

Ireland 2040

National Planning Framework

Joint submission
on behalf of:



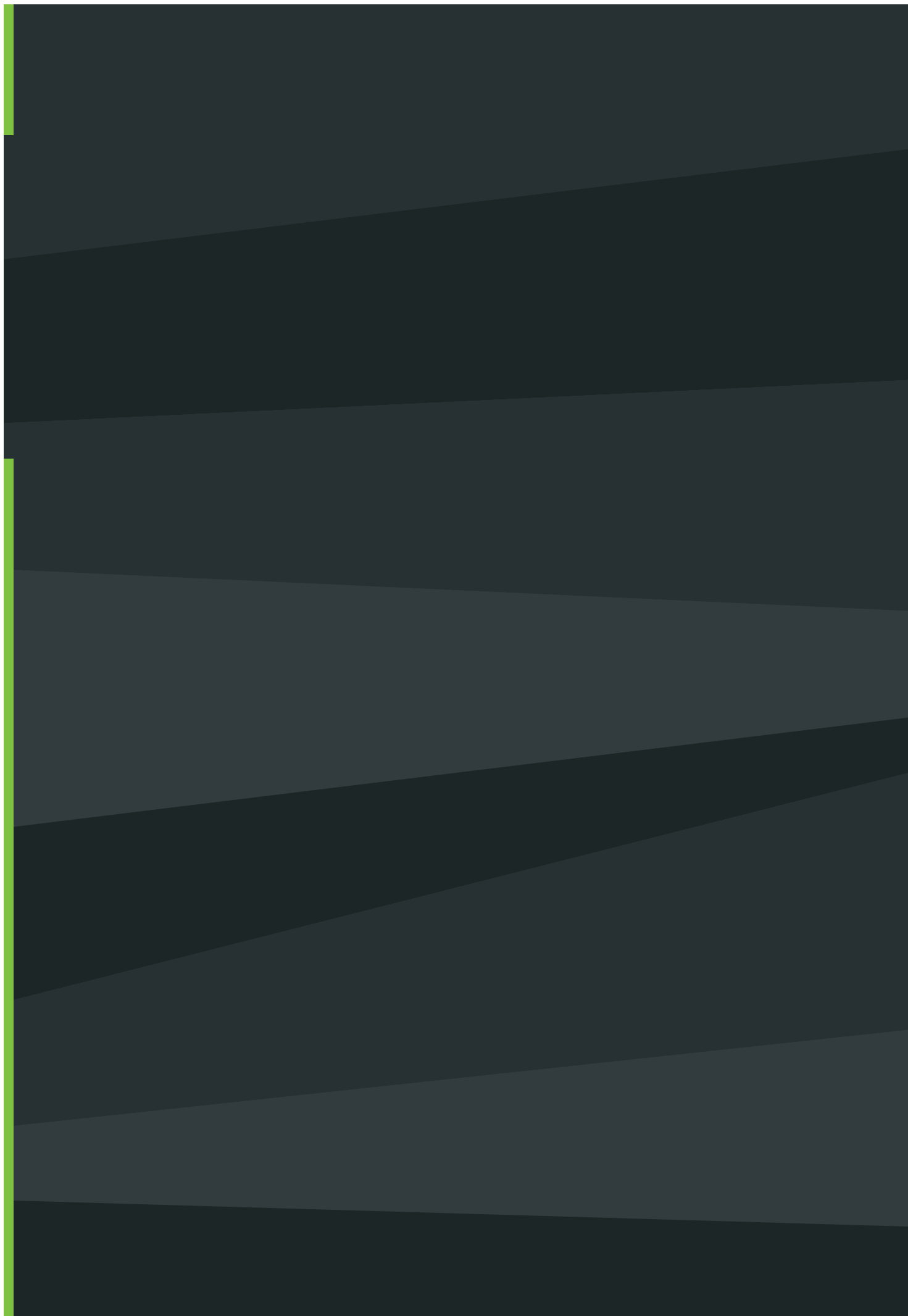


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Executive Summary

The Local Authorities of Clare and Tipperary County Councils and Limerick City and County Council together with our partners in Shannon Group, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, Shannon Foynes Port Company and the Mid West Action Plan for Jobs, working in collaboration make this joint submission to the National Planning Framework (NPF).

It is our vision that the Mid West Limerick City region, building on the strong governance structures that already exist, will be developed into a dynamic Tier 2 City Region, identified in the NPF as a focus for growth which can exert critical mass leverage to contribute towards national development and competitiveness.

The identification in the NPF and the positive promotion of the Mid West Limerick City region which includes Shannon, with its competitive and historical advantages of central location, its national and international connectivity, national assets such as Shannon Airport, Shannon Foynes Port Company, third level institutes, abundance of natural and man-made national assets, high quality of life and human capital has the capacity to both complement and create additionality to the sustainable growth of Dublin.

The designation of a Mid West Limerick City Region, with capacity for significant population increase and located at a centre-point between Galway and Cork cities, would maximise the economic and social benefit to the greatest benefit of surrounding centres of population in the west and south west and their rural hinterlands, resulting in significant sustainable development for the State.

Through a focus on maximising the significant existing and future capacity of national assets such as Shannon International Airport, Shannon Estuary and Shannon Foynes Port Company, University of Limerick and Limerick Institute of Technology, Moneypoint and Lough Derg water resource – many of which are not reliant on significant State funding - the NPF can achieve significant effective regional development through prudent use of capital, reducing the burden on the exchequer whilst maximising the rate of economic return.

There is a vibrant mix of towns and villages and contrasting landscapes, a high quality of life, a range of existing and planned social amenities, educational facilities and the availability of housing in the Mid-West Limerick City Region. It is this mix of social and economic resources and in particular its rural areas that which differentiates the Mid-West Limerick City Region from other areas and provides its strength as an agent for effective regional development.

The city-region has strength across many aspects of enterprise but is particularly strong in the areas of tourism, aviation and manufacturing. The Shannon Free Zone as well as other major industrial sites within the city-region have a long history of high-quality manufacturing. This has been added to by an expanding services sector in recent years with many new large-scale service enterprises being established in the region in recent years.



Tourism is also a key industry in the region and unlike most industries, where goods and services are transported to the consumer, in the case of tourism based on natural assets and environmental resources, consumers and employees travel to the location of the product in order to enjoy it. Many of Ireland's most popular tourism destinations are located in the region, all of which are easily accessible to both national and international visitors. Recent initiatives such as the Wild Atlantic Way build on and promote the natural and cultural attractions.

In addition to focussing on maximising the significant capacity of existing national assets in the region to support sustainable future development, the NPF should positively identify and promote the following projects and initiatives to give effect to the opportunities which lie within the Mid-West Limerick City Region and its rural areas.

- Prioritise the achievement of the Mid West Limerick City Region as a Tier 2 city region by promoting significant population growth within the region.
- Policy support for Motorway connection between Limerick and Cork and also upgrading of the N24 to Motorway standard.
- Complete the Limerick Northern Distributor Road.
- Provide a faster rail link between Limerick and Dublin and between Limerick and Cork.
- Utilise existing rail infrastructure to provide improved commuter connectivity between Limerick and Shannon and Limerick and Nenagh.
- Promote the development of the Strategic Development Sites on the Shannon Estuary as set out in the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary (SIFP).
- Prioritise of the delivery of the proposed Foynes to Limerick Road Improvement Scheme and rail link and support further the role and expansion of Foynes Port, recognising its status as a Tier 1 port of national significance.

- Align national aviation policy with the NPF and maximise the utilisation of the capacity of Shannon International Airport, whilst increasing air traffic to the country at no significant extra cost to exchequer.
- Promote Shannon as a National aviation services and aerospace centre.
- Maximise road access to and the development of the significant land-bank at the Clare Campus of the University of Limerick and Errina Canal integrating learning, research, employment, living and ongoing economic, social and culture development.
- Identify Shannon Estuary, Silvermines, Slieve Callan and Shannon for marine, Pumped Hydro and CHP renewable energy hubs.
- Support the creation of a national advanced manufacturing centre and the development of Aerospace subcomponent manufacturing in the region.
- Increase opportunities for rural development, support services and broadband facilities in towns and villages, and identify specific actions to promote the viability and vitality of the rural areas.
- Maximise the potential of the unique natural attractions of the region eg Burren, Cliffs of Moher, Lough Derg, Lough Gur and the Shannon Estuary for sustainable development of the tourist product in the wider region.

Together the relevant agencies have the vision, statutory remit, governance and proven track record to coordinate and drive the delivery of the NPF through an innovative identification of a Mid-West Limerick City Region as a nationally significant economic, social and sustainable development area, achieving effective regional development and increasing the quality of life for all who live, work and visit the region.

1

Introduction

Ireland stands at an exciting and unique opportunity to shape the long-term planning over the next 20-years. The launch of the Issues and Choices Document for “Ireland 2040 – Our Plan”, the National Planning Framework (NPF) and invitation for submissions is welcomed. It is considered that a visionary framework is required to rationalise long term investment priorities. Business as usual cannot continue and delivery of a new framework which promotes effective regional development and growth for the benefit of the country must be at the centre of Ireland’s 2040 plan. In acknowledging that the NPF will represent Government policy on how nationally significant spatial, economic and planning matters should be implemented by Government Department and Agencies¹ this submission is made on behalf of the key local government, state and semi-state educational agencies in the Mid-West Region.

The Local Authorities of Clare and Tipperary County Councils and Limerick City and County Council together with our partners in Shannon Group, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, Shannon Foynes Port Company and the Mid West Action Plan for Jobs, working again in collaboration are pleased to make a joint submission to the National Planning Framework.

Together the agencies have the vision, capacity, statutory remit, governance and proven track record to coordinate and drive the delivery of the NPF into nationally significant economic, social and sustainable developments achieving effective regional development, creating sustainable communities and increasing the quality of life for all who live, work and visit the region. Moreover the Mid West Limerick City region which includes Limerick and Shannon, with its competitive and historical advantages of central location, its national and international connectivity, abundance of natural and man-made assets, quality of life and human capital can both complement and act as a counterbalance to the growth of Dublin resulting in sustainable development for the State.

It is accepted that the focus for the NPF should move from designating a number of settlements as advocated in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). Echoing European and global trends, this submission advocates that economic, demographic and sustainable planning should focus on the city and its region, with Limerick city at the core, complemented by the potential of the people, communities and urban centres and assets all within 1-hour drive time.

1 Towards a National Planning Framework – December 2015

The Mid West Limerick City Region is a region of approximately 400,000 people with Limerick City at its centre. Quality of life is a key strength of the Region as a result of its rich environment comprising of coastal areas, inland waterways and mountains. Its affordable housing, cultural, sporting and recreational facilities, as well as a variety of educational facilities make the region an attractive place to live and work in. It has the health and well being infrastructure to deliver healthier places legacy for future generations.

It is our vision that the Mid West Limerick City region will be developed into a dynamic international Tier 2 City Region with strong interdependence on the surrounding regions. The contribution of the City Region's economic and social activities is sufficiently important to positively impact the outputs and performance of the national economy.

This collective submission demonstrates that the governance and structures that are needed to collaboratively deliver on an ambitious vision is already in place in the Mid West Limerick City Region. This dynamic will prove for future success. In the preparation of this submission the group has considered the competitive advantages, opportunities to enhance economic synergies and the availability of immediate capacity, to ensure that the Mid West Limerick City Region achieves the critical mass to compete at an international level. A successful city region will enhance the long term economic development of the country as a whole.

This submission to the National Planning Framework sets out the contribution that the Mid West Limerick City Region can make towards national development and competitiveness in both the near and long-term. The submission is structured as follows; Section 2 states the agencies' shared vision for the Mid West Limerick City Region to 2040. Section 3 sets out the context, governance structures, key messages and demonstrates capacity to deliver. Noting the NPF will be a high level strategic approach to spatial development, Section 4 sets out key strategic aims and actions that the NPF should include to maximise the opportunities, enable the shared vision and realise the potential of the Mid West Limerick City Region.

2

Vision for the Mid West Limerick City Region

To create a sustainable Tier 2 Mid West Limerick City Region, of a scale which can exert critical-mass leverage at an international level, maximising the economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities in a manner for all those who live, work and visit the region and for the benefit of the country.

The Mid West Limerick City Region is strategically positioned nationally to develop and expand as an urban engine for growth and to become a global centre of economic activity with a population of 800,000 by 2040, complementing the country's capital city Dublin and contributing significantly to the international competitiveness of the Country.



3

Mid West Limerick City Region

3.1 Mid West Limerick City Region

Historically the Mid West region was defined as the geographical area which comprised of the local authority administrative areas of Limerick City Council, Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary County Council's. The region is bounded by the West, Midland, South East and South West regions. This area was further given statutory effect in the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines.

In 2014 the Local Government Reform process merged Limerick City and County Council and North and South Tipperary County Council's, created the new Regional Assemblies through the abolition of the Regional Authorities, and dissolved Town Councils.

In seeking to provide a planning framework for 2040, the most appropriate spatial expression of the area is the mid west region with Limerick City at its centre, based on modern economic, infrastructural, demographic and social interrelationships and potential, rather than historical administrative areas. In that regard, it is more appropriate to examine the spheres of influence of the key assets which lie within it. These assets include, but are not limited to;

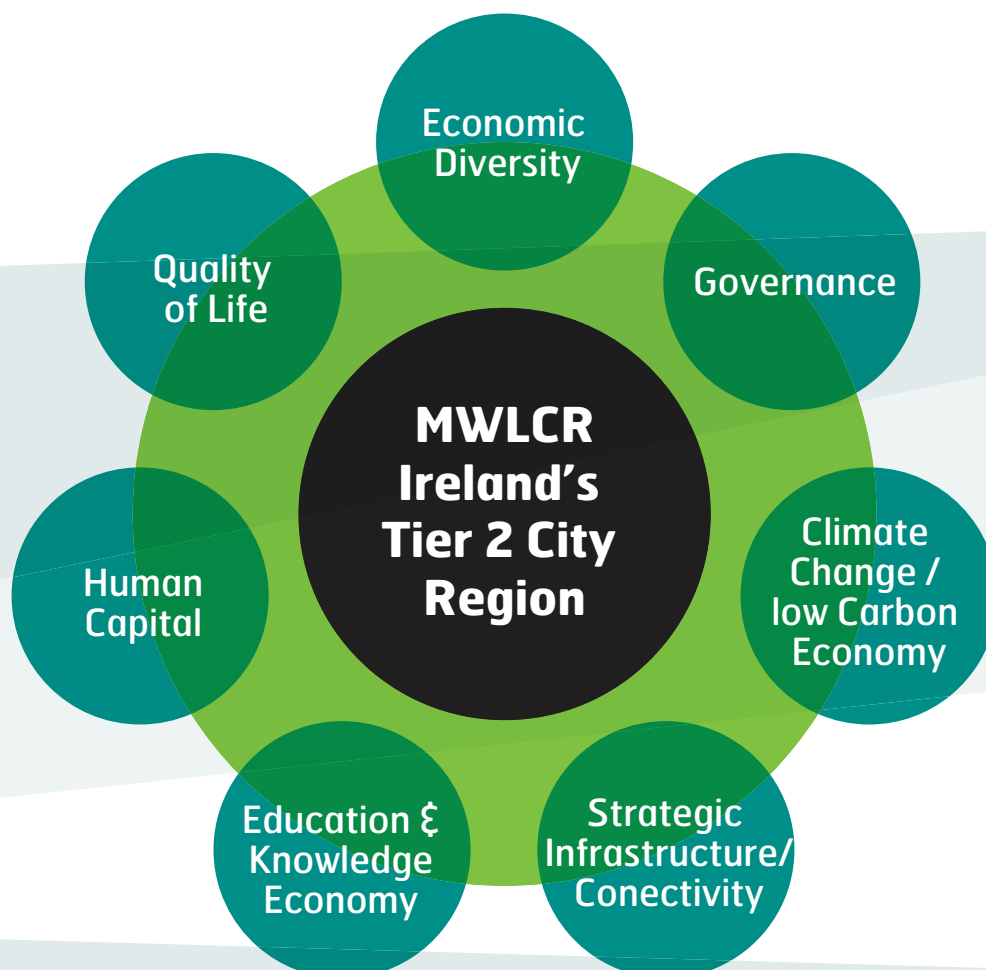
- Limerick City
- Shannon International Airport
- Shannon Estuary and Foynes Port
- Motorway and Rail connectivity
- Industrial and Enterprise sites
- Legacy and tradition of regional development and inward investment
- Internationally renowned 3rd level institutes
- Limerick University Hospital and Regional Maternity Hospital
- Access to talent
- Cultural, heritage and environmental assets
- Tourism
- Regional Settlement structure and availability of housing and capacity of lands for future development
- Infrastructural assets
- Electricity Generating Stations including Moneypoint and a range of renewable installations and high energy transmission grid network
- Rich agricultural land and natural resources.

The Mid West Limerick City Region sphere of influence also extends outside the Mid West; northwards towards Galway City, southwards towards Cork City and Tralee, eastwards towards Tipperary Town and west into Kerry.

3.2 Ireland's tier 2 city region

Central to the economic, regionally balanced and sustainable growth of a developed economy is the promotion and achievement of Tier 2 cities in the nation. These can be defined as those cities outside the capital whose economic and social performance is sufficiently important to affect the potential performance of the national economy. It does not imply that they are less important than the capital cities.² International research has shown that key drivers of tier 2 cities are economic diversity, skills and human capital, connectivity, place quality, and strategic governance capacity.

The Mid West Limerick City Region meets the key criteria to be a Tier 2 City. It is a successful, sustainable and low carbon place; a natural resilient place and a connected place. With these central criteria, the Mid West Limerick City Region can be an international model of low carbon living, supporting growth, addressing regeneration and improving connections. Moreover when taken with the existing national assets such as Shannon Airport, Shannon Foynes Port Company, 3rd level institutes and access to talent and connectivity, the Mid West Limerick City Region has the potential to be Ireland's Tier 2 city region.



² SGPTD Second Tier Cities and Territorial Development in Europe: Performance, Policies and Prospects Applied Research 2013/1/11 Final Report 30/06/2012

3.3 Limerick City

Cities play a critical role in driving economic development. Competitive cities drive competitive regions, by promoting growth and employment and by joining up separate business hubs to expand existing markets and create new ones. They act as economic engines for their regions, providing a critical mass of public and private institutions. Cities boost regions by creating employment for residents, and they provide national and international connectivity through the concentration of infrastructure³. Cities depend on their regions to provide a wider workforce and skills base.

Limerick is ranked as one of the top 10 locations in Western Europe in which to invest by the sixth global 'Best to Invest Report' compiled by Site Selection. €84.5 million of investment was announced for Limerick in 2016. In 2011 it was designated European City of Sport and in 2014 was the National City of Culture.

In 2013, Limerick City and County Council launched the Limerick 2030 Plan, a 15-year plan that aims to transform Limerick through the economic, social and physical renaissance of Limerick City Centre and the wider County and Mid-West. The plan sets out the following vision:

"Limerick will become a major economic force in the Irish and European economy, a leading centre for commercial investment – both foreign direct investment and endogenous business growth, capitalising on the strengths of its higher education institutions, the skills of its workforce and its environmental and heritage attributes. The City Centre will be at the heart of this economic force – an attractive magnet for retail, leisure, residential, commercial, educational and cultural growth. Growth will benefit all citizens across the City, County and Mid West Region".

The plan seeks to deliver 12,000 jobs with 5,000 in the city centre. Since the launch of the plan Limerick has experienced significant growth with over 9,600 jobs and €1.4 billion in investments announced. The implementation of the Limerick 2030 Plan has been further accelerated by the establishment of the Limerick Twenty Thirty Strategic Development DAC (Designated Activity Company) which is the first entity of its kind created by a local authority to deliver a city and county wide programme of investment. It is the biggest single Irish commercial property development programme undertaken outside the capital and is tasked with delivering over €500m worth of transformational investment infrastructure across four strategic sites in Limerick City.

These positive announcements are reflected in Limerick's Live Register which has fallen significantly by 42 per cent from 19,304 Live Registrants in January 2013 to 11,292 in December 2016. Furthermore, the CSO's most recent County Incomes and Regional GDP Report shows that Limerick (€21,116) has the highest disposable income per person in Ireland outside of Dublin (€21,633). At the same time, Limerick remains, as highlighted by the *12th Annual Demographic International Housing Affordability Survey*, the most affordable of 367 international cities to buy a home in.

These developments along with the success of the regeneration project, which has brought new opportunities to the city, highlight the significant change that is currently underway in Limerick.



3.4 Governance

In order for the NPF to deliver for the Country, there must be collaboration and not competition among the governance structures for areas identified for growth thus maximising scarce resources and increasing the benefit of investment. The ability to identify and deliver greater efficiencies in administration and governance as part of the implementation and monitoring of the NPF should have regard to past experience and history of delivery.

In anticipation of the publication of the Issues and Choices document, the Chief Executives of Limerick City and County Council, Tipperary County Council and Clare County Council, building on existing collaborative networks brought together senior colleagues in Shannon Group, Shannon Foynes Port Company, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology and the Mid West Action Plan for Jobs. This submission has been prepared and is being made on behalf of these governmental, educational, transport and infrastructural providers in the Mid West Limerick City Region, demonstrating that the Region has the political will and cross-agency structures in place, together with a clear vision and capacity, and the drive and ambition to deliver for the Region and the Country immediately, up to 2021 and continuing to 2040 and beyond.

There is a long history of public and private stakeholders across the Mid West Limerick City Region working together for the betterment of its citizens. Deliverables include the Mid West Strategic Area Plan, the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan, the Mid West Retail Planning Guidelines and the Mid West Senior Planners Grouping. The Shannon consortium is also an example of collaboration already in existence in the region. This is a collaborative alliance between the three higher level institutes of UL, Mary Immaculate College and Limerick Institute of Technology, which aims to establish the Shannon region as a zone of excellence in teaching, learning and learner support.

The region is acknowledged nationally as providing a flexible and agile talent-delivery model. Initiatives such as Limerick for IT and Limerick for Engineering display the collaborative networks that are enhancing the economic prosperity of the region. Further and Higher Education institutes, with stakeholders including the local authority, IDA and EI are delivering talent solutions to meet business needs. Such collaborative and responsive partnerships are built on trust, and our region is the envy of regions who do not have the ability to work so closely together to support economic potential.

The networks that exist have proved significant in attracting and retaining jobs in the region and will continue to do so into the future. Indeed, Limerick for IT is referenced as an example of how collaborations can work in supporting job creation in the Ireland's 'National Skills Strategy 2025'. As the pace of technological change continues to disrupt traditional business models a region which has a proven capability to adapt and adjust to industry needs gives the Mid West Limerick City Region a significant USP.

Recent changes in local government including the merger of Limerick City Council and Limerick County Council (Limerick City and County Council); and North Tipperary County Council and South Tipperary County Council (Tipperary County Council), together with the abolition of the Town Councils in Clare and Tipperary, and the establishment of the Local Enterprise Offices within Local Authorities, have demonstrated that the local authorities in this region, together with other key organisations, have the ability, ambition, vision and the expertise to deliver on targets and opportunities which are provided to them.

Collaboration also exists in the region between the University of Limerick and the Hospital Group through the clinical research unit, which provides more scope for clinical trials and research.

Many of the ties and relationships built up during the operation of Shannon Development remain strong and there is an underlying desire to see the Mid West Limerick City Region succeed and prosper. The organisations in the Region have the ability and experience to work and deliver across administrative boundaries and on a cross organisational basis.

Implementation programmes can be developed on a cross organisational level to achieve and realise actions and maximise investments made within the Mid West Limerick City Region. The successful delivery of previous strategic policy documents have suffered from colloquialism amongst various bodies and organisations. There must be certainty that the actions identified in the NPF are delivered on time and in the best interests of the Country.

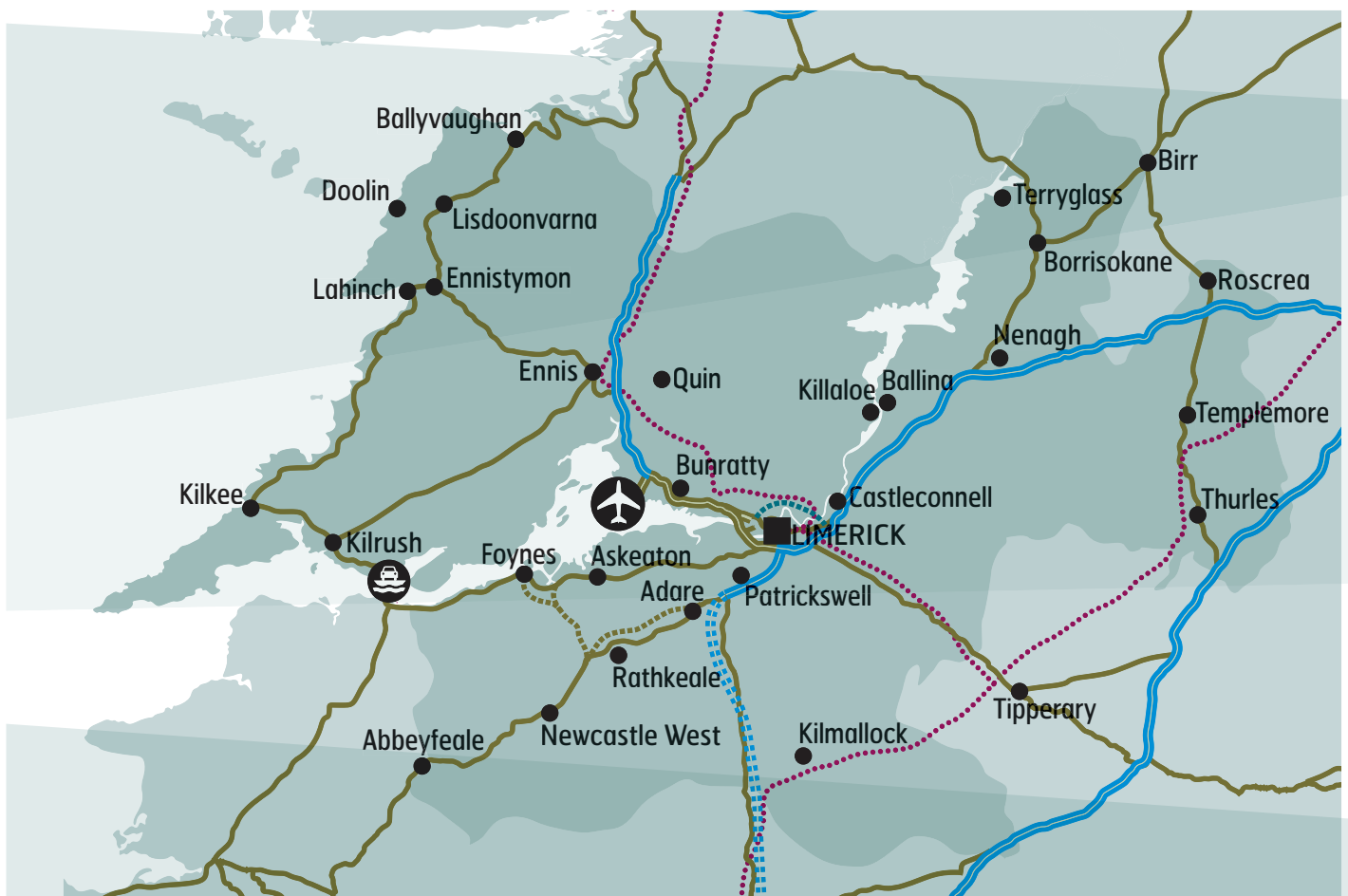


3.5 Strategic Infrastructure/ Connectivity

The Mid West Limerick City Region has significant national infrastructure assets in modern road, rail and world class marine infrastructure with an International airport and a Tier 1 Core European Port at its centre. It is a net contributor to electrical power generation supplying Ireland with electricity from Moneypoint and renewable energy providers from Ardnacrusha and wind energy developments in the region. The region is served and easily accessible by the motorway network from Dublin <2hours M7 and the N4 / M18 from Dublin, Galway and the Atlantic corridor. Rail transport including heavy rail goods criss-cross the region from the Hubs of Limerick, Limerick Junction and Thurles served by mainline trains from Dublin, Cork and the Western Rail corridor to Ennis and north to Athlone. Foynes Port is served by heavy goods rail, and while currently not operational, preliminary investigations, supported by European CEF funding, are underway to fully reinstate this rail way in the medium term. In addition, an infrastructure safeguard is in place for a rail link to Shannon Airport.

Progress has been made in the development of smarter travel initiatives in the region also. Following receipt of €9million under the 5 year Smarter Travel Areas Demonstration Programme significant investment and development in Smarter Travel has been made in Limerick since 2012.

- Motorways
- - - - - Proposed Motorways (indicative)
- National Primary / Secondary Roads
- - - - - Proposed Limerick Northern Distributor Road (indicative)
- - - - - Proposed new N69 (indicative)
- - - - - National Rail Routes





3.5.1 Shannon International Airport

Within a European context, Shannon Airport has Ten-T comprehensive status and is one of the country's three national Airports as defined in Ireland's National Aviation Policy, 2015.

Shannon is known globally as a major innovator in the development of the aviation industry, for its historical significance and also the global reach of its diaspora. It was the first airport in the world to trade Duty Free goods and is only one of two airports outside the Americas to offer full US Customs and Border Protection Preclearance facilities to passengers travelling to the USA. Located between Limerick and Galway cities and accessed by the M18 Motorway, Shannon is the closest long-haul airport for 40% of the State's population, including the catchments of Galway, Ennis, Limerick and Cork, as well as the principal gateway for the Wild Atlantic Way. Shannon Airport is a national asset with capacity to accommodate 4.5 million passengers per year and with capacity in the airfield infrastructure to cater for much more, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The direct, international connectivity provided by Shannon Airport has been a critical factor in the decision of many multinationals to base operations in the Midwest and adjacent regions. As a result, Shannon's catchment area is home to the largest concentration of multinationals outside Dublin. Shannon airport has the largest cluster of aviation and aerospace industry in the country encompassing more than 50 companies, directly employing more than 2,000 staff.

3.5.2 Shannon Estuary and Shannon Foynes Port Company

Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) with the Shannon Estuary as its harbour, extends from Limerick city to the Atlantic Ocean and is Ireland's premium deepwater resource with a channel depth of in excess of 18 metres and connected to all major international shipping lanes. SFPC oversees trade with an annual value of €7.6bn supporting over 3,600 jobs. The existing facilities on the estuary are serviced by the largest vessels entering Irish waters routinely handling large vessels up to 200,000 deadweight tonnes (dwt). Shannon Estuary has a number of substantial deepwater facilities under the authority of SFPC each with significant adjoining landbanks with access to the high voltage electricity network and gas supply. These facilities include the general cargo ports at Foynes and Limerick Docklands as well as the single user jetties at Moneypoint, Tarbert Island, Aughinish and Shannon Airport Aviation Fuels Jetty.

The Shannon Foynes Port is recognised by the European Commission as one of the three core ports in Ireland under the Trans- European Transport Network (Ten – T). In the Government's 2013 National Ports Policy, it is recognised as one of the three Tier 1 ports of national significance. Importantly, this Government Policy identifies the Tier 1 ports as responsible for providing future national port infrastructural capacity.

SFPC is Ireland's largest bulk port and its second largest port operation currently handling in excess of 11 million tonnes per annum. It remains the largest dry bulk port in Ireland and as stated annually facilities trade valued at €7.6bn supporting thousands of jobs. SFPC's masterplan, Vision 2041, was launched in 2013. Vision 2041 is a highly collaborative masterplan outlining, inter alia, SFPC's sustainable capacity requirements out to 2041. The Port company is actively implementing Vision 2041 with a major jetty expansion investment completed in 2016 and is currently preparing a Strategic Infrastructure Planning application for next phase port development in line with Vision 2041. SFPC also controls significant parcels of land within the docklands area of Limerick city. SFPC intends to launch its collaborative Limerick Framework Strategy shortly coordinating the development of its extensive port and non-port assets at Limerick.

The Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary was commissioned in 2011 by Clare County Council, Kerry County Council, Limerick City and County Councils, Shannon Development and Shannon Foynes Port Company. It was overseen by a multi-agency Steering Group comprising of the above, and other key stakeholders with an interest in the Estuary. The SIFP designated 9 Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) for marine related industry will act as catalysts during the lifetime of the NPF, to act as game changers in regional development and position not only the Mid West region but Ireland as a global marine transport hub. These SDLs are a unique national maritime asset as the land within the SDLs adjoins specifically identified sheltered deepwater (>15m depths) sites on the Shannon Estuary. Supporting these SDLs, the relevant local authorities have adopted the recommendations of the SIFP by varying their County Development Plans and by zoning the land within these SDLs for marine related development.





3.5.3 Energy Generation and Transmission

The region is a net contributor of renewable energy, building on a proud tradition of Ireland's first renewable energy power station in Ardnacrusha in 1927. Moneypoint electricity generating station is a national asset generating and transmitting electricity to Dublin across the range of electricity and grid infrastructure serving the region and beyond. In 2015 ESB International announced a test site off Co. Clare coast for an off-shore Wave Energy test site, whilst tidal action renewable energy investigations are anticipated in the Shannon Estuary. The region has the highest wind speeds in the country and access to the existing grid is readily available. The Limerick and Clare Energy Agency and Tipperary Energy Agency are established as key agencies in the research of renewable energy whilst collaboration with University of Limerick and the Marine Institute in NUIG is further examples of collaborative relationships in the region. The plan-led approach to renewable energy development in the region has and will continue to ensure that renewable energy opportunities can be exploited to its potential whilst still protecting and responding to ecological and community sensitivities.

The Shannon Estuary is recognised as a significant economic driver in the region with strong economic and development policies focused on growing its potential. This is very much recognised by the Universities in the region as they have launched a suite of complementary undergraduate energy programmes thereby expanding the population of skilled workers and graduates with energy knowledge/training. They have also signed a memorandum of understanding with a group of leading firms in Silicon Valley with the aim of creating a "world-class cluster" of sustainable and renewable energy companies between Galway and Limerick. This initiative has been named the Shannon Energy Valley.

CAPACITY:

Development of the planned infrastructure in the region is critical for the overall growth of the region as it supports the economic prosperity and potential of the country into the future.

- Shannon International Airport has the ability to immediately relieve the congestion in Dublin Airport. Existing infrastructure has the capacity to deal with 4.5 million passengers without additional investment. Passenger numbers in 2016 was 1.74 million. Investing hundreds of millions of Euro of infrastructure in Dublin airport to increase capacity would limit the ability to deliver wider capital works, while not realising the capital investment previously made in Shannon Airport.

Shannon International Airport can be developed into a national cargo hub, utilising its runway and hanger capacity and its ability to handle 24 hours operations (unlike Dublin). Shannon International Airport could also be developed into a centre for transit flights, utilising capacity at the pre-clearance and customs clearance facilities currently located at Shannon.

- With the completion of the Limerick to Foynes Road Scheme, the SFPC ports can offer highly efficient, flexible port services to a much larger hinterland, particularly toward the east of the country and offer viable alternatives to existing freight congestion in the greater Dublin area.

In excess of €200m has been invested by the port and its customers from 2009 – 2014 and it is projected that an additional €277m will be invested in the period 2014 – 2019⁴. SFPC estimates that on completion of the port's current investment programme, there will be a maximum of 2.3 million tonnes of available capacity at the Port of Foynes. In order to satisfy tonnage growth beyond this limit, SFPC has identified the need to construct a new deep water jetty. Consistent with the SIFP, the LCCC CDP and Vision 2041 Foynes Island is the preferred location for this deep water jetty.



3.6 Education and the knowledge economy



Ireland's worldwide reputation for high quality education is built on the solid foundation of many centuries of commitment to educational excellence. The Mid West Limerick City Region combines this rich history with being one of the most globalised regions in the world with a range of internationally renowned 3rd level institutes.

University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology / Mary Immaculate, Burren College of Art, Gurteen Agricultural College, Templemore Garda College and the Shannon College of Hotel Management (which is NUIG accredited) are critical drivers of economic development and the fostering of an innovative, knowledge-based economy for the Mid-West Limerick City Region. The University of Limerick, catering for approximately 15,000 students, has developed significantly in recent years on the Clare side of the River Shannon, and now boasts three residential villages along with the Health Sciences and World Academy of Music and Dance buildings, a medical school and the largest all-weather sports complex in Europe. Limerick Institute of Technology is one of 13 institutes that are members of the Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI). The Institute has four campuses in Limerick city, one in both Thurles and Clonmel and a regional learning centre in Ennis, County Clare. The Shannon College of Hotel Management, founded in 1951, is Ireland's only dedicated hotel management college, offering degree programmes and has a world-wide reputation for careers in business and hotel management.

There is significant potential for the University of Limerick to expand further northwards into County Clare into their existing land-bank. The development of the Limerick Northern Distributor Road will provide direct access to the University from County Clare creating a direct link between Shannon International Airport, the businesses and industries in the Shannon area and the university campus. This will significantly enhance the attractiveness of the region from a research, innovation and development perspective. The continued expansion of LIT facilities and campuses into Clare and Tipperary provide for a high-skilled and educated workforce throughout the region and attracting economic investment and retaining the vibrancy of local population. This zone is the subject of a separate submission by the University.

As well as increasing the numbers of students at under-graduate and post-graduate level and attracting more international students and a more diversified student body, UL's strategic plan *Broadening Horizons 2015-2019* has a strong quality agenda. UL aims to be a research-led university characterised by excellence in research, building critical mass in translational research and delivering research that benefits on the economy and society – i.e., research impact. There are three main structures or centres of research activity set up to deliver on this, namely: the Bernal Institute in Science and Engineering; LERO, the Irish Software Research Centre and the Health Research Institute (HRI) – a partnership between UL and the HSE at University Hospital Limerick and also working in collaboration with clinical partners abroad.

Industry engagement structures and strategies are in place to support knowledge transfer and a regional enterprise strategy. The current profile of industry-supporting centres and institutes (e.g., LERO, Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre, Dairy Processing Technology Centre) at UL represent an investment of €130.5 million and 85 industry partners. Collaboration is supporting emerging clusters and industry in the knowledge economy in the region.



Employability of graduates has been a particular strength of UL. This is reflected in its Cooperative Education programme (student work placements in employment as part of under-graduate programmes) and the focus on meeting employer needs across the whole higher education sector. UL has an excellent record in terms of progression of graduates into employment. However, while it is attracting 54% of its student population from Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary, based on the latest graduate survey, some 38% progress to employment in Mid-West region and 60% find employment elsewhere in the state (with the higher proportion finding employment in the Greater Dublin / East region). This represents under-utilisation of the region's human resource potential and shows the importance of creating more work opportunities for graduates in the local and regional economy.

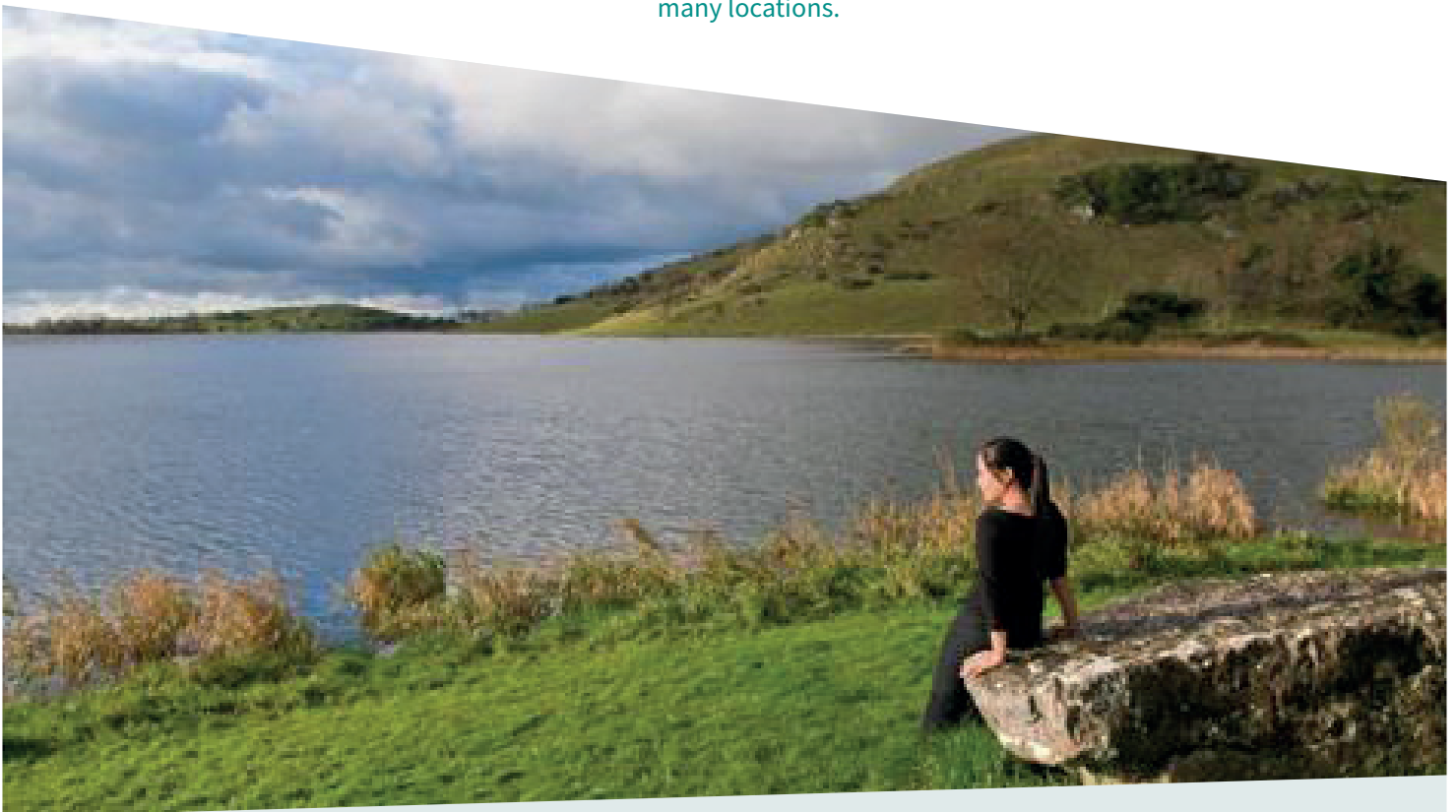
The success of the education and knowledge economy within the region was recently acknowledged following the award of the UNESCO 'learning city' (<http://www.uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/sixteen-cities-receive-unesco-learning-city-award-2017>).

3.7 Health and Wellbeing

The Mid West Limerick City Region is served by a variety of health services including the Mid West Regional Hospital, St. Johns, Regional Maternity, Barringtons private hospital, Nenagh, Ennis, Croom, St. Joesphs physciatric as well as a large network of primary care centres, nursing homes and community related health infrastructure. Capacity exists for increased alliances with University's whilst allied with the permission for a private hospital in Ennis to, and the hierarchy of facilities in the region the health services can expand to cater for the requirements of a Tier 2 city region.

Also, a unique opportunity and scope for integrated planning exists in the Mid West Limerick City Region due to the fact that the Community Health Organisation and the Hospital Group share the same geographical area (unlike any others within the country).

The positive impact of sport on health is well document. The Mid West Limerick City Region has an excellent reputation in the area of sport, with limerick recognised as the European city of sport in 2011. Also, the University of Limerick houses the headquarters of Coaching Ireland, the Irish Sports Council, which has the lead role in the development of coaching in Ireland on an all island basis. Significant opportunities exist within the region to expand on and develop sports tourism at many locations.



3.8 Human Capital

Ireland operates within a global economy and population growth must take place in locations where it can be of greatest benefit to the Country as a whole. The Mid West Limerick City Region is best placed to achieve this ambition.

Preliminary results from the 2016 Census show a population of 385,172 for the Mid West Limerick City Region which represented a 1.5% increase over the five year period 2011 – 2016. Limerick City, which had a population of 94,596 in 2011 and all three counties within the region experienced growth; however in the absence of strong purposeful regional policy, the region has lagged behind the national growth rate of 3.7% over the same period.

Outside of Limerick the largest urban centres in the region are Ennis with a population of 25,360, Shannon with a population of 9,673, Nenagh with a population of 8,439 and Thurles with a population of 7,933. The proportion of the population living in the aggregate town area rose from 41% to 47% over the 25 year period from 1986-2011 but the majority of the population of the Mid-West continue to live in the open countryside or in smaller rural settlements.

The 2011 census demonstrated that the Mid-West Region has a relatively young population with 28% of the population under the age of 20, and close to 50% of the population under the age of 35.

CAPACITY:

Through increased densities, innovative design and change in life style choices Limerick city and environs has existing zoned land available to accommodate in the region of 50,000 additional people in the short term.

Other urban centres within the MWLCR also have the capacity to cater for significant increase in population. With further investment in infrastructure following the review of the capital investment plan in 2021 Limerick and other urban centres will have capacity to cater for significant population growth up to 2040.

3.9 Economic Development & Job Creation



The Mid-West Action Plan for Jobs is an ambitious plan supported by the Department of Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation which aims to create an additional 23,000 jobs in the region by 2020. This government policy contains 157 actions to be delivered through collaborative partnership across various public and private stakeholders, government bodies and private business interests. Teams tasked with identifying potential opportunities for future job growth across their sectors which can deliver job growth & business expansions within the region are currently being formed. The Action Plan for Jobs aims to grow employment by circa 10-15% during the lifetime of the initiative. Additionally, the initiative aims to grow tourist numbers in the Mid-West to 1.26m by 2025; increasing employment in the sector by 25% by 2025.

The region has experienced significant increase in economic development and job creation with an additional 11,000 people at work across the Mid-West by Q4 2016 and the unemployment rate in the Region fell by 26% in 2016 alone.

The economic importance of SFPC to the regional and national economy is evidenced by research undertaken by Indecon on behalf of SFPC. Indecon estimates that the overall value of trade handled by SFPC, amounted to €8.43 billion in 2015. This trade, in addition to the direct and indirect impacts of port-related activities, is estimated to support a total of 104,447 full-time equivalent jobs directly and indirectly across the Irish economy. The growth of SFPC envisaged in Vision 2041 and the promotion of the Shannon Estuary as an international economic hub by taking advantage of what are among the deepest and sheltered harbours in Europe & the world will also lead to significant job creation.

In terms of capacity within the Mid West Limerick City Region; additional job creation will require net in-migration; the number of persons available on the live register will not meet this growth in demand for people. Therefore it is imperative that the NPF facilitates the investment needed to enhance the infrastructure capacity of the region to accommodate this population growth to 2017 and beyond. History shows us that in the past 18 years the labour force and employment levels have grown in the region by almost one-third; if this trend continues at a very minimum at historic levels infrastructure to accommodate an additional 49,000 persons in employment will be required. (ref CSO QNHS Q1 1998 vs Q4 2016)

CAPACITY:

In terms of capacity; an additional 49,000 jobs will require net in-migration; the number of persons available on the live register will not meet this growth in demand for people. Therefore it is imperative that the NPF prioritises investment in infrastructure that facilitates the population growth to this region.

3.10 Tourism

The sustainable and successful development of the tourism industry is critical to the economy of the Mid-West Limerick City Region. Unlike most industries, where goods and services are transported to the consumer, in the case of tourism, consumers travel to the location of the product in order to enjoy it. It is this differentiating feature of tourism that provides its strength as an agent of balanced regional development. Most of Ireland's most popular tourism destinations are located within the Mid West Limerick City Region – UNESCO Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Loop Head, Bunratty, Lough Derg and St. Johns Castle and Limerick City of Culture. Recent initiatives such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Irelands Ancient East build on and promote the natural and cultural attractions, vibrant towns and villages and contrasting landscapes, all of which are easily accessible to both national and international visitors. The Lough Derg Marketing Group is also an example of where development of the lake is taking place in a coordinated manner within the region. The full restoration of the Errina Canal bounding the University of Limerick's campus is a project of key significance in the context of the Region's tourism strategy. The project is detailed further in a separate submission by the University.

The NPF, through other measures set out in our submission e.g. infrastructure, increased capacity of Shannon Airport, road and rail accessibility, will serve to maximise the potential of tourism to create a sustainable economic and social resource. More specifically, branding and reimagining of the Shannon Estuary and its islands as tourism and recreation destination, the promotion of our greenways, the focus on place making and sustainable tourism in the Limerick and Ennis, the promotion of the Burren as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Munster Vales should be given prominence. The collaboration between Local Authorities in the region and tourism agencies to develop attractions such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Irelands Ancient East and the development of a Shannon Estuary Loop should be promoted.

CAPACITY:

The Mid West Limerick City Region has capacity in its tourism assets and in particular the further development of the Wild Atlantic Way and Irelands Ancient East.

3.11 Quality of life – rural towns and villages

Strong and vibrant rural towns and villages are essential to effective regional development. Towns and villages are the heart of the Mid West Limerick City Region. They provide services, social opportunities, employment and infrastructure. Most importantly they are home to a network of communities, each of which has its own unique identity, with each one contributing to the overall identity of the Region.

Each town and village in the region performs a different function, with large towns such as Ennis, Shannon, Nenagh and Tipperary driving economic growth in their hinterlands, complementing the role of Limerick city while smaller settlements such as Kilrush, Newcastle West, Kilmallock are important service providers for their resident populations and focal points for the surrounding rural communities. The rural towns and villages are key areas for enhanced quality of life, employment centres and social and economic drivers in a sub-regional context and tourist destinations in their own right. Moreover the region has a necklace of town centres as a model for attractive sustainable residential, commercial and retail development.

With increased focus on quality of life and work life balance projections indicate future trends toward higher levels of home and e-working business models. The Mid-West is uniquely attractive in the solutions available to address congestion and talent challenges that exist in the over-populated capital city as well as alleviating pressures on other urban centres across the country who do not have the infrastructures to deal with current, never mind future, capacity.



3.12 **Climate Change/ Low Carbon Economy**

While opportunities exist to maximise the potential of the regions, this must not be done at the expense of the natural environment. The development of a low carbon economy has the ability to ensure that all parts of the Country can play a part in future prosperity.

Responding to climate change and developing a low carbon economy will require the Country to identify new ways to enable improved performance to achieve outcomes that make a difference at a national scale. Structural changes will be required to help transition to a low carbon sustainable economy and society. Growth must be balanced with more sustainable approaches to development. The business as usual model with continued urban sprawl and concentrating Irish investments around Dublin without fully utilising other national assets within the City Regions is not sustainable. Regional Cities have the ability to allow for the continued economic growth and prosperity which the Country requires while also providing Ireland with a mechanism for meeting its international Climate Change Targets.

Within the Mid West Limerick City Region, statutory bodies have been at the forefront of addressing climate change challenges. The establishment and growth of the Tipperary Energy Agency and the Limerick/Clare Energy Agency has demonstrated that local authorities supported organisations can deliver in this area. Tipperary County Council is the most energy efficient Local Authority in the Country, having reached 35% of its energy performance improvements by 2015 (target was 33% by 2020). The three Local Authorities in the region are part of the Covenant of Mayors and are developing sustainable energy action plans, to work with households, businesses and communities to reduce emissions and improve energy performance. This region has shown a commitment and has demonstrated its ability to meet its climate change obligations. Ireland needs to support a transition to a low carbon and climate change resilient economy through investment in strategic infrastructure and the development of sustainable interlinked settlements and communities. The Mid West Limerick City Region is in a position and has the structures in place, to deliver on the need to grow the economy while protecting the environment and tackling climate change.

4.1 Create Ireland's tier 2 city region

4

Strategic Aims and Actions

In order to cement the Mid West Limerick City Region's position as Ireland's tier 2 city region and maximise its benefit to the entire Country a series of strategic aims and actions in the NPF must be identified and implemented. These are set out below.



4.2 Effective Regional growth and collaboration with Dublin

It is apparent that the business as usual model is not a long term viable proposition for the growth of Ireland to 2040 and that City Regions must collectively harness shared strengths, combine assets and provide co-ordination to improve regional performance, complementing Dublin ultimately for the benefit of the Country.

The NPF should positively pursue a rebalancing of growth and investment in a sustainable manner, so that Dublin can continue to play its international role, while being complemented by a significantly strengthened role for the next tier of city regions, and supported by a network of rural settlements and areas.

The ability to deliver City Regions of a scale which will make important contributions to national prosperity will benefit the Country as a whole. Equally, there is a need for the City Regions to work together to maximise investments in key infrastructure and to achieve value for money.

The Atlantic Corridor concept was set out in a number of papers in 2007. While it was not fully developed, the idea of linking up the main cities to maximise synergies and to provide a counter balance to Dublin, remains valid today. Targeted and prudent investment in key assets which can provide the highest level of returns to the exchequer and serves the greatest number of people through maximising its sphere of influence is vital. Whether it is centres of excellence in health and education, infrastructural connectivity, or housing provision, the return on money invested can be maximised if it results in effective regional development and affects a wider spatial area.

The Mid West Limerick City Region combined with Galway and Cork cities presently contain approximately 1.2m people. With the completion of road infrastructures connecting these three cities, drive time connectivity will be greatly reduced. With the increased use of autonomous vehicles and ride and car share it is almost impossible to predict the impact that this will have on travel movements in 20 years time, suffice to say it will vary significantly from movements that are the norm in 2017. These three City Regions offer the potential to harness shared strengths, combine assets and provide co-ordination to improve the overall regional performance of the Atlantic Corridor to complement the Dublin City Region - absorbing some of the pressures that the Capital has been subject to in terms of population growth, growth in employment and infrastructural requirements.

However, capital spending must be aligned with the need to transition to a sustainable, low carbon economy and society. It cannot occur everywhere. Geographically, the Mid West Limerick City Region has the potential to service not only its own region but also to provide high quality services to the populations of both Cork and Galway as well. Therefore it is advocated that due to its strategic location the Mid West Limerick City Region has the capacity to grow to 800,000 by 2040, with supporting infrastructure and investment. The Limerick City Metropolitan area should be supported to cater for a population of 300,000.

Through connectivity and collaboration with Dublin, a second central location, along the Atlantic Corridor, for centres of excellence in health and education, together with maximising the potential for air and port connectivity, can achieve the highest value for money return for the exchequer.

Noting the proposals to investigate the possibility of a 3rd terminal at Dublin Airport and the substantial costs involved, it is important to note that there currently exists in Shannon International Airport the capacity for an additional c.2.5 million passengers per year. Shannon International Airport currently serves 40% of the Country's population within its catchment by motorway. Using existing infrastructure and unrestricted operational hours, it is strongly advocated that the NPF would set a clear vision with transport and aviation policy aligned to NPF, supporting and maximising the use of the existing national asset and infrastructure at Shannon International Airport, which could be utilised to cater for the additional capacity requirements of air traffic into the state without the need for significant capital investment at Dublin Airport.

Moreover not only would minimal physical investment but strong regional and transport benefit the Mid West Limerick City Region but it will maximise the significant potential that the Galway and Cork City Regions have. The existence of existing capacity in key infrastructure would allow for a high return for initial minimal investment.

- Shannon International Airport can deliver an additional 2.5 million passengers utilising existing infrastructure.
- Shannon Foynes Port has the capacity to handle an additional 9 million tonnes of cargo. Additionally, the SIFP for the Shannon Estuary has designated 9 strategic development locations in Ireland's deepest waters.
- University of Limerick with its significant land bank can develop as a next generation 3rd level institute, accommodating and attracting foreign direct investment and additional population attracted to centres of excellence and the knowledge based economy.
- Mary Immaculate college/St. Patrick's College Thurles and Limerick Institute of Technology could accommodate students with further investment within its campuses, building on its traditions and international reputation whilst also serving a social and educational function to the city region and rural areas.

- Limerick Institute of Technology has a comprehensive multi-campus development plan for its facilities located throughout the region. This plan includes the development of a number of new campuses in Limerick City, Ennis and Tipperary – the subject of a separate submission - with a focus on flexibly meeting the specific skills needs of industry, businesses and enterprises in the area, building on the long tradition of LIT in meeting such needs.

ACTIONS:

- Prioritise the Mid West Limerick City Region as Irelands tier 2 city region. The growth of the region shall include for the provision of high quality services.
- Maximise the capabilities of the City Regions by ensuring that capital investment takes place at locations where it can provide the greatest value for money and serve the highest numbers of people.
- The NPF should proactively promote and harness the potential of Shannon Airport's capacity and its motorway connectivity to 40% of the Country's population.
- The NPF should proactively promote and harness the potential of SFPC and the Shannon Estuary as a significant opportunity for the Mid West Limerick City Region and Ireland by virtue of its deep waters which are unrivalled in a national and European context.
- The City Regions of Galway/Limerick/Cork along the Atlantic Corridor to work together to develop a strong regional complement to Dublin.
- Maximise finite land resource through higher densities within Limerick City and other urban centres so that trends of the past are not replicated. Higher densities should be linked with the provision of high quality amenities. It is considered that the Mid West Limerick City Region could achieve this requirement and has the capacity to grow to 800,000 by 2040. Within this area the Limerick City Metropolitan area has the capacity to grow to a population of 300,000.
- Maximise the capacity which exists within existing public infrastructure within the Mid West Limerick City Region.
- Utilise capacity at Shannon Airport to bring additional visitors to Ireland and in particular the Atlantic Corridor and the Wild Atlantic Way.
- To support effective regional development of the area the NPF should prioritise the implementation of CFRAMs in the areas targeted for significant population growth.

4.3 Smart Economy

For the past two decades advances in ICT and digital technologies have changed the world: the Internet, mobile communications, social networks and the “cloud” have changed us into a connected, “always on” society with new expectations on how we seek and find information, how we access education and services, how we work, how we engage with our peers and how we communicate. In Ireland, the value of the digital economy has been estimated to be €12.3b or 6% of GDP and it is expected to grow to €21.4b by 2020. There are over 100,000 people employed in the digital economy (Indecon 2016).

A Smart Region means a better engaged society through digital channels, better services and digital services, enhanced management of the region based on insights derived from better use of data and the Internet of Things, broader educational opportunities, and improved equality and diversity in access to, and use of, the knowledge economy. This approach will result in new value added knowledge driven jobs, enhanced sustainability of the social, economic and physical development of the region, better resilience to external shocks (environmental, economical, physical) leading ultimately to a better quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors. Many cities have developed digital strategies to ensure the future sustainability and diversity of their economies and to take advantage of the opportunities created by the knowledge and digital economy. They future proof existing enterprises, aim to attract further investments, stimulate job creation and deliver economic growth. Limerick City and County Council is in the process of developing a digital strategy which will ensure it is prepared for the digital age.

The NPF needs to anticipate changes in work practices and social interactions. More people will be shopping online; there will be growth in online interactions such as doctor visits, access to services, etc. The costs of shopping online, the delivery charges and delivery times will decrease through the use of drones leading to more profits being made by companies that use the Internet and transact online. Autonomous vehicles will have massive impact on society at many levels. There will be an increase in the use of robotics which will replace work currently carried out by lower paid workers. With the emergence of new technology it is also likely that people will constantly need to re-train and change careers during their working life, which will have consequent impact on education. To stimulate innovation and new services the NPF will need to continue and expand the supports for start-ups.

Actions need to be put in place in the NPF to ensure the community and fabric of society is not only maintained but better prepared for the digital age and the new industry.

ACTIONS

- Develop coordinated digital & smart region strategies at regional and local level
- Continue the investment in digital infrastructure such as the National Broadband Plan, Public WiFi, Smart CCTV, fibre deployments, data infrastructures and the Internet of Things.
- Develop digital transformation programs in the public sector with the view to increase the number of online services provided by the public sector on a “digital first” principle;
- Develop cross agency digital services and citizen experience while enhancing privacy and data protection as required by the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016
- Develop digital platforms for citizens and businesses to transact and provide services in the Digital Single Market
- Develop work practices that take advantage of the availability of new data and analytics capabilities leading to better management of the region (traffic, parking, air/water/soil quality, emergency response, etc.)
- Continue to expand the use of digital consultation platforms in order to enable an increasing number of citizens to participate in the development of their communities and to inform appropriate actions and investments at local level;
- Develop new collaboration practices between local and regional stakeholders using digital technologies and enhancing knowledge management;
- Further develop and enhance the supports for start-ups and local companies to take advantage of the digital economy;
- With increase in new technologies and the use of robotics there is a need to put in place policies and objectives to ensure the community and fabric of society is maintained.
- Invest in capital infrastructure projects which ensure that industry and research in Ireland collaboratively work to ensure the country has the capacity and capability to innovate and deliver global technology solutions. Such Centres of Excellence need critical mass and priorities in relation to the geographic positioning of such investments must be made on business needs, not political desires.

4.4 Education and knowledge based economy

International experience of the development of universities and, in particular, those universities whose strategic mission focuses on knowledge transfer, indicates that their hinterland adapts quickly to become a focus for development arising from, and complementary to, the existence of the university. The potential of such hinterlands in terms of economic and social development is significant.

The identification of the expansion of University of Limerick north of the River Shannon into their significant land bank, the completion of the LNDR and continued expansion of LIT campus into the region are immediate-gains that the NPF should prioritise, to realise the vision of the Limerick City & Mid-West Region as a world-class learning research and development hub and leading centre for the localisation of globalised development.

ACTIONS:

- The availability of primary and secondary schools at a range and variety of locations and sizes is a key selling point for attracting families and inward investment to the region. The NPF should ensure that there is continued collaboration between the relevant agencies, such as Planning and the Department of Education.
- Having regard to the multinational and attractiveness for the Mid West Limerick City Region for intentional investment, the prioritisation of an International Language school should be identified.



4.5 Natural resources

While Ireland is not short of natural resources, ensuring good environmental stewardship of these resources by avoiding any further deterioration and addressing existing deficiencies will be key during the lifetime of the NPF.



Agriculture is not only a way of life but a substantial employer and a big business. It contributes to emissions, but it is core to many businesses which operate in both rural and urban areas. The growth of artisan food production is complimentary to the development of larger scale farming operations. Continued innovation in farming practices and technologies must be supported while ensuring that Ireland's reputation for the production of high quality food is not put at risk. With the world population forecasted to reach over 9 billion by 2040 (UN department of economic and social affairs) the production of food to feed this population will be a key issue over the next 20 years. Serving this global market will ensure sustainability and job growth for the country. Ireland must ensure that its highly productive lands and natural resources are not comprised through inappropriate development. Countries with the ability to produce high quality foods and to innovate in the production of food technology will have the economic advantage in the coming decades.

The MWLCR is at the centre of the "Golden Vale" and has some of the best farming land in the Country. Limiting the carbon footprint of food is likely to become central to food production in coming years and offers an opportunity for rural areas to grow and thrive.

Given its diverse landscapes and varied natural environment, the Mid West Limerick City Region is well placed to become a pilot location for the development and roll out of new technologies and solutions. The Silvermines in Tipperary has been identified as a location for the development of a 350MW bulk storage hydro-electric station; Lisheen Mines in Tipperary has been identified in the Mid West Action Plan for Jobs as a Strategic Energy Hub and Mount Callan in Co. Clare has been identified for a Pumped Hydro Electricity Scheme complementing the existing regional scaled Wind Energy Development.

The Shannon Estuary is one of Irelands greatest natural resources offering naturally deep and sheltered waters which facilitate the largest commercial shipping vessels on the Ireland of Ireland. With a market share of over 35% of Irelands bulk market SFPC is a critical hub in Ireland Inc's supply chain. Due to its unique advantage of uncongested deep water and the persistently clear trend of ever larger ships, SFPC has significant potential for growth. In order to realise this growth and deliver on its significant economic potential the NPF should clearly identify, support and promote its standing as a Tier 1 Port as prioritised in the 2013 National Ports Policy.

The SIFP is further evidence of the capacity of the existing agencies to collaborate and implement a regional approach to a strategic national assist. The NPF can further give effect to this by designating the Shannon Estuary as the primary marine related centre in the west of Ireland. The Estuary and the Port facilities should be promoted for the testing, research, manufacturing, storage, assembly and deployment of marine energy devices and other technological devices. Branding of the Estuary as an Ocean Energy Hub is appropriate.

ACTIONS:

- While recognising the importance of retaining and sustaining communities within rural Ireland, where possible future growth should take place in the nearest towns and villages.
- Although some development can take place through the use of on-site effluent treatment, Irish Water may need to set aside funding to expand or provide treatment plants within these rural towns and villages in order to allow for their future growth. This funding should be separate to the larger scale investments required in the towns and cities.
- Use of technology and innovative farming practices to reduce the carbon foot print of food. The Mid West Limerick City Region is at the centre of food production in Ireland and has the ability to link into the connectivity which the Mid West offers to quickly get food to national and international markets.
- Support initiatives for farms to be energy self sufficient by 2040. In this regard build on the energy agricultural conference run by Tipperary County Council and others.
- Protect highly productive farm land from inappropriate development and to designate it as a national natural resource.
- Encourage people to become more self efficient in terms of food production.
- Designate the Shannon Estuary as a key strategic maritime transport gateway.
- Identify locations with immediate capacity for growth in maximising natural resources and renewable and which will provide the greatest return on capital investment made.
- Set benchmarks for efficiency in various farming practices, though education, incentivisation and support with a view that farming operations are energy self sufficient by 2040.
- Support the implementation of the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan.
- Identify the Shannon Estuary as an Ocean Energy Hub.

4.6 Low carbon economy / climate change

The Country must prioritise the development of infrastructure which can deliver national benefits and ensure that Ireland is secured in terms of energy generation following the transition from fossil fuels. Future energy needs will need to be delivered in more sustainable ways. The renewable sector must continue to be more central to meeting the energy demands of the Country.

Within the Midwest Limerick City Region, statutory bodies have been at the forefront of the promotion of renewable energy while protecting our natural and built environment. The establishment and growth of the Tipperary Energy Agency and the Limerick/Clare Energy Agency, into nationally and internationally recognised organisations, driving innovation and research into minimising energy consumption, the promotion of sustainable renewable energy production and increasing long term energy security has been key to the progress which the MWLCR has made. UL and LIT have courses which provide graduates with the skills and expertise to meet the future challenges which the Country will face in this area.


There is a need to address the community ownership of renewable energy projects. Without a mechanism for community ownership, the roll out of renewable energy will be stalled. Tipperary County Council, the Tipperary Energy Agency, Future Analytics and Philip Lee Solicitors received funding from the SEAI for the preparation of a research project on Community ownership of renewable energy projects. This can be made available to the Department if requested.

The impact of climate change has been demonstrated in recent years in a variety of ways, be it rising temperatures, destructive storms and rising sea levels. The start of 2017 has seen shortages of fresh fruit and vegetables as a result of adverse weather conditions in southern Europe. These challenges are likely to continue in coming years and Ireland needs to equip itself to deal with this.



ACTIONS:

- Utilise the existing capacity within the Mid West Limerick City Region to provide growth and development in a sustainable manner without the need for urban sprawl or urban generated rural housing.
- Utilise the experiences and talents within the Energy Agencies within the Mid West Limerick City Region to reach international climate and energy commitments.
- Maximise the capacity in the extensive public transport networks (bus and rail) in the Mid West Limerick City Region to allow for further growth while reducing transport emissions.
- Invest in high quality place-making designs linking employment, residential and community uses within existing urban settlements. The Mid West Limerick City Region would have a number of suitable locations where this could happen.
- Encourage further residential development within smaller towns and villages to maximise existing public investment in these locations, reduce spatial dispersal, retain community facilities and reduce pressures on the rural environment. This may require landowners within villages to be incentivised to release land for housing, or in the event that this does not happen to allow statutory bodies to compulsorily acquire it and make it available for cluster housing. Tipperary County Council is currently preparing cluster guidance for villages and towns and can make these available to the Department on their completion.
- Recommend that energy efficiency design and technology be included in all new houses constructed in Ireland.
- To strive to meet international commitments for carbon reduction.

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- Need to map out potential implications for climate change as a result of rising sea temperatures and destructive storms, including the implementation of the flood defences and measures outlined in the CFRAM reports.
 - Establish a mechanism for community ownership for renewable energy projects.
 - Provide pilot/champion locations for the trial of new technologies and mechanisms for reducing energy consumption in the domestic and business sectors.
 - Support the continued roll out of electric and hydrogen fuelled cars.
 - Pilot the use of district heating systems through the co-ordination of employment and residential development opportunities in the Mid West Limerick City Region.
 - Continue to engage with schools, communities, businesses and households on the importance of renewable energy. All new builds should aim to achieve the highest energy standards.
 - Provide elderly individuals who are at risk of health complications resulting from poor heating systems, with an energy upgrade to allow them to stay in their homes and their communities for longer.
 - Utilise the Public Participation Network to engage communities in energy awareness.
 - Continue to provide supports which enable companies to invest in infrastructures that enhance their energy performance.
 - Enact policies which encourage and reward business use of environmentally sustainable energy uses

4.7 Infrastructure

The Mid West Limerick City Region has the structures in place that are required to facilitate growth including; Local Authorities to oversee provision of houses and other services, third level institutes to cater for increase in third level educational places, IDA and Action plan for jobs to promote job creation, Shannon International Airport to accommodate increase in travel requirements and the Shannon Foynes Port Company to cater for increased activity on the estuary. While there is capacity in key infrastructure to deliver in the medium term there are a number of key infrastructural requirements which are required to assist the Mid West Limerick City Region to meet its potential to become a tier 2 city region. . These are detailed further in separate submissions from the SIFP for Shannon Estuary, Shannon Foynes Port and Shannon Group.

ACTIONS:

Key infrastructural requirements:

Transport—Road Infrastructure:

- A Motorway from Limerick to Cork
- Upgrade the N24 up to and including motorway standard.
- Prioritisation and delivery of the proposed Foynes to Limerick Road Improvement Scheme. The TEN-T regulations, underpinning Shannon Foynes Port's status as an EU TEN-T Core Network Port, includes an explicit requirement that the road network serving a core network port must comprise either motorway or 'express' standard roads. Such connectivity must be in place by 2030 if Shannon Foynes is to retain its TEN-T status.
- Development of a Limerick Northern Distributor Road would benefit regional city interconnectivity and would provide improved access from the region to the University of Limerick and the IDA national technology park, which would also facilitate significant expansion of both areas.
- Motorway Interchange connection from the M7 to Limerick South side. This would require the upgrade of the R509 Chiders Road, to R527 Ballysimon Road to improve better accessibility to the city from the motorway network including public transport infrastructure.
- Upgrade of arterial roads from the motorway network to increase capacity including the provision of public transport infrastructure; which includes for e.g., R527 Dock Road, R445 Dublin Road & R527 Tipperary Road.
- To improve the attractiveness and functionality of our towns as places to live and work in, bypasses are required for the following towns: Adare, Newcastle West, Abbeyfeale, Thurles and Tipperary town.

- Provide an upgrade to the R498 Nenagh to Thurles Road to connect the centre of the Mid West Limerick City Region.
- Ballina / Kilaloe Bridge and connecting road
- The improvement and enhancement of a safe and efficient National Secondary road network in the region is vital to improve the connectivity and attractiveness of many of the regional towns and villages. The following nine National Secondary routes provide vital linkages through the region; N52, N62, N65, N67, N68, N69, N74, N75 & N85. Minor realignments and safety improvement schemes along these routes need to be provided.
- New bridge and road realignment on N85 in Ennistymon and other N85 road realignments including at Kilnamona.



Transport—Rail Infrastructure:

- In order to fully complement the role of Dublin there will be a requirement for a high speed train link between Dublin and Ireland's tier 2 Limerick City region.
- The Limerick to Foynes Railway links Ireland's deepest port to the national rail network. Accordingly, this line should be recognised in the NPF as a national strategic freight link.
- Upgrade of the commuter rail line between Limerick and Nenagh.
- Along with an increase in population there is a need to plan for more sustainable transport modes. In this regard a direct rail link, utilising existing infrastructure, from Shannon Airport, Shannon Town and industrial estate to Limerick City and the western rail corridor, which would include provision of commuter stations at Sixmilebridge, Moyross, Kings Island, the University and the Parkway should be identified as a key piece of infrastructure.

Transport—Bus and Cycling Infrastructure:

- The provision of three high quality QBC/BRT bus routes and bus-based park and ride sites as proposed in the Mid-West Area Strategic Plan 2030 will be required as part of smarter travel options.
- A 10 minute public transport link between Limerick City and the University of Limerick is important in order to ensure connectivity between both.
- Development of high quality off road cycle and pedestrian Greenways around the city and larger urban areas.



Water and Sewerage Infrastructure:

- Irish Water investment plan shall ensure investment takes place to deliver the requirements of the NPF within the 2040 time limit.

Broadband:

- The NPF needs to ensure broadband infrastructures are in place to facilitate higher levels of home working in order to deliver more flexible working models which are becoming more prevalent internationally and also to ensure people are connected.

Shannon Airport:

- Continued development of Shannon International airport as Ireland's second airport for both national and international air travel.
- Fully utilise the available capacity within Shannon Airport to deliver an additional 2.5 million passengers into Ireland. This action requires no further investment and would maximise existing public investment.
- Maximise existing capacity by extending its catchment to become the principle point of access to Ireland for the Atlantic Corridor and Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way.
- Utilise existing Investment in the airport and its surrounding land bank to act as a catalyst for economic growth in the region.
- Build on the success of the National aviation services centre in Shannon to become the world centre for aerospace.
- The 2015 National Aviation Policy should be updated to align it with the NPF, in order that the provision of air connectivity in Ireland supports the development of Second Tier Cities.
- The NPF should support the expansion of the TEN T core network to include Shannon airport, to reflect the importance of air connectivity for the Atlantic Corridors continued development and integration with the rest of the EU.
- Increase direct air connections between Shannon and key European airports through a targeted program of air service assistance development should be supported.

Shannon Foynes Port Company and the Shannon Estuary:

- The Limerick City Region benefits from a National Tier 1 port, generating important economic activity and playing an important role as an enabler of economic growth. The annual economic impact of Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) related activity has reached €1.9bn – equivalent to 1% of Ireland’s entire GDP⁵.
- The economic performance of SFPC is sufficiently important to effect the performance of the Irish economy and the maritime ports strategy. Therefore the NPF should identify, support and promote the Shannon Foynes Port Company standing as a Tier 1 Port as prioritised in the 2013 National Ports Policy.



- Identification of Shannon Foynes Port as a core port in the Trans European Transport Network (TEN- T) guidelines supports its growth and expansion at an international level. However, a key requirement to maintaining “Ten- T Core Port” status is that all core ports must be connected to the Core European rail and road network by 2030. The NPF must prioritise the delivery of the Foynes to Limerick Road Improvement Scheme.
- Ireland and specifically the transport corridor extending from Belfast to Dublin and Cork, has been identified as part of the EU’s Trans-European Transport Network, comprising the core corridor North Sea – Mediterranean Corridor. Presently this core corridor (Belfast through Dublin to Cork) excludes SFPC. In line with Government policy the State is in ongoing discussions to have the EU core network corridor extended to include SFPC. The inclusion of SFPC onto the EU core network corridor would bring significant investment opportunities to the region in the form of FDI potential and enhanced EU funding opportunities and this should be promoted in any national framework plan going forward.
- Develop the port as a transit port with US customs pre clearance building on similar facilities which are in Shannon Airport and catering for middle east and far east shipping.

Public realm and Urban Renewal:

- To support the development of the City, towns and villages increased funding is required to support urban renewal, public realm schemes and also increase greenways within urban areas.

4.8 Deliver Employment Growth and Business Expansion

For Ireland's future economic potential to be reached regional urban centres, which complement and augment the potential of the capital city, must be developed in a planned and sustainable manner. Ireland operates in an intensely competitive global environment, where change is the only constant, and where change can have a transformative impact on our enterprise landscape. The NPF must maximise the opportunities which deliver competitiveness in delivering a balanced and sustainable economy where indigenous and multinational enterprises coexist driving constant innovations and efficiencies.

A plethora of national policies, such as The Action Plan for Jobs 2015–2017 and its associated regional plans, IDA 'Winning: Foreign Direct Investment 2015–2019, as well as Enterprise Ireland policies and funding calls, or more recently the Rural Action Plan, all recognise the importance in ensuring that economic activity cannot be concentrated solely on our capital city and that our regions play a crucial role in enabling our country achieve its full potential.

A key indicator of future potential is historic delivery and track record. The Mid-West region has proven its ability to innovate and re-invent itself, turning adversity to opportunity. Historic examples, such as the Shannon Free Zone prove that we've been delivering world renowned innovations for decades. Most recently the region is at the forefront nationally of collaborating innovatively to drive and deliver solutions. Examples such as Limerick for IT and Limerick for Engineering highlight the strength in private industry collaboration with public body stakeholders, from local authorities and education and training providers, to ensure this region has the skills and innovation to deliver for the future. Such collaborations and co-operations are most successful in regions outside capital cities where geographic and enterprise synergies can be harnessed and supported, where relationships and trust augment economic realities. This collaboration is not limited to public-private co-operations, with local government in showing leadership and vision, from planning initiatives such as the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan to enterprise initiatives such as their financial support for the regional Action Plan for Jobs.

In regard to the Mid-West Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017, it recognises a number of existing enterprise and research strengths in the region including Manufacturing, Aviation, Tourism, Pharma and Agri-Food. While it is paramount to retain existing jobs, the Mid-West is also focused on ensuring that our region builds on its strengths to position itself in line with international trends and enterprise disruptions, from industry 4.0 to e-lancing and everything in-between.

While it is impossible to predict now what business will look like in 20 years, it is imperative that government policies support enterprise and business growth and investment in infrastructure as a pre-requisite to facilitate changing needs. The NPF must be an agile tool which can adapt to changes in business environments, where current technological advancements are advancing at an exponential of 10.

FUTURE TRENDS

Manufacturing retains a proportionately larger share of total regional employment compared to national figures, reflecting the strength of the manufacturing base. Manufacturing processes are now becoming more automated and robotic; IoT technologies and sensors are generating data at exponential rates which is revolutionising the manufacturing process. A strategic future economic growth area for the region is the creation of a National Advanced Manufacturing Centre; delivering for Ireland a Centre of Excellence aligning with models being adopted internationally. Such a facility is most suited to a regional location and with the major urban centres of Ireland located within a 2 hour radius, the Mid-West Limerick City Region is most advantageously positioned to deliver on this national initiative. It ensures the future viability of existing employment as businesses transition to Industry. Such a facility support existing employment, which is particularly concentrated in the medical devices sector, but will also augment future sectoral job opportunities emerging in the region such as Aerospace, Agri-Tech, Sports and Smarter Aging.

Nationally our aging demographic will present key challenges to our public services delivery and finances. However, the aging economy also presents new Smart Aging business opportunities. ISAX, which is headquartered in the region, is an example of how regions can innovatively adapt to deliver new solutions and innovations.

Ireland is globally renowned for its aviation finance sector and 45% of that activity occurs in the mid-west region. A sector that Ireland is yet to compete in at scale globally is Aerospace sub-component manufacturing. Projections suggest that 39,620 new aircraft worth \$5.9 trillion are needed over the next 20 years. Ireland has a very strong level of expertise in precision engineering, owing to our strength in competing and delivering for the Med-Devices sector. With all prudent business planning diversity is critical in oscillating business demand cycles and our indigenous precision engineering companies are looking for new diversification opportunities. The Mid-West is ideally positioned, with Shannon Airport to deliver on the potential growth of this sector. Other regions across the globe, from Toulouse to Bristol are successfully benefitting from this growth market and Ireland needs to position itself as a centre of excellence.

The success of the region is highlighted in a number of recent business expansions and the arrival of new sectors, for example a new media hub for film and TV is in the pipeline to complement the opening of Troy Studios; a 340,000 sq.ft facility located at the former Dell building in the Plassey Technological Park, Castletroy. This world-class facility includes sound stages, production offices, dressing rooms, workshops, props storage, costume areas, hair and make-up rooms and canteen facilities all under one roof and presents a diverse range of opportunities for the creative industries in the region. This initiative supports the delivery of job creation targets as outlined in the Limerick 2030 Plan and the Mid-West Action Plan for Jobs.

ACTIONS:

- Support the creation of a national advanced manufacturing centre within the Mid West Limerick City Region.
- Support the development of Aerospace subcomponent manufacturing in the region.
- Recognise the Mid West Limerick region as a media hub for film and TV.
- Ensure a connected region placing an emphasis on work-life balance enabling higher participation rates in e-working
- Recognise the Shannon Estuary as an internationally economic hub.



4.9 Grow Tourism

The Mid West Action Plan for Jobs ambition is to capitalise on the Tourism assets of the region, which include a large section of the Wild Atlantic Way and Irelands Ancient East, as well as Greenways, Blueways, the Shannon Waterway and Lakes, and the offshore islands, which contributed to attracting 956,000 overseas visitors to the region in 2013 and €248m revenue generated from overseas visitors in the same year. This will grow overseas tourist numbers in the Mid West to 1.26m by 2025, increase overseas tourism revenue in the Mid West to €375m by 2025, and grow employment in the sector by 25% to 2025.

ACTIONS:

- Promotion of the Mid West Limerick City Region for major conferences, sustainable travel and the creation of a year round all weather product.
- Enhance opportunities to develop loops of the Wild Atlantic Way, Irelands Ancient East and the development of a Shannon Estuary Loop should be promoted.
- Develop the Mid West Limerick City Region as a centre point from which to explore the western, southern and midlands of the Country.
- Build on the work of the County Tourism Strategies.
- Open up Lough Derg as the “Gateway to Ireland’s Lakelands”
- Continue to grow and develop the WAW and IAE concepts.
- Increase the number of visitors coming to the Mid West Limerick City Region by 50%
- Investment in the necessary infrastructures to facilitate the growth in tourism numbers to our unique national assets.
- Recognise the potential of the Mid West Limerick City Region for development of Sport Tourism.
- Develop Lough Derg / Shannon River as a distinct tourism offering.



4.10 Health and well being

Health and wellbeing are the outcome of environmental, economic and social factors. Therefore creating healthy communities and enhanced quality of life for all requires building a culture of health, where health is integrated into decisions made in all sectors of society. Health in all policies (HiAP) is an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity. (Helsinki Declaration, WHO, 2014).

In order to create community cohesion and a healthier society Limerick City and County Council has recently employed a Healthy Limerick Co-ordinator. Healthy Limerick is about creating a movement in Limerick city and county where all sectors and levels of society have health, wellbeing and quality of life high on their agendas and are pulling together in their endeavours.

As highlighted in the Issues and Choices document; planning for the requirements of an ageing population is also critical for the future planning of Ireland. The health and well being implications on our aging population needs to be considered. Limerick's "Age Friendly Limerick Strategy, 2015 – 2020" is a good example of best practice in consideration of age friendly policies. The strategy was developed to help Limerick and its communities to become more supportive to older people by addressing their needs across eight themes; outdoor spaces and buildings, transport; housing; respect and social inclusion; social participation; communication and information; civic participation and employment; and community and support services.



ACTIONS:

- The NPF needs to require all policy makers at various levels, departments and agencies to consider the impact of such policies on health and wellbeing. Health needs to be considered from planning stage to implementation and beyond. To achieve this, collaboration between various departments and agencies is required. A good example of this is the Australian program “Healthy Active by Design”.
- Wellbeing factors, issues and needs should be addressed in a collaborative cross organisational manner that makes the best use of resources and actively addresses the health issues amongst all age groups and social groups within the country.
- There is a need to predict and respond to the needs of senior citizens through better management of shared information and the development of Master Data Management Strategies. The National Planning Framework will need to consider how technological developments such as connected health and ambient assisted living can support Health and Well-Being. Such developments support both healthcare (for example, people with chronic diseases, older persons to continue living at home, people who could receive healthcare support through technology) and well-being (for example, people living on their own, those developing nutrition and fitness plans, security monitoring within the home).
- Proposed housing schemes should be planned to a high quality in an inclusive manner for mixed demographic and family life cycle.
- Need for better coordination of national and local age friendly alliances and agencies in order to improve accountability and collective action. This could be achieved through the development of formal governance strategies.
- Policy documents should contain policies requiring universal design guidelines to be included.
- Planning of health services should be linked to the growth of areas.
- Build on the experiences of the Limerick age friendly strategy and utilise the Mid West Limerick City Region as a pilot for addressing the requirements of our aging population.

4.11 Place making and rural sustainability

Whether it is a rural parish, or an inner city community, successful place making is at the centre of creating a better place in which to live and work. It does this by revitalising these areas, enhancing local services, empowering local communities and building better communities.

The increasing integration of the global economy and free movement of people, information and finance has accelerated the pace of change for enterprises. People are increasingly mobile and are making decisions about where they want to work and live – and the war for talent is global. In fighting this war it is quality of life which will set Ireland apart from many of its competitors. Places and communities must be supported and developed to ensure that this advance can be fully utilised. To facilitate this investment in infrastructures, specifically digital connectivity is essential.

4.11.1 Rural place making and sustainability

The Action Plan for Rural Development, entitled, “Realising our Rural Potential”, published by the Government in 2017 recognised that our towns and villages are at the heart of rural communities and should be places where people can live, work, access services and raise their families in a high quality environment. The rejuvenation of towns and villages is supported in this Action Plan and should be supported in the NPF.

Rural Areas support a number of economic sectors, including tourism, food and drink, renewable, and other primary industries. Growth and investment in these sectors relies on the continuing environmental quality of our countryside, support for the settlements and communities within them, infrastructure and the sustainable use of natural resources. Development in rural areas should not be necessarily constrained, but should be more focused to take advantage of improvements in digital linkages and the opportunities this presents for remote working and new enterprises to grow. Rural communities must be sustained and the diverse and challenged rural towns within the City Region must be strengthened and supported.



The Mid West Limerick City Region contains a large number of settlements of varying sizes providing a key asset on which to build. These settlements must be supported and grown in support of the city region, by retaining services in these towns and maximising public investment which has taken place.

Each new dwelling that is built within a town or village, contributes to the long term viability of that settlement. By encouraging appropriate development within the villages, the future sustainability of these settlements can be supported. However, there is also a strong community within one off houses in the Country.

Rural Ireland must be central to actions contained in Ireland 2040 as it contains unique strengths and key assets which must be fully utilised between now and 2040. Rural Ireland has the potential to positively interact with technology change and improve connectivity, such as broadband, to create rural based employment.

ACTIONS:

- Direct urban generated housing to rural towns and villages. These houses could be facilitated on serviced site/cluster developments, offering people the opportunity to construct their own dwellings and thereby retaining employment in the rural construction industry. Tipperary County Council are preparing cluster guidance which could be shared with the Department NPF team.
- Limit rural housing to only those with an essential requirement to live in a one-off house in the Countryside. Alternatively, they should live in nearby towns and villages.
- Need to make towns and villages more attractive places to live, through an enhanced public realm, leisure, education and the support for serviced e.g. schools, shops, pubs, community centres.
- The Rural Action Plan should be endorsed in the NPF.
- Key natural resources i.e. highly productive land, forestry plantations, quarries, high amenity areas should be provided with protection within the NPF. They are limited and cannot be replaced once lost through inappropriate development.

4.11.2 Urban place making

Sustainable communities need to have good social interaction and networks and demonstrate resilience and a shared sense of civic pride and active participation in shaping their local environment.

By developing an improved quality of life offering for people through place-making and design the NPF can provide the opportunities for communities to reach their potential. This can build on work already carried out within urban regeneration schemes e.g. Limerick Regeneration, or as part of the Local Economic and Community Plans.

The Business as Usual model of population growth on the periphery of Dublin, and involving long distance commuting is not sustainable. As mentioned earlier, the Mid West Limerick City Region has a high quality of living, short travel distances and linked urban centres with the capacity to grow and develop immediately, and up until 2040. These settlements would not only work in collaboration with Limerick City, but taken together as the Mid West Limerick City Region, they would work to complement the growth of Dublin and Ireland.

Providing an **identity/branding** to some or all of the towns in the Mid West City Region highlights the opportunities arising in just a few, and offers a clear message on which to build a clear identity within the region. Examples include:





The Mid West Limerick City Region is strategically located at the centre of the Atlantic Corridor Cities of Galway and Cork with a combined population within this corridor of approximately 1.2 million. Working at the centre of this larger grouping of City Regions, the Mid West Limerick City Region has the potential to provide centres of excellence and international connectivity to this wider population, maximising investment in such infrastructure and releasing capacity within the Dublin region.

ACTIONS:

- Utilise capacity within existing urban areas in the Mid West Limerick City Region in order to release capacity within the greater Dublin region.
- Identify significant targets for growth in the areas of population, employment, services and centres of excellence and put in place the policy supports to ensure the delivery of these in the short to medium term.
- Provide improved connectivity between the large towns in the Mid West Limerick City Region and Limerick City so that the urban fabric of the Region works in support of the City and each other.
- Brand each of the towns within the Mid West Limerick City Region around which to develop a town which acts in support of the region as a whole and their individual hinterlands.
- Increase CPO powers for Local Authorities in order to speed up the amalgamation of urban sites for redevelopment.
- Increase the powers of the Derelict Sites Act in order to quickly penalise those who allow their properties to fall into disrepair.
- Build on the Smarter Travel work already carried out in Limerick City and roll it out to additional urban centres.

5

Conclusion

The Local Authorities of Clare and Tipperary County Councils and Limerick City and Council, together with our partners in Shannon Group, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, Shannon Foynes Port Company and Mid West Action Plan for Jobs are pleased to make this joint submission to the Ireland 2040 – Our Plan. Together the Local Authorities and Agencies have the vision, ambition, capacity, statutory remit, governance and proven track record to coordinate and drive the delivery of the NPF into nationally significant economic, social and sustainable developments achieving effective regional development, creating sustainable communities and increasing the quality of life for all who life, work and visit the region.

The strategic location of the Mid West Limerick City Region relative to other cities, positively position it to develop and expand as an engine for growth and to contribute significantly to the international competitiveness of the Country.

It is our vision that the Mid West Limerick City Region can deliver for the Country both nationally and internationally and become a Tier 2 City region, which will build on the strong governance structures that already exist in the region.



