Purpose of Report

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) was made on the 31st of January 2020 and came into effect from this date. This completed the statutory regional tier of the national planning process.

Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 226 states:

> 'Within a year of the making of the RSES the SRA will establish robust implementation mechanisms, plan and structures, including cross sectoral stakeholder and cross boundary local authority steering group committees, to ensure the delivery of the RSES and the MASPs is specific measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. The implementation phase will include action plans that include time bound targets, progress indicators and a set project tracking plan to ensure effective and efficient delivery.'

The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed structures to comply with RPO 226.

Context

The RSES is a key element in the delivery of the programme for change set out in Project Ireland 2040, the NPF and the National Development Plan 2018-2027. It sets out ambitious targets for growth across the Region impacting on each local authority area. This includes a projected additional population of 380,000 by 2040 bringing the population of the region to almost two million with an additional 225,000 people in employment (880,000 in total). A dual track strategy is pursued that builds on our Metropolitan Areas; Cork, Limerick - Shannon and Waterford as significantly scaled economic drivers and supports the Region (and each constituent Local Authority) as a strong network of Key Towns, Towns, villages and rural areas. The RSES encompasses spatial, economic, social, communication, transport and environmental issues focussing on compact growth, placemaking, responding to the challenge of climate change and resilience.

The achievement of the transformative change required will be challenging and will require significant and timely investment in infrastructure and a step change in working arrangements amongst the parties involved particularly public bodies and local authorities. Effective implementation structures that result in the timely delivery of key enablers and the delivery of transformative change will be necessary.

There is also a regulatory requirement to implementation. The RSES is a statutory document underpinned by legislation, is democratically mandated by the members of the Assembly following an extensive and open process of engagement and collaboration involving citizens, communities, key stakeholders, government and public bodies. Local authorities in particular had a key and direct input to the development of the RSES strategy.

The Planning Acts, including Sections 22, 25 and 27 places obligations on the Regional Assembly, Local Authorities and other stakeholders for implementation and monitoring of the RSES.

The RSES contains 301 RSES objectives: the 229 Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) together with 22 Cork MASP Objectives, 23 Limerick Shannon MASP Objectives and 27 Waterford MASP Objectives. The objectives have a range of targets, involving differing actions and stakeholders. Some require direct action by the Regional Assembly (Regional Actions), others require statutory application by other groups - for example ensuring the Core Strategy of Development Plans accord with the RSES (Instructive) while others involve support for initiatives undertaken by other agencies (Supportive). Combined they provide a comprehensive mechanism for implementation.

The objectives address three over-arching pillars:

- A Green Region
- A Liveable Region, and
- A Creative and Innovative Region.

These relate in turn to the 11 Strategy Statements contained in the RSES (see below).

Key Enablers – What will success for the RSES look like?

- **Taking the rights steps** towards more sustainable settlement patterns, travel, energy and bio-economy to **lead on Climate Action** in the states transition to a Low Carbon Society.

- Delivering ambitious and sustainable growth targets for our cities and Metropolitan Areas (50% plus) – **Cork, Limerick & Waterford,**
- Developing and consolidating our **Key Towns, Kilkenny City, Tralee, Carlow, Ennis, Wexford, Killarney, Mallow, Clonakilty, Newcastle West, Thurles, Clonmel, Nenagh, Dungarvan, and Gorey,**
- Developing the **Cork Docklands,**
- Regeneration of **Limerick-Shannon,** including the **Limerick Northern Distributor Route/ Smart Travel Corridor**,
- Achieving a balanced 'concentric city' model north of the river in **Waterford** with development of the North Quays and adjoining lands in **Kilkenny**.
- Creating an inclusive and Learning Region, building on our higher education institutions including establishing the new technological universities of **MTU** and **TUSE**, a new **Learning Region Network** and developing a **Smart Region**.
- Positioning the Southern Region as **Ireland's International Gateway** through our seaports and airports.
- Making the most of **Cork and Waterford Harbours** and the **Shannon Estuary** – our natural maritime assets.
- Improving and protecting **the quality of the environment** and our rich **heritage.**
- **Sustainably developing our tourism and recreational potential** along the Wild Atlantic Way, into Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, through Ireland's Ancient East, , and along the Blueways and Greenways.
- **Revitalising our urban areas and spaces** through creative and regenerative place-making, to deliver on **Compact Growth and Housing Need,** and provide new vitality for City and Town Centres.
- **Revitalising Rural Areas** through readapting our small towns and villages and increasing collaboration between networks of settlements to seek higher value, diversified jobs for a higher quality of life.
- **Connecting our Region** – enhanced infrastructure from **North to South** and **East Coast to West Coast**, connecting to the **Atlantic Economic Corridor** & developing an extended **Eastern Economic Corridor to Rosslare Europort.**
- Creating the **Greenest** and **most Liveable Metropolitan Areas** for diverse communities, culture and enterprise –
- Investing in **Public Services** to tackle legacies, support planned population and employment growth; providing education, health, transport, community and social services and infrastructure.

Categorisation and Prioritisation of Workload

The development of an Implementation Work Programme has involved the categorisation and prioritisation of the 301 RSES objectives depending on the nature of the Action required:

- **Active** – largely direct action by Regional Assembly in a co-ordination capacity to drive progress by key stakeholders.

- **Instructive** – largely statutory obligation for stakeholders to comply with in formulating their own policies, plans and strategies (especially important for Development Plan alignment).

- **Supportive** – largely supporting/tracking work of other agencies and a signal of regional support for key initiatives, strategic projects and bids for funding pursued by stakeholders.

In addition, each Objective has been assessed to determine the following high-level details:

- Identification of lead agency,
- Identification of agencies involved,
- Identification of the action required,
- Identification of common actions

Implementation to date:

- Engagement with Development Plan process including statutory submission on the Draft Wexford County Development Plan and statutory submissions on Cork County, Kilkenny, Cork City, Kerry, Clare, Tipperary, Waterford and Limerick City and County and Carlow Pre-Draft Consultations.
- Engagement with Government Departments on alignment of national policy with regional priorities under the RSES including Departmental statement of strategies, National Marine Planning Framework, National Economic Recovery Plan and review of the National Development Plan.
- Engagement with the other Assemblies, Departments and agencies representing the priorities of the Region and RSES as part of cross sectoral steering groups and forums, progressing national, regional and local policy alignment and implementation.
- Interreg Europe Blue Green Cities Project – Establishment of Stakeholder Forum.
- Interreg Europe Match Up Project and development of the 10 Minute Town Framework – Report published September 2020
- Cohes3ion and the Smart region.
- COVID-19 Regional Impact Analysis Impact Analysis Report Published September 2020
- Learning Region Action Plan. Stakeholder Consultation undertaken during 2020
- Development of Regional Development Monitor based on the three RSES Implementation Themes – Liveable Region, Green Region and Creative and Innovative Region.
- Regional Co Working Analysis Report Published October 2020
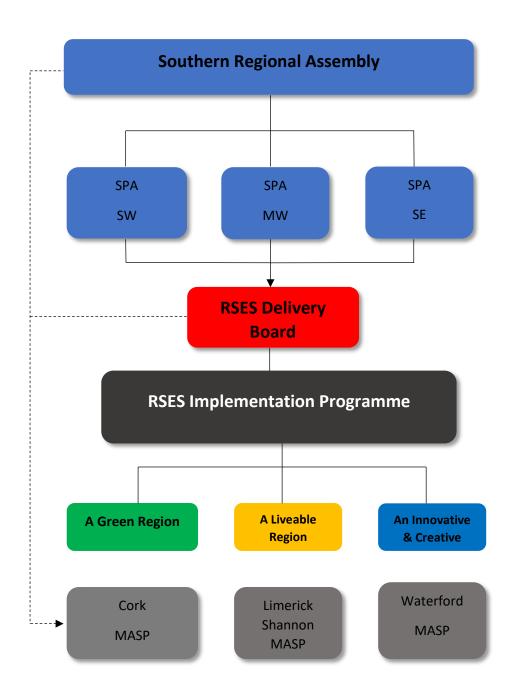
Approach to Implementation

In developing the implementation structures, the following principles/considerations apply:

- The scale of the challenge presented by Project Ireland 2040 is very significant and requires a coordinated approach with input from national, regional and local level, as well as relevant public agencies and the private sector.
- The process should be action focussed and project management focused. The RSES has signed off on a large number of priorities; implementation therefore should focus on sequencing and funding action, progress and delivery.
- Each level of government has a role to play. It is important to achieve cross departmental/agency buy-in/awareness of the strategic Regional/sub regional priorities to be delivered under Project Ireland 2040. This is critical to Implementation – Project Ireland is in place; the regional element is in place and Local Authorities are now completing their requirements through the Development Plan process. To avoid repeating the mistakes of the NSS through dilution of the principles of the NPF there

is a need to ensure that the regional and local level buy-in is replicated at national level.

- The SRA have an important cross regional remit, oversight and co-ordinating role and are an important and effective resource to assist our stakeholders in securing shared priorities. The successful mechanisms for collaboration established through the preparation of the RSES should be continued to assist effective implementation structures.
- At the same time, it is not the role of the Regional Assembly to address all the objectives contained in the RSES nor does the Assembly have the resources to do so. Therefore, Regional Assembly input should be effective, focussed and should not impede on areas outside of its area of responsibility or where others can achieve implementation more effectively.
- The Assembly should harness the resource available through its role and expertise in European matters to support implementation of the RSES.
- Political representation is important and should be incorporated to the process. The RSES (including the MASP's) is agreed and the focus should be on using the political process to achieve implementation, ensuring that the polices of the RSES transfer to the policies and practice of the Local Authorities, as well as communication on progress.
- Ensure effective communication and coordination with the Project Ireland 2040 Board. Delivery at the local level requires commensurate support and input from the national level.
- The MASPs face particular challenges given the scale of change required, the cross-boundary nature and required focussed implementation and the need for effective collaboration between cities.
- Agree and establish indicators for monitoring and tracking of delivery e.g., tracking investment, compact urban growth, urban centre regeneration, housing delivery, sustainable mobility, local employment, infrastructure capacity, connectivity, service and amenity provision etc are important.
- Need for resilience, flexibility and ability react to change, for example the climate action plan was published late in the development of the RSES and the COVID-19 19 crisis has been a significant shock to society and the economy. While a long-term strategic approach is necessary, implementation should allow for adaptability in response to significant events.
- Representation should be at a high level to ensure effectiveness and to avoid the process becoming a 'talking shop'. All participants in implementations groups should be mandated to represent their organisation and to make appropriate decisions on its behalf.
- Successful delivery of a broad-based strategy is inherently challenging with no clear model of success. The Assembly will seek to be innovative and will engage specialist advice to advise on implementation, project management and action delivery.

Implementation Proposals

The recommended RSES Implementation Structure is set out below:

The Structure contains the following elements:

Political - The Regional Assembly: The Assembly is the overall governance body for the RSES, and implementation will be reported to the Assembly every six months commencing March 2021. In addition, interim reports on a Sub Regional basis should be delivered to the three Strategic Planning Area Committee's – South-West (Cork City, Cork County & Kerry); Mid-West (Clare, Limerick & Tipperary) and South-East (Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford & Wexford) on intervening six monthly bases.

Executive - RSES Delivery Board: This high-level group provides guidance, coordination and oversight of Implementation between the statutory level and Project Ireland Board. Representatives should be operating at a sufficiently senior/strategic level to ensure alignment of development and investment priorities in order to drive the delivery of the RSES.
Based on the existing Senior Officials Advisory Group (SOAG), membership will comprise:

- Chief Executive representation for each SPA and the Designated Chief Executive.
- High-level representation from relevant government departments including, Rural and Community Development, Agriculture Food and the Marine, Enterprise Trade and Employment, Housing, Local Government and Heritage, DPER, Environment, Climate and Community and Transport including representation from the Project Ireland 2040 Board.
- The CE's (or their representative) of relevant state agencies including all public bodies to which Section 22(A) applies– TII, NTA, DBEI, IDA, EPA.
- High level Regional Operational Programme representation.

This is a high-level group and would meet every six months and will be chaired by a member of the group or external chair (to be agreed). To assist with participation of key departmental/agency representatives' the meetings will be held online or in Dublin.

All Local Authorities will be briefed through an annual RSES conference/webinar involving all Chief Executives, so the outputs and actions driven by the RSES Delivery Board are communicated to all Local Authorities.

The role/terms of reference for the Board includes:

- The RSES Delivery Board is overarching, guides and gives a mandate to focused thematic Implementation Work Programme under the three pillars of a Creative and Innovative, Liveable and Green Region.
- The RSES Delivery Board will approve a broad programme of priorities to be addressed by the Implementation Working Groups, receive a regular progress report and address obstacles if they arise
- Provide a platform to address obstacles.
- Provide a mechanism for linking national, regional and local public bodies in the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the RSES.
- Utilise expertise, resources and relationships of representatives to assist and advise on alignment and linkages with other relevant initiatives/sectors and legislative requirements.
- The Board will meet twice yearly and may convene extra meetings as required.
- To monitor and report on the progress of RSES / MASP / implementation.

MASPS

The RSES (and NPF) is built on the pillars of the Cork, Limerick Shannon and Waterford statutory MASPs, to realise their combined strengths and potential and to support their development as a viable alternative to Dublin and to anchor wider development across the region. There is a long-established process of cross boundary collaboration in Cork through the CASP structure. The MASPs include very ambitious and unprecedented targets of over 50% accelerated and urban focused growth, and significant proposals to address strategic issues facing our cities. The MASPs have statutory status and were developed in collaboration with relevant local authorities and have widespread stakeholder buy in. Associated Metropolitan Transport Strategies (based on the MASP boundaries) have been developed in Cork, Limerick – Shannon and in preparation in Waterford. Given their cross-boundary nature and the unprecedented targets applied they require a tailored Implementation mechanism for each MASP including Executive Oversight, technical co-ordination, and political representation. It is proposed therefore to develop in conjunction with the relevant local authorities and other stakeholders tailored MASP Implementation structures.

RSES Implementation Programme:

The overall Implementation Programme has been streamlined to focus on specific action orientated RPOs over a RSES Implementation Programme period focussing on 2021. The task headings set out below are the first phase of the implementation process. They are in addition to the other ongoing work that the planning team are involved including engagement with national consultations, involvement with various steering committees and joint projects with the other Assemblies. A detailed overview of the implementation tasks (including additional tasks) will be presented to the first Assembly RSES review meeting in March.

The emphasis on implementation is on delivery and where required Implementation Working Groups will function as the driving force of implementation. Convened to drive actions in our Region under the pillars for a Creative and Innovative, Liveable and Green Region, they, will be co-ordinated by the SRA. Membership will be cross sectoral and will include representation from relevant government departments, local government, infrastructure agencies and private business sectors. For additional perspectives, participation will also be sought from academia sectors and communities (through the Public Participation Networks).

Task No	Task Headings
1	**Agree with Assembly proposed Implementation Structures and Establish RSES Delivery Board:** RPO 226: Implementation Mechanism for the Strategy and MASPs.
2	**Establish MASP Structures** RPO 226: Implementation Mechanism for the Strategy and MASPs
3	**Establish and Agree Regional Indicators & Monitoring** RPO: 226 Monitoring the Strategy also 68 & 71

		This is a key task and will include tracking of infrastructure delivery for the Region.			
4		**Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas – Cork, Limerick – Shannon, Waterford and Galway** RPO 6: Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas			
5		**Ensure the RSES Programme for Change is Incorporated in Development Plan Process. This involves engagement with Local Authorities Development Plan Processes, S27 Submissions and tracking Development Plan Content** This is a significant task and will dominate the work programme through to Q2 2022. **Related RPO: '**RPO 3: Local Authority Core Strategies. & 1,3,4,5,27,29,30,31,34,35, 37,38,54,55,56,62,76,77,88, 89,110,114, 115, 116, 117, 120,121,122,123 ,124, 125,126, 127, 128,130,131,143, 151, 152,154,157,163,165,169,175,176,181,182,208,209,210,11,212,213,214,215			

	LA	Draft Development Plan Stage		Material Amendment – NB – Dates are Indicative Only	
		Issue	**Submission Due**	**Issue**	**Submission Due**
6	**Wexford***	Completed		14/06/2021	12/07/2021
7	**Kilkenny**	22/12/2020	12/03/2021	17/09/2021	15/10/2021
8	**Cork**	22/04/2021	01/07/2021	06/01/2022	03/02/2022
9	**Carlow**	01/06/2021	10/08/2021	15/02/2022	15/03/2022
10	**Kerry**	04/06/2021	13/08/2021	18/02/2022	18/03/2022
11	**Limerick**	05/06/2021	14/08/2021	19/02/2022	19/03/2022
12	**Cork City**	06/06/2021	15/08/2021	20/02/2022	20/03/2022
13	**Waterford**	30/06/2021	08/09/2022	16/03/2022	13/04/2022
14	**Tipperary**	06/09/2021	15/11/2021	23/05/2022	20/06/2022
15	**Clare**	07/09/2021	16/11/2021	24/05/2022	21/06/2022

		Note: A submission on the Draft Wexford Development Plan was issued in Q4 2020.
16		**Prepare Learning Region Action Plan.**
17		**Establish Waterford as a UNESCO Learning City.** RPO 186: Lifelong Learning & 39, 63, 186, 187, 190, Waterford MASP PO 23
18		**Implement SRA Communications Strategy** RPO: 73: International Branding of the Region and reputation.
19		**Development of a framework/toolkit to support a regional approach for**
20		**Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) in the Southern Region.**

	Smart Region definition and framework to facilitate Smart Cities Driving a Smart Region. RPO 134: Smart Cities and Smart Region:
21	Develop Smart Region Action Plan (following completion of task 19 & 20). RPO 134: Smart Cities and Smart Region:
22	Establish Scope and remit of Regional Freight Strategy RPO 141: Regional Freight Strategy
23	Establish scope and remit of Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region RPO 145: Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region
24	Establish Scope and remit of Regional Airport Strategy strategies RPO:149: Airport Strategy for the Southern Region
25	Developing Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) for infrastructure provision RPO: 211,212,213,214,215,216,217,218, 11,123 & 124 This task incorporates the current INTERREG EUROPE Blue Green City project
26	Scope remit of Regional Renewable Energy Strategy (inclusive of the bioeconomy). RPO 98: Regional Renewable Energy Strategy
27	Scope the role, remit and lead to develop a Regional Decarbonisation Plan RPO: 90 Regional Decarbonisation
28	Co-ordination of Climate Action with Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO) RPO: 87,88,89 & 90
29	Identify the scope and role of the Regional Landscape Strategy for the Region RPO 129: Landscape
30	Develop Match Up – 10 Minute Towns

	RPO: 176 10-minute" city and town concepts
31	**Support the development of the Eastern Corridor.** RPO: 42 Eastern Corridor
32	**Develop Capacity and strengthen the bidding capacity of local authorities, government agencies and regional stakeholders.** RPO 70 – Bidding Capacity

Recommendation:

That the above structures and work programme form the basis for RSES Implementation for 2021. The first review of Implementation will be considered at the March Assembly Meeting.

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