Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt

Southern Regional Assembly

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
for the Southern Region

Two-Year Monitoring Report

2022-2024

September 2024

Contents

Cathaoirleach's Message

On behalf of the members of the Regional Assembly, I am pleased to present the second Monitoring Report on the implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region.

This Monitoring Report highlights and demonstrates the substantial efforts undertaken to implement the policies and objectives of the RSES across the Region since the RSES was published in January 2020 and in particular it demonstrates the extensive work that has taken place to deliver the RSES across the Region over the past two years. Across the region significant progress has been made to realise the objectives of the RSES through actions of key public sector organisations. Each of the ten local authorities in the Region has played a critical role through their City and County Development Plans to achieve policy alignment between the National Planning Framework, the RSES and now local policy. In addition, many have prepared Local Area Plans for Key Towns and their Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs). At national level there is evidence of major investment in the Region through Government Departments and State Agencies in support of the key objectives, allied to major initiatives by the Regional Assembly. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are still very significant challenges to achieve the transformation required under Project Ireland 2040 and these are highlighted in the Report. With the release of important data from Census 2022 and other sources, the Report includes detailed analysis of how the Region is performing in the national context.

I would like to thank my colleagues from the Local Authorities represented on the Assembly, who have supported the RSES and ensured its delivery. I would also like to thank the Local Authorities, Government Departments, and agencies, for their support to the Regional Assembly and for their assistance in the preparation of this report. I am also grateful to the staff of the Regional Assembly for their hard work, dedication and support provided during this time. The Report details the substantial progress made but also highlights the tasks ahead which must be faced at national, regional, and local level. Highlighting and addressing these challenges is a key priority for the Regional Assembly with the review of the National Planning Framework and upcoming RSES review. I look forward to working with NOAC, Government, Local Authorities, and all relevant stakeholders as we face these challenges together.

Garret Kelleher

Garret Kelleher
Cathaoirleach

Director's Message

This second Monitoring Report for the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region outlines the progress made in securing its overall objectives over the past two years.

Since the RSES came into effect in January 2020 considerable progress has been made in delivering on the RSES objectives across the three themes - "Liveable", "Creative and Innovative" and "Green". Effective implementation of the RSES is key to delivering the transformative change as set out in Project Ireland 2040 and the National Planning Framework (NPF) to provide for the sustainable growth of the Region. This is never more important as we strive to address Ireland's most pressing spatial, societal, economic, and environmental challenges. The sustainable growth of our Region, both rural and urban including the growth of our three cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford is crucial to realising the structural change across the Region. This Report was prepared in accordance with Section 25A of the Planning and Development Act and highlights the key initiatives taken by the Regional Assembly to advance this work across the Region and the critical role of Government Departments, Local Authorities and public agencies and bodies in the collective objective for balanced regional development and for the sustainable development the Southern Region.

The Report sets out the great progress that has been made since the last Monitoring Report and outlines RSES implementation, including specific actions and outcomes, across the three themes. It specifically highlights the progress made in implementing the RSES by local authorities, public bodies and their agencies, and the Regional Assembly itself. I would like to thank the Chief Executives of the Local Authorities, their staff and all the public bodies and agencies that have contributed to the production of this report.

It also provides an opportunity to take stock and reflect on areas that are working well and areas that need further consideration. Therefore, a number of recommendations to improve and

support the RSES, and NPF, delivery have been put forward for consideration by NOAC. With the review of the NPF underway I would be hopeful that many of these can be taken on board to strengthen and enhance delivery.

Finally, I would like to thank the elected members for their ongoing commitment and support for the work of the Assembly and the implementation of the RSES, and the staff of the Assembly for their dedicated work to date and ongoing dedication to deliver on and prepare for the review of the RSES over the coming years.

David Kelly
Director

Foreword

The *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES)* came into effect on 31st January 2020. This is the second monitoring report prepared, setting out progress made over the two years from 31st January 2022 to 31st January 2024 across 3 themes - *Creative and Innovative, Green* and *Liveable* Region. It also monitors progress made in delivering transformative change in our role as part of *Project Ireland 2040* including the *National Planning Framework (NPF)* to provide for sustainable growth of the Region.

This Report was prepared in accordance with Section 25 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and highlights the key initiatives taken by the Regional Assembly to advance this work across the Region and the critical role of Government Departments, Local Authorities and public agencies and bodies in the collective objective for balanced regional development and for the sustainable development of the Southern Region.

The Report will be submitted to the *National Oversight and Audit Commission* (NOAC) with our recommendations on where action and investment can enhance delivery of RSES objectives or help overcome barriers to progress we have identified.

Executive Summary

This is the second Monitoring Report prepared to assess progress made in implementing the *RSES* for the Southern Region, which came into effect on 31st January 2020. It sets out progress made over the two years from 31st January 2022 to 31st January 2024. It looks at the key initiatives and actions undertaken by the Regional Assembly itself and in collaboration with other national and local

Figure 1 | RSES Strategy Statements

bodies, as well as the work undertaken by the public bodies and local authorities in the Region in supporting implementation of the RSES objectives. A key feature of this report is research and analysis of data from sources such as *Census 2022,* which assists in monitoring underlying trends and performance. The report will be submitted to the *National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)* who following consideration may make recommendations to the Minister in relation to relevant measures to further support the implementation of the RSES.

The Report broadly follows the structure of the first Monitoring Report, setting out progress on the implementation of RSES objectives across the 3 themes of:

- Liveable Region;
- Creative and Innovative Region;
- Green Region.

A key focus of the report is assessing outcomes under the 11 RSES Strategy Statements, which sit within the hierarchy of the 17 *UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* and 10 *National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs)* of the *National Planning Framework (NPF).*

National and Regional Collaboration

This section of the report focuses on the RSES implementation programme and includes much of the work that the SRA itself has been involved in, focusing on action-orientated *Regional Policy Objectives* (RPOs). Such actions have included: engagement with national and local consultations, policy and research, involvement with various steering committees, and joint projects with the other Regional Assemblies.

Strong progress has been made in areas such as:

- Efforts to assess and promote delivery of NPF/RSES targets for the Southern Region including a review of the capacity of regional structures to deliver on the NPF, critique of the structural underpinning of investment and engagement with the Expert Group on the NPF Review, the NPF Planning Advisory Forum, Local Authorities and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) on this issue;

- Developing Regional Indicators and Monitoring;

- Progressing the RSES Transport Strategy and engagement with and delivery of the *National Sustainable Mobility Plan*;

- Developing the Learning Region initiative, including publication of the document *Towards a Learning Region*;

- Regional Coordination and dissemination in the area of Blue and Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS), including the establishment of a Regional BGI and NBS Network.

Areas where more moderate progress has been made include:

- Establishment of *Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)* structures;

- Collaboration between the Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon, Waterford and Galway;

- Developing an Airport Strategy for the Region.

Areas where progress has not been as successful as anticipated include:

- Regional Decarbonisation;

- Developing a Regional Landscape Strategy;

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Monitoring.

Liveable Region

This section of the Report focuses on the implementation actions by public bodies and local authorities under the RSES Strategy theme of *Liveable Region*. The RSES *Liveable Region* supports *sustainable and inclusive communities and places, which improves our quality of life and regional attractiveness*. With the release of important data from *Census 2022* and other sources available, analysis of the performance of the Region in this area is also included. It provides a specific focus on trends and projects undertaken in the Region's 3 Cities and 14 Key Towns.

Some of the key points to note include:

- There has been substantial alignment between the planning policy framework at national, regional and local levels, with all of the Local Authority Development Plans adopted during the monitoring period;

- Local authorities are in the process of preparing a number of Local Area Plans (including Local Transport Plans) for many of the Key Towns in the Region. Framework plans and masterplans are also being prepared to guide future development of regeneration or new areas of development;

- From analysis carried out on population growth, housing delivery and infrastructure investment in the Region, some interesting insights have been drawn, which informed the SRA submission to the draft revision of the NPF and will provide a focus for discussion and feed into the RSES Review. It is evident for example, that planned infrastructure investment under the National Development Plan (NDP) is not fully aligned with the overall objectives of the NPF for balanced regional development (see Figure 2 below on planned NDP investment per capita). In addition, while population growth has been strongest in the Dublin and Eastern Regions/Strategic Planning Areas during the intercensal period, housing delivery has not increased to the same extent in line with population increase in areas such as Cork, Limerick and Waterford (see Figure 3 on housing stock increase versus population increase below).

SRA	€5,479
NWRA	€4,701
EMRA	€12,522
EMRA (Excl. Dublin)	€2,367
Dublin Metro	€19,011

Cork Metro	€10,278
Limerick-Shannon Metro	€9,209
Waterford Metro	€6,922
Galway Metro	€13,926
Dublin Metro	€10,011
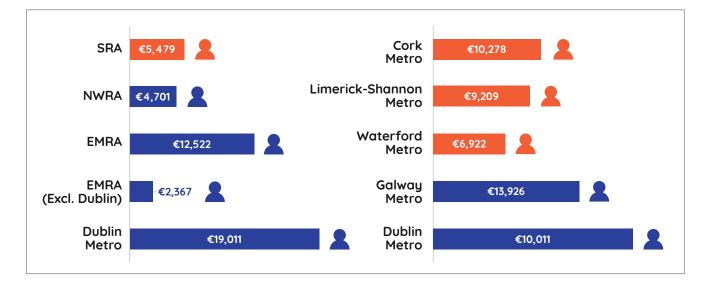
Figure 2 | Planned NDP Investment – Per Capita Assessment by Region and Metropolitan Area
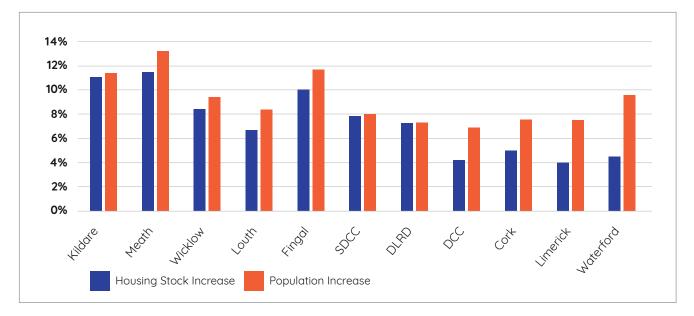
Figure 3 | Housing Stock Increase and Population Increase of Metropolitan Local Authorities 2016 to 2022 (Source: Census 2022)

Creative and Innovative Region

This section focuses on the implementation actions by public bodies and local authorities under the RSES Strategy theme of *Creative and Innovative Region* and analysis by the SRA of key data on economic trends in the Region. The aim of a *Creative and Innovative Region* is *where our economy and communities grow together through the innovation and skills of our people and high-quality connectivity.*

Some of the key points to note include:

- The increase in employment witnessed in the Region in the intercensal period was aligned with the overall national trend and that seen in the Eastern and Midland Region at 16%. The Northern and Western Region showed a slower increase at 15%;

- For the Region's Cities and Key Towns: Cork is the largest employment centre in the Region with 113,067 jobs. Waterford and Limerick showed the highest increase in employment at 14% and 12% respectively, which aligns with the increase in Dublin (13%). This contrasts with population growth and housing delivery, which showed a much lower rate of growth in the regional cities compared to Dublin. Circa 100,000 people collectively are employed in the Region's Key Towns, 4% of the national share. However, Key Towns saw a lower rate of increase in total job numbers from 2016 to 2022 at 7%;

- In terms of strengthening rural economies and communities in the Region, the Department of Rural and Community Development provided a significant rural development investment programme including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the LEADER Programme, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and the CLÁR Programme.

Region	Total No. Employed	Change 2016 - 2022	% Emp. Share	% Pop. Share
State	2,320,297	16%	-	-
Southern	749,745	16%	32%	33%
Eastern and Midlands	1,180,014	16%	51%	49%
Northern and Western	390,538	15%	17%	18%

Table 1 | Employment in Ireland (2022) by Region (Source: Census 2022)

Settlement	Total No. Jobs	Change 2016 - 2022	% Emp. Share	% Pop. Share
Cork	113,067	11%	5%	4%
Limerick	49,871	12%	2%	2%
Waterford	27,704	14%	1%	1%
Key Towns in SRA	99,688	7%	4%	5%
Dublin	577,835	13%	25%	25%

Table 2 | Number of Jobs within Cities and Key Towns (Source: Census 2022)

Green Region

This section focuses on the implementation actions by public bodies and local authorities under the RSES Strategy theme of *A Green Region*. Its aim is that *the Region will foster a low-carbon, climate-resilient and sustainable society built around planned, infrastructure-led development and sustainable mobility*. Analysis of trends also provides a key focus of this chapter.

Some of the key points to note include:

- Modal share of travel to work, college or school showed no significant change at either national or regional level between 2016 and 2022, with minor reductions (< 1%) in the proportion for both active travel and public transport, and a minor increase in the share for private vehicles. By comparison to the national profile, the Southern Region showed higher levels of car dependency and lower levels of active travel and public transport in 2022. When considered against modal share targets for 2030 as set out in Government's *Climate Action Plan 2024*, it highlights the major challenge that the Region faces in achieving more sustainable transport patterns;

- Some implementation actions include the adoption of 3 *Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies* for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford, with the progression of the BusConnects project to improve bus services in Ireland's cities;

- Local authorities are also engaging in a number of actions in the area of Climate Action and Decarbonisation, including the preparation of the *Local Authority Climate Action Plans*;

- The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) has progressed the development of the *South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan* (DMAP) proposal including a proposed, geographical area off the south coast within which future offshore renewable energy development may take place.
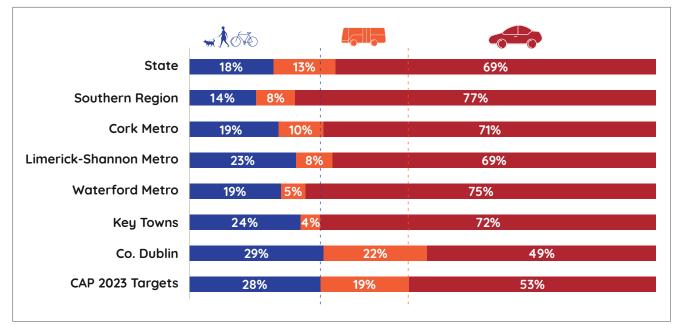

Figure 4 | *Modal Share of Travel to School, College or Work 2022 (Source: Census 2022)*

	Walk/Cycle	Public Transport	Car
State	18%	13%	69%
Southern Region	14%	8%	77%
Cork Metro	19%	10%	71%
Limerick-Shannon Metro	23%	8%	69%
Waterford Metro	19%	5%	75%
Key Towns	24%	4%	72%
Co. Dublin	29%	22%	49%
CAP 2023 Targets	28%	19%	53%

Conclusion

In terms of overall implementation of the RSES in the monitoring period, it is evident that there has been substantial policy alignment between the national, regional and local tiers based on the NPF and RSES, particularly with the adoption of the City and County Development Plans during this period and the commencement and adoption of Local Area Plans for some of the Key Towns and preparation of Local Transport Plans as part of this process. There has also been significant investment made by public bodies in the Region under *Project Ireland 2040*, including through funding mechanisms such as the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF). However it is evident that the extent to which funding follows policy and buy-in to the NPF and its objectives from some government departments and public bodies is not sufficient to achieve NPF objectives for balanced regional development. It is also clear that implementation of overall NPF objectives and how funding is being distributed is not being monitored sufficiently at national level. This Monitoring Report has therefore looked at some of these issues, which it is felt would be more appropriate to address as part of the NPF process. It is hoped that the review of the NPF, will be an opportunity to influence the discussion on some of these areas of concern.

Some of the Key Conclusions from this report include:

- It is evident that many of the conclusions from the previous RSES 2-Year Monitoring Report (2020-2022) are still pertinent, such as the **trajectory of growth of Dublin and danger that the objectives of Project Ireland 2040 will be undermined as a response to current circumstances,** and that its recommendations have not been fully taken on board at national level;

- With the current review of the NPF, there is a **concern that recent trends of continued population growth in the Dublin and Eastern Regions are being used as a basis to**

undermine the achievement of Project Ireland 2040/RSES objectives. Some commentary, including the recent Housing Commission Report, appears to be supporting the view that objectives for balanced regional growth are undeliverable and that public policy cannot influence economic policy and development across the State. However, as is evidenced by this Report, there has been a significant under-delivery of housing in the Southern Region when compared with the Dublin and Eastern Regions/SPAs. There is a particularly pronounced disparity in rates of delivery in and around Dublin when compared with the Regional Cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford. The regional disparity in levels of population growth and housing delivery is not reflected in jobs growth, where Regional Cities are in line with, or growing faster than Dublin;

- Some recent **commentary in relation to housing delivery has focused on the lack of zoned land, however the data signifies that this is not a significant factor, and instead the major challenge is in delivering housing on land that is already zoned.** In addition, the role of vacant properties in dealing with the housing challenge should not be underestimated. For example, if the housing vacancy rate across the Region was reduced from 7.9% to 5%, an additional 21,300 homes could be brought back into occupation, which is more than the entire number of homes delivered within the monitoring period, and demonstrates the potential role that vacant housing can play in the short term to the Region's housing need. A significant proportion of housing supply relates to rural housing (25% of all housing units delivered during the monitoring period) emphasising the need for positive alternatives including investment in the viability of our towns and villages;

- Evidence in this report shows that **the vast majority of planned infrastructure investment is being targeted towards the Dublin Metropolitan Area, with a planned underinvestment in the Southern Region as a whole and in our three Metropolitan Areas.** Planned investment will determine the major projects that are delivered up the midpoint of the next decade. As a result, current objectives for balanced regional growth to 2040 or beyond are being fundamentally undermined and it is not realistic to assume that NPF growth projections can be delivered in the context of the major disparity in infrastructure investment between Dublin and other areas;

- **In order to progress key projects in the Region under** *Project Ireland 2040*, **the process for approving these projects should be streamlined to prevent delays** and assist local authorities; for example, in overcoming resource constraints, the significant costs involved and other difficulties encountered as part of the application process. The role of projects in delivering upon the objective for balanced regional growth should be a key factor of the Cost-Benefit Analysis process and when they are considered and assessed at feasibility and businesses case stages;

- In terms of reaching targets on the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and sustainable society, there have been many positive initiatives carried out during the monitoring period such as the progression of the Southern DMAP by DECC and setting up Climate Action Teams and preparation of the Local Authority Climate Action Plans. However **given the scale of the climate and biodiversity crises and energy supply issues, there are many areas of concern including the amount of car dependency in the Region, which increased slightly during the intercensal period;**

- The issue of the centralised nature of the Irish state and governance issues has been highlighted by reports carried out during the monitoring period relating to the structural change necessary to ensure effective delivery of the RSES and MASPs. **A review of structures is required to ensure better delivery of national targets.**

Progress on Key Enablers

The following table provides a high-level review of the challenges faced and progress in achieving the RSES Key Enablers:

Key Enabler	Outlook/Challenges	Progress
Transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and sustainable society.	**Significant steps** taken including the preparation of the **South Coast DMAP** and **Local Authority Climate Action Plans.** However **strong concern** remains including **achievement of targets on modal shift to public transport,** given the results of Census 2022 and scale of the climate and biodiversity crises.	
Delivery of growth targets for our Cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford.	**Development Plans** for all relevant local authorities have been **adopted,** taking into account NPF and RSES growth targets. However significant concerns remain regarding delivery at the scale needed, in particular given the trajectory of growth to the Dublin and Eastern Regions/SPAs which will significantly undermine the NPF & RSES policy. There is a **need for full commitment to implementation of the NPF for our Region including accelerated MASP delivery.**	
Creating the greenest and most liveable Metropolitan Areas for diverse communities, culture and enterprise.	Significant steps taken; however, **strong concern** given the scale of the challenge to be addressed and the **trajectory of growth of the Dublin and Eastern Regions** which is undermining the NPF & RSES policy.	
Developing and consolidating our Key Towns.	Local authority development plans have been adopted with a number of **Local Area Plans** either adopted or being prepared for **Key Towns.** However there remains a need for strong commitment and investment.	
Developing the Cork Docklands.	Progress includes securing **URDF funding, setting up of Docklands Delivery Office by Cork City Council and the LDA, as well as commencement of preparation of a Masterplan.** There is a need for continued investment and commitment to delivery.	

Regeneration of Limerick-Shannon.	Adoption of **Development Plans for Limerick and Clare** with a number of **regeneration and public realm projects** being progressed such as the Opera Square and the Colbert Quarter. Clare County Council are preparing a **Local Area Plan for Shannon Town.** There is a need for continued investment and commitment to delivery.	
Develop Waterford as a balanced concentric city north and south of the river.	Adoption of **Development Plans for both Waterford and Kilkenny.** Work is progressing on the **North Quays,** and Kilkenny County Council are currently preparing an **LAP for Ferrybank.** There is a need for continued investment and commitment to delivery and commitment by Government to the MASP Implementation Structures.	
Creating an inclusive, Learning Region.	Strong progress in the Region with **Waterford** designated as a **Unesco Learning City.**	
Positioning the Southern Region as Ireland's International Gateway.	Significant potential and progress made in areas such as commissioning a **Socio-Economic Study on the Region's ports and the preparation of the South Coast DMAP.** Need to drive investment to capitalise potential of ports in the Region and deliver on **potential for off-shore renewable energy.**	
Making the most of Cork and Waterford Harbours and the Shannon Estuary.	Need to drive investment to capitalise potential of ports in the Region and deliver on potential for off-shore renewable energy. **Need to follow through with investment.**	
Improve and protect our environment and our heritage.	Significant steps taken; however, strong concern given the scale of the challenge to be addressed and negative indicators regarding environmental quality. **Significant action required to address deteriorating environmental indicators on biodiversity, water quality and air quality.**	

Developing our tourism and recreational potential.	**Strong progress and potential,** need to continue investment.	
Revitalising Rural Areas.	Progress on promoting rural towns and villages through **funding mechanisms such as RRDF, Town Centre First** etc., and greater digital infrastructure and investment in rural transport such as Local Link. However significant challenges and **structural issues** remain to be addressed including targeted **investment in water infrastructure, direct intervention to address vacancy/ dereliction, and implementation of sustainable rural housing policy** to protect the viability of towns and villages.	
Enhanced connectivity- North to South and East Coast to West Coast.	Significant initiatives and investment; however, scale of challenge is significant. The **SRA commenced work on the Eastern Economic Corridor.** However there is a need for improved coordination between regional/national level.	
Public services and infrastructure to support planning regional growth.	**Significant concerns regarding delivery** at the scale needed, in particular given the **trajectory of growth to the Dublin Region,** which is undermining the NPF & RSES policy.	

Table 3 | *Progress on Key Enablers*

Recommendations

A key task of this Report is to make recommendations following on from the findings of the monitoring process and suggest ways that overall implementation of the RSES could be improved. 10 recommendations are set out below:

1. **Devolution of power to the regional tier of government**
   There is a need for structural reform to ensure better delivery of regional investment. In the more immediate term, improved implementation structures for the NPF, RSES and especially the MASPs are needed, requiring greater alignment with public bodies such as Uisce Éireann, TII, the NTA and ESB in the delivery of the RSES and greater involvement of the Regional Assemblies as members of the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board;

2. **Greater coordination of regional governance**
   There is a need to address the negative impacts of having a multiplicity of regional bodies, sometimes with overlapping mandates and differing boundaries;

3. **Greater alignment between the RSES and Regional Enterprise Plans**
   There should be greater alignment and integration between the RSES and the Regional Enterprise Plans, including consideration given to locate this function within the Regional Assemblies rather than between the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and local authorities. It should be noted that local authorities already cater for their own economic development and LECP functions;

4. **Reform of financing structures**
   Delivery of own-source revenues and multi-annual investment at regional and local level is required, particularly for the Metropolitan Areas in line with the OECD Report recommendations highlighted in Chapter 1;

5. **Retain the long-term ambition of Project Ireland 2040 for balanced regional growth**
   Project Ireland 2040 should be viewed as a long-term strategy and its vision for balanced regional growth and objectives should not be undermined by relying on the continued growth of the Dublin and Eastern Regions as a reason to alter policy direction;

6. **Need for greater alignment between funding under the NDP and NPF/RSES delivery**
   Projects considered of strategic importance in delivering balanced regional growth should be highlighted within the NDP. These projects would act as catalysts for broader investment and growth rather than serving an already existing or emerging population demand. A clear framework is also needed at national level to monitor how the scale and distribution of planned investment aligns with the NPF. The funding mechanisms to achieve NPF and RSES objectives should be reviewed; in particular, the competitive bid process for funding the strategic change sought through the NPF/RSES;

7. **Need to prioritise housing delivery in the regional cities**
   The under-delivery of housing in our regional cities needs to be recognised and addressed as an urgent priority and in a focused manner. Central to this is recognising the sustained absence of private delivery of higher density housing typologies in particular, when compared to the Dublin Metropolitan Area. In the short term, delivery in regional cities should be prioritised through established mechanisms such as Croí Conaithe, Project Tosaigh and direct project delivery by the LDA itself to activate extant planning permissions and to progress planning approvals on zoned land. These mechanisms, and broader interventions aimed at accelerating housing delivery should recognise the clear benefit of compact growth of our Cities and Key Towns;

8. **Stronger implementation of MASP Governance**
   Stronger implementation (with necessary governance structures) are required for the metropolitan areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford. The Regional Assemblies should also be given a more active role where there are obstacles to co-operation or where local authorities act in a manner that would significantly hinder RSES implementation;

9. **Enhanced role for Regional Assemblies in Local Authority Development and Local Area Plans**
   Regional Assemblies should have a statutory function regarding material alterations to draft development plans and local area plans for Key Towns;

10. **Enhanced role for Regional Assemblies in Climate Action**
    Regional Assemblies to be prescribed bodies for submissions on local authority climate action plans to ensure cohesiveness with spatial planning.

1.0.

Introduction and legislative context

1.1. Requirement for a Monitoring Report

This is the second Monitoring Report prepared under Section 25A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) (the Act), monitoring progress made in implementing the RSES for the Southern Region, which came into effect on 31st January 2020.

Under the Act, the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) shall, every 2 years, prepare a report monitoring progress made in implementing the RSES, specifying progress in securing the overall objectives of the RSES, including any specific actions and outcomes, including actions specific to the public bodies[1]. The public bodies and each local authority within the Regional Assembly shall prepare and submit a report setting out progress made in supporting objectives, relevant to that body of the RSES.

The first monitoring report, prepared in 2022, provided an overview of the implementation of the RSES between 31st January 2020 and 31st January 2022. It referenced measures such as policy alignment and investment and identified barriers to, and recommendations on how to improve, implementation. It also provided an opportunity to take stock of the role of the RSES and the SRA in the *Project Ireland 2040* process.

This Report sets out progress made over the past two years: 31st January 2022-31st January 2024.

The SRA is now required to submit this Report to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC). NOAC shall consider the Report and may make recommendations to the Minister in relation to relevant measures to further support the implementation of the RSES.

1.2. Structure of the Report

The Report broadly follows the structure of the first Monitoring Report. It sets out progress on the implementation of RSES objectives across the 3 themes of:

- Liveable Region;
- Creative and Innovative Region;
- Green Region.

A key focus is assessing outcomes under the 11 RSES Strategy Statements (see Page 20), which sit within the hierarchy of the 17 *UN Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) and 10 *National Strategic Outcomes* (NSOs) of the *National Planning Framework* (NPF).

The key initiatives and actions undertaken by the Regional Assembly itself and in collaboration with other national and local bodies, are outlined separately in Chapter 2 *National and Regional Collaboration*.

Chapters 3-5 follow the structure of the 3 RSES themes, outlining the key findings and feedback from the relevant public bodies and local authorities under these headings, as well as including research carried out by the SRA itself, following the recent availability of data sources such as Census 2022. Many good practices and interesting information were shared by the public bodies and local authorities; however, considering the large volume of information received, the detailed reports and submissions are included in Appendix 1, with the most pertinent information and initiatives highlighted within the main body of the Report. It is not intended for example, that the Report would specifically reference updates on new national policy or more local projects, but rather initiatives and specific projects of relevance at the regional level or good practice examples of regional significance that may have been highlighted in the responses.

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[1]   1. The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage 2. The Minister for Rural and Community Development 3. The Minister for Finance 4. The Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform 5. The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment 6. The Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications 7. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine 8. The Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media 9. The Minister for Transport 10. The Minister for Health 11. The Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science 12.The Minister for Education 13. The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth 14.The Minister for Foreign Affairs

The final chapter sets out important conclusions and recommendations, which the SRA considers would support more effective, balanced regional development and the necessary policy changes and implementation measures which could be strengthened in the revised NPF and RSES review.

The main focus of this report is on the RSES themes and Strategy Statements (illustrated below) with specific RPOs included where they are considered of particular relevance. For reference purposes, a full list of RPOs is available in Appendix 2. It is also noteworthy that the RSES themes and strategies are cross-cutting with many inter-connecting policy areas and focuses. Therefore, certain implementation actions highlighted under one section of the Report may equally be relevant under another.

1.3. The role of the Southern Regional Assembly

The *Southern Regional Assembly* (SRA) is one of three Regional Assemblies established in 2015 under the Local Government Reform Act (2014), along with the *Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly* (EMRA) and Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA). The Establishment Order (Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 (S.I. No. 573 of 2014) provides for the Assembly to play a leading role in regional administration and regional development with an overarching role to provide for the general welfare, strategic planning and sustainable development requirements of the Southern Region. Political oversight is provided by 34 local councillors appointed as Members of the Assembly for a five-year term : 27 by their constituent local authorities, 6 as *Committee of the Regions* representatives, and the Mayor of Limerick as an ex officio member.

Key functions of the Assembly include:

* The formulation, adoption, and implementation of the RSES and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs); and

* Management of EU co-funded Programmes, EU project participation, supporting and promoting public sector participation in EU Programmes.

The unique EU related functions of the Regional Assembly enable the integration of European Regional Development priorities with RSES implementation. An effective funding stimulus to accelerate RSES implementation is managed by the SRA as the managing authority for the development and implementation of the Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional ERDF Programme 2021-2027. The Assembly's Annual Reports for 2022 and 2023 are available through the following link: https://www.southernassembly.ie/resources/publications

1.4. The RSES

The *RSES* is a planning and economic framework that considers the future development of the Region for a period of not less than 12 years and not more than 20 years. Section 23(1) of the *Planning and Development Act* states that the objective of the RSES is to:

support the implementation of the National Planning Framework and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region.

Section 23(2) identifies the topics which the RSES should address including:

- The location of future population growth;
- Provision of housing;
- Improving the qualities of cities, towns and rural areas;
- Education and lifelong learning;
- Creating and sustaining quality jobs;
- Supporting rural development;
- Identifying priorities for infrastructure investment, including educational, healthcare, social, community, sporting and cultural facilities;
- Preserving and protecting the environment, its amenities and landscape qualities;
- Transportation, water services, energy and communications networks, and waste management facilities;
- Addressing climate change;
- Promoting sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas.

The RSES for the Southern Region came into effect in January 2020 and its Vision is to:

- Nurture all our places to realise their full potential;
- Protect and enhance our environment;
- Successfully combat climate change;
- Achieve economic prosperity and improved quality of life for all our citizens;
- Accommodate expanded growth and development in suitable locations; and
- Make the Southern Region one of Europe's most creative, innovative, greenest and liveable regions.

The Vision is supported by 11 Strategy Statements, framed under 3 themes of: Liveable Region; Creative and Innovative Region; and Green Region. A primary statutory objective of the RSES is to support the implementation of the *Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework* (NPF) and the *National Development Plan* (NDP).
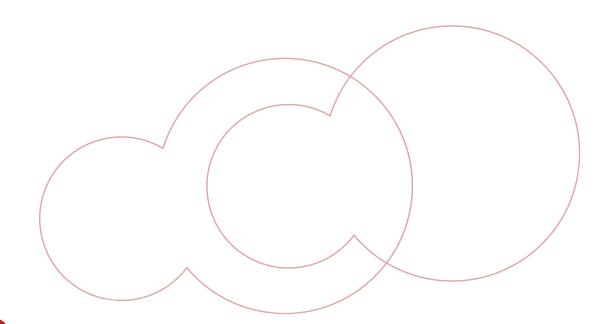
https://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/rses

Critical aims of the RSES:
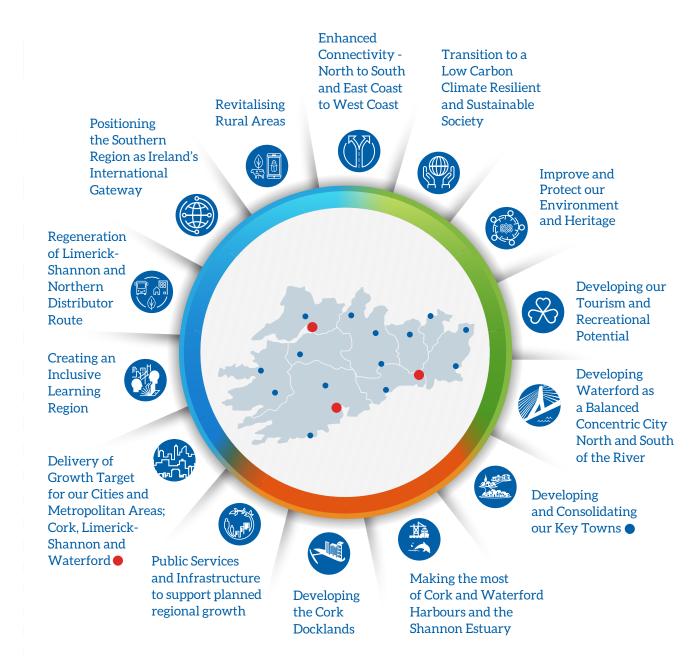
- To ensure a structural realignment, for the overall betterment of our society and environment, in population, homes, and jobs away from the Greater Dublin Area with a 50:50 distribution of growth between: the Eastern and Midlands Region; and the Southern, and Northern and Western Regions;

- The achievement of an additional population in the Southern Region of 380,000 by 2040 bringing the population to almost two million with an additional 225,000 people in employment (880,000 in total);

- Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society.

Figure 1.0 | *RSES Strategy Statements*

Key Enablers - which are actions to show tangible progress towards the Implementation of the RSES:

Figure 1.1 | Key Enablers

Metropolitan Area Plans (MASPs)

The RSES includes 3 Metropolitan Area Plans (MASPs):

- Cork Metropolitan Area Plan
- Limerick – Shannon Metropolitan Area Plan
- Waterford Metropolitan Area Plan

1.5 First Monitoring Report

As outlined above, this Report builds on the first RSES Monitoring Report carried out for the period January 2020-January 2022: https://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/two-year-report-progress-report).

The first Report notes the significant work undertaken by the Regional Assembly, public bodies and Local Authorities in the initial two-year period of implementation, indicating strong progress in securing the overall objectives of the RSES. It acknowledges however, the long-term nature of the RSES process, with immediate transformation not expected or possible to be fulfilled over such a short period of time.

In terms of progress in achieving RSES objectives, it highlighted the following challenges and areas of concern:

- Need for full commitment to the implementation of the NPF and MASP delivery;

- Significant concerns on delivery of public services and infrastructure to support planned regional growth, especially the scale of growth around Dublin, which is undermining the NPF and RSES policy. It cites lack of clarify as to whether the structural changes required to address the overall 50:50 split fundamental to Project Ireland 2040 and the RSES, and the population change required in our urban and rural areas, are on track. It mentioned the National Development Plan review document: *Analytical note for review of National Development Plan: Assessing the alignment of the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan* (2021), which highlighted that the regional cities have a lower share of investment projects over €20 million and €100 million compared to their planned growth;

- Preliminary census results show Dublin and adjoining counties experiencing significant growth;

- Uncertainty surrounding the delivery of the Limerick Northern Distributor Road;

- Need for greater delivery of infrastructure and investment in Waterford City;

- Difficulty in reaching targets on the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and sustainable society, given the scale of the climate and biodiversity crises and energy supply issues;

- Significant action required to address deteriorating environmental indicators on biodiversity, water quality and air quality;

- Challenges in delivering digital and water infrastructure, rural transport, vacancy and dereliction, and sustainable rural housing policy to protect the viability of towns and villages in rural areas.

Some of its recommendations include:

- Necessity in not undermining the achievements of Project Ireland 2040/RSES objectives by relying on the continued population growth of the Dublin and Eastern Regions as a reason to alter policy direction;

- Need for a clear mechanism to ensure sectoral investment is weighted in favour of achieving balanced regional growth and the 50:50 split as set out in the NPF;

- Significant policy instruments are now in place and the emphasis should be on delivery of the transformation needed to deliver the NPF/RSES;

- The funding mechanisms to achieve NPF and RSES objectives should be reviewed, in particular the competitive bid process for funding the strategic change sought through the NPF/RSES;

- An effective delivery mechanism, to progress the development of the MASPs in accordance with the NPF/RSES, should be advanced;

- A long-term budgeting mechanism (10-year strategic fund) should be established to drive the accelerated growth of our three Metropolitan Areas with funding support considered for Key Towns and rural areas;

- Need to address the negative impacts of

having a multiplicity of regional bodies, sometimes with overlapping mandates and differing boundaries;

- Need to strengthen the structural relationship between the Regional Assemblies, DHLGH, Government Departments and the Project Ireland 2040 Board;

- Need for greater alignment and integration between the RSES and the Regional Enterprise Plans in terms of the RSES Economic Strategy.

1.6 NOAC's Review of Monitoring Reports on Regional and Economic Strategies

The first Monitoring Report was submitted to NOAC as required, who, with the *Office of the Planning Regulator* (OPR) provided assistance in reviewing and making recommendations on the Monitoring Reports of the 3 Regional Assemblies. *The Review of Monitoring Reports on Regional and Economic Strategies by Regional Assemblies* (https://www.noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/NOAC-Review-of-Monitoring-Reports-2024-5.pdf) had 10 Key Findings:

1. Measures are needed to support the RSES spatial strategies, directing significant growth to Metropolitan Areas, Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns (centres of scale, regeneration and compact growth);

2. Need for focused, highly empowered and accountable implementation structures to develop and implement the MASPs;

3. Mechanisms are required to ensure greater alignment between funding decisions to support spatial strategy of the RSESs, particularly in relation to focusing investment in the Cities, Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns;

4. Strengthen structural relationship between the Regional Assemblies, DHLGH,

Government Departments and Project Ireland 2040 Board;

5. Provide additional resources to support local authorities in preparation of statutory plans for key settlements (Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns);

6. More active role for Regional Assemblies where there are obstacles to co-operation or where local authorities act in a manner that would significantly hinder RSES implementation;

7. Regional Assemblies to have a statutory function regarding material alterations to draft development plans and local area plans for Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns;

8. Regional Assemblies should be prescribed bodies for submissions on local authority climate action plans to ensure cohesiveness with spatial planning;

9. Further development of the *Regional Development Monitor* (RDM) in terms of RSES implementation and public funding/investment;

10. Engagement with public bodies to focus more on specific RPOs/RSOs and the spatial strategy of the RSES.

1.7 Other recent studies of relevance

Some other recent studies which have provided a key input into the preparation of this Report and context for RSES performance include: the *Report of the Expert Group for the First Revision of the National Planning Framework*, prepared in August 2023; and the *OECD Regional Development Papers - Towards Balanced Regional Attractiveness in Ireland – Enhancing the Delivery of the National Planning Framework (December 2023).*[2]

The Report of the Expert Group for the First Revision of the National Planning Framework was prepared in August 2023: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/1924f-report-of-expert-group-for-the-first-revision-of-the-national-

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2   It should be noted that the publication of the Draft First Revision of the National Planning Framework falls outside the timeframe for this Report.

planning-framework/ As part of the process of undertaking a review of the NPF, an expert group comprising three independent experts with experience of spatial planning, economic and social development and environmental protection was established, to provide a high-level overview of the NPF and identify matters to be considered in its revision. While this deals specifically with the NPF, its terms of reference include regional development and it provides some useful insights, which assist with identifying issues of a regional nature for this Report.

Recommendations of particular relevance include:

- The revision of the NPF should explore ways of making the five Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans more effective. This is key to ensuring that all Irish city-regions live up to their potential as European cities of scale;

- The revision of the NPF should consider the establishment of a dedicated unit which would monitor implementation of the NPF annually. The unit should be mandated to require all relevant Departments and relevant organisations (e.g. Local Authorities and Uisce Éireann) to report progress and report publicly on their performance against clear metrics, both investment (including the NDP) and impact metrics. The monitoring unit should also identify challenges in the implementation process;

- The revision of the NPF should consider clarification of the roles of all key National, Regional and Local Bodies to support the implementation of the NPF and to ensure alignment between the NPF and National, Regional and Local Plans, including County Development Plans;

- The revision of the NPF should consider the benefits of establishing a cross-departmental implementation group at the centre of government which would systematically prioritise and co-ordinate decisions in relation to all key infrastructure decisions, including the NDP projects and programmes.

The OECD Regional Development Papers-Towards Balanced Regional Attractiveness in Ireland – Enhancing the Delivery of the National Planning Framework, was prepared in December 2023: https://www.

oecd.org/cfe/towards-balanced-regional-attractiveness-in-ireland-3df116ad-en.htm. The report aims to support more balanced regional outcomes in Ireland.

Some of the main Recommendations on enhanced NPF delivery for more balanced regional attractiveness of relevance, include:

- To give local and regional government the tools to deliver new, own-source revenues and a multi-annual investment framework;

- At the national level, an inter-ministerial commission could be introduced, including agencies with a mandate for infrastructure, utilities, and local and regional development – to support the coordination of projects of regional concern;

- Together with the Regional Enterprise Plan managers, Regional Assemblies should develop territorialised, critical skills lists by working with employers and chambers of commerce across each Region and Strategic Planning Areas;

- At the regional level, RSES delivery boards with a dedicated, statutory committee for MASP implementation should be established, and include representation from key national agencies, especially the NTA, TII, Uisce Eireann, Eir Grid and Irish Rail;

- While the National Transport Authority is uniquely placed to develop a regional strategy for transportation, a more collaborative approach should be established to involve the Assemblies as a leader in the policy and implementation design process;

- Consideration should be given to the democratic mandate of regional government in Ireland. As indirectly elected bodies, Regional Assemblies may lack the political legitimacy to deliver on their mandate;

- Steps should be taken to encourage co-creation of more systemic reforms across levels of government and civil society. The DHLGH should work with the Regional Assemblies to develop and fund regional forums in key policy areas such as Transport, Housing, Talent Attraction, Renewable Energy Development.

Another study of relevance prepared during the monitoring period is the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe Report: *Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Ireland* (October, 2023): https://rm.coe.int/cg-2023-45-17prov-en-monitoring-of-the-application-of-the-european-cha/1680acd809%20e While it deals mainly with governance issues relating to local authorities, noting that Ireland remains one of the most centralised countries in Europe, it recommended (in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity) that members of the Regional Assemblies be elected directly, citing concerns around accountability and having no direct mandate.

1.8 Conclusion

Building on the experience of the first Monitoring Report, the NOAC/OPR Review of Monitoring Reports and other recent studies of relevance, a useful context has been provided for preparing the current Report. While the Report is not intended to monitor the performance of the NPF, noting that the *Report of the Expert Group for the First Revision of the National Planning* *Framework* sets out the need for greater implementation and monitoring at this level, it does provide some conclusions and recommendations considered of relevance in achieving the overarching aims of the NPF for more balanced regional growth. Many of the local authorities in the Region are also in the process of preparing monitoring reports for their Development Plans, which will focus on issues of more relevance at local level and assessing the impact of their Core Strategies with regard to the delivery of housing and infrastructure in their functional areas. This Report focuses more on the performance of the Region as a whole, the Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), the Metropolitan Areas as well as the Cities and Key Towns. Overall thematic issues are also dealt with, which in turn monitor how our small towns, villages and rural areas are performing. The development of the Regional Development Monitor (RDM), which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 *National and Regional Collaboration*, has been a significant initiative by the 3 Regional Assemblies over the past two years in providing a key information source in RSES monitoring. It is intended to build on its existing framework to provide more insights into performance and assist monitoring of the RSES into the future.

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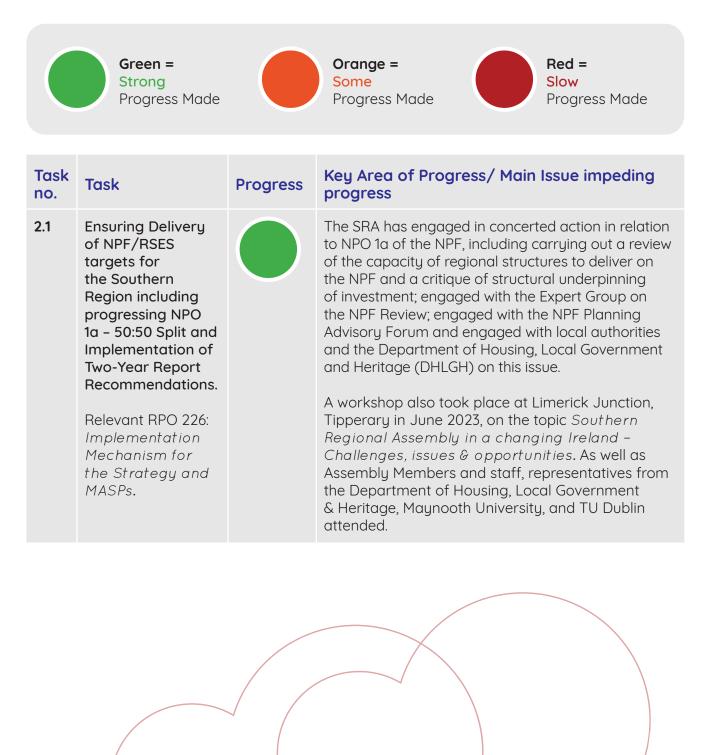
National and Regional Collaboration

2.1. RSES Implementation Programme

This section sets out progress made by the SRA itself in implementing the RSES during the two-year period of the Report (31st January 2022 - 31st January 2024). Many of the tasks are reflected in the *Annual Programmes of Work* for the Assembly relating to the performance of its functions, which must be adopted in February each year in accordance with Article 21(1) of the 2014 Establishment Order. The implementation programme focuses on specific, action orientated RPOs, which are cited below. There is also ongoing work that the planning team are involved in including: engagement with national consultations; policy and research; involvement with various steering committees; and joint projects with the other Assemblies.

Progress across each Implementation Task is summarised in the table below with further details provided on each Task within this section.

Green = Strong Progress Made	**Orange =** Some Progress Made	**Red =** Slow Progress Made

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.1	Ensuring Delivery of NPF/RSES targets for the Southern Region including progressing NPO 1a – 50:50 Split and Implementation of Two-Year Report Recommendations. Relevant RPO 226: *Implementation Mechanism for the Strategy and MASPs*.	🟢	The SRA has engaged in concerted action in relation to NPO 1a of the NPF, including carrying out a review of the capacity of regional structures to deliver on the NPF and a critique of structural underpinning of investment; engaged with the Expert Group on the NPF Review; engaged with the NPF Planning Advisory Forum and engaged with local authorities and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) on this issue. A workshop also took place at Limerick Junction, Tipperary in June 2023, on the topic *Southern Regional Assembly in a changing Ireland – Challenges, issues & opportunities*. As well as Assembly Members and staff, representatives from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, Maynooth University, and TU Dublin attended.

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
			The event was based on three sessions relating to: Democratic Mandate, Linkage to National Level, and Funding and Structure. The following 9 recommendations were formed from the sessions, and subsequently agreed at the October Assembly meeting:

1. Measures to ensure greater awareness of regional assembly initiatives at local authority level should be developed;

2. The SRA, together with EMRA/NWRA and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage/OPR should prior to the 2024 elections set out a programme in relation to nomination of elected members to the Regional Assembly including briefing on role and responsibilities on the Regional Assembly, geographic/population balance;

3. There should be a standing item relating to the Committee of The Regions on a quarterly basis;

4. The issue of remote meetings should be discussed in more detail including consideration of national position, other Regional Assemblies, and measures to optimise participation;

5. The issue of EU officers at LA level should be discussed in more detail including with local authorities/DHLGH;

6. The Regional Assembly should continue to press for greater structural integration with relevant government departments;

7. The RSES implementation mechanisms should be improved, and communication of progress should be reported to the members;

8. The role and nature of differing regional bodies should be reviewed to improve the effectiveness and coordination between these;

9. The regional assembly staffing and financial structure should be reviewed in the context of its role and by reference to other similar public bodies.

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.2	Establishment of Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) Structures Relevant RPO 226: *Implementation Mechanism for the Strategy and MASPs.*	🔴	• There has been ongoing engagement with the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) Steering Committee for the Cork Metropolitan Area; • There will be formal MASP structures set up under the legislation for the Limerick Directly Elected Mayor; • The SRA prepared an agreed approach – **'A Unified Voice'** for the Waterford Metropolitan Area which seeks to establish a formal coordination/delivery mechanism linking Waterford City and County Council, Kilkenny County Council, the Southern Regional Assembly, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, DPER, other relevant government departments, and relevant stakeholders, all with the purpose of providing a Unified Voice for development of the Metropolitan Area. There is ongoing engagement about the establishment of these new structures; • The SRA has been a key driver in proposing MASP structural change with the DHLGH and as part of the OECD work on the NPF review.
2.3	Developing Regional Indicators and Monitoring Relevant RPOs: *68 Regional Investment; 71 Shared Evidence Base; and 226 Implementation Mechanism for the Strategy and MASPs.*	🟢	• The *Regional Development Monitor* (RDM) Hub has been developed which is a collaborative project between the three Regional Assemblies, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University and spatial infrastructure partners the Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) via the GeoHive platform. It collates and visualises a range of relevant socio-economic and environmental indicators to present the performance of each of the three Regions in terms of achieving the objectives outlined in their respective RSESs. It provides a series of new national mapping and visualisation infrastructures to assist Government Departments, Regional Assemblies, Local Authorities, planners, policy makers, researchers and members of the public in gaining a greater insight into social, economic and environmental trends to aid better decision making. It also focuses on indicators related to the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs)/Strategy Statements of the RSESs along with their appropriate socio-economic and environmental variables and will be categorised into four key principles: *Our People and Places, Our Green & Sustainable Future, Our Region's Economy, and an All-Island Perspective;*

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
			• Preparation of this Monitoring Report is also a key step in ensuring implementation can be accurately measured;
			• Tracking of infrastructure delivery and analysis of key trends including the results of Census 2022, as well as the development of GIS capacity, has been successfully implemented which has fed into this Report and will enhance the evidence base for the upcoming review of the NPF and RSES;
			• The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the upcoming RSES Review is shortly going out to tender. It is intended to develop indicators for SEA Monitoring with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) as part of their review processes.
2.4	Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas: Cork; Limerick–Shannon; Waterford; and Galway. Relevant RPO 6: *Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas.*	🔴	The Regional Planning team has facilitated a dialogue between the 3 Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick–Shannon and Waterford in the Region, focusing on the practical issues including meetings between staff of the SRA and Local Authorities to support implementation of Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS). This work is linked to the wider Regional Nature Forum providing a platform for sharing of good practice and knowledge in this area.
2.5	Ensure the RSES Programme for Change is incorporated into the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) Process.	🟢	The SRA engaged with all the local authorities in the Region as part of their LECP processes, as required under Section 66 of the Local Government Reform Act. The status of the various LECPs and the dates for agreement of Statement of Consistency between the LECPs and the RSES is set out in the table on the next page.

Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs)

Local Authority	Status - Regional Assembly Roles
Waterford City & County Council	Statement of Consistency agreed on 10/11/2023
Wexford County Council	Statement of Consistency agreed on 08/09/2023
Carlow County Council	Statement of Consistency agreed on 08/09/2023
Kilkenny County Council	Statement of Consistency agreed on 14/04/2023
Cork City Council	Statement of Consistency agreed on 12/04/2024
Cork County Council	Statement of Consistency agreed on 12/01/2024
Kerry County Council	LECP due Q4 2024
Limerick City & County Council	Statement of Consistency agreed on 12/04/2024
Clare County Council	Statement of Consistency agreed on 08/03/2024
Tipperary County Council	Statement of Consistency agreed on 10/11/2023

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.6	Implement Learning Region Action Plan.	🔴	There has been ongoing engagement with stakeholders including HEIs and DFHERIS on the development of a Unified Tertiary System. The SRA has also participated in the all island Irish Network of Learning Cities.
2.7	Establish Waterford as a UNESCO Learning City. Relevant RPOs: *39 Economic Opportunities and Choice for all our Citizens; 63 Skills and Talent; 186 Lifelong Learning; 187 Education and Training; 190 Lifelong Learning and Healthy Cities Initiatives;* and Waterford MASP PO 23: *Lifelong Learning and Skills.*	🟢	Following an application in 2023 led by Waterford City and County Council, the SRA and South East Technical University (SETU), this task was successfully achieved when Waterford became a designated UNESCO Learning City in early 2024. There is ongoing engagement with Waterford City and County Council, SETU and other stakeholders on delivery of a programme for Lifelong Learning and related activity for Waterford.

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.8	Implement SRA Communications Strategy. Relevant RPO 73: *International Branding of the Region and Reputation*.	🟢	The SRA's social media accounts and website are continuously updated on events happening and matters of relevance in the Region. The SRA is currently in the process of developing a new website, which will provide information in a more accessible manner. A new branding portal was also launched in 2023.
2.9	Develop the Smart Southern Region Action Plan. Relevant RPO 134: *Smart Cities and Smart Region*.	🟠	The SRA is progressing implementation of the Smart Southern Region (SSR) initiative, building on its launch on the 18th of January 2023. Developments include: a regional approach for Smart Specialisation (S3); the Smart Southern Region project mapping tool in consultation with Local Authorities and stakeholders; a Smart Southern Region Action Plan; and to establish a Smart Southern Region Network. The SRA is also exploring potential EU and national funding pathways for specialist services to work with the Assembly on these actions. The SRA submitted an *Expression of Interest* to the EU Commission to be designated a Regional Innovation Valley.
2.10	Develop Regional Freight Strategy. Relevant RPO: 141 *Regional Freight Strategy*.	🟢	Action 24 of Ireland's *Road Haulage Strategy 2022-2031* requires the Regional Assemblies, with the NTA, to lead the development of Regional Level Freight Strategies in consultation with key stakeholders, consistent with the objectives of the RSESs. Action 23 further requires metropolitan level freight strategies to be prepared for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford. The SRA has prepared a roadmap for the development of this strategy in consultation with the NTA. The process will commence in 2024 following completion of the *National Demand Management Strategy* and improvements in data through Action 02, 03 and 06 of the *Road Haulage Strategy*. It is set to be completed by Q3/Q4 2025.

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.11	Develop Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region. Relevant RPO: 145 *Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region.*	🟢	Following the completion of a Project Charter setting out the scope and aims for this work, the SRA continues to coordinate with the Department of Transport and engage with transport stakeholders, port companies, Local Authorities and other stakeholders to prepare the *Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region* in 2024. Specialist research services were secured in early 2024 to demonstrate the significance of the socio - economic impact and future growth potential of port and harbour activities and their associated enterprises and supply chains for the economy of the Region (as individual and combined regional assets), the opportunities for a lower carbon future and role of ports to enable offshore renewable energy development. This analysis will also provide an evidence base to communicate the important future role of our ports and harbours to achieve balanced regional economic development. This work will input into the review of National Ports Policy targeted for adoption in Q1 2025 and other strategic plans for our Region's coastal and maritime areas.
2.12	Develop Airport Strategy for the Southern Region. Relevant RPO 149: *Airport Strategy for the Southern Region.*	🔴	Following the completion of a Project Charter setting out the scope and aims for this work, the SRA continues to coordinate with the Department of Transport and engage with transport, airports, Local Authorities and other stakeholders to prepare an *Airport Strategy for the Southern Region* in 2024-2025. As part of this work, the SRA intends to procure specialist research services to demonstrate the significance of the economic impact of airport infrastructure and associated services, enterprise and supply chains to the economy of the region (as individual and combined regional assets), the opportunities for a lower carbon future for the sector and communicate the important future role of our airport assets to achieve balanced regional development. This work will input into a future review of national aviation policy scheduled to commence in 2024.

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.13	Sustainable Mobility. Relevant RPOs: 151-174 and RPO 176 *for sustainable mobility, enhanced regional connectivity and a low carbon, climate resilient and sustainable society.*	🟢	Progress on the RSES Transport Strategy and National Sustainable Mobility Plan (SMP) includes: • Participation in SMP Leadership Team, SMP Delivery Team and the managing authority for National Pathfinder Project 30, the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Accelerator Programme in each of the three Regions to enable the design and implementation of smart and sustainable mobility projects and achieve greater levels of behavioural change and modal shift to reduce carbon emissions from the transport sector. The SRA is the managing authority on behalf of the Department of Transport and three Regional Assemblies to deliver this 3-Year project. The Programme was launched in 2023. Quarterly meetings take place with Track One stakeholders (Local Authorities). Training for Track Two stakeholders (Councillors) will take place in Q4 2024. • Continued support for capacity building and actions to implement 10-15 minute cities, towns and neighbourhoods in action, building upon the publication of SRA's 10 Minute Town Methodology and Framework Report; • Preparation and implementation of Metropolitan Transport Strategies (CMATS, LSMATS and WMATS), Local Transport Plans and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans; • Coordination with the Department of Transport's Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland Division on the regional level implementation of the National Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2025; • Liaison with DoT/NTA on Demand Management.
2.14	Implement Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) for infrastructure provision. Relevant RPO: 124 Green Infrastructure	🟢	There has been ongoing engagement with Local Authorities and other agencies to promote BGI and NBS including working with ESPON and Maynooth University on a joint seminar held in December 2023. Ongoing meetings of the Regional Nature Forum are held which provide a supporting structure for Local Authorities, agencies and other practitioners involved in the practical application of BGI and NBS and act as a forum to discuss common issues/barriers and for sharing knowledge. This task continues the work of the INTERREG EUROPE Blue Green City Project.

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.15	Develop Regional Renewable Electricity Strategy Roadmap. Relevant RPO: 98 *Regional Renewable Energy Strategy.*	🟢	Along with the other two Regional Assemblies, the Regional Planning team has taken part in consultation meetings with the SEAI and Government Departments (DECC and DHLGH) on development of a Roadmap for preparation of *Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies* (RRES) by each Regional Assembly. This task is an action of the Government's Climate Action Plan and a National Policy Objective (NPO) in the First Draft Revised NPF.
2.16	Regional Decarbonisation. Relevant RPO: 90 *Regional Decarbonisation.*	🔴	Research on *Territories and Low-carbon Economy* has been carried out as part of the ESPON Locate Project and will provide useful background research for the preparation of a *Regional Decarbonisation Plan.* The South-East Energy Agency (SEEA) is also undertaking some preliminary work for a Regional Decarbonisation Plan (RDP) as part of the REGIO 1st Interreg Project.
2.17	Co-ordination of Climate Action with Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO). Relevant RPOs: 87 *Low Carbon Energy Future;* 88 *National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework;* 89 *Building Resilience to Climate Change;* and 90: *Regional Decarbonisation.*	🟢	The Regional Planning Team continues to engage in quarterly Steering Group meetings with the *CARO Southern Seaboard South,* on matters related to Climate Action and the Local Authority Climate Action Plans.
2.18	Identify the scope and role of the Regional Landscape Strategy for the Region. Relevant RPO: 129 *Landscape.*	🔴	Progress on this task has been delayed pending the development of the *National Landscape Strategy.*

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.19	Support the development of the Eastern Corridor and on-going support to the Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative. Relevant RPOs 41: *Atlantic Economic Corridor* and 42: *Eastern Corridor.*	🟢	Details of implementation for the Atlantic Economic Corridor is outlined in Chapter 4 *A Creative and Innovative Region.* Preliminary research on the Eastern Corridor was undertaken in 2023 has been followed by engagement with SRA elected members from Wexford and a meeting with the Executive at Wexford County Council. Further engagement with Wexford County Council and other stakeholders is taking place.
2.20	Develop capacity and strengthen the bidding capacity of local authorities, government agencies and regional stakeholders. Relevant RPO: 70 *Bidding Capacity.*	🟢	Implementation on this is ongoing through submissions on Development Plans, development of workshops and engagement with Local Authorities and the ETC Network.
2.21	Marine Spatial Planning. Relevant RPOs: 76 *Marine Economy;* 77 *Marine Spatial Planning – Consistency and Alignment*; and 78: *First Mover under the National Marine Planning Framework.*	🔴	Coordination is ongoing with the DHLGH - *Marine Policy and Legislation Division* (and now with DECC) on regional roles in future *Designated Maritime Area Plan* (DMAPS) processes. The SRA participated in stakeholder engagement in the development of the Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) for the South Coast (Offshore Renewable Energy).
2.22	Regional Enterprise Plans. Relevant Regional Strategy Statement: 5 *A Strong Economy.*	🟢	The SRA continues to participate in the implementation of Regional Enterprise Plans, including taking the role of action leader and action partner to assist thematic working groups convened to implement the SW, SE, MW REPs as required. Participation on implementation steering committees and networking with the three REP Programme Managers also takes place.

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.23	Develop Bioeconomy through the ROBIN Project. Relevant RPOs: 57 *National Policy Statement on Bioeconomy*; and 58 *Bioeconomy and Rural Areas*.	🟢	Led by the EU Programmes Division, the Regional Planning team is involved in the ongoing delivery of the *ROBIN* project, which aims to empower Europe's regions to adapt their governance models and structures in ways that accelerate the achievement of their circular bioeconomy targets while promoting social innovation and accounting for different territorial contexts. The project has developed *ROBIN Support Actions for Bioeconomy Governance* and is now testing a *ROBIN Toolbox Environmental Protection Planning Tool*.
2.24	Develop SRA's role in Placemaking; and Sustainable and Compact Settlements. Relevant RPOs: 31 *Sustainable Place Framework;* 34 *Regeneration, Brownfield and Infill Development;* and 35 *Support for Compact Growth.*	🟢	The SRA prepared submissions as part of the consultation for the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements - Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DHLGH, 2024). Possible further involvement with the Department was discussed, in order to promote best practice in design and place-making and assisting local authorities in this area. The SRA is also a partner in an Interreg Europe project titled PROXIMITIES, which will promote the concept of good place-making and the compact growth approach in peripheral locations of the Region's 3 Cities- Cork, Limerick and Waterford.
2.25	Ensure representation of the regional view and engagement in ongoing relevant European, national, and regional policy implementation processes/fora including (see list over):	🟢	• NPF Review Advisory Forum; • NPF Review Expert Group; • Department of Transport – Sustainable Mobility Policy – Leadership Group; • Project Ireland 2040 Board; • National Climate Change Adaptation Forum; • National Strategic Environmental Assessment Forum; • Irish Water National Water Resource Plan and Regional Water Resource Plans; • Regional Enterprise Plans; Steering Group participation for SW, MW, SE Regional Enterprise Plans; • Regional Skills Forum (SW, MW, SE); • Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT); • Town Centre First; • Steering group- Coastal Change Management Strategy;

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
			• ECP Advisory Group;
			• Planning for Climate Change Steering Group;
			• Atlantic Economic Corridor;
			• Consultation and coordination with DoT, TII and NTA for the implementation of the RSES Transport Strategy including preparation and implementation of Metropolitan Transport Strategies (CMATS, LSMATS and WMATS) and Local Transport Plans;
			• All Island Strategic Rail Review -Department of Transport;
			• National Rail Freight Strategy review with Iarnród Éireann;
			• National Marine Planning Framework – consultation with DHLGH;
			• Marine Planning Policy Division;
			• Engagement, research, and training through OPR Forum;
			• Academic research with UCD (under the Irish Research Council Enterprise Partnership Scheme) on Achieving Regional Equality – Urban Rural Dynamics in Irelands Southern Region EU-Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Policy;
			• International Transport Forum (ITF);
			• Irish Planning Institute (IPI) Marine Planning Committee.
2.26	Submissions made by the SRA in 2022 and 2203 are available in Appendix 3.	🟢	
2.27	Development Plan Process.	🟢	There has been substantial alignment between the planning policy framework at national, regional and local level with the adoption of the Local Authority Development Plans during 2022 and 2023. The SRA had significant engagement with the local authorities through this process. Full details of the adoption dates for the Development Plans is set out in Chapter 3 *Liveable Region.*

Task no.	Task	Progress	Key Area of Progress/ Main Issue impeding progress
2.28	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Monitoring.	🔴	Article 10 of the SEA Directive requires that monitoring be carried out in order to identify, at an early stage, any unforeseen adverse effects due to implementation of a plan, and to be able to take remedial action. Implementation of the RSES relies to a large extent on existing monitoring programmes managed by other agencies. There are currently substantial challenges in accessing appropriate and up-to-date data aligned with monitoring of the RSES SEA. In addressing this challenge, the Regional Assemblies plan to devise a standardised RSES SEA Monitoring approach which can integrate relevant data into the Regional Development Monitor. Through the National SEA Forum, the Regional Assemblies are actively engaging with key stakeholders regarding RSES SEA Monitoring and the EPA has offered to assist the Regional Assemblies in advancing RSES SEA Monitoring. It is also intended to look at better indicators to make the SEA monitoring process easier to implement as part of the upcoming RSES Review.

3.0. Liveable Region

This section focuses on the implementation actions by public bodies and local authorities under the RSES Strategy theme of *Liveable Region*. The SRA's own actions in this area are included in Chapter 2 *National and Regional Collaboration*. The RSES *Liveable Region* supports sustainable and inclusive communities and places, which improves our quality of life and regional attractiveness. With the release of important data from Census 2022 and other sources available, analysis of the performance of the Region in this area is also included in this chapter. This will assist the SRA and other policy makers going forward, to demonstrate more effectively how the RSES and its objectives are being implemented and suggest areas that need to be addressed.

3.1. Strategy Statements

Relevant Strategy Statements:

- **Strategy Statement 1** *Compact Growth* Strengthening and growing our cities and metropolitan areas; harnessing the combined strength of our 3 cities as a counterbalance to the Greater Dublin Area,

through quality development; regeneration and compact growth; building on the strong network of towns and supporting our villages and rural areas;

- **Strategy Statement 3** *Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities* Strengthening the role of and improving quality of life in the Region's diverse rural areas and communities and valuing our rural Region as dynamic, resilient and outward looking;

- **Strategy Statement 7** *Diversity, Language, Culture and Heritage Enhancement* Strengthening and protecting our Region's diversity, language and culture, our recreational assets, and our natural and built heritage;

- **Strategy Statement 9** *Sustainable Planned and Infrastructure-led Development* Providing infrastructure and services in a sustainable, planned and infrastructure-led manner to ensure the sustainable management of water waste and other environmental resources

- **Strategy Statement 11** *Inclusive International Region* Building an inclusive outward looking international Region on the global stage.

Strategy Statement 1

Compact Growth - Strengthening and growing our cities and metropolitan areas; harnessing the combined strength of our 3 cities as a counterbalance to the Greater Dublin Area, through quality development; regeneration and compact growth; building on the strong network of towns and supporting our villages and rural areas.

3.1.1. Local Authority Development Plans

RPO 3: *Local Authority Core Strategies*

There has been substantial alignment between the planning policy framework at national, regional and local levels, with the following

Local Authority Development Plans adopted:

- Carlow: Came into effect on 4th July 2022;

- Clare: 20th April 2023. Ministerial Direction: 3rd August 2023;

- Cork City: 8th August 2022. Ministerial Direction 2nd: December 2022. Variation 1 adopted 8th May 2023;

- Cork County: 6th June 2022, Ministerial Direction: 28th September 2022;

- Kerry: 15th August 2022. Ministerial Direction 5th December 2022;

- Kilkenny: 15th October 2021. Draft Ministerial Direction never finalised. Variation 1 adopted 20th November 2023;

- Limerick: 29th July 2022. Ministerial Direction 4th November 2022. Judicial Review ongoing. Variation 1 adopted 22nd May 2023;

- Tipperary: 22nd August 2022;

- Waterford: 19th July 2022. Judicial Review;

- Wexford: 22nd July 2022.

3.1.2. Local Area Plans and Framework/Masterplans

RPO 2: Planning for Diverse Areas
RPO11: Key Towns

The local authorities provided the following information on Local Area Plans, including those for Key Towns, which also include the preparation of Local Transport Plans:

Local Authority	Town
Carlow	• Draft Carlow-Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030 on public display until the 5th February 2024; • Muine Bheag- Royal Oak Local Area Plan 2024-2030 Issues Paper due in Q1 of 2024; • Tullow Local Area Plan 2024-2030 Issues Paper due in Q1 of 2024.
Clare	• Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030 at pre-draft stage; • Ennis Town and Environs Local Area Plan at information gathering stage in advance of preparing an Issues Paper.
Cork City	• Cork Docklands Framework Masterplan being prepared; • Work commenced in 2023 on North Blackpool / Kilbarry Framework Plan; • Work commenced in 2023 on Blarney East / Ringwood Expansion Area; • Some preparatory work has commenced on Stoneview Framework Masterplan; • Work commenced in Q4 2023 on Douglas Framework Plan; • Work commenced in 2023 on Airport City Gateway Framework Plan; • Work commenced in Q 2 2023 on Avenue De Rennes Neighbourhood Framework Plan; • Work commenced in 2023 on Blackpool Neighbourhood Centre Regeneration Plan; • Work commenced in 2023 on Northwest Regional Park Masterplan.
Cork County	No area-based plans have been prepared since the adoption of the County Development Plan.

Local Authority	Town
Kerry	• Kenmare MD LAP 2023-29 is currently at material amendment stage. Estimated date of adoption is April 2024; • Draft Tralee MD LAP 2024-30, estimated publication June 2024; • Draft Killarney MD LAP 2024-30, estimated publication July 2024; • Fenit Village Design Masterplan adopted in 2022; • Draft Milltown Masterplan currently being finalized; • Tender being published for Castleisland Masterplan;
Kilkenny	• A Local Area Plan for Ferrybank/Belview area will commence in March 2024 and be completed in Q1 2025; • A Local Area Plan for Castlecomer will commence in April 2024 and be completed in Q2 2025. Masterplans have been prepared for the following: • Abbey Quarter regeneration area (2023); • Loughmacask Neighbourhood (2023); • Urlingford village (2023). Masterplans are under preparation for: Ballyragget, Kilmacow, Paulstown, St Canice's Campus and (HSE lands in Kilkenny City). It is hoped they will be complete by the end of 2024.
Limerick	Following the adoption of the Development Plan (LDP), Local Area Plans for: Caherconlish, Castleconnell, Rathkeale, Abbeyfeale and Newcastle West have been adopted. The review process for the Local Area Plans of Adare and Patrickswell are on-going and nearing adoption. Other Framework/Master Plans include: • Arthur's Quay Framework Plan to be completed by Q1 2024; • Newcastle West Masterplan for the Castle Demense prepared; • Kings Island Walled Town Spatial Framework Plan in preparation; • Toppin's Field Masterplan prepared; • Cleeves Riverside Quarter Masterplan prepared;
Tipperary	• Clonmel & Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030 – due to be made in February 2024; • Nenagh & Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030 - due to be made in February 2024; • Thurles & Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030 - due to be made in February 2024; • Roscrea Local Area Plan 2023-2029 –came into effect from 23rd October 2023. The Roscrea Town Centre First Plan was developed in tandem with the LAP and is placed on a statutory footing by way of its inclusion within the LAP.

Local Authority	Town
	Masterplans are in place for areas within: Clonmel (Ballingarrane); Nenagh (Martyr's Road); Thurles (Thurles Town Centre Renewal Strategy); and Roscrea (Gantly Road) and are given statutory effect by the inclusion of objectives within the relevant LAPs. These masterplans are at various stages of implementation. Local Area Plans for Cashel, Carrick-on-Suir, Templemore and Tipperary Town are due to commence in 2024. A Masterplan for Lisheen BioEconomy Campus is to be published in 2024 to support the redevelopment of this area, an area included within the Tipperary Decarbonisation Zone (DZ).
Waterford	Local Area Plans for Tramore and Dungarvan/Ballinroad with consultants being appointed to prepare Local Transport Plans as part of this process.
Wexford	• Preparation of Local Area Plans for Wexford town and Enniscorty are progressing and include the preparation of Local Transport Plans; • The Gorey Local Area Plan 2017-2023 has been extended for 3 years; • The Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan 2015-2021 was extended until 2026.

Table 3.1 | *Local Area Plans as Per Local Authority*

3.1.3. Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)

The following includes details of projects being funded under the URDF by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The URDF aims to deliver more compact and sustainable development, through the regeneration and rejuvenation of Ireland's five cities and other large towns (greater than 10,000 population and 2,500 jobs).

RPO 7: Delivery and Funding

Carlow – Masterplan for Carlow town centre and Public Realm and Pedestrian Linkage Project;

Clare – Shannon Town Centre Masterplan; Ennis Town Centre Public Realm Regeneration;

Cork City - Beamish and Crawford/Grand Parade Quarter; Cork City Docklands; Tivoli Docks; and Kent Station yard;

Cork County – Carrigaline Western Relief Road; Midleton Main Street Public Realm; Cobh Diaspora Centre; Carrigtwohill Public Realm; Mallow Town Regeneration; Passage West-

Ringaskiddy-Carrigaline Harbour Cluster;

Kerry – Tralee Town Centre Public Realm works and Economic Regeneration; Killarney Public Realm, Áras Phrádraig Masterplan and Destination Killarney;

Kilkenny – Abbey Quarter; Enhanced City Centre Liveability Project;

Limerick – O'Connell St. Urban Centre Revitalisation; Digital Collaboration and Virtual Reality Centre; Living Georgian City Programme; Opera Project; UL Digital District;
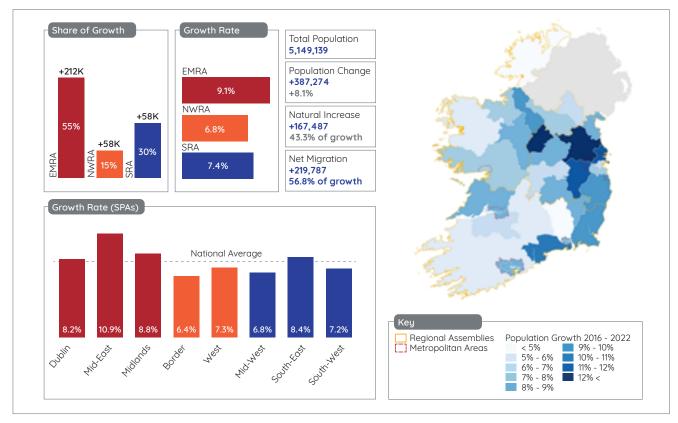
Tipperary – Liberty Square Thurles; Clonmel 2030 Transformational Regeneration; Nenagh Sustainable Energy Centre of Excellence;

Waterford – Waterford City Centre Regeneration; Waterford North Quays; Tramore Town Centre;

Wexford – Trinity Wharf Project.

3.2. Analysis of recent trends by the SRA

This is the first Monitoring Report, where detailed dissemination of the results of Census 2022 has been available and has assisted the analysis of recent trends for the Region. When Census 2022 was carried out on the 3rd April 2022, factors such as recent lifting of Covid 19 restrictions, including significant working from home patterns were still evident. The impacts of immigration due to the war in Ukraine were also not fully realised. Another caveat with these figures is the early stage of the Project Ireland 2040 process with local authority Development Plans only recently adopted. It is not expected to see the full impact of recent policy shifts in terms of balanced regional growth.

3.2.1. Population Growth of the Region and Strategic Planning Areas

Figure 3.1 | Overview of national and regional population growth, 2016 to 2022 (Source: Regional Development Monitor)

The population of the Southern Region grew by 7.4%, with the Eastern and Midland Region growing by 9.1% between 2016 and 2022 showing distribution of growth was significantly weighted in favour of the east. Within the Southern Region, the strongest level of growth was experienced within the South East Strategic Planning Area (SPA) at 8.4%, followed by the South West at 7.2% and the Mid West at 6.8%. Nationally, it is noteworthy that that Eastern SPA experienced the most significant rate of growth across the period at 10.9% reflecting a focus of growth within Dublin's commuter belt, with the Dublin SPA growing by 8.2%.

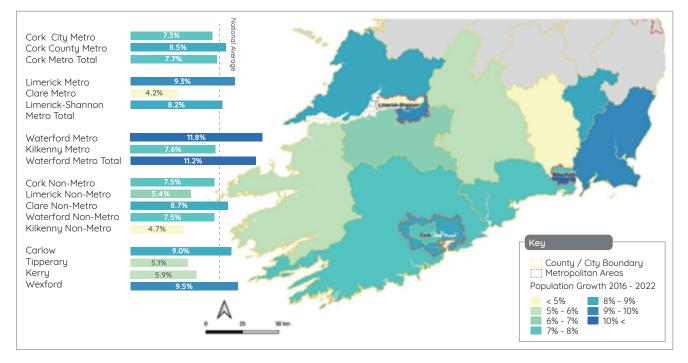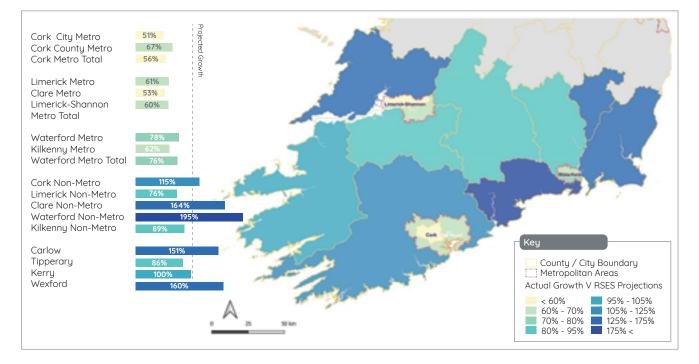## 3.2.2. Population Growth of Local Authorities and Metropolitan Areas
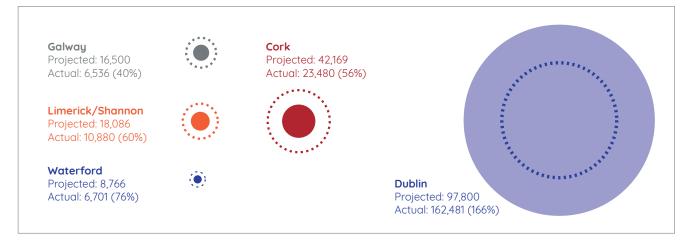
Figure 3.2 | Overview of local authority (including metropolitan and non-metropolitan) area population growth 2016 to 2022 (Source: Census 2022, SRA Analysis)

At local authority level in the Region, the highest rates of growth were experienced in Counties Waterford (9.6%), Wexford (9.5%) and Carlow (8.8%). Despite the rate of the growth in the wider South-East, Co. Kilkenny experienced the lowest rate of growth in the Region at 5%. Of the three Metropolitan Areas: Cork grew by 7.7%, which is below the national average; Limerick-Shannon grew just above the national average at 8.2%; while Waterford grew at a higher rate of 11.2%.

3.2.3. Percentage Rates of Growth versus Population Projections

Figure 3.3 | Actual Versus Projected Population Growth for local authorities (including metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas) the Southern Region, 2016 to 2022 (Source: Census 2022)
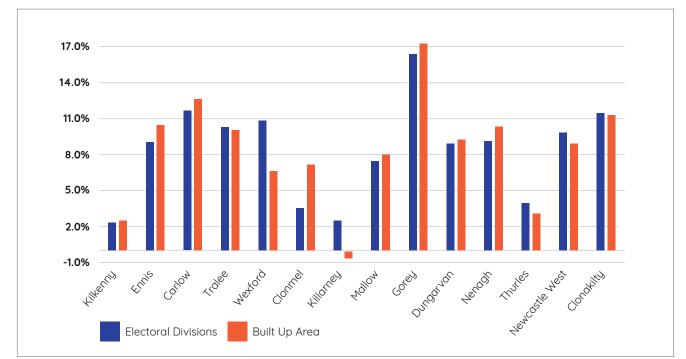
Figure 3.4 | *Projected versus Actual Growth of Metropolitan Areas (shown as a percentage), 2016 to 2022 (Source: Census 2022)*

In identifying planned growth targets across the Region, the RSES sets out projected growth from 2016 to 2026, and to 2031. When rates of growth to 2026 are extrapolated for 2022, it is evident that the Southern Region grew by 91% of its projected rate of growth, the Eastern and Midland Region by 134% and the Northern and Western Region by 83% based on the NPF Implementation Roadmap projections.

Counties Carlow, Wexford and non-metropolitan parts of Counties Waterford and Clare grew significantly above their projected rate of growth (> 150%). Significantly, the non-metropolitan part of Co. Waterford grew at 195% of its projected growth. By comparison, the Metropolitan Areas generally grew at a significantly lower rate than projected: Cork 56%; Limerick-Shannon: 60% and Waterford 76%. This shows a significant divergence on how Metropolitan Areas and the remainder of the Region are growing.

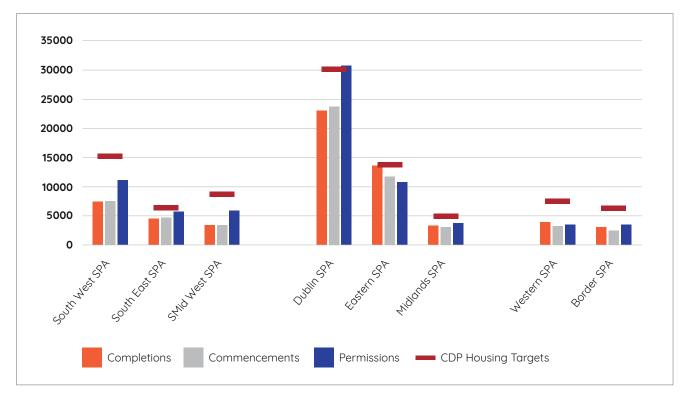Under Figure 3.4 for Cities: there is also a significant disparity between the rate of growth of the Dublin and other Metropolitan Areas, highlighting the major challenge faced in delivering upon the NPF's objective for balanced regional growth.

3.2.4. Percentage Population Growth of Key Towns

Figure 3.5 | *Percentage Population Growth of Key Towns 2016 – 2022 - EDs and BUAs (Source: Census 2022)*
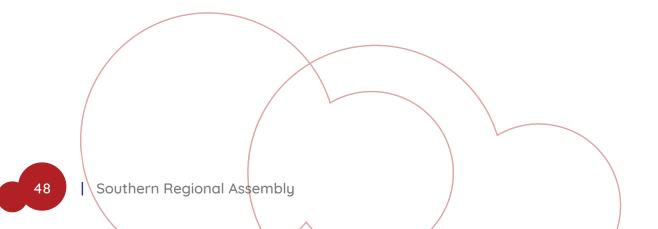
As a result of discrepancies between from the redefined town boundaries from Settlements in 2016 to Built Up Areas in Census 2022, population change of Electoral Divisions within and adjacent to Key Towns has also been included to give a more accurate comparison in some instances. The Region's Key Towns grew by 8.1% in total, with an average of 8.4%. Ennis is now the largest Key Town in the Region, with a population of 27,923, having grown by 10.5%. Gorey experienced the highest rate of growth at 17.3%. Its location within commuting distance to Dublin appears to be a significant factor in this. Some towns experienced very low levels of growth, such as Kilkenny and Killarney. However this may be due to the strong role of tourism and visitor accommodation in these towns, experiencing significant economic disruption as a result of lockdowns during 2020 and 2021.
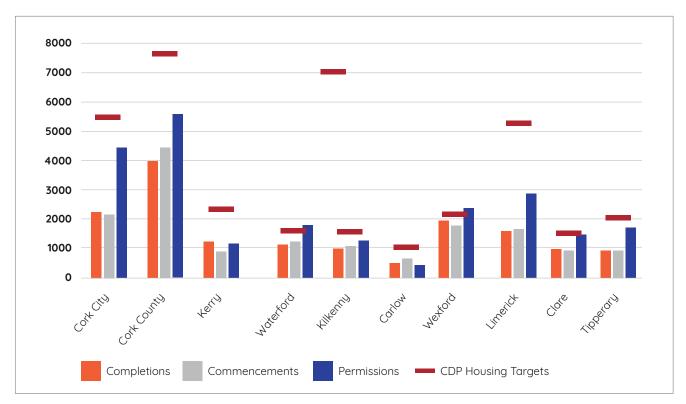
3.2.5. Housing Delivery in the Region and Strategic Planning Areas

Figure 3.6 | Housing Development Activity across SPAs, 2022-2023 (Source: CSO Statistical releases on new dwelling completions, commencements and planning permissions granted and Development Plans)

During 2022 and 2023, 62,421 housing units were completed nationally, 15,395 (25%) of which were in the Southern Region. During the same period 59,758 units commenced nationally, of which 15,581 (26%) was in the Southern Region. Planning permission was granted for 75,402 units nationally, of which 22,894 (30%) was in the Southern Region. When planning and development activity is considered against annualised housing targets from Development Plan Core Strategies, activity is falling significantly short of targets in the Southern Region with the exception of the South-East SPA. This compares with the Dublin and Eastern SPAs, where figures are more closely aligned to targets.
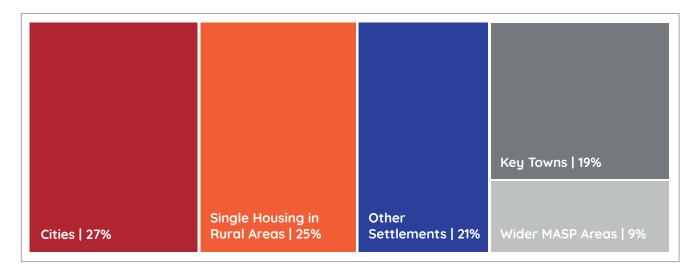
3.2.6. Housing Delivery for Local Authorities in the Region

Figure 3.7 | *Housing Development Activity for Local Authorities in the Southern Region, 2022-2023 (Source: CSO Statistical releases on new dwelling completions, commencements and planning permissions granted and Development Plans)*

Counties in the South East SPA show the greatest alignment in terms of Development Plan Core Strategy targets and housing and development activity. Limerick experienced the lowest level of housing delivery compared to its targets. Cork City also saw low levels of completions (41%) and commencements (40%), though a significantly higher rate of permissions (82%).
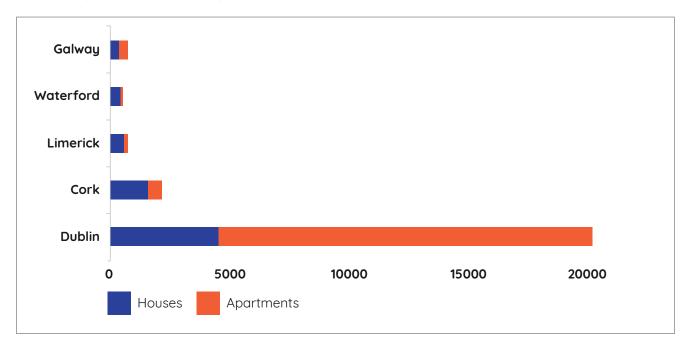
3.2.7. Type and Location of Housing in the Southern Region

Figure 3.8 | *Housing Unit Completions by Settlement Type 2022 and 2023 (Source: CSO Statistical releases on new dwelling completions, commencements and planning permissions granted and Development Plans)*

The following trends are evident for housing units completed across the Southern Region in 2022 and 2023:
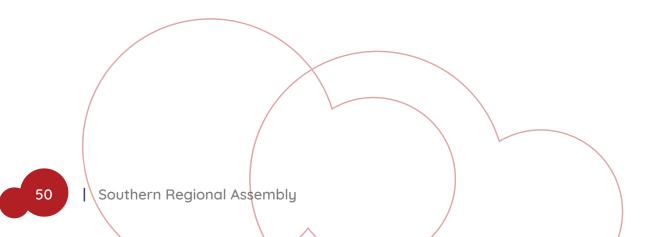
- Of the 15,400 units completed: 59% were scheme houses, 30% single houses and 11% apartments;

- 35% of housing units were delivered within the Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford Metropolitan Areas. The RSES aims for approximately 75% of housing to be delivered within the Metropolitan Areas. The Cork Metropolitan Area accounted for 24% with Limerick-Shannon delivering 7% and Waterford 4%;

- It is noteworthy that 25% of all new housing units delivered in the monitoring period were single houses in rural areas.
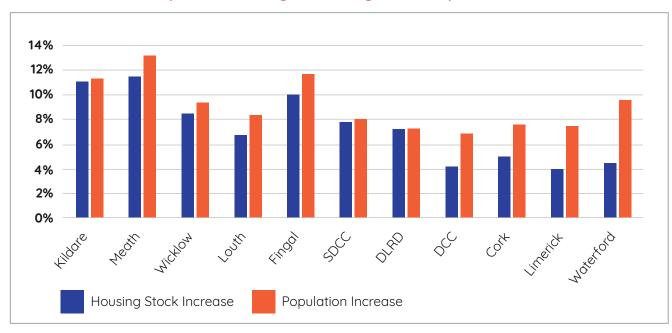
3.2.8. Type of Housing Delivered within Ireland's 5 Cities

Figure 3.9 | Housing Delivery within Cities 2022 and 2023 (Source: CSO Statistical releases on new dwelling completions, commencements and planning permissions granted and Development Plans)

Ireland's five Cities accounted for 24,600 new homes in 2022 and 2023 or 39% of all completions nationally. 82% of these units were delivered in Dublin. There is a significant disparity in the amount of apartment development evident between Dublin and the other Cities.

3.2.9. Relationship of Housing Delivery and Population Growth

Figure 3.10 | *Housing Stock Increase and Population Increase of Metropolitan Local Authorities 2016 to 2022*

Figure 3.10 sets out the relationship between housing stock increase and population increase across the local authorities of the Dublin Metropolitan Area, and those of Cork City, Waterford and Limerick. In Cork, Limerick and Waterford, the rate of increase in housing stock in relation to population increase is substantially lower (average of 55%) than that of the Dublin Metropolitan local authorities (average of 87%).

There are a number of factors that may influence the regional disparity in housing delivery, with some of the key factors including:

- Earlier recovery of the housing market, as part of broader economic recovery, in the Dublin and Eastern Regions/SPAs in comparison to other regions;

- Higher housing values in the Dublin and Eastern Regions/SPAs improving viability;

- Greater reliance on foreign institutional investment, as opposed to traditional lending, for house building which is primarily focused on the Dublin housing market;

- Disparity in levels of public investment in infrastructure and housing.

3.3. Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans - Profile of Metropolitan Areas

This section provides profiles of the 3 Metropolitan Areas within the Region: Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford.

3.3.1. Cork Metropolitan Area

3.3.1.1. Population Growth

Figure 3.11 | Projected versus actual population growth 2016 - 2022

Figure 3.12 | Percentage of Actual Population Growth Cork Metropolitan Area (Source Census 2022)

The population of the overall Metropolitan Area grew by 7.7% in the census period, to 346,338 residents. The Cork City Council part of the Metro grew by 7.3%, wh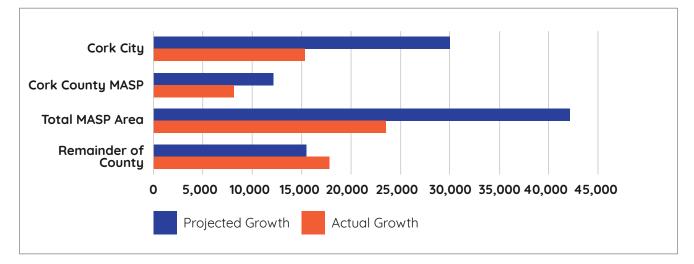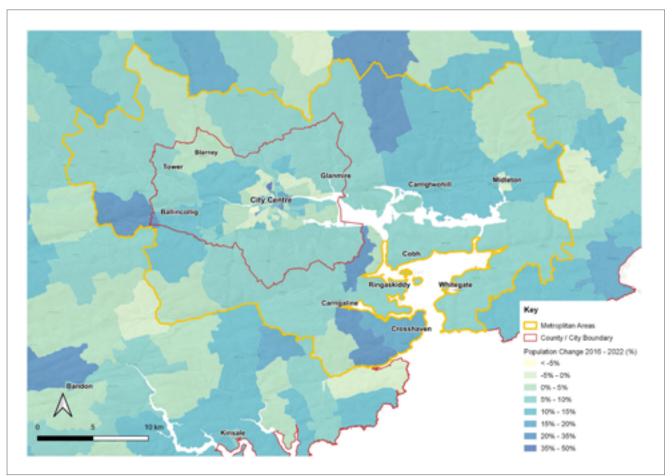ich is only 51% of its projected growth in the RSES. The wider Metropolitan Area within Cork County Council's functional area grew at a higher rate of 8.5%, though still at only 67% of its projected growth. It is noteworthy that the non-metropolitan area of County Cork saw a marginally higher rate of population growth than Cork City, at 7.5%. The City Centre generally saw the lowest levels of population growth, with comparatively higher growth in many suburban locations.

3.3.1.2. Housing Delivery

	2022		2023		Overall		Annual Target
Metropolitan Area	1,951	**44%**	1,789	**40%**	3,740	**42%**	**4,458**
City Council Area	1,166	**43%**	1,034	**38%**	2,200	**41%**	**2,706**
County Metro. Area	785	**45%**	755	**43%**	1,540	**44%**	**1,752**

Table 3.2 | Housing Completions in the Cork Metropolitan Area*
*Note: Housing Completion Data is not published in a manner which allows exact figures for the Cork County portion of the Metropolitan Area to be easily defined. It is therefore based on Eircode Routers, which is the spatial dataset, which most closely aligns.

Housing delivery within the Cork Metropolitan Area has been significantly below Development Plan Core Strategy targets at 42%. In its submission to this Report, Cork City Council stated that as of August 2023, there were 10,873 existing planning permissions for dwellings in place which had not commenced. Cork County Council identified 2,537 existing permissions for dwellings within the County Metro, less than half of which had commenced. This demonstrates that despite low rates of construction, planning activity has resulted in a sufficient pipeline of sites with planning permission to deliver upon these targets.

3.3.1.3. Housing Vacancy

Area	Vacant Homes	Residential Vacancy*
Overall Metropolitan Area	6,483	5.3%
Cork Urban Core	1,197	8.5%
City and Suburbs	5,034	5.6%
Wider Metropolitan Area	1,449	4.4%

Table 3.3 | Housing vacancy in the Cork Metropolitan Area (Source: CSO, Census 2022)
*Excluding holiday homes
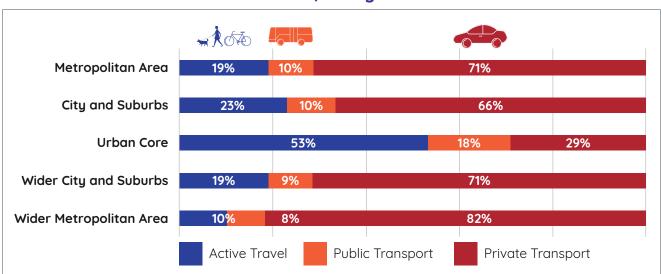
Housing vacancy in the Cork Metropolitan Area is below the national average of 7%, and in line with those of both Dublin and Limerick. The vacancy rate is significantly higher within the urban core (8.5%), than in the wider Metropolitan Area (4.4%). There are various factors which may influence this, including the older age of the housing stock in the urban core, higher levels of informal short term letting, and influence of student housing. It is worth noting that the number of vacant homes in the Metropolitan Area represents 24% of the housing requirement up to 2028 and demonstrates the impact housing vacancy could play in addressing housing need.

3.3.1.4. Employment

Urban Area	Jobs (2022)	Change from 2016	JRW Ratio
Cork City and Suburbs	113,067	11%	1.27
Blarney	834	24%	0.76
Tower	334	13%	0.24
Midleton	4,625	19%	0.80
Carrigtwohill	4,538	387%	1.91
Cobh	2,066	44%	0.37
Passage West-Monkstown	717	61%	0.31
Carrigaline	3,050	65%	0.41
Overall Metropolitan Area*	129,231	16%	1.12

Table 3.4 | Employment Figures for the Cork Metropolitan Area (Main Settlements) Source: CSO, Census 2022

There was an increase of 16% in the number of jobs in the Metropolitan Area (major settlements) between 2016 and 2022, with Cork City and Suburbs showing an increase of 11%. In the wider Metropolitan Area: Midleton, Carrigtwohill, Carrigaline and Cobh are major employment locations, and have also recorded major increases in jobs figures. It should be noted however that this is likely to be influenced by the redefinition of *Settlement* boundaries to *Built Up Areas* in Census 2022 and the inclusion of additional industrial areas. Data on employment figures for major employment clusters such as Ringaskiddy has not been published by the CSO; however, localised analysis indicates there are approximately 3,800 jobs in the Ringaskiddy area. Cork City and Suburbs includes the major industrial location of Little Island. In terms of unemployment Cork City and Suburbs recorded a rate of 8% in Census 2022, which was the lowest of any city in the state and a reduction from 12.1% from 2016. While the Metropolitan Area experienced strong levels of jobs growth within the census period, it is noteworthy that this is significantly higher than the rate of population growth for the same period.

3.3.1.5. Modal Share of Travel to Work, College or School

Figure 3.13 | Percentage Modal Share of Travel to Work, College or School. Source: Census 2022

There is a major contrast in the level of private vehicle use and active travel between residents of the Cork urban core, the wider city and suburbs, and the overall Metropolitan Area. Residents of the urban core are over five times more likely to walk/cycle to work/college/school than residents of the wider Metropolitan Area. Public Transport use remains low at only 10% in the City and Suburbs and overall Metropolitan Area, which is less than half the rate of public transport use recorded in Co. Dublin (four Dublin local authorities). The data highlights the importance of delivering key transport infrastructure focused on active travel and public transport. BusConnects Cork is at an advanced stage of consultation, with major progress made on the Cork Commuter Rail programme. The Cork Light Rail project will also be essential in increasing public transport use in Cork by linking the City Centre with high demand destinations across the City and its early delivery should be a commitment of the National Development Plan. The data also demonstrates the critical importance of sustainable patterns of residential development through compact growth, and housing provision within Cork's Urban Core including the Docklands.

3.3.1.6. *Significant Projects in the Cork Metropolitan Area*

Cork City and County Councils have provided the following updates on significant projects in the Metropolitan Area during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are also included in other sections of this plan:
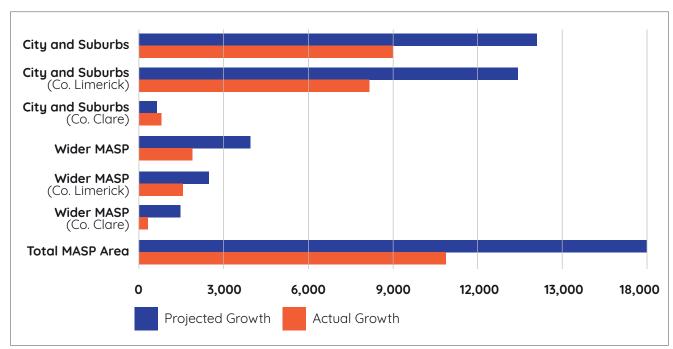
- Both Councils collaborated on studies for the Metropolitan Area such as the Joint Housing Needs Demand Assessment and Housing Strategy, the Retail Strategy as part of the development plan process and continue to work on implementing the *Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy* (CMATS) in co-operation with the National Transport Authority and Transport Infrastructure Ireland;

- Work is progressing on the Grand Parade Quarter and Bishop Lucey Park project in Cork City Centre;

- Works have commenced on Phases 2 and 3 of the Marina Park (Marina Promenade upgrade);

- The Mac Curtain Street Public Transport Improvement Scheme opened in November 2023;

- The Grange Road Transport Corridor and Tramore Valley (N40) Bridge (Vernon Mount Bridge) opened in November 2023;

- Urban regeneration initiatives developed in Cork County include Carrigaline Western Relief Road, Cobh Town Centre Regeneration Project and the Carrigtwohill Traffic Study;

- Procurement commenced on the Carrigaline Transportation and Public Realm Enhancement Plan (TPREP);

- Work is progressing on the Little Island Sustainable Transport Infrastructure scheme;

- Additional URDF funding of €5million has been awarded to Cork County Council for the acquisition of derelict and vacant properties in the Metropolitan Area;

- The Dunkettle Interchange is due to be completed in 2024;

- The M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy Route has multiple advance works under way and is on track for the award of a main construction contract in late 2024 or early 2025;

- Work is ongoing in engaging with key stakeholders to activate the development of the Urban Expansions Areas at Carrigtwohill and Midleton;

- In Q4 2023 Cork County Council commenced a project aimed at developing a comprehensive *Cork Harbour and Coastline Green Industrial and Economic Strategy.*

3.3.2. Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area

3.3.2.1. *Population Growth*

Figure 3.14 | Projected versus actual population growth 2016 – 2022
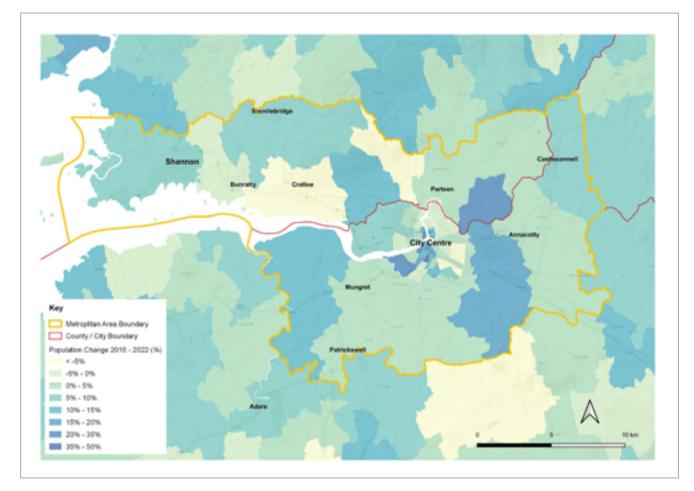
Figure 3.15 | Percentage of Actual Population Growth Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area

The population of the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area grew by 8,984 (8.2%) to a total of 143,300 in the intercensal period, which is in line with the national average, but only 60% of its projected growth in the RSES. The urban core of Limerick City showed relatively strong growth. By comparison, growth within the Co. Clare portion of the Metropolitan Area is very low, at only 1.5%, compared to a growth rate in the non-Metropolitan portion of Co. Clare at 9%. It should be noted that changes to the *Settlement* boundary for *Limerick City and Suburbs* in 2016 and the redefined *Built Up Area* in 2022 (and the extent to which it includes parts of Co. Clare), make a direct comparison between 2016 and 2022 more difficult.

3.3.2.2. *Housing Delivery*

	2022		2023		Overall		Annual Target
Metropolitan Area	570	**26%**	630	**29%**	1,200	**28%**	**2,181**
City and Suburbs	365	**19%**	421	**22%**	786	**20%**	**1,926**
Wider Metro. Area	205	**80%**	209	**82%**	414	**81%**	**256**

Table 3.5 | Housing Completions in the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area*
*Note: Data on housing completions is only available on a Local Electoral Area basis for the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area

Housing delivery in the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area is substantially behind annualised Development Plan targets, at 28%. Limerick City and County Council has identified that within its

portion of the Metropolitan Area, planning permission is in place for 4,300 housing units, though less than 500 have commenced. This compares to a housing requirement of 11,900 identified in the Development Plan Core Strategy up to 2028. Considering the timelines from planning application to completion stage, it is highly unlikely the housing requirement for the plan period will be delivered. While other cities are facing challenges in housing delivery, the data indicates that those facing Limerick are more substantial. Of particular concern is the low number of permissions for housing developments of a strategic scale (200+ units). For example under the SHD process, there are 6 permissions for a total of 1,287 homes, which is more typical of SHD activity experienced in commuter towns in the Dublin and Eastern Regions, rather than what would have been expected in the country's third largest city. Progress is advancing however on a number of strategic development and regeneration sites in Limerick City and Suburbs, including the Colbert Quarter (2,800 homes proposed) and Mungret with an overall potential for up to 2,000 dwellings.

3.3.2.3. *Housing Vacancy*

Area	Vacant Homes	Residential Vacancy*
Overall Metropolitan Area	3,262	5.7%
Limerick Urban Core	681	8.7%
Limerick City and Suburbs	2,466	5.9%
Wider Metropolitan Area	796	5.2%

Table 3.6 | Housing vacancy (excluding holiday homes) in the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area. Source: Census 2022
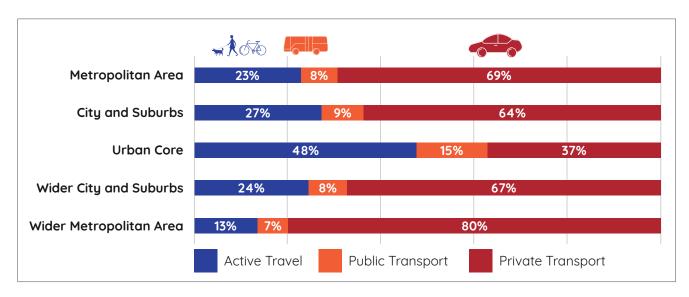
Residential vacancy in Limerick City and the wider Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area is in line with those seen in Cork and Dublin, and lower than both Waterford and Galway. Similar to other cities, housing vacancy is notably higher within the urban core. Limerick City and County Council has undertaken a number of direct measures to tackle vacancy and dereliction. Limerick also faces particular challenges with regards to vacancy and dereliction within its four designated regeneration areas, where a major programme housing programme is underway involving the demolition and replacement of housing. It should be noted that the 3,262 vacant homes within the Metropolitan Area represents 25% of the housing requirement up to 2028. This highlights the particularly valuable role that vacant homes can play in addressing housing need in the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area.

3.3.2.4. *Employment*

Urban Area	Jobs (2022)	Change from 2016	JRW Ratio
Limerick city and suburbs	49,871	12%	1.28
Shannon	8,185	83%	1.92
Annacotty	1,597	89%	1.10
Sixmilebridge	330	46%	0.28
Overall Metropolitan Area*	59,983	20%	1.31

Table 3.7 | Employment figures for the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area

There was an increase of 20% in job numbers in the main settlements of the Metropolitan Area between 2016 and 2022, with Limerick City and Suburbs showing an increase of 12%. Shannon also plays a crucial role as an employment location with 8,185 jobs. It shows a notable increase of 83% increase from 2016, however this is partly due to the revised boundary of the Shannon Built Up Area by the CSO in Census 2022, making comparison difficult. Limerick City and Suburbs had an unemployment rate of 10.9% under Census 2022, a reduction of 5.2% from 2016. However, it is comparably higher than unemployment rates in both Cork (8%) and Dublin (8.3%), which indicates that Limerick would benefit from continued investment in employment and jobs.

3.3.2.5. *Modal Share of Travel to Work, College or School*

Figure 3.16 | *Modal Share of Travel to Work, College or School Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area*

It is evident that the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area overall, and Limerick City and Suburbs, have higher modal shares of active travel (walking and cycling) compared to Cork and Waterford. However, there is a major contrast between the levels of active travel for those living within the urban core compared to those living in the wider Metropolitan Area. It is expected that BusConnects Limerick will play a key role in driving modal shift to public transport and active travel in the Metropolitan Area. Within the wider City and Metropolitan Area, the proposed commuter rail network outlined in the *Limerick–Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy* (LSMATS), and reinforced within the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, would result in much improved connectivity, including to Shannon. The proposed commuter rail service and new stations would also provide an opportunity for transport-orientated development which would have direct access to the City Centre.

3.3.2.6. *Significant Projects in the Limerick City/County Council and Clare County Council Metropolitan Area*

Limerick City and County Council and Clare County Council have provided the following updates on significant projects in the Metropolitan Area during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans of projects of relevance are also included in other sections of this plan:

• Limerick City and County Council in conjunction with Clare County Council and the NTA prepared the *Limerick–Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy* (LSMATS) in 2022, which provides a strategy for the delivery of key infrastructure and sustainable transport within the Metropolitan Area;

• As part of BusConnects, the NTA carried out a review of the bus network in Limerick in collaboration with Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council and Bus Éireann in

2022 and published a final new bus network for Limerick in December 2023;

- A Retail Strategy for the Limerick –Shannon Metropolitan Area was prepared by both Councils;

- The Limerick Public Realm Strategy is being progressed which looks at the public realm within the central area of Limerick. Initial information gathering consultation stages took place in Q1 & Q2 of 2023;

- The Arthur's Quay Framework Plan and the Cleeves Riverside Quarter Masterplan were prepared as part of the URDF Worldclass Waterfront funding allocation of €73.4m;

- The URDF funded Living Limerick City Centre Initiative (LLCC Initiative) is ongoing which focuses on targeted interventions to renew vacant and underutilised building stock in Limerick City Centre;

- Construction of the Opera development in the city centre has commenced with phase one to

- include basement works and the development of one of the landmark buildings on the site;

- Implementation of Meanwhile Uses on 2 of 3 key transformational sites began in Q3 of 2022:

- UL City Campus; and Verdant Place, Toll Cottages and the Green adjacent to King John's Castle;

- Planning permission for the change of use of the former Dunnes Stores building on Sarsfield Street in Limerick City Centre from retail to educational was granted by Limerick City and County Council in November 2023, as part of the University of Limerick's plans to develop a city centre university campus;

- Construction continues for the development of a mixed-use commercial and residential development scheme at The Bishop's Palace site in the City Centre;

- A Draft Limerick Regeneration Plan Status Update 2024 – 2030 was prepared in 2023;

- The Shannon Town Centre Masterplan was finalised in January 2022 with a Local Area Plan for Shannon Town and Environs and Local Transport Plan being prepared;

- Clare County Council is intending to develop the One Shannon Hub, which will be a multi-functional building in the town centre;

- The Shannon Town and Environs Flood Relief Scheme is underway;

- The Shannon Consortium, comprises a collaborative alliance between the three higher level institutes of UL, Mary Immaculate College and Technological University of the Shannon, aiming to establish the region as an area of excellence in teaching, learning and learner support;

- The Foynes to Limerick Road (Including Adare Bypass) Project was approved by An Bord

- Pleanála in August 2022 and has proceeded to the next stage of delivery;

- The Department of Transport approved the tender process for the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road.

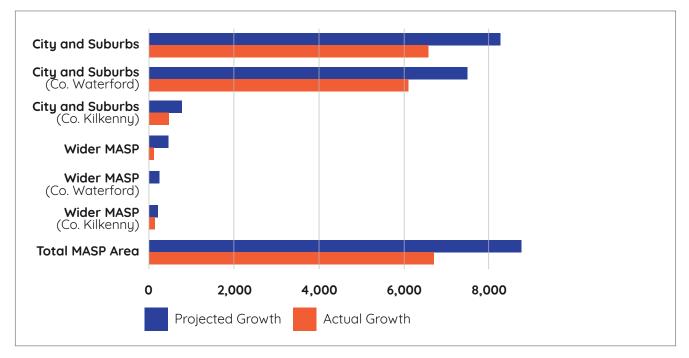### 3.3.3. Waterford Metropolitan Area

3.3.3.1. *Population Growth*

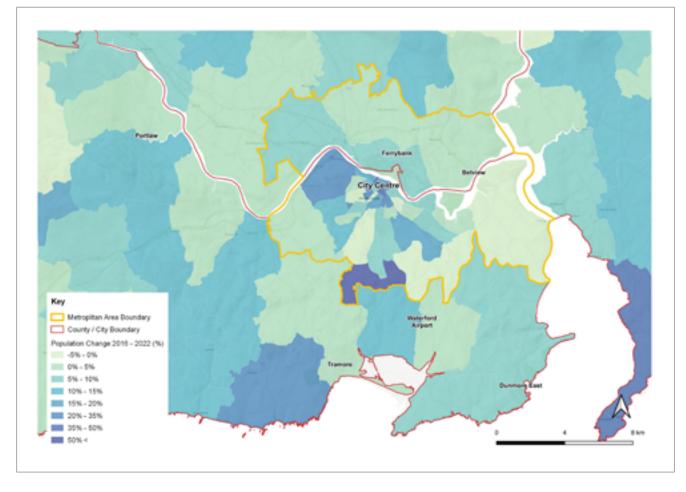*Figure 3.17 | Projected versus actual population growth 2016 – 2022*

Figure 3.18 | Percentage of Actual Population Growth Waterford Metropolitan Area

The population of the Waterford Metropolitan Area grew by 6,701 (11.2%) from 2016 to 2022, to a total of 66,555. This was a greater rate of growth than the other Metropolitan Areas outside of Dublin, driven primarily by growth of the City and Suburbs at 12.6%. Despite this, the Metropolitan Area still only experienced 76% of its projected growth under the RSES, compared to the remainder of County Waterford which experienced 195% of its projected growth. Growth was strongest in parts of the City Centre, and to the west and south of the City, with lower growth evident to the north. It is noteworthy to some areas beyond the Metropolitan Area grew at a very strong rate, particularly Tramore, Kilmeaden and Dunmore East.

3.3.3.2. *Housing Delivery*

	2022		2023		Overall		Annual Target
City and Suburbs	217	32%	338	50%	555	41%	680

Table 3.8 | *Housing Delivery in Waterford City and Suburbs 2022/23*

Note: Specific data on housing delivery within the wider metropolitan area is not available, however the CSO defined BUA of Waterford City and Suburbs accounts for the major urban area in which housing is being targeted across both Counties Waterford and Kilkenny, and the only urban area in which housing was delivered within the monitoring periods.

Similar to other Metropolitan Areas, housing delivery has been significantly behind that targeted for Waterford City and Suburbs in the Development Plans of both Waterford and Kilkenny, achieving only 41% of Core Strategy targets. Progress is noted on a number of strategic development sites in the Waterford Metropolitan Area, such as the North Quays Strategic Development Zone (SDZ). Kilkenny County Council is currently preparing an LAP for Ferrybank to enable sustainable residential development to the north of the City, and build upon the North Quays regeneration. Elsewhere in the City, redevelopment of the St. Otteran's Hospital Campus has the potential to deliver between 530 to 760 homes. A masterplan for the site is currently being prepared in partnership between the Council, the LDA and the HSE. It is noteworthy that only one planning permission was granted within the Waterford Metropolitan Area under the SHD process, for 361 homes. The lack of planning activity for large, strategic developments represents a significant challenge to delivery of the necessary quantum of housing required to meet established housing targets in the Waterford Metropolitan Area.

3.3.3.3. *Housing Vacancy*

Area	Vacant Homes	Residential Vacancy*
Overall Metropolitan Area	1,900	6.7%
Waterford Urban Core	653	15.7%
Waterford City and Suburbs	1,727	6.8%
Wider Metropolitan Area	173	6.6%

Table 3.9 | *Housing vacancy (excluding holiday homes) in the Waterford Metropolitan Area.*

Waterford City and Suburbs has a higher level of residential vacancy than other cities in the state, at 6.8%. However, it should be noted that this follows a significant reduction of 4% from 2016. Waterford City and County Council has been identified as a national leader in measures

to address residential vacancy, most significantly through the Repair and Lease (RLS) scheme. Notwithstanding the positive pattern, Waterford's urban core has a vacancy rate of 15.7%, which is more than double the national average of 7%. This demonstrates that there are particular challenges within the urban core which require targeted investment and intervention. 1,900 vacant homes in the Metropolitan Area represents 47% of its housing requirement up to 2028. This highlights the particularly valuable role that vacant homes can play in addressing housing need in Waterford.

3.3.3.4. *Employment*

Jobs (2022)	Change from 2016	Unemployment	JRW Ratio
23,244	14%	11.7% (- 7.1%)	1.19

Table 3.10 | Employment data for Waterford City and Suburbs

There were 23,244 jobs recorded in Waterford City and Suburbs in 2022, which was a 14% increase from 2016, the highest of any city in the state. Waterford had an unemployment rate of 11.7% as of Census 2022. This was higher than other cities, but is a significant reduction from 18.8% in 2016. Waterford appears to have faced more significant economic challenges than other cities, necessitating a greater recovery. Data indicates that the City is well positioned to benefit from a continued increase in employment and new jobs. Evidence from Census 2022 shows that Waterford City has a more limited economic influence over the wider South-East Strategic Planning Area, particularly on Co. Wexford, than both Cork and Limerick have over their respective SPAs, while it also has a lower Jobs to Resident Worker Ratio than the other cities.

3.3.3.5. *Modal Share of Travel to work, college or school*
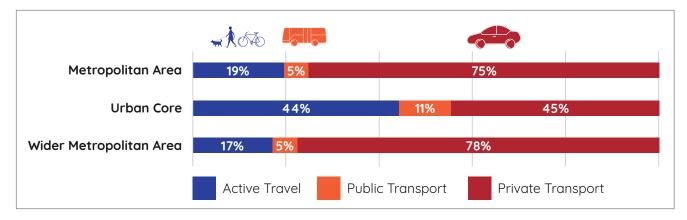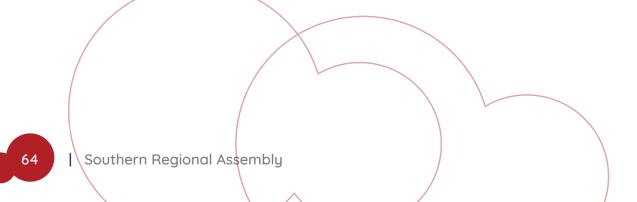
Figure 3.19 | Modal share of travel to work, college or school across the Waterford Metropolitan Area

Similar to other Metropolitan Areas, there is a significant contrast between levels of active travel and car use within the urban core and the wider Metropolitan Area. This demonstrates the importance of housing delivery in the urban core, and in ensuring that new development elsewhere is based upon the principle of compact growth. The *Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy* (WMATS) includes a comprehensive series of projects and interventions aimed at delivering a major modal shift. Elements of WMATS relating the North Quays, including a new sustainable transport bridge and new transport interchange, are already underway. The WMATS also seeks to drive a significant increase in cycling through a network of cycle tracks and greenways. The WMATS also outlines the basis for BusConnects Waterford which will play a key role in improving public transport provision in the City.

3.3.3.6 *Significant Projects in the Waterford City/County Council and Kilkenny County Council Metropolitan Area*

Waterford City and County Council and Kilkenny County Council have provided the following updates on significant projects in the Metropolitan Area during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are also included in other sections of this plan:

- A Joint Retail Strategy and Joint Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy are currently being prepared by both Councils;

- The *Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy* (WMATS) was prepared in 2022;

- Construction has commenced on the construction of the new sustainable transport bridge linking the North and South Quays. Enabling works are also in progress to support the relocation of the train station;

- The Ferrybank LAP is being prepared by Kilkenny Co. Council;

- The regeneration of the Former St. Joseph's Manor Hill site (71 residential units) is nearing completion;

- Acquisition of the Former Waterford Stanley Site, Bilberry was approved under URDF Call 3;

- The LDA and HSE have progressed to masterplan stage to seek regeneration of the lands of the former St. Otteran's Hospital;

- Lands at the Former Brook's site, Newtown Road; Former Poser Seeds, Dunmore Road; and the Former Ard Ri Site, Dock Road, Ferrybank have been included in the WCCC URDF 3 program;

- Lands transfer is now complete to support the development of an enlarged SETU campus at Former Waterford Crystal, Cork Road;

- Development of 120 dwelling units is progressing on a portion of the land at Williamstown;

- A portion of the lands at The Glen, Waterford City have been placed on the Derelict Sites Register.

3.4. Key Towns

3.4.1. Kilkenny

Comment: Kilkenny experienced significantly lower than average population growth over the census period, at just 2.5%. Despite this, recent housing delivery within 2022/23 indicates an increase in this level of growth. The Town saw strong growth in employment and is the largest employment hub outside of the Region's Metropolitan Areas. There was a slight increase in housing vacancy, though this may be influenced by the role of tourism and informal visitor accommodation.

Population
27,184 — +642 from 2016 (2.5%)

Jobs
15,479 — +1,741 from 2016 (13%)

Homes Completed 2022/23
374 — 69% of Development Plan Housing Target of 542 Homes

Jobs to Resident Workers
1.46 — + 0.2 from 2016

Housing Vacancy
7.1% — 0.6% higher than 2016
1.1% less than Key Town Average

Mode of Travel
27.7% (+0.1%) 5.6% (+1.5%) 66.7% (-1.6%)

Figure 3.20 | Kilkenny Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Kilkenny County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) is being developed for the city to achieve modal shift and to promote sustainable transport including the expansion of the town bus service. An objective of the SUMP will be to audit the city to identify barriers to the 10-minute city concept;

- Three sites have been identified for compulsory purchase under the URDF Call 3;

- Kilkenny City has been identified as the Decarbonisation Zone for the county;

- Abbey Quarter Masterplan review has been completed allowing for more compact development to take place;

- Construction of the main street and an urban park around the former St Francis Abbey will commence in 2024. This will allow all plots within the regeneration area to be developed and allow access to the Abbey by the public for the first time in 300 years;

- An integrated tourism attraction is proposed for the Tholsel (City Hall). Part 8 has been secured and funding is in the process of being secured through an application to Failte Ireland.

3.4.2. Ennis

Comment: Ennis is now the largest Key Town in the Region, having grown by 10.5% in the inter-census period. However, the Town saw a more moderate increase in jobs in that time, and it's JR Ratio remains below 1.

Population
27,923 +2,647 from 2016 (10.5%)

Jobs
10,628 +457 from 2016 (4%)

Homes Completed 2022/23
300 58% of Development Plan Housing Target of 517 Homes

Jobs to Resident Workers
0.95 No change from 2016

Housing Vacancy
7.3% 3.3% less than 2016 0.9% less than Key Town Average

Mode of Travel
16.8% (-0.3%) | 3.8% (+0.4%) | 79.3% (-0.1%)

Figure 3.21 | Ennis Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Clare County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- A number of projects under Ennis 2040 are being progressed including Abbey Street and Harvey's Quay;

- Works commenced in October 2023 on the Ennis Public Realm Regeneration (Project B) to enhance the streetscape of High Street, Bank Place, O'Connell Square, O'Connell Street, Old Barrack Street and Barrack Square in Ennis town centre;

- Work commenced in 2023 on the Ennis Transport Plan, which will inform the preparation of an Ennis and Environs Local Area Plan;

- Considerable progress on the delivery of an Ennis Public Bus Service;

- New County Library nearing completion of construction adjacent to the Glór theatre;

- New Primary Care Centre built in Ennis Town Centre;

- Masterplan prepared for the Roche site;

- Tulla Road (Ennis) Active Travel Scheme has been approved;

- Limerick Road (Ennis) Active Travel Scheme received its initial funding allocation from the NTA in 2023 and is currently at Concept Design and Route Option Development stage.

3.4.3. Carlow

Comment: Carlow Town witnessed strong population growth within the census period of 12.7%, along with a large increase in the number of jobs at 17%. Despite this, the Town's JR Ratio remains low for a Key Town. Housing completions in the Town over the monitoring period are significantly behind that targeted within the Development Plan.

Population	Jobs
27,351 — +3,079 from 2016 (12.7%)	**9,231** — +1,363 from 2016 (17%)

Homes Completed 2022/23	Jobs to Resident Workers
196 — 45% of Development Plan Housing Target of 433 Homes	**0.88** — No change from 2016

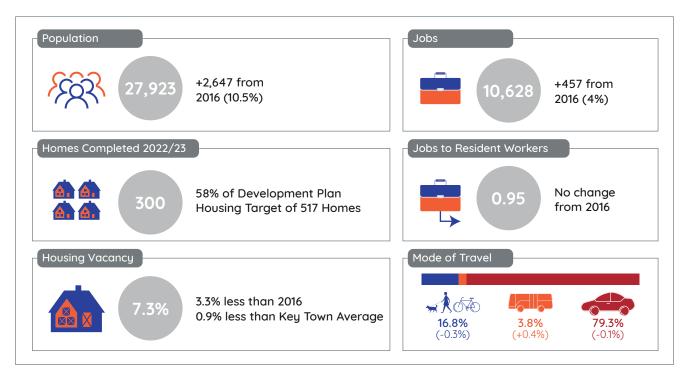| Housing Vacancy	Mode of Travel
6.3% — 1.8% less than 2016 / 1.9% less than Key Town Average	22.5% (-2.7%) 5.4% (+1.7%) 72.1% (+1%)

Figure 3.22 | Carlow Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Carlow County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

Carlow 2040 is a regeneration strategy for Carlow Town and the long-term strategy is to transform Carlow into a regional powerhouse with sustainable growth and a better quality of life for all. Projects include:

- Rail Station Link preliminary designs completed;

- Design team procured and appointed in 2023 for Carlow Town Centre Scheme;

- Funding of €1.5m secured under URDF Call 3 to compulsorily acquire 10 derelict properties in Carlow town;

- Preparation of Draft Carlow Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030 and Local Transport Plan.

3.4.4. Tralee

Comment: Tralee experienced strong population growth within the census period at 10.1%, which was supported by a significant reduction in the level of housing vacancy in the Town. The Town remains a major employment hub with a 7% growth in jobs, and JR Ratio of 1.41. Housing delivery within the monitoring period is significantly lower than targeted for the Town in the Kerry Development Plan.

Population

26,079 +2,388 from 2016 (10.1%)

Jobs

13,336 +819 from 2016 (7%)

Homes Completed 2022/23

193 28% of Development Plan Housing Target of 696 Homes

Jobs to Resident Workers

1.41 -0.1 from 2016

Housing Vacancy

8.8% 4.9% less than 2016
0.6% above Key Town Average

Mode of Travel

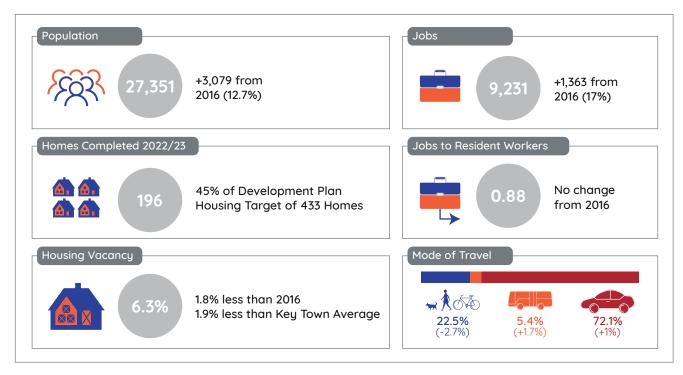23.4% (-1%)   4.4% (+0.1%)   72.1% (+0.9%)

Figure 3.23 | Tralee Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Kerry County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- Masterplan prepared for a new linear park and the development of four individual investment sites surrounding Tralee park;

- The ERDF 'Island of Geese (IOG)' regeneration project is ongoing;

- The Destination Tralee tourism project, funded by Failte Ireland and Kerry County Council which seeks to improve Tralee's visitor orientation and wayfinding infrastructure was completed in 2023;

- The Tralee Fenit Greenway was opened in June 2022.

3.4.5. Wexford

Comment: Wexford's population grew by 6.6% in the census period, slightly below the regional average, despite the wider Electoral Divisions of Wexford Town and environs growing by 11%. The census identifies a significant reduction in the number of jobs in Wexford Town from 2016 to 2022.

Population		Jobs	
21,524	+1,336 from 2016 (6.6%)	**10,458**	-1,503 from 2016 (-13%)

Homes Completed 2022/23		Jobs to Resident Workers	
435	60% of Development Plan Housing Target of 725 Homes	**1.25**	-0.3 from 2016

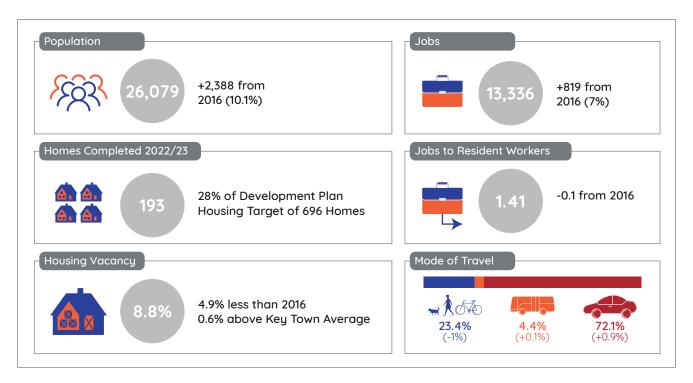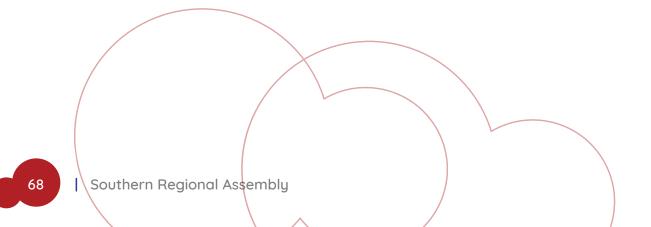| Housing Vacancy		Mode of Travel		
8.8%	1.7% less than 2016 0.6% above Key Town Average	23.8% (-2%)	4.4% (+0.8%)	71.8% (-1.2%)

Figure 3.24 | Wexford Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Wexford County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- The Wexford Town Local Area Plan 2024-2030 is currently being prepared along with a Local Transport Plan – to be completed in 2024;

- A Wexford heritage-led Regeneration Plan has been prepared and includes a number of actions for regeneration of the town;

- Construction is underway at the Trinity Wharf site with €21 million received in URDF funding;

- Phase 1 demolition works are complete and the procurement process is ongoing for the provision of the temporary performance structure at the Cresent Quay/Oyster Lane Site;

- Contractors have been appointed to carry out essential maintenance works at the Mechanics Institute site;

- Paving has been completed and infrastructure for street canopy is 80% completed for the Monck Street Public Realm Enhancement Project;

- The Council has acquired 55 acres and a CPO has been confirmed for a further 50 acres at the SETU University Campus and Education Ecosystem at Ballynagee. Consultants have also been appointed to develop a Masterplan for the site;

- Tender has been put out for works for the Georgia Southern University Accommodation Campus at the Adoration Convent;

- Consultants have been appointed for engineering and environmental services to the Wexford Town Flood Relief Scheme;

- Min Ryan Park was completed in 2022;

- The Wexford Arts Centre extension was completed in 2022;

- The €200m investment at Rosslare Europort commenced in 2023.

3.4.6. Clonmel

Comment: Clonmel's population grew by 7.2% during the census period, close to the regional average. While the town has a lower than average level of housing vacancy, housing delivery has been significantly behind targets in the Tipperary CDP. The Town saw modest jobs growth at 2%, and it's JR Ratio remains below 1.

Population	
18,369	+1,229 from 2016 (7.2%)

Jobs	
7,190	+154 from 2016 (2%)

Homes Completed 2022/23	
78	18% of Development Plan Housing Target of 423 Homes

Jobs to Resident Workers	
0.96	-0.1 from 2016

Housing Vacancy	
7%	1.5% less than 2016 1.2% less than Key Town Average

Mode of Travel

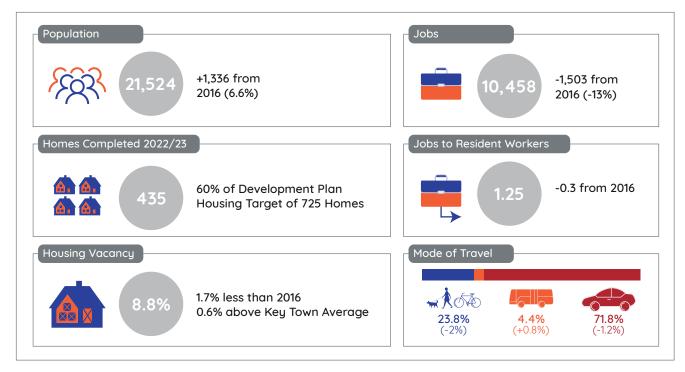| 17.3% (-1.6%)	3.8% (-0.5%)	78.9% (+2.3%)

Figure 3.25 | Clonmel Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Tipperary County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- The *Clonmel & Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030* (LAP) is due to be adopted in February 2024. A Local Transport Plan was also prepared as part of the Plan;

- A *Town Centre First Clonmel Action Plan* was adopted in December 2022;

- The *Clonmel 2030 Transformational Regeneration* project includes: Kickham Barracks Regeneration, Clonmel Regional Sports Hub, Clonmel – Flights of Discovery and Clonmel Public Realm Enhancement and is ongoing. Kickham Barracks Regeneration Phase 1 and Clonmel Regional Sports Hub are complete;

- The Council continues to work with Technological University Shannon (TUS) and the Education and Training Board (ETB) to deliver a co-located third and further education campus facility on Kickham Barracks with the ETB already fully located on the site;

- The Council continues to support the delivery of the N24 project, identified as strategically important in the National Development Plan, which has now reached 'Preferred Route Selection' stage on both elements of the project;

- The Council continues to work in partnership with Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail to seek the improvement and enhancement of rail services on the Limerick to Waterford and Limerick to Ballybrophy railway lines and deliver their strategic programme of planning and investment. The Council was fully engaged in the development of the new town bus route in Clonmel.

3.4.7. Killarney

Comment: Killarney is the only Key Town that has shown a decrease in population across the census period, of 0.6%. While this may have been influenced by the revised for the Built Up Area boundary, the wider Electoral Areas showed only modest growth of 2%. Given the prominent role of tourism in the Town, the impacts on Covid 19 on the demographics and workforce are likely to have been significant.

Population
14,412 — -92 from 2016 (-0.6%)

Homes Completed 2022/23
115 — 27% of Development Plan Housing Target of 426 Homes

Housing Vacancy
9% — 1.2% less than 2016 / 0.8% above Key Town Average

Jobs
7,398 — +289 from 2016 (4%)

Jobs to Resident Workers
1.31 — +0.1 from 2016

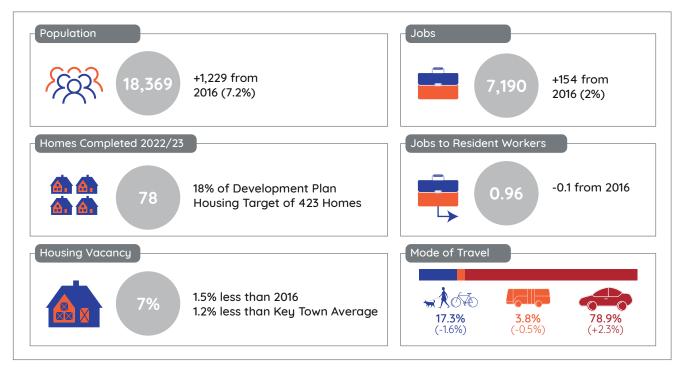**Mode of Travel**
28.4% (+2.2%)   5.3% (+0.1%)   68.6% (-2.3%)

Figure 3.26 | Killarney Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Kerry County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

• Plans have been prepared to interweave the fabric of the Urban Core of Killarney seamlessly into the National Park through a series of interrelated transport and public realm improvements and a traffic management strategy that removes as far as possible transitory traffic from the urban core;

• Public Realm Plans are being advanced to upgrade the town centre streets;

• A Masterplan has been prepared for the Aras Phádraig site to provide a community centred, cultural and commercial hub.

3.4.8. Mallow

Comment: Mallow's population grew by 8% in the census period, in line with regional average though it saw a significant rise in jobs at 19%. This has led to an increase in its JR Ratio, which is now closer to 1. Housing vacancy is above average with only a moderate drop of 1%, while housing delivering in the monitoring period is just over half that targeted in the Development Plan.

Population		Jobs	
13,456	+997 from 2016 (8%)	**4,493**	+718 from 2016 (19%)

Homes Completed 2022/23		Jobs to Resident Workers	
208	56% of Development Plan Housing Target of 368 Homes	**0.9**	+0.1 from 2016

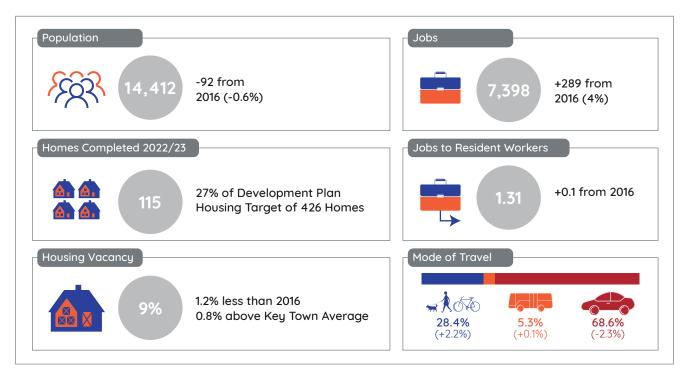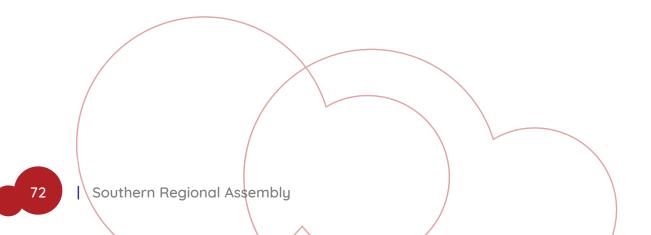| Housing Vacancy		Mode of Travel		
9.4%	1% less than 2016 1.2% above Key Town Average	18.4% (+0.2%)	6.3% (+0.7%)	75.3% (-0.9%)

Figure 3.27 | Mallow Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Cork County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- Since the adoption of the County Development Plan, planning permission has been granted for 290 residential units;

- Upgrades to Mallow Sewerage Scheme have been completed;

- Mallow Town Regeneration URDF project is now complete;

- Projects currently in planning stage include development of the former Town Hall into a Theatre and Arts venue and Mallow Public Realm URDF which is at design stage;

- The Council is actively supporting the delivery of the N72-N73 Mallow Relief Road and the N/M20;

- Proposals are also in train for the upgrade of Mallow Swimming Pool.

3.4.9. Nenagh

Comment: Nenagh experienced a high level of population growth in the census period at 10.3%. While housing vacancy is above average, it has reduced significantly from 2016 when it was the highest of all Key Towns. There has been strong growth in the number of jobs at 11%, though a slight reduction in the JR Ratio to 1.2.

Population

9,895 +927 from 2016 (10.3%)

Jobs

4,846 +489 from 2016 (11%)

Homes Completed 2022/23

52 23% of Development Plan Housing Target of 221 Homes

Jobs to Resident Workers

1.2 -0.1 from 2016

Housing Vacancy

9.2% 4.6% less than 2016
1% above Key Town Average

Mode of Travel
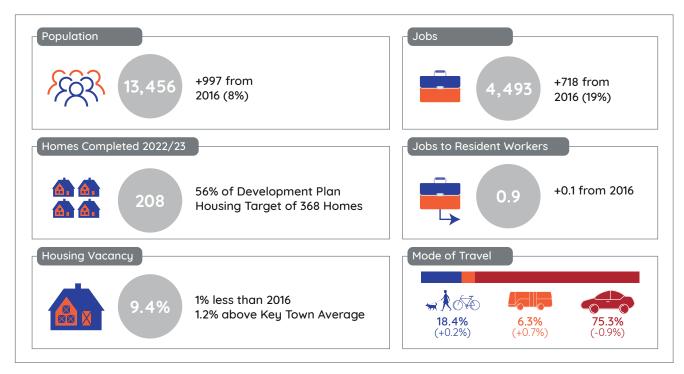
24.6% (-0.3%)   3.8% (+0.3%)   71.7% (-0%)

Figure 3.28 | Nenagh Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Tipperary County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

• The Nenagh & Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030 to be adopted in February 2024. A Local Transport Plan was also prepared as part of this;

• Uisce Eireann have made a commitment to the upgrading of the wastewater treatment plant for Nenagh to support new development in the town, with a planning application expected in 2024;

• It is proposed to develop a transport hub at the rail station in Nenagh with inter-urban bus services and cycle storage facilities and to provide an improved rail service to meet the needs of the community, in consultation with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Irish Rail;

• Detailed design has been completed on the R498 (Nenagh to Thurles Road);

• Procurement is progressing on *A Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy* to be the anchor and catalyst for the redevelopment of *Martyr's Road Regeneration Quarter*.

3.4.10. Thurles

Comment: Thurles saw a lower than average rate of population growth, at 3.1%, and also saw reduction of 10% in jobs. Despite this, there was a significant increase in the Town's JR Ratio. Housing vacancy, while lower than 2016, is the highest of all Key Towns. Within the monitoring period, housing delivery was also behind that targeted in the Development Plan.

Population		Jobs	
8,185	+245 from 2016 (3.1%)	**3,066**	-330 from 2016 (-10%)

Homes Completed 2022/23		Jobs to Resident Workers	
87	44% of Development Plan Housing Target of 196 Homes	**0.99**	+0.6 from 2016

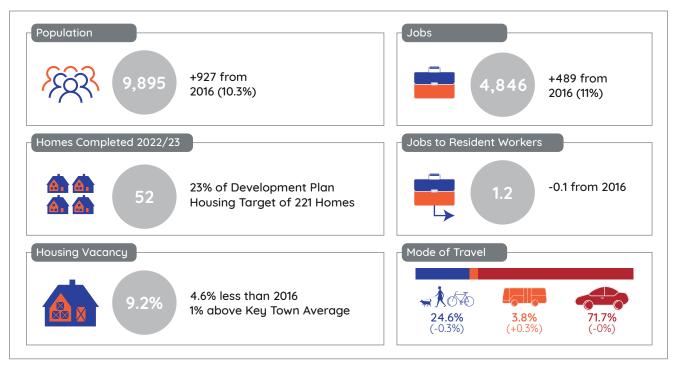| Housing Vacancy		Mode of Travel		
10.5%	2.7% less than 2016 2.4% above Key Town Average	21.9% (-4.2%)	3.9% (+0.5%)	74.2% (+3.8%)

Figure 3.29 | Thurles Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Tipperary County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- The *Thurles & Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030* is due to be adopted in February 2024. A Local Transport Plan has also been prepared and forms part of the Plan;

- Significant progress has been advanced in the development of the Lisheen National BioEconomy Campus, with discussions ongoing with funding bodies, land owners, prospective developers and the development of a Masterplan for the site;

- Thurles continues to be a hub of national sporting activity, hosting intercounty and Munster championship games and finals. Planning permission was recently granted for the development of a Regional Sports Campus at Technological University Shannon, Thurles;

- Phase 1 works are complete on The Liberty Square Enhancement Scheme;

- Discussions are ongoing with the Department for Transport in order to secure funding to engage a consultant to complete detailed design for the Thurles Inner Relief Road.

3.4.11. Newcastle West

Comment: Newcastle West experienced higher than average population growth in the census period. Housing delivery within the monitoring period is the lowest (as a % of CDP targets) than any Key Town at just 16%, and despite a substantial excess of residential zoned land in the Town. The Town experienced strong growth in jobs, though the JR ratio remains at 0.92.
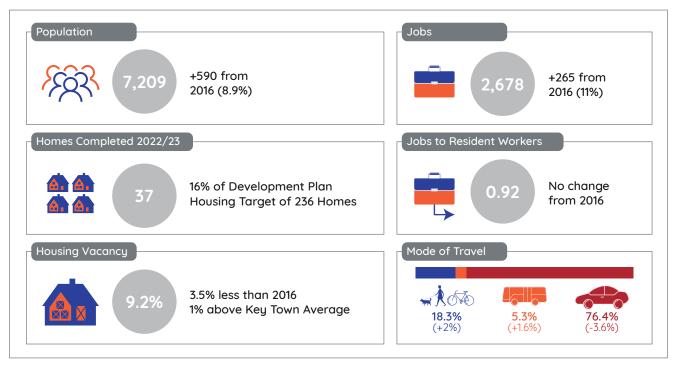

Population

7,209 — +590 from 2016 (8.9%)

Jobs

2,678 — +265 from 2016 (11%)

Homes Completed 2022/23

37 — 16% of Development Plan Housing Target of 236 Homes

Jobs to Resident Workers

0.92 — No change from 2016

Housing Vacancy

9.2% — 3.5% less than 2016
1% above Key Town Average

Mode of Travel

18.3% (+2%) 5.3% (+1.6%) 76.4% (-3.6%)

Figure 3.30 | Newcastle West Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Limerick City & County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- The Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2023-2029 was adopted in December 2023 and included a Local Transport Plan for the town;

- The Newcastle West Regional Athletics Hub was officially opened in September 2023;

- Work is continuing on pre-construction activities and the development of the Limerick Greenway Hubs at Rathkeale, Ardagh, Abbeyfeale and Newcastle West, as well as the West Limerick Tourism Hub at Fullers Folly;

- Initial route selection and public consultation has been completed on the N21 Newcastle West Road Scheme;

- A masterplan for the Demesne parklands has been prepared.

3.4.12. Clonakilty

Comment: Clonakilty witnessed significant population growth from 2016 to 2022 of 11.3%, and a 14% increase in jobs. There was a slight increase in housing vacancy to 9.9%, in contrast to the trends across the Region and in other Key Towns, though this may be influenced by the role of informal visitor accommodation in the Town. Housing delivery is also below that targeted within the Development Plan.
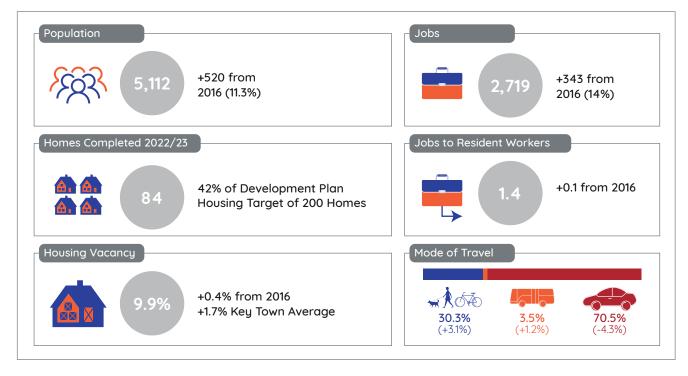

Population	Jobs
5,112 — +520 from 2016 (11.3%)	2,719 — +343 from 2016 (14%)

Homes Completed 2022/23	Jobs to Resident Workers
84 — 42% of Development Plan Housing Target of 200 Homes	1.4 — +0.1 from 2016

Housing Vacancy	Mode of Travel
9.9% — +0.4% from 2016 +1.7% Key Town Average	30.3% (+3.1%) 3.5% (+1.2%) 70.5% (-4.3%)

Figure 3.31 | Clonakilty Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Cork County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- Since the adoption of the County Development Plan, 9 dwellings have been permitted (development activity has been impacted by significant water supply constraints);

- In 2023, works were completed on the Bandon to Clonakilty Water Augmentation Scheme, which involved the construction of a new 13KM pipeline to boost water supply to the Clonakilty area from the Bandon Water Treatment Plant at Carhue;

- Work is underway on upgrade works at Jones Bridge (Clonakilty) Water Treatment plant;

- A suite of public realm projects are being developed including: the development of the Gallanes Amenity Area Phase 2 – walkway extension to connect the town to the Technology Park; Birdwatch Enhancement Project in Clonakilty Bay; Restoration and enhancement of Deasy's Quay South in Clonakilty Bay; and rejuvenation of Chateaulin Orchard Town Park.

3.4.13. Dungarvan

Comment: Dungarvan experienced above average population growth of 9.3% in the census period, as well as a significant increase in jobs of 22%. This has also resulted in the Town's JR Ratio rising above 1. Housing vacancy is below average, though housing delivery within the monitoring period has remained low.
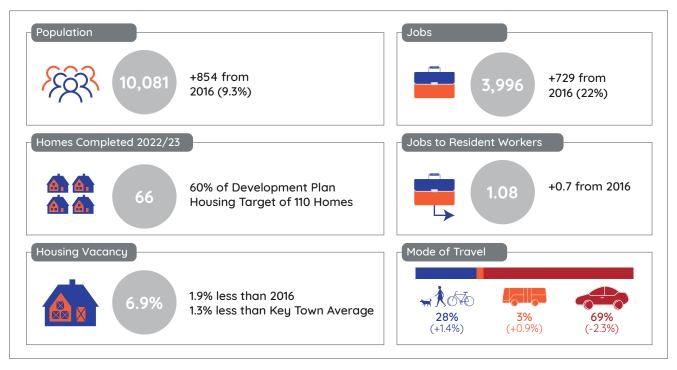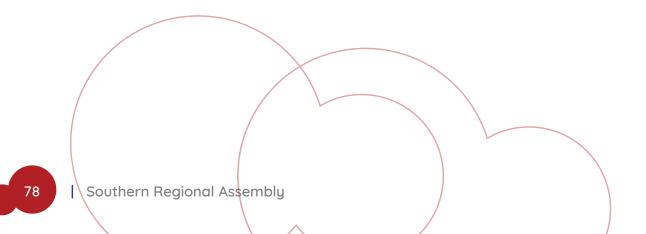

Population
10,081 — +854 from 2016 (9.3%)

Jobs
3,996 — +729 from 2016 (22%)

Homes Completed 2022/23
66 — 60% of Development Plan Housing Target of 110 Homes

Jobs to Resident Workers
1.08 — +0.7 from 2016

Housing Vacancy
6.9% — 1.9% less than 2016
1.3% less than Key Town Average

Mode of Travel
28% (+1.4%) 3% (+0.9%) 69% (-2.3%)

Figure 3.32 | Dungarvan Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Waterford City & County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- A Dungarvan 2040 Strategy has been prepared which will inform the new 2024 Local Area Plan for the town. A Local Transport Plan will also be prepared as part of the plan;

- A total of 6 regeneration and opportunity have been identified as being suitable for redevelopment. The Glanbia Site and adjacent lands, Davitt's Quay and Car Park, O'Connell Street were included in the schedule of lands approved for acquisition under URDF Call 3;

- Additional active travel infrastructure is being rolled out to build on opportunities provided by the Waterford Greenway along with additional supportive links to Gaeltacht na nDéise to support the role of Dungarvan as a Gaeltacht Service Town.

3.4.14. Gorey

Comment: Gorey was the fastest growing Key Town in the Region with a population increase of 17.3% which was more than twice the average growth rate for Key Towns in the census period. It also saw significant jobs growth of 18%. There was a significant reduction in housing vacancy, while housing delivery in the monitoring period is close to Development Plan targets. There are indications that the Town is being influenced by its proximity to Dublin.

Population

11,517 — +1,695 from 2016 (17.3%)

Jobs

4,170 — +641 from 2016 (18%)

Homes Completed 2022/23

272 — 83% of Development Plan Housing Target of 328 Homes

Jobs to Resident Workers

1.0 — No change from 2016

Housing Vacancy

5.2% — 4.2% less than 2016
3% less than Key Town Average

Mode of Travel

26.3% (+1%)   6.2% (+0.7%)   67.5% (-1.7%)

Figure 3.33 | Gorey Growth Statistics Relative to Employment

Wexford County Council has provided the following updates on significant projects during the monitoring period. It should be noted that other plans or projects of relevance are included in other sections of this plan:

- The M11 Business Campus which includes the Hatch Lab was completed;

- The new Gorey District Park has been substantially completed;

- The Esmonde Street Public Realm Scheme is progressing to detailed design stage;

- Development is progressing on the development of a multi-functional venue at Gorey Market House;

- A Masterplan has been prepared for St Waleran's, which is a Council led scheme to deliver social and affordable housing on a 30 hectare site at Ballytegan. Part 8 has been approved for development of Masterplan Phase 1.

3.5. Towns and Villages and Rural Areas

Relevant RPOs: 26 *Towns and Villages* **and 27** *Rural*

3.5.1. The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

RPO 7: *Delivery and Funding*

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) is provided through the Department of Rural and Community Development, with €1 billion to be invested in rural Ireland over the period 2019 to 2027. The following are details of funding in the Region during the monitoring period:

Carlow: Applications for Rathvilly and Bagenalstown;

Clare: Funding sought for Corofin Enhancement Plan;

Cork: Bandon, Fermoy Town Regeneration, Kinsale Library, Charleville Public Realm Improvements, Mitchelstown Georgian Quarter;

Kerry: Listowel Economic and Town Centre rejuvenation, Killorglin Smart Rural Regeneration, Caherciveen Town Centre rejuvenation;

Kilkenny: Pilltown Town Centre rejuvenation, Callan historic town rejuvenation;

Limerick: Great Southern Greenway and Limerick Greenway Hubs, West Limerick Tourism Gateway Newcastle West, Rural Limerick Housing Development Initiative, Foynes Flying Boat & Maritime Museum;

Tipperary: Nenagh Historic and Cultural Quarter, Gantly Street masterplan Roscrea, Templemore Town Hall Enterprise and Cultural Centre, Thurles Market Quarter, Cahir Town Centre Living-Working Quarter, Carrick on Suir Regeneration Plan;

Waterford: Projects in Cappoquin, Portlaw, Dunmore East and Dungarvan;

Wexford: New Ross Tourism Project, Emigrant Park, High Hill and John Street Building Regeneration Project.

3.5.2. The Town Centre First

The *Town Centre First* Policy, was launched on 4 February 2022, and is a major cross-government policy that aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into our town centres. It advocates for a holistic, place-based approach to sustainable rural development. Some developments during the monitoring period include:

Carlow: Tullow Town Centre First Plan prepared and town team established. Bagenalstown is part of the next phase;

Clare: Sixmilebridge town team established and plan prepared;

Cork: Skibbereen plan prepared and Kanturk plan will be part of the next phase;

Kerry: Milltown plan being finalised. Kenmare plan will be part of the next phase;

Kilkenny: Urlingford plan prepared. Graigeunamanagh will be part of the next phase;

Limerick: Abbeyfeale plan prepared. Rathkeale plan will be part of the next phase;

Tipperary: Roscrea plan prepared. Carrick on Suir plan will be part of the next phase;

Waterford: Portlaw plan being finalised. Dunmore East plan will be part of the next phase;

Wexford: New Ross plan prepared. Courtown / Riverchapel is part of the next phase.

3.6. Infrastructure Investment in the Southern Region

RPO 4: *Infrastructure Investment*

A central component of Project Ireland 2040 is to ensure the alignment of investment plans with the stated National Strategic Objectives of the NPF in a considered, cohesive and defined manner. Specifically, this is to be ensured through effective oversight of the National Development Plan (NDP), which sees a total public investment of €165 billion from 2021 to 2030. The Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR) has responsibility for oversight and delivery of the NDP. In its submission DPENDR noted that it has responsibility for allocating expenditure on a departmental, and not on a geographic basis. It is also responsible for ensuring that individual projects satisfy the requirements of the Infrastructure Guidelines with the responsibility for ensuring that overall departmental spending programmes are aligned with the NPF resting with the individual government departments.

The NDP is primarily monitored through the Project Ireland 2040 Capital Investment Tracker and Map. DPENDR has noted that the regional distribution of the number of projects identified in the tracker indicates planned investment is in line with NPF objectives for balanced regional growth. However the SRA has concerns that DPENDR based its analysis on the number, rather than the nature of projects, and the actual quantum of investment planned.

The SRA has carried out its own analysis of the regional distribution of infrastructure investment identified in the NDP. This assessment is based upon the projects and information identified in the most recently published version of the Project Ireland 2040 Capital Investment Tracker from April 2024: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7682860c80d64a62b90e8a1ca3d16364. To ensure an accurate assessment of planned infrastructure investment, this assessment was based on projected project costs where available. Where this information is not available, or for NPD projects costing less than €100 million, an aggregate of the relevant project cost range from the Capital Investment Tracker has been used. The assessment also differentiates between projects at pre-implementation, and implementation-completion phase.

Some projects are categorised as national/pan regional in nature, which are projects being delivered at a specific location, but which serve a national rather than local or regional purpose e.g. the National Children's Hospital.

3.6.1. Share of Planned NDP Investment Across Ireland's Regions (including the Dublin Metropolitan Area)
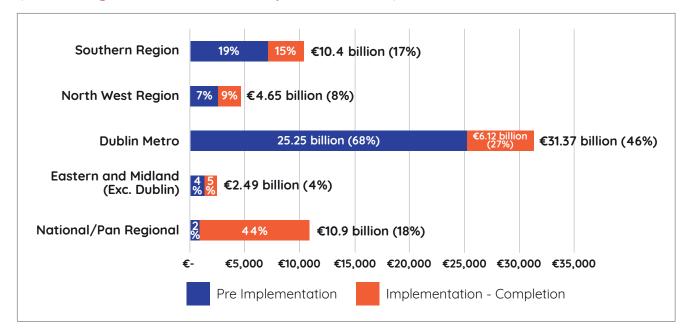

Figure 3.34 | Planned NDP Investment Across Ireland's Regions

€10.4 billion of investment is planned for the Southern Region, which equates to 17% of overall planned investment. By comparison, the Dublin Metropolitan Area accounts for €31.37 billion, 46% of the total. The remainder of the Eastern and Midlands Region has been identified for €2.49 billion, or 4% of overall spend. National/pan regional projects account for €10.9 million, which equates to 18% of overall project cost, with the vast majority at implementation-completion phase. Notably the Dublin Metropolitan Area accounts for 68% of total planned investment at pre-implementation phase, compared to 19% for the Southern Region. Many projects at post implementation/completion phase would have originated prior to the NPF or NDP, with feasibility, design, planning and business case approval taking a number of years. However, the expectation should be that projects identified at pre-implementation phase would be much more closely aligned with the core objectives of the NPF. The data demonstrates that over a period in which the NPF is targeting balanced regional growth, the Southern Region received 3.5 times less investment than the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

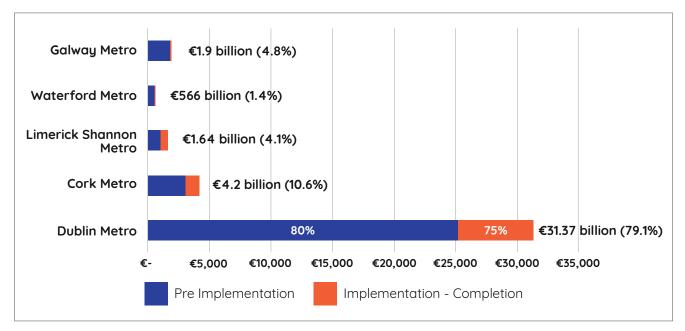## 3.6.2. Share of Planned NDP Investment Across Metropolitan Areas

Galway Metro — €1.9 billion (4.8%)
Waterford Metro — €566 billion (1.4%)
Limerick Shannon Metro — €1.64 billion (4.1%)
Cork Metro — €4.2 billion (10.6%)
Dublin Metro — 80% | 75% | €31.37 billion (79.1%)

Pre Implementation   Implementation - Completion

Figure 3.35 | Share of Planned NDP Investment Across Metropolitan Areas

When planned investment for the five metropolitan areas is considered, 79% of funding is focused on the Dublin Metro. Within the Southern Region, Metropolitan Areas are projected to deliver circa 75% of the Region's overall growth. It is also an objective that the four regional Metros are collectively, targeted to deliver the same quantum of growth as the Dublin Metro.

3.6.3. Planned NPD Investment – Per Capita Assessment by Region and Metropolitan Area

SRA — €5,479
NWRA — €4,701
EMRA — €12,522
EMRA (Excl. Dublin) — €2,367
Dublin Metro — €19,011

Cork Metro — €10,278
Limerick-Shannon Metro — €9,209
Waterford Metro — €6,922
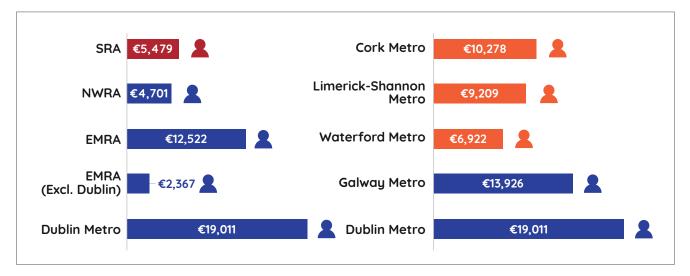Galway Metro — €13,926
Dublin Metro — €19,011

Figure 3.36 | Planned NDP Investment Per Capita Assessment by Region and Metropolitan Area

Population projections for 2031 from the relevant RSESs have been used as the basis for the per capita assessment. 2031 also represents a mid-point of NPF implementation. Planned investment in the Southern Region equates to €5,479 per capita. This is less than half that of the Eastern and Midlands Regions at €12,522. It should be noted that there is major difference in per capita investment for the Dublin Metropolitan Area (€19,011) and the remainder of the Eastern and Midlands Region (€2,367). Funding for the Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford Metros are substantially lower per capita than the Dublin Metro.

3.6.4. Projects committed under the NDP within the Southern Region

Completed/Implementation Phase	Pre-Implementation Phase
• M11 Gorey-Enniscorthy (€400 mill.) • N22 Macroom Bypass (€280 mill.) • N25 New Ross Bypass (€230 mill.) • Dunkettle Interchange (€213 mill.) • Cork Commuter Rail Phase 1 (€185 mill.) • Waterford North Quays (€170 mill.) • Cork Lower Harbour Main Drainage (€144 mill.)	• M20 Cork to Limerick (€1.5 billion) • BusConnects Cork, Limerick and Waterford (€1.3 billion) • Cork Docklands (€750 mill.) • N21/N69 Adare to Foynes (€450 mill.) • Higher Education Facilities (€350) • M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy (€300 mill.)

Figure 3.37 | Projects Committed under the NDP within the Southern Region

3.6.5. Projects committed within the Dublin Metropolitan Area

Completed/Implementation Phase	Pre-Implementation Phase
• Dublin City Port Masterplan (€1.6 billion) • Housing Projects (€600 mill.) • Ringsend Waste Treatment Plant (€550 mill.) • Luas Cross City Lane (€360 mill.) • Dublin Airport North Runway (€320 mill.)	• Metro Link* (€9.5 billion) • BusConnects Dublin (€3.65 billion) • Major Hospital Projects* (€1.5 mill.) • Eastern and Midlands Water Supply (€1.3 billion)* • Greater Dublin Drainage Scheme (€750 mill.)

Figure 3.38 | Projects Committed within the Dublin Metropolitan Area

It is noteworthy that in comparison to the Southern Region, the substantial majority of investment in the Dublin Metro relates to public transport projects with investment in roads accounting for a substantial majority of infrastructure investment in the Southern Region. The major influence on overall costs is MetroLink, which will be the largest infrastructure project undertaken in the state at a latest projected cost of €9.5 billion. In addition to MetroLink, the Dart+ programme and BusConnects Dublin both have a projected cost in excess of €3 billion. The Luas Cross City Line, completed in 2017, is accounted for under the NDP, with a final cost of €360 million.

3.6.6. Non-Committed Projects in the Southern Region

Non-Committed Projects	
• Cork Light Rail Network • Limerick Commuter Rail Network/Shannon Airport Spur • Cork Commuter Rail Network (Phase 2 - New Stations, Electrification) • Cork Nothern Distributor and Link Roads	• Limerick Nothern Distributor Road • N24 Cahir to Limerick Junction • N24 Waterford to Cahir (€600m) • N11/N25 Oilgate to Rosslare • N25 Upgrades (Cork to Waterford)

Figure 3.39 | Non-Committed Projects in the Southern Region

There a number of projects, which have been identified either in national, regional or local strategies, which have not been included within the NDP and have no funding commitment for capital works, despite funding being made available for progressing design and feasibility in some cases. Some of these projects would have transformative impacts on the Region and would act as catalysts for increased public transport use and wider modal shift. The SRA considers that the importance of these projects should be recognised by their inclusion in future revisions to the NDP.

3.6.7. Urban Regeneration Development Fund

The URDF is an investment programme to support NPF objectives through the sustainable regeneration and rejuvenation of Ireland's five cities and large towns. As per the URDF Project Tracker: https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/98a739a585944cf887f2dffe54c4f129/, €1.69 billion has been allocated up to the monitoring period.

The regional distribution of URDF funding is as follows:

- Southern Region: €821.4 million (49%)

- Eastern and Midlands Region: €634.3 million (38%)

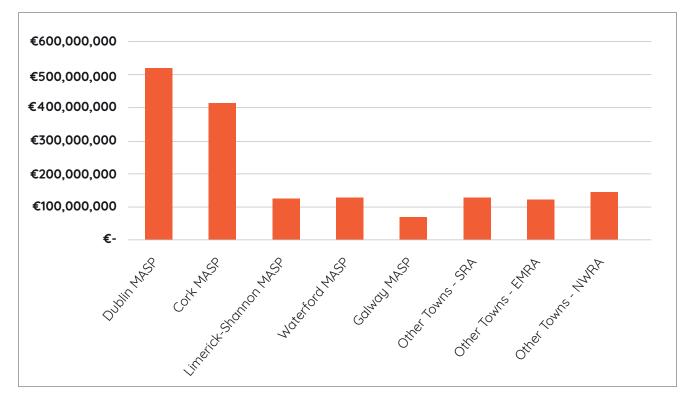- Northern and Western Region: €213.2 million (13%)
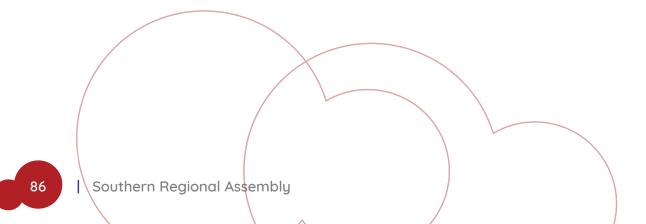
Figure 3.40 | Distribution of URDF Funding (Source: URDF Tracker)

When compared to investment under the broader NDP programme, the allocation of funding under the URDF is weighted strongly towards the Southern Region, and Cork in particular. This is largely a result of an allocation of €350 million towards the Cork Docklands regeneration projects, and €46 million to the Grand Parade Quarter project. In Waterford €100 million has been allocated to the North Quays regeneration project and in Limerick, €125 million was allocated to the redevelopment of Opera Square and the development of a World Class Waterfront. It should be noted that the URDF only accounts for 4% of overall spending identified within the NDP.

Strategy Statement 7

Diversity, Language, Culture and Heritage Enhancement
Strengthening and protecting our Region's diversity, language and culture, our recreational assets, and our natural and built heritage.

3.7. Culture, Heritage and Arts- Gaeltachtaí

Cork, Kerry and Waterford (City and) County Councils have provided the following information on Gaeltachtaí within their areas:

Cork County Council	• Produced a Historic Town Map for the Gaeltacht Service town of Macroom (being made available in English agus trí mheán na Gaeilge); • The County Cork Heritage Grant Scheme as well as the County Cork Commemorations Grant Scheme has supported many Irish groups and initiatives and the Arts Grants, operated through the Council's Arts Office, also has a bespoke Irish strand; • A Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan for the Múscraí Gaeltacht was produced, which won an Irish Planning Institute Award.
Kerry County Council	• Initiatives in the Gaeltacht areas aimed at promoting the use of the Irish language e.g. supporting Tobar Dhuibhne in training for those involved in sports training as Irish language mentors; • Policy for an Irish language skills competency test for social housing applicants for a specified percentage of houses in Gaeltacht areas; • Objective of the Kerry County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 to reserve at a minimum 66% of completed residential units on Residentially zoned land in all Gaeltacht areas for Irish speakers; • Cathair Saidhbhín language plan approved by the Minister for the Gaeltacht, in 2023 and the implementation of the plan to commence following the appointment of a Language Planning Co-ordinator for the project in 2024.
Waterford City and County Council	The Development Plan includes policy objectives to support the role of Dungarvan as a Gaeltacht Service Town and support for the delivery of Plean Teanga na nDéise 2018 – 2024 in collaboration with Údarás na Gaeltachta, Comhlucht Forbartha na nDéise, and the broader community.

Table 3.11 | Cork, Kerry and Waterford Gaeltachtaí

4.0.

Creative and Innovative Region

This section focuses on the implementation actions by public bodies and local authorities under the RSES Strategy theme of *Creative and Innovative Region*. The SRA's own actions in this area are included in Chapter 2 *National and Regional Collaboration*. The RSES supports a Creative and Innovative Region: where our economy and communities grow together through the innovation and skills of our people and high-quality connectivity. With the release of Census 2022 data and other sources available, information and analysis of the performance of the Region, its Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), Metropolitan Areas and Key Towns are also included in this chapter. This will assist the SRA and other policy makers going forward, to demonstrate more effectively how the RSES and its objectives are being implemented and suggest areas that need to be addressed, which also feeds into Chapter 6 *Conclusions and Recommendations*.

Relevant Strategy Statements:

- **Strategy Statement 3** *Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities* Strengthening the role of and improving quality of life in the Region's diverse rural areas and communities and valuing our rural Region as dynamic, resilient and outward looking

- **Strategy Statement 5** *A Strong Economy* Building a competitive, innovative and productive economy.

- **Strategy Statement 6** *High Quality International Connectivity* Optimising our international connectivity through investment and increased capacity in our ports and airports and provision of high-quality digital connectivity throughout the Region.
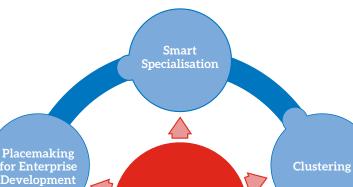
Strategy Statement 5

A Strong Economy - Building a competitive, innovative and productive economy.

4.1. RSES Economic Strategy

The main emphasis of the RSES Economic Strategy is to create the conditions that will support and encourage enterprise development and employment creation, underpinned by the economic principles: Smart Specialisation, Clustering, Placemaking for enterprise development, Knowledge Diffusion; and Capacity Building.

Economic Strategy

Figure 4.1 | RSES Economic Strategy

The Regional Economic Drivers are effective economic engines for the Region in developing all of the assets of the Region – the Cities, Towns and Villages and connecting them with the Networks and Economic Corridors. Each Local Authority has integrated the economic principles of RSES Economic Strategy into their adopted Development Plans.
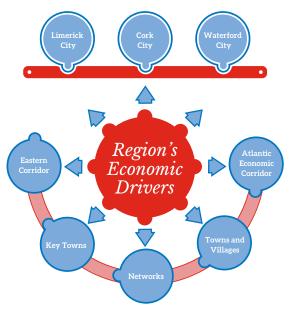
Region's Economic Drivers

Figure 4.2 | *Region's Economic Drivers*

4.1.1. Analysis of recent employment trends by the SRA
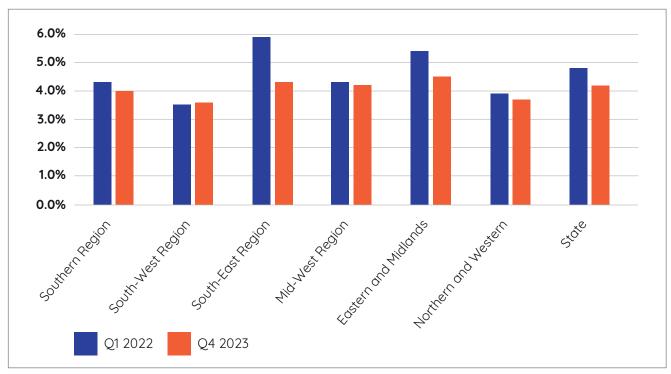
Region	Total No. Employed	Change 2016 - 2022	% Emp. Share	% Pop. Share
State	2,320,297	16%	-	-
Southern	749,745	16%	32%	33%
Eastern and Midlands	1,180,014	16%	51%	49%
Northern and Western	390,538	15%	17%	18%

Table 4.1 | *Employment in Ireland (2022) by Region*

Settlement	Total No. Jobs	Change 2016 - 2022	% Emp. Share	% Pop. Share
Cork	113,067	11%	5%	4%
Limerick	49,871	12%	2%	2%
Waterford	27,704	14%	1%	1%
Key Towns in SRA	99,688	7%	4%	5%
Dublin	577,835	13%	25%	25%

Table 4.2 | *Number of Jobs within Cities and Key Towns*

As set out in Table 4.1 there were over 2,320,000 people employed in Ireland as per the 2022 Census, a 16% increase from 2016. Table 4.2 outlines the number of jobs within the main settlements in the region. Cork is largest employment centre in the region, with 113,067 jobs, an 11% increase from 2016, and 5% share of jobs (where a place of work is recorded) nationally. Both Limerick and Waterford saw higher rates of growth in job numbers at 12% and 14% respectively.

The rate of jobs growth in the regional Cities is aligned with that of Dublin (13%), which contrasts with population growth and housing delivery outlined in previous sections which shows a much lower rate of growth in the regional cities when compared to Dublin. The Region's Key Towns employ just under 100,000 people collectively, 4% of the national share. However, Key Towns saw a lower rate of increase in total job numbers from 2016 to 2022 of 7%.

4.1.2. Labour Force Survey
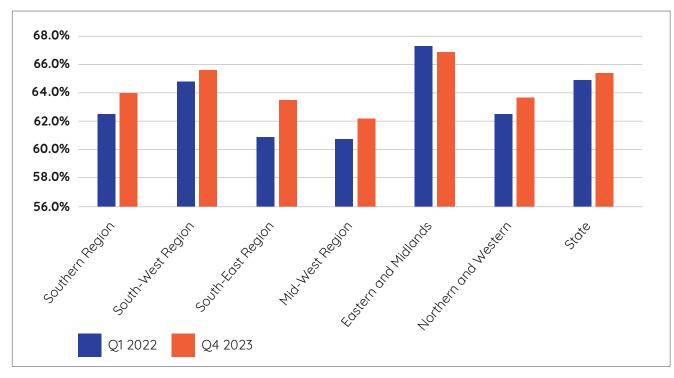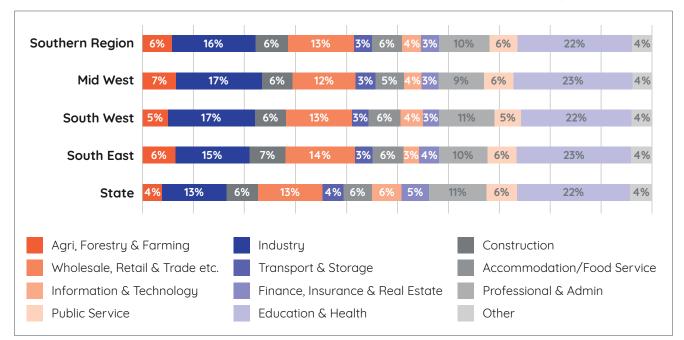
Figure 4.3 | Unemployment Rate Q1 2022 to Q4 2023 (Source: CSO Labour Force Survey)

Figure 4.4 | Labour Force Participation Rate Q1 2022 to Q4 2023 (Source: CSO Labour Force Survey)

The CSO Labour Force Survey quarterly reports provide estimates on unemployment and labour participation rates across NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 Regions (SPAs). As of Q4 2023, the Southern Region had an unemployment rate of 4%, a reduction of 0.3% from the start of the period. Within

the Region, the South-West SPA has the lowest level of unemployment, with moderately higher rates in the Mid-West and South-East. The labour participation rate for the Southern Region is 64%, highest in the South-West at 65.6%, and lowest in the Mid-West at 62.2%. The Eastern and Midlands Region has the highest participation rate at 66.9%. However, the gap between the Southern and Eastern and Midland Regions has reduced significantly over the monitoring period. The Labour Force Survey data indicates strong economic performance in the Southern Region within the monitoring period. Notably, the rate of jobs growth and levels of employment in the Southern Region is in line with, and potentially performing more strongly than Dublin and the Mid-East. This contrasts with rates of housing delivery, which shows much higher levels of activity in the Eastern and Midland Region compared the Southern Region.

4.1.3. Share of Employment by sector in the Southern Region

Figure 4.5 | *Share of Employment by Sector within the Southern Region, NUTS Regions and State as a whole (Source: Census 2022)*
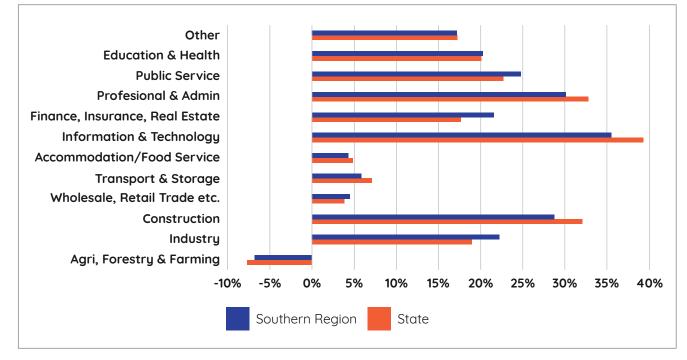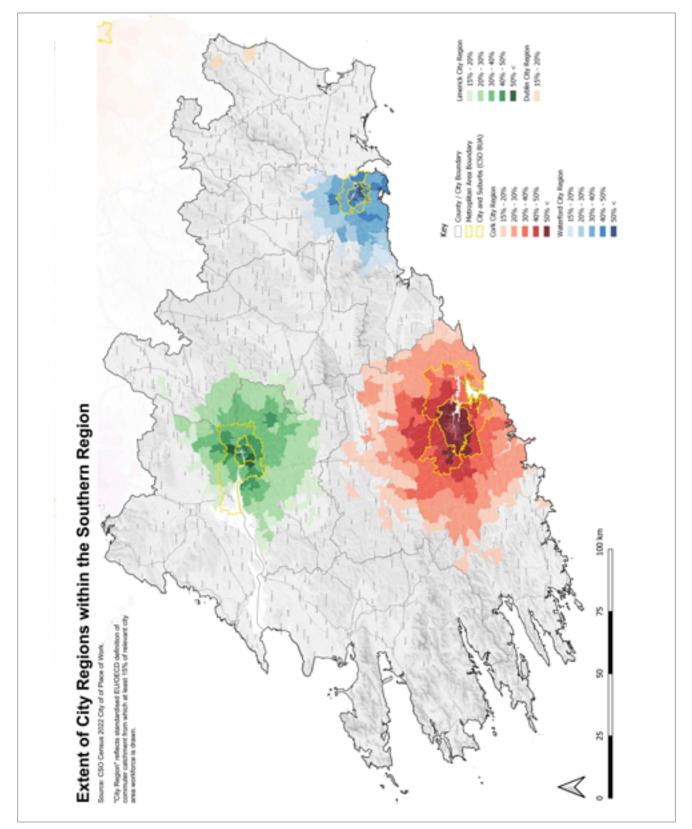
Figure 4.6 | *Percentage Change in Employment by Sector, 2016 to 2022 (Source: Census 2022)*

Generally, there is no significant variance of sectors across the State or Region. Within the Southern Region, there is a slightly higher proportion of workers employed in Agri, Forestry and Farming, Industry and Construction than the national average, while there is slightly less employed in IT and Financial Services. From 2016 to 2022, the biggest increase in employment was in IT, Professional and Administration, and Construction.

4.1.4. Economic Influence of Cities

Figure 4.7 | *Extent of influence of Cities within the Region (Source: Census 2022)*

Overall Extent of Commuting to Cities within the Region

Source: CSO Census 2022 City of of Place of Work.

Data reflects percentage of an Electoral Area workforce which state that they commute to a City as their place of work.

Only the City where the highest rate of commuting is recorded in an Electoral Area is reflected.

Key

County / City Boundary
Metropolitan Area Boundary
City and Suburbs (CSO BUA)

Cork
> 2%
2% - 5%
5% - 10%
10% - 15%
15% - 20%
> 20%

Limerick
< 2%
2% - 5%
5% - 10%
10% - 15%
15% - 20%
> 20%

Waterford
< 2%
2% - 5%
5% - 10%
10% - 15%
15% - 20%
> 20%

Dublin
< 2%
2% - 5%
5% - 10%
10% - 15%
> 15%

Galway
5% - 10%
10% - 15%

Figure 4.8 | Overall Extent of Commuting to Cities within the Region (Source: Census 2022)

Cork and Limerick have a significant economic influence (commuting zone) within the Mid-West and South-West SPAs respectively (where 15% of more of the working population travel there to work). By comparison, Waterford has a more limited economic influence over the South-East SPA, where despite i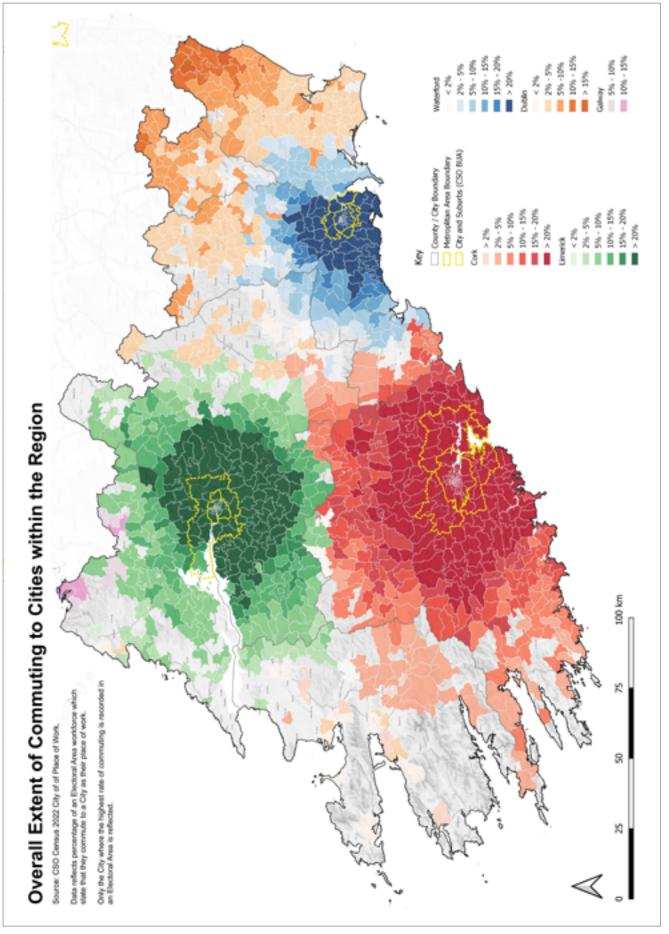ts proximity, County Wexford is not within the area of economic influence of Waterford City. The spatial extent of Waterford's influence is comparable to Kilkenny. Also notable is the extent of Dublin's influence within the Southern Region, which is particularly prominent within the South-East SPA, where parts of North Co. Wexford are within the areas of economic influence of Dublin. Furthermore, the vast majority of the county is under a greater level of economic influence of Dublin than Waterford. This reflects the scale of influence of Dublin as an economic hub in comparison to Waterford. It is likely that the influence of Dublin within the South-East SPA is playing a significant role in the higher rates of population growth and planning and development activity, particularly in Counties Wexford and Carlow.

4.2. Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) has a key role to play in implementation of the RSES Economic Strategy and promoting employment in the Region. In its submission it outlines how future employment growth and sustainability requires a major focus on boosting regional growth potential, necessitating the promotion of growth that is sustainable, driven by exports, and underpinned by innovation and competitiveness across all regions. Its *White Paper on Enterprise 2022-2030* identifies balanced regional economic and enterprise development as a central component of enterprise policy. The enterprise development programmes of IDA Ireland, the principal agency charged with attracting foreign direct investment, and the work of Enterprise Ireland in developing Irish enterprises in the world market, is hugely significant to the economy of the Region. The role of the Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) is also of key importance.

4.2.1. IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland continues to progress delivery of its targets and strategic objectives as outlined in its strategy, *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024*. Its "Regions" pillar aligns with the objectives of the Programme for Government in relation to regional development. The overarching ambition of national policy on "Regions" is to promote balanced, compact and sustainable growth outside of Dublin. The realisation of the strategic outcomes of the NPF, through the growth and development of regional cities and towns, would significantly enhance Ireland's value proposition to FDI and support emerging urban locations of scale to become future FDI growth drivers. IDA Ireland has Regional Development Teams supporting the implementation of IDA Strategy at the regional level based in three regional offices across the Southern Region, namely Limerick, Waterford and Cork. It has also published investment targets for every region over the four years of its current strategy. The combined target for the Southern Region over the period 2021-2024 is 234 investments.

In terms of the FDI Base in the Southern Region, there are 478 IDA client operations employing 93,854 directly in 2023. This represents 31% of total IDA client employment nationally. Including indirect employment estimated at 75,084 which are supported by FDI, the total number of jobs supported both directly and indirectly by FDI in the Southern Region is estimated at 168,938. The table breaks this down by SPA.
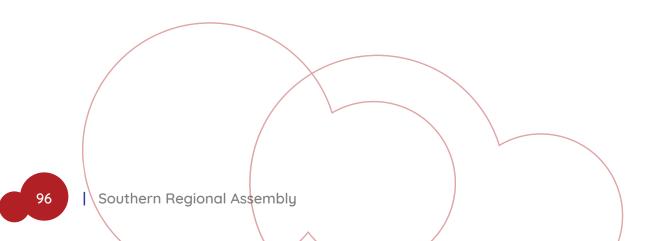
2023 Total FDI Base/Employment	Mid-West	South-East	South-West	Southern Region
Number of client operations	159	86	233	**478**
FDI Employment - Direct	27,257	15,301	51,296	**93,854**
FDI Employment - Indirect	21,806	12,241	41,037	**75,084**
FDI Employment - Combined	49,063	27,542	92,333	**168,938**
% Growth	3%	1%	1%	

Table 4.3 | Total FDI Base/ Employment for Southern Region including SPAs in 2023 (Source: AES 2023)

In terms of economic impact of FDI across the Southern Region, this is significant with an estimated €9.97bn spend in 2022 which is an increase of 9% on 2021 figures.

	Mid West	South East	South West	Southern Region
2022 ABSEI Results €m				
Payroll	1,991	1,100	3,389	6,480
Irish Materials & Services	753	557	2,181	3,491
FDI Economic Impact	2,744	1,657	5,570	9,971
Inhouse R&D	616	100	538	1,254
2021 ABSEI Results €m				
Payroll	1,754	909	3,228	5,891
Irish Materials & Services	535	500	2,181	3,216
FDI Economic Impact	2,289	1,409	5,409	9,107
Inhouse R&D	415	119	538	1,072

Table 4.4 | Economic Impact of FDI in the Southern Region in 2022 (Source: ABSEI 2022)

4.2.2. Enterprise Ireland

Employment in client companies of Enterprise Ireland increased to a total of 74,428 in 2023 in the Southern Region, the highest ever recorded. The total number of jobs created was 5,022. When job losses are considered, there was a positive net jobs result of 1,551 in a very challenging year for businesses. Just over 32%, or almost one third, of new jobs created in 2023 in companies supported by Enterprise Ireland were located in the Southern Region. In addition to direct financial support, Enterprise Ireland also works to ensure an increased focus on innovation, digitalisation and sustainability. Export-focused companies are continuing to create quality employment across the Southern Region, despite a challenging business environment.

4.2.3. Local Enterprise Offices Annual Employment Results 2023

An Annual Employment Survey is carried out by Local Enterprise Offices (LEO) showing the number of client companies and net jobs created, with the latest results available for 2023. The figures show a tenth consecutive year of jobs growth. The figures show that the network of LEOs now has a portfolio of 7,167 small businesses that account for 38,726 jobs nationally. As set out below 2,590 of these businesses are located in the Southern Region. The job numbers referred to only include jobs recorded by those businesses that received LEO grant aid.

LEO	No. of Client Companies	Net Jobs
Carlow	208	1
Clare	229	62
Cork City	183	77
Cork South	163	120
Cork W/N	284	47
Kerry	242	65
Kilkenny	188	53
Limerick	313	238
Tipperary	266	96
Waterford	280	47
Wexford	234	177
Southern Region Total	2590	983

Table 4.5 | Local Enterprise Offices Annual Employment Results 2023

4.2.4. Regional Enterprise Plans

Relevant RPO 51: Economic Clusters and Ecosystems

The three Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) for the Southern Region: the Mid-West REP; the South-West REP; and the South-East REP, were launched in early 2022 and are now in the final year of implementation. The delivery of each REP is led by a Steering Committee of regional stakeholders and chaired by a senior private sector businessperson, supported by a full-time REP Programme Manager (PM). The PMs are chiefly responsible for driving implementation and stakeholder engagement on the ground. DETE is responsible for monitoring implementation of the REPs at national level through the National Oversight Group (NOG), chaired by the Department's Ministers. The last meeting of the NOG took place on 26th October 2023 and implementation was considered to be progressing well overall across the Southern Region.

4.2.5. Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme (SREIS)

The Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme (SREIS), is co-funded under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and supports projects aligned to the REPs. The first call of €35 million was announced in October 2023 with subsequent calls to be announced in the coming years. Mid-term progress reports are being prepared and will include a comprehensive, action-by-action update on the implementation of each of the REPs up to Q3 2023.

4.2.6. European Digital Innovation Hubs

European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) are one-stop shops for companies and public sector organisations to access, for little or low cost, expertise, advice, and opportunities to deploy digital technologies or to test technologies before investing. One of these, ENTIRE, is based in the Southern Region, led by Tyndall National Institute Cork. Funded under Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), its primary focus is to help SMEs and start-ups to become more competitive in their business/production processes using digital technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT) and sensors.

4.2.7. Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund and Innovation

The Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) was established in 2018 as part of the NDP and has committed to €500 million in funding over the period to 2027 for co-funded collaborative projects involving the enterprise and research sectors. Since 2018, the DTIF has invested €371 million in 104 collaborative disruptive innovation projects, 49 of which have one or more partners located in the Southern Region, were awarded over €184 million. These projects cover areas such as life sciences, medical devices, ICT, artificial intelligence, manufacturing and environmental sustainability.

4.2.8. Other Funds and Initiatives

- 44 entities across the Southern Region were funded under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) with total approved funding for projects of €41.1 million. 23 entities were funded under the Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme (RETS) with total approved funding for projects of €2.6 million.

- The Pre-Seed Start Fund (PSSF) is open to innovative start-ups in all sectors, with a focus on manufacturing, life sciences, food, and renewables. Since it was launched in 2022 there have been 34 start-up companies supported in the Southern Region with €2.9 million committed to those companies.

- 200 senior leaders from the food sector and key industry stakeholders attended Enterprise Ireland's flagship Food Innovation Summit in May 2023 at Pairc Ui Chaoimh, Cork. The event was the first dedicated Food Innovation Summit to take place in Ireland and turned the spotlight on the innovation capability within the Irish food industry and the strength of Ireland's food research ecosystem.

4.3 Digital Connectivity

RPOs: 133-138

The submission from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) states that:

- The *Digital Connectivity Strategy* was published in December 2022 and aims to enhance Ireland's digital infrastructure including ambitious targets such as achieving Gigabit network coverage for all Irish households and businesses by 2028, comprehensive 5G coverage by 2030, and digital connectivity for all schools and Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) by 2023. The *National Broadband Plan (NBP)* is a critical part of achieving these targets, focusing on high-speed, reliable digital connectivity. Strategic Connection Points (SCPs) are a key element of the NBP, providing high speed broadband in every county in advance of the rollout of the fibre to the premises network. In the Southern region, 103 BCPs were in place by the end of November 2023, all of which were open for business, providing high speed broadband services to communities. There were also 265 school Strategic Connection Points (school SCPs) in the Southern region installed by the end of November 2023, and 210 of these schools are utilising the newly provided service with high-speed connectivity. The remaining 55 schools, which have slower connectivity, are in the process of being connected to the new high-speed connection. This amounts to a total of 368 SCPs installed in the Southern region by 30th November 2023. The breakdown by county for the BCPs installed in the Southern region is as follows:

SCPs Installed By County - Southern Region			
County	**School SCPs**	**Public BCPs**	**Total SCPs**
Carlow	9	7	16
Clare	29	7	36
Cork	91	24	115
Kerry	24	10	34
Kilkenny	21	7	28
Limerick	21	15	36
Tipperary	37	20	57
Waterford	16	4	20
Wexford	17	9	26
Totals	**265**	**103**	**368**

Table 4.6 | SCPs Installed by County – Southern Region

As of 12th January 2024, National Broadband Ireland (NBI) has completed fibre deployment activities on 10 islands around the country, including two Hare and Long, which are adjacent to Cork, and now have high speed broadband. It is intended that this will be delivered to six islands within the Southern region by Q4 2026: Sherkin, Cape Clear, Bere, Dursey, Horse and Valentia are intended to be delivered by Q4 2026.

4.4. Smart Specialisation

In July 2022, DETE published the *National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027 (S3)*. The preparation of the S3 allowed for the assessment of Ireland's regional competitive advantages, future market opportunities, solutions to societal challenges, as well as the effectiveness of the current suite of enterprise innovation supports. Accordingly, the S3 builds on identified regional and national strengths to ensure the creation of a supportive environment for innovation to flourish, new start-ups to emerge and businesses to scale. It puts a focus on the twin green and digital transformations needed across the enterprise

sector, while aligning our national innovation system to engage with this challenge. It embraces a regional approach to addressing Ireland's research, development and innovation (RD&I) challenge, providing an important 'bridge' between regional and national innovation strategy-building and decision-making.

4.5. Atlantic Economic Corridor

RPO 41: *Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC)*

As detailed in the submission from the *Department of Rural and Community Development* (DRCD), the *Western Development Commission* (WDC) supports the delivery of Government policy towards balanced regional development across a wide variety of sectors including its work on the AEC initiative. The WDC is a statutory body that was set up to promote both social and economic development in the west of Ireland (Counties: Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare). The AEC is a linear network along the western seaboard, stretching from

Kerry to Donegal. The overarching objective of the AEC initiative is to maximise assets along the western seaboard to attract investment, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for those who live there. The WDC is currently working on a strategy document for the AEC initiative. The AEC initiative has to date enabled a number of projects to be developed, most notably the AEC Hub Network project, which has since progressed to a national initiative in the form of *Connected Hubs*. *Connected Hubs* is a national initiative, forming a single network of remote working facilities that provides users with information on, and the location of facilities available at remote working hubs throughout Ireland. It has grown substantially since its launch and now has c.340 hubs live on its online booking platform (www. connectedhubs.ie).

County	Hubs on boarded	Hubs pending onboarding
Carlow	5	9
Clare	13	10
Cork	33	20
Kerry	20	8
Kilkenny	4	13
Limerick	15	13
Tipperary	14	24
Wexford	12	11
Waterford	9	9

Table 4.7 | *Connected Hubs in the Southern Region as of the end of 2023*

Strategy Statement 3
Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities

RPOs: 43-50

4.6. Rural Development

The submission from the Department of Rural and Community Development states that:

- The rural development investment programme continues to support investment throughout rural Ireland by delivering schemes including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the LEADER Programme, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and the CLÁR Programme. Furthermore, policies and strategies which form part of *Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025*, include the Town Centre First Strategy and the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy;

- The *Our Living Islands - National Islands Policy 2023-2033*, was published in June 2023, which is the first whole-of-Government policy for the islands to be published in 27 years, supporting sustainable island communities. and is accompanied by an Action Plan for the period 2023-2026. The West Cork Islands of Dursey, Bere, Whiddy, Long, Heir, Sherkin and Cléire are included.

The following details were provided by the local authorities regarding Rural Regeneration and Development funding in the Region (RRDF):

Local Authority	Towns
Carlow	Applications for Rathvilly and Bagenalstown
Clare	Funding sought for Corofin Enhancement Plan
Cork County	Bandon, Fermoy Town Regeneration, Kinsale Library, Charleville Public Realm Improvements, Mitchelstown Georgian Quarter
Kerry	Listowel Economic and Town Centre rejuvenation, Killorglin Smart Rural Regeneration, Caherciveen Town Centre rejuvenation
Kilkenny	Pilltown Town Centre rejuvenation, Callan historic town rejuvenation
Limerick	Great Southern Greenway and Limerick Greenway Hubs, West Limerick Tourism Gateway Newcastle West, Rural Limerick Housing Development Initiative, Foynes Flying Boat & Maritime Museum
Tipperary	Nenagh Historic and Cultural Quarter, Gantly Street masterplan Roscrea, Templemore Town Hall Enterprise and Cultural Centre, Thurles Market Quarter, Cahir Town Centre Living-Working Quarter, Carrick on Suir Regeneration Plan
Waterford	Projects in Cappoquin, Portlaw, Dunmore East and Dungarvan
Wexford	New Ross Tourism Project, Emigrant Park, High Hill and John Street Building Regeneration Project

Table 4.8 | *Rural Regeneration and Development funding per local authority*

4.7. Agriculture and Diversity in Rural Economy

The submission from the Department of Agriculture highlights the following:

- The *Food Vision 2030 Strategy*, is a ten year Strategy for the Irish agri-food sector with its first Annual Report prepared in May 2023;

- The *CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027* contains measures that address the 9 Specific Objectives of the CAP, and the cross-cutting objective of modernising the agriculture sector by fostering and sharing of knowledge, innovation and digitalisation, and encouraging their uptake;

- The *Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme* (ACRES), is Ireland's new agri-environment climate scheme under Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan. Farmers in ACRES will work to provide significant

benefits at landscape level for biodiversity, climate and water quality. ACRES zones in the Southern Region include: Burren-Aran, Munster-South Connaught, Kerry-West Cork and Leinster;

- A new food innovation hub/ biotransformation suite has been developed at the Teagasc Food Research Centre, Moorepark in Co. Cork for the fermentation of food by-products;

- In terms of the horse racing industry, capital grants have benefitted racecourses in Limerick and the Key Towns of Clonmel, Thurles, Mallow, Wexford and Killarney in areas such as water capture systems for irrigation, equine care and safety. Horse Racing Ireland recently published its Sustainability Strategy and will be actively engaging with the racecourses in the Key Towns to promote and assist them with improving biodiversity, reducing waste, promoting the circular economy, increasing community engagement and education programmes for industry participants and local schools. It also intends to develop an all-weather track at Tipperary racecourse,

forming the Tipperary hub for the Thoroughbred Country Experience, an equine based tourism product, being developed by Tipperary and Kildare County Councils.

4.8. Bioeconomy

RPOs: 57-59

The submission from the Department of Agriculture highlights the following:

- The *National Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023-2025* (https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a1bb6-bioeconomy-policy/) was published in October 2023 and supports the sustainable development of Ireland's bioeconomy. It includes a specific pillar on communities, regions and cities and seeks to enhance regional governance, develop co-creation and co-design opportunities for regional bioeconomy development and to examine funding routes to explore these cocreated and co-designed opportunities. Furthermore Action 5.1 aims to: *advance bioeconomy governance in cities, regional assembles, Local Authorities*, while Action 5.2 aims to: *co-create needs driven regional and local bioeconomy development linked to regional enterprise and regional skills*

Tipperary Co. Council provided the following update on the National Bio-economy Hub in Lisheen (note RPO 59: *National Bio-economy Hub in Lisheen*):

"The Council is engaged with funding bodies, land owners, prospective developers in the development of a Masterplan for the Lisheen National Bio Economy Campus. Development is already taking place on the site. Revive Environmental has recently been granted permission to operate from the site and are actively developing the location. The Council is seeking funding through a number of different funding streams including the EU Just Transition Fund to leverage and activate the location."

Further details on the Bioeconomy are included in Chapter 5 *Green Region*.

4.9. Marine and Coastal Assets

RPOs: 76-86

The submission from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) highlights the following:

- The *Fishery Harbour Centres and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme* delivers on the action of the *Balanced Regional Development* section in the *Programme for Government* to: *"invest strategically in harbour infrastructure to attract increased landings into Ireland of sustainably caught fish in our waters, driving the development of the seafood processing sector and the blue economy in coastal communities.* Three of Ireland's six, state-owned Fishery Harbour Centres lie within the Southern Region: An Daingean, Castletownbere, and Dunmore East. In 2023, a total of €7.8m was allocated to these harbours through the programme;

- The *Brexit Adjustment Local Authority Marine Infrastructure* (BALAMI) Scheme 2022-2023 provides funding to local authorities to upgrade, modernise and develop public marine infrastructure for the purposes of mitigating the impacts of the EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement on the Irish seafood sector. In the Southern Region, 5 coastal local authorities were approved for 68 marine infrastructure projects with a combined maximum scheme contribution of €16.8m: Clare, Cork County, Kerry, Waterford and Wexford;

- The *Brexit Blue Economy Enterprise Development Scheme* which closed in August 2023 aimed to stimulate growth in rural coastal communities by giving businesses an opportunity to apply for funding for their blue economy activities in areas including seafood, coastal tourism, boat building and repair, marine leisure and sport, and renewable energy initiatives. Over the course of the scheme, a total of 153 projects with a grant value of €5.72 million were funded in the Southern Region.

4.10. Tourism

RPO 53: Tourism

As outlined in the submission from Fáilte Ireland:

- In May 2023 four new Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027 were launched for: Ireland's Ancient East, Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Dublin. These provide a framework for sustainable tourism development across Ireland, with three of the strategies involving the Southern Region;

- Fáilte Ireland launched its *Destination Towns Scheme* to boost the attractiveness and tourism appeal of towns nationwide, with projects to be completed between 2022 and 2024. It is funded under Project Ireland 2040 with the aim of driving sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector increasing revenue and job creation. €15.5 million has been allocated, with up to €500,000 available to each Local Authority. Towns and cities included in the Southern Region are: Carlow, Ennistymon, Cork City, Bantry, Tralee, Kilkenny, Limerick City, Cashel, Waterford City and New Ross;

- Fáilte Ireland's capital funding programme comprises: a large grants scheme (Platforms for Growth investment programme); individual small grants schemes; strategic partnerships with other public bodies; and direct investment in experience brand infrastructure. Its objective is to optimise key assets for the benefit of tourism and sustainable economic development while also increasing the geographic spread of visitors, promoting season extension and supporting sustainable growth management. The second platform (Platforms for Growth 2) was launched in January 2020, and involved a targeted call for applications from local authorities, aiming to develop activity facility centres at waterside locations across Ireland. Examples in the Southern Region include:

Local Authority	Project
Clare	• Ballycuggeran Sports Activity Facility – Killaloe; • Kilkee Waterworld Activity Facilities – Kilkee.
Cork	• Claycastle Sports Activity Facility - Youghal.
Kerry	• Ballybunion Beach Shared Facilities Centre - Ballybunion; • Fenit Beach Shared Facility Centre - Fenit; • Magherabeg Shared Facilities Centre – Magherabeg Lower and Castlegregory.
Tipperary	• Dromineer Sports Activity Facility - Nenagh.
Waterford	• Ardmore Water-Sports Activity Facility Centre - Ardmore; • Tramore Water-Sports Activity Facility Centre – Tramore.

Table 4.9 | Southern Region Facility Centres at Waterside Locations

Other capital investment from the Department over the two years 2022 and 2023 was made towards the following projects:

Local Authority	Project
Carlow	Outdoor Public Space Scheme - The Carlow Exchange.
Clare	Glór Theatre, Outdoor Public Space Scheme - Newmarket on Fergus and countywide, Irish Aerial Creation Centre (allocation*).
Cork City	Crawford Art Gallery, Cork Opera House, Cyclone Rep, Firkin Crane, Outdoor Public Space Scheme - Elizabeth Fort, Cork Butter Museum, Cork Arts Theatre, Nano Nagle Place.
Cork County	Briery Gap Theatre Mallow, Béal na Bláth Commemorations, Sirius Arts Centre, West Cork Arts Centre (allocation*), Outdoor Public Space Scheme – project in Youghal (allocation*).
Kerry	Anam- Killarney Cultural Centre, Kerry Writers Museum, Outdoor Public Space Scheme – Island of Geese.
Kilkenny	Butler Gallery (allocation*), Outdoor Public Space Scheme – project at Watergate Theatre (allocation*).
Limerick City & County	Hunt Museum, Dance Limerick, Limerick Museum, Foynes Flying Boat & Maritime Museum.
Tipperary	Thomas McDonagh Centre (Cloughjordan), Tipperary Museum of Hidden History, Outdoor Public Space Scheme- project in Clonmel (allocation*).
Waterford City & County	Garter Lane, Waterford Treasures Museums, Outdoor Public Space Scheme - countywide (allocation*).
Wexford	National Opera House, Wexford Arts Centre, Outdoor Public Space Scheme - project on the Quays in Wexford Town (allocation*).

Table 4.10 | 2022 and 2023 Capital Investment from the Department
* This refers to where an allocation of funding has been made to an organisation but they haven't drawn down the funding yet for various reasons i.e. the project may be in progression or not yet started.

5.0.

Green Region

5.1. Introduction

This section/chapter focuses on the implementation actions by public bodies and local authorities under the RSES Strategy theme of *A Green Region*. Its aim is that *the Region will foster a low-carbon, climate-resilient and sustainable society built around planned, infrastructure-led development and sustainable mobility.* With the release of important data from Census 2022 and other sources available, information and analysis of the performance of the Region, its Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), Metropolitan Areas and Key Towns are also included in this chapter. This will assist the SRA and other policy makers going forward to demonstrate more effectively how the RSES and its objectives are being implemented, and suggest areas that need to be addressed, which also feeds into Chapter 6 *Conclusions and Recommendations*.

Relevant Strategy Statements:

- **Strategy Statement 4** *Sustainable Mobility* aims to transform our transport systems towards well-functioning, sustainable, integrated public transport, walking and cycling and electric vehicles;

- **Strategy Statement 8** *Low Carbon, Climate Resilient and Sustainable Society* aims to safeguard and enhance our environment through sustainable development, prioritising action on climate change across the Region, driving the transition to low carbon and climate resilient society;

- **Strategy Statement 9** *Sustainable, Planned and Infrastructure-led Development* aims to provide infrastructure and services in a sustainable, planned and infrastructure-led manner to ensure the sustainable management of waste water and other environmental resources.

Strategy Statement 4

Sustainable Mobility aims to transform our transport systems towards well-functioning, sustainable, integrated public transport, walking and cycling and electric vehicles.

5.2. Analysis of recent trends by the SRA

	Walking/Cycling	Bus	Car
State	18%	13%	69%
Southern Region	14%	8%	77%
Cork Metro	19%	10%	71%
Limerick-Shannon Metro	23%	8%	69%
Waterford Metro	19%	5%	75%
Key Towns	24%	4%	72%
Co. Dublin	29%	22%	49%
CAP 2023 Targets	28%	19%	53%
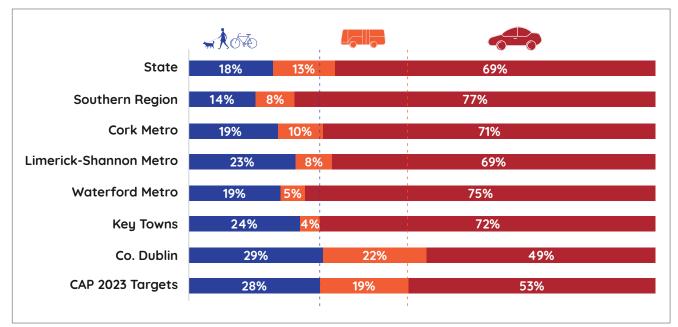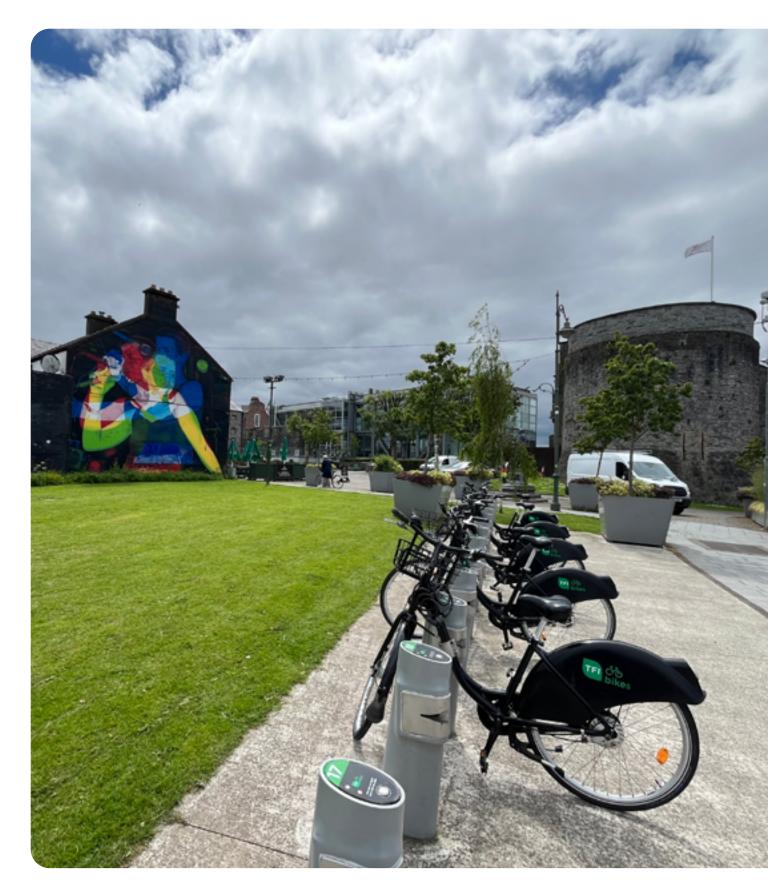
Figure 5.1 | Modal Share of Travel to School, College or Work 2022 (Source: Census 2022)

Modal share of travel to work, college or school showed no significant change between 2016 and 2022, either at national or regional level, with only minor reductions (< 1%) in the proportion for both active travel and public transport, and a minor increase in the share for private vehicles. By comparison to the national profile, the Southern Region has higher levels of car dependency and lower levels of active travel and public transport. When considered against modal share targets for 2030 as set out in the Governments Climate Action Plan 2024, it highlights the major challenge that the Region faces in achieving more sustainable transport patterns.

Lowest Levels of Car Dependency

Town	%
Dingle-Daingean Uí Chuis	42.9
Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch	53
Kilrush	53.1
Bunclody	54.4
Muinebeag (Bagenalstown)	55
Killarney (KT)	56
Kilmallock	56.2
Cashel	57
Castlemartyr	57.2
Tralee (KT)	57.8

Highest Levels of Active Travel

Town	%
Dingle-Daingean Uí Chuis	44.3
Muinebeag (Bagenalstown)	30
Clonakilty (KT)	29
Shannon (LSM)	27.4
Kilrush	27.1
Killaloe	26.4
Dungarvan (KT)	26.2
Templemore	26
Kilkenny (KT)	25.6
Killarney (KT)	25.5

Highest Jobs to Residents Ratio

Town	Ratio
Dingle-Daingean Uí Chuis	2.40
Shannon (LSM)	2.13
Carrigtwohill (CM)	2.02
Kilrush	1.94
Bantry	1.94
Abbeyfeale	1.93
Killorglin	1.91
Templemore	1.90
Muinebeag (Bagenalstown)	1.90
Skibbereen	1.85

Highest Levels of Car Dependency

Town	%
Tower (CM)	80.4
Passage West-Monkstown (CM)	74.8
Blarney (CM)	74.7
Carrigaline (CM)	74.1
Crosshaven (CM)	72.9
Castlebridge	72.8
Castleconnell (LSM)	70.9
Newmarket-On-Fergus (LSM)	70.8
Newport	69.9
Sixmilebridge (LSM)	69.1

Lowest Levels of Active Travel

Town	%
Tower (CM)	3.1
Passage West-Monkstown (CM)	8.5
Caherconlish	8.7
Castleconnell (LSM)	9.5
Rosslare Harbour	9.8
Castlebridge	10.2
Blarney (CM)	10.4
Courtown	10.5
Dunmore East	10.7
Rosslare	11

Lowest Jobs to Residents Ratio

Town	Ratio
Tower (CM)	0.25
Newmarket-On-Fergus	0.29
Rathcormac	0.30
Sixmilebridge (LSM)	0.30
Passage West-Monkstown (CM)	0.31
Cloyne (CM)	0.32
Courtown	0.35
Watergrasshill (CM)	0.37
Castlemartyr	0.38
Portlaw	0.38

Figure 5.2 | Settlements (Pop.1,500+) in SRA with the highest and lowest levels of sustainable mobility. (Source: Census 2022)

Despite being one of the most peripheral towns in the region, Dingle (Daingean Uí Chuis) has the most sustainable travel patterns, and is the only town in the Region where more people walk or cycle than travel by car. Muine Bheag (Bagenalstown) and Kilrush also demonstrate very high levels of sustainable mobility. Generally, towns with the most sustainable travel appear to be reasonably compact, with strong town centres and/or a strong local economy. In the case of Shannon, it is noteworthy that the town is also a major employment centre. By contrast, the five settlements with the highest levels of car dependency are located within the Cork Metropolitan Area, while four of the remaining top ten settlements are located within or just outside the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan

Area. Metropolitan Area settlements also make up four of the ten settlements with the lowest levels of active travel. In a national context, six of the top ten most car dependent settlements are located in the Southern Region, while only one Southern Region town (Dingle) is in the top twenty least car dependent nationally. This highlights that settlements in the Southern Region have significantly lower levels of sustainable mobility than elsewhere in the State. There is clear correlation between levels of car dependency and active travel, and the Jobs to Resident Worker Ratio of a settlement. Where more economic and employment opportunities are available locally, residents are more likely to chose a sustainable mode of travel. For settlements or suburban areas located in the wider extent of a metropolitan area, a high proportion of residents will be commuting to work or college in the urban core or other parts of the metropolitan area. These settlements are often also categorised by low density urban sprawl, resulting in increased distances to local services and amenities. This data demonstrates the need to prioritise delivery of high quality public transport and active travel services and infrastructure, as set out in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Transports Strategies. Crucially, it also reinforces the importance of compact growth in wider metropolitan areas, an integration of land use and transportation planning, and implementing the principle of 10/15 minute neighbourhoods. The data also demonstrates the high levels of sustainable mobility that can be achieved within towns and villages in rural settings, and the benefits of developing strong local economies and vibrant town centres. It also clearly highlights the value of focusing new housing within our towns and villages.

5.3. National Initiatives

RPO 160: *Smart and Sustainable Mobility*

The Department of Transport outlines the following in its submission:

- The *National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland* (NIFTI) has placed active travel at the top of the transport investment hierarchy, which is reflected in the significant increase in funding for walking and cycling in recent years;

- The provision of 1,000km of walking and cycling infrastructure by 2025 is targeted in the *National Sustainable Mobility Policy*, with over half of that already provided by 2022;

- The *Climate Action Plan 2023* highlights the importance of embedding Transport Orientated Development (TOD) at all stages of planning and development, particularly the siting of services and multi-use development at transport nodes. TOD is also a key policy objective of the Government's *Housing for All plan*, and a working group was established in December 2021 under Action 26.1 to consider opportunities for TOD in major urban centres. It is intended that a report on TOD opportunities in Cork, Limerick and Waterford in the Southern Region will be finalised in the coming months;

- *Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland* (ZEVI), was set up to assist the transition to zero emission vehicles, with a ZEVI Pilot project announced for Limerick City to increase its EV charging infrastructure in January 2024.

5.4. Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies

RPO 164: *Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies*

The Department of Transport and relevant local authorities outline the following in their submissions:

- The **Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS)** was developed by the NTA in collaboration with Cork City Council, Cork County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in 2020. There has been good progress in delivering key elements of CMATS, including:

  » Active Travel Projects such as MacCurtain Street, Passage Greenway Phase 1, Curraheen to Carrigrohane Greenway Upgrade, the Little Island Sustainable Transport Infrastructure, and the Cork Area Commuter Rail Programme;

- » BusConnects Cork including Service Network Design and Sustainable Transport Corridors;

- » Detailed alignment assessment by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) of the proposed Cork Light Rail Transit System.

- The NTA published the **Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS)** in December 2022. The strategy was prepared by the NTA in collaboration with Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council and TII, with the cooperation of Iarnród Éireann. Progress on delivery includes:

  - » Bus Connects Limerick: the NTA carried out an extensive review of the bus network in Limerick in 2022 in collaboration with Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council and Bus Éireann, and following an extensive public consultation process published a final new bus network for Limerick in December 2023;

  - » The final Limerick Public Realm Strategy is to be published shortly;

  - » In 2023, O'Connell Street and Thomas Street in Limerick City underwent a comprehensive transformation under the O'Connell Street Revitalisation project;

  - » Foynes to Limerick Rail Line: advances have been made in the first phase of the project to reopen the Foynes to Limerick railway line for freight transport;

- » Active Travel Projects completed include: Castletroy Urban Greenway, R926 Dooradoyle Road Cycle Lane Scheme Phase 1, and Shannon Bridge- 2-way segregated cycle lanes providing safe cycling access from the north side of the city to the city centre; the Transport Accessibility Assessment for Shannon Town is underway and is a key input to the draft Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030. In 2022, the Shannon Bike Share Scheme was established across the Shannon Free Zone and Shannon Town.

- The NTA published the **Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (WMATS)** in December 2022. It was developed in collaboration with Waterford City and County Council, Kilkenny County Council, the Southern Regional Assembly and TII. Progress on delivery includes:

  - » Construction has commenced and is progressing well on the relocation of Waterford Plunkett train station and a sustainable transport bridge on the North Quays in Waterford City;

  - » The extension of the Waterford Greenway through the city centre to connect with the New Ross Greenway is underway;

  - » The Ferrybank Belview Local Area Plan will include a Transport Plan;

  - » Bus Connects: a new network will be published for consultation shortly, with the final network intended to be published in Q4 2024.

Strategy Statement 8

Low Carbon, Climate Resilient and Sustainable Society aims to safeguard and enhance our environment through sustainable development, prioritising action on climate change across the Region, driving the transition to low carbon and climate resilient society.

RPO 87: Low Carbon Energy Future;

RPO 88: National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework;

RPOs 95 to 104 on Renewable Energy

5.5. Climate Action and Decarbonisation

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) provided the following updates:

- The latest update to the Climate Action Plan: *Climate Action Plan 2024*, was published in December 2023;

- DECC is currently in the second year of a 5-year contract agreement with University College Cork to provide the Department with research and modelling in areas relating to energy demand, consumption and supply, as part of a wider climate action modelling group. The amount awarded is €4,014,763 (ex. VAT);

- In April 2022 Cork City Council, was selected from over 300 applicants to be part of the *EU Cities Mission*. The European Commission set up the EU Cities Mission in 2021, to support 100 cities in the EU to become climate neutral by 2030 and to pave the way for all cities in Europe to be climate neutral by 2050;

- Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) build capacity within the local government sector to respond and adapt to climate change. The SRA sits on the Regional Steering Group for the Atlantic Seaboard South CARO, which is based in Cork County Council;

- Ireland's Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act (2021) requires local authorities to prepare a *Local Authority Climate Action Plan* (LACAP) to meet national emission reductions targets and develop resilience to the impacts of climate change. All of the local authorities within the Region adopted their Climate Action Plans in early 2024. The Climate Action Plans include Decarbonizing Zones.

Some of the local authorities within the Region highlighted the following actions they have undertaken in this area of Climate Action and Decarbonisation:

- Carlow is engaging in the SEAI pathfinder programme in partnership with Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford, and Tipperary County Councils to carry out energy saving and CO2 reducing retrofit works to Council facilities; and developing and adopting an Electric Vehicle Strategy to support the transition to electric vehicle use in the wider community for County Carlow and the South-East Region;

- In 2022, Clare County Council supported the Burrenbeo Trust's 'Hare's Corner' Initiative, which involves working with landowners to make more space for nature through creation of a mini woodland, a mini orchard, a pond or a 'plan for nature'. In 2023, they also development the 'Return to Nature' biodiversity initiative;

- A Home Energy Upgrade Office (HEUGO) has been set up by Cork City Council,

offering the public information on energy efficiency upgrades that can be achieved with the intention of reducing their carbon emissions;

• Cork County Council is a stakeholder in the *EU Energy Islands Initiative*, which will provide technical assistance and knowledge transfer to assist island communities with their energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources;

• Kerry County Council's Community Climate Action Programme fund has been launched which will see €663,000 allocated to community-led climate action projects across the county;

• Limerick City and County Council led a successful application to the second strand of the Creative Climate Action Fund, securing a grant of €249,936 for delivery across 2023, 2024 and 2025. The *Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce Report* was launched in 2023 and sets out the vision for the Shannon Estuary to become Ireland's Atlantic Green Digital Corridor;

• Tipperary County Council's Decarbonisation Zone (DZ) is centred around the National Bioeconomy Campus in Lisheen, which is the only inland, rural DZ in Ireland;

• Waterford City and County Council highlights the identification of renewable energy targets in its Development Plan while Action Towards Climate Resilience is identified as a key strategic outcome of the Plan;

• Wexford County Council highlights ongoing work by the Council's Climate Action Steering Group in conjunction with the South East Energy Agency.

5.6. Renewable Energy

DECC states that:

• In terms of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) development, the *South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan* (DMAP) proposal was published in July 2023, including an initial 'proposed' geographical

area within which future offshore renewable energy development may take place continuing through the process in 2024. The Draft South Coast DMAP will become Ireland's first ORE DMAP with further DMAPs to be established subsequently;

• In terms of onshore wind:

  » The Southern Region area encompasses a significant volume of Ireland's existing onshore wind capacity. A strong future pipeline of onshore wind and solar projects from the Southern Region is critical to participate in the future programme of Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auctions over the coming years in order for Ireland to meet its 80% renewable electricity target;

  » Community renewable energy projects will also play an important role in our transition to an electricity grid that is up to 80% powered by renewables by 2030. The Region is home to Ireland's first community owned wind farm, the Templederry Wind Farm in Co. Tipperary, and it is expected that further community energy projects will be developed across the Region.

• The Department has commenced work on a *Renewable Electricity Spatial Policy Framework White Paper* (RESPF) with a view to ensuring a more facilitative and supportive spatial planning framework for the delivery of increased onshore renewable electricity generation. With the development of *Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies* (RRES), each regional assembly will consider how their regional renewable electricity generation targets, to be established in the revision to the National Planning Framework, will be achieved within their region in an equitable and strategic manner. The Regional Assemblies hold a vital role in improving the coherence between national, regional, and local climate action policy. A Roadmap is currently being developed in collaboration between the Department, The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the SEAI and the three Regional Assemblies to assist with and guide the development of the RRES. This will streamline the drafting of these strategies

whilst enabling an efficient and consistent approach.

Some of the Local Authorities within the Region highlighted the following actions they have undertaken in this area of renewable energy:

• Carlow County Council highlights the preparation of a Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) as part of the preparation of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028;

• Clare County Council has identified its strategic aims for renewable energy in the Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029, and the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy which also forms part of the Plan;

• Cork City Council states that it will support measures in the Region, including the Offshore Renewable Energy working group being established under the auspices of the South-West Regional Enterprise Plan;

• Cork County Council states that the County Development Plan 2022 includes strong policy support of the development of renewable energy and hybrid energy systems;

• Kerry County Council states that its County Development Plan provides a framework for approximately 389MW of additional renewable energy to be potentially generated over the lifetime of the plan through a variety of renewable sources;

• Kilkenny County Council highlights the renewable energy targets detailed in its Climate Action Plan which sets out a target to reduce energy use by 50%, and carbon emissions by 51% by 2030, across its buildings, fleet and public lighting;

• Limerick City and County Council mentions the *+CityxChange EU H2020* project which supported the development of an innovative tidal turbine;

• Tipperary County Council highlights its targets to provide 600MW of operational wind energy and 150MW of operational solar energy by 2028 and the proposal to develop a Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy in Nenagh;

• Waterford City and County Council also highlights renewable energy targets set out in its Development Plan;

• Wexford County Council highlights its Energy Strategy, which sets a target of 100% of electricity consumption in the county to be from renewable sources by 2027. An Offshore Renewable Energy Hub in Rosslare is also proposed.

5.7. Decarbonisation in the Agricultural Sector

RPO 44: *Common Agricultural Policy*

RPO 94: *Decarbonisation in the Agricultural Sector*

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) states that:

• The EU Just Transition Fund, which is being managed by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, was launched in April 2023 and supports research, knowledge transfer and monitoring activities on reduced management measures and overall sustainable land management improvements for farmed peat soils predominantly in the Midlands, but includes the municipal districts of Carrick-on-Suir and Thurles, Co. Tipperary in the Southern Region;

• The *Agri-Climate Rural Environmental Scheme* (ACRES), under Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan, aims to help address biodiversity decline while delivering an income support for farm families and ACRES Co-operation projects, such as the South Kerry Development Partnership and ACRES Munster South Connacht;

• EIP-AGRI Operational Groups are intended to bring together multiple actors such as farmers, researchers, advisers, businesses, environmental groups, consumer interest groups or other NGOs to advance innovation in the agricultural and forestry sectors including *Blackstairs Farming*

Futures in the South-East SPA/NUTS3 Region;

- A new *National Agricultural Sustainability Research and Innovation Centre* is being established at Teagasc Johnstown Castle in Co. Wexford, with €9 million in funding provided.

5.8. Circular Economy

RPO 107: Regional Waste Management Plan for the Southern Region 2015-2021

RPO 108: EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy

The submission from DECC states that:

Significant pro-circular policy and legislation has been introduced in Ireland in recent years including the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy 2020-2025; the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022; and the Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022-2023. Building on this progress, in 2023 Government adopted a suite of strategic measures to provide a pathway for reduced resource consumption, waste prevention, and increased levels of re-use and recycling.

Some funding projects in the Region include:

- A guide for plastic-free events in Limerick;

- Cork Urban Soil Project;

- GIY Wasted education programme in Waterford;

- Project for repurposing windfarm blades in Clare;

- Saltrock Dairy refillable milk cartons in Wexford.

5.9. Biodiversity

RPO 126: *Biodiversity*

The submission from DECC states that:

The rehabilitation of peatlands is currently being undertaken by Bord na Móna through the Enhanced Decommissioning Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme (EDRRS) and is receiving funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan via the Climate Action Fund. This project relates to the enhanced rehabilitation of approximately 33,000 hectares of Bord na Móna peatlands across 82 bogs including a small number in the Southern Region such as Littleton Bog group (Tipperary) - which included intensive raised bog restoration at Knockahaw and Ballysorrel Bogs.

5.10. Air Quality

RPO 130: *Air Quality*

The submission from DECC states that:
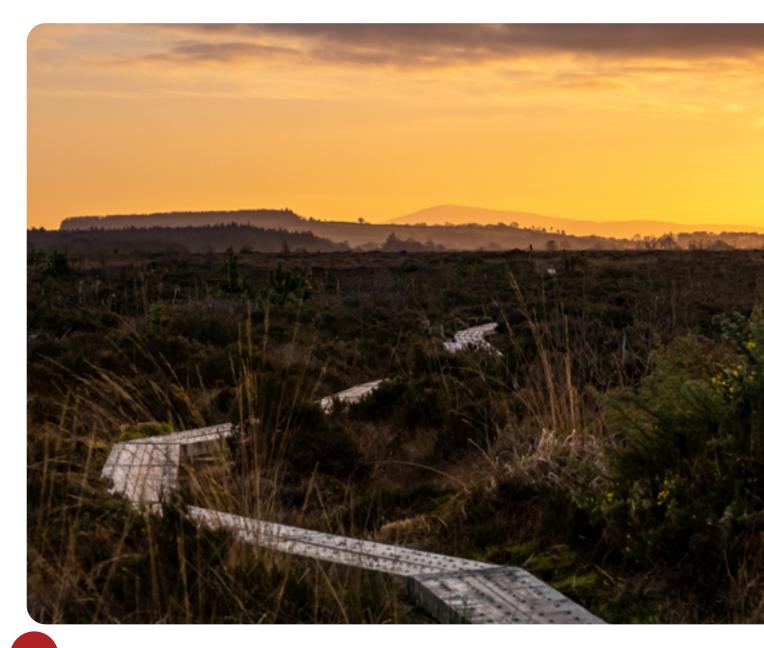
- The *Clean Air Strategy* was published in April 2023. It outlines how we will enhance and protect the quality of the air that we breathe and realise the full environmental and health benefits of cleaner air;

- In order to achieve our commitment to continued improvements in our air quality and bringing associated health benefits to our population, new *Solid Fuel Regulations* were introduced in October 2022 and apply across the entire state.

5.11. Noise

RPO 131: Noise

The submission from DECC states that:

The *Environmental Noise Directive* (END) and the *European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 to 2021* (The Regulations) require Strategic Noise Maps to be prepared for all major roads, railways, airports and agglomerations. The Round 4 Strategic Noise Maps, including Limerick and Cork Agglomerations are available on the EPA website: https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/noise/noise-mapping-and-action-plans/, and draft noise action plans are due to be published for consultation in 2024.

6.0.

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

In terms of overall implementation of the RSES in the monitoring period, it is evident that there has been substantial policy alignment between the national, regional and local tiers based on the NPF and RSES, particularly with the adoption of the City and County Development Plans during this period and the commencement and adoption of Local Area Plans for some of the Key Towns and preparation of Local Transport Plans as part of this process. There has also been significant investment made by public bodies in the Region under *Project Ireland 2040*, including through funding mechanisms such as the URDF and RRDF. However it is evident that the extent to which funding follows policy and buy-in to the NPF and its objectives, from some government departments and public bodies, is not sufficient to achieve NPF objectives for balanced regional development. It is also clear that implementation of overall NPF objectives and how funding is being distributed is not being monitored sufficiently at national level. This Monitoring Report has therefore looked at some of these issues, which it is felt would be more appropriate to address as part of the NPF process. It is hoped that the review of the NPF, will be an opportunity to influence the discussion on some of these areas of concern.

Some of the **Key Conclusions** from this report include:

- It is evident that many of the conclusions from the previous RSES 2-Year Monitoring Report (2020-2022) are still pertinent, such as the **trajectory of growth of Dublin and danger that the objectives of Project Ireland 2040 will be undermined as a response to current circumstances,** and that its recommendations have not been fully taken on board at national level;

- With the current review of the NPF, there is a **concern that recent trends of continued population growth in the Dublin and Eastern Regions are being used as a basis to undermine the achievement of Project Ireland 2040/RSES objectives.** Some commentary, including the recent Housing Commission Report, appears to be supporting the view that objectives for balanced regional growth are undeliverable and that public policy cannot influence economic policy and development across the State. However as is evidenced by this Report, there has been a significant under-delivery of housing in the Southern Region when compared with the Dublin and Eastern Regions/SPAs. There is a particularly pronounced disparity in rates of delivery in and around Dublin when compared with the Regional Cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford. The regional disparity in levels of population growth and housing delivery is not reflected in jobs growth, where Regional Cities are in line with, or growing faster than Dublin;

- Some recent **commentary in relation to housing delivery has focused on the lack of zoned land, however the data signifies that this is not a significant factor, and instead the major challenge is in delivering housing on land that is already zoned.** In addition, the role of vacant properties in dealing with the housing challenge should not be underestimated. For example, if the housing vacancy rate across the Region was reduced from 7.9% to 5%, an additional 21,300 homes could be brought back into occupation, which is more than the entire number of homes delivered within the monitoring period, and demonstrates the potential role that vacant housing can play in the short term to the Region's housing need. A significant proportion of housing supply relates to rural housing (25% of all housing units delivered during the monitoring period) emphasising the need for positive alternatives including investment in the viability of our towns and villages;

- Evidence in this report shows that **the vast majority of planned infrastructure investment is being targeted towards the Dublin Metropolitan Area, with a planned underinvestment in the Southern Region as a whole and in our three Metropolitan Areas.** Planned investment will determine the major projects that are delivered up the midpoint of the next decade. As a result, current objectives for balanced regional growth to 2040 or beyond are being fundamentally undermined and it is not realistic to assume that NPF growth projections can be delivered in the context of the major disparity in infrastructure

investment between Dublin and other areas;

- **In order to progress key projects in the Region under** *Project Ireland 2040*, **the process for approving these projects should be streamlined to prevent delays** and assist local authorities for example in overcoming resource constraints, the significant costs involved and other difficulties encountered as part of the application process. The role of projects in delivering upon the objective for balanced regional growth should be a key factor of the Cost-Benefit Analysis process and when they are considered and assessed at feasibility and businesses case stages;

- In terms of reaching targets on the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and sustainable society, there have been many positive initiatives carried out during the monitoring period such as the progression of the Southern DMAP by DECC and setting up Climate Action Teams and preparation of the Local Authority Climate Action Plans. However **given the scale of the climate and biodiversity crises and energy supply issues, there are many areas of concern including the amount of car dependency in the Region, which increased slightly during the intercensal period;**

- The issue of the centralised nature of the Irish state and governance issues has been highlighted by reports carried out during the monitoring period relating to the structural change necessary to ensure effective delivery of the RSES and MASPs. **A review of structures is required to ensure better delivery of national targets.**

6.2. Progress on Key Enablers

The following table provides a high-level review of the challenges faced and progress in achieving the RSES Key Enablers:

Key Enabler	Outlook/Challenges	Progress
Transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and sustainable society.	**Significant steps** taken including the preparation of the **South Coast DMAP** and **Local Authority Climate Action Plans.** However **strong concern** remains including **achievement of targets on modal shift to public transport,** given the results of Census 2022 and scale of the climate and biodiversity crises.	
Delivery of growth targets for our Cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford.	**Development Plans** for all relevant local authorities have been **adopted,** taking into account NPF and RSES growth targets. However significant concerns remain regarding delivery at the scale needed, in particular given the trajectory of growth to the Dublin and Eastern Regions/SPAs which will significantly undermine the NPF & RSES policy. **Need for full commitment to implementation of NPF for our Region including accelerated MASP delivery.**	

Creating the greenest and most liveable Metropolitan Areas for diverse communities, culture and enterprise.	Significant steps taken; however, **strong concern** given the scale of the challenge to be addressed and the **trajectory of growth of the Dublin and Eastern Regions** which is undermining the NPF & RSES policy.	
Developing and consolidating our Key Towns.	Local authority development plans have been adopted with a number of **Local Area Plans** either adopted or being prepared for **Key Towns.** However there remains a need for strong commitment and investment.	
Developing the Cork Docklands.	Progress includes securing **URDF funding, setting up of Docklands Delivery Office by Cork City Council and the LDA, as well as commencement of preparation of a Masterplan.** There is a need for continued investment and commitment to delivery.	
Regeneration of Limerick-Shannon.	Adoption of **Development Plans for Limerick and Clare** with a number of **regeneration and public realm projects** being progressed such as the Opera Square and the Colbert Quarter. Clare County Council are preparing a **Local Area Plan for Shannon Town.** There is a need for continued investment and commitment to delivery.	
Develop Waterford as a balanced concentric city north and south of the river.	Adoption of **Development Plans for both Waterford and Kilkenny.** Work is progressing on the **North Quays,** and Kilkenny County Council are currently preparing an **LAP for Ferrybank.** There is a need for continued investment and commitment to delivery and commitment by Government to the MASP Implementation Structures.	
Creating an inclusive, Learning Region.	Strong progress in the Region with **Waterford** designated as a **Unesco Learning City.**	

Positioning the Southern Region as Ireland's International Gateway.	Significant potential and progress made in areas such as commissioning a **Socio-Economic Study on the Region's ports and the preparation of the South Coast DMAP.** Need to drive investment to capitalise potential of ports in the Region and deliver on **potential for off-shore renewable energy.**	
Making the most of Cork and Waterford Harbours and the Shannon Estuary.	Need to drive investment to capitalise potential of ports in the Region and deliver on potential for off-shore renewable energy. **Need to follow through with investment.**	
Improve and protect our environment and our heritage.	Significant steps taken; however, strong concern given the scale of the challenge to be addressed and negative indicators regarding environmental quality. **Significant action required to address deteriorating environmental indicators on biodiversity, water quality and air quality.**	
Developing our tourism and recreational potential.	**Strong progress and potential,** need to continue investment.	
Revitalising Rural Areas.	Progress on promoting rural towns and villages through **funding mechanisms such as RRDF, Town Centre First** etc., and greater digital infrastructure and investment in rural transport such as Local Link. However significant challenges and **structural issues** remain to be addressed including targeted **investment in water infrastructure, direct intervention to address vacancy/ dereliction, and implementation of sustainable rural housing policy** to protect the viability of towns and villages.	
Enhanced connectivity- North to South and East Coast to West Coast.	Significant initiatives and investment; however, scale of challenge is significant. The **SRA commenced work on the Eastern Economic Corridor.** However there is a need for improved coordination between regional/national level.	

Public services and infrastructure to support planning regional growth.	**Significant concerns regarding delivery** at the scale needed, in particular given the **trajectory of growth to the Dublin Region,** which is undermining the NPF & RSES policy.	

Table 6.1 | *Progress on Key Enablers*

6.3. Recommendations

A key task of this Report is to make recommendations following on from the findings of the monitoring process and suggest ways that overall implementation of the RSES could be improved. 10 recommendations are set out below:

1. **Devolution of power to the regional tier of government**
   There is a need for structural reform to ensure better delivery of regional investment. In the more immediate term, improved implementation structures for the NPF, RSES and especially the MASPs are needed, requiring greater alignment with public bodies such as Uisce Éireann, TII, the NTA and ESB in the delivery of the RSES and greater involvement of the Regional Assembliesas members of the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board;

2. **Greater coordination of regional governance**
   There is a need to address the negative impacts of having a multiplicity of regional bodies, sometimes with overlapping mandates and differing boundaries;

3. **Greater alignment between the RSES and Regional Enterprise Plans**
   There should be greater alignment and integration between the RSES and the Regional Enterprise Plans, including consideration given to locate this function within the Regional Assemblies rather than between the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and local authorities. It should be noted that local authorities already cater for their own

economic development and LECP functions;

4. **Reform of financing structures**
   Delivery of own-source revenues and multi-annual investment at regional and local level is required, particularly for the Metropolitan Areas in line with the OECD Report recommendations highlighted in Chapter 1;

5. **Retain the long-term ambition of Project Ireland 2040 for balanced regional growth**
   Project Ireland 2040 should be viewed as a long-term strategy and its vision for balanced regional growth and objectives should not be undermined by relying on the continued growth of the Dublin and Eastern Regions as a reason to alter policy direction;

6. **Need for greater alignment between funding under the NDP and NPF/RSES delivery**
   Projects considered of strategic importance in delivering balanced regional growth should be highlighted within the NDP. These projects would act as catalysts for broader investment and growth, rather than serving an already existing or emerging population demand. A clear framework is also needed at national level to monitor how the scale and distribution of planned investment aligns with the NPF. The funding mechanisms to achieve NPF and RSES objectives should be reviewed, in particular the competitive bid process for funding the strategic change sought through the NPF/RSES;

7. **Need to prioritise housing delivery in the regional cities**
   The under-delivery of housing in our regional cities needs to be recognised and addressed as an urgent priority and in a focused manner. Central to this is

recognising the sustained absence of private delivery of higher density housing typologies in particular, when compared to the Dublin Metropolitan Area. In the short term, delivery in regional cities should be prioritised through established mechanisms such as Croí Conaithe, Project Tosaigh and direct project delivery by the LDA itself to activate extant planning permissions and to progress planning approvals on zoned land. These mechanisms, and broader interventions aimed at accelerating housing delivery should recognise the clear benefit of compact growth of our Cities and Key Towns;

8. **Stronger implementation of MASP Governance**
Stronger implementation (with necessary governance structures) are required for the metropolitan areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford. The Regional Assemblies should also be given a more active role where there are obstacles to co-operation or where local authorities act in a manner that would significantly hinder RSES implementation;

9. **Enhanced role for Regional Assemblies in Local Authority Development and Local Area Plans**
Regional Assemblies should continue to have a statutory function regarding material alterations to draft development plans and local area plans for Key Towns;

10. **Enhanced role for Regional Assemblies in Climate Action**
Regional Assemblies to be prescribed bodies for submissions on local authority climate action plans to ensure cohesiveness with spatial planning.

6.4. Next Steps

This Report was approved by the Members of the Southern Regional Assembly at the Assembly meeting of September 2024 and will be submitted to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) for consideration.

The National Oversight and Audit Commission shall consider the Monitoring Report of the Regional Assembly and may make recommendations to the Minister in relation to relevant measures to further support the implementation of the RSES.
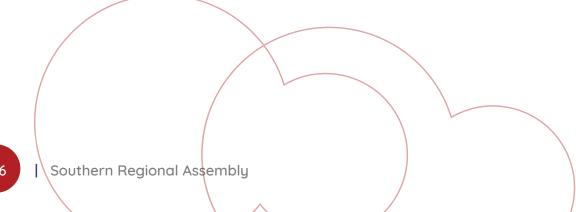
Appendices

Appendix 1: Submissions Received from Public Bodies and Local Authorities

Submissions Received from Public Bodies 2024	
Public Body	**Link**
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Agriculture%2C_Food_and_the_Marine.pdf
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Children%2C_Equality%2C_Disability%2C_Integration_and_Youth.pdf
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Enterprise%2C_Trade_and_Employment.pdf
Department of Finance	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Finance.pdf
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Further_and_Higher_Education_Research_Innovation_and_Science.pdf
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Housing%2C_Local_Government_and_Heritage_Section_25A_-_Monitoring_Report_2024_for_the_SRA.pdf
Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Public_Expenditure%2C_NDP_Delivery_and_Reform.pdf
Department of Rural and Community Development	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Rural_and_Community_Development.pdf
Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_the_Environment%2C_Climate_and_Communications.pdf
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Tourism%2C_Culture%2C_Arts%2C_Gaeltacht%2C_Sport_and_Media.pdf
Department of Transport	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Department_of_Transport.pdf

Submissions Received from Local Authorities 2024	
Local Authority	**Link**
Carlow	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Carlow.pdf
Clare	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Clare.pdf
Cork City	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Cork_City.pdf
Cork County	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Cork_County.pdf
Kerry	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Kerry_.pdf
Kilkenny	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Kilkenny_.pdf
Limerick	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Limerick_City__County.pdf
Tipperary	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Tipperary_County.pdf
Waterford	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Waterford_City__County.pdf
Wexford	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Wexford_County.pdf

Appendix 2: List of Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs)

RPO	Text As Appears in RSES Document
RPO 1	Environmental Assessment
RPO 2	Planning for Diverse Areas
RPO 3	Local Authority Core Strategies
RPO 4	Infrastructure Investment
RPO 5	Population Growth and Environmental Criteria
RPO 6	Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas
RPO 7	Delivery and Funding
RPO 8	Investment to Deliver on the Vision for Metropolitan Areas
RPO 9	Holistic Approach to Delivering Infrastructure
RPO 10	Compact Growth in Metropolitan Areas
RPO 11	Key Towns
RPO 12	Kilkenny City
RPO 13	Ennis
RPO 14	Carlow
RPO 15	Tralee
RPO 16	Wexford
RPO 17	Clonmel
RPO 18	Killarney
RPO 19	Mallow
RPO 20	Nenagh
RPO 21	Thurles
RPO 22	Newcastle West
RPO 23	Clonakilty
RPO 24	Dungarvan
RPO 25	Gorey
RPO 26	Towns and Villages
RPO 27	Rural
RPO 28	Collaboration/Partnership

RPO 29	Rural Settlement Networks
RPO 30	Inter-Urban Networks as Regional Drivers of Collaboration and Growth
RPO 31	Sustainable Place Framework
RPO 32	Rebuilding Ireland
RPO 33	Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA)
RPO 34	Regeneration, Brownfield and Infill Development
RPO 35	Support for Compact Growth
RPO 36	Land Development Agency
RPO 37	Active Land Management
RPO 38	Retrofitting Initiative Priorities
RPO 39	Economic Opportunities and Choice for all our Citizens
RPO 40	Regional Economic Resilience
RPO 41	Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC)
RPO 42	Eastern Corridor
RPO 43	Rural Economy and EU Good Practices
RPO 44	Common Agriculture Policy
RPO 45	Action Plan for Rural Development and Rural Development Programme 2014-2020
RPO 46	Digital and Physical Infrastructure in Rural Areas
RPO 47	Rural Partnership Models
RPO 48	Innovation Hubs and Centres of Excellence
RPO 49	Innovation in Rural areas
RPO 50	Diversification
RPO 51	Economic Clusters and Ecosystems
RPO 52	Multinational Corporation (MNC) and Indigenous Industry Connections
RPO 53	Tourism
RPO 54	Tourism and the Environment
RPO 55	Retail
RPO 56	Low Carbon Economy
RPO 57	National Policy Statement on Bio-economy
RPO 58	Bio-economy and Rural Areas
RPO 59	National Bio-economy Hub in Lisheen
RPO 60	Social Enterprise

RPO 61	Health Place Audit (HPA) for Placemaking
RPO 62	Locations for Employment Development
RPO 63	Skills and Talent
RPO 64	Facilitate new business formation, growth and industrial re-organisation
RPO 65	Attracting overseas Entrepreneurs and maintaining Irish Entrepreneurs
RPO 66	Monitoring and evaluating our economic eco-system performance
RPO 67	Enterprise and Innovation Support
RPO 68	Regional Investment
RPO 69	International Good Practice
RPO 70	Bidding capacity
RPO 71	Shared Evidence Base
RPO 72	Brexit
RPO 73	International branding of the Region and reputation
RPO 74	Economic Risk Management System
RPO 75	Anticipating Economic Structural Changes
RPO 76	Marine Economy
RPO 77	Maritime Spatial planning - Consistency and Alignment
RPO 78	First Mover under the National Marine Planning Framework
RPO 79	Shannon Estuary and Other Harbour Plans
RPO 80	Marine Resource and Blue Economy
RPO 81	Fishery Harbour Centres and Local Authority Harbours
RPO 82	Seafood Sector
RPO 83	Island and Coastal Communities
RPO 84	Fishing Local Area Group (FLAG) Development Strategies
RPO 85	Renewable offshore energy
RPO 86	Marine Cluster
RPO 87	Low Carbon Energy Future
RPO 88	National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework
RPO 89	Building Resilience to Climate Change
RPO 90	Regional Decarbonisation
RPO 91	Decarbonisation in the Transport Sector
RPO 92	Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

RPO 93	CNG & EV Infrastructure
RPO 94	Decarbonisation in the Agricultural Sector
RPO 95	Sustainable Renewable Energy Generation
RPO 96	Integrating Renewable Energy Sources
RPO 97	Power Stations and Renewable Energy
RPO 98	Regional Renewable Energy Strategy
RPO 99	Renewable Wind Energy
RPO 100	Indigenous Renewable Energy Production and Grid Injection
RPO 101	International Hub for Energy Innovation
RPO 102	Energy Research Funding
RPO 103	Interconnection Infrastructure
RPO 104	Energy Storage and Carbon Capture
RPO 105	Clean Electric Heat Technologies & District Heating
RPO 106	Future Proofing and Retrofitting
RPO 107	Regional Waste Management Plan for the Southern Region 2015-2021
RPO 108	EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy
RPO 109	Bio-Energy Implementation Plan
RPO 110	Ecosystem Services
RPO 111	Water Resources
RPO 112	Water Quality
RPO 113	Floods Directive
RPO 114	Flood Risk Management Objectives
RPO 115	Flood RIsk Management Plans
RPO 116	Planning System and Flood Risk Management
RPO 117	Flood Risk Management and Biodiversity
RPO 118	Flood Risk Management and Capital Works
RPO 119	Flood Relief Schemes
RPO 120	Flooding and Coastal Erosion
RPO 121	Effective Collaboration to Implement River Basin Management Plans and Water Framework Directive
RPO 122	Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
RPO 123	River Basin Management Plan and Spatial Planning
RPO 124	Green Infrastructure

RPO 125	Green Infrastructure Corridors
RPO 126	Biodiversity
RPO 127	Invasive Species
RPO 128	All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015 – 2020
RPO 129	Landscape
RPO 130	Air Quality
RPO 131	Noise
RPO 132	'Dark Sky' Parks and Reserves
RPO 133	Smart Cities
RPO 134	Smart Cities and Smart Region
RPO 135	High Quality High Capacity International Digital Transmission
RPO 136	National Broadband Plan (NBP)
RPO 137	Mobile Infrastructure
RPO 138	Digital Strategies
RPO 139	Low Carbon International Connectivity
RPO 140	International Connectivity
RPO 141	Regional Freight Strategy
RPO 142	Ports
RPO 143	Ports and Airports
RPO 144	Port Infrastructure
RPO 145	Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region
RPO 146	High Quality International Connectivity – Ports
RPO 147	Economic Opportunities of Ports
RPO 148	National Aviation Policy
RPO 149	Airport Strategy for the Southern Region
RPO 150	High Quality International Connectivity – Airports
RPO 151	Integration of Land Use and Transport
RPO 152	Local Planning Objectives
RPO 153	Capacity of Inter-Urban Road Connections
RPO 154	Land Use Plans
RPO 155	Managing the Region's Transport Assets
RPO 156	Steady State Investment

RPO 157	Local Transport Plans (LTP)
RPO 158	Intra-regional Rural Connectivity
RPO 159	Role of Transport in Enabling Access for All
RPO 160	Smart and Sustainable Mobility
RPO 161	Smart Mobility
RPO 162	Multi-Modal Travel Integration
RPO 163	Sustainable Mobility Targets
RPO 164	Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies
RPO 165	Higher Densities
RPO 166	Investment in Strategic Inter Regional Multi-Modal Connectivity to Metropolitan Areas and Economic Corridors
RPO 167	National Road Projects
RPO 168	Investment in Regional and Local Roads
RPO 169	Strategic Road Network Improvement Priorities
RPO 170	Rail
RPO 171	Bus
RPO 172	Rural Transport
RPO 173	Tourism Corridors
RPO 174	Walking and Cycling
RPO 175	Improving Regional Quality of Life through Infrastructure-led Planning
RPO 176	10-minute" city and town concepts
RPO 177	Childcare, Education, and Health Services
RPO 178	Universal Health Services
RPO 179	Diverse and Socially Inclusive Society
RPO 180	Volunteering and Active Citizenship
RPO 181	Equal Access
RPO 182	Ageing Population
RPO 183	Digital Strategies
RPO 184	TUSE and MTU
RPO 185	New School Facilities
RPO 186	Lifelong Learning
RPO 187	Education and Training
RPO 188	Regional Skills Fora

RPO 189	Further Education and Training
RPO 190	Lifelong Learning and Healthy City initiatives
RPO 191	Cultural and Creative Sectors
RPO 192	Cultural Policies and Objectives
RPO 193	Collaborative Regional Partnerships
RPO 194	Arts, Heritage and Culture
RPO 195	Language Plans
RPO 196	Gaeltacht
RPO 197	Irish language Networks
RPO 198	Sport and Community Organisations
RPO 199	Larger Sports Projects
RPO 200	Green Infrastructure and Recreation
RPO 201	National Trails, Walking Routes, Greenway and Blueway Corridors
RPO 202	Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Built Heritage assets
RPO 203	Revitalisation of Historic Cores
RPO 204	Better Public Access
RPO 205	Built Heritage
RPO 206	Architectural Heritage
RPO 207	Archaeological Investigation
RPO 208	Irish Water and Water Supply
RPO 209	Strategic Water Supply Projects
RPO 210	Drinking Water Protection Plans
RPO 211	Irish Water and Wastewater
RPO 212	Strategic Wastewater Treatment Facilities
RPO 213	Rural Wastewater Treatment Programmes
RPO 214	Eliminating Untreated Discharges and Long-term Planning
RPO 215	Separation of Foul and Surface Water Networks
RPO 216	Servicing of Rural Villages
RPO 217	Storm Water Infrastructure
RPO 218	Sustainable Urban Drainage and Rainwater Harvesting
RPO 219	New Energy Infrastructure
RPO 220	Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM)

RPO 221	Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Network
RPO 222	Electricity Infrastructure
RPO 223	International Energy Interconnection Infrastructure
RPO 224	Delivery of Energy Networks
RPO 225	Gas Network
RPO 226	Implementation Mechanism for the Strategy and MASPs
RPO 227	Investment and Funding
RPO 228	Smart Growth Initiatives
RPO 229	Monitoring the Strategy

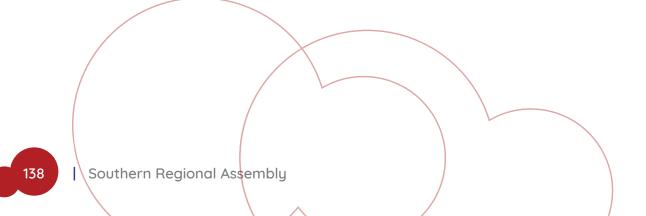# Appendix 3: Submissions made by the SRA in 2022 and 2023

SRA Submissions 2022		
Document Name	**Date**	**Link**
Proposed Amendments to the Draft Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	15th February 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/SRA_Obs_to_Draft_Cork_County_CDP_Proposed_Amendments_15-2-22.pdf
Submission to Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028	15th June 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/SRA_Obs_to_Kerry_County_Council_CDP_Material_Amendments_15-6-22.pdf
Submission to the Draft Regional Water Resource Plan- Eastern and Midland Region Technical Follow Up to Initial Submission on National Water Resources Plan Consultation	21st March 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/For_website_-_subs_section.pdf
Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028	22nd March 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Carlow_Mat_Alts_22nd_March.pdf
Draft Clare Development Plan 2023-2029.	28th March 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Clare_Draft.pdf

Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028	1st April 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Waterford_Mat_Alts.pdf
Proposed Material Alterations To The Draft Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028	11th April 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Limerick_Mat_Alts.pdf
Submission to the Draft Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy	12th July 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/SRA_Submission_to_Draft_WMATS_12-7-2022_FINAL_ISSUE.pdf
Submission to the Draft Regional Water Resource Plan- South West Region Technical Follow Up to Initial Submission on National Water Resources Plan Consultation	24th August 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/24_August_SRA_Submission_to_IW_RWRP-_SW_24-8-22-Final.pdf
Pre-Draft Consultation on preparation of a Joint Urban Local Area Plan for the Carlow-Graiguecullen Area 2023-2029	14/10/2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/17th_Oct_SRA_Sub_to_LAOIS_on_Pre_Draft_CGJUP_DRAFT_14-10-22_F.pdf
Submission to the Preparation of the Port of Cork Masterplan 2050	28th October 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/01_November_SRA_Submission_to_Port_of_Cork_Masterplan_2050.pdf
Submission to Ireland's Road Haulage Strategy 2022-2031	30th November 2022	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/SRA_Submission_to_Irelands_Road_Haulage_Strategy_2022-2031_.pdf

SRA Submissions 2023-31st January 2024		
Document Name	Date	Link
Submission to the Draft Direction on the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029	11/5/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/DP_23001_FINAL_SRA_Response_to_Section_31_Ministers_Direction_Clare_County_Development_Plan_11052023.pdf
Pre-Draft Issues Paper Shannon Town	03/08/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/LP_23004_Final_Obs_Shannon_Predraft_LAP_03.08.2023.pdf
Pre-Draft Issues Paper Wexford Town	03/08/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/LP_23005_OBs_Wexford_Town_LAP_IP_Aug_2023.FINAL_3_.8.pdf
Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Clonmel Local Area Plan	18/12/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/LP_23006_rlap-13-david-kelly.pdf
Proposed Amendments of the Nenagh Local Area Plan 2024-2030	18/12/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/G_23007_SRA-Response_to_National_Port_Policy_-15-01-24.pdf
Proposed Material Amendments to the Thurles Local Area Plan 2024-2030	18/12/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/LP_23008_Thurles_Mat_Amendments.pdf
SRA Submission to the All-Island Strategic Rail Review- Draft Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment Consultation	29/09/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/22_GD001_SRA_Response_to_All_Island_Strategic_Rail_Review_-_Consultation_for_SEA_-_29-9-23.pdf
SRA Submission to the Draft Regional Water Resources Plan- South East Region	03/10/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/A_23002_SRA_Submission_to_IW_RWRP-_SE_-_FINAL_3.10.2023.pdf
SRA Submission to the Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2023-2029	23/10/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/FINAL_Obs_Mat_Amendments_Newcastle_West_LAP.pdf
SRA Submission to Mid Term Review of the Regional Airports Programme 2021-2025 Consultation	16/06/02023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/G_23003_SRA_Submission_to_Regional_Airport_Strategy_Review-Final_16th_June_2023.pdf

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SRA Submission to the South Coast Renewable Energy DMAP Proposal Consultation	06/10/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/G_23004_SRA_Submission_to_South_Coast_DMAP_Proposal_-_6-10-2023.pdf
SRA Submission to Sustainable and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities- Draft for Consultation August 2023	05/10/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/G_23005_FINAL_SRA_Submission_on_Draft_Sustainable_and_Compact_Settlement_Guidelines.pdf
SRA Submission to National Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind Consultation	07/11/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/G_23006SRA-Response_to_National_Industrail_Strategy_for_Offshore_Wind-7-11-23.pdf
Submission to Public Consultation for Review of National Ports Policy	15/01/2024	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/G_23007_SRA-Response_to_National_Port_Policy_-15-01-24.pdf
SRA Submission to the Draft Clonmel and Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030	11/09/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/LP_23006_Draft_Clonmel_Local_Area_Plan_2024-2030.pdf
SRA Submission to the Draft Nenagh and Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030	11/09/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/LP_23007_Draft_Nenagh_Local_Area_Plan_2024-2030.pdf
SRA Submission to the Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Nenagh and Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030	18/12/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/LP_23007_rlap-8-david-kelly.pdf
SRA Submission to the Draft Thurles & Environs Local Area Plan 2024-2030	11/09/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/LP_23008_Draft_Thurles_Local_Area_Plan_2024-2030.pdf
SRA Submission to the Draft Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2023-2029	19/06/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Obs_Newcastle_West_LAP_FINAL_19.06.2023.pdf
Kilkenny LECP	26/04/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Letter_to_Kilkenny_County_Council_re._LECP_Statement_26_.4.23.pdf
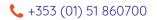
Wexford LECP	11/7/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Letter_to_Wexford_County_Council_LECP_Statement.pdf
Carlow LECP	16/8/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Letter_to_Carlow_County_Council_LECP_Statement.pdf
Waterford LECP	27/09/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/E_23004_Letter_Waterford_LECP_Statement_of_Consistency.pdf
Tipperary LECP	13/11/2023	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/E_23005_Letter_Tipperary_LECP_Statement_of_Consistency.pdf
Cork County LECP	16/01/2024	https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Letter_Cork_County_LECP_Statement_of_Consistency.pdf

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