



**Cork
Chamber**
Advancing business together

Submission to Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy

March 2019

CorkChamber.ie

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Introduction

Cork Chamber is the leading business organisation in Cork, proactively working to identify and progress developments that are facilitative of economic and sustainable growth. Representing an employer base of close to 1,200 businesses and over 100,000 employees across the region, our vision is to make Cork the best place for business.

In representing the voice of business, we take this opportunity to restate the support of Cork Chamber to the development of a strong and actionable vision for Cork and the wider Southern Region, and we believe that the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) can be the opportune policy vehicle to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive road map to deliver for economic, social and environmental priorities.

We commend the Southern Regional Assembly for their work and engagement to date in developing the draft RSES along with the level of public engagement as part of the consultation phase. We welcome this opportunity to submit observations which are aimed at further strengthening the fundamentals of the RSES and its efficacy as a policy and development framework for the future sustainable growth of the Southern Region.

As part of our submission formulation, Cork Chamber has attended a range of RSES related presentations and workshops to ensure the robustness and reflectiveness within our observations. We have engaged with our members to capture the priorities of business from an economic growth, technology and energy, skills attraction and retention, placemaking, environmental, quality of life, social and community perspective.

Cork Chamber Consultation Process

In developing our submission we took a number of steps including;

1. Ann Bogan, Cork City Council presentation to Cork Chamber Public Affairs Council
2. Irish Planning Institute Workshop attendance
3. Southern Regional Assembly workshop attendance
4. Stakeholder outreach to businesses and external groups
5. Internal workshop with Chamber Public Affairs Council and our Thought Leaders Council.

Executive Summary

Chamber Vision for Cork 2040

The Chamber's vision for Cork is aligned with the joint stakeholder document 'Cork 2050 - Realising the Full Potential'. The vision is for a vibrant high-density city region serviced by quality North-South and East-West transport corridors. Connected regionally, nationally and internationally Cork is home to a healthy, sustainable, educated, skilled, confident, and entrepreneurial community.

As Ireland's second city region, Cork will continue to grow, enhancing its scale and economic value, acting as the fulcrum and economic driver for the Southern Region, complementing Dublin to secure the future resilience of the Irish economy. We fully endorse the position of Cork, as set out in the draft Southern Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy, page 209:

"The population of the Cork Metropolitan Area in 2016, at over 304,000, is almost one fifth of the Southern Region's total population. It is the second largest metropolitan area in the State after Dublin and is larger in scale than the Limerick-Shannon, Galway and Waterford Metropolitan Areas combined."

The NPF recognises the scale and critical mass of Cork as a key differentiator compared to other locations where it states with respect to the role of cities that "Cork is emerging as an international centre of scale and is well placed to complement Dublin, but requires significantly accelerated and urban focused growth to more fully achieve this role". We maintain that the critical role of Cork in facilitating the Southern Region to meet its population and economic growth targets is carried through to the final RSES.

Cork Chamber highlights the criticality that an adopted RSES for the Southern Region engenders flexibility and adaptability, prioritising the development of strengthened economic, societal and environmental pillars to ensure sustainable growth and a region that meets the needs of its current and future generations.

It is believed that 65% of children joining the school system for the first time will work in a sector which hasn't been thought up or invented yet. The RSES therefore needs to be robustly premised on sound strategic planning priorities and objectives. The RSES must include a roadmap identifying the key enablers to ensure a diversity of activities, energy and transport technologies, technologically enabled and connected population centres, and business innovation hubs to adopt successful growth models across urban and rural areas.

In this submission, we focus on identifying the key enablers of sustainable growth and development across the Southern Region. Our key points are listed below. These, we believe, will be critical to the RSES successfully achieving its objectives.

Key Points

- **The central position of City Regions** as economic drivers in Ireland 2040 must be carried through to the adopted RSES.
- **RSES Decision Making and Implementation Process** – ensuring Ireland 2040 is implemented and not eroded over time and that the RSES supports this and does not undermine it
- **Implement and Monitor Ireland 2040** - Reinforcement of the alignment of Ireland 2040 and the national Development Plan and Cork's unique position with it. (p.209)
- **Compact growth and high density** - Creating of thriving, sustainable cultural and economic hubs while also taking account of viability

- **International Connectivity** – The critical nature of international connectivity for our open economy
- **Public Transport** - Importance of public and sustainable transport in facilitating stable economic growth, meeting environmental targets, and in reducing unsustainable transport
- **Jobs of the future** - Building an economy and infrastructure that can adapt to the jobs of the future. In this respect, we emphasise the importance of digital infrastructure, clusters and co-working supports to enable our rural areas to prosper.
- **Counter cyclical investment:** Importance of continued infrastructural investment irrespective of economic cycle.
- **Energy, Climate Change Mitigation and the Circular Economy** Importance of state investment in large scale renewable deployment, and community-based initiatives.
- **Alignment of all public policies** with the vision of Ireland 2040 and the stated strategic priorities of a RSES.

Central position of City Regions

The five City Regions of Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford are Ireland's engines for sustainable economic growth and have been identified as such by Government planning in the National Planning Framework (NPF), Ireland 2040. Population growth is a significant challenge, as well as an opportunity, with growth of 20-25% for Dublin and 50-60% for Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford targeted in the National Planning Framework. To achieve these targets in a sustainable way, we must invest in infrastructure in these cities and support their proper planning and development.

While Ireland's five cities are in different stages of their development, a common set of challenges and opportunities for growth are shared. The NPF sets out a series of objectives for the five cities, including targets and guidelines for infrastructure, centres of commerce, public realm and housing in densely populated urban cores to support projected population growth. These targets need to be reached for our five cities to compete internationally and to serve their regions to reach their potential.

If these targets are to be reached in the stated NPF timeline, there needs to be prompt decision making and action across all areas of development, and, complete commitment to the goals from all Government departments at national, regional and indeed local level.

The Chambers of Commerce in the 5 city regions have come together under the banner of City Regions Ireland in recognition that the nation's urban centres share similar challenges and aspirations. In one voice, we have identified a set of principal areas of focus: infrastructure, housing, planning to inform policy making, maximise growth, and tackle the common issues and opportunities in our urban areas.

With a vision to increase the population of the Southern Region to almost two million by 2040, equating to an approximate extra 225,000 people in employment, Cork by virtue of its existing population and metropolitan land area represents a significant proportion of this future growth. The population of the Cork Metropolitan Areas in 2016 at 304,000 is almost one fifth of the Southern Region's total population, is the second largest metropolitan area in the State after Dublin, larger in scale than that Limerick-Shannon, Galway and Waterford Metropolitan Areas collectively. National growth targets see an estimated 283,700 population in Cork City and suburbs by 2031, with the rest of the Metropolitan Area growing to 125,000.

Cork is a City region that has the proven capacity as an economic engine, as a location with the scale, capacity, track record and available natural resources to drive the national and international agenda. Population growth demands the requisite infrastructure investment to successfully meet this opportunity. With the Cork Metropolitan Area having a jobs growth target for 65,000+ by 2031, it is critical that the Cork City region is enabled through strategic communications infrastructure, social infrastructure, a diversified and resilient energy supply, and public transport corridors connecting high density population centres and strategic employment areas.

Recommendation:

- 1. The central position of City Regions as economic drivers must be carried through to the adopted RSES.**

RSES Decision Making and Implementation Process

It is critical that the decision making and implementation processes of the Regional Assembly relative to the RSES & Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) do not dilute the integrity of Ireland 2040 and the vision it sets forth. To use a simple analogy, the composition of the Assembly in its current format can be described as akin to the US Senate, with individual representatives appointed based on geography rather than density of population. To balance this, the US system has a house of representatives, which, broadly speaking, represents the public based on population. Together with the executive office, they create a balanced democratic structure. However, the Regional Assembly does not create this balance. As such the economic engines of the City Regions are not adequately represented by their scale and consequently risk being undermined.

We are concerned about the under-representation of residents of metropolitan areas in the Regional Assemblies. We propose increasing the number of elected representatives from the five city regions to better reflect their populations, and their roles as drivers of regional growth as outlined in the National Planning Framework. This change to city region representation must be complemented by changes to the voting processes for the MASPs. There is a democratic deficit in the regional assemblies as currently constituted, and city residents and their interests are seriously under-represented, while those of more rural areas are comparably over-represented. We believe that without a strong executive and political voice for the Metropolitan Regions, to coordinate the making and implementation of the MASP for the cities, the strategic plans will not be effective. As the MASPs will determine the development of Ireland's cities in the years ahead, it is essential that the decision-making structures are properly configured from the outset.

We have serious concerns about proposals for how the MASPs will be drafted and decided upon. As we understand, decision making sits with the Assembly representatives with input from local authority stakeholders. This means that elected members and officials from outside of the affected area will be able to determine the content of MASPs, even though their constituents will not be directly impacted by the plan. Since Regional Assemblies do not have a majority of urban councillors, this voting structure means that members from other parts of a region could potentially implement a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan without the consent of the majority of elected representatives from the metropolitan area concerned.

As such, MASPs that set the parameters for important developments within their areas, will not be decided upon solely by representatives from the affected area. This is inimical to the principles of democratic decision-making, economic efficiency and good planning. These issues could be addressed through amendments to the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016. Alternatively, they can be addressed via secondary legislation, e.g. by amendment to the Local Government Establishment Order 2014. These amendments would not in any way negatively impact other counties but would allow the proposed MASPs for city regions to be more effective and make Regional Assembly representation fairer and more proportionate for citizens living in all parts of each region.

Short of addressing this issue, we strongly caution that we cannot afford to undermine the economic value of City Regions in the interpretation of Ireland 2040, and the NDP through either the RSES or the MASP process.

Recommendation:

1. Reform the Assembly decision making structure on MASPS and metropolitan representation levels to ensure that the objectives of Ireland 2040 are implemented, rather than undermined by the RSES.

Implementation and Monitoring of Ireland 2040

Infrastructure

To support continued investment and business confidence in our City Regions, it is essential that there is enhanced transparency in relation to delivery timelines and availability of funding. Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan usefully endorse projects that will be critical enablers for Cork and the Southern Region, yet there is limited visibility of timelines and delivery milestones. If we are to be ambitious and to be delivery focussed, these details must be made available through the RSES and MASPs. They will be essential for trust in the documents as effective instruments for delivery.

There are multiple examples of nation states that take this approach and we believe that it would be hugely beneficial for investor certainty and for the continuity of counter-cyclical spend during challenging economic cycles. New South Wales¹, for example, has a readily available infrastructure tracker dashboard, which shows the stage of project development, the cost, the timelines and the responsible party among other details. It is critical that the RSES takes a similar approach building on the initial steps taken by DPER.

THE NSW INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE

Sort by: NAME ▼ Search for keyword VIEW KEY

Click on a project to view details

Project Name	Estimated Project Value	Procurement Strategy	Project Phase	Construction Procurement Commence Date	Construction Commence Date	Contact
TRANSPORT						
Bus Priority Infrastructure Program	TBA	Various	RP	Ongoing	Ongoing	Contact
Central Precinct Renewal	\$\$\$\$	TBA	SP	Q3 2020	Q1 2021	Contact
Cycling Investment Program	\$	TBA	SP	TBA	TBA	Contact
Delivering Sydney Clearways	TBA	Various	RP	Ongoing	Ongoing	Contact
Digital Systems - Onboard (Fleet)	\$	ECI	D	Q2 2019	TBA	Contact
Digital Systems- Digital Train Radio System and Fixed Telecommunication Network Updates	\$	ECI	D	Q3 2019	TBA	Contact
Electrical Substations and Sectioning Equipment Hut Replacement	\$	D&C	RP	Ongoing	Ongoing	Contact
F6 Extension Stage 1	\$\$\$\$	TBA	D	Q2 2019	Q4 2020	Contact

Reference: Infrastructure NSW, independent statutory agency

Relating to specific infrastructure projects, improved connectivity from Cork to Limerick, Waterford and the Southern Region will require investment in the Dunkettle Interchange, the M20 and Northern Ring Road, the N22 (including the corridor between Ballincollig and Macroom), and the N25, encouraging further collaboration and driving growth in the Southern Region. The delivery of

¹ See <http://www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au/expert-advice/pipeline-of-projects/> for further insight.

the M28 is critical to the continued success of the global cluster of economic activity that has been long established in Ringaskiddy.

The full implementation of Bus Connects, the City Centre Movement Strategy, the Little Island Transport Strategy, opening of Kilbarry train station, increased frequency of rush hour rail and bus services, extension of the Coke Bike Scheme, and the implementation of the Cork Cycle Network Plan, are essential to transform our public transport provision and to catalyse a change in commuter patterns and mode. Commuters require this step change in service provision and infrastructure. Without this we are limiting the adoption of sustainable commuting patterns and behaviours as well as curtailing the sustainable and healthy growth of our City regions.

In addition, Project Ireland 2040 confirms the need to invest in Cork's social and health infrastructure, including Cork Events Centre, a new general hospital, elective only hospital, primary care centres, and a dental school.

These major infrastructure proposals are not only of regional importance, but also critical at a national level, enabling the Southern Region to compete effectively and robustly complement the Greater Dublin Area and perform strongly in an international context.

Recommendation:

- 1. The availability of transparent project plans, timelines and budget availability must be made available for all economic and social infrastructure projects set out in the National Development Plan and Ireland 2040, i.e. a project tracker webpage**
- 2. The availability of interim milestones across specific projects and progress indicators must be agreed and published.**
- 3. Necessity of alignment of capital spend of the Urban and Rural Regeneration Funds and other competitive funds under Ireland 2040 with the strategic objectives of the RSES and Project Ireland 2040.**

Compact Growth and High Density

We note the draft RSES objective to promote compact growth through achieving a minimum 50% of all new homes to be developed within the existing built-up footprint of Cork, and 30% in other metropolitan settlements. This objective is a clear and welcome departure from historic planning mistakes, for which the Southern Assembly should be commended.

Nevertheless, while there is massive opportunity in Cork's Docklands to realise compact growth targets (Tivoli: 3,000 residential units and 4,000 jobs planned; City Docks: 29,000 employees and around 9,500 housing units planned) we caution that regulatory and policy guidelines must be amended to make brownfield developments economically viable.

Across Cork's skyline we are seeing cranes building office blocks, hotels, traditional housing and student accommodation; all of which are private sector investments. However, apartments/high density developments have not yet come on stream. From our members in construction, we understand that it is currently not economically attractive to construct build-to-let apartments in urban centres as envisioned under the NPF and the RSES. Infill and brownfield developments are both complex and costly. The importance of ensuring viability in achieving growth targets must be

recognised and acted upon or else brownfield housing developments of the density aimed for will not happen to the scale proposed under the RSES.

We also note that the draft RSES proposes the “application of sustainable higher densities, acknowledging variability and flexibility in application to take account of local circumstances” (p. 75). While Cork Chamber fully supports the objective of realising high densities in our urban centres, which in turn is required for enhanced public transport including light rail, we suggest that the RSES considers that there may be a need for greater flexibility in suburban areas which matches market demand.

The RSES should provide clear policy direction that higher density should be focused on core city areas with medium-high densities acceptable within the suburban area.

Recommendations:

- 1. The practicalities of delivering high density, including economic viability, must be recognised and actioned under the RSES and national policy instruments.**
- 2. Flexibility in density targets in suburban areas may be required.**
- 3. Transparency around targets relating to density and economic growth and current baseline i.e. progress tracker**

Public Realm & Cultural Space

Cities and town centres need to be vibrant, economically, culturally and socially with an appropriate mix of retail, office, residential, green spaces and public realm and to be well connected through a public transport system. They need to be attractive, safe and vibrant, by day and by night.

Key areas of the public realm within city and town centres need to be appropriately funded for rejuvenation to improve liveability, encourage tourism and consumer activity. The Urban Regeneration Fund must be facilitative of this with funding allocated appropriately to the City Regions that offer the most economic potential. Sites for mixed use development within the city centre that have clear regional support and, in many cases, have achieved public sector investor interest, need to be considered for investment and approved promptly by Government. Measures to rejuvenate city centres and develop a vibrant atmosphere should include tapping into the potential of residential apartments above shop fronts, this also would have the welcome impact of providing much needed additional urban housing.

In the Cork Chamber Q4 2017 Economic Trends survey² of Cork businesses, the number one response from Cork businesses in relation to their priorities for improving the City environment for ‘family living’ was the diversity of housing, the quality, affordability, the need for new builds, and the need for refurbishment of vacant buildings. The second priority was for an enhanced Cork transport network and infrastructure, followed by the development of better amenities. The same survey asked what should be improved to strengthen Cork as a Living City. Here, the top five priorities were the diversity of housing; amenities – shops, cafes, cinemas, theatres, bars; schools, lower traffic volumes and green spaces. Initiatives of this nature must be robustly supported.

² <https://issuu.com/chamberlink/docs/eco-b-1-2018>

Enhancing and investing in the urban fabric is widely acknowledged throughout international best practice as being essential to ensuring thriving Cities and town centres. It is acknowledged as being a factor in influencing business investment and skills attraction and retention. The Cork Chamber economic survey provides direct feedback from the Cork business community calling for catalysed investment to enhance the liveability, connectivity, cultural character and placemaking attractiveness for visitors and residents alike.

The Events Centre in Cork is a critical pillar for the social, cultural and economic fabric of the Southern Region and must be recognised as such in the RSES. If the Southern Region is to thrive as an entity, a cultural facilities of this scale and vision is a key component of the necessary infrastructure.

In Cork, we see increased preference among indigenous and FDI business to be in the city centre close to public transport connections; for example: Cylance, Clearstream, Keeper Security which have all opted for city centre locations in recent months. Similarly, recent office developments and commercial construction activity is primarily focused on locations close to public transport connections.

City region economies are multi-faceted, and this must be acknowledged and supported in the RSES.

Recommendation:

- 1. The awarding of public funding through instruments such as the Urban and Rural Regeneration funds should support the objective of creating living cities and improving public realm and cultural space.**
- 2. The cultural and economic significance of the Cork Event Centre must be noted and endorsed through the RSES.**

International Connectivity

Cork Airport

Cork Airport is a critical lynchpin in the Southern Regional economy – driving connectivity for tourism and commerce and expanding business opportunities into global markets.

In a Q1 2019 survey of our membership, we asked about usage of Cork Airport and the importance of international connectivity to doing business in Cork. 41% describe direct air access to Cork as very important to their businesses, while 35% say it is extremely important.

The Southern RSES will play a critical role in ensuring that Cork Airport's role as a regional economic driver continues to grow, in line with the National Planning Framework's acknowledgement that the global connections provided by our ports and airports are "vital to our survival, our competitiveness and our prospects" (p. 145).

The RSES for the Southern Region must support opportunities to capitalise on growth in international connectivity. In this respect, we recommend that the final adopted RSES provides clear and unambiguous support for growth of movements and passenger numbers at Cork Airport on a

24-hour and year-round basis, aligned with the upgrading and expansion of infrastructure (including both at terminal and airfield) required to deliver this growth. We note that Cork Airport has capacity to steadily grow passenger numbers. We believe that the Southern RSES should increase the utilisation of existing State airport assets by encouraging usage of the airports located within the Southern region, including by supporting ease of access to Cork and Shannon airports within the region.

The RSES provides a vital layer of regional policy, which will very practically guide and shape spatial planning in the vicinity of Cork Airport. It has the important function of ensuring the safety and security of airport infrastructure and passengers; while at the same time ensuring the careful management of development within the vicinity of the airport to minimise any conflict with aviation uses and safeguard lands for future airport growth.

Cork Chamber supports additional clear and unambiguous policies in respect to airport safeguarding in particular, keeping housing developments at a safe distance from the airport perimeter and having appropriate regard to noise sensitive uses, glint and glare impact, obstacles and bird hazard with regard to airport proximity. We note and encourage the opportunity presented by the new RSES to guide and align regional policy across the regions in this respect.

Local connectivity to Cork Airport is also key and it is critical that it is treated as such in the RSES, in Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS) and in any future policy documents. We see the absolute criticality of Metro North to the future success of Dublin and Dublin Airport and it is essential that an equivalent is planned for in Cork, ensuring that obstacles to future development are not created and that plans are made in a timely manner to keep pace with demand. In the short term, dedicated bus corridors with customer centric frequency of service would be an appropriate step change in relation to airport access with light rail planned for the corridor sequentially in line with demand.

Recommendation:

- 1. The RSES should provide full support for growing movements and passenger numbers at Cork Airport to maximise this strategic asset.**
- 2. The RSES should support improved access from within the Southern Region to Cork and Shannon Airports.**

Port of Cork

Cork Harbour is the second largest natural harbour in the world. The Port of Cork is the key seaport in the South of Ireland and is one of the only two Irish ports which service the requirements of all six shipping modes i.e. lift on, lift off, roll on, roll off, liquid bulk, dry bulk, break bulk and cruise.

The ongoing Port of Cork Redevelopment Project in the Lower Harbour will form an extension to the existing facilities that the Port currently operates in Ringaskiddy. It is enabling the Port to facilitate larger vessels and ensuring long term international competitiveness. The Port of Cork Ringaskiddy Redevelopment Project (new Container Terminal) is planned to be operational in 2020.

Cork Chamber highlights the strength of the strategic port facility in the Cork region as regards international market access and the future ability to facilitate increased usage, especially in light of market uncertainties which have come to the fore with the planned UK Brexit. Our port infrastructure is a hugely important strategic point of entry into Ireland and export location.

It is sometimes overlooked that as an open economy with a dependence on international trade, we do over 90% of our trade by sea. The port is ideal for future investment. The development of a new

container terminal will overcome the existing physical constraints in handling larger vessels and increasing the ability of the port to adapt activities to match current international requirements.

Amongst other things, the port redevelopment will enhance the ability of Cork to maximise the potential for increased sea freight direct to mainland Europe post Brexit.

It will facilitate the capacity to catalyse and influence wider regional development, including the development of the tourism sector and of the Cork Docklands at Tivoli, and the Marino Point redevelopment, and so growing Cork's recreational and housing capacity;

It will work to consolidate the N28 as a strategic national primary route serving the EU TEN-T core transport network of which Port of Cork is part.

Recommendation:

- 1. The N28 upgrade is a critical component for unlocking the full potential of the Port of Cork, industry and IDA strategic land holdings, and should be recognised as a critical piece of infrastructure.**

Public Transport

We note the Strategic Investment Priorities set out on page 12 in the draft RSES. As currently presented, housing and sustainable urban development is ranked first, followed second by the national road network, third rural development, and fourth environmentally sustainably public transport.

We fully support that the delivery of sustainable urban housing will be key to ensuring the success of Ireland 2040 and the objectives of the RSES. Unless we can house people in our cities in areas close to employment, the population and jobs growth of the scale envisioned under the strategy will be constrained. Furthermore, we fully endorse the critical importance of the national road network in ensuring inter-urban and rural connectivity, thus supporting the competitiveness of Ireland and the Southern Region.

However, to enable Ireland to successfully transition into a sustainable economy and society with an enhanced global appeal for talent and investors, we believe that the delivery of sustainable public transport will be as important as housing. We believe our future housing and sustainable transport modes must be developed in tandem rather than sequentially.

We highlight the immediate need to increase the pace of investment in Cork's public transport network. As a nation, we need to enable our cities and regions to grow smarter. To do this, we need investment to deliver. We must develop our Cities' future growth in a way that learns from past missed opportunities and builds on future potential. In the next 3 years alone, there will be an extra 5,000 jobs created in Cork City as current development projects reach completion, with this growing to 10,000 in the coming years as the Docklands are developed. This is unparalleled outside of Dublin and never has the demand for public transport been greater in Cork. Cork City is growing at pace with the development of office space significantly increasing over the last year with over 1 million square feet of office in planning or development.

As part of Project Ireland 2040, Cork will be the fastest growing City region in the Country over the next 20 years, with the City population expected to grow by at least 125,000. To accommodate

these numbers, we need a massively enhanced public transport network and infrastructure for the Cork Metropolitan Area. We need to develop our transport corridors and network to meet the needs of a growing population base, connecting residential zones with strategic employment zones and amenity areas. The opportunity lies in being proactive, in facilitating this growth, and in driving a public transport programme that matches the needs of the City as it grows and evolves.

The development of high value North-South and East-West transport corridors are game-changers in enabling Cork's commuter and residential populations to choose sustainable transport options. The development of Bus Rapid Transport corridors, Light Rail and an integrated cycle network across Cork Metropolitan Area is a strategic priority and clear delivery timelines must be provided.

One of the principal objectives of the Chamber is for the essential infrastructure to achieve a step-change in the use of public transport to be put in place. In turn, this investment will assist a transition to a low-carbon economy which will unlock new growth potential for Cork and the Southern Region. Building on the strength of the existing suburban rail network and aligned with proposals for an increased population and employment density in Metropolitan Cork, we endorse an integrated East-West and North-South public transport corridor that will link urban and rural communities with strategic employment areas and services.

Consequently, we propose that the strategic investment priorities are revised to provide greater emphasis to public and sustainable transport modes. By doing so, we will enable our cities to become more inclusive, more appealing, and more environmentally friendly; all of which will have significant knock-on effects on the ability to grow our population, further inward migration, and attract more jobs, ultimately creating better places to live.

Recommendations:

- 1. Revise strategic investment priorities to give greater emphasis to public and sustainable transport modes to enable a step-change in sustainable commuting across Cork Metropolitan Area.**
- 2. The adopted RSES should recognise the importance and give clear timelines to the Little Island transport strategy, the opening Kilbarry Train Station, delivery of Bus Connects, Light Rail, Park & Rides, Cork Metropolitan Area Cycle Network Plan, Bike Share Schemes, and existing commuter rail network to successfully achieve a modal change in transport in Cork.**
- 3. The potential for electric rail, renewable powered busses, electric vehicle infrastructure, and feasibility of water commuting should be recognised within the adopted RSES.**

Jobs of the future - Building an Adaptable Economy

Connectivity

From a digital connectivity perspective, Metropolitan Cork boasts vital high capacity Tier 1 Express fibre connectivity. This offers the lowest latency in the EU to the East Coast of the US, connecting Cork with vital digital and financial markets in the US and UK. Our digital infrastructure enables the Cork area, making it ready to attract, accommodate and grow Ireland's national capacity to benefit from future investment from next generation digital and financial companies.

In addition, the Celtic Interconnector offers the opportunity to not only provide electrical connectivity but to also to provide digital connectivity that would benefit the Southern Region, especially in a potential post-Brexit scenario where certain data sets would not pass through a non-EU country. Regardless of the outcome of Brexit, the Celtic Interconnector is an essential piece of energy and data transmission infrastructure. As such, Cork Chamber emphasises the readiness of Metropolitan Cork in absorbing growth in the digital sector, and specifically the ever-growing data centre industry and reemphasises the region's characteristics as regards existing energy infrastructure.

Improved digital connectivity will also be hugely important from a social perspective. Increasingly, access to and delivery of public services will be moved online, which underlines the importance of ensuring that every household in the Southern Region is digitally connected. In relation to the National Broadband Plan, it is essential that delivery of connectivity is a priority for the RSES. In the event that the Broadband Plan proves unworkable in the market, it is possible to explore empowering wireless internet service providers to fulfil the vision of full connectivity. The current impasse has provided uncertainty to this agile, delivery focussed sector. The RSES should support the delivery of this much needed connectivity.

Recommendation:

- 1. The enormity of the social and economic potential of digital infrastructure for the Southern Region, and Ireland as a whole, cannot be underestimated. It is essential that the Southern RSES recognises, supports and invests in this significant infrastructure.**

Education

92% of students in Ireland complete the Leaving Cert. Cork possesses world renowned higher education institutions accommodating 35,000 students with UCC recognised as in the top 2% of research institutions in the world and the world's first green campus, and with CIT generating 250 start-ups in the last 10 years and producing more accredited engineers than any higher education institution in Ireland. The steady stream of ICT, science and engineering graduates will be a draw for FDI and the support for emerging indigenous talent.

Additional capital investment will be required in all levels of education, research and innovation. The delivery of the Munster Technological University will have a further significant impact on Cork and the wider South West Region, augmenting Cork's already strong performance in producing STEM graduates and attracting talent. Furthermore, the delivery of the new Cork University Business School will bring a further 4,000 students to the heart of the City Centre. The availability of a skilled and entrepreneurial workforce, particularly in science, technology and engineering, is crucial to the delivery of an additional 121,000 jobs.

By 2027, it is expected that Cork's third level institutes will see an increase of 37% of teenagers coming through their doors. This significant increase reflects a demographic bulge and does not consider any growth in students from outside of Ireland or from inward migration. While this growing number of third level students presents enormous economic advantage for Cork and the Southern Region, it could also present a huge challenge for our third level institutes unless early and adequate investment in services and educational infrastructure is delivered.

At present, there are 45 schools currently being extended and more in planning. In Carrigtwohill alone there is planning for a 1,000-student facility. We must continue to invest in and plan for education across all levels, notably also in early years. More childcare and early years places will be

required across Cork to match population and jobs growth in areas close to people's homes. Similarly, there is significant demand across Cork for primary and secondary schools, including schools that cater for international students. Facilities should be located in accessible locations with good walking, cycling and public transport connectivity close to people's homes by which we will enable more sustainable and independent school transport.

In summary, continued infrastructural investment will be required to facilitate the growth of our educational institutions across all levels of education, including student accommodation, public transport and sustainable infrastructure, and support for the capital plans of each relevant institution.

Recommendation:

- 1. The RSES should support early investment in the infrastructure required to facilitate the growth of our educational institutions across all levels, including student accommodation, public transport and sustainable infrastructure and support for the capital plans of each relevant institution.**

Health Centre of Excellence

Cork is well placed to support the nation's future healthcare needs while contributing to employment growth. It is a national leader in healthcare innovation which is of both social and economic significance and which offers great growth potential for indigenous industries into the future. For example, the National Health Innovation Hub Ireland led by UCC facilitates and accelerates the commercialisation of innovative healthcare solutions. Cork University Hospital (CUH) is the largest university teaching hospital in Ireland and is the only Level 1 Trauma centre in the country due to the presence of over 40 different medical and surgical specialties on the campus.

In order to maximise this opportunity, the RSES should actively support Cork's existing health infrastructure to create a Health Centre of Excellence. Cork's existing health infrastructure is under constant pressure and does not have the required capacity to adequately meet the future health needs of a growing region. Project Ireland 2040 commits to a new general hospital for Cork, and a second elective hospital.

Recommendation:

- 1. The adopted RSES should recognise the importance and give clear timelines for site selection for the new general hospital and the second elective-only hospital.**

Counter-Cyclical Investment

One of the greatest legacy challenges posed by the previous recessions in Ireland is the delay in the delivery of infrastructure to facilitate sustainable economic resilience and growth. In 2008, capital investment peaked at 5.3% of GNP and this decreased by 60% in the years to 2014, compounding the economic crisis, the impact on the construction sector, and the delivery of infrastructure for future growth.

Eleven years on, Ireland is still playing catch-up on a decade of lost capital infrastructural development. Classic Keynesian economic theory would suggest that Government should operate counter-cyclical spending policies by increasing capital investment spend in periods of economic

downturn to lessen the impact of the business cycle. These principals are also endorsed by the Fiscal Advisory Council.

Alongside transparency around timelines, spending priorities, and milestones, it is our view that the Southern RSES should promote counter-cyclical infrastructure spend. By investing smartly, continuously and strategically, our region will be put on the right track to deliver on Ireland 2040 targets, attracting further inward investment while supporting indigenous businesses to grow their output.

Economic cycles are inevitable, and we must ensure our National Development Plan and the Rainy Day Fund play their part in mitigating the impacts, as and when they arise.

Recommendation:

- 1. Alongside transparency around timelines, spending priorities, and milestones, it is our view that the Southern RSES should promote counter-cyclical infrastructure spend.**

Energy, Climate Change Mitigation and the Circular Economy

Commercial Renewable Energy Deployment

Cork is home to Ireland's Energy hub, located around Cork Harbour and comprising the country's most strategically important cluster of energy infrastructure, businesses and research facilities. Cork is a net exporter of electricity generation to the national grid and is at the forefront of renewable energy generation in the country. The Energy Hub supplies over 25% of Ireland's energy demands and is home to 20% of Ireland's electricity generating capacity. Many of the largest energy companies in Ireland are represented within the Energy Hub or in the wider Cork area.

However, given Ireland's dependency on energy imports, it is critical that we increase diversity and resilience in energy supply. We must increase the domestic supply to meet current and future expected demand. It is critical that strategic developments are undertaken which increase Ireland's ability to generate renewable energy and decrease our carbon footprint as a nation. Ireland ranks 26th out of 28 EU member states when it comes to renewable energy and it is now clear that we will not meet our EU 2020 renewable targets.³

Cork already accounts for approximately 13% of Ireland's wind energy generation. Cork is a hub for marine renewables (tidal and wave rider technology), and solar PV. Solar PV if actively enabled by policy has the potential to generate a very significant portion of Ireland's target for renewable electricity. In Ireland, we currently have the potential for 1GW permitted capacity from solar however with 0 solar farms operating.

There is significant scale and capacity for the Southern region to achieve climate change emission reduction targets. With costs being actively driven down by innovation in solar, onshore and offshore wind in particular, the renewable industry is becoming increasingly cost competitive and can deliver for Ireland with the certainty of Government support. For example, looking to the UK, almost 8GW of offshore wind energy have been deployed as a result of a facilitative auction support regime.

³ <https://greennews.ie/energy-targets-wont-be-met-despite-bumper-year-for-renewables/>



Burbo Bank Extension offshore wind farm⁴, UK, generating capacity up to 250MW

A report⁵ recently published by the Cambridge Econometrics and Eurofund's European Jobs Monitor concluded that the potential employment and economic benefits of transition to a low-carbon economy by 2030 could result in a 1.1 per centre growth in EU28 GDP and 0.5 per centre growth in employment. The reports surmises that adopting the necessary policy measures now will ensure that all of society can benefit from this move to a low carbon future.

The RSES needs to contain direct policy support for renewable industries in the allocation and positioning of transmission and distribution infrastructure. Centralised policies that demonstrate long term Government commitment and support for the commercial investment in the renewable energy industry, such as solar PV, need to be clarified without delay or any such references in the RSES will be only aspirational in nature. Clarity will maximise the potential of such sectors and our vast regional potential in increasing delivery of sustainable energy technologies, our national resilience and our energy security.

Recommendation:

- 1. The RSES should support renewable industries in the allocation and positioning of transmission and distribution infrastructure.**
- 2. The RSES should actively support climate change emission reduction through subsidies for the commercial deployment of renewable energy.**

De-carbonising Heat & District Heating

The section on de-carbonising the built environment briefly mentions how new initiatives to support low carbon heating should include district heating (DH). The National Planning Framework listed district heating as one of the key enablers for the future growth of Cork. However, there are regulations currently in place that are prohibitive for DH schemes. These may be outside the scope

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/burbo-bank-extension-offshore-wind-farm-given-development-consent>

⁵ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2019/energy-scenario-employment-implications-of-the-paris-climate-agreement>

of the RSES, yet they will need to be addressed if DH is to become a viable heating alternative to fossil fuel sources.

Guidance is therefore required from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to address the fact that waste heat is not recognised as a solution to reduce carbon. Recoverable or 'waste' heat is an unavoidable by-product of thermal power production and many large industries. However, current policy does consider this as low carbon solution and instead focuses on renewable energy rather than lowest carbon energy. DH, and many other low-carbon energy solutions, have only been able to grow and take a foothold in markets where there are effective carbon taxes, meaning low-carbon solutions are competitive and economically attractive. It is very difficult for DH to compete with the low costs of fossil-based heating fuel, especially when the upfront investment cost of DH infrastructure is considered. The recast Renewable Energy Directive recognises district heating systems as an important infrastructural technology to facilitate the increase of total conversion efficiencies.

Recommendation:

- 1. Regulations currently in place that are prohibitive for district heating schemes need to be addressed by Government to enable a transition to low carbon heating as envisioned under RSES.**

De-carbonising the Transport Sector

Regional Policy Objectives 87-89 include measures to decarbonise transport including electric vehicle infrastructure and Compressed Natural Gas refuelling stations. In terms of regional planning, and to address the challenges associated with climate change, the draft RSES must also take account of the need to develop hydrogen fuelling stations. This will enable the deployment of hydrogen fuelled vehicles such as cars, buses and heavy goods vehicles. Fuel cells can eliminate the pollution caused by burning fossil fuels; for hydrogen fuelled fuel cells, the only by-product at point of use is water.

Using CNG compared to diesel and petrol alternatives can achieve reductions of up to 30% for CO₂ (and 70% for NO_x, a transboundary pollutant) and as a transport fuel will lead to significant emissions reductions. CNG vehicles also provide a pathway for the use of Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) /biomethane (methane obtained from biomass).

The strategy for deploying alternative fuels infrastructure must allow for a station siting strategy that facilitates alternative fuel vehicle deployment. For example, learnings should be taken from the UK's strategy whereby driveability of hydrogen fuelled vehicles was facilitated by creating a viable network around major urban centres with stations situated near main roads.⁶ This is with a view to groups of early stations being used to create hydrogen refuelling station clusters around major urban centres, with a minimum of two stations needed per cluster.

Recommendation:

- 1. The RSES must take account of the need to develop CNG/ Biogas, Electric and hydrogen fuelling stations and infrastructure, with a view to develop refuelling clusters around all urban centres and high-density residential zones.**

⁶ <http://www.ukh2mobility.co.uk/>

De-carbonising the Agriculture Sector

The RSES should support the deployment of anaerobic digesters for the treatment of agricultural waste. This is in line with the principles of the circular economy and Government policy; as anaerobic digestion (AD) not only generates energy, but also gives effect to national waste policy in terms of utilising waste as a resource.⁷ The Southern Region has appropriate levels of slurry feedstock for farm level anaerobic digesters. Gas Network Ireland's analysis indicates that the agricultural AD strategy has minimum achievable total GHG savings of 17.5 tonnes CO₂/ha/a.

Recommendation:

- 1. The RSES must facilitate the deployment of anaerobic digesters for the treatment of agricultural waste**

Resource Efficiency – Further Observations

SEAI's latest Energy in Ireland publication reported that renewables made up 10.6% of gross final consumption relative to a 2020 target of 16%.⁸ Challenges in meeting renewable targets across the electricity, heat and transport sectors mean that Ireland will likely miss this goal and will have to engage in statistical transfers (i.e. purchase compliance for other Member States who have exceeded their targets). The EU targets for 2030 include a 40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels, at least a 32% share of renewable energy consumption and indicative target for an improvement in energy efficiency at EU level of at least 27% (compared to projections), to be reviewed by 2020 (with an EU level of 30% in mind).

Issues that are arguably beyond the scope of the RSES have created hurdles in terms of meeting EU mandated targets (i.e. grid connection policy, a delay in implementing government renewable energy supports). However, RPO 94 aspires to the development of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy. It must provide the necessary framework to address measures to overcome barriers related to renewable energy deployment. The timing is opportune given the recent publication of the Revised Renewable Energy Directive in the Official Journal of the European Union and its forthcoming transposition.

RPO 96 focuses on Indigenous Renewable Energy Production and Grid Injection. Gas Network Ireland has commenced the development of renewable gas collection logistics and Central Grid Injection (CGI) facilities. These will be located on the gas transmission network and will be designed to operate as gas Entry Points on the network for delivery to their gas customers in the heat, power and transport sectors. As previously noted, an alternative fuels infrastructure is required in order to facilitate the roll-out of agri-based anaerobic digesters to underpin renewable gas supply. It is envisaged that biogas will be purified to Natural Gas standard at AD sites, ready for collection.

RPO 103 (Non-Fossil Fuel and Heat Sources) outlines the objective to support initiatives for the conversion of homes to non-fossil fuels. An additional RPO should be included to facilitate the decarbonisation of heat for industry i.e. through measures such as connecting to a district heating network.

⁷ <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Energy%20White%20Paper%20-%20Dec%202015.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.seai.ie/resources/publications/Energy-in-Ireland-2018.pdf>

Circular Economy/Waste

While waste reduction and elimination must be prioritised, unavoidable wastes that cannot be recycled in a sustainable manner can be safely and effectively treated by the waste-to-energy (WtE) process. This form of sustainable waste technology has the added benefit of producing electricity and heat whilst ensuring that such unavoidable wastes are transformed into useful and valuable resources which can thereafter contribute to a circular bio-economy.

The implementation of the Waste Framework and Landfill Directives have been instrumental in diverting waste away from landfill which is regarded as the least desirable and most environmentally detrimental tier of the waste hierarchy. The “waste hierarchy” ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment. It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery, and last of all disposal (e.g. landfill and incineration without energy recovery).

The Regional Waste Management Plan (WMP) 2015-2021 is in line with the principles of the circular economy. It addresses the need for an additional 300,000 tonnes per annum treatment capacity for residual municipal waste. This additional capacity would help to achieve a key objective of improving self-sufficiency in waste treatment, reducing the amount of waste being transported to Leinster or exported abroad for treatment.

The extent of capacity determined reflects the predicted needs of the residual waste market to 2030 at the time of preparing the waste plan. Against the backdrop of a growing population (and with Cork, Limerick and Waterford projected to be amongst the fastest growing locations in the State over the next 20 years), and in line with RPO 104, it is essential that the RSES supports the objectives in the WMP as well as any updates to the plan.

Recommendation:

- 1. Linked to the proposed population growth in Cork, Limerick and Waterford, it is essential that the RSES supports the objectives in the Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 as well as any updates to the plan.**

Conclusion

We begin this submission fully endorsing the position of Cork, as set out in the draft Southern Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy, page 209: *“The population of the Cork Metropolitan Area in 2016, at over 304,000, is almost one fifth of the Southern Region’s total population. It is the second largest metropolitan area in the State after Dublin and is larger in scale than the Limerick-Shannon, Galway and Waterford Metropolitan Areas combined.”*

We have set out our recommended amendments to the final RSES to enable Cork and the Southern Region to grow its population and jobs in a sustainable manner that creates a built, natural and economic environment that leaves a robust legacy for future generations.

We have done so under the headings of the central positions of city regions; the RSES decision making and implementation process; the implementation and monitoring of Ireland 2040; compact growth and high density; public realm and cultural space; international connectivity; public

transport; jobs of the future; counter-cyclical investment; and energy, climate change mitigation and the circular economy.

We trust our recommendations to be considered carefully as the RSES is finalised and look forward to working with the Southern Regional Assembly and all stakeholders to deliver on the vision and ambition set out for Cork and the Southern Region within this strategy.

Appendix 1

Cork Chamber submission to Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

February 2018

INTRODUCTION

Cork Chamber, which represents more than 1,200 businesses who employ over 100,000 people in the Cork region, welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and share our view on how we see Cork and Ireland develop to 2040.

In this submission we identify where we see the draft plan as being on the right path, and where we consider the draft plan to be lacking in ambition.

To put this submission in context, we open with a few basic facts around Cork: Ireland's second city region:

- Cork is home to over 500,000 people, with more than 305,000 people living in the metropolitan area
- Over 150 FDI companies have chosen Cork for their operations in parallel with an ever-thriving indigenous base
- Cork has strong, established clusters in healthcare, pharma/ bio-pharma, IT, energy, engineering and cybersecurity, marine, agri-food, and financial services.
- Cork has a thriving third level population with over 40,000 people (staff and students) and over 10,000 skilled graduates per annum and across a range of disciplines, and with a robust further education offering with increased numbers enrolling in apprenticeships every year.
- Cork is host to world renowned research institutes such as the Tyndall National Research Institute, The NIMBUS Centre and the Moorepark Dairy and Food Research Centre to name but a few.
- Cork is home to Cork University Hospital, the Ireland's largest university teaching hospital in Ireland and the only Level 1 trauma facility in the county.
- The Health Innovation Hub Ireland is located in Cork, focused on facilitating and accelerating the commercialisation of innovative healthcare solutions.
- Ireland's Energy hub is located around Cork Harbour and comprises the country's most strategically important cluster of energy infrastructure, businesses and research facilities. Added to this, Cork is a net exporter of electricity generation to the national grid and is at forefront of renewable energy generation in the country.
- From a digital connectivity perspective, Metropolitan Cork is home to vital high capacity Tier 1 Express fibre connectivity, offering the lowest latency in the EU to the East Coast of the US.
- Cork Airport serves over 50 destinations across the UK, Europe and the US
- Cork boasts an internationally renowned cultural and tourism offering and is the unique meeting place of both the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East.
- Cork is the Food Capital of Ireland, and host to more than 20 festivals a year

- Cork offers a perfect combination of vibrant and compact city-living, surrounded by 1,100 kilometres of spectacular coastline on the doorstep.

Looking at the objectives of the NPF, overall we welcome the intention set by the target of 50% future population growth in Ireland's main cities.

In relation to Cork specifically, we welcome the intention of accelerating population growth in the city and suburban area to twice the rate of that in the past 25 years, and up to three times the projected national average over the same period.

We note how the past six years has already seen more business and people locating within inner urban cores. This trend is backed by the findings of Census 2016, which showed a Cork City population increase of 5.4% since 2011. With more jobs, especially high-value jobs, opting to be based in city centres in order to attract and retain the best staff, we expect further city centre population growth to follow in the years ahead. In the image below, we outline new developments underway in Cork city centre which can accommodate further jobs growth in the region.

In our view, a growing desire for urban living and working must be enabled by the implementation of the RSES.

Second, and in reference to above, the position and ambition of Cork, as Ireland's second city and the driver of a thriving Southern Region, must be recognised in the content and substance of the RSES.

SECTION 1: OUR CITIES AND TOWNS

Key Questions for our Cities:

- What must the RSES do to facilitate the cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick and Waterford in achieving their full potential at international, national and regional level and to act as the main "engines" of economic growth in our region?
- What are the potential barriers to achieve the targeted levels of 50-60% growth in our cities and what must be done to ensure that at least half of that projected growth occurs within the urban core on infill and brownfield sites?
- What are the key transformational projects that will further assist our cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick and Waterford to grow and prosper as vibrant urban communities with an enhanced quality of life?
- How can Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) effectively co-ordinate sustainable development patterns and delivery of key infrastructure?
- How can the City Regions assist in the economic growth of the three cities in the Southern Region?

Cork Chamber Feedback:

- The proposed development of Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans has potential to provide spatial and economic structure to the growth of our city regions. However, it must be noted that the exemplary Cork Area Strategic Plan has been operating successfully since 2001 preceded by the equally commended Cork Land Use and Transportation Study put in place as early as the 1970's. Clarity is required to enable precise commentary but any future MASP model must be adaptable to local conditions and not be restrictively prescriptive, must allow

for equally representative and proactive local stakeholder engagement and influence in the determination of content and application thereafter. Local ownership and implementation aligned with national objectives is critical to success and this should not be weakened by regional structures.

- If we are to achieve the anticipated growth rate of between 50 – 60% then it is imperative that as a nation we are strategic at the outset, that we are proactive in meeting the needs of communities and business as we grow our cities. As such the opportunity exists now to develop a regional plan that cohesively maps the objectives of the NPF in developing a transport network that is robust, mixed use urban living that meets the needs of a growing residential population, that supports urban centres as key drivers for regions, and that backs a communication and energy network that is resilient and diverse. To ensure the objectives of the NPF are met via the RSES, it is essential that capital investment is focused and strategic to ensure the enablers are in place to facilitate sustainable growth. Sufficient supply of zoned land within our metropolitan areas for both commercial and residential developments is equally important.
- The Cork Docklands is a transformational opportunity for Ireland. It is unprecedented in this day to have over 220 hectares of brownfield site located adjacent to the City Centre as is the case with Cork. There is an exceptional opportunity to advance the Cork Docklands in line with international best practice to develop a mixed use urban environment to maximise the potential of Cork City, a location that is attractive to investment and residential living, and one that is iconic to residents and visitors alike. To enable sustainable growth, development of a robust transportation network holds the potential to transform how a City functions. The commitment to facilitating a Rapid Transport System and supporting infrastructure for Cork is essential and will be catalytic in growing both the regions and Ireland strategically.
- To date, the Cork region and in particular the Metropolitan Cork area, has proven its capacity as the economic engine of the Southern Region, and has grown its presence through strong collaboration both regionally and nationally. Cork has the track record, critical mass, infrastructure and scale to grow the role as Ireland's second city region and the fulcrum of a thriving Southern Region.

Key Questions for our Large Towns:

- What are the potential barriers to achieve the Draft NPF targeted levels of 20-25% growth for larger centres (with populations in excess of 10,000) and how can the RSES address these barriers?
- Are there examples of infrastructure "packages" which would be strong integrated growth enablers capable of transforming our larger regional settlements?
- How can the RSES assist the work of Local Authorities and other stakeholders in incentivising urban centre renewal and achieving targets for 30% of new housing on infill/brownfield sites?
- How can the RSES support the development of high quality and socially inclusive urban communities which can become locations of choice to live, work, visit and invest in?

Cork Chamber Feedback:

- Lack of connectivity, both transport and communications, is a key barrier to growing the larger centres. There is an urgent requirement outside of the main urban centres towards increasing the potential of these centres to grow employment and business opportunities, as well as enabling commuter patterns that are sustainable and that don't detract from quality of life and environment. Cork Chamber highlights the need to improve the commuter rail

network and revise the fare structure to ensure affordability, to increase the quality and dependability of broadband to urban centres, to develop rapid public transport systems and networks that link to commuter hubs.

- In the latest Cork Chamber Quarterly Economic survey, respondents were asked about their top priorities in creating urban environments that are attractive for family living. The top 3 answers were quality and affordable housing options, an enhanced transport infrastructure and network and further amenities such as public spaces, crèches and cafes. Local Authorities can strategically enable communities through future planning and practices to create locations that are attractive to urban living and investment.

Key questions for towns with populations of less than 10,000

- What are the key challenges and barriers to the achievement of sustainable economic and population growth for towns less than 10,000 population and rural areas?
- How should we define the hinterlands or functional areas of towns with populations of less than 10,000 people?
- What are the most suitable criteria for determining the range of services which would be necessary for towns of between 1,500 and 10,000 people?
- What is the most appropriate form and density of residential development in these existing towns?

Cork Chamber Feedback:

- The attraction and retention of skilled employees, and effective transport and communications network are all key challenges for the sustainable economic and population growth for towns less than 10,000 population. In supporting the key enablers for business, Local Authorities will organically increase the attractive of towns to investment and sustained population growth which will in turn affect positively the social fabric and urban centres of these towns.
- To truly enable the full potential of our region to be realised, we highlight the need to increase and accelerate the investment in broadband connectivity for towns and rural areas as an essential pillar in transforming the economic prosperity across regions which also working to enhance the viability and sustainability of town and rural communities into the future.

Key Questions for our Rural Region

- What are the key infrastructure priorities (physical and social) to address to achieve tangible population and employment growth in rural areas, in particular to assist vibrant regenerated town and village centres which are competitive and attractive locations of choice for living and working?
- How can the RSES support growth and diversity in rural economic sectors which are successfully embedded in our region, particularly agriculture, marine, forestry, tourism, energy and the green economy? What are the examples of other emerging sectors that will further drive the rural economy and what are infrastructure requirements that will assist their success?
- How can the RSES strengthen protection of the rural environment and rural resources in tandem with objectives for sustainable growth in the rural population and employment?

Cork Chamber Feedback:

- Cork Chamber highlights the success of the Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen, West Cork. This hub is hugely successful due to the high speed internet connectivity which was secured, enabling businesses to thrive in this rural location and enabling a hub for the location and for residents living in the wider rural area. As such Cork Chamber highlights the power of developing effective hubs that are serviced by high speed internet connectivity, are supported with resources and funding, are facilitative of rural business networking, of training and continuous development, and that are focused on developing and supporting business locally. This may be the reenergising and further development of the existing Enterprise Centres.

SECTION 2: PEOPLE, HOMES & COMMUNITIES

A number of key questions for the RSES in this regard might include:

- What are the principal infrastructural and investment deficits preventing progress on the achievement of national planning policy objectives
- What key infrastructural investment is needed to drive the development of the three cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford
- How can the RSES seek to improve the coordination and governance of public investment
- What role can the Regional Assembly play in more explicitly aligning the investment plans of State Owned Enterprises with Government objectives
- What key infrastructural investment is required to facilitate the development of the towns and villages in the Southern Region?

Cork Chamber Feedback:

- The development of the M20 Cork to Limerick route, the Northern Ring Road, the Cork Docklands are all high impact transformational investment projects, catalytic in their potential to develop the Cork and surrounding regions. The delivery of the M20 in particular also has the potential to facilitate better intercity collaboration and connectivity within the Southern Region, as well as support the development of smaller towns and villages, for example Buttevant, Mallow and Charleville.
- The development of an integrated public transport network to facilitate a change in travel mode will increase the sustainability of progress and alleviate potential commuter congestion as well as working to achieve the national climate change targets.
- Investment in the facilities that support the social fabric is also essential to ensure thriving communities such as crèches, educational facilities, healthcare facilities, green spaces and city centre playgrounds to encourage central family living, and affordable high density housing in close proximity to public transport links.
- For all investment in both hard and social infrastructure, it is important that strategies are aligned with MASP.
- Support for public services and public transport funding for day to day provision must be increased to meet increasing pressures on existing services.
- In order to achieve the objectives of the National Planning Framework, it is important that all new commercial and residential developments within urban cores meet minimum density requirements and that they are strategically located with easy access to public transport in

order to minimise car dependency. From a Cork City perspective, it is important that planners support the city growing up rather than out to encourage vibrancy and density.

- Ensuring timely delivery of projects already in the capital plan is also of essential importance, including the Dunkettle Interchange Upgrade, Mallow Bypass, the M28 road to Ringaskiddy, and the N22 Cork-Kerry road.
- To achieve metropolitan locations that are sustainable, it is important that alongside the larger infrastructure projects, the less costly but highly impactful infrastructure projects are also supported. Such projects can be enormously valuable in their latent potential to impact positively on commuter experiences and the overall attractiveness and viability of a region to investment. Cork Chamber has assessed a number of projects as fitting within this category of investment and potential. Our intention is not to be prescriptive, but to highlight potential opportunities for assessment and investment, and within this also we highlight the opportunities for local stakeholder knowledge in identifying pinch points and possible solutions.

Please see Appendix 1 for an overview of lower cost high impact infrastructure:

SECTION 3: A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC FUTURE

Key economic questions for the RSES to consider:

- What are the barriers to achieving 220,000 additional jobs in our region by the year 2040?
- What are the existing strengths of the region's economy, particularly the specialisms that distinguish the region nationally and internationally as an economic location?
- How do we maximise opportunities in the emerging sectors of the economy for the benefit of the region as a whole and what can we do to address those sectors that are in decline?
- What needs to be done to ensure that the benefit of increased economic activity in our cities and larger urban centres is transferred into the rest of the towns, villages and more rural parts of the region?
- Are there parts of the Southern Region that are notably underdeveloped? What reasons are there for this and what can we do to overcome such blockages?

Cork Chamber Feedback

- Cork has the scale, experience and capacity to accommodate another 120,000 jobs by 2050 as set out in our submission to the National Planning Framework.
- From a Cork perspective our main distinguishing factor as an economic location is our availability of talent with a college population of over 40,000 people; scale of the city with more than 305,000 people living in the metropolitan area; strong, established clusters in ICT, pharma, life-sciences, cyber security, energy, marine, agri-food, and financial services; relative competitiveness compared to other European cities; access to the European Market; a highly attractive work-life balance with short commuting distances; and excellent connectivity through both our ICT and energy infrastructure as well as through Cork Airport and the Port of Cork.
- The opportunity is now to maximise opportunities from emerging economies for the benefit of the region as a whole. To achieve this however the connectivity infrastructure, and support for regional hubs such as The Ludgate Hub must be prioritised. To truly enable the

full potential of wider regions to be realised, we highlight the need to increase and accelerate the investment in broadband connectivity for towns and rural areas as an essential pillar in transforming the economic prosperity across regions which also working to enhance the viability and sustainability of rural communities into the future. For example, current advancements in agri-tech have the power to greatly enhance the prosperity of rural communities, however to truly capitalise on these advancements communities must be able to interact and engage with these advancements and the current low rates of broadband connectivity is an impediment to this.

- The development of Cork's Docklands presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a whole new urban quarter in Cork city. We suggest that development of Cork's Docklands is approached as an international pilot project for future urban planning incorporating concepts such as living cities initiatives, smart technologies, urban greening, clean energy and green transport.
- The North Side of Cork City equally has excellent capacity to grow and accommodate more business, FDI and homes. This is particularly relevant in the context of the M20 progressing, which will begin just before Blarney. However, in order to enable social and economic expansion of Cork City's North Side, and also in support of the M20 Cork-Limerick motorway, there is a need to invest in a Northern Ring Road to ensure traffic flows freely enabling growth on the North side of the City.

SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL, NATURAL HERITAGE, COASTAL AREAS AND THE MARINE

Key Questions

- What are the key infrastructure investments needed to support sustainable connectivity (including modal shift to sustainable transport modes) throughout our region including infrastructure between our large urban areas, within our metropolitan cities, towns and villages?
- How best can the Regional Transport Strategy ensure that strategic road projects enhancing accessibility between our large urban centres compliment sustainable mobility goals for our region?
- How can our airports and ports become economic drivers for the Southern Region?
- Is digital infrastructure sufficiently prioritised as an essential infrastructure for the economic and social development of communities throughout our region's cities, towns, villages and rural areas? What are the main barriers to the successful implementation of the National Broadband Plan and other digital economy initiatives throughout our region and how can the RSES address this?

Cork Chamber Feedback:

- The primary delivery and infrastructure challenge for Cork's Docklands to be developed is the relocation of the Port of Cork to Ringaskiddy, which requires an upgrade of the M28 and investment in infrastructure to relocate Seveso sites. In the short-term all focus should centre on ensuring that the Port of Cork can move to a new home, to enable future development of compact city centre living in Cork. Crucially, this cannot happen without the M28 being delivered and that Seveso sites and fertiliser activities can continue from another suitable location. Furthermore, the

Silversprings Interchange, Eastern Gateway Bridge, and a new rail station at Tivoli are essential for maximising the opportunity of development at the Tivoli Docks.

- To ensure structured sustainable economic growth in the Southern Region, infrastructure will be the key enabler. The RSES must firmly reinforce the message that increased and sustained infrastructure spend is critical as we continue to grow our economy and population. The commitment to and consistent investment in public transport is essential. We need a step change in ambition for sustainable transport to accommodate our projected growth and ambition. As such a Rapid Transit Route enabling our East-West City region corridor and must be acknowledged in the RSES.
- As regards public transport, Cork Chamber also proposes that a greenway running along the waterfront from Kent station through Tivoli and onto Dunkettle and Little Island and along the lower harbour is developed. This greenway would facilitate both cycling and pedestrian paths, and could have a dual function as a flood protection zone.
- It will be important to ensure a link between the Commuter Rail line and the South City Docklands Bus Rapid Transit line to ensure fluid movement in the future. Currently the plans are for two bridges. Cork Chamber proposes that one of these should be adaptable to facilitate a Light Rail interconnector in the future. The Eastern Gateway Bridge is crucial in connecting Tivoli Docks with South Docks and to ensure a fluid movement of people to and from the North of the City to the South of the City, especially in light of future predicted population increases. It is proposed that the Eastern Gateway Bridge favours Public/ Sustainable Transport modes in a bid to avoid over utilisation of available space allocation to car parking in the South or Tivoli Docks. The bridge should be adaptable to meet future commuter needs and aimed at accommodating private, and public/ sustainable transport in the short to medium term but with appropriate future emphasis on sustainable modes and the ability to adapt this bridge infrastructure to meet future transport modes e.g. possible use as fully Light Rail interconnector.
- We note that Cork Airport, despite having experienced terrific growth, has further capacity for growth and can readily be scaled up to accommodate more passengers. The draft NPF recognises the critical nature of high-quality international connectivity to Ireland's overall competitiveness and to address the opportunities and challenges arising from Brexit. We ask that the RSES supports growth at Cork Airport, including supporting infrastructure in and around Cork and Cork Airport to support the needs of a more people and economic activity in Cork and the Southern Region. The Port of Cork will become an even more important asset for Ireland and the Southern Region post Brexit. To facilitate the Port of Cork absorbing more traffic and trade, it is essential that the M28 road to Ringaskiddy is delivered on time to complete the port's move from Cork city centre down to Ringaskiddy. We ask that the RSES acknowledges and supports this move. The upgrade of access to Cobh via the R624 is also critical to the development of Marino Point and the ongoing increase in cruise visitor numbers which was up to 140,000 in 2017 and is expected to continue apace.

SECTION 5: IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Questions which must now be addressed as part of the Draft RSES preparation process include:

- What measures need to be put in place at a regional level to ensure full implementation of the National Policy Objectives in the Draft NPF and the more detailed policies and objectives of the RSES?
- What would be the most appropriate form of political and administrative leadership to support the Regional Assembly in the preparation and oversight of metropolitan area strategic plans?
- What are the key indicators that could be used to determine the level of success of the adopted strategy?

Cork Chamber Feedback:

- Clarity is required to enable precise commentary but any future MASP model must be adaptable to location conditions and must allow for equally representative and proactive local stakeholder engagement and influence in the determination of content and application thereafter. Local ownership and implementation aligned with national objectives is critical to success and this must not be undermined by regional structures.
- We have reservations relating to the oversight of NPF implementation most notably due to the lack of clarity currently available in the NPF or other supporting material and look forward to future engagement as structures are further determined. Much of the NPF's success will be determined by how well the National Investment Plan is aligned with it, as well as how quickly investment funds can flow from Central Government to put in place the enabling infrastructure allowing places like Cork to grow by 25%.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Cork Chamber firmly believes that the vision set out in Cork 2050 will be a key driver of Ireland and the fulcrum of a thriving Southern Region. We formally request that this is acknowledged in the content of the RSES, in complement to the NPF and reinforced by an aligned Investment plan

As stakeholders in support of this, we highlight the value-add on a regional and national basis that Cork can bring, and the value of working in collaboration to drive growth through a strong regional core.

Finally, given no visibility of the NPF prior to the submission to this round of the RSES consultation, we emphasise the importance of a transparent second round of consultation with stakeholders to inform the final RSES.

Appendix 1: Low cost high Impact Infrastructure

1. Little Island Traffic

Little Island is home to almost 1,000 companies at present and more than 16,000 employees, it is Cork's largest employment area and a key driver of economic growth across the southwest region. Currently, access for commuters is predominantly characterised by an over dependence on private car leading to growing congestion impacting commuters, employers and local residents. Cork Chamber believes that a number of short term transport measures to alleviate these issues are prudent and should be progressed in the short to medium term. Measure such as improved public transport, cycle access and slip way/ traffic signalling improvements need to be implemented and as such should be recognised and prioritised for immediate delivery alongside the focused development of wider strategic solutions for the medium to long term. The planned expansion of the area must be based on the delivery of improved non-vehicular transport modes.

Businesses in Little Island have identified a number of short term and medium term measures to inform a future strategy to relieve traffic congestion in and around the island.

Short term measures:

- A city centre bus service to East Gate, and shuttle bus service from the train station to East Gate
- A public bike share scheme with stations located across Little Island and at the train station
- Secure overnight bicycle storage and parking in Little Island to facilitate an opportunity for commuters to mix their mode and located at the train station.
- A second lane at the R623 exit to N25 towards Dunkettle Roundabout.
- Review traffic light sequencing at the R623 exit/entrance to N25 to accommodate higher volumes of traffic at peak times and greater efficiency of movement.

Medium term measures:

- New N25 easterly entrance/exit to facilitate access to the strategic zoned lands at Courtstown and Harbour Point and ease pressure on the eastern side of Little Island
- The development of dedicated bus and carpool lanes on the island.

2. N25 Cork City to Waterford City bypass of Castlemartyr and Killeagh

To alleviate increasing commuter congestion for those accessing employment hubs such as Little Island, Cork City, City Gate Mahon from the East, it is timely to initiate a bypass of Castlemartyr and Killeagh. As the connecting route between two expanding urban hubs, and nationally the Atlantic Corridor from Waterford to Galway, this is essential in facilitating future growth opportunities.

Specifically:

- Initiate a bypass of Castlemartyr and Killeagh
- Lakeview roundabout bottleneck – this junction should be reviewed and upgraded to provide capacity enhancements. The Lakeview roundabout is the only route for traffic travelling on the N25 from Cork to Waterford/Rosslare and is the only means of access to the N25 for heavy vehicles travelling from Ireland's Energy Park at Whitegate. A slip road directly from the R630 to the N25 would increase the safety for commuters and residents in facilitating the flow of car traffic and heavy vehicle traffic and facilitate the growth of Ireland's Energy Park. Signalling at this roundabout could also enhance the flow at peak times.

3. Ireland's Energy Park – Access Upgrade

Upgrading of the R630 regional road to national road status to ensure ease of access to Ireland's Energy Hub at Whitegate holds a significant opportunity to enable the potential of this site. As already mentioned, Cork Chamber highlights the potential of developing a slip road from the R630 to the N25 thereby easing access and enhancing the flow of business and residential traffic.

Located around Cork Harbour, this area comprises the country's most strategically important cluster of energy infrastructure, businesses and research facilities. The Energy Hub supplies over 25% of Ireland's energy demands, is home to 20% of Ireland's electricity generating capacity and the country's only oil refinery. Many of the largest energy companies in Ireland are represented within the Energy Hub or in the wider Cork region.

4. Marino Point – Access Upgrade

The upgrading of the R624 to enable ease of transit to Cobh, and to the Port of Cork facility at Marino Point should be assessed with the aim to undertake this in the medium term. Previously a feasibility study was carried out by Cork County Council and this should be reviewed as a preliminary step. From a road safety perspective, improved signage to forewarn motorists of the Belvelly bridge ahead is a priority in the short term. Furthermore, an upgrade to the Belvelly Bridge, or the identification of an alternative route to accommodate additional truck movements is also advisable.

5. Cycle and pedestrian greenways & expansion of the Cork Public Bike Scheme

Use of the Old Passage Railway Line as a cycle path and pedestrian greenway should be a relevant consideration in examining proposed residential locations in the City South Environs. This should be fully extended to Carrigaline which is a location for major housing development into the future and population growth.

There is an ideal opportunity with the proposed future redevelopment of the Cork City Docks and the Tivoli Docks to initiate a greenway to link Little Island/ Cobh via Dunkettle to the City and further afield to Ballincollig with CSO Census data from 2016 showing cycle commuting as having the largest percentage increase of all means of transport, rising from 39,803 in 2011 to 56,837 in 2016, an increase of 42.8 per cent over the five years. Furthermore, an uninterrupted greenway route around Cork Harbour would have amenity as well as commuter benefits.

Secure city based bicycle parking facilities should be considered across the City and at strategic locations e.g. bus station and train station. This will enable commuters accessing in the Cork City environs the opportunity to mix their mode.

Since its commencement in 2014, the Cork Coke Zero public bike scheme has been hugely successful and has clocked up 720,000 trips in just 2.5 years, 5x more trips than the total number seen in Galway and Limerick and with more than 10,000 annual subscribers by mid-2017. To assess the uptake and opinions on the Cork Public Bike Scheme, Cork Chamber recently undertook a survey of business members. In addition to this, Cork Chamber as part of the Cork Transport and Mobility Forum undertook a survey of general public opinions on the same topic. The results are as follows: 60% of the general public surveyed indicated the expansion of the bike scheme as high priority with 46% stating that they would use the scheme if there were additional station locations, and with the top 3 number one locations identified and listed by frequency as 1) Blackpool 2) County Hall 3) Blackrock. The top 3 number one locations identified by Cork Chamber business members and again listed by frequency are 1) Blackrock and Douglas 2) CIT 3) Blackpool. 85% of those surveyed stated that they would use the scheme if there were additional locations via an expansion, with 55% indicating that an expansion was of high priority. There is clear demand for the expansion of the scheme and Cork Chamber believes that this should be undertaken in the short to medium term to match the demand and build on the success to date of the scheme in Cork.

The development of fit-for-purpose and interconnected cycle and pedestrian greenways could yield vast impacts in the short to medium term as regards facilitating commuters.

6. Carrigtwohill railway station and IDA site access upgrade

The new railway station in Carrigtwohill is underutilised and it is important that this is supported by a strategy to increase the amount of residentially zoned land with the 400 metres walking catchment, as well as an appropriate phasing plan which provides for the concurrent development of lands east and west of the station.

Carrigtwohill exhibits some of the highest trends relating to overreliance of car usage in Cork. The implementation of the Carrigtwohill North Framework Masterplan will be critical in this regard, with modal shift to public transport, cycling and walking identified as a critical objective.

We understand that a number of prospective employers have made enquiries in relation to the IDA site in Carrigtwohill but that the viability of its development is constrained by the absence of a viable means of access to the lands in the form of a grade separated interchange. To leverage the potential of this site, it is suggested that the Cork County Council and TII explore an upgrade of local access infrastructure which may allow for its phased release.

7. Mallow rail station as commuter station

In order to maximise the value of the railway network already servicing Cork City, we suggest that Mallow is identified as a commuter station to improve the affordability and attractiveness of rail. We note that Mallow is located as close to Cork as Kilcock and Naas are to Dublin, both of which were recently included in the Short Hop Commuter Zone resulting in great fare reductions for passengers.

Similarly, the provision of free and secure bicycle and car parking at commuter stations has a strong impact on ensuring rail as an attractive alternative to undertaking a commute by car.

8. Overall rail and bus usage

Investment in parking is needed in order to grow commuter rail in Cork. If parking facilities were improved at stations so that cars could easily and freely be dropped off, Cork Chamber believes there would be great potential to develop rail as a real commuter service in Cork, especially for the many people who travel to Little Island and Cork City for work on a daily basis.

In parallel, we believe that Irish Rail should facilitate users to bring on-board their bicycles free of charge also during rush hour to ease the onward journey. Finally, we believe there is scope for Irish Rail to better market the availability / cost of its commuter services.

The phased introduction of a BRT system linking Ballincollig and Mahon, via the City Centre and Docklands, connecting: Docklands; Kent Rail Station; fMain Bus Station; fUCC, Bon Secours Hospital, CUH, Cork Co. Co. Offices, CIT and proposed Science Park is a must and has the potential to facilitate current and latent demand via an efficient and fast connection service. A high quality BRT system has similar benefits to a Light Rail and so it gives the same transportation and environmental benefits; and is more cost effective than Light Rail and as a result the economic return is greater (BRT for Cork Region will cost ~€300m, LRT will cost ~€1bn).

Bus and rail fares should be reviewed in line with changing travel patterns and increased daily commuter distances so as to promote a change in behaviours and feasibly enable commuters to mix their mode and choose another commuting option that does not negatively impact on their pockets. Fares should be affordable and dependable.

9. Addition of Park and Ride locations on the North and East of the City

The addition of Park and Ride facilities to the north and east of the City would greatly facilitate commuters accessing major employment hubs. The 'Park & Ride' could be linked to rail network, and bus network.

- Park & Ride at redundant Blarney Rail Station
- Park & Ride at Carrigtwohill West (New Station)
- To include bus connection to major employment hubs outside of rail network e.g. Loughmahon, Cork University Hospital

10. Promotion of carpooling through existing toll booths and during peak hours

This could be promoted via the designation of one of the existing toll lanes on the M8 to make it free of charge to those carpooling during peak commute hours. This will work to alleviate congestion, and the number of one person occupancy cars.

Appendix 2: Cork Chamber Ireland 2040 Submission

Please see the attached PDF submission: