region.

## Environmental Assessment

**The RSES forms a regional tier under the National Planning Framework and is supported by a lower tier of county and local level plans where further detail is developed. Where other strategies and plans undergo review, they will also require more focussed feasibility and environmental assessment including assessment of their impact on carbon emissions, in line with upcoming departmental guidance.**

**At the project level, all applications for development consents that may have likely significant effects on the environment will need to be accompanied by one or more of the following, as deemed necessary under the relevant legislation;**

- An Ecological Impact Assessment Report (EclA),
- Environmental Report (ER) including Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)
- An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)
- Natura Impact Statement (NIS)

## Implementation and Investment Framework

In making the RSES, EMRA worked closely with local authorities, government departments, state agencies and other stakeholders through Technical Working Groups and a Senior Officials Advisory Group. Implementation requires continued collaboration and coordination, across boundaries, sectors and organisations, and in the allocation of funds, to drive delivery at national, regional and local level.

A number of structures are in place to drive implementation, including;

- RSES and MASP Implementation Groups** - EMRA will establish implementation groups with key stakeholders, to monitor and review implementation of the RSES and the MASP. The evidence base will be updated to support development of indicators to monitor delivery.
- Review of City and County Development Plans** within six months of RSES adoption and broadly aligned from 2019/21 to 2026/27, along with Local Area Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs). Key state agencies and sectoral bodies to consider their strategies and investment plans in light of the NPF and RSES. The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) has a monitoring role to ensure alignment with national and regional policy.
- Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board** to oversee delivery of NPF/NDP by key departments<sup>11</sup> and to co-ordinate cross sectoral funding and regional investment decisions. A new Land Development Agency (LDA) has been established to unlock state lands for housing and regeneration.
- Project Ireland and other funds** - the RSES is a key policy framework for accessing funds including the four Project Ireland funds - Urban and Rural Regeneration, Disruptive Technology and Climate Action - as well as the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, Enterprise Funding Schemes, EU funds and the European Investment Bank.
- EU programmes** - the Regional Assembly aims to have an increased role in the management and funding of European programmes post 2020, in line with the other Regional Assemblies.



<sup>11</sup> Lead NDP departments; DHPLG, DBEI, DTTAS, DRCD, DAFM, DCCAE, OPW, commercial SOEs, DCYA, DES, DH



## Infrastructure Investment

The RSES provides a policy framework to prioritise the delivery of key enabling infrastructure and services by government and state agencies.

### Transport

The NTAs Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area provides a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure in the Region. Transport policies and objectives for the Midlands and County Louth, as well as the GDA include:

- The on-going management and enhancement of the national and strategic road networks to address the Region's intra-regional, interregional and international connectivity.
- The maintenance of an appropriate level of rail service and enhancements
- Provision for enhanced regional and local bus services
- Improvements to walking and cycling provision in towns and villages; and
- Improvements to public transport provision in rural areas.

The RSES supports the protection and improvement of the national road network and connectivity to it and the delivery of key public transport projects; Bus Connects, Metrolink and the DART and LUAS expansion programmes, whilst at the same time providing for an appropriate level of commuter rail service in the Midlands and South-East, bus corridors between major regional settlements, park and ride at strategic nodes and improved rural transport and universal access. The RSES also supports delivery of the National Cycle Plan within the Region inclusive of the Greenway and Blueway projects.

The integration of transport and land use planning in the Region shall be consistent with the guiding principles in the transport strategy of the RSES to facilitate a shift towards sustainable mobility. Investment will be delivered through local transport plans (LTPs), to be prepared in collaboration with transport agencies, for settlements in the Region to include, but not limited to, Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda, Portlaoise, Mullingar, Tullamore, Longford, Balbriggan, Navan, Naas, Newbridge, Wicklow-Rathnew, Ashbourne, Arklow and urban areas in the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

### Communications Network and Digital Infrastructure

The growth of the digital economy is impacting on every aspect of our lives: from transport, to education, leisure and entertainment and health services. The Strategy supports the development of all-island fibre communications links and a high-quality communications network throughout the Region, and the roll out of smart city programmes to promote Ireland as an international destination for exploitation of ICT.

The National Broadband Plan will play an integral role in supporting businesses opportunities and enhancing our communities, particularly in rural and peripheral areas of the Region, in order to achieve balanced social and economic development.

### Water/Waste Water

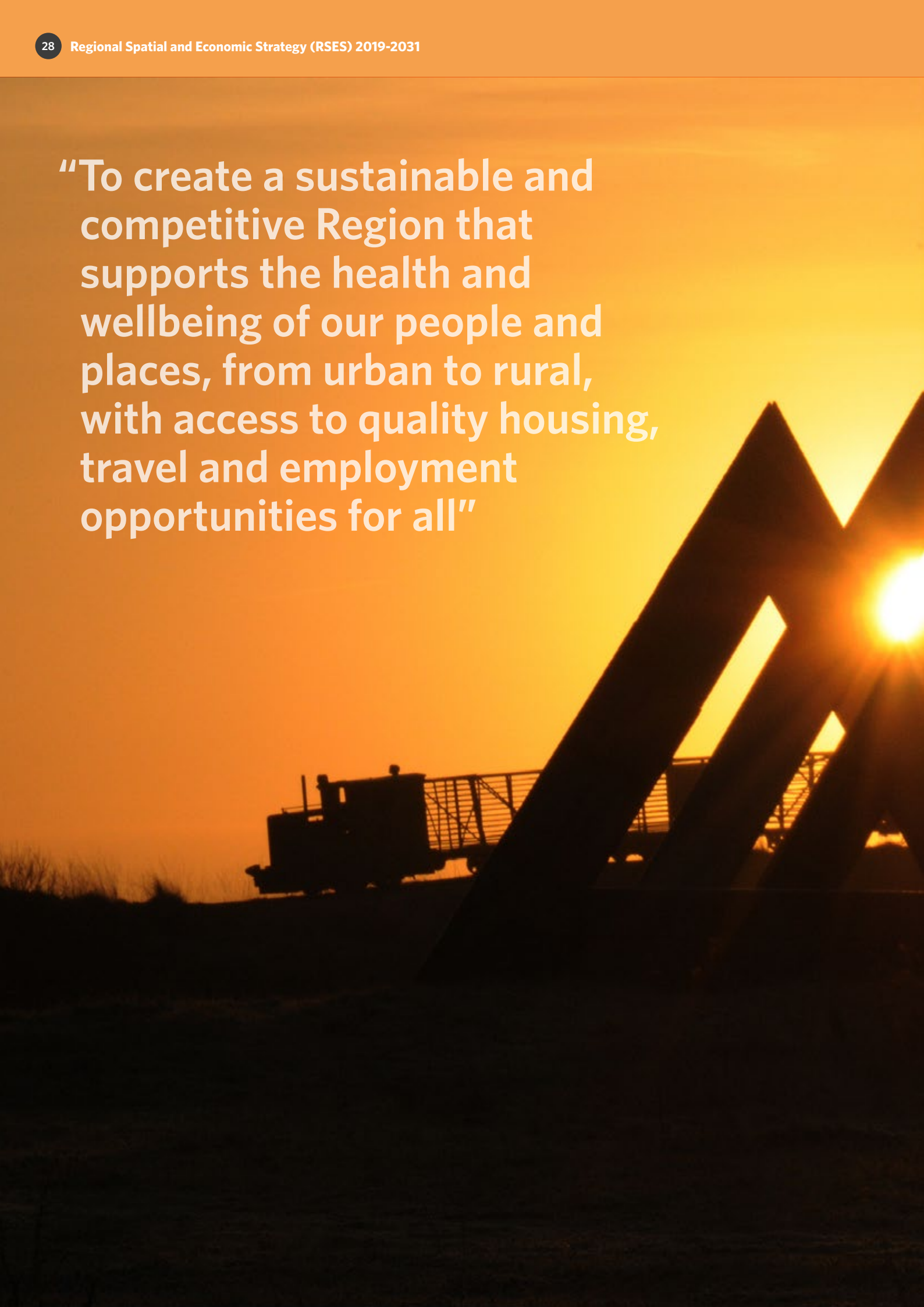
The sustainable growth of the Region requires the provision of services and infrastructure in a plan led manner to ensure that there is adequate capacity to support future growth in the Region. Pollution from urban waste water is one of the key threats to water quality in the Region. To address this, the Strategy supports delivery of the Greater Dublin Drainage Project, Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant Project, Athlone Main Drainage Project and Upper Liffey Valley Sewerage Scheme.

A key priority is to work with Irish Water to ensure delivery of the Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midland Region to provide for water security up to 2050 along with ongoing investment in network upgrades and to reduce leakage, the Rural Water Programme and Vartry water supply scheme.

### Waste Management

The Eastern and Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015 - 2021 sets out waste policy for the Region, highlighting the value of waste as a resource and promoting a move towards a circular economy, where materials are retained in use for as long as possible and are then re-used or recycled leaving a minimum of residual waste. Local authorities should achieve waste reduction, increases in material re-use and recycling and reductions in waste going for disposal and shall promote the inclusion in developments of storage space that support the separate collection of dry recyclables and food.

**“To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all”**







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Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
**2040**



Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre  
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly