

Galway City Council (GCC) welcomes the opportunity to be part of the consultative process in the preparation of the RSES for the *Northern & Western Region*. The Council Members engaged in a specific workshop and requested that issues raised would be included in the submission. The minutes of this meeting are included in Appendix 1. Acknowledging that the RSES will support the implementation the National Planning Framework (NPF) we reiterate, as we did on our submission on the Draft NPF, that a long term, strategic, spatial strategy that will structure policy and investment decisions in a manner that can address current unsustainable patterns of development trends is critical for the state and the region.

In particular we support the acknowledged importance of the role of the regional cities, towns and villages – such as those highlighted in the NWRA issues paper. The specific affirmation of the importance for development and investment in regional cities in the Draft NPF which includes Galway City will contribute to a better national spatial hierarchy and will contribute to effective regional planning. The supported growth development of the city of Galway as part of a national urban hierarchy is not perceived to be in conflict with sustainability in the smaller urban centres or the rural areas. We note the recent ESRI report (*Prospects for Irish Regions and Counties Scenarios and Implications Edgar Morgenroth January 2018*) confirms the positive spatial benefits of those agglomerations can have on their hinterland.

The City supports the expressed view in the issues paper that the RSES has potential to give a structured approach to harvesting the potential assets of the region while supporting sustainable settlement, transport strategies, high social objectives and environmental protection. The diverse catchments, characteristics, economic profiles, geographical layout and political dimensions of the region present the formulation of the RSES with unique challenges. The City supports the approach proffered in the issues paper to prepare the RSES with regard to sub regions – these are described as catchment areas (as shown in Section 1.2 Map 2 of the Issues Paper). There may be some benefit to revisiting the high number and arrangement of these sub areas. With respect to the sub region relevant to Galway, there is a need to ensure that the scale and arrangement of any sub regional basis has some bearing on the requirement to prepare the MASP in order to be able to distinguish the focus of the MASP from that of the sub regional layer

Notwithstanding the Draft NPF objective to develop Galway City as a regional city of sufficient scale to compete internationally and to be a driver of regional growth, it is critical for the RSES to recognise the need to develop in particular Letterkenny, Sligo, Ballina,

Castlebar and Cavan and Athlone. The notable dearth of a strong regional urban hierarchy in the NW region renders the area at a disadvantage and without the spatial distribution of strong urban agglomerations the positive impact of Galway City agglomeration alone on the region will not be sufficient to drive regional progress, sustain and grow populations and offer a modern standard of living, supported by the appropriate requisite of social, economic and cultural supports and facilities. It is considered however that the population increases as distributed for these urban areas (to grow by 40% in some instances) will be very challenging to achieve.

It is considered in particular for the region to address this challenge, flourish and work as a regional entity there is a need to address deficits in strategic infrastructure. It is considered that these are the foundations for building viability in settlements, retention and growth in population, and a structured visionary economic investment strategy. This in turn will have social benefits and will also fulfil sustainable and environmental requirements.

The Region

In general GCC are of the view that for the region the following elements are a priority for the RSES and will require appropriate policy support linked with investment / specific focus

- Inter urban routes linking the designated regional cities, including Galway and providing connections onward to the main settlements in the region particularly Sligo & Letterkenny, in line with the ambitions for the Atlantic Economic Corridor
- Road network in the NW area and key connections to Northern Ireland/ Dublin to ensure better regional connectivity
- Investigation of double tracking of the Galway – Athenry - Athlone line, which can facilitate improved commuter travel patterns into Galway while allowing for choices in residency.
- Sustained support, expansion and improved transport links & bus timetabling to the international airport at Knock
- Development of Ports to a scale of regional/national level in particular Galway Port, (including planned extension) Ros a' Mhil and Killybegs Port
- Development of Broadband services with a minimum download speed of 30Mbps, extended to all unserved/poorly served areas in particular rural areas in the region
- Examination of potential for additional fibre cable connections including potential links to mainland Europe directly from the region
- Likely benefits that can accrue from regions extensive coastline including marine economic potential, recreational & tourism value, sustainable energy development
- A tourism strategy that can link, co-ordinate and harvest the assets of the region as a destination with particular combination attractions exploring both urban attractions complemented by high quality natural environment attractions, activities and links.

- A redress of current deficits in the electrical grid network and gas distribution network in the region.
- Delivery of all measures under the Galway Transport Strategy, including the N6 GCRR acknowledging that such developments will benefit the region consequently in view of the regional role of the city
- Housing delivery including social housing and specific housing in urban areas and also delivery linked with acceptable and sustainable commuter models
- Existing sustainable employment in high tech manufacturing and research most notably ICT; Bio Medical ; Pharma;
- Development of Skills demand base that has collaborative links with education and training institutes
- Continued development of NUIG including their regional multi-campus delivery throughout the region.
- Development of a well resourced, *Connacht–Ulster Alliance Technological University* once established that responds at all locations – Galway/Mayo, Sligo, Letterkenny to regional opportunities for enterprise, community support and development
- Development of a more diverse economic base to include for new and emerging sectors including the creative /cultural, marine , food, energy areas
- Appropriate framework of support for local indigenous start ups and SME's – new and existing
- Development of a regional branding identity that spans a range of areas tourism, enterprise environment and community.
- Sustaining rural enterprises and future proofing them through agriculture innovation, diversity while acknowledging needs nationally to reduce greenhouse gases
- Preserve distinctive culture of the region including the uniqueness of the Gaeltacht areas including the city Gaeltacht
- Improvements to public realm areas of all urban settlements designated for significant population increases including delivery through infill and regeneration
- Delivery of appropriate infrastructure services to support housing development of sustainable densities within the region settlements
- A cost effective and sustainable healthcare system, community service delivery where needed specifically at this level / linked with ease of access to such supports through the development of SMART technologies and transport links.
- Development of a migration policy which is bespoke to addressing current patterns out migration, inter migration and which positively supports in migration including that for international migrants.
- A support for benchmarks that are perceived to contribute to quality of life and therefore help sustain communities, retain skills and attract investment, in migration and tourism
- An inclusion of policies and supports for emerging demographic changes such as those focused on the aging population
- Protection of the natural environment – land, sea and water which in conjunction with the uniqueness of the settlements gives identity to the region and can be a major contributor to national biodiversity, an economic asset and complement the quality of life for communities.

- Support measures that enable the region move to a low carbon economy

Galway City

Galway City has potential for significant contribution to development of the region and to realise the vision that will emerge in the RSES. Galway, as the regional city in the NWRA area is a critical environment for the creation of economic output and contains the key important elements such as human capital, entrepreneurship, innovation and diversity. These attributes must be grown and fostered so that the city will function as a key driver for the region.

Specifically for Galway City, GCC has identifies the need for investment in the following key area some of which are identified in the Draft NPF and will be required for Galway to grow and develop to Regional City status and scale and also to enable Galway contribute best to deliver on the vision outlined in the issues paper for the NWRA - RSES

- Delivery of a number of regeneration projects for the provision of new development to extend and intensify the City Centre, including the Station, Docks and Headford Road areas.
- Support for the delivery of all forms of housing including identifying infill and regeneration opportunities to intensify housing and employment development throughout inner suburban areas.
- Progressing the sustainable development of new greenfield areas for housing and the development of supporting public transport and infrastructure, such as at Ardaun.
- Implementing the *Galway Transport Strategy (2016)* which includes measures to enhance public transport and sustainable transportation.
- Improving access and sustainable transport links to, and integration with, the existing employment areas to the east of the City at Parkmore, Ballybrit, Mervue and Ragoon /Knocknacarra
- The continued expansion of all city education facilities, in particular third level institutions and their integration with the city and region including the facilitation of the objective of the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (CUA) to establish a Technological University (TU) for the West and North West of Ireland.

- Determining the sustainable future development of the Galway Airport site for employment and/or residential use together with supporting facilities and infrastructure.
- Provision of a Citywide public transport network in accordance with the measures included in the Galway Transportation Strategy to deliver enhanced accessibility between existing and proposed residential areas and the City Centre, third level institutions and the existing employment areas to the east and future employment areas in the west of the city.
- Public realm and urban amenity projects in conjunction with measures to be delivered under the Galway Public Realm Strategy, focused on streets and public spaces, particularly in support of an extended city centre area and where residential and employment areas can be linked to pedestrian routes.
- Development of a strategic cycleway network and associated infrastructure as identified in the Galway Transport Strategy with a number of high capacity flagship routes and delivery of the National Cycleway and Greenway network including the connecting section within the city.
- Delivery of the Galway City Ring Road.
- Delivery of the Galway East Main Drainage Waste Water Treatment Plant and other critical infrastructure measures identified in the Galway Main Drainage project.
- Ensuring that water supply and waste-water needs are met by new national projects to enhance Galway's water supply and increase waste water treatment capacity.
- Improving sustainability in terms of energy, waste and water, to include district heating and water conservation.
- Realisation of proposals for the expansion of Galway Port in alignment with regional, metropolitan and local plans.
- Strengthening of the Medical Technologies and ICT clustering and supporting diversification and expansion into the emerging 'Blue Economy' and Food economy.
- Delivery of key cultural and arts infrastructure in the context of the Cultural Strategy and to facilitate successful delivery of Galway European Capital of Culture 2020 and its legacy.
- Delivery of key community and social facilities to support existing and future targeted population under the NPF.
- Delivery of measures to address housing supply and demand set out in *Rebuilding Ireland* including those pertinent to Galway.

- Delivery of an enhanced regional health care service, developed to a modern standard to support existing and future population within the region including for a new acute hospital, located in Galway City to service the West and North –West.
- Continued development of broadband and hyper-connectivity measures including subsea links to continental Europe.
- Delivery of future projects emanating from the *Climate Change Adaptation Plan*, national and local.
- Timely delivery of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme and investment in identified manage flood risks measures, designed appropriately for sensitive city locations.
- Development of the Murrough LAP area for recreation and amenity and appropriate mixed uses.
- Implementation of the objectives of the *Recreation and Amenity Needs Study* including investment in parks and open space acquisition and continued provision of recreation facilities.
- Ensuring a maintained and improved rail network, with frequent intercity connectivity and commuter rail services and including the facilitation of the double tracking of the Galway to Athenry line and in the longer term to Athlone – Portarlinton section of the line.
- Improvements and support for key city amenity infrastructure including the *Sailín to Silverstrand Coastal Protection Scheme* and Salthill Promenade upgrades.
- Delivery of environmental protection measures such as the River Basins Management Plans and measures to support improved bathing water quality.

Metropolitan Area Spatial Plan (MASP)

The need to have a high level plan to co-ordinate strategic issues that impact a city and environs is considered a good concept in light of the close relationship between cities and their environs. However it is noted that the Draft NPF does not give clarity on what legislative support, if any is intended. It doesn't elaborate on the administration structure/resourcing nor the political input from the relevant authorities.

It is difficult to see how the MASP plan can be prepared at regional level without this framework in place. In the event that clarity is not achieved consequent on the publication of the final NPF (due 16/02/18) it may be prudent to request that the MASP is deferred, as preparation in a vacuum may not produce the best quality of plan and may not win political support and consensus. Also of relevance to Galway City is the lack of decision making regarding the question of amalgamation of the City Council with the County Council. It is considered particularly but the members of the City Council that this is a decision that has to be made before any advancement for an approach to prepare a MASP plan. In the current environment where this decision has been deferred uncertainty regarding future planning remains.

It is noted also that the Draft NPF did not establish what the metropolitan boundaries are for three of the five cities. Section 2.1.1 in the issues paper has an illustration - Map 3 in highlighting a map showing the travel to work catchment to Galway City. It is interpreted that this is a suggestion of a potential boundary. This has some link with the OECD definition which use commuter catchment to define metropolitan influences but when used most cities would have typical commuter catchment at 15% (reference in the Draft NPF). However, considering the significant commuter catchment into Galway city, which equates to almost half of the workforce in the city and the wide substantially rural geographical spread of these commuters this is not considered by GCC as the appropriate boundary to use for the 'area under urban influence'. It is considered to be too extensive and an inappropriate for a definition of the MASP area. It is linked only with one parameter – a non typical commuting pattern, whereas the Draft NDP references other strategic things that the MASP will focus on such as settlements, recreation catchments, strategic water/waste water catchments and Regeneration sites.

It is considered that the boundary definition should be a much narrower cordon, determined by an area that corresponds with the reciprocal influences and the combined characteristics of a functional metropolitan area. It will then accord more with the concept of a regional city, urban in nature and also have a rational basis for influencing national policy and strategic investment in a greater Galway city area. If extended too far it will undermine the focus and relevance of the MASP. This approach is supported by the research references of cities catchment influences as referenced in the ESRI (*Prospects for Irish Regions and Counties Scenarios and Implications E. Morgenroth January 2018*) commentary) specifically Section 6.2 on Urban Hierarchy.

Finally two issues which although not especially for inclusion in the RSES are relevant. Considerable interests was express from Members of GCC as to where funding for investment of the NDP/RSES was being resources from. In particular this relates to projects which may not be of such significant as to be of national interest and therefore included in the National Investment Plan. In addition clarification is needed as to how current deficits in research, specifically that relating to regional performance levels, can be remedied to allow for monitoring of the three regions progress. This will be necessary to measure the effectiveness of the regional dimension of the NPF and also to allow for amendments /modifications to the RSES at the 6 year review period if needed.

APPENDIX 1

Minutes of Meeting of Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy Issues Paper Public Consultations Stage 1 - Workshop

held on 8th January 2018 in Galway City Council, City Hall, College Road, Galway.

Present:

- Cllr. Terry O'Flaherty**
- Cllr. Declan McDonnell**
- Cllr. Donal Lyons**
- Cllr. Frank Fahy**
- Cllr. Pádraig Conneely**
- Cllr. John Walsh**
- Cllr. Colette Connolly**
- Cllr. Billy Cameron**
- Cllr. Noel Larkin**
- Cllr. Mark Lohan**

In Attendance: Ms. Eileen Ruane, A/Director of Services

- Mr. Thomas Connell, Director of Services**
- Ms. Caroline Phelan, Senior Planner**
- Ms. Helen Coleman, Senior Executive Planner**
- Mr. Gary McMahon, Senior Executive Officer**
- Ms. Kathy Keane, Executive Technician**
- Mr Brian Corcoran, Assistant Planner**
- Ms. Elaine Coffey, Clerical Officer**

This workshop was organised to give attendees a general overview of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy Issues Paper Public Consultations Stage 1 and to get their observations/comments on the paper. The planning department are required to make a submission

by 26th January 2018. The workshop delivered by Caroline Phelan provided a general overview with deadline date for submission.

All in attendance of the meeting were given a hand out outlining the contents of the paper which drew the member attention to the areas where their observations/comments were required. The paper was an information document issued with the request of submissions.

On completion of the presentation the floor was opened to queries. Cllr Colette Connolly sought clarification on where the funding would come from and the life span of the document. In reply Caroline Phelan advised it would be funded by regional funding and the life span of the document was 12-20 years.

Cllr Declan McDonnell voiced his concerns on the growth of the City and the requirement of low carbon technology centres/facilities which could be designed/developed by the Universities.

Cllr Terry O Flaherty brought to the attention of the attendees the issues with broadband in rural areas. It was suggested employment & set up companies were still subjected to highly populated areas and this issue should be addressed.

Cllr John Walsh raised the issue of SME's not mentioned in the paper and expressed the importance of their recognition. Cllr. Mark Lohan sought clarification on the time frame of the final document. In response Caroline Phelan informed the attendees that final documents would have to be submitted by the end of the year, 2018.

Cllr Noel Larkin referred to the document and brought it to the attention of the meeting that a live music/concert venue was required for Galway and this should be part of the submission made by Galway City Council. Cllr Larkin advised that this was essential for the growth of the metropolitan area.

Cllr Colette Connolly outlined a number of issues she wished addressed. Cllr Connolly expressed her concerns regarding public health & mental health care in the Galway City & Co County. The issue with drugs in the City was also pointed out & a request for this to be addressed. Cllr Colette Connolly requested Sporting facilities & Public Swimming Pools be mentioned in the submission on the paper. Housing was another issue raise by Cllr Connolly which in her view is a direct policy for Government.

Provision of school transport & public transport should be a priority in the submission Cllr Connolly also stated especially in light of the current traffic chaos. Links to rural areas along with a regional train system should be addressed as an importance to meet the needs of the City. Support for SME's & funding steams for insurance is also of importance it was though by Cllr Connolly. It was also stated by Cllr Connolly that the cities marine was not being utilised and should be used to promote the City. A clarification of the funding steams was also raised by Cllr Connolly.

Cllr Frank Fahy queried the amount of land zoned for housing & commercial and if it was based on population. Infrastructure was an issue for discussion in Cllr Fahy opinion. Caroline Phelan informed the attendees figures were based on the National Framework guidelines & the document sits under the National framework.

Cllr Billy Cameron suggested that the Development Plans should be the back bone of the submission. Cllr Cameron advised that Galway City Council should make metropolitan strategic a priority. Cllr Cameron expressed his concerns on the amalgamation of the County & City Councils & its effect on the submission as without the confirmation of the amalgamation or not the submission was a waste of resources on this project. Cllr Cameron reiterated Cllr Connolly's concerns on social housing & transport infrastructure. With similar concerns to that of traffic & the increase when colleges and schools are in progress. The ring road is a solution to the problem and should be put into action Cllr Cameron outlined.

Cllr Cameron agreed with the provision of health care to be addressed in the submission. Art infrastructure to be another major issue of concern, Cllr Cameron suggested. Cllr Cameron suggested maybe it would be an idea if sporting bodies came together to provide a major concert hall. It was again reiterated by Cllr Cameron that it was impossible to submit anything on this paper without knowing the future off the Councils.

Cllr Lyons was of the opinion that the National Framework be incorporated into Galway City Council's submission on this & we should look after the interest of Galway City. Again infrastructure should be a priority with Cllr Lyons suggesting the opening of the Athlone Railway Track. Galway Port should be explored in this submission and the outer ring road is essential in line with the City's growth. Cllr Lyons raise the boundary of County & City again as an issue

Cllr Pádraig Conneely expressed concern on the delivery of smart health care in one region. Galway has the only acute hospital in the area. Cllr Queries was the submission more specific to that or was it already covered in the Framework