

Opportunities for biodiversity management through the Regional Assemblies

Dr Owen Douglas



Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

How Local Authorities Can Address the Biodiversity Emergency
Limerick, 21-22nd September 2022



Functions of the Regional Assemblies

Strategic Planning

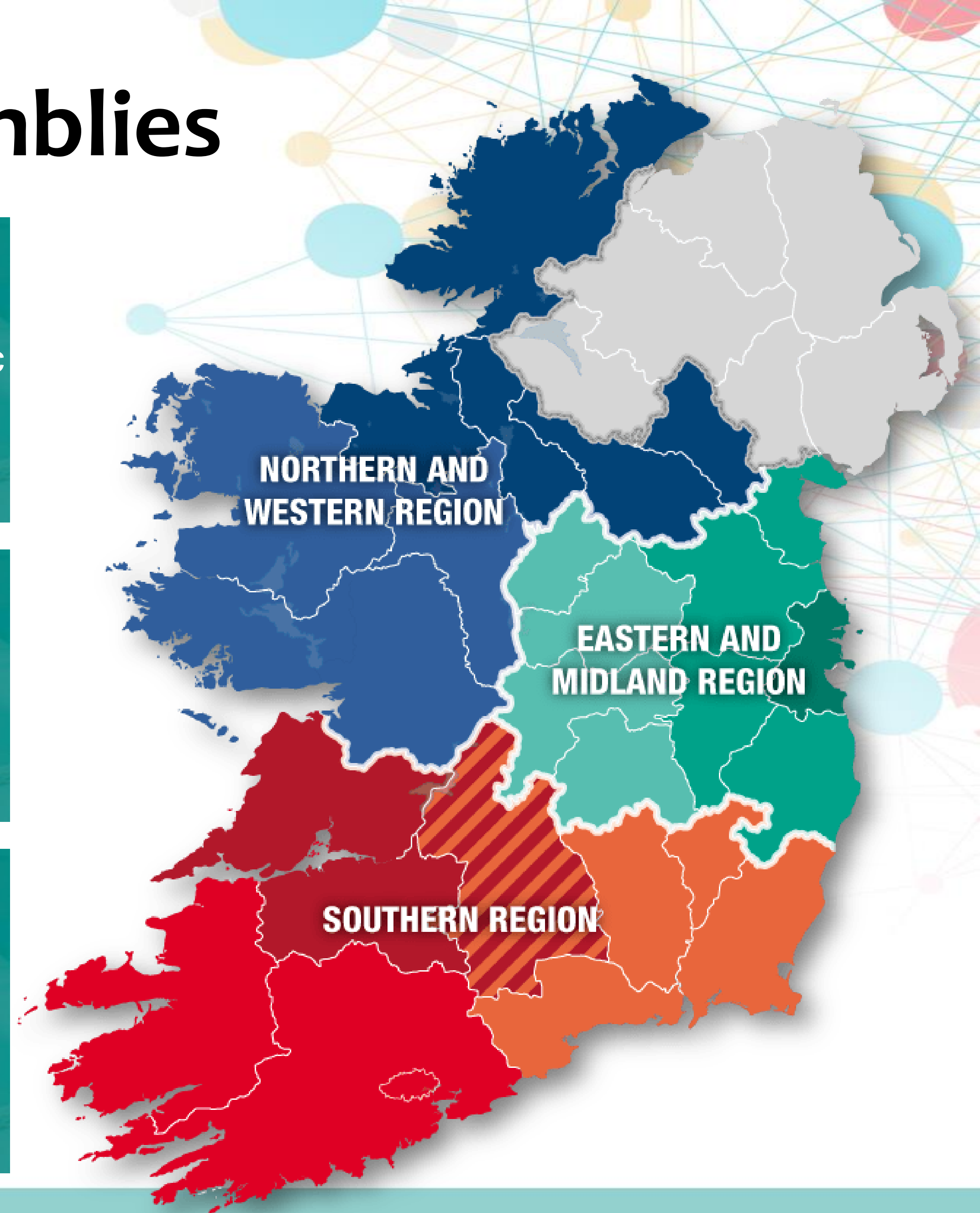
- **Make regional policy** – Co-ordinate, promote and support strategic planning and sustainable development of the regions - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs).
- **Provide oversight** – Make statutory observations on local authority development plans/variations and LECPs.

EU Affairs

- **Manage regional funds**– Regional Operational Programmes, EU Just Transition Fund and Monitoring Committees.
- **Provide supports** – National contact points for EU funding programmes, Committee of the Regions (CoR) and Irish Regions European Office (IREO).

Effectiveness in Local Government

- **Promote co-ordination**– between EU/ National/ Regional and local governance in conjunction with the National Oversight & Audit Commission (NOAC).
- **Develop knowledge** – Support research and development of a robust evidence base for implementation and monitoring.

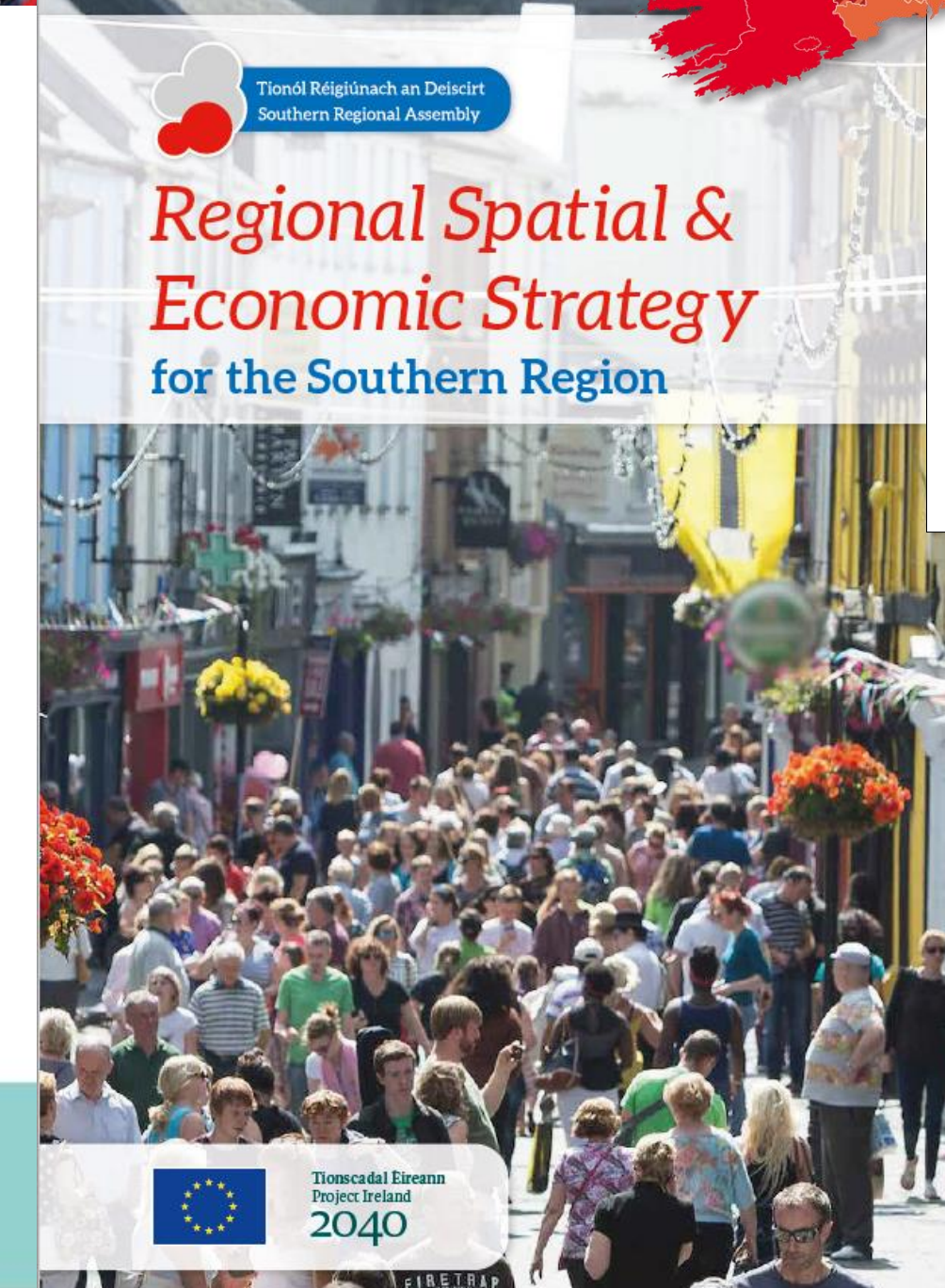


Strategic Planning (RSEs)

Each Regional Assembly has made a 12-year **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**.

The purpose of the RSEs is to translate Project Ireland 2040 to a regional level and provide long-term strategic planning and economic frameworks for the development of each region.

Each RSES has identified the need to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of habitats and native species including landscape and heritage protection; identify, protect and enhance ecosystem services; ensure the sustainable management of natural resources, and; build climate resilience, to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050.



Example: Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) for Protected Areas

RPOs of RSEs that give regional expression to NPO 59 of the NPF: *Enhance the conservation status and improve the management of protected areas and protected species.*

...with specific RPOs related to **protected/designated areas**.



RPO 5.5

Ensure efficient and sustainable use of all our natural resources, including inland waterways, peatlands, and forests in a manner which ensures a healthy society a clean environment and there is no net contribution to biodiversity loss arising from development supported in this strategy. Conserve and protect designated areas and natural heritage area. Conserve and protect European sites and their integrity.

RPO 126

Biodiversity

a. Promote biodiversity protection and habitat connectivity both within protected areas and in the landscape through promoting the integration of green infrastructure and ecosystem services, including landscape, heritage, biodiversity and management of invasive and alien species in the preparation of statutory and non-statutory land-use plans. The RSES recognises the role of the National Biodiversity Data Centre through its Citizen Science initiatives;

REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Biodiversity and Natural Heritage

RPO 7.16: Support the implementation of the Habitats Directives in achieving an improvement in the conservation status of protected species and habitats in the Region and to ensure alignment between the core objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and local authority development plans.

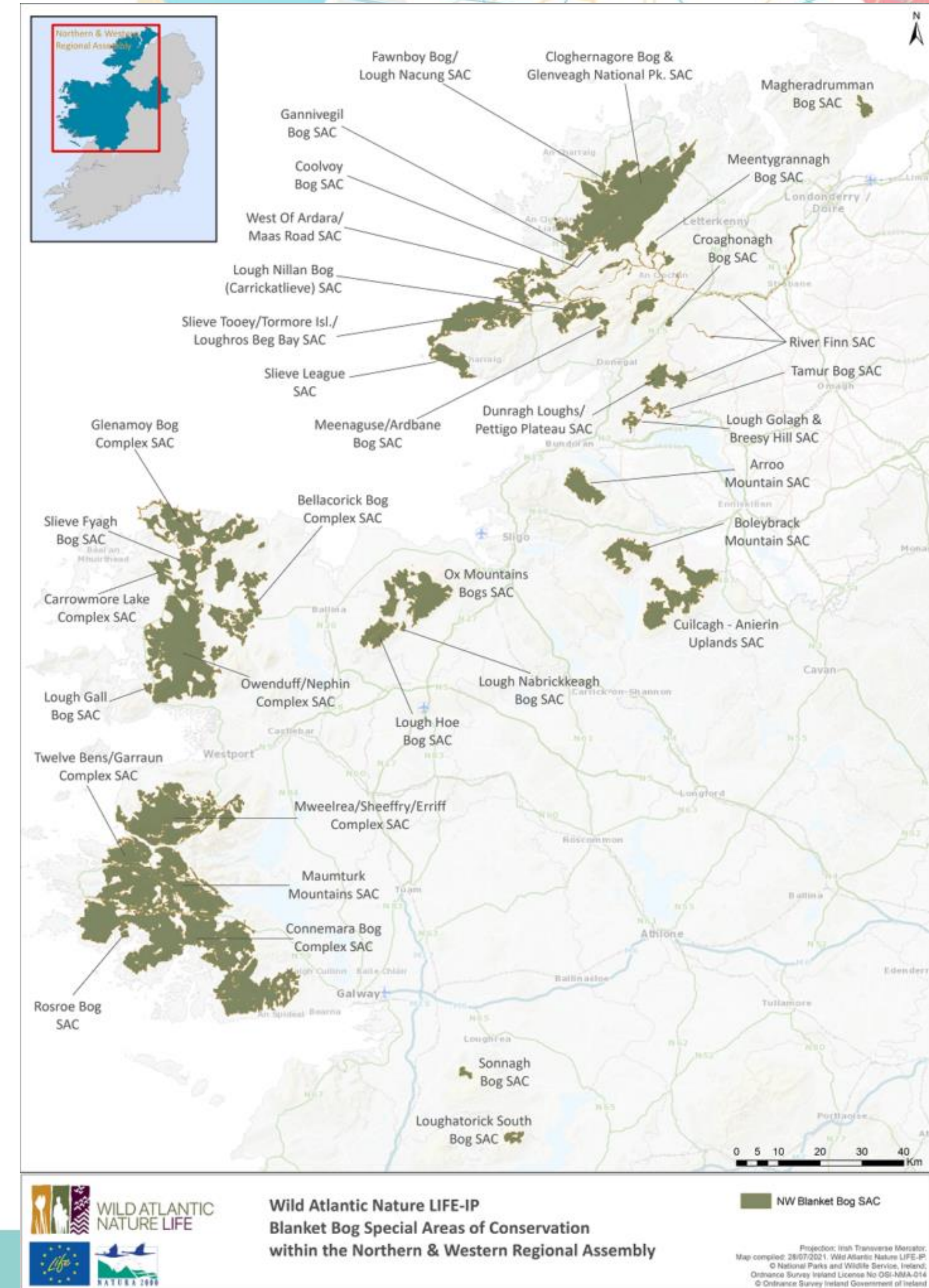
RPO 7.17: Facilitate cross boundary co-ordination between local authorities and the relevant agencies in the Region to provide clear governance arrangements and coordination mechanisms to support the development of ecological networks and enhanced connectivity between protected sites whilst also addressing the need for management of alien invasive species and the conservation of native species.

RSES implementation through project participation

- **Example from NWRA**



- NWRA is one of 9 partners on the WAN Life Integrated Project (IP) 2021-2029 – Total budget €20.6m - 35 project sites.
- Aimed at management of Natura 2000 network, and in particular to improve the conservation status in the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) Network of blanket bog, a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive.
- The project works with farmers and local communities **to conserve and improve the quality of blanket bogs and associated habitats**, and the ecosystem services they provide including clean water, carbon storage and biodiversity.
- **Securing best practice learnings that are shared and inform future actions.**



Land & ecosystem management

Capacity building

Education & awareness

EU Affairs - example



URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme which aims to build the capacity of urban areas to design and implement Sustainable Urban Development strategies.

Local authorities are the main beneficiary, all urban areas in Ireland are eligible.

Two main types of networks

- Action Planning networks: Co-create solutions
- Transfer networks: transfers a good practice

Programme covers: EU 27, Norway, Switzerland & IPA countries

Co-financed by ERDF budget of approximately €110M (€80M ERDF)

**Fact #26:
Urban
biodiversity
strengthens
ecosystem
services**



Marselle, M.R., Lindley, S.J., Cook, P.A. et al. Biodiversity and Health in the Urban Environment. *Curr Envir Health Rpt* 8, 146–156 (2021).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-021-00313-9>

First Call URBACT IV (2021-2027) January 2023 – Open for 3 months

Example projects from 2014-2020



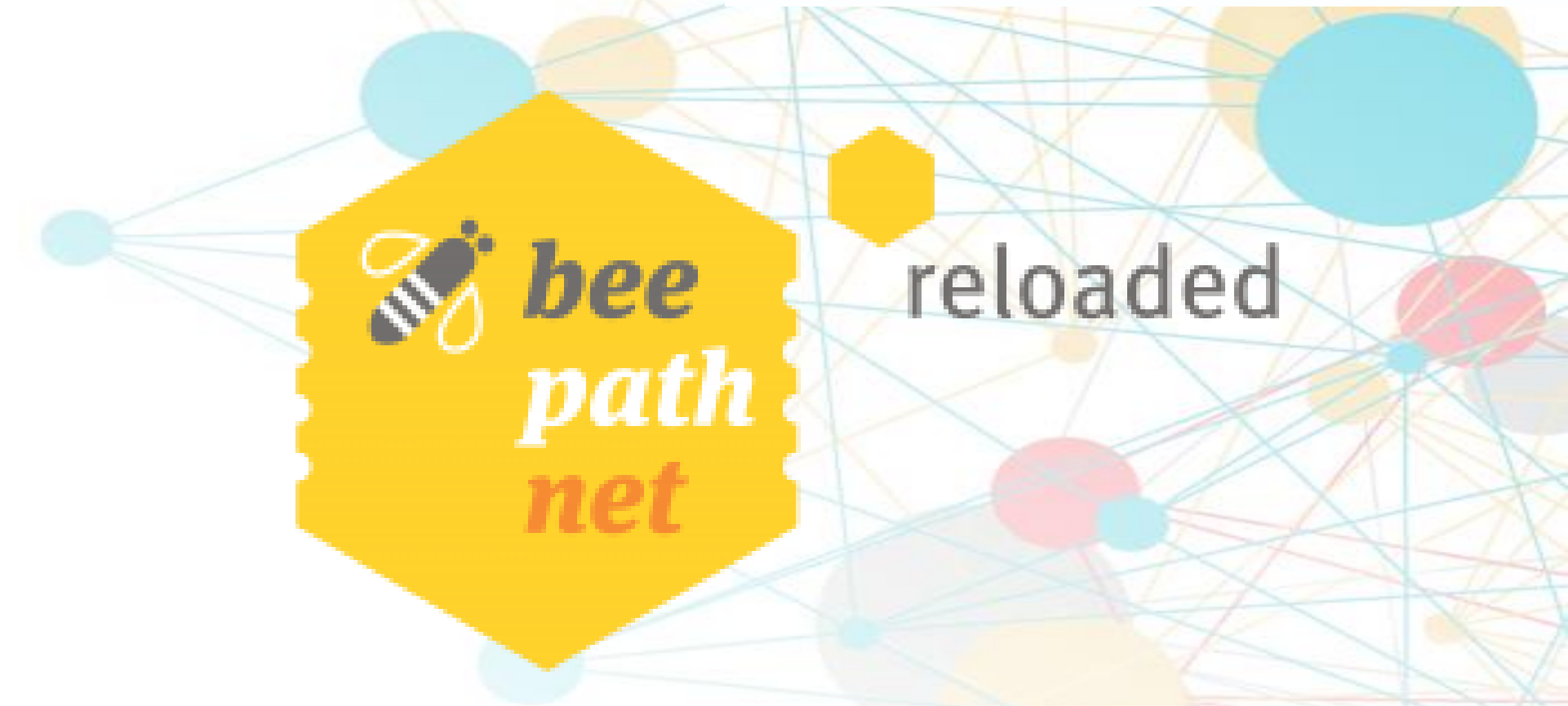
**HEALTH &
GREENSPACE**
*Greener Cities,
Healthier Communities*

Urban agriculture for resilient cities

RU:Rban's Good Practice is the Management model of Urban gardens in Rome to be transferred to newcomer cities that are geographically, historically and socio-culturally distant from each other.

Linking green infrastructure design and management to urban health policies and practices

The project focuses on physical and mental health benefits of urban greenspaces, as well as their role in improving social health and air quality and reducing heat stress in cities. Actions targeted by the network are linked to both physical changes to the urban environment and the promotion of social activities such as community, cultural, education and physical activity programs in green areas.

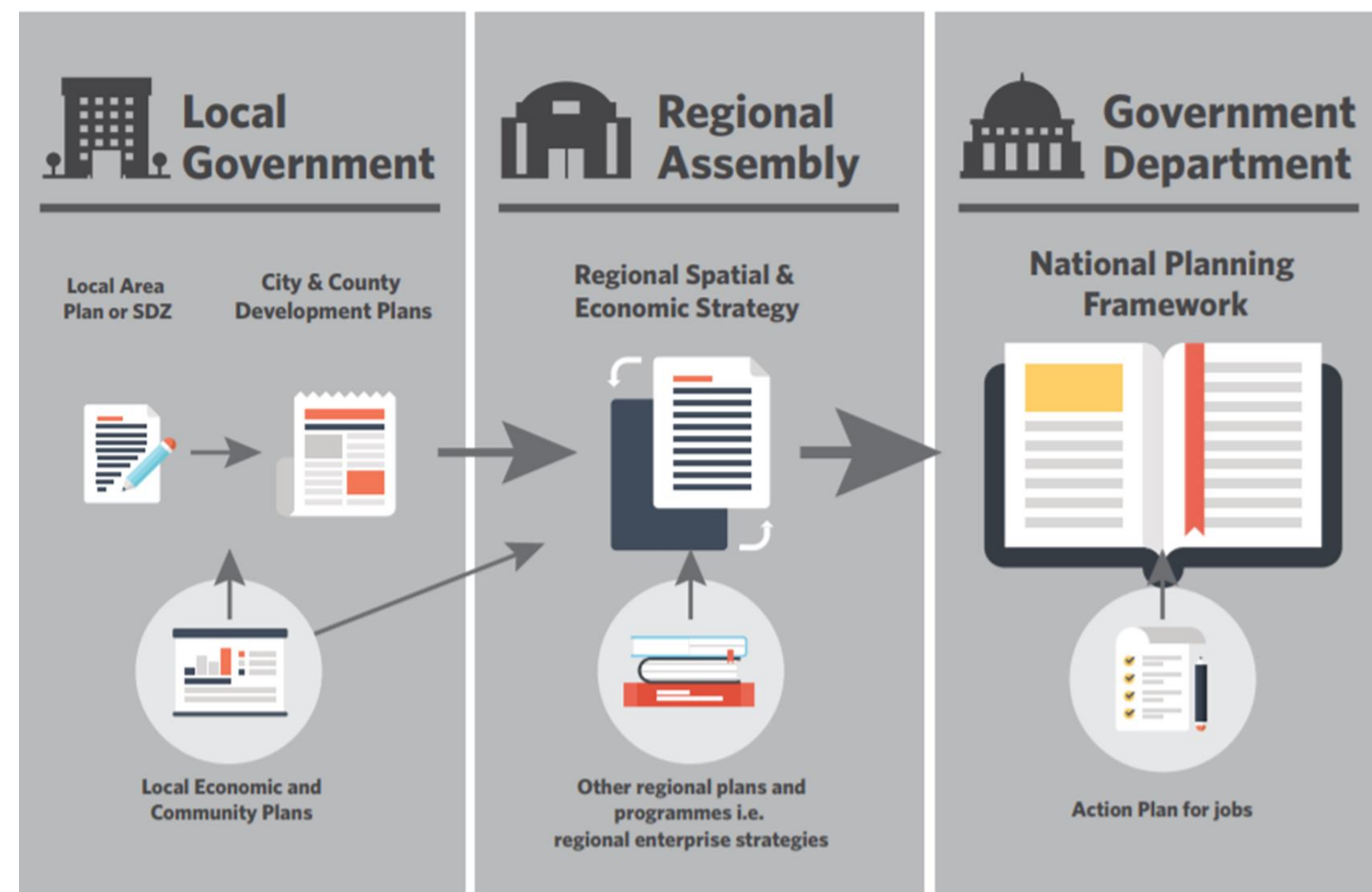


Enriching the Urban Jungle with Bees

Bees are the best indicator of healthy environment! BeePathNet- Expanded project will widen the network of "bee-friendly cities" based on BeePathNet project transfer success. It will address urban environmental, biodiversity and food self-sufficiency challenges linked to urban beekeeping through integrated and participative approaches, build key stakeholders' capacities to influence relevant policies, develop and implement efficient solutions.

Effectiveness in Local Government

- Promoting co-ordination– between EU/ National/ Regional and local governance



- Developing and sharing knowledge – Research and evidence base for implementation and monitoring.



Southern Regional Assembly @SouthernAssembl · Jul 1

Good luck @LGMAIreland on #YourCouncilDay. The theme Climate Change in the Local Authorities. The Regional Assemblies work with LAs on initiatives such as "Bringing Nature into Local Authority Development Plans" SEA Fora hosted by the 3 Regional Assemblies & @EPAIreland #RSES

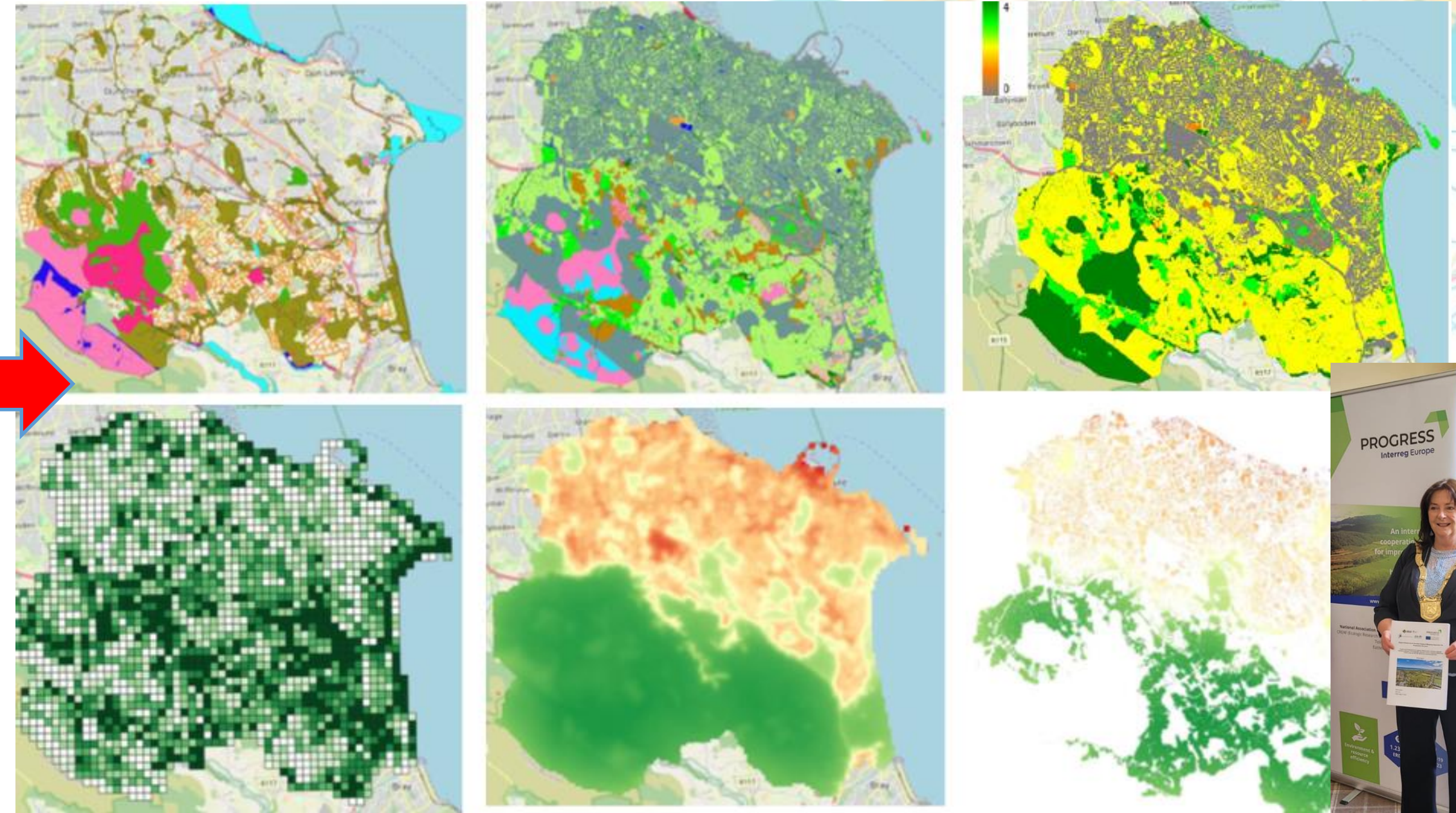
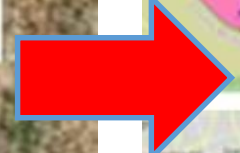


Effectiveness in Local Government

- Example from EMRA



Promoting improved governance for regional ecosystem services



Target 2.1

Increase the area of Council land that is managed in a pollinator-friendly way

Action	Progress measure	Responsibility
<p>31 Increase the number of Regional Assemblies who agree to partner with the Plan and support implementation within local government, where appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are three Regional Assemblies in Rol. Each to be approached on supporting the objectives of the AIPP 2021-2025. Each has a 12 year Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) (made in 2019/2020) containing Regional Planning Objectives (RPOs). These to support implementation of the AIPP 2021-2025 (and vice versa), where appropriate. Each participates in EU projects which involve sectoral, local, regional and international engagement activities. Where thematically relevant, these to promote the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (e.g. the Interreg Europe PROGRESS project on which the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is a partner) 	<p>The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, others to agree</p>



Action 2 - Advance the coordination of a standardised Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Mapping Approach in the Dublin Metropolitan Area

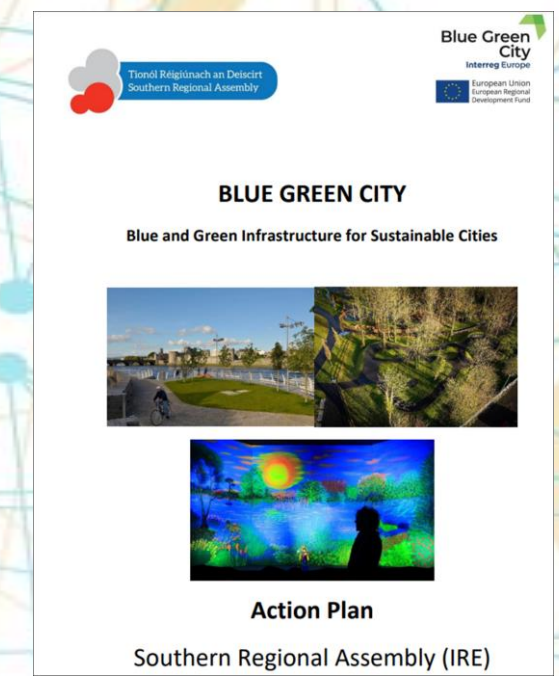
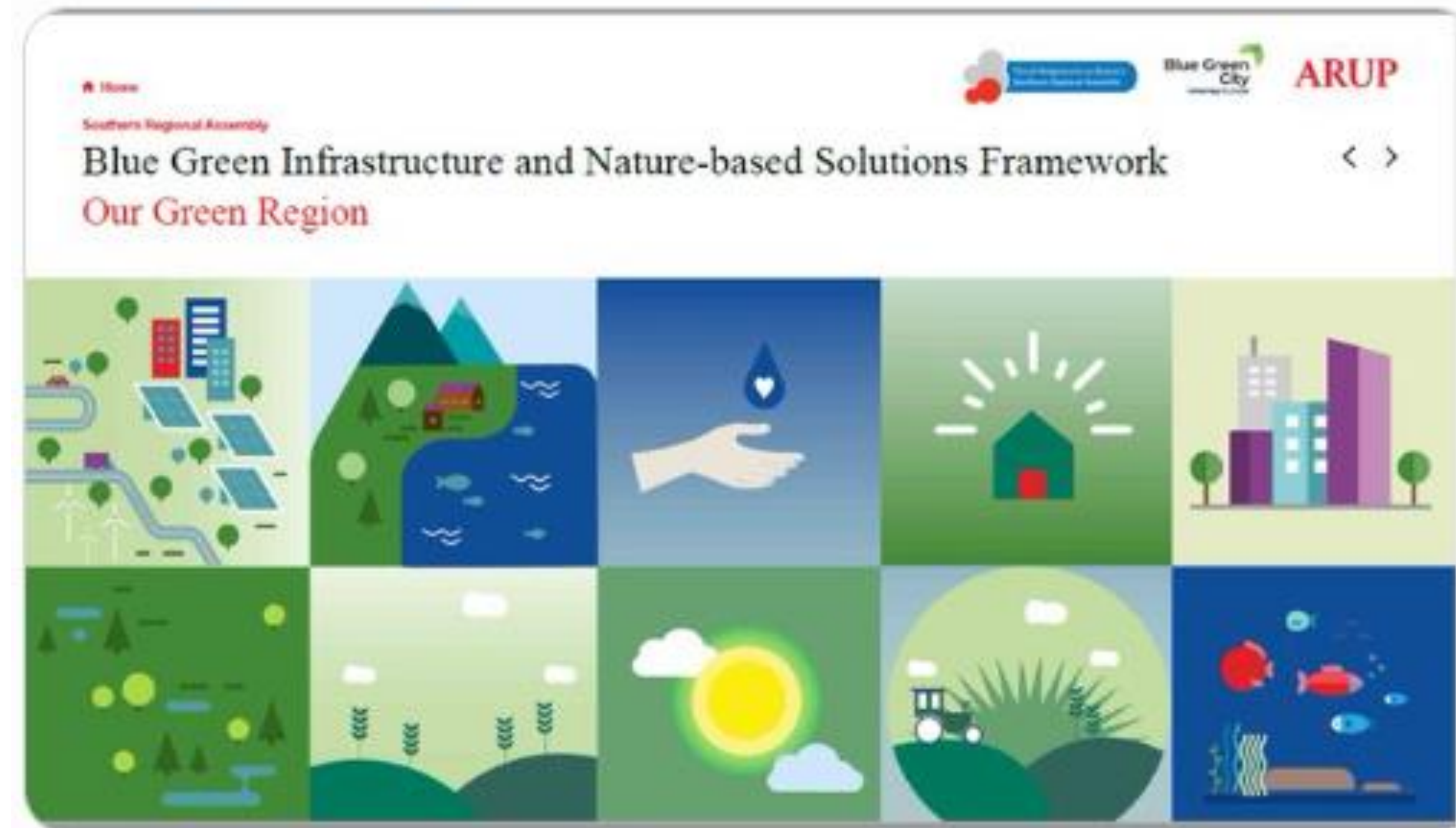
Effectiveness in Local Government

- Example from **SRA**



Improving policies that promote Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) as an integral part of a local or regional natural heritage preservation strategy.

Southern Regional Assembly @SouthernAssembl · Aug 17
The @SouthernAssembl & @ArupGroup with @interregeurope Blue Green City Project have created a Framework to help guide the implementation of Blue Green Infrastructure & Nature Based Solutions in our Region
#LocalAuthority #BGI #NBS #RSES
Link: ow.ly/3YVE50K9yGt



This Framework provides a **resource for Local Authorities**, decision makers and developers working in the Region to guide the implementation of **BGI and NbS**.

Intended to facilitate the implementation of a network of nature-based interventions to solve local challenges in settlements and the landscapes that they link to.

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