



Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt  
Southern Regional Assembly

# Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES)

Two Year Monitoring Report 2020-2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Straitéis Réigiúnach Spásúil agus Eacnamaíoch do Réigiún an Deiscirt (SRSE)

Tuarascáil Monatóireachta Dhá Bhliain 2020-2022

ACHOIMRE FHEIDHMEACH



Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040

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# Two Year Monitoring Report 2020-2022

## Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) Objectives for the Southern Region

The Two Year Monitoring Report sets out progress on implementation of the RSES in the two year period 2020-2022 and is prepared under Section 25(A) (2) of the Planning Act, which requires the Regional Assembly to prepare a report monitoring progress made in implementing the RSES every two years. The monitoring report takes into account submissions made by public bodies and the 10 local authorities within the Southern Region on progress made by these bodies in supporting the objectives of the RSES. The report is 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 RSES came into effect on 31st January 2020 with the overall objective to deliver transformative change set out in *Project Ireland 2040* and the National Planning Framework (NPF). Critical to achieving transformative change for the Region are:

- 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.

The RSES contains **11 Strategy Statements**, **301 Regional Policy Objectives** and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans for Cork, Limerick – Shannon and Waterford to achieve the RSES Vision to create one of Europe’s most **Liveable, Creative and Innovative and Green Regions**.

The Report summaries progress across the 3 themes:

- **Liveable Region**
- **Creative and Innovative Region**
- **Green Region**

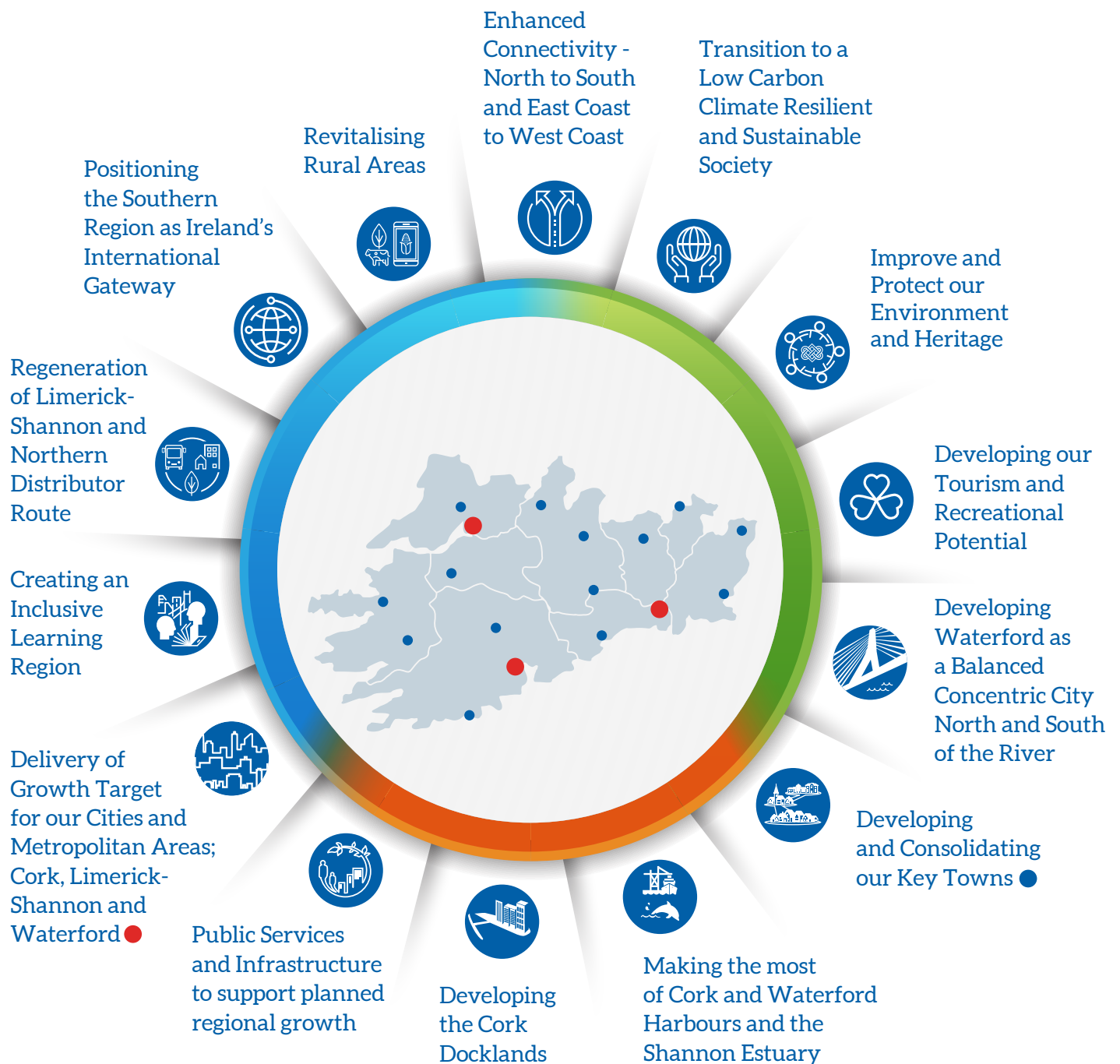
# Strategy Statements

The RSES Strategy sets out 11 Strategy Statements



# Key Enablers

The RSES identifies the following Key Enablers to achieving the Strategy:





# RSES Implementation Programme








The RSES Implementation Programme includes **32 Priority Tasks** undertaken during the period of the report, together with actions undertaken by local authorities and public bodies.









The monitoring report identifies Progress in the following key areas:

- **There has been substantial policy alignment** between national, regional, and local policy based on the NPF and RSES by the 10 Local Authorities within the Southern Region particularly relating to the Development Plan process.
- **There has been significant investment by public bodies** in a range of initiatives which support the implementation of the NPF and RSES and address many of the key enablers identified in the RSES
- **The development by the Regional Assembly of Transformative SRA Initiatives - within the RSES Implementation Programme:**
  - The Regional Development Monitor (Joint Assembly Initiatives).
  - Joint Assembly Initiatives on the impact of Covid 19
  - MASP Implementation Structures for our Metropolitan Areas.
  - Learning Region Initiative,
  - Smart Southern Region/S3
  - Regional Sustainable Mobility & 10 Minute Towns
  - Blue/Green Infrastructure/Nature Based Solutions Initiative.

# Challenges for Further RSES Implementation

The report also identifies where progress has been limited and the challenges and barriers faced. It is important to note that these concerns are set in the context that this is the first monitoring report in a 20-year process and therefore immediate change is not expected.

Key Enabler	Outlook/Challenges	Progress
Transition to a Low Carbon Climate resilient and sustainable Society.	Strong Concern for Outlook given the scale of the climate crises challenge, energy supply issues, the biodiversity crisis	
Delivery of Growth Targets for our Cities and Metropolitan Areas - Cork, Limerick & Waterford.	Strong Concern on Delivery of infrastructure and services at scale required given the continued trajectory of growth in the Dublin region	
Creating the Greenest and most Liveable Metropolitan Areas for diverse communities, culture and enterprise	Strong Concern on Delivery of infrastructure and services at scale required given the continued trajectory of growth in the Dublin Region	
Developing and consolidating our Key Towns.	Significant Preparatory Work but need for strong commitment and investment	
Developing the Cork Docklands.	Strong Progress and Potential - need to continue investment.	
Regeneration of Limerick-Shannon & Northern Distributor Route.	Significant Preparatory Work - need to continue investment and to fast track delivery of key infrastructure	
Develop Waterford as a Balanced Concentric City north & South of the River	Significant Preparatory Work - need to continue investment and to fast track delivery of key infrastructure.	

Key Enabler	Outlook/Challenges	Progress
Creating an Inclusive Learning Region.	Very Strong Progress at National and Regional level – requires continued investment	
Positioning the Southern Region as Ireland’s International Gateway.	Increased Role for Southern Region Ports with significant potential	
Making the most of Cork and Waterford Harbours and the Shannon Estuary.	Strong Progress on policy change and potential – need follow through with investment	
Improve & Protect our environment & heritage.	Strong Concern on environmental indicators and outlook - significant action required	
Developing our Tourism and Recreational potential.	Strong Progress and Potential – needs ongoing investment	
Revitalising Rural Areas.	Significant Preparatory Work – structural issues regarding infrastructure /services/ dereliction / vacancy to be addressed to protect the viability of towns, villages and rural areas	
Enhanced Connectivity - North to South and East Coast to West Coast.	Significant Preparatory Work – need to continue investment & establish eastern corridor identity	
Public Services & Infrastructure to support planned regional growth.	Strong Concern on Delivery of infrastructure and services at scale required given the continued trajectory of growth in the Dublin Region	



# Conclusions

The monitoring report has presented a valuable opportunity to examine the effectiveness of implementation to date and to look at the barriers to progress. The Table above captures the outlook and challenges we face in relation to Key Enablers for RSES implementation.

Our key conclusions are as follows:

- There has been a positive impact of new initiatives and funding mechanisms by Government and Public Bodies in support of NPF and RSES objectives and the significant work undertaken within each Local Authority to progress *Project Ireland 2040*.
- There is serious concern at the trajectory of continued population growth to the Dublin Region which undermines the NPF & RSES policy. Based on findings in the NDP Review, it is unclear if the *Project Ireland 2040* process will deliver the wider structural changes required to address the overall 50:50% split fundamental to *Project Ireland 2040* and RSES or commit to the services/infrastructure required to achieve the population targets for the three Metropolitan Areas and the Region fundamental to the overall delivery of *Project Ireland 2040* and RSES Objectives for regional growth.
- Preliminary census results are also concerning and indicate that while all local authorities in the Region experienced growth only Carlow, Waterford and Wexford experienced above average growth. Dublin and adjoining counties by contrast have experienced significant growth and there is no indication of a change in the trajectory of population growth to the Dublin area.
- The finding of the NDP Review 'Assessing the alignment of National Development Plan' that the regional cities have a lower share of investment projects over €20 million and €100 million compared to their planned growth is concerning given the Metropolitan Areas key role in the implementation of the NPF, the RSES, the scale of the growth proposed for each and the fact that three of the four cities are in the Southern Region.

# Challenges and Recommendations

## Addressing the Challenges

The report re-affirms *Project Ireland 2040* as providing a positive and sustainable basis to address the spatial and environmental issues facing Ireland but stresses that there needs to be continual commitment and concerted efforts to achieve its aims and outcomes.

The report identifies key challenges to delivering the NPF and successful RSES implementation:

- The challenges of **climate change** are unprecedented. Successful implementation of NPF and RSES objectives will require enhanced integration of climate action into all areas of activity.
- **Population targets in the NPF and RSES are extremely ambitious** and have never been accomplished in the State's history.
- **What are the factors that will successfully enable the level of growth required in the Region to happen?** The current approach relies to a significant degree on establishing population targets and zoning. Is there a better more effective approach to achieving the change required?
- The **trajectory of growth to Dublin and the surrounding Region is long term, deeply embedded** and unless this trajectory is changed, the ongoing growth levels will consume resources that should be allocated to achieve the NPF 50:50% model for regional development and will **fundamentally undermine *Project Ireland 2040***.
- There is a **danger of 'mission creep'** and that the objectives of *Project Ireland 2040* will be undermined in response to current circumstances. This should be resisted.
- A key task and challenge is to **ensure the investment strategy in the NDP, and other Government spending is clearly aligned to the NPF and the RSES Strategies** to achieve the radical break from past patterns of investment and development.
- Delivery of the NPF and the RSES requires structural changes to achieve the transformative change required particularly at regional, local, and metropolitan level.
- **Regional governance structure in Ireland is underdeveloped by European terms.** Can the regional tier play a more enhanced and effective role in supporting national objectives; and If it should, is there an appetite or willingness to facilitate this role at the national level?


## Recommendations to Support RSES Implementation


The following measures are recommended to support RSES implementation:

- Continued population growth in the Dublin Region should not be used as a basis to undermine the achievement of *Project Ireland 2040*/ RSES objectives.
- A clear mechanism should be applied to ensure sectoral investment is weighted in favour of the achievement of Objective 1a of the NPF and that population and employment growth in SRA and NWRA should at least match that of EMRA (the 50:50 split). This should include the integration and delegation to the regional tier to underpin the achievement of national strategic outcomes at the regional and local level.
- Significant policy instruments are now in place and the emphasis should be on delivery. Policy reform and review should focus on the mechanisms to achieve the high-level challenges faced including ensuring the delivery of the transformation change needed to deliver the NPF/RSES in our urban and rural areas and the significant challenge faced through climate change and environmental challenges rather than plan making.
- The funding mechanisms to achieve NPF and RSES objectives should be reviewed to deliver on City and County Development Plan objectives and Core Strategies, especially the delivery of housing and employment targets aligned with national and regional projections and objectives.
- For our 3 Metropolitan Areas an effective delivery mechanism is required to progress the development of the MASP in accordance with the NPF/RSES should be advanced.
- The establishment of dedicated long-term budgeting mechanism (10- year strategic fund) to drive the achievement of the accelerated growth of our three Metropolitan Areas, funding support for Key Towns, towns and rural areas and other strategic objectives should be considered. A Strategic funding approach will strengthen urban and rural areas together and implementation of the overall RSES strategy in seeking services, physical and social infrastructure investment, and enterprise growth for all communities.
- Enhance the remit and role of Regional Assemblies to drive implementation of *Project Ireland 2040* with an increased level of implementation and delivery undertaken directly at regional level, where the Regional Assemblies building on strategic skillsets and connections to all regional agencies and stakeholders.
- The effective implementation of many RSES and MASP objectives relies on a strong working relationship between the Regional Assembly and Government Departments. There is a need to strengthen the structural relationship between the Regional Assemblies, DHLGH, Government Departments and the *Project Ireland 2040* Board.
- The RSES set out an economic strategy for the region based on 5 economic principles and the spatial strategy of RSES focused on the Region's Economic Drivers. Effective implementation of RSES requires that all Government Departments and Agencies and Local Authorities ensure alignment with regional policy and support the implementation of RSES. The Regional Enterprise Plans are a significant and positive intervention in regional development and there should be greater co alignment and integration between the RSES and REPS



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