



Tionól Réigiúnach
an Tuaiscirt & an Iarthair
Northern & Western
Regional Assembly

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

Report on Pre-Draft Consultation

26th March – 22nd May 2026



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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive outline of the pre-draft public consultation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region, that was carried out between the period 26th March to 22nd May 2026, to aid Members and the Executive of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly in the consideration of all submissions received. It will also guide the preparation of the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region.

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Executive Summary

This Report has been prepared following the pre-draft consultation process for the review, and preparation of a new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region which took place from 26th March to 22nd May 2026. It lists and summarises the submissions received, identifies the principal issues and themes arising, and provides overall responses to inform the preparation of the RSES.

The Assembly welcome the significant level of engagement at this early stage of the process and express sincere gratitude to all prescribed bodies, government departments, infrastructure providers, regional assemblies, local authorities, neighbouring authorities, community organisations, sectoral interests, private stakeholders and members of the public who made submissions. The information provided is substantial and will greatly assist the preparation of the RSES which will contain strategies for sustainable settlements (including the Galway Metropolitan Area), population and housing targets, infrastructure (transport, energy (including renewable energy), water, communications, waste management), climate action, marine and coastal matters, cultural and natural heritage, economic and employment-related development (retail, industry and commercial) and social infrastructure (third level education, healthcare, sports of scale) - and its accompanying environmental assessments.

A total of 94 submissions were received. Of the 70 prescribed bodies consulted 40 responded, providing a significant level of statutory, technical and sectoral input. A further 54 general submissions were received from a wide range of stakeholders. Taken together, the submissions provide an important evidence base for the preparation of the RSES and identify key strategic issues, opportunities and constraints relevant to the future spatial, economic, environmental, social and infrastructural development of the region.

The matters raised are closely aligned with the statutory requirements of the RSES – under Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended). Section 29 sets out the required content of an RSES, including settlement (including a Metropolitan Area Plan for Galway City), housing, employment, regional economic development, infrastructure, climate action, renewable energy, marine and coastal matters, environmental protection, heritage, landscape, flooding, social infrastructure and the protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht. Section 29(13) also requires the RSES and any Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) to include measures for effective implementation and monitoring, including infrastructure priorities, sequencing, potential funding sources, cross-sectoral actions, cooperation between public bodies and monitoring arrangements.

Several cross-cutting themes emerge from the submissions. These include the need for the RSES to be infrastructure-led, climate-responsive, implementation-focused, environmentally robust, aligned with national policy, supportive of balanced regional development and grounded in SMART Regional Policy Objectives and monitoring.

The submissions demonstrate that future settlements, housing and employment growth must be more closely aligned with enabling infrastructure, including water services, wastewater capacity, electricity grid infrastructure, transport, digital connectivity, social infrastructure - and environmental capacity. They also highlight the importance of compact growth, town-centre-first regeneration, strategic land activation, rural sustainability and the distinct roles of the Galway Metropolitan Area, Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns, other towns, villages, rural settlements, island communities and Gaeltacht areas.

The Galway Metropolitan Area is identified as a critical driver of regional growth, requiring a strengthened Galway MASP with clearer governance, delivery structures, infrastructure sequencing, transport integration, housing delivery, regeneration and employment planning. The governance and delivery of the Galway MASP will also be considered having regard to National Planning Objective 96 of the National Planning Framework.

Infrastructure delivery is one of the strongest themes arising from the consultation. Submissions identify the need for strategic investment, sequencing and coordination in relation to electricity transmission and distribution, grid capacity, water and wastewater services, strategic roads, rail, aviation, public transport, ports, digital infrastructure, energy networks and serviced lands. While detailed logistical considerations remain matters for the relevant bodies, the RSES has an important strategic role in identifying infrastructure priorities of regional scale and supporting coordinated land-use and infrastructure planning.

Climate action, renewable energy and energy security are also central themes. Submissions highlight the need for the RSES and Regional Renewable Energy Strategy (RRES) to provide a clear, plan-led framework for renewable energy delivery, including onshore wind, solar PV, grid infrastructure, energy storage, repowering, community energy, biomethane, renewable gas, hydrogen, Green Energy Hubs and offshore renewable energy. These matters will be considered having regard to national climate and energy policy, grid capacity, environmental assessment, landscape capacity, biodiversity, community considerations and infrastructure requirements.

The submissions also place strong emphasis on environmental protection, biodiversity, water quality, heritage, landscape, flood risk, coastal resilience and marine and coastal planning. The preparation of the RSES will be informed by Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Regional Flood Risk Appraisal. Submissions containing SEA Scoping matters or information relevant to the SEA process have been forwarded to the appointed environmental consultants and will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report.

Marine and coastal matters are of particular importance to the region, having regard to the Atlantic coastline, island communities, ports, harbours, fisheries, aquaculture, marine tourism, offshore renewable energy potential, coastal erosion and land-sea interactions. The submissions also highlight the importance of the Gaeltacht, island communities, rural communities, social infrastructure, health, education, sport, culture, community services and quality of life as essential components of sustainable regional development.

Overall, the submissions demonstrate the need for a RSES that provides clear regional direction, supports coordinated development across the region and aligns spatial planning with infrastructure investment, climate action, environmental capacity and implementation. Matters raised in submissions that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES, having regard to relevant national policy, statutory requirements, environmental assessment, infrastructure capacity and the role of other public bodies, agencies and infrastructure providers.

This report will be circulated to the Members of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly for their consideration and formally noted at the monthly meeting of the regional assembly in July 2026. Following consideration of the report, and with further workshop(s) with the Members, the Assembly Executive will proceed with the preparation of a draft RSES for the Members to consider and approve. A further opportunity for public consultation will take place following the preparation and publication of a draft RSES, when prescribed bodies, stakeholders and members of the public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the draft RSES and associated environmental assessments. It is envisaged this will be in Q4 of 2026 or Q1 of 2027.

Introduction, Statutory Context and Consultation Process

1

1.1 Introduction

On 26th March 2026, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) formally gave notice of its intent to review the existing Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region 2020–2032 with intent to prepare a new RSES. The review of the existing RSES and preparation of a new RSES represents one of the most significant statutory functions of the Regional Assembly. The RSES provides a long-term strategic framework for the spatial and economic development of the Northern and Western Region. It guides how the region should grow, identifies priority areas for investment, and ensures that national policy objectives are effectively implemented at regional and local levels over the next two decades and beyond.

1.2 Purpose and Contents of this report

The review of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy is being undertaken in accordance with Part 3, Chapter 4 the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended).

Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) states that:

- A regional assembly shall make a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of its region, which shall make provision for the matters set out in section 29;
- The objectives of a regional spatial and economic strategy shall be to support
 - a. the implementation of the National Planning Framework, and
 - b. the economic policies and objectives of the Government;
- A regional spatial and economic strategy shall be in accordance with
 - a. the principles of proper planning and sustainable development, and
 - b. the economic policies and objectives of the Government.
- A regional spatial and economic strategy shall make provision for a period that is not less than 10 years and not more than 20 years.
- A regional spatial and economic strategy shall be materially consistent with—
 - a. the National Planning Framework,
 - b. the National Marine Planning Framework, and
 - c. any relevant National Planning Policies and Measures.

Section 29 of Part 3, Chapter 4 of the Act (section 29) sets out the required content of a RSES and provides the statutory framework within which the RSES must be prepared. It requires the RSES to address a broad range of strategic regional planning and economic matters, including sustainable settlement patterns, housing and population growth, strategic employment locations, regional economic development, retail, transport and land-use integration, water, energy (including renewable energy), communications and waste infrastructure, climate change adaptation and mitigation, marine and coastal matters, environmental protection, natural, built and cultural heritage, landscape and landscape character, flooding and flood risk management, regional-scale social infrastructure and the protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht.

Section 29 also provides for the preparation of Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASP) for cities, and coordinated planning for settlements which extend across more than one planning authority area, where appropriate. These provisions are of particular relevance to the future planning of the Galway Metropolitan Area, Athlone and Carrick-on-Shannon.

In addition, Section 29(13) requires the RSES (and any MASP included within it) to contain measures to secure effective implementation and monitoring. These include the identification of infrastructure priorities of scale, an order of priority for infrastructure provision, potential funding sources, cross-sectoral investment and actions, cooperation between local authorities and public bodies, and monitoring and reporting arrangements.

1.3 Pre-draft Consultation Process

To support the preparation of a RSES, consultation is considered a key element of the strategy-making process. The NWRA carried out the first statutory public consultation process during the period 26th March to 22nd May 2026. During this stage, submissions and observations were sought from stakeholders including members of the public on the future development of the Northern and Western Region.

A dedicated online public consultation portal (www.consult.nwra.ie) was set up to keep members of the public up to date with the process. All valid submissions were published for public viewing on the portal. Submissions could be made through the portal, by post or by email to a dedicated email address for the RSES rses@nwra.ie

Figure 1: Cover of Pre-Draft Consultation Paper



Pre-Draft Consultation Paper

A Pre-Draft Consultation Paper was prepared and published at the outset of the process. This document

- Set out the statutory context for the preparation of the RSES.
- Explained the role of the RSES within the national hierarchy of plans and frameworks.
- Identified key thematic areas including settlement patterns, infrastructure, climate action, economic development and marine planning.
- Highlighted emerging challenges and opportunities and priorities for the Region, and
- Invited written submissions.

The Consultation Paper was made available online via the NWRA website, a dedicated online Consultation Portal, and linked through the NWRA social media pages (click on links below).



Online and Social Media

Regular notifications and reminders relating to the pre-draft consultation were issued through the NWRA website and social media channels during the consultation period.¹ This included updates across LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and X to raise awareness of the process, direct interested parties to pre-draft consultation paper and encourage submissions from stakeholders.

Statutory Notices

Public notice of the intent to review and prepare a new RSES was published in The Irish Independent newspaper on 26th March 2026 in accordance with section 31(1)(c) and section 31 (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended). The notice informed any interest party of the commencement of the review and intent to prepare a new RSES for the Northern and Western Region, invited submissions and observations, and provided details of how and where submissions could be made. The notice directed the public to a dedicated online consultation portal and e-mail address. Details of the duration of the consultation period was also set out.

Consultation with Prescribed Bodies and Stakeholders

In accordance with section 31(3)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) prescribed bodies² were notified directly and invited to make submissions. This included government departments, state agencies, infrastructure providers (transport, energy, communications, water), regional and local authorities and key sectoral and economic stakeholders. These bodies were requested to provide input on strategic matters relevant to the preparation of the RSES. A total of 70 prescribed bodies were consulted, of which 40 made submissions. This represents a significant level of statutory, technical and sectoral input at pre-draft stage and will assist in informing the preparation of the RSES. Prescribed bodies consulted at pre-draft stage and those who made, and those who did not make submissions are listed in Table 1 below.

¹ Examples of social media notifications Issues during the consultation period included posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and X, with five updates Issues on LinkedIn, five on Facebook, three on Instagram and two on X.
² S.I. No. 458 of 2025 Planning and Development (Prescribed Persons – Statutory Plans) Regulations 2025

Table 1: Prescribed bodies notified at Pre-Draft consultation stage and submission made or not

Prescribed body	Submission Made
Roscommon County Council	✗
Leitrim County Council	✓
Sligo County Council	✓
Donegal County Council	✓
Monaghan County Council	✓
Cavan County Council	✓
Mayo County Council	✓
Galway County Council	✓
Galway City Council	✓
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DAU)	*Scoping only
Office of the Planning Regulator	✓
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority	✓
National Transport Authority	✓
Department of Finance	✗
Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation	✗
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	✗
Department of Defence	✗
Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment	✓
Department of Transport	✓
Department of Education and Youth affairs	✓
Department of Children, Disability and Equality	✗
Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment	✓
Department of Social Protection	✗
Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht	✓
Department of Culture, Communications and Sport	✗
Department of Health	✗
Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration	✗
Department of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and the Marine	✗
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	✗
Southern Regional Assembly	✓
Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly	✓
An Chomhairle Ealaíon	✗
An Coimisiún Pleanála	✓
Office of Public Works	✓
DAA	✗

Prescribed body	Submission Made
EirGrid	✓
Electricity Supply Board	✓
Enterprise Ireland	✓
Environmental Protection Agency	Scoping only
Fáilte Ireland	✓
Gas Networks Ireland	✓
Health Service Executive/Department of Public Health	✓
Heritage Council	✓
Health and Safety Authority	✓
Irish Air Navigation Service	✗
Industrial Development Agency (Ireland)	✓
Inland Fisheries Ireland	✗
Land Development Agency	✓
Marine Institute	✗
Derry City & Strabane	✓ /Scoping
Mid Ulster District Council	✗
Fermanagh & Omagh Council	✓ /Scoping
Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Council	✗
Newry & Down Council	✗
National Disability Authority	✗
Sport Ireland	✓
An Taisce — the National Trust for Ireland	✓
Transport Infrastructure Ireland	✓
Uisce Éireann	✓
Loughs Agency	✗
Port of Galway	✗
Killybegs	✗
Ros a Mhil	✗
Ireland West Airport Knock	✓
Donegal Airport	✗
ATU	✓
University of Galway	✓
Irish Rail	✓
Bus Éireann	✗
Education and Training Boards	✗

Source: Northern and Western Regional Assembly
*Note: “Scoping” indicate submissions made in response to the SEA Scoping notification, which invited relevant environmental authorities and prescribed bodies to provide observations on the scope and level of detail to be included in the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RSES.

1.4 Ongoing Engagement with Government Departments, Infrastructure Providers and Local Authorities

Since 2024, the Assembly have undertaken an extensive programme of engagement with government departments, infrastructure providers, regional assemblies and local authorities within the region and neighbouring authorities. This has included ongoing engagement with relevant departments including the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), the Department of Climate, Energy and Environment (DCEE) and the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (DETE), Department of Transport (DOT) in relation to the preparation of the RSES, including the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, timelines and the scope and content of the emerging strategy.

The Assembly have also continued engagement with key infrastructure providers, including EirGrid, ESB Networks, the Land Development Agency, Uisce Éireann, Irish Rail, the Port of Galway and Ireland West Airport Knock. Several infrastructure providers have attended Regional Assembly meetings over the past 18 months to present regional data and outline strategic infrastructure matters, with two-way successful engagement arising.

In addition, the NWRA Executive have met with senior management in all nine local authorities in the Region to discuss local authority matters, priorities and recommendations for the RSES. Cross-border engagement has also taken place, including with Derry City and Strabane District Council.

This ongoing engagement has informed and increased the Assembly’s understanding of strategic regional matters that can be addressed in the RSES and is invaluable for the preparation of the draft RSES.

1.5 Environmental Assessments and Consultations

In parallel with the preparation of the RSES, the NWRA is also progressing the required environmental assessment processes, including Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Regional Flood Risk Appraisal (RFRA). These processes are being prepared alongside the RSES to ensure that environmental considerations, including biodiversity, water quality, climate, landscape, cultural heritage and flood risk, are integrated into the preparation of the draft RSES from the outset. As part of the associated consultation and decision-making process, SEA scoping notifications were issued to the relevant environmental authorities in parallel with the pre-draft consultation process. The purpose of this scoping stage is to inform the scope and level of detail of the environmental assessment work and to ensure that the preparation of the draft RSES is informed by the views of the relevant statutory environmental authorities. The draft RSES will be accompanied by the relevant environmental assessment documentation and will be subject to further statutory consultation.

1.6 Submissions

A total of 94 written submissions were received during the consultation period, from prescribed bodies, government departments, State agencies, infrastructure providers, regional assemblies, local authorities, cross border authorities, sectoral organisations, community groups, private stakeholders and members of the public. The submissions provide important statutory, technical, sectoral and local input and will assist the Assembly in identifying the key strategic matters to be addressed in the RSES. Section 2 of this report provides an overview of these strategic matters and an overall response. A list of all those who made submissions, with a hyperlink to each submission, along with detailed summaries of the submissions received is set out in Section 3.

Strategic Matters Emerging from Submissions and Overall Response

2

2.1 Overview

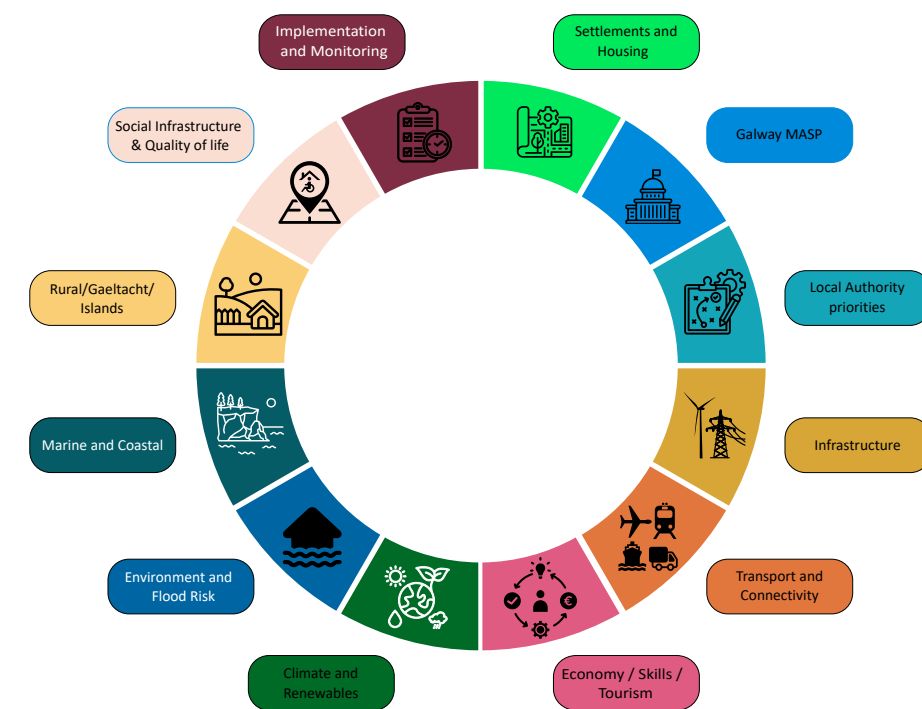
This section identifies the principal strategic matters emerging from the submissions received during the pre-draft consultation process and provides the Assembly's overall response to those matters. It draws together the cross-cutting and recurring themes, statutory considerations, policy frameworks and strategic proposals arising from the submissions.

The Assembly welcome the significant level of engagement received during the pre-draft consultation process and wish to acknowledge and thank all those who made submissions. The submissions are detailed, constructive and wide-ranging. They provide substantial information on spatial, economic, environmental, social and infrastructural matters, identifying issues and constraints while also identifying opportunities relevant to the Northern and Western Region. This information will greatly assist the Assembly in preparing the draft RSES.

Taken together, the submissions demonstrate the need for a RSES that is infrastructure-led, climate-responsive, implementation-focused, environmentally robust, aligned with national policy, supportive of balanced regional development and grounded in SMART Regional Policy Objectives and monitoring.

A clear theme emerging from the consultation is the need to better align settlement growth, housing delivery, employment, transport, water services, wastewater capacity, electricity grid capacity, renewable energy, social infrastructure and environmental capacity. The submissions also highlight the importance of infrastructure sequencing, funding, inter-agency coordination and stronger monitoring arrangements.

The RSES has a strategic role in providing regional direction, supporting coordinated development across the Region and ensuring that settlement, housing, employment, infrastructure, climate action and environmental considerations are planned in an integrated manner. Matters raised in submissions that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES, having regard to relevant national policy, statutory requirements, environmental assessment, infrastructure capacity and the role of other public bodies, agencies and infrastructure providers.



2.2 Statutory and Policy Alignment

Issues Raised:

Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) sets out the required content of a RSES. The matters raised in the submissions closely reflect the statutory scope of the RSES, including sustainable settlement patterns, housing and population growth, strategic employment locations, regional economic development, retail, transport and land-use integration, water, energy, communications and waste infrastructure, climate action, renewable energy, marine and coastal matters, environmental protection, natural, built and cultural heritage, landscape, flooding, social infrastructure and the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht.

Section 29 also requires the RSES to contain measures for effective implementation and monitoring, including infrastructure priorities of scale, an order of priority for infrastructure provision, potential funding sources, cross-sectoral investment and actions, cooperation between local authorities and public bodies, and monitoring and reporting arrangements.

The submission from the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) is particularly relevant in this regard. It highlights the role of the RSES as the principal mechanism for translating national planning policy to the regional level and identifies the need for consistency with the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), the National Planning Framework First Revision 2025, the National Marine Planning Framework, National Planning Policies and Measures and relevant transport strategies.

Response:

The review and preparation of a new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy is required to be, and is being undertaken in accordance with Part 3, Chapter 4 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended). Section 28 of the Act provides that a regional assembly shall make a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of its region, making provision for the matters set out in section 29. It states that the objectives of a RSES are to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework and the economic policies and objectives of Government. It further provides that a RSES shall be prepared in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and the economic policies and objectives of Government.

Section 28 also requires a RSES to be materially consistent with the National Planning Framework, the National Marine Planning Framework and any relevant National Planning Policies and Measures.

Section 29 sets out the required content of a RSES addressing a broad range of strategic regional planning and economic matters, including sustainable settlement patterns, housing and population growth, strategic employment locations, regional economic development, retail, transport and land-use integration, water, energy, including renewable energy, communications and waste infrastructure, climate change adaptation and mitigation, marine and coastal matters, environmental protection, natural, built and cultural heritage, landscape and landscape character, flooding and flood risk management, regional-scale social infrastructure and the protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht.

Section 29 also requires the RSES to include a statement of the actions being taken, or proposed to be taken, to ensure the effective integration of transport and land-use planning. This includes having regard to relevant transport strategies of the National Transport Authority, together with any relevant reports or observations prepared or submitted by the NTA in accordance with the Act. The RSES must also include provision for the integration of the National Biodiversity Action Plan, and a statement confirming that the Strategy is materially consistent with the National Planning Framework, the National Marine Planning Framework and any relevant National Planning Policies and Measures. The Assembly, cognisant of its statutory obligations, will seek to prepare and provide a clear regional planning and economic strategy for the Northern and Western Region in a manner that reflects the specific needs, opportunities and challenges of the Region.

2.3 Settlement Strategy, Housing and Compact Growth

Issues Raised:

Many submissions demonstrate the need for a clear, evidence-based settlement strategy which identifies where future growth will be directed and how that growth will be supported. Submissions refer to the role of Galway as the regional city, the Regional Growth Centres of Sligo and Letterkenny, and proposals for additional or enhanced designations including joint or expanded Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns, and strategically important smaller settlements.

The submission from the OPR identifies the settlement strategy as a central element of the RSES and highlights the need for the strategy to clearly set out where future growth is to be directed, with a focus on the Galway Metropolitan Area, Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns. Local authority submissions strongly reinforce this point and seek recognition of the particular role, potential and infrastructure requirements of settlements across the region, including smaller towns, villages, rural settlements, Gaeltacht areas and island communities.

A recurring theme across submissions is the need to build critical mass in the region's principal urban centres while also supporting balanced regional development through investment in Key Towns and smaller settlements. Several local authorities also seek amendments to the settlement hierarchy, including the designation of an additional MASP and Regional Growth Centre, the strengthening of existing Regional Growth Centres, designation of additional Key Towns and the recognition of cross-border or joint Regional Growth Centres.

For the purposes of regional, and geographic focus, this report has set out below a brief summary of the respective points highlighted by the NWRA's local authorities:

Galway City Council highlight the strategic role of Galway City as the regional city for the Northern and Western Region and as a key driver of economic, cultural, social and innovation activity. The Council seek a strengthened Galway MASP with clear priorities, measurable targets, delivery mechanisms, funding supports and stronger governance arrangements. They also identify the need to support compact growth, Transport-Oriented Development, regeneration, sustainable neighbourhoods and strategic opportunity sites including Ardaun, Murrough, Tuam Road, Ceannt Station environs, the Docks, Headford Road, Sandy Road and Garraun.

Galway County Council identify the Galway Metropolitan Area as critical to the future growth and development of the region and seek a stronger MASP framework with clear governance, funding and delivery structures. The Council also seek support for an evidence-based approach to population and housing growth across County Galway, aligned with infrastructure capacity, settlement role and sustainable transport. They request recognition of Ballinasloe and Tuam as Key Towns, Athenry as a place of strategic potential, and the role of Gort, Loughrea and other towns as important growth and service locations. The submission also highlights rural regeneration, village renewal, vacancy reduction, community-led investment, Gaeltacht communities, islands and coastal settlements.

Sligo County Council highlight the role of Sligo as the principal economic driver for the North-West and seek revised objectives for Sligo Regional Growth Centre, having regard to the Sligo County Development Plan 2024–2030 and the forthcoming Sligo Town Urban Area Plan. The Council seek recognition of Sligo Town Centre regeneration as a regional priority and emphasise the importance of strengthening Sligo's role within the settlement hierarchy. They also highlight the role of smaller towns and villages across the county in supporting rural communities and economic activity.

Donegal County Council set out a strong case for enhanced recognition of the North West City Region centred on Letterkenny–Derry. The submission proposes the development of a Metropolitan Area Spatial Strategy (MASP) for the cross-border city-region and seeks recognition of Letterkenny–Derry as a joint or metropolitan-scale Regional Growth Centre. The Council emphasise the importance of cross-border planning, coordinated

infrastructure investment and governance arrangements to support this functional urban area. They also highlight the role of Letterkenny as a Regional Growth Centre and the importance of supporting other towns across Donegal, including Ballybofey–Stranorlar, Buncrana and Donegal Town, as well as rural and Gaeltacht communities.

Mayo County Council highlight the absence of a designated Regional Growth Centre within Mayo and seek consideration of a joint or linked Regional Growth Centre for Castlebar–Westport. The Council propose that Castlebar–Westport be recognised as a combined Regional Growth Centre or strategic urban area capable of driving growth in the western part of the Region. They also seek strengthened recognition of Ballina as a Key Town and highlight the role of smaller towns and villages in supporting rural hinterlands and balanced development.

Leitrim County Council emphasise the importance of smaller towns and villages in sustaining rural communities and seek stronger recognition of settlements with populations between 1,500 and 10,000. The Council support the retention of Carrick-on-Shannon as a Key Town and highlight its economic and service role. They also call for clearer differentiation within the settlement hierarchy and greater support for rural regeneration and smaller settlements.

Cavan County Council seek retention of Cavan Town as a Key Town and highlight its regional role in the Cavan–Monaghan–Leitrim sub-region. The Council also identify Virginia as a strategically important settlement with potential for growth and request recognition of its role within the settlement hierarchy. They highlight the importance of supporting other towns including Kingscourt, Ballyjamesduff, Bailieborough, Cootehill and Ballyconnel.

Monaghan County Council request the designation of Carrickmacross as a Key Town, citing its strategic location and growth potential. The Council also highlight the importance of Monaghan Town as a strategic employment centre and identify the need to support balanced growth across other towns including Castleblayney and Clones. They emphasise the importance of smaller settlements and rural areas in supporting community resilience and economic activity.

Across submissions, there is a consistent emphasis on the importance of smaller towns, villages and rural settlements in supporting population retention, service provision, local employment and community wellbeing. Local authorities highlight the need for targeted investment, regeneration, infrastructure provision and policy support to enable these settlements to contribute to balanced regional development.

The role of the Land Development Agency (LDA) in supporting housing delivery, particularly on State-owned lands, and the need for alignment between the RSES and national housing delivery mechanisms are also highlighted in submissions. The importance of compact growth, brownfield development, regeneration and the efficient use of serviced land are emphasised, alongside the need to ensure that infrastructure provision keeps pace with population and housing growth.

Response:

It is intended that a clear, evidence-based settlement strategy aligned with the National Planning Framework First Revision and the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) will be provided for in the RSES. In addition, the role of the Galway Metropolitan Area, Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns and other settlements in accommodating future population and housing growth, while supporting compact growth, sustainable transport and infrastructure-led development, will be clearly outlined in the Strategy.

During the course of the preparation of the draft RSES, there will be further engagement with Members of the Regional Assembly and relevant personnel of local authorities to explore the approach to the designation of

Key Towns and/or places of regional significance/potential. This will involve a multitude of factors including the scope of some settlements to grow, with availability of infrastructure a key consideration. It is clear from the trends associated with the current RSES, and the associated two-yearly Implementation and Monitoring Reports, that urban centres across the Region are growing at a rate well below what was initially envisaged, and this requires measures through the RSES revision to help address any bottlenecks which exist, including land use zoning, transport, water and wastewater infrastructure. Local authorities are already playing their part in this regard, with recent variations to County Development Plans to bring additional residential lands forward for housing construction identified as one significant element of ongoing work.

Matters raised in relation to settlements, housing and compact growth that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES, having regard to national planning policy, infrastructure capacity, environmental assessment and the role of local authorities in statutory plan-making. It is intended that the RSES will support compact growth, town-centre-first development, brownfield regeneration, vacancy and dereliction reduction, strategic land activation and housing delivery in locations where infrastructure, transport, employment and services (in-situ or planned within the lifetime of the strategy) can support sustainable growth.

Galway MASP

The role of Galway City as the regional city and the preparation of a strengthened Galway MASP will be central to the RSES. The Galway MASP will provide a framework for the coordination of settlement and population targets, housing, economic development and employment, regeneration, transport, water services, wastewater, energy infrastructure, education, healthcare, cultural infrastructure and environmental considerations — that will benefit not only the Galway Metropolitan Area but the wider region.

The governance and delivery of the Galway MASP is critical to its continued and future success, and Regional Policy Objectives will be included in the new RSES that enable strong governance measures to be put in place to allow for successful delivery of plans and projects for the Galway MASP, cognisant of Section 29 and National Planning Objective 96 (NPO 96) of the National Planning Framework.

Regional Growth Centres

The National Planning Framework (First Revision) has set out the position of Regional Growth Centres, with Sligo and Letterkenny retaining their designation as settlements with city-like functions serving wide sub-regions. The importance of these places will be recognised in the RSES, and the RSES is likely to contain Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plans to bring the detail of longer-term coherence to their growth ambitions in terms of demographics, housing, and other services, including employment. This is particularly important in relation to enabling infrastructure. The submission from Sligo County Council provides much of this detail in respect of Sligo Town, with many of the associated projects either in train or in the initial stages of planning/design. It should also be noted that many of the key projects in relation to Letterkenny as a Regional Growth Centre outlined in the RSES (2020) remain to be advanced, and the expediting of these projects will be a key consideration over the short to medium term.

Key Towns

Many stakeholders requested that existing Key Towns such as Carrick-on-Shannon, Ballinasloe, Tuam, Cavan Town and Ballina be retained in the new RSES, along with a request for the inclusion of Carrickmacross as a Key Town. Designation of Key Towns in the new RSES will be assessed against the criteria set out in national policy and the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), along with regional knowledge, to determine their suitability for such designation. Consideration will also be given to the classification and role of strategically important settlements. It is accepted there may be scope to expand upon the current designation (RSES 2020) of Key Towns across the region.

Smaller Settlements, rural communities, island communities and Gaeltacht areas

Given the settlement pattern of the Northern and Western Region, it is important that the RSES considers the importance of sustaining smaller towns, villages, rural communities, island communities and Gaeltacht areas, alongside growing the Metropolitan Area, Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns, as part of balanced regional development. Therefore, the important role of these settlements will be recognised in the RSES by supporting population retention, service provision, local economies and community wellbeing, regeneration, compact growth, and rural housing in line with national policy, while ensuring alignment with environmental and infrastructure capacity considerations.

Other Considerations

The role of the Land Development Agency (LDA) and other delivery bodies will be considered in supporting housing delivery, particularly on publicly owned lands, and in facilitating compact growth and regeneration. The LDA submission does not contain detail in relation to its planning on projects beyond Galway City, and this is something which will be an area of focus for the purposes of the draft RSES, particularly in regard to the Regional Growth Centres in the first instance. The RSES will seek to align regional policy with national housing delivery mechanisms and funding programmes.

All proposals will be subject to environmental assessment, infrastructure capacity, alignment with national policy and further discussions and engagement with Members at regional and sub-regional level through the West (Counties Mayo, Roscommon and Galway, and Galway City) and Border (Counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan) Strategic Planning Areas,³ local authorities and stakeholders during the preparation of the draft RSES.

2.4 Local Authority Priorities

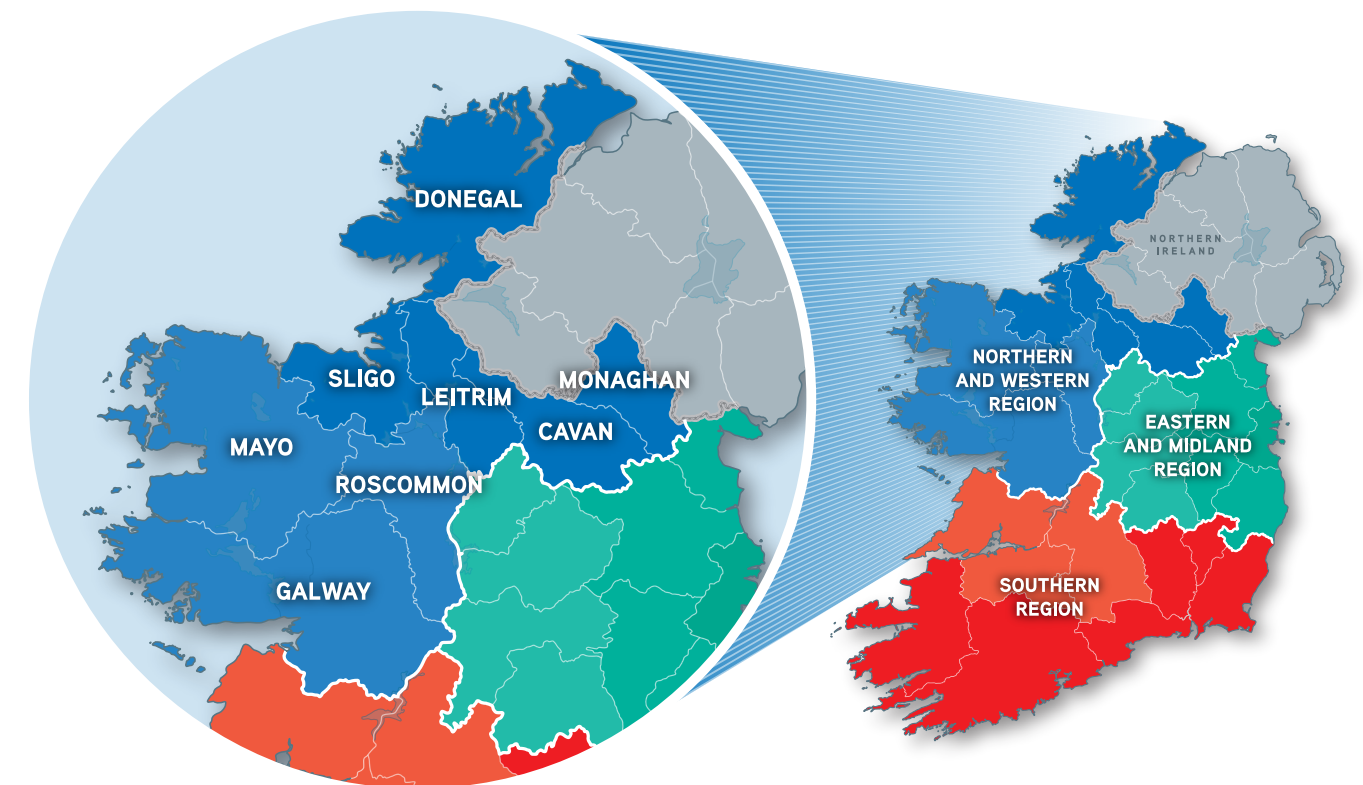
Issues Raised:

Submissions from local authorities within the Northern and Western Region provide detailed place-based input on settlement strategy, population and housing growth, strategic infrastructure, economic development, transport, renewable energy, climate action, marine and coastal matters, rural development, regeneration and implementation.

A common emerging theme across the local authority submissions is that the RSES should provide a stronger, clearer and more investment-focused regional framework. Local authorities seek support for the role of Galway City (and its Metropolitan Area) as the city of the region, the Regional Growth Centres of Sligo and Letterkenny, Athlone as a cross-regional settlement, Key Towns, county towns, smaller towns, villages, rural settlements, Gaeltacht areas, islands and cross-border settlements.

The submissions generally highlight the need to build critical mass in the region's principal settlements, while recognising that the Northern and Western Region has a dispersed settlement pattern, significant rural and coastal communities, important border locations and a number of towns which perform important economic, service and employment functions beyond their population size. In this regard, the settlement hierarchy in the National Planning Framework First Revision, together with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), will be central to the preparation of the RSES.

While full summaries are provided in Section 3, specific priorities raised by each local authority are summarised and responded to below.



³ An SPA is a sub-regional territorial unit consisting of three or more Local Authority areas (City and County Councils) and established on a statutory basis by the [Establishment Order \(SI 573 of 2014\)](#) for the Regional Assemblies. Each SPA has an SPA Committee drawn from elected representatives from the constituent local authorities of that SPA where strategic and policy issues can be considered and recommendations brought to the plenary level of the Regional Assembly.

⁵¹ No. 573/2014 - Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014

West Strategic Planning Area

Galway City Council

Issues Raised:

Galway City Council identifies Galway City as the regional city for the Northern and Western Region and a key driver of economic, cultural, social, education and innovation activity. The submission seeks a strengthened Galway MASP, with clearer priorities, measurable targets, delivery mechanisms, funding supports and governance arrangements. It also seeks consideration of the MASP boundary, including Athenry and Maigh Cuilinn, having regard to their relationship with Galway City, transport connections, labour market linkages and future growth potential.

The Council identifies strategic transport and infrastructure as essential to the sustainable growth of Galway City and the wider Metropolitan Area. Priorities include the Galway City Ring Road, BusConnects Galway, the Galway Transport Strategy, improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure, Galway Port, rail improvements, double-tracking or associated infrastructure on the Galway-Athenry line, water and wastewater infrastructure and the Galway Wastewater Strategy.

The Council also seeks support for compact growth, Transport-Oriented Development, regeneration and the development of strategic brownfield and greenfield locations including Ardaun, Murrough, Tuam Road, Ceannt Station environs, the Docks, Headford Road, Sandy Road and Garraun. Other priorities include the Coirib go Cósta Galway City Flood Relief Scheme, coastal and marine infrastructure, green and blue infrastructure, An Lóchran, third-level education facilities, cultural infrastructure, the Night-Time Economy, EU funding readiness, AI and disruptive technologies, and Galway's role within the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

Response:

Galway City's role as the Northern and Western Region's city, along with its metropolitan area, as the principal driver of growth within the Northern and Western Region will be addressed in the preparation of the draft RSES, particularly through the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP). The Galway MASP will be a key mechanism for coordinating settlement growth, housing, employment, transport, regeneration, infrastructure, social infrastructure, environmental considerations and implementation across the Metropolitan Area.

The governance and delivery of the Galway MASP will be considered having regard to the National Planning Framework, including National Planning Objective 96. The strategic infrastructure, regeneration, transport, climate, cultural, education and economic priorities raised by Galway City Council, including the specific recommendations contained in the submission, will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES and Galway MASP. Further engagement with Members of the Regional Assembly, including Members from within the West Strategic Planning Area, and the relevant personnel of local authorities will take place throughout the RSES process to inform these considerations, having regard to national policy, infrastructure capacity, environmental assessment, funding responsibilities and the statutory roles of relevant public bodies.

Galway County Council

Issues Raised:

Galway County Council identify the Galway Metropolitan Area as critical to the future growth and development of the region and seek a stronger MASP framework with clear governance, funding and delivery structures. The Council emphasise the shared role of Galway City and Galway County in delivering metropolitan growth and seek an evidence-based approach to population and housing growth across County Galway, aligned with infrastructure capacity, settlement role and sustainable transport.

The Council identify economic development priorities including med-tech, ICT, agri-food, tourism, marine, renewable energy, a "Strategic Economic Corridor," the former Galway Airport site, HealthTech and the circular bioeconomy. Strategic infrastructure priorities include the N6 Galway City Ring Road, the Galway Transport Strategy, rail investment, sustainable transport, East Galway Main Drainage, water supply and wastewater capacity.

In relation to settlement hierarchy and rural development, Galway County Council seek continued recognition of Ballinasloe and Tuam as Key Towns, Athenry as a place of strategic potential, and Gort, Loughrea and other towns as important growth and service locations. The submission also highlights rural regeneration, village renewal, vacancy reduction, appropriate rural housing, remote working, the Gaeltacht, islands, Ros an Mhíl Harbour, Galway Port, the marine economy, seaweed sector, digital connectivity and electricity networks.

Response:

County Galway's role in supporting metropolitan growth, balanced regional development, economic development, infrastructure-led settlement growth, rural regeneration, Gaeltacht communities, islands and marine-related development will be considered and addressed in the preparation of the draft RSES.

The role of Ballinasloe, Tuam, Athenry, Gort, Loughrea and other settlements, including the specific recommendations made by Galway County Council, will be considered in the preparation of the RSES having regard to the National Planning Framework First Revision, the regional settlement hierarchy, the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) (including the definition and criteria for a Key Town), infrastructure capacity, sustainable transport, compact growth, environmental assessment and the statutory role of Galway County Council in local plan-making. Further engagement with Members of the Regional Assembly, including Members from within the West Strategic Planning Area, and the relevant personnel of local authorities will take place throughout the RSES process to inform these considerations. Strategic infrastructure, marine, digital, energy and economic priorities raised by Galway County Council will be considered at a regional level, where appropriate.

Mayo County Council

Issues Raised:

Mayo County Council seek stronger recognition of Mayo's role in supporting balanced regional development, the Atlantic Economic Corridor, renewable energy, connectivity, enterprise, education, marine infrastructure and coastal communities. They state that Mayo's location between Galway and Sligo should be more clearly recognised and argue that the absence of a designated Regional Growth Centre in Mayo creates a gap in the regional settlement structure.

Specific settlement-related recommendations include recognising Mayo as a strategic linking platform between Galway and Sligo, supporting the Atlantic Economic Corridor, designating Castlebar-Westport as a Regional Growth Centre, strengthening the role of Ballina as a Key Town and recognising the role of smaller towns and villages in supporting rural hinterlands.

Mayo County Council identify strategic connectivity and enabling infrastructure as critical to Mayo's growth. Priorities include the Western Rail Corridor north of Claremorris, the M17/dual carriageway north of Tuam, upgrades to the national road network, Ireland West Airport, the Airport Strategic Development Zone, improved multi-modal access to the Airport, enhanced access to Ballina, the N84 Ballinrobe Bypass and a Castlebar rail freight and logistics hub.

The Council also highlight Mayo's existing contribution to renewable energy generation and seek support for electricity grid reinforcement, the North Connacht 110 kV project, green energy parks, energy storage, hydrogen, bioenergy, solar, marine energy and renewable energy enterprise. Economic, education and regeneration priorities include strategic employment growth, tourism, town-centre regeneration, the role of ATU, Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board and the redevelopment of the former Military Barracks in Castlebar as an education, skills and regeneration hub. Marine and coastal priorities include Roonagh Pier, Clare Island, Inishturk, AMETS, coastal tourism, offshore renewable energy and structured multi-annual investment in marine infrastructure.

Response:

Consideration will be given to Mayo's role in supporting balanced regional development, connectivity between Galway and Sligo, the Atlantic Economic Corridor, renewable energy, enterprise, education, marine infrastructure, coastal communities and rural sustainability in the preparation of the draft RSES. Specific recommendations made by Mayo County Council will be considered having regard to the provisions set out in the National Planning Framework First Revision, including the regional settlement hierarchy, the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), infrastructure capacity, compact growth, and environmental assessments. Further engagement with Members of the Regional Assembly, including Members from within the West Strategic Planning Area, and the relevant personnel of local authorities will take place throughout the RSES process to inform these considerations. Strategic transport, energy, airport, marine, education, regeneration and enterprise priorities raised by Mayo County Council will be considered at a regional level, where appropriate

Border Strategic Planning Area

Sligo County Council

Issues Raised:

Sligo County Council highlight the role of Sligo as the principal economic driver for the North-West and as a Regional Growth Centre. The Council seek revised objectives for Sligo Regional Growth Centre, having regard to the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030 and the forthcoming Sligo Town Urban Area Plan. They request that Sligo Town Centre regeneration be designated as a regional priority and that Sligo Town Centre be identified as the primary retail centre for the North-West sub-region.

A number of strategic regeneration, tourism and placemaking priorities are identified by the Council, including the Wine Street Car Park Masterplan, Harbour Masterplan, City Campus Masterplan, Cleveragh Regional Park Masterplan, Sligo Gaol landbank, Sligo Greenway, SLNCR Greenway, National Mountain Bike Centre at Coolaney and a regional tourist attraction at Hazelwood. The Council also seek support for the reconfiguration of MacDiarmada Station as an improved public transport arrival point.

Other priorities for Sligo County Council include disaggregation of population and housing targets to county and RGC level, a Regional Landscape Character Assessment, recognition of the Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo, a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy informed by landscape considerations, strategic transport corridors including the N17 Sligo-Knock-Galway corridor, N16 Sligo-Enniskillen-Belfast corridor and N15 Sligo-Donegal-Letterkenny corridor, improved rail connectivity, electricity grid upgrades, a Regional Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy, support for ATU Sligo, IDA Oakfield Business Park, Finisklin Industrial Estate, creative and cultural economy assets and stronger implementation and monitoring arrangements.

Response:

The strategic role of Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre and as a key driver of growth in the North-West will be considered during the preparation of the draft RSES. The matters raised in relation to town-centre regeneration, retail, tourism, public realm, brownfield development, transport interchange, higher education, employment lands, cultural infrastructure, strategic transport corridors, rail, energy infrastructure, blue and green infrastructure, landscape and renewable energy, including the specific recommendations made, are of strategic regional relevance.

Sligo's role will be considered having regard to the National Planning Framework First Revision, the Sligo County Development Plan, the forthcoming Sligo Town Urban Area Plan, infrastructure capacity, environmental assessment, transport policy, renewable energy policy and the need to support implementation through clear and measurable Regional Policy Objectives. Further engagement with Members of the Regional Assembly, including Members from within the Border Strategic Planning Area, and the relevant personnel of local authorities will take place to inform these considerations.

Donegal County Council

Issues Raised:

Donegal County Council set out a strategic narrative on the challenges, opportunities and priorities for Donegal, the North West City Region and the wider Northern and Western Region. The Council call for a more targeted, investment-led and place-based RSES to address long-standing structural imbalance, infrastructure deficits, peripherality and economic underperformance.

The Council identify the North West City Region, centred on Letterkenny-Derry, as a major strategic asset and a key opportunity to address national regional imbalance. They seek formal recognition of the North West City Region as a metropolitan-scale city-region, support for a Metropolitan Area Spatial Strategy and Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy, stronger cross-border planning frameworks and policy alignment, and support for Letterkenny-Derry as a major driver of regional growth.

Critical infrastructure priorities identified include the N2/A5 Dublin-Derry corridor, N13/N2 Letterkenny-Derry corridor, Donegal TEN-T projects, A6 Derry-Belfast, N56 Inver-Killybegs, N13 Stranorlar-Letterkenny, N15 Stranorlar-Lifford, rail reintegration of the North West into the national rail network, strategic port infrastructure at Killybegs and Foyle Port, Donegal Airport, City of Derry Airport, electricity grid upgrades, gas network extension, water and wastewater upgrades, digital connectivity, serviced lands, ATU Letterkenny, Ulster University Derry-Londonderry and regional innovation infrastructure. The Council also highlight the blue economy, offshore renewable energy, Killybegs Port, Foyle Port, marine industries, the green transition, rural development, regeneration, Gaeltacht communities, skills, human capital, governance and implementation.

Response:

County Donegal's strategic role within the region, including the pivotal role of Letterkenny as a Regional Growth Centre, and the North West City Region, will be considered in the preparation of the draft RSES. This will include consideration of relevant matters such as cross-border cooperation, the blue economy, offshore renewable energy, strategic transport, ports, airports, digital connectivity, higher education, enterprise development, Gaeltacht communities and regional imbalance.

The issues raised, including the specific recommendations contained in the submission, will be considered having regard to the National Planning Framework First Revision, relevant cross-border and all-island policy frameworks, infrastructure capacity, environmental assessments, national transport and energy policy, and the role of other public bodies and infrastructure providers. Further engagement with Members of the Regional Assembly, including Members from within the Border Strategic Planning Area, and the relevant personnel of local authorities will take place throughout the RSES process to inform these considerations. The RSES will seek to provide a stronger strategic framework for the North West, while recognising that detailed logistical matters remain matters for the relevant bodies.

Leitrim County Council

Issues Raised:

Leitrim County Council focus on balanced regional development, rural counties, smaller towns, enabling infrastructure, Carrick-on-Shannon, strategic employment lands, rural and affordable housing, renewable energy, forestry and governance.

The Council state that the RSES must address spatial imbalances within the region, particularly between larger urban centres and weaker rural counties. It highlights the important role of smaller towns and villages, particularly settlements with populations between 1,500 and 10,000, in sustaining rural communities and local economies.

The Council seek clearer differentiation between Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns, county towns, local centres and the open countryside, and request greater recognition of the economic role of smaller towns and villages.

Leitrim County Council request that Carrick-on-Shannon retain its status as a Key Town and highlight its economic, service and employment role. They also identify a 23-hectare Industrial and Enterprise site east of Carrick-on-Shannon, zoned for Industrial and Enterprise use in the Carrick-on-Shannon Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031, as a regionally significant employment opportunity.

Other priorities include water and wastewater capacity, transport connectivity, energy, digital infrastructure, enterprise infrastructure, rural housing, affordable housing, wastewater treatment challenges in areas of poor soil permeability, research into evapotranspiration wastewater treatment systems, renewable energy capacity allocations, grid capacity, the siting of high-energy demand uses, forestry, landscape capacity, rural community impacts and governance arrangements for RSES preparation and implementation.

Response:

The role of County Leitrim as a rural county, with smaller towns and villages, will be considered in the preparation of the RSES, in terms of supporting balanced regional development, compact growth, access to services, rural regeneration, housing delivery and local economic resilience. The role of Carrick-on-Shannon as a Key Town within the regional settlement hierarchy, and its potential to support population growth, employment, placemaking and economic development, including the specific recommendations made by Leitrim County Council, will be considered having regard to the National Planning Framework First Revision, the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), infrastructure capacity and environmental assessment.

The strategic employment lands, rural housing, wastewater, renewable energy, grid, forestry, landscape and governance issues raised by Leitrim County Council will be considered at a regional level, where appropriate. Further engagement with Members of the Regional Assembly, including Members from within the Border Strategic Planning Area, and the relevant personnel of local authorities will take place throughout the RSES process to inform these considerations.

Cavan County Council

Issues Raised:

Cavan County Council, in its submission, focuses on continued and sustained population growth for Cavan Town, Virginia, its supporting towns, education, transport, utilities, economic development, tourism, climate action, placemaking and quality of life.

The Council seek support for accelerated and sustainable population growth in County Cavan, stating that future population targets should reflect the County's natural growth rate and capacity to contribute to regional growth. They seek retention of Cavan Town as a Key Town and highlight its role as the largest town in the Cavan-Monaghan-Leitrim sub-region, with regional-scale facilities including Cavan General Hospital, Cavan Institute, Cavan Agricultural College and major sports and civic infrastructure.

Virginia is identified as a strategically important settlement and gateway to the Dublin-Belfast corridor, with potential for employment, housing and services growth. The Council seek support for Virginia as a location of strategic development potential, including delivery of the Virginia Bypass and support for the existing food cluster and masterplan lands east of Virginia. They also highlight the role of other towns including Kingscourt, Ballyjamesduff, Bailieborough, Cootehill and Ballyconnell in supporting economic and population growth.

Transport and infrastructure priorities include the M3/N3 corridor, Virginia Bypass, N55, east-west connectivity, N16, cross-border routes, utilities, water and wastewater, active travel and digital infrastructure. Education and skills priorities include Cavan Institute, the proposed College of the Future and stronger higher education provision in the Cavan-Monaghan sub-region. Economic priorities include agri-food, agri-tech, engineering, manufacturing, building materials, digital services, renewable energy, tourism, serviced employment sites and enterprise development. Tourism and placemaking priorities include greenways, waterways, heritage attractions, angling, food tourism, forest parks, Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark, town and village regeneration, public realm, housing choice, community facilities, sport and recreation.

Response:

The role of Cavan Town within the regional settlement hierarchy and the contribution of County Cavan to future regional growth will be considered in the preparation of the draft RSES. The role of Virginia and other supporting towns, including the specific recommendations made by Cavan County Council, will also be considered having regard to the National Planning Framework First Revision, settlement capacity, infrastructure, compact growth, sustainable transport and economic development potential.

The transport, utilities, education, enterprise, tourism, placemaking, climate and social infrastructure priorities identified by Cavan County Council will be considered at a strategic regional level, where appropriate. Further engagement with Members of the Regional Assembly, including Members from within the Border Strategic Planning Area, and the relevant personnel of local authorities will take place throughout the RSES process to inform these considerations. The RSES will consider how Cavan can support balanced regional development, including through its relationship with the Dublin-Belfast corridor, cross-border networks, indigenous enterprise base and strategic employment opportunities.

Monaghan County Council

Issues Raised:

Monaghan County Council seek support for the sustainable growth of towns in line with compact growth principles and the Town Centre First policy. The Council place particular emphasis on Carrickmacross and request its designation as a Key Town within the regional settlement hierarchy. They highlight Carrickmacross's strategic location on the N2, its accessibility to the Dublin-Belfast corridor, Dundalk, Newry and Dublin, and its recent population growth.

The Council also seek stronger support for balanced intra-county development, including the roles of Monaghan Town, Castleblayney, Clones and Ballybay as important service, employment and residential centres. They highlight the need to strengthen the economic and population base of these towns, support town centre regeneration, address vacancy and dereliction, and enhance placemaking and quality of life.

Strategic priorities identified by the Council include improvements to the N2 corridor, enhanced east-west connectivity, cross-border transport links, water and wastewater infrastructure, digital connectivity and serviced lands to support housing and enterprise development. The Council also highlight the importance of supporting indigenous enterprise, agri-food, manufacturing, logistics and small and medium enterprises, as well as tourism, heritage and recreation assets.

The Assembly also note proposals regarding strategic employment lands and enterprise infrastructure in the county — particularly the potential c. 49-hectare greenfield site strategically located adjacent to the N2 and N12 corridors in Monaghan Town — the county's renewable energy and bioeconomy capabilities, as well as strategic infrastructure and project priorities.

Monaghan County Council also emphasise the importance of cross-border cooperation, given the County's extensive border with Northern Ireland, and seek alignment with neighbouring jurisdictions in relation to infrastructure, economic development and service provision. Additional priorities include climate action, renewable energy, rural development, housing delivery, community infrastructure and the need for clear implementation and funding mechanisms within the RSES.

Response:

The role of County Monaghan in supporting balanced regional development, including its strategic location along the N2 corridor and its strong cross-border linkages, will be considered in the preparation of the RSES. The role of Carrickmacross within the regional settlement hierarchy, including the request for Key Town designation, will be considered having regard to the National Planning Framework First Revision, the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) (including the definition and criteria for a Key Town), settlement function, infrastructure capacity, compact growth principles and environmental assessments.

The roles of Monaghan Town, Castleblayney, Clones, Ballybay and other settlements in supporting population growth, employment, regeneration and service provision will also be considered in the preparation of the RSES. The strategic transport, infrastructure, enterprise, tourism, cross-border cooperation, climate action and rural development priorities identified by Monaghan County Council will be considered at a regional level, where appropriate. This includes consideration of strategic employment lands and enterprise infrastructure, including the potential development of the c. 49-hectare site on the fringe of Monaghan Town, as well as the county's renewable energy and bioeconomy potential.

In this context, the RSES will address both place-based cross-boundary planning and wider cross-border and inter-regional cooperation. This includes consideration of coordinated spatial planning for settlements and functional areas that interact across administrative boundaries, as well as broader collaboration with neighbouring regions, Northern Ireland authorities and relevant agencies on strategic issues such as transport connectivity, economic development, infrastructure provision, climate action and environmental management. Relevant Strategic Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) will be included to support these approaches.

Further engagement with Members of the Regional Assembly, including Members from within the Border Strategic Planning Area, and the relevant personnel of local authorities will take place throughout the RSES process to inform these considerations. The RSES will seek to support the sustainable growth of Monaghan's towns and rural areas, while recognising that detailed logistical considerations remain matters for the relevant government departments, agencies and infrastructure providers.

2.5 Cross-Boundary Planning and Coordinated Area Plans

Issues Raised:

A number of submissions raise issues relating to settlements and functional urban areas which extend beyond individual local authority, Regional Assembly or jurisdictional boundaries. These submissions highlight the need for coordinated spatial planning where settlement growth, employment, transport, infrastructure, environmental resources and economic functions are shared across administrative boundaries.

Athlone is identified as a key cross-boundary settlement. Although the main urban area of Athlone is located within the Eastern and Midland Region, part of the wider settlement and functional area extends into the Northern and Western Region. Submissions relating to Athlone highlight its strategic role in supporting population growth, employment, innovation, climate action, infrastructure investment and balanced regional development. A submission from Brady Shipman Martin on behalf of Ballymore highlights the Athlone Green City Vision and the potential role of Athlone as a cross-regional growth settlement. The NWRA will liaise with the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) in this respect, as Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre lies largely within their functional area. Nonetheless, Monksland and Barrymore on the western bank of the Shannon will be assessed for the role they will play in Athlone's overall function, and there should be capacity to grow housing and service provision in this area of Athlone over the medium term.

Submissions also highlight the importance of the North West City Region, centred on Letterkenny, Derry and Strabane, as a functional cross-border urban and economic area. Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council seek stronger recognition of the North West City Region, coordinated infrastructure investment, policy alignment and enhanced governance arrangements to support its role in balanced regional development. More generally, submissions identify the need for coordinated approaches to cross-boundary settlements, border communities, strategic growth areas and shared infrastructure corridors where growth pressures, economic opportunities, transport networks and environmental considerations do not align neatly with administrative boundaries.

Response:

The need for coordinated area planning is recognised for settlements and functional areas that extend across more than one planning authority area or Regional Assembly area, having regard to Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended).

It is intended that the RSES will support coordinated area planning for Athlone in conjunction with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and the relevant local authorities, having regard to Athlone's cross-boundary role, settlement function, infrastructure requirements and strategic importance.

The role of the North West City Region, including the Letterkenny-Derry-Strabane functional area, will also be considered in the preparation of the RSES, having regard to the National Planning Framework, cross-border cooperation frameworks, infrastructure capacity, environmental assessment, governance considerations and the role of the relevant local authorities and Northern Ireland authorities.

Matters raised in relation to cross-boundary settlements and coordinated area planning that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES. This will include consideration of settlement role, critical mass, infrastructure capacity, sustainable transport, economic function, environmental considerations and the need for effective coordination between the relevant authorities.

2.6 Infrastructure-Led Growth

Issues Raised:

Infrastructure delivery is one of the most recurring themes arising from the consultation. Submissions from Uisce Éireann, EirGrid, ESB Networks, Gas Networks Ireland, the Department of Transport, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the National Transport Authority, Irish Rail, Ireland West Airport, local authorities and others demonstrate that the RSES will need to be infrastructure-led. For example:

Uisce Éireann highlights the need to align growth with the sustainable management of water resources, wastewater capacity, environmental constraints and long-term investment planning. It refers to key water services policy and investment frameworks, including the Water Services Strategic Plan 2050, the National Water Resources Plan, the Regional Water Resources Plan North West, the Water Action Plan/River Basin Management Plan, the National Wastewater Strategy Framework, the Draft Galway Wastewater Strategy, the National Sludge Management Plan/Draft National Bioresources Strategy and Uisce Éireann's Capital Investment Plan 2025-2029.

EirGrid and ESB Networks highlight the critical role of electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure in supporting population growth, housing delivery, enterprise, electrification, renewable energy integration, climate action and energy security. EirGrid identifies priority grid development projects in the region, while ESB Networks emphasises the need to recognise electricity infrastructure as critical enabling infrastructure and to safeguard substations, grid corridors, wayleaves and access routes.

Gas Networks Ireland highlights the role of strategic gas network infrastructure, renewable gas, biomethane, hydrogen and alternative fuels in supporting energy security and decarbonisation. It notes the biomethane potential of parts of the region and the importance of safeguarding strategic energy corridors.

The Irish Concrete Federation highlights the importance of aggregates and construction materials in supporting housing, infrastructure and economic development. The Irish Waste Management Association highlights the role of waste management, circular economy, resource recovery and infrastructure in supporting sustainable development.

Response:

While detailed logistical matters in relation to the provision of infrastructure for the region will remain matters for the relevant infrastructure providers, Government departments, local authorities and statutory processes, it is critical that the RSES includes the NWRA's important strategic role of identifying infrastructure priorities of regional scale, providing regional direction and supporting coordinated land-use and infrastructure planning. In 2025, the NWRA identified regional infrastructural priorities for the region to 2034⁴ and the preparation of the draft RSES provides an opportunity to review these projects and plan out for a period of 20 years, including an order of priority of projects, as required in the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended). This will be

⁴ Briefing Note – Regional Infrastructure Priorities for the Northern and Western Region July 2025 NWRA

an important part of the strategy-making process. It may also provide an opportunity to identify infrastructure projects for consideration by the Government for designation as "Critical Infrastructure."

A significant number of the projects of scale in terms of regional infrastructure, identified by the NWRA in 2025 and agreed by the NWRA members, have now been included in the revised National Development Plan 2025 and remain key enabling projects for the region. These include the Galway City Ring Road, Donegal TEN-T Road project, the N17 from Knock to Collooney, the bypassing of Carrick-on-Shannon (N4) and Virginia (N3), the upgrade of the A5 from Derry to Aughnacloy, upgrades to the N2 in County Monaghan, the advancement of the Western Rail Corridor being reutilised for rail transport, the upgrades of a number of stretches of the National Grid, particularly in the North West, in addition to a number of building projects across the region's third-level campuses, and several major housing developments around Galway City. All of these projects are identified in submissions by multiple bodies. The Assembly, in preparing the draft RSES, will distinguish between those projects which are realisable in the near term (next 5 years) and those projects which are more likely to constitute ambitions in the medium term (5–12 years). Given the RSES is a 20-year strategy, there will be a need to potentially include projects which are not currently listed for advancement in the NDP but may represent longer-term ambitions, across a number of areas, inclusive of transport, the energy grid, water and wastewater, as well as potentially other areas including health and education.

It should further be noted that in setting out project priorities for the region, the NWRA must identify the source funder/primary funder of capital projects through the RSES, and this requirement under the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) will be further explored in discussions with Members as the draft RSES is advanced.

All of the above, in addition to the safeguarding of existing and proposed infrastructure project routes/corridors, will also be an important element for consideration in the RSES.

2.7 Transport, Connectivity and Accessibility

Issues Raised:

Transport and connectivity are major themes across the submissions. Submissions from the Department of Transport, the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Irish Rail, Ireland West Airport, local authorities, GLUAS and rail advocacy groups, greenway groups and active travel organisations highlight the need for a more integrated approach to land-use and transport planning.

The Department of Transport submission emphasises alignment with national transport policy, sustainable mobility and investment priorities. The NTA submission highlights the need for integrated land-use and transport planning, particularly in relation to Galway, regional towns, public transport and active travel. TII emphasises the role of national roads and the need for alignment with the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland, the National Development Plan and national transport policy.

Irish Rail highlights the role of rail infrastructure and the relevance of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, Rail2050 and rail freight policy.

Ireland West Airport is identified as an important regional asset supporting international connectivity, tourism, enterprise and regional accessibility.

A recurring theme is the safeguarding of strategic transport corridors. Submissions relating to rail and greenways highlight the need to ensure that greenway or interim active travel proposals on former or disused rail alignments do not compromise the future reinstatement, enhancement or delivery of rail infrastructure where such potential exists or is supported by national or regional policy.

Response:

Matters raised in relation to transport and connectivity that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, having regard to national transport policy, the NPF, NIFTI, NTA strategies, the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, Rail2050 and other relevant transport frameworks, along with the identified needs of the region.

Several matters pertaining to transport have been referenced in the response at 2.6 above, including the projects of scale which have already been identified as key priorities given the extent of this region's infrastructure deficit in the area of transport in particular.

It is intended that the RSES will support the integration of land-use and transport planning as required by the planning legislation and will include strategic transport matters of regional importance, including public transport, rural mobility, freight, strategic roads, aviation, ports, active travel, greenways and access to services. The lack of investment in these areas in the region in recent decades will be highlighted and addressed in the RSES. As outlined in 2.6, priority projects for the region will be identified and ranked in order of priority.

It is considered important that a balanced approach be taken which recognises the role of greenways and active travel in tourism, recreation and climate action, while safeguarding strategic rail corridors for potential future transport use.

2.8 Employment, Enterprise, Tourism and Skills

Issues Raised:

Economic development and employment are central themes across the submissions. Submissions from the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, the Western Development Commission, IBEC, Galway Chamber, local authorities, Atlantic Technological University, University of Galway and others demonstrate the need for a strong regional economic strategy.

The submissions highlight the importance of enterprise-enabling infrastructure, serviced employment lands, innovation, skills, digital connectivity, competitiveness, tourism, higher education, research, agglomeration economies, as well as smart specialisation with a particular focus on key sectors such as agri-food, med-tech, life sciences, marine, renewable energy, manufacturing, logistics, the blue economy and creative industries.

Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland highlight the role of infrastructure, skills, enterprise ecosystems and competitiveness in supporting regional enterprise development. The Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment highlights the need to integrate enterprise policy, regional economic development, infrastructure planning, innovation and sustainability. Fáilte Ireland emphasises the role of tourism in supporting employment, rural communities, cultural heritage, natural assets, placemaking and the visitor economy.

The university submissions identify higher education, research and innovation as critical regional assets. Atlantic Technological University is described as having a region-wide presence and a role in education, research, innovation, enterprise, cross-border cooperation, climate action and the blue economy. University of Galway highlights the role of higher education and research infrastructure, skills, sectoral specialisms and quality of life in supporting balanced regional development.

Submissions relating to retail and postal services highlight the importance of everyday services and supporting infrastructure in regional development. Retail submissions from Tesco and Lidl emphasise the role of grocery retail in town centres, accessibility, employment, regeneration and meeting the needs of growing communities. An Post highlights the role of postal services and the post office network as community and service infrastructure.

Response:

It is intended that the RSES will support a sustainable regional economic strategy that aligns enterprise growth with housing, infrastructure, transport, skills, digital connectivity, education, innovation and quality of life. Matters raised in relation to economic development, enterprise, tourism, skills and services that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, having regard to national enterprise, tourism, education, climate and infrastructure policy.

2.9 Climate Action, Renewable Energy and Energy Security

Issues Raised:

Climate action and renewable energy are among the most significant themes raised. The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment highlights the statutory obligations arising from the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021, Climate Action Plan 2025, the National Adaptation Framework and the transition to a climate-neutral economy. It recommends that the RSES include a Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy and a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy in accordance with Section 29.

Renewable energy submissions from Statkraft, MKO, Energia, Bord na Móna, Bord Gáis Energy, SSE Airtricity, Harmony Solar, FuturEnergy Ireland, Wind Energy Ireland and others highlight the need for a clear, deliverable and plan-led Regional Renewable Energy Strategy. Key issues include regional and county-level renewable electricity capacity allocations, grid capacity, energy storage, repowering, hybrid projects, solar PV, onshore wind, energy parks, Green Energy Hubs, long-duration storage, community benefit, renewable gas, biomethane, hydrogen and energy security.

Several submissions emphasise that renewable energy targets should be treated as minimums rather than caps and that target-setting methodologies should be transparent, evidence-based and capable of reflecting project attrition, grid capacity, environmental constraints and delivery timelines. Others highlight the need for consistent landscape assessment methodologies, biodiversity protection, community engagement and alignment with grid development plans.

Response:

The RSES, which will include a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, will support the region's contribution to national climate and energy targets while ensuring that renewable energy development is planned in a balanced and environmentally responsible way. The NWRA, in conjunction with DECE and the other two regional assemblies, is developing a methodology to facilitate this, and it will be employed in allocating regional onshore renewable wind and solar targets set out in the NPF to the counties within the respective regions. Regional targets for onshore wind and solar are already set out in the NPF, which will provide a guide in this regard.

The Regional Renewable Energy Strategy will be an integral part of the RSES and is a critical element of policy for the State. The region requires significant expansion and investment in onshore wind, solar and grid to enable the progress sustained over recent decades to be maintained and expanded. There are a number of areas across the region that EirGrid have recently highlighted as being significantly constrained by a lack of carrying capacity in the grid network, with the North West particularly impacted in this regard.

Matters raised in relation to climate action, renewable energy and energy security that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, having regard to national climate and energy policy, RRES methodology, environmental assessment, grid capacity, landscape capacity, biodiversity, community considerations and infrastructure requirements.

2.10 Marine, Coastal and Land-Sea Interactions

Issues Raised:

Marine and coastal matters are of particular importance to the Northern and Western Region. The MARA submission highlights the statutory requirement for alignment with the National Marine Planning Framework and the need for coordinated land-sea planning. It identifies the strategic role of the region in supporting offshore renewable energy, the blue economy, ports and marine infrastructure, coastal resilience, ecosystem-based planning and marine biodiversity protection.

The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, ESB Networks, EirGrid, local authorities and other stakeholders also highlight the importance of offshore renewable energy, landfall locations, port capacity, onshore grid infrastructure, marine infrastructure, coastal adaptation and integrated land-sea planning.

Submissions also raise issues relating to ports, harbours, piers, fisheries, aquaculture, marine tourism, island access, coastal erosion, coastal flooding and the long-term resilience of coastal communities..

Response:

It is intended that the RSES will provide an appropriate regional framework for marine and coastal matters and land-sea interactions, recognising the significant importance of the Atlantic coastline to the economic, environmental, social and cultural identity of the Northern and Western Region. Marine and coastal assets are central to the region's long-term development, including offshore renewable energy, ports, harbours, piers, fisheries, aquaculture, marine tourism, island access, coastal communities, biodiversity, climate resilience and the wider blue economy.

The RSES will consider these matters having regard to the National Marine Planning Framework, future Designated Maritime Area Plans, offshore renewable energy policy, coastal resilience, marine infrastructure, landfall and grid requirements, island connectivity and the need for integrated planning between terrestrial and marine areas.

Given the extent of the region's coastline, its island communities, coastal settlements, marine resources and offshore renewable energy potential, marine and coastal issues will be an important component of the preparation of the RSES. These matters will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES and accompanying environmental assessments.

2.11 Environment, Biodiversity, Heritage, Landscape and Flood Risk

Issues Raised:

A proportion of the submissions demonstrate the need for the RSES to be environmentally robust. Submissions from the Heritage Council, An Taisce, Irish Green Building Council, Hedgerows Ireland, Friends of the Irish Environment, Dark Sky Ireland, Friends of Mayo Dark Skies, the OPW, local authorities and others raise issues relating to biodiversity, climate resilience, water quality, green and blue infrastructure, nature-based solutions, hedgerows, built heritage, archaeological heritage, architectural heritage, dark skies, landscape character, flood risk, waste management and circular economy.

The Heritage Council submission highlights the importance of natural, built and cultural heritage as part of sustainable regional development. Hedgerows Ireland highlights the role of hedgerows in biodiversity, carbon storage, landscape character and ecological connectivity. The Irish Green Building Council highlights the built environment, embodied carbon, circularity and sustainable construction. Dark Sky submissions highlight light pollution, landscape quality, biodiversity, tourism and the importance of dark sky policy.

The OPW submission highlights flood risk and the need for strategic flood risk management. Flood risk is also raised in relation to settlement planning, climate adaptation, coastal change, water management and infrastructure resilience.

Response:

The RSES will be informed by Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Regional Flood Risk Appraisal. These processes will ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into the preparation of the Strategy from the outset.

Submissions which include SEA scoping matters, or which contain information that may inform the Strategic Environmental Assessment process, have been forwarded to the appointed environmental consultants who are undertaking the environmental processes. The issues, recommendations and baseline information contained within those submissions will be considered, where appropriate, as part of the preparation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report. The SEA Report will inform and guide the review and development of the RSES, ensuring that environmental considerations, including relevant transboundary and cross-border environmental matters, are integrated throughout the plan-making process.

Matters raised in relation to environment, heritage, landscape and flood risk that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES and associated environmental assessments.

2.12 Rural Development, Gaeltacht, Islands and Communities

Issues Raised:

Submissions from the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Údarás na Gaeltachta, local authorities, island communities and rural interests highlight the importance of rural development, community development, cross-border cooperation, local economic and community planning, libraries, Gaeltacht areas and the sustainability of rural and island communities.

The Department's submission highlights the importance of rural proofing and alignment with emerging national policy, including Our Rural Future 2026-2031. Údarás na Gaeltachta highlights the importance of the Gaeltacht, language planning, cultural resilience, enterprise, digital hubs, housing, infrastructure and community sustainability. Island submissions highlight access, transport, infrastructure, housing, services, energy, resilience and the distinct needs of island communities. The Údarás submission has a number of key requests, which involve language planning and particular Regional Policy Objectives pertaining to the Gaeltacht regions of Galway, Mayo and Donegal, which are classified as both a regional and national asset in need of sustaining and support to enable their ongoing survival and future success.

Response:

Given that the Northern and Western Region is largely rural, characterised by a much larger rural population share than the national average, it is important that the new RSES recognises that balanced regional development requires strong support for rural communities, Gaeltacht communities, islands, small towns and villages. This includes access to housing, transport, digital connectivity, community services, enterprise supports, cultural infrastructure and climate-resilient infrastructure. As a region with the largest Gaeltacht area in the country, the protection of the Irish language and the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht is essential and will be reflected in the RSES.

2.13 Social Infrastructure, Health, Education and Quality of Life

Issues Raised:

Social infrastructure is a recurring theme across the submissions. The Department of Education and Youth highlights the importance of education provision, school accommodation, special educational needs and the integration of education infrastructure with settlement and housing growth. It also refers to National Policy Objective 41, which supports the timely delivery of childcare facilities and new and refurbished schools on well-located sites.

The Department of Public Health highlights the relationship between planning, health, climate, transport, access to services and the wider determinants of health. Sport Ireland highlights the role of sport infrastructure in supporting community wellbeing, recreation, health and quality of life. Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee highlights youth services, participation, accessibility and the needs of young people.

The submissions demonstrate that social infrastructure must be treated as enabling infrastructure for sustainable growth. Housing and population growth will need to be supported by timely investment in schools, healthcare, childcare, community facilities, sports infrastructure, cultural facilities, public realm, libraries, youth services and age-friendly infrastructure.

Response:

It is intended that the RSES will support healthy placemaking, inclusive communities, active travel, access to services, recreational infrastructure and quality of life. These matters are central to compact growth, regional attractiveness, social inclusion and balanced regional development.

Matters raised in relation to social infrastructure, health, education and quality of life that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES.

2.14 Cross-Border, Inter-Regional and All-Island Cooperation

Issues Raised:

The importance of cross-border, inter-regional and all-island cooperation is a recurring theme across a number of submissions. While Section 2.5 addresses specific cross-boundary settlements and coordinated area planning, this section addresses the wider cooperation required between Regional Assemblies, local authorities, Northern Ireland authorities, Government departments, infrastructure providers and other relevant stakeholders.

Submissions from the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Southern Regional Assembly, Derry City and Strabane District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, InterTradelreland, local authorities and other stakeholders highlight the need for continued cooperation on strategic matters that extend beyond regional and jurisdictional boundaries.

Key issues raised include the all-island economy, cross-border enterprise, SMEs, renewable energy, strategic transport and rail connectivity, energy infrastructure, tourism, digital connectivity, shared environmental resources, climate resilience, marine planning and the role of border communities. Submissions also highlight the importance of cooperation between the three Regional Assemblies in supporting balanced regional development and the implementation of national planning objectives.

Response:

The Northern and Western Region has a significant cross-border dimension, with strong economic, social, environmental and infrastructure relationships with Northern Ireland. Cross-border, inter-regional and all-island cooperation will therefore be important in supporting the implementation of the RSES.

The National Planning Framework contains a number of objectives relevant to Northern Ireland, all-island cooperation and cross-border planning. It is intended that the RSES will consider how these national objectives can be supported and translated at regional level through appropriate Regional Policy Objectives.

The RSES will support continued cooperation with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, the Southern Regional Assembly, Northern Ireland authorities, local authorities, Government departments, infrastructure providers and relevant stakeholders. This cooperation will be important in relation to transport, rail, energy, digital infrastructure, enterprise, tourism, marine planning, climate action, environmental management and placemaking in adjoining towns, villages and rural areas.

There will also be other pathways to consider how to enhance cross-border interactions, through Special Project Bodies and initiatives such as the future direction of the Shared Island Unit via the Department of An Taoiseach. Matters raised in relation to cross-border, inter-regional and all-island cooperation that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES, having regard to national planning policy, regional coordination requirements, infrastructure capacity, environmental assessment and the role of relevant public bodies, agencies and infrastructure providers.

2.15 Implementation, Monitoring and SMART RPOs

Issues Raised:

Implementation is a recurring theme which arises repeatedly across many of the submissions received. Many submissions place emphasis on the importance of a RSES that must be capable of monitoring and delivery over time. This is particularly relevant having regard to Section 29(13), where legislation requires the RSES to include measures for effective implementation and monitoring. For example, submissions from the OPR, LDA, Uisce Éireann, EirGrid, ESB Networks, local authorities, renewable energy stakeholders and others point to the need for clearer implementation arrangements, infrastructure sequencing, funding alignment, cooperation between public bodies, monitoring indicators and reporting arrangements.

Response:

It is intended that the RSES will include clear, evidence-based and implementable Regional Policy Objectives. RPOs will be framed to be SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. This will require full support from the Members of the Assembly when inputting into the strategy-making process.

The new RSES will include an Implementation and Monitoring Strategy that will be based on the RPOs in the RSES and will include appropriate indicators capable of tracking progress on settlement growth, housing delivery, infrastructure, transport, renewable energy, climate action, environmental protection, regional economic development and other areas identified during the strategy-making process.

The RSES will also be prepared having regard to the monitoring and reporting requirements set out in Section 35 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended). Section 35 requires the Regional Assembly to keep the implementation of the RSES under review and to prepare a monitoring report within four years of the making or revision of the Strategy, and every four years thereafter. Local authorities within the Region are also required to submit reports to the Regional Assembly, not later than three years after the making or revision of the RSES and following subsequent monitoring reports, setting out progress made in supporting the objectives of the Strategy.

This statutory monitoring framework reinforces the need for clear implementation measures, measurable objectives, effective reporting arrangements and ongoing cooperation between the Assembly, local authorities, Government departments, infrastructure providers and other relevant public bodies over the lifetime of the RSES.

2.16 Overall Conclusion

The submissions received provide a clear, detailed and valuable evidence base for the preparation of the RSES. They demonstrate the need for a Strategy that offers a focus on the direction on the future growth of the Northern and Western Region, including the role of Galway Metropolitan Area and MASP, Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns, smaller towns, villages, rural areas, Gaeltacht areas, islands, coastal communities and cross-border settlements.

A central message emerging from the consultation is that future growth must be infrastructure-led and capable of implementation. The submissions consistently highlight the need to align settlement and housing growth with enabling infrastructure, including transport, water services, wastewater capacity, electricity grid infrastructure, renewable energy, digital connectivity, social infrastructure, environmental capacity and climate resilience. They also identify the importance of strategic infrastructure projects, many of which are required at scale, to support balanced regional development over the lifetime of the RSES.

The submissions also demonstrate the breadth of areas to be addressed in the RSES, including

- A clear desire to see the Northern & Western Region make significant inroads into the delivery of infrastructure of scale in transport, to allow the region to operate at a status which is commensurate with the other regions on the island of Ireland.
- Boost our key urban centres, through continued focus on compact growth and accelerated housing delivery.
- Economic development, with focused employment growth.
- Tourism product enhancement, with increased services in destination towns.
- The sustaining of progress across our education and skills providers, particularly through our third level institutions.
- The need to increase output in relation to onshore / offshore Renewable energy, and the associated Electrical Grid.
- Marine and coastal planning, biodiversity, heritage, landscape, flood risk.
- The sustaining of our Gaeltacht and island communities.
- The improvement of our Social infrastructure, enhancing cross-border cooperation.
- The setting out of a clear framework to oversee the monitoring and implementation of regional policy, both in terms of measuring progress in multiple areas, including the delivery of housing, and infrastructure in the areas of electricity, water, waste water, education and transport.

These issues are strongly interrelated and will require an integrated approach to spatial planning, economic development, infrastructure investment, climate action and environmental assessment.

The submissions in many instances demonstrate that this region has significant potential, but that this potential can only be realised through stronger alignment between spatial planning, infrastructure investment, environmental capacity, climate action and implementation. It is intended that the RSES will provide a focused, deliverable and regionally responsive strategy which supports the sustainable growth of the region, identifies pathways in addressing long-standing structural weaknesses across our Counties, and which maximises the opportunities arising from the region's people, places, natural assets, infrastructure, institutions and strategic location.

The issues, recommendations and observations raised during the consultation will be considered, where appropriate, through the preparation of the RSES. Further engagement with Regional Assembly Members, relevant personnel from local authorities, prescribed bodies, infrastructure providers and relevant stakeholders will be important in development the RSES and ensuring that its Regional Policy Objectives are SMART and capable of supporting implementation over the lifetime of the RSES.

Summary of Submissions Received

3

3.1 Overview of Submissions Received

This section provides an overview of the submissions received during the pre-draft consultation process. It records the level of engagement, identifies the persons and organisations who made submissions, and provides a summary of the matters raised.

The submissions have been grouped by category, including prescribed bodies which include Government departments, Regional Assemblies, local authorities, infrastructure providers. Also included are non-statutory consultees, sectoral interests, community organisations, advocacy groups, private stakeholders and members of the public. Each submission has been reviewed and summarised having regard to the principal issues, observations and recommendations raised.

The purpose of this section is to provide a clear record of the submissions received and to assist in understanding the range of views, technical inputs and strategic matters identified through the consultation process. The strategic issues emerging from the submissions, together with the overall Response, are set out in Section 2.

A total of 94 submissions were received through the consultation portal, by post and through the dedicated email account. This represents a significant level of engagement at this early stage in the preparation of the RSES.

In accordance with section 31(3)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), 70 prescribed bodies were consulted, of which 40 provided submissions. This represents a substantial level of statutory, technical and sectoral input to inform the preparation of the RSES.

A further 54 submissions were received from a wide range of stakeholders, including non-prescribed infrastructure providers, community organisations, sectoral interests, advocacy groups, private stakeholders and members of the public.

Taken together, the submissions provide valuable statutory, technical, sectoral and local input and form a strong evidence base for the preparation of the RSES. They will assist the Assembly in identifying the key strategic matters, opportunities and constraints to be addressed in the Strategy and in formulating clear, evidence-based and measurable Regional Policy Objectives.

Table 2 below lists the persons and organisations who made submissions. A hyperlink to each submission is also provided. All pre-draft submissions received are summarised in this section.

Table 2: List of submissions made and a hyperlink to the submission on the consultation portal

Reference	Name/Authority	Reference	Name/Authority
NWRA-C1-1	Geoff Hynes, HSA	NWRA-C1-48	Galway City Council
NWRA-C1-2	John Moran, Mayo Plus	NWRA-C1-49	Eoin Keehan, Department of Transport
NWRA-C1-3	David Barton, Community Campaigner	NWRA-C1-50	DETE
NWRA-C1-4	Niamh Lennon, MARA	NWRA-C1-51	Aine McNamara, Department of Public Health
NWRA-C1-5	Louise Stewart, Fermanagh & Omagh Council	NWRA-C1-52	Shane Dineen, Failte Ireland
NWRA-C1-6	Rachel Woodward, OPW	NWRA-C1-53	Marie Casserly, Individual
NWRA-C1-7	Virginia Teehan, The Heritage Council	NWRA-C1-54	Graham Diamond, Donegal County Council
NWRA-C1-8	Planning Advisory, Department of Climate, Energy & Environment	NWRA-C1-55	Ciaran Cannon, The Quiet Man Greenway
NWRA-C1-9	Colman O Raghallaigh, West on Track	NWRA-C1-56	Des Foley, Atlantic Technological University
NWRA-C1-10	Peter Feeney, Western Inter-County Railway Committee	NWRA-C1-57	Steve McCarthy, Harmony Solar
NWRA-C1-11	Noeleen Fagan, Department for Rural Community Development & the Gaeltacht	NWRA-C1-58	Karen O'Reilly, SSE
NWRA-C1-12	Clare Bannon, EMRA	NWRA-C1-59	Mary Quinn, Leitrim County Council
NWRA-C1-13	InterTradelreland	NWRA-C1-60	Bord Na Mona
NWRA-C1-14	Juliet Ryan, FuturEnergy Ireland	NWRA-C1-61	Robert Jones, Bord Gais Energy
NWRA-C1-15	Sligo Greenway Co-op Ltd	NWRA-C1-62	McCutcheon Halley/Irish Waste Management Association
NWRA-C1-16	Niall O'Donnellan, Individual	NWRA-C1-63	Sara Tinsley, Energia
NWRA-C1-17	Mary Bourke, Individual	NWRA-C1-64	Woodlawn Heritage Group
NWRA-C1-18	Irish Green Building Council	NWRA-C1-65	Mayo County Council
NWRA-C1-19	Phoebe Duvall, An Taisce	NWRA-C1-66	Mark Gibson, Ballyglunin Community Development
NWRA-C1-20	Dark Sky Ireland	NWRA-C1-67	Brendan Mulligan, GLUAS
NWRA-C1-21	Rachael Craig, Derry City & Strabane District Council	NWRA-C1-68	Enda McDonnell, Enterprise Ireland
NWRA-C1-22	Friends of Mayo Dark Skies	NWRA-C1-69	Sean Finan, Irish Bioenergy Association
NWRA-C1-23	Pauline Byrne, Brady Shipman Martin / Ballymore Group	NWRA-C1-70	Steve Seymour, Uisce Éireann
NWRA-C1-24	Tara Spain, TII	NWRA-C1-71	Galway Children & Young People's Services Committee
NWRA-C1-25	Hedgerows Ireland	NWRA-C1-72	University of Galway
n/a	Withdrawn from TII duplicate submission	NWRA-C1-73	Lorraine D'Arcy, Individual
NWRA-C1-27	Joe Sheridan, Sustainable Community Area Network	NWRA-C1-74	Keenan Stack, IBEC
NWRA-C1-28	Peadar Conway, Sligo Greenway Co-op Ltd	NWRA-C1-75	Sligo Cycling Campaign

Reference	Name/Authority	Reference	Name/Authority
NWRA-C1-29	Brendan Quinn, Individual	NWRA-C1-76	John Willoughby, Wind Energy Ireland
NWRA-C1-30	David Kelly, Southern Regional Assembly	NWRA-C1-77	MKO
NWRA-C1-31	Gerry Farrell, Irish Concrete Federation	NWRA-C1-78	Cormac O'Flaherty, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
NWRA-C1-32	Tesco Ireland Ltd	NWRA-C1-79	Cormac MacDonnell, Sport Ireland
NWRA-C1-33	An Post	NWRA-C1-80	Eleanor Ryan, EPA
NWRA-C1-34	Mary Considine, Irish Rail	NWRA-C1-81	Friends of the Irish Environment
NWRA-C1-35	Comharchumann Forbartha Árann	NWRA-C1-82	Marie Sinnott, ESB
NWRA-C1-36	Eoin Farrell, NTA	NWRA-C1-83	Pamela Connolly, LDA
NWRA-C1-37	East Mayo Greenway	NWRA-C1-84	Galway Chamber
NWRA-C1-38	Cootehill Chamber of Commerce	NWRA-C1-85	Anne Marie O'Connor, Office of the Planning Regulator
NWRA-C1-39	Eileen McCarthy, Leitrim CoCo/ARUP	NWRA-C1-86	Nicholas O'Kane, Cavan County Council
NWRA-C1-40	Sligo County Council	NWRA-C1-87	Colin Clarke, Statkraft
NWRA-C1-41	Frances Hague, Western Development Commission	NWRA-C1-88	Dean Maguire, Louth County Council
NWRA-C1-42	Liam Glynn, Milltown Community Council Ltd.	NWRA-C1-89	Alan Hanlon, Department of Education and Youth
NWRA-C1-43	Lidl	NWRA-C1-90	Bryana Hindle, Ireland West Airport
NWRA-C1-44	Gas Networks Ireland	NWRA-C1-91	Liam Hanaran, Galway County Council
NWRA-C1-45	Feasta	NWRA-C1-92	Derrick Hambleton, The Galway Association of An Taisce
NWRA-C1-46	Údáras na Gaeltachta	NWRA-C1-93	Sinead Dooley, EirGrid
NWRA-C1-47	Cathal Flynn, Monaghan County Council	NWRA-C1-94	IDA

3.2 Consultation Summaries

The following section provides a summary of each submission received during the pre-draft consultation process. The summaries are intended to capture the principal issues, observations and recommendations raised by each submitter in a concise manner. They should be read alongside Section 2, which draws together the strategic matters emerging from the submissions and sets out the overall response. The summaries do not seek to reproduce each submission in full but provide an overview of the matters raised to inform the preparation of the RSES.

Prescribed Bodies

Office of the Planning Regulator

Submission No.

[NWRA-C1-85](#)

Submission by:

Office of the Planning Regulator

Issues raised/Theme:

Planning Matters

Summary of Submission

The submission from the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) relates to the preparation of the revised Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the requirement for the Strategy to be consistent with the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), the National Planning Framework First Revision 2025, the National Marine Planning Framework, National Planning Policies and Measures, National Planning Policy Guidance and relevant transport strategies prepared by the National Transport Authority. The OPR notes the role of the RSES as the principal mechanism for translating national planning policy to the regional level. The submission identifies the need for the RSES to provide a clear spatial framework for the region, with stronger alignment between population growth, housing delivery, employment, infrastructure, climate action and renewable energy.

1. Settlement Strategy

The OPR identifies the settlement strategy as a central element of the RSES. It advises that the Strategy should clearly set out where future growth is to be directed, with a focus on the Galway Metropolitan Area, the Regional Growth Centres of Sligo, Letterkenny and Athlone, and Key Towns. The submission states that the settlement hierarchy should be clearly defined and consistently applied, particularly having regard to possible changes to the definition of Key Towns. It also highlights the need to identify strategic growth locations at scale, including new or expanded communities, and to ensure that these are supported by infrastructure and high-quality public transport.

Specific recommendations

- Clearly define the settlement hierarchy and the role of each settlement type.
- Prioritise growth in the Galway Metropolitan Area, Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns.
- Recognise the role of Athlone, Sligo, Letterkenny and the Letterkenny-Derry cross-border network.
- Consider the implications of the proposed revised definition of Key Towns.
- Identify strategic locations for growth at scale, including new or expanded communities.
- Prioritise the plan-led expansion to the east of Galway City, including Garraun and Ardaun.
- Demonstrate how national compact growth targets will be delivered.
- Provide a framework for defining the built-up footprint of settlements.
- Address cross-boundary growth areas and identify the need for a Coordinated Area Plan for Athlone.
- Support rural communities in appropriate locations while avoiding unsustainable long-distance commuting.

2. Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan

The OPR identifies the Galway MASP as a key delivery mechanism for the RSES. It notes the NPF requirement for Galway City and suburbs to reach a minimum population of 122,000 by 2040, including approximately 36,000 additional people.

The submission advises that the MASP should be strengthened as a delivery tool, with clear governance, phasing, infrastructure sequencing and investment priorities. It highlights the need to prioritise large-scale Transport-Oriented Development along high-capacity public transport corridors and to identify strategic housing and employment locations within the MASP area.

Specific recommendations

- Strengthen the Galway MASP as a delivery and implementation tool.
- Reflect the NPF target for Galway City and suburbs to reach a minimum population of 122,000 by 2040.
- Ensure that at least 50% of new housing in Galway City and suburbs is delivered within the existing built-up footprint.
- Prioritise large-scale Transport-Oriented Development along high-capacity public transport corridors.
- Identify strategic housing and employment locations within the MASP area.
- Consider appropriate greenfield locations where required to accommodate growth.
- Have regard to previous work on TOD opportunities and relevant work by State agencies including the Land Development Agency.
- Include clear governance, phasing, infrastructure sequencing and investment priorities.
- Include implementation and monitoring measures in accordance with Section 29(13) of the Planning and Development Act 2024

3. Housing

The OPR notes that Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 requires the RSES to make provision for the location of housing and for meeting national and regional growth targets set out in the NPF.

The submission states that the RSES should provide a clear framework for housing delivery in the locations identified for growth in the settlement strategy. It places particular emphasis on the need for a strong pipeline of zoned and serviced land in appropriate locations, supported by public transport, water services, social infrastructure and other enabling infrastructure.

Specific recommendations

- Set out the location of housing growth in accordance with Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2024.
- Provide for national and regional population and housing targets from the NPF.
- Identify strategic locations for housing growth at scale.
- Ensure housing delivery is aligned with infrastructure capacity and planned investment.
- Align housing growth with public transport, water services and social infrastructure.
- Align NDP funding, State agency capital programmes and local authority infrastructure priorities with strategic housing locations.
- Identify infrastructure bottlenecks and funding gaps affecting housing delivery at regional scale.
- Support coordination with the New Urban Communities Taskforce.

4. Employment and Economic Development

The OPR highlights that Section 29 requires the RSES to provide for the strategic location of employment-related, industrial and commercial development, and to include a strategy for retail matters.

The submission advises that the RSES should coordinate the spatial distribution of population, employment and infrastructure. It states that employment development should be directed to locations that are accessible by sustainable transport and capable of supporting a critical mass of activity.

Specific recommendations

- Provide a clear framework for the spatial distribution of employment.
- Align employment growth with housing, transport and infrastructure.
- Identify and quantify strategic employment locations, including in Galway and other suitable urban and rural locations.
- Direct employment development to locations accessible by sustainable transport.
- Consider the Programme for Government commitment to develop Next Generation Sites, including one anticipated in the west of the country.
- Provide for different employment needs, including industrial, logistics and commercial uses.
- Consider the relocation of traditional industrial or commercial uses from strategic regeneration areas where necessary.
- Support economic clustering, innovation and smart specialisation.
- Work with national enterprise agencies to prioritise investment in key locations and sectors.
- Include a strategy for retail matters, including the location of retail development.

5. Transport, Infrastructure and Waste

The OPR states that future growth must be infrastructure-led and that land use and infrastructure planning must be fully integrated. It notes existing infrastructure deficits in the region and the need to align investment with the locations identified for growth.

The submission advises that transport investment should support compact settlement patterns and locations with sufficient population and activity to support strategic public transport projects. It also states that the RSES should provide a strong policy framework for the delivery of National Development Plan projects and other regionally significant infrastructure.

Specific recommendations

- Align infrastructure planning with the settlement strategy.
- Ensure transport investment supports compact growth and sustainable settlement patterns.
- Consolidate growth in locations capable of supporting strategic public transport.
- Support the delivery of NDP projects and other regionally significant infrastructure.
- Prioritise infrastructure required to unlock development in strategic growth locations.
- Strengthen coordination with infrastructure providers, Government departments and State agencies.
- Provide a regional policy framework for waste management and the circular economy.
- Ensure consistency with the regional waste management plan and NPF objectives relating to the circular economy.

6. Renewable Energy

The OPR welcomes the recognition of renewable energy as a significant opportunity for the region. It states that the preparation of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy will be essential to demonstrate consistency with the National Planning Framework.

The submission notes that the Northern and Western Region is required to plan for the delivery of 35% of national onshore wind and 12% of national solar PV capacity. It recommends that renewable energy capacity allocations should be identified for each planning authority using the best available scientific evidence.

Specific recommendations

- Prepare a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy as part of the RSES.
- Plan for the region's contribution to 35% of national onshore wind and 12% of national solar PV.
- Identify renewable energy capacity allocations for each planning authority.
- Use the best available scientific evidence to inform allocations.
- Work with the Southern and Eastern and Midland Regional Assemblies to apply a consistent methodology.
- Have regard to the methodology developed under the Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce.
- Address cross-boundary grid connections and strategic energy infrastructure.
- Support energy storage, repowering and energy security.
- Coordinate with national agencies to support strategic renewable energy projects

7. Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

The OPR advises that climate action should be integrated throughout the RSES rather than treated as a standalone policy area. It identifies land use, transport, flood risk, coastal management, energy, economic development and infrastructure planning as areas where climate adaptation and mitigation should be embedded.

The submission highlights the need for consistency with national climate legislation and policy, including the transition to net zero by 2050. It also notes the role of cities in supporting lower-carbon living through sustainable mobility, energy demand management, low-carbon buildings and alternative energy solutions.

Specific recommendations / OPR advice

- Integrate climate adaptation and mitigation across all relevant policy areas.
- Ensure consistency with national climate legislation and policy.
- Align land use and transport planning with climate action objectives.
- Address future flood risk associated with climate change.
- Integrate coastal zone management with climate adaptation.
- Recognise the role of cities in supporting the transition to net zero.
- Support sustainable mobility, low-carbon buildings and energy demand management.
- Provide for a just transition to carbon neutrality.
- Set out roles, responsibilities and collaboration mechanisms for public bodies in delivering climate objectives.

8. Marine and Coastal Matters

The OPR notes that the RSES is required to address marine and coastal matters, including land-sea interaction, sea-level rise, coastal flooding, marine ecosystems, ports, fisheries, tourism, offshore renewable energy and associated grid infrastructure.

The submission highlights the need to address the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports, ports of regional significance, State fishing harbours and smaller harbours, in accordance with national ports policy.

Specific recommendations

- Address coordinated land and maritime planning in the RSES.
- Provide for land-sea interaction and integrated coastal planning.
- Address sea-level rise, coastal flooding and coastal change.
- Support the protection of marine ecosystems.
- Address ports, fisheries, tourism, offshore renewable energy and associated grid connections.
- Consider the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports, ports of regional significance, State fishing harbours and smaller harbours.
- Ensure consistency with the National Marine Planning Framework.
- Support cross-border and transboundary cooperation on marine and coastal matters.

9. Social Infrastructure

The OPR highlights the importance of social infrastructure, including childcare, education, healthcare and sports facilities, in supporting sustainable growth.

The submission notes that Section 29 requires the RSES to identify regional-scale third-level education, healthcare and sports facilities. It advises that these facilities should be aligned with the settlement strategy and transport planning, and that engagement with relevant infrastructure providers and Government departments will be required.

Specific recommendations / OPR advice

- Identify regional-scale third-level education, healthcare and sports facilities.
- Align social infrastructure provision with the settlement strategy.
- Ensure social infrastructure is integrated with transport planning.
- Engage with relevant infrastructure providers and Government departments, including the Department of Education and Youth.
- Ensure population growth is aligned with investment and funding streams for social infrastructure.
- Support the provision of social infrastructure in rural areas.
- Have regard to Our Rural Future and relevant NPF objectives for rural communities.

10. Environment, Heritage, Gaeltacht, Landscape and Flooding

The OPR highlights the statutory requirements under Section 29 relating to environmental protection, biodiversity, natural and built heritage, Gaeltacht language and cultural heritage, landscape and landscape character, and flooding and flood management.

The submission advises that the RSES should support implementation of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 and include regional policy objectives relating to biodiversity, ecosystem services, no net loss of biodiversity and nature-based solutions.

Specific recommendations

- Provide for the preservation and protection of the environment and amenities.
- Integrate the National Biodiversity Action Plan into the RSES.
- Protect archaeological, architectural and natural heritage.
- Include regional policy objectives for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Include no net loss of biodiversity, consistent with NPF policy.
- Support nature-based solutions to contribute to climate objectives.
- Protect the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht.
- Support language plans, Gaeltacht service towns and language networks.
- Prepare a landscape and landscape character strategy for the region.
- Coordinate landscape categorisation with the other Regional Assemblies.
- Prepare a flooding and flood management plan for the region.
- Engage with the Office of Public Works on flood risk and flood management.
- Include objectives relating to SuDS, nature-based solutions and coastal change.
- Identify strategic flood infrastructure required to support sustainable growth.

11. Implementation and Monitoring

The OPR places significant emphasis on implementation, monitoring and accountability. It states that the RSES should translate national objectives into measurable regional indicators and should strengthen coordination with infrastructure providers, Government departments and State agencies.

The submission refers to Section 29(13), which requires the RSES and MASP to include measures for effective implementation and monitoring. These include infrastructure priorities, an order of priority, potential funding sources, cross-sectoral investment and actions, coordination between local authorities and public bodies, and monitoring and reporting arrangements.

Specific recommendations

- Include a robust implementation and monitoring framework.
- Identify infrastructure priorities of scale.
- Provide an order of priority for infrastructure provision.
- Identify potential sources of funding for infrastructure.
- Set out cross-sectoral investment and actions required to deliver planned growth.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for delivery.
- Strengthen coordination between planning authorities and public bodies.
- Include clear monitoring and reporting arrangements.
- Develop measurable indicators linked to strategic objectives and regional priorities.
- Engage early and regularly with infrastructure providers, Departments and agencies.
- Work with the other Regional Assemblies to develop a consistent monitoring framework across all regions.

12. Structure and Format of the RSES

The OPR notes that the RSES review provides an opportunity to streamline the structure and format of the Strategy and to promote consistency with the other Regional Assemblies where appropriate.

The submission identifies opportunities for common approaches to matters such as flood risk management, protection of the strategic function of national roads, integration of land use and transport, modal shift, active travel, renewable energy methodology and monitoring indicators.

Specific recommendations / OPR advice

- Streamline and improve the structure and format of the revised RSES.
- Coordinate with the other Regional Assemblies where common approaches are appropriate.
- Promote consistency on national policy matters that apply across all regions.
- Consider common policy approaches to flood risk, national roads, land use and transport, modal shift and active travel.
- Coordinate the preparation and implementation of Regional Renewable Energy Strategies.
- Apply common measurable indicators and monitoring report structures where appropriate.
- Ensure Regional Policy Objectives are clear, measurable and capable of implementation.

Overall Summary

Overall, the OPR advises that the RSES should provide clear regional leadership and coordination, with a robust settlement strategy, stronger Galway MASP, aligned housing and infrastructure delivery, strategic employment planning, coordinated transport and infrastructure investment, renewable energy planning, climate action, environmental protection and a stronger implementation and monitoring framework.

Government Departments

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-49](#)
 Submission by: Department of Transport
 Issues raised/Theme: Transport Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The Department recommends that the RSES is aligned with key national transport policies, including the National Sustainable Mobility Policy, the Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan 2026-2030, Moving Together: A Collaborative Approach to Systems Change in Transport 2026-2030, Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan and relevant National Transport Authority programmes.

The submission highlights the importance of compact growth and sustainable mobility in reducing travel demand, congestion, emissions and car dependency. It also notes the requirement under Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 for the RSES to identify sustainable settlement patterns and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas.

The submission places particular emphasis on Connecting Ireland, TFI Local Link services, Smart Demand Responsive Transport, improved rural connectivity, accessibility for disabled and older people, and the Public Transport Accessibility Retrofit Programme.

The Department also notes the preparation of the Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy, which will replace the Galway Transport Strategy 2016 and provide a long-term framework for transport investment and integrated transport planning in the Galway Metropolitan Area.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-8](#)
 Submission by: Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE)
 Issues raised/Theme: Renewables, Energy Infrastructure, Climate, Marine

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to climate action, renewable energy, energy infrastructure, marine planning and the transition to a climate-neutral economy. It highlights the statutory obligations arising from the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021, Climate Action Plan 2025, National Adaptation Framework, revised National Planning Framework and Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The submission recommends that the RSES include a Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy and a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy in accordance with Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2024. It also emphasises the need to support renewable energy generation, electricity grid infrastructure, energy security, Local Authority Climate Action Plans, smart energy services, marine spatial planning, offshore renewable energy and coordinated land-sea planning.

The submission further highlights the strategic role of the Regional Assemblies in supporting national climate targets, renewable energy capacity allocations, climate resilience, coastal adaptation and the sustainable development of Ireland's marine and blue economy sectors.

The submission highlights the importance of integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity protection, climate resilience, coastal change management and sustainable resource use into the RSES and associated SEA process. It references the National Climate Change Risk Assessment, National Adaptation

Framework, Local Authority Climate Action Plans and the Sustainable Development Goals as key frameworks for consideration.

The submission also emphasises the importance of nature-based solutions, ecosystem resilience, coastal adaptation, marine environmental protection and consideration of climate-related risks, including flooding, coastal erosion and sea-level rise, within the environmental assessment process.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-11](#)
 Submission by: Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG)
 Issues raised/Theme: Rural Development issues

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to rural development, community development, libraries, cross-border cooperation, local economic and community planning, and the sustainable development of Gaeltacht areas. It highlights the importance of aligning the RSES with emerging national policy, including Our Rural Future 2026-2031, and recommends that a rural proofing exercise be undertaken to ensure the needs, opportunities and challenges of rural communities are appropriately reflected in the Strategy.

The submission emphasises the role of community infrastructure and services in supporting sustainable communities, including public libraries, community and voluntary organisations, the Community Services Programme, LCDCs, and LECs. It also highlights the importance of cross-border cooperation through the PEACEPLUS Programme and the contribution of community-led initiatives to social inclusion, economic development and place-making.

The submission further supports the sustainable development of Gaeltacht areas and cultural heritage, noting the importance of alignment with national language policy, including the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language, and initiatives that support the long-term viability of Gaeltacht communities.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-89](#)
 Submission by: Department of Education and Youth
 Issues raised/Theme: Education and Youth Affairs

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to education provision, school accommodation, special educational needs and the integration of education infrastructure with settlement and housing growth.

The Department highlights the importance of schools as key social infrastructure and as an enabler of housing delivery and sustainable communities. It refers to the National Planning Framework First Revision 2025 and, in particular, National Policy Objective 41, which supports the timely delivery of childcare facilities and new and refurbished schools on well-located sites within or close to existing built-up areas.

The submission requests that the revised RSES support the provision of school accommodation, including new schools and the expansion or alteration of existing schools. It also seeks support for the protection of existing schools and for wider infrastructure and amenities to serve school communities.

The Department places emphasis on the need for additional Special Educational Needs provision at primary

and post-primary level, including appropriate school accommodation for children and young people with special educational needs.

The submission also notes that compact growth, infill and brownfield development can increase pressure on school places within existing built-up areas. It therefore requests that the RSES support the need to plan for sufficient school provision in areas targeted for population growth.

The Department further notes that schools should be located at the heart of new and expanding communities, with opportunities for shared use of school premises, sports facilities and other community amenities outside school hours.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-50](#)
 Submission by: Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment
 Issues raised/Theme: Regional Development, Enterprise, Tourism, Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (DETE) submission notes the importance of integrating enterprise policy, regional economic development, infrastructure planning, innovation, sustainability, and competitiveness objectives into the revised Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and that the RSES review should align with National Enterprise Policy, the revised National Planning Framework (NPF), and wider planning and economic development objectives.

It highlights the objectives of the White Paper on Enterprise 2022–2030, particularly its commitment to balanced and sustainable regional growth, balanced regional employment, and ensuring that towns and rural areas benefit from innovation, investment, productivity improvements, and the transition to a low-carbon economy. They note the Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity (2025), includes actions (74 & 75) to strengthen coordination between enterprise policy and regional planning. These actions commit to publishing and resourcing new Regional Enterprise Plans, enhancing cooperation between DETE and the Regional Assemblies and ensuring regional activities align with national enterprise policy and the NPF.

The Department further notes they are developing a new national enterprise strategy, Enterprise 2035, expected to be published in early 2027. Regional economic growth is expected to be a central theme, and the Department intends to continue working closely with the Regional Assemblies during its development.

The Department welcomes the Strategic Issues Paper's recognising enterprise resilience as an important emerging priority for Irish economic policy and notes the role of the RSES in identifying critical infrastructure needs across the regions and indicates that it will engage directly with the Regional Assemblies on enterprise-related infrastructural requirements.

The Department expresses support for continued alignment and cooperation between national enterprise policy and regional spatial and economic planning.

Topics which will be addressed in the Full Submission will include -

- The Department's ongoing cooperation with the Regional Assemblies
- The Regional Enterprise Plans
- Regional Employment Modelling
- Enterprise Strategy
- The Large Energy User Action Plan
- Green Tech/Offshore Wind
- Enterprise Innovation Smart Specialisation and ERDF Programming and Governance
- AI and Digital Programmes
- Tourism

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-51](#)
Submission by: Department of Public Health
Issues raised/Theme: Public health

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to public health, healthy placemaking, social infrastructure, climate resilience, accessibility and the social determinants of health.

The submission states that health should not be treated as a matter for the HSE alone, but should be embedded across settlement planning, transport, housing, economic development, environmental policy and community infrastructure. It highlights particular challenges in the Northern and Western Region, including rurality, peripherality, an ageing population, disability and neurodivergence, transport deficits, environmental pressures, health inequalities, loneliness and social isolation.

The submission recommends that all Regional Policy Objectives are subject to Health Impact Assessment screening and that public health outcome indicators are included in the RSES monitoring framework. It also recommends the adoption of a Health in All Policies approach and continued engagement with the HSE and public health professionals.

The submission includes detailed recommendations on healthy town centres, active travel, ageing in place, Universal Design, disability and autism-informed design, children’s right to play, loneliness and social connection, climate and health resilience, healthcare access, mental health, water quality, rural health inequalities and Gaeltacht cultural heritage as a health asset.

Regional Assemblies, Local Authority and Northern Ireland/Cross Border Local Authorities

Regional Assemblies

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-12](#)
Submission by: Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA)
Issues raised/Theme: Regional Development Issues

Summary of Submission

1. Overall Context and Inter-Regional Cooperation

The submission outlines the role of EMRA as part of the regional tier of governance and notes the expanded role of Regional Assemblies under the Planning and Development Act 2024. It highlights the importance of alignment between the three Regional Assemblies in preparing RSESs that respond to national policy, climate obligations, economic development, infrastructure delivery and regional implementation.

2. Climate Resilience and Sustainable Energy

The submission emphasises the legal obligation of Regional Assemblies, as relevant bodies under climate legislation, to support the achievement of national climate objectives. It recommends that climate resilience, mitigation, adaptation, renewable energy delivery, energy efficiency, grid infrastructure, carbon sinks, sustainable supply chains and Regional Renewable Energy Strategies are addressed in a coordinated manner across Assembly areas, particularly in adjoining counties.

3. Effective Regional Development

The submission supports balanced regional development and regional parity, recognising the importance of Galway achieving its growth potential in the context of national population and economic objectives. It also notes that parts of both the Eastern and Midland Region and the Northern and Western Region experience similar socio-economic challenges, including lower disposable income, infrastructure deficits and lower job density in the Midlands.

The submission includes comparative evidence on disposable income and job location, highlighting regional disparities across the State. In particular, the data identifies lower disposable income levels in counties such as Longford, Roscommon, Donegal, Leitrim and others, and shows the relative concentration of jobs across the EMRA, SRA and NWRA areas. The submission considers that capital investment should be directed to each region and sub-region in proportion to its strategic needs, legacy deficits and potential for sustainable development.

4. People and Healthy Places: Settlement Strategy, MASPs, Coordinated Area Plans, Key Towns and Rural Areas

The submission supports a clear settlement strategy for the Northern and Western Region, including the sustainable growth of Galway Metropolitan Area, Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns and rural settlements. It recommends closer alignment between the five MASPs nationally, including consistent compact growth methodologies, Transport-Oriented Development principles and the 15-minute city concept. The submission also highlights the need for coordinated planning for Athlone, which straddles the NWRA and EMRA regions, and recommends collaboration on Key Town criteria, rural areas, social infrastructure and regional-scale health, education and sports facilities.

5. Coordinated Infrastructure-Led Development for Housing Delivery and Regional Competitiveness

The submission emphasises that infrastructure-led development is essential to housing delivery, economic competitiveness and sustainable communities. It highlights the need for coordinated delivery of transport, water services, waste, communications, energy infrastructure and digital connectivity. It recommends continued support for TEN-T, TEN-E and communications networks, strategic ports and airports, sustainable mobility, rural transport, rail connectivity, active travel, Uisce Éireann capital programmes, electricity grid investment and inter-regional infrastructure projects.

6. Economic Development, Enterprise and Innovation

The submission highlights the importance of strategic economic corridors, Smart Specialisation, enterprise clustering, innovation, digital connectivity, access to energy and third-level institutions. It supports the complementary role of the Atlantic Economic Corridor and Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and identifies opportunities in areas such as advanced manufacturing, MedTech, ICT, food, tourism, renewable energy, the circular bioeconomy and the Just Transition. It also highlights the importance of Technological Universities, innovation hubs, research and enterprise collaboration.

7. North-South and Cross-Border Collaboration

The submission supports continued collaboration with the NWRA, local government and agencies in Northern Ireland in areas such as community development, housing, infrastructure, economic development, education, tourism, environmental management and shared natural resources. It recommends that the RSES support continued cross-border trade, networks and communities, particularly in the Louth, Cavan and Monaghan border area, and recognise the role of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and connections to Northern Ireland.

8. Landscape Management, Environmental Protection, Marine Spatial Planning and Coastal Zone Management

The submission highlights the need for coordinated environmental management across administrative and regional boundaries, recognising that environmental systems operate at catchment and ecosystem scale. It supports a coordinated approach to landscape character, biodiversity, green and blue infrastructure, nature-based solutions, SuDS, marine spatial planning, coastal zone management, offshore renewable energy, blue carbon, marine protected areas and climate adaptation. It also highlights the importance of Gaeltacht language planning, cultural heritage, sustainable tourism and alignment with EU and national environmental obligations.

9. Implementation and Monitoring

The submission states that effective implementation of the RSES depends on collaboration between Regional Assemblies, local authorities, Government departments, State agencies and infrastructure providers. It supports robust implementation structures, clear roles and responsibilities, legislative support, adequate resourcing and continued use of the Regional Development Monitor as a shared evidence base. It also supports integrated SEA, AA and RFRA processes and the use of SMART Regional Policy Objectives to support implementation and monitoring.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-30](#)
 Submission by: Southern Regional Assembly (SRA)
 Issues raised/Theme: Regional Development

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to inter-regional collaboration and the role of the three Regional Assemblies in supporting balanced regional development under Project Ireland 2040.

The Southern Regional Assembly welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly in the preparation of the RSESs. The submission highlights that meaningful balanced regional development cannot be achieved by one region acting alone and requires coordinated planning policy across the three regions.

The submission supports the national objective of shifting away from “business as usual” growth patterns towards a more balanced 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midland Region and the combined Southern and Northern and Western Regions.

It also welcomes further engagement on major cross-regional infrastructure projects, including rail infrastructure, and on strategic opportunities to further develop economic corridors.

Local Authorities

Submission No. **NWRA-C1-40**
 Submission by: Sligo County Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Sligo Considerations

Summary of Submission

1. Sligo Regional Growth Centre and Town Centre Regeneration

Sligo County Council highlights the role of Sligo as the principal economic driver for the North-West. The Council notes that the Planning and Development Act 2024 no longer requires “strategic plans” for Regional Growth Centres (RGC) based on commuter catchments, and requests that the revised RSES include objectives for Sligo RGC based on the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030 and the forthcoming Sligo Town Urban Area Plan.

Specific Recommendations

- Include revised objectives for Sligo RGC.
- Omit references to the current “strategic plan area” where it extends outside the adopted Sligo Town zoning map.
- Designate Sligo Town Centre regeneration as a regional priority.
- Identify Sligo Town Centre as the primary retail centre for the North-West sub-region in the retail strategy.
- Support town-centre-first retail investment and the sequential approach.
- Support key tourism projects, including Sligo Gaol, Sligo Greenway, SLNCR Greenway, National Mountain Bike Centre at Coolaney and a regional tourist attraction at Hazelwood.
- Include an RPO supporting the Wine Street Car Park Masterplan.
- Include RPOs supporting the Harbour Masterplan, City Campus Masterplan, Cleveragh Regional Park Masterplan and Sligo Gaol landbank.

2. Population and Housing Targets

The submission notes that Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 requires the RSES to include provision for the location of housing and for meeting national and regional population growth targets.

Specific Recommendations

- Disaggregate regional population targets to county and RGC level.
- Set a realistic, evidence-based population target for Sligo RGC for the period 2030-2040, consistent with the National Planning Framework First Revision (April 2025) and the most up-to-date ESRI population projections.
- Ensure a logical relationship between population and housing targets for County Sligo and Sligo Town/ RGC.
- Enable future County Development Plans to reflect these targets through their Housing Development Strategies.

3. Landscape Character and Renewable Energy

The submission states that the statutory requirements for a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy and a landscape and landscape character strategy are closely linked and should be addressed together

Specific Recommendations

- Prepare a Regional Landscape Character Assessment as an evidence base for a Regional Landscape Strategy.
- Have regard to Sligo County Council’s bid for UNESCO World Heritage status for the Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo.
- Identify the Passage Tomb Landscape, including Cairns Hill, Carrowmore, Knocknarea and Carrowkeel, as a highly sensitive landscape.
- Ensure the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy is informed by the Regional Landscape Strategy.
- Balance renewable energy development with protection of landscapes and cultural heritage.

4. Strategic Infrastructure and Cross-Border Connectivity

The submission highlights the importance of strategic transport and energy infrastructure in supporting the growth of Sligo RGC and the wider North-West.

Specific Recommendations

- Identify the N17 Sligo-Knock-Galway corridor as a strategic regional connectivity priority.
- Designate the N16 Sligo-Enniskillen-Belfast corridor as a critical cross-border route.
- Include an RPO supporting the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads Scheme.
- Identify the N15 Sligo-Donegal Town-Letterkenny corridor as a strategic regional priority.
- Support improved rail connectivity between Sligo and the wider national rail network, including improved journey times and service frequency on the Sligo-Dublin line.
- Consider longer-term enhanced rail connectivity southwards towards Galway and Limerick in line with the All-Island Strategic Rail Review.
- Support upgrading of electricity grid infrastructure and capacity to support Sligo RGC, IDA Oakfield Business Park, Smart City objectives and renewable energy potential.

5. Regional Blue and Green Infrastructure

The submission seeks a stronger regional approach to blue and green infrastructure, linking biodiversity, climate resilience, water management, recreation, health and quality of life.

Specific Recommendations

- Prepare a Regional Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Prepare a Regional BGI Network Map.
- Identify designated habitats, river corridors, coastal habitats, uplands, wetlands and urban greenways as part of the regional network.
- Require each planning authority to prepare or update a County/City BGI Strategy consistent with the regional strategy.
- Recognise Cleveragh Regional Park as a regionally significant green infrastructure asset.
- Integrate the BGI Strategy with the Regional Flood Risk Appraisal, Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy and Landscape Strategy.

6. Higher Education, Economic Development and Key Sectors

The submission highlights the role of Atlantic Technological University Sligo, the creative and cultural economy, IDA Oakfield Business Park and Finisklin Industrial Estate in supporting the development of Sligo RGC.

Specific Recommendations

- Include an RPO supporting the further development of ATU Sligo.
- Recognise ATU Sligo as a regional anchor institution.
- Identify the creative and cultural economy as a regional economic asset.
- Support investment in cultural facilities of regional scale.
- Include an RPO supporting IDA Oakfield Business Park and consolidation of Finisklin Industrial Estate.
- Support high-value manufacturing, medtech and digital economy sectors.

7. Implementation and Monitoring

The submission states that the revised RSES should include quantifiable objectives, infrastructure priorities and clear delivery mechanisms.

Specific Recommendations

- Link Regional Growth Centre designation to capital investment prioritisation.
- Identify priority infrastructure required to support Sligo RGC.
- Include water and wastewater, transport, mobility, energy and communications networks as priority infrastructure.
- Establish a clear order of priority for strategic infrastructure.
- Identify funding sources and delivery mechanisms.
- Include transparent monitoring and reporting arrangements.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-47](#)
 Submission by: Monaghan County Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Monaghan Considerations

Summary of Submission

1. Sustainable Growth of Towns and Carrickmacross

Monaghan County Council seeks support for the sustainable growth of towns in line with compact growth principles and Town Centre First policy. The submission places particular emphasis on Carrickmacross and requests its designation as a Key Town within the regional settlement hierarchy.

The submission states that Carrickmacross has a strategic location on the N2 and strong accessibility to the Dublin-Belfast corridor, Dundalk, Newry and Dublin. It also notes recent population growth in Carrickmacross, with the town increasing to 5,743 persons, representing approximately 31% growth.

Specific Recommendations

- Support the sustainable growth of towns in County Monaghan.
- Designate Carrickmacross as a Key Town in the regional settlement hierarchy.
- Recognise Carrickmacross as a key driver of population, employment and service growth in the east of the county.
- Support compact growth, investment and infrastructure in Carrickmacross.

2. Balanced Intra-County Growth

The submission seeks stronger support for balanced growth within County Monaghan, particularly in towns and settlements that have experienced lower levels of development or underperformance. The Council states that these settlements require targeted investment in connectivity, employment-generating development and serviced lands to improve long-term economic resilience.

Specific Recommendations

- Include an objective supporting balanced intra-county growth.
- Support towns and settlements that have experienced slower rates of development.
- Promote compact growth in smaller towns and settlements.
- Support infrastructure, connectivity and enterprise provision to strengthen local economies.

3. Strategic Employment Lands and Enterprise Infrastructure

The submission highlights strategic employment lands in Monaghan Town, including a c.49-hectare greenfield site adjacent to the N2 and N12 corridors. The lands are zoned for Industry / Enterprise / Employment and are the subject of a Shared Island Initiative feasibility study and master planning process.

The submission states that these lands have potential to operate as a regionally significant strategic employment location, supporting indigenous enterprise, inward investment, cross-border collaboration and emerging sectors.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise Monaghan Town as a location for regionally significant strategic employment lands.
- Support the development of serviced industrial and enterprise lands.
- Support the IDA Business Park expansion in Monaghan Town.
- Support enterprise infrastructure to attract indigenous and foreign direct investment.
- Support research and innovation facilities for advanced manufacturing, engineering, biotechnology and agri-food.
- Provide formal recognition in the RSES for the development of a potential c. 49-hectare greenfield site strategically located adjacent to the N2 and N12 corridors in Monaghan Town.

4. Renewable Energy, Bioeconomy and Innovation

The submission identifies County Monaghan as an emerging location for renewable energy development and associated technological innovation. It notes the County's potential for anaerobic digestion and bioenergy generation, having regard to agricultural by-products and organic waste streams from the poultry, dairy and waterfowl sectors.

The submission also notes that the County Development Plan 2025-2031 includes an objective to prepare a County Renewable Energy Strategy.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise County Monaghan as an emerging strategic location for renewable energy enterprise and technological innovation.
- Support the preparation of a County Renewable Energy Strategy.
- Support anaerobic digestion, bioenergy and circular economy opportunities.
- Support renewable energy development linked to rural economic development and emissions reduction.
- Align renewable energy development with national and regional climate objectives.

5. Strategic Infrastructure and Project Priorities

The submission includes a list of priority projects for County Monaghan across transport, rail, gas, enterprise, tourism, greenways, regeneration and emergency planning.

Priority projects include the N2 Road Scheme, East-West link from Dundalk to Sligo, road projects in Monaghan Town and Carrickmacross, the Armagh-Monaghan-Cavan rail link, extension of the gas network to Monaghan Town, Ulster Canal, Sliabh Beagh Eco-Tourism Project, Lough Muckno Masterplan, Ulster Canal Greenway Network, regeneration projects in Monaghan Town, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney and Clones, and the Learning and Development Campus at Annahagh.

Specific Recommendations

- Include County Monaghan's strategic infrastructure priorities in the RSES.
- Support key road projects including the N2, East-West link and local link roads.
- Support the Armagh-Monaghan-Cavan rail link in line with the All-Island Strategic Rail Review.
- Support extension of the gas network to Monaghan Town.
- Support tourism and green infrastructure projects including the Ulster Canal, Sliabh Beagh and greenway networks.
- Support town regeneration projects in Monaghan Town, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney and Clones.
- Support cross-border emergency management and resilience infrastructure.
- Identify funding streams and delivery mechanisms for priority projects.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-48](#)
 Submission by: Galway City Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Galway City and MASP Considerations

Summary of Submission

1. Galway MASP, Governance and Metropolitan Area

Galway City Council highlights the strategic role of Galway City as the regional city in the Northern and Western Region and as a key driver of economic, cultural, social and innovation activity. The submission states that the Galway MASP should be strengthened as a high-level strategic section of the RSES, with clear priorities, measurable targets, delivery mechanisms and funding supports.

The submission identifies governance as a key issue in the implementation of the Galway MASP and seeks a stronger governance structure involving Galway City Council, Galway County Council, the NWRA and relevant stakeholders.

The submission also requests that the MASP boundary be extended to include Athenry and Maigh Cuilinn, having regard to their relationship with Galway City, transport links, labour market connections and future growth potential.

Specific Recommendations

- Include a dedicated high-level strategic section for the Galway MASP.
- Provide clear priorities, measurable targets and actionable initiatives for the MASP.
- Establish stronger governance and oversight arrangements for the Galway Metropolitan Area.
- Support Galway City Council having a central coordinating role in MASP delivery.
- Extend the MASP boundary to include Athenry and Maigh Cuilinn.
- Identify key enablers for metropolitan success, including settlement, development and transport strategy.
- Include priority infrastructure for transport, water services, waste management, energy, communications, education, healthcare, retail, cultural and recreational facilities.
- Include financing and funding models to support delivery across the Metropolitan Area.

2. Strategic Transport and Infrastructure

The submission states that strategic infrastructure deficits must be addressed to enable Galway City and the wider Metropolitan Area to grow sustainably. It identifies transport, water, wastewater, port infrastructure, rail, cycling, public transport and energy infrastructure as key requirements.

Specific Recommendations

- Support delivery of the Galway City Ring Road.
- Support BusConnects Galway and improved walking, cycling and bus infrastructure.
- Support the development and expansion of Galway Port as a strategic regional asset.
- Support implementation of the Galway Transport Strategy and Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy.
- Provide a citywide public transport network linking residential areas, regeneration sites, the city centre, third-level institutions and employment areas.
- Support strategic cycleway infrastructure and national cycleway/greenway connections.
- Improve rail connectivity, including frequent intercity and commuter services.
- Support double-tracking or associated infrastructure on the Galway-Athenry line and longer-term improvements towards Athlone-Portarlington.
- Support Transport-Oriented Development at Murrough with associated rail and road infrastructure.
- Support the Galway Wastewater Strategy.
- Ensure water supply and wastewater needs are addressed through national projects.

3. Sustainable Neighbourhoods, Compact Growth and Regeneration

The submission supports the sustainable development of brownfield and greenfield lands for housing, with particular emphasis on compact growth, Transport-Oriented Development and the regeneration of underused lands.

Specific Recommendations

- Support brownfield and greenfield housing development, with a focus on Transport-Oriented Development.
- Support development at Ardaun, Murrough and Tuam Road.
- Support compact growth in Galway City Centre through regeneration of Ceannt Station environs, the Docks, Headford Road and Sandy Road.
- Enable regeneration of strategic opportunity sites in Galway City.
- Support housing growth aligned with national policy and housing targets.
- Support Garraun as a new neighbourhood through coordinated land use and transport planning.
- Continue to promote the Irish language and Galway City's status as a bilingual city.

4. Climate Action, Flood Risk, Coast and Green/Blue Infrastructure

The submission identifies climate resilience, flood risk, coastal and marine infrastructure, nature-based solutions, biodiversity and renewable energy as key considerations for the RSES.

Specific Recommendations

- Support delivery of the Coirib go Cósta Galway City Flood Relief Scheme.
- Support sustainable development of the Galway City coastline.
- Facilitate appropriate coastal and marine infrastructure.
- Promote a strong and resilient maritime economy.
- Support Sustainable Drainage Systems and nature-based solutions.
- Enhance and link green and blue spaces in line with biodiversity action plans.
- Support renewable energy delivery, electricity grid infrastructure, energy security and coordination between public authorities.

5. Community Infrastructure, Education and Culture

The submission highlights the need for community, social, cultural and education infrastructure to support Galway's planned growth.

Specific Recommendations

- Support the development of An Lóchran as a flagship Regional Library in Galway City.
- Support continued development and expansion of education facilities, particularly third-level institutions.
- Support integration of Atlantic Technological University and University of Galway with the city and region.
- Support community and social facilities required to meet current and future population growth.
- Support continued development of arts, language and cultural infrastructure.

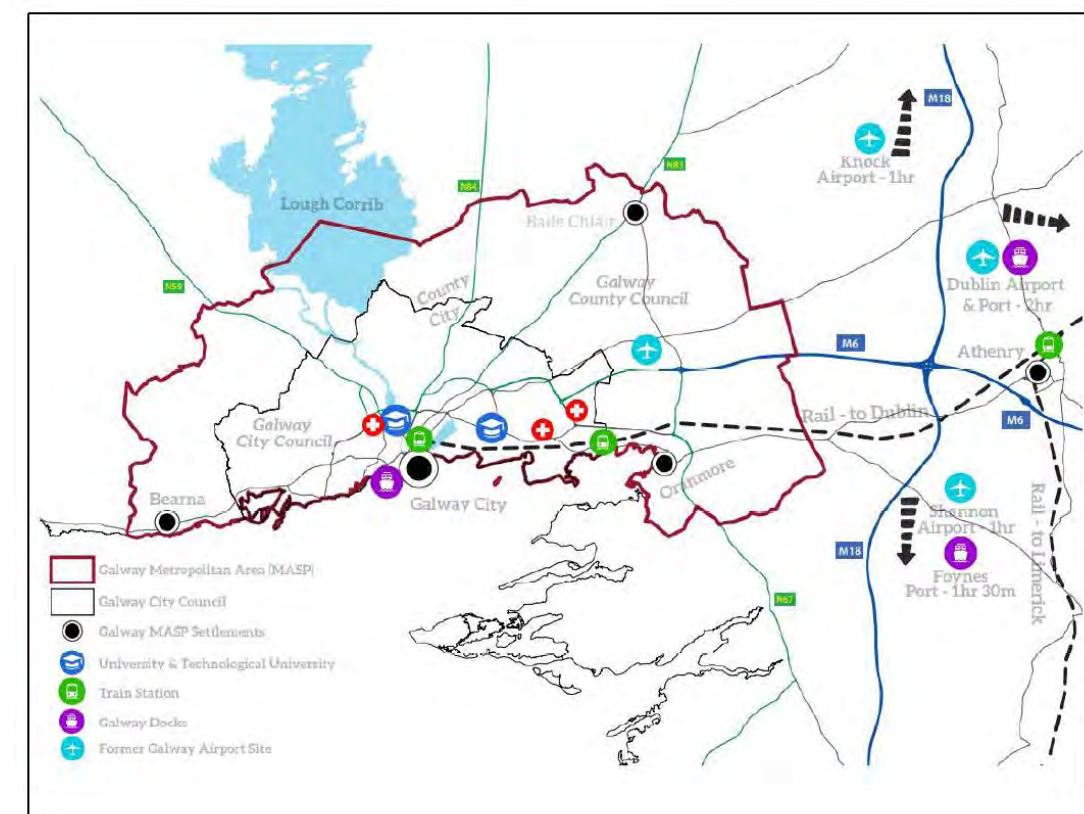
6. Economic Development, Night-Time Economy and Regional Competitiveness

The submission states that Galway City is a key economic driver for the region, with strengths in human capital, education, entrepreneurship, innovation, cultural identity and diversity. It supports stronger recognition of city-led urban growth as a catalyst for regional prosperity.

The submission also seeks recognition of the Night-Time Economy as a strategic tool for city-centre vitality, cultural infrastructure, creative employment, tourism and quality of life.

Specific Recommendations

- Strengthen recognition of city-led economic growth.
- Support a coordinated metropolitan economic development framework for Galway City and Environs.
- Recognise the need for a higher level of national and EU capital investment in the region.
- Recognise urban centres as economic infrastructure.
- Support strategic employment lands at Carnmore.
- Support regional sectors including tourism, med-tech, marine and blue economy, creative industries and climate-related innovation.
- Recognise the Night-Time Economy as a strategic tool for city-centre regeneration and economic diversification.
- Support evening and night-time public transport to enable safe access to employment and cultural activity.
- Consider the impact of AI and disruptive technologies on employment sectors.
- Consider global economic change, on-shoring and the importance of quality of life in attracting investment.
- Recognise Galway City as a key anchor within the Atlantic Economic Corridor.
- Support city-led EU funding pipelines and Galway as a testbed for innovation, climate adaptation, blue economy and culture-led regeneration.



Submission No. **NWRA-C1-54**
 Submission by: Donegal County Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Donegal Considerations

Summary of Submission

The submission from Donegal County Council sets out a strategic narrative on the challenges, opportunities and priorities for Donegal, the North West City Region and the wider Northern and Western Region of Ireland. The submission calls for a more targeted, investment-led and place-based RSES to address long-standing structural imbalance, infrastructure deficits and economic underperformance.

1. Regional Imbalance and Investment-Led Development

Donegal County Council identifies persistent regional imbalance as the main challenge facing the Northern and Western Region of Ireland. The submission states that the region continues to experience lower levels of economic growth, investment and population expansion compared with other parts of the State.

The submission argues that the region requires targeted intervention and a clear investment focus to address structural underperformance and support national cohesion.

Specific Recommendations

- Provide a stronger investment-led approach to regional development.
- Target intervention towards Donegal, the North West City Region and the wider Northern and Western Region.
- Address long-standing economic, infrastructure and population imbalances.
- Support a clear investment bias towards the region to enable it to compete nationally and internationally.

2. North West City Region and Cross-Border Development

The submission identifies the North West City Region as a major strategic asset and a key economic opportunity to address regional imbalances in Ireland. It states that the city region operates as a functional cross-border economic area but remains constrained by underinvestment, peripherality, Brexit impacts and differing policy frameworks.

The submission highlights existing cross-border governance structures, including the North West Strategic Growth Partnership, as a foundation for coordinated growth.

Specific Recommendations

- Formally recognise and develop the North West City Region as a metropolitan-scale city-region.
- Support a Metropolitan Area Spatial Strategy for the North West City Region.
- Support a Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy for the North West City Region.
- Strengthen cross-border planning frameworks and policy alignment.
- Support the role of Letterkenny-Derry as a major driver of regional growth.
- Address Brexit-related impacts on trade, mobility and economic integration.

3. Critical Enabling Infrastructure

The submission identifies infrastructure deficits as the primary constraint on regional development. It highlights deficits across transport, energy, water and wastewater, enterprise infrastructure, digital connectivity and serviced land.

A high-level list of key enabling infrastructure requirements is included for Donegal and the North West City Region.

Specific Recommendations

- Accelerate delivery of strategic transport infrastructure, including:
 - ◊ N2/A5 Dublin-Derry corridor.
 - ◊ N13/N2 Letterkenny-Derry corridor.
 - ◊ Donegal TEN-T projects.
 - ◊ A6 Derry-Belfast.
 - ◊ N56 Inver-Killybegs.
 - ◊ N13 Stranorlar-Letterkenny.
 - ◊ N15 Stranorlar-Lifford.
- Support rail reintegration of the North West into the national rail network, including:
 - ◊ Dublin-Derry-Letterkenny.
 - ◊ Derry-Belfast.
 - ◊ Letterkenny-Sligo.
- Support strategic port infrastructure at Killybegs and Foyle Port.
- Support Donegal Airport and City of Derry Airport, including continued PSO support.
- Support high-capacity electricity grid upgrades.
- Support extension of the gas network into Donegal.
- Support water and wastewater upgrades to meet growth needs.
- Support ATU Letterkenny, Ulster University Derry-Londonderry and regional innovation infrastructure.
- Support 100% fibre and mobile coverage.
- Support serviced land initiatives in key locations.

4. Economic Development, Innovation and Creative Economy

The submission states that economic development is constrained by the limited availability of serviced land, enterprise space and investment-ready sites. It also refers to lower levels of agency engagement and investment activity in the region.

The submission identifies opportunities in innovation, digital connectivity, research, the creative economy and screen/film activity in Donegal and Derry.

Specific Recommendations

- Strengthen enterprise infrastructure and serviced land provision.
- Support innovation ecosystems and regional innovation hubs.
- Support sectoral clustering and smart specialisation.
- Increase agency engagement and investment activity in the region.
- Support remote and hybrid working.
- Support the creative economy, including the screen and film sector.
- Support digital and technology sectors.

5. *Blue Economy, Offshore Renewable Energy and Green Transition*

The submission identifies the Blue Economy and renewable energy as transformational opportunities for Donegal and the wider North West. It highlights the region's coastline, Atlantic location, wind resource, Killybegs Port, Foyle Port and marine engineering capacity.

The submission states that offshore renewable energy potential cannot be realised without significant grid investment.

Specific Recommendations

- Establish the Blue Economy as a core pillar of regional growth.
- Support fisheries, aquaculture, marine engineering, marine technology, blue biotechnology and marine data.
- Support offshore renewable energy development.
- Support port development at Killybegs and Foyle Port.
- Support marine sector investment.
- Address electricity grid curtailment in Donegal.
- Provide high-capacity grid infrastructure to support renewable energy generation and route to market.

6. *Settlement, Rural Development, Regeneration and Gaeltacht Communities*

The submission identifies demographic and settlement challenges, including rural population decline, imbalances in age structures, weak growth in key settlements, vacancy and dereliction, infrastructure constraints and dispersed settlement patterns.

It also identifies regeneration, compact growth and place-making as key opportunities to improve quality of life and strengthen the settlement network.

Specific Recommendations

- Support growth of key settlements.
- Promote compact growth and town centre regeneration.
- Address vacancy and dereliction.
- Support rural population retention and renewal.
- Support Gaeltacht communities.
- Align housing delivery with enabling infrastructure.

7. *Skills, Human Capital, Governance and Implementation*

The submission highlights the need for investment in education, skills and research to support emerging sectors, address labour market gaps and strengthen regional competitiveness.

It also states that the success of the RSES will depend on strong governance, delivery structures, alignment with national investment frameworks, and robust monitoring and implementation mechanisms.

Specific Recommendations

- Invest in education, skills and research.
- Support emerging sectors and address labour market gaps.
- Strengthen regional competitiveness.
- Provide strong governance and delivery structures.
- Align the RSES with national investment frameworks.
- Include robust monitoring and implementation mechanisms.

Submission No. **NWRA-C1-59**
 Submission by: **Leitrim County Council**
 Issues raised/Theme: **Leitrim Considerations**

Summary of Submission

The submission from Leitrim County Council focuses on balanced regional development, rural counties, smaller towns, enabling infrastructure, Carrick-on-Shannon, strategic employment lands, rural and affordable housing, renewable energy, forestry and governance.

1. *Balanced Regional Spatial Development and Smaller Towns*

Leitrim County Council supports balanced regional development but states that the RSES must address spatial imbalances within the region, particularly between larger urban centres and weaker rural counties.

The submission states that regional policy should recognise dispersed settlement patterns and avoid overly urban-centric assumptions. It also highlights the important role of smaller towns and villages, particularly those with populations between 1,500 and 10,000, in sustaining rural communities and local economies.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise the specific challenges facing rural counties with low population density and limited settlement hierarchies.
- Avoid over-consolidation of growth into a small number of larger centres.
- Provide clearer differentiation between Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns, County Towns, Local Centres and the open countryside.
- Recognise the economic role of smaller towns and villages.
- Provide greater detail on the future role of rural towns and villages.
- Include 3 to 4 regional case studies of successful rural town and village regeneration.
- Consider an age-friendly strategy for towns and villages in County Leitrim.

2. *Enabling Infrastructure and Priority Projects*

The submission identifies infrastructure as a key constraint on balanced development. It states that limitations in water and wastewater capacity, transport connectivity, energy infrastructure, digital infrastructure and enterprise infrastructure are affecting the ability of settlements to grow and businesses to scale.

Specific Recommendations

- Progress the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon Bypass and Traffic Management Plan.
- Provide additional capacity in the South Leitrim Regional Water Supply Scheme.
- Prioritise wastewater capacity upgrades in future Uisce Éireann Capital Investment Plans, including for Manorhamilton and Ballinamore.
- Support the Carrick-on-Shannon to Battlebridge Blueway.
- Support the SLNCR Greenway and Cavan-Leitrim Greenway.
- Support further investment in Carrick-on-Shannon Business Campus.
- Upgrade and expand electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure, including grid reinforcement and new substations.
- Support the advancement of the Glenfarne Masterplan.
- Support the 33 key infrastructure projects identified by the NWRA in its Regional Infrastructure Priorities briefing note.
- Prepare and deliver a funded regional plan for key enabling infrastructure in the North West.

3. Carrick-on-Shannon and Strategic Employment Lands

The submission requests that Carrick-on-Shannon retain its status as a Key Town. It states that the town performs an important economic and service role and has capacity for population and employment growth, subject to investment in infrastructure, services and placemaking.

The submission also identifies a regionally significant employment opportunity site east of Carrick-on-Shannon, comprising 23 hectares of land zoned for Industrial and Enterprise use in the Carrick-on-Shannon Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

Specific Recommendations

- Retain Carrick-on-Shannon as a Key Town.
- Place greater emphasis on functional economic areas rather than population-based hierarchies only.
- Recognise Carrick-on-Shannon as a strategic employment centre.
- Include the 23-hectare Industrial and Enterprise site east of Carrick-on-Shannon as a strategic employment location in the RSES.

4. Rural Housing and Affordable Housing

The submission raises concerns regarding rural housing delivery in County Leitrim, particularly due to poor soil permeability and challenges in meeting EPA wastewater treatment requirements for individual houses.

The submission notes that Leitrim County Council, the EPA and Trinity College Dublin are trialling evapotranspiration systems for wastewater treatment and disposal in areas of poor percolation. The submission also identifies affordability challenges in towns and villages due to construction costs, energy requirements, lower local spending power and competition from people relocating from higher-value housing markets.

Specific Recommendations

- Acknowledge the ongoing research into evapotranspiration wastewater treatment systems.
- Support any future changes required to the EPA Code of Practice arising from this research.
- Seek Government funding to support zero-discharge wastewater treatment systems in rural counties.
- Provide further support for affordable housing delivery in rural towns and villages.
- Seek greater flexibility in Departmental Affordable Housing Scheme criteria for rural counties, particularly in the North West.
- Support measures to stimulate multiple private house development in rural settlements.

5. Renewable Energy, Grid Capacity and High-Energy Demand Uses

The submission highlights the role of renewable energy in the transition to a low-carbon economy. It notes that County Leitrim has already contributed significantly to renewable energy generation and has prepared a Renewable Energy Strategy and Landscape and Visual Capacity Study for Wind Farms and Wind Turbines.

The submission raises concerns regarding how renewable electricity capacity allocations will be distributed to local authority level and asks that the process be fair, evidence-based and informed by local authority input. It also states that high-energy demand uses, such as data centres, should be directed closer to renewable energy generation in the Northern and Western Region.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise County Leitrim's existing contribution to renewable energy generation.
- Ensure renewable energy allocations to local authorities are fair, evidence-based and reasoned.
- Have regard to local authority renewable energy strategies and landscape capacity assessments.
- Allow local authorities to influence final renewable energy allocations.
- Address grid capacity constraints before requiring further renewable energy production.
- Address potential conflicts between wind energy, tourism, landscape protection and rural settlement patterns.
- Consider locating high-energy demand uses closer to renewable energy generation in the Northern and Western Region.

6. Forestry, Landscape and Rural Communities

The submission acknowledges the role of forestry in carbon sequestration but raises concerns regarding the social and landscape impacts of afforestation in County Leitrim. It states that afforestation can affect rural communities, farm viability, housing, landscape character and the ability to retain young farmers and families in rural areas.

Specific Recommendations

- Balance forestry policy with the need to protect rural communities.
- Recognise the social and visual impacts of afforestation.
- Undertake a regional assessment of landscape capacity for commercial forestry.
- Have regard to Leitrim County Council's landscape capacity assessment for forestry.
- Give strong weighting to the safeguarding of rural communities when considering forestry policy.

7. Governance, Delivery and Implementation

The submission requests clarity on governance, management and technical oversight arrangements for the preparation and implementation of the RSES, particularly in the context of regional energy planning.

It states that the previous RSES process benefited from engagement with regional Chief Executives and a Technical Working Group, and that similar structures should support policy alignment, technical assessment and delivery.

Specific Recommendations

- Provide clarity on governance, management and technical oversight arrangements.
- Build on the previous Chief Executive and Technical Working Group model.
- Ensure strategic leadership, technical input and delivery structures are aligned.
- Strengthen the RSES as an implementation-focused and investment-led framework

Submission No. **NWRA-C1-86**
 Submission by: Cavan County Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Cavan Considerations

Summary of Submission

The submission from Cavan County Council focuses on population growth, Cavan Town, Virginia, supporting towns, education, transport, utilities, economic development, tourism, climate action, placemaking and quality of life.

1. Population Growth, Cavan Town and Supporting Towns

Cavan County Council seeks support for accelerated and sustainable population growth in County Cavan. The submission notes recent population growth in the County and states that future population targets should reflect Cavan's natural growth rate and capacity to contribute to regional growth.

The submission seeks retention of Cavan Town as a Key Town and highlights its role as the largest town in the Cavan-Monaghan-Leitrim sub-region, with regional-scale facilities including Cavan General Hospital, Cavan Institute, Cavan Agricultural College and major sports and civic infrastructure.

The submission also identifies Virginia as a strategically important settlement and gateway to the Dublin-Belfast corridor, with potential for employment, housing and services growth.

Specific Recommendations

- Ensure population targets for County Cavan reflect natural growth trends.
- Retain Cavan Town as a Key Town.
- Support Cavan Town as a regional centre for housing, employment, education, healthcare and services.
- Support key projects in Cavan Town, including Abbeylands, Cavan Regional Sports Campus, Cavan Town Greenway Extension, Farnham Street Masterplan and River Mill Quarter Masterplan.
- Recognise Virginia as a location of strategic development potential.
- Support the Virginia food cluster and masterplan lands east of Virginia.
- Support sustainable growth in Virginia, Kingscourt, Ballyjamesduff, Bailieborough, Cootehill and Ballyconnell.

2. Transport, Utilities and Enabling Infrastructure

The submission identifies transport, water, wastewater, electricity and broadband as critical to supporting growth. It states that Cavan's location provides an important gateway to the Dublin-Belfast corridor and that investment in transport links is essential for economic development.

Specific Recommendations

- Support delivery of the M3/N3 extension to Cavan Town and the Virginia Bypass.
- Support the N55 Ballinagh Relief Road.
- Support the Dundalk-Cavan-Sligo East-West strategic route.
- Support the N16 Sligo-Blacklion route and cross-border links.
- Support investment in N16/A4, N54/A3 and other cross-border routes.
- Support road infrastructure and active travel measures around Cavan Town.
- Support water, wastewater, surface water, broadband and electricity infrastructure to enable growth at all settlement levels.

3. Education and Skills

The submission highlights the role of Cavan Institute and the proposed College of the Future in Cavan Town. It also seeks support for an Institute of Technology in the Cavan-Monaghan sub-region.

Specific Recommendations

- Support the development of Cavan Institute as a College of the Future.
- Recognise the role of Cavan Institute in skills, workforce development and progression pathways.
- Support the need for an Institute of Technology in the Cavan-Monaghan sub-region.
- Support collaboration between education providers, enterprise and research bodies.

4. Economic Growth, Enterprise and Serviced Sites

The submission highlights Cavan's economic strengths in agri-food, agritech, engineering, manufacturing, building materials, financial services, renewable energy and tourism. It also notes the importance of both foreign direct investment and indigenous enterprise. The submission identifies a shortage of serviced employment sites as a barrier to growth.

Specific Recommendations

- Support a border region fund to enable local authorities to purchase and service employment lands.
- Support foreign direct investment and indigenous enterprise in County Cavan.
- Support agri-food, agritech, manufacturing, engineering, building materials, digital economy, renewable energy and tourism sectors.
- Support serviced employment lands across the County and region.
- Support the Cootehill Enterprise Park model.
- Support economic lands in Virginia to strengthen the agri-food cluster.
- Support research and development partnerships.

5. Tourism and Regional Attractions

The submission identifies tourism as an important sector for County Cavan, particularly angling, greenways, waterways, food tourism, heritage and outdoor recreation. It also highlights the Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark as a regional and international asset.

Specific Recommendations

- Support Cavan Town Urban Greenway and wider greenway development.
- Support the Ulster Canal.
- Support Castle Saunderson, Shannon Pot Visitor Centre and Glangevlin visitor centre/trails.
- Support forest parks including Killykeen and Dún a Rí.
- Support the Beara Breifne Way, Cavan County Museum, Bridewell Bailieborough and Turbot Island.
- Support investment in angling and promote Cavan as a regional angling destination.
- Support Cavan as a regional food destination.
- Recognise Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark as a strategic regional asset.
- Support long-term funding, sustainable transport, peatland restoration, climate action and cross-border delivery for the Geopark.

6. Climate Action, Biodiversity and Green Region

The submission refers to the Cavan County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 and seeks support for climate resilience, emissions reduction, biodiversity, active travel and renewable energy.

Specific Recommendations

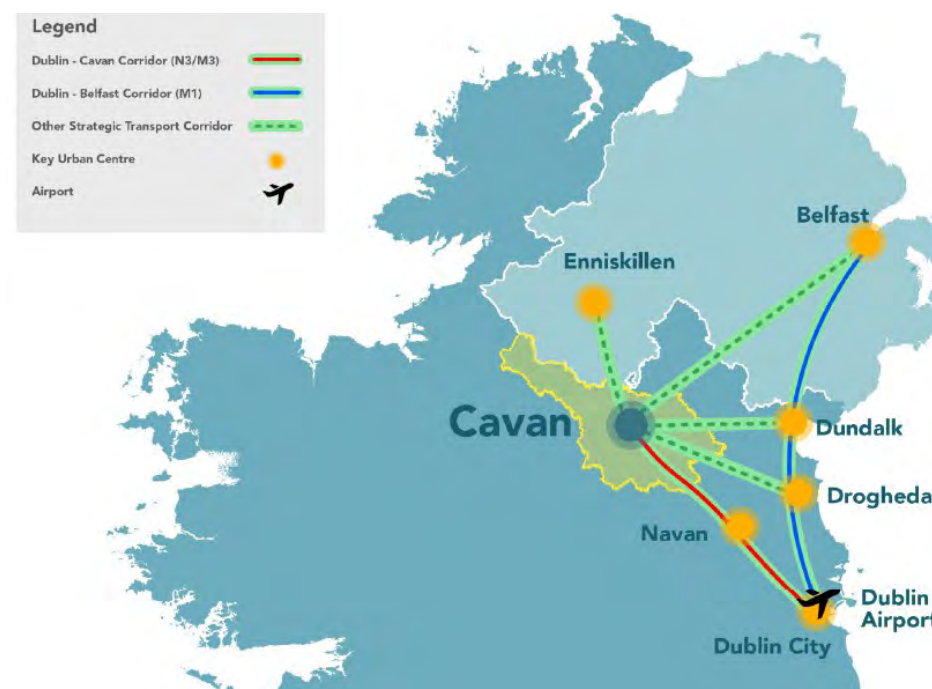
- Support Local Transport Plans and alignment with Smarter Travel policies.
- Support walking and cycling routes.
- Support implementation of national and county biodiversity plans.
- Support the potential of the region as a Green Region.
- Explore biomass as an energy source.
- Support energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- Align renewable energy targets on a county-by-county basis.
- Support Local Climate Action Teams.

7. Placemaking, Quality of Life and Social Infrastructure

The submission places strong emphasis on placemaking, town and village regeneration, public realm, housing choice, community infrastructure, social inclusion, sport and recreation.

Specific Recommendations

- Support investment in towns and villages.
- Address dereliction, vacancy, public realm, public spaces, car parking, smarter travel and pedestrian priority.
- Support adaptable housing, smart homes, age-friendly housing and downsizing options.
- Engage with young people on the future of towns and villages.
- Support outreach for older adults, migrants, lone parents and people with disabilities.
- Support health and wellbeing programmes, social prescribing and ageing well in place.
- Support Cavan Regional Sports Campus.
- Support town parks, amenity areas and community hubs.
- Support Bailieborough backlands, Ballyjamesduff, Con Smith Park, Morrissey Park, Belturbet, Shercock, Blacklion and Ballinagh.



Submission No. **NWRA-C1-91**
 Submission by: Galway County Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Galway County and MASP Considerations

Summary of Submission

The submission from Galway County Council focuses on the Galway Metropolitan Area, population and housing growth, economic development, infrastructure, climate action, settlement hierarchy, rural development, Gaeltacht, islands, marine economy, digital connectivity and electricity networks.

1. Galway Metropolitan Area and MASP

Galway County Council identifies the Galway Metropolitan Area as critical to the future growth and development of the Northern and Western Region. The submission supports a stronger MASP framework with clear governance, funding and delivery structures.

Specific Recommendations

- Strengthen the role of the Galway MASP in the RSES.
- Support appropriate governance and funding structures for MASP delivery.
- Recognise the shared role of Galway City and Galway County in delivering metropolitan growth.
- Include clear infrastructure, housing and employment targets for the Metropolitan Area.
- Support joint work on transport, retail, economic development and the Eastern Environs.
- Include support for An Lóchran as a flagship Regional Library serving Galway and the wider North West.

2. Population and Housing Growth

The submission supports an evidence-based approach to population and housing growth, aligned with infrastructure capacity, settlement role and sustainable transport.

Specific Recommendations

- Include a clear population growth allocation for County Galway.
- Align population growth with housing delivery, employment, infrastructure and transport.
- Direct growth to settlements capable of compact, serviced and climate-resilient development.
- Support population regeneration in smaller towns and rural areas.
- Maintain flexibility to respond to demographic change, household size and remote/blended working.
- Support plan-led rural housing based on local need.

3. Economic Development and Employment

The submission highlights County Galway's sectoral strengths, including med-tech, life sciences, ICT, agri-food, tourism, marine, renewable energy. It also highlights the economic role of Key Towns, Athenry, Gort, Loughrea and smaller towns.

Specific Recommendations

- Support enterprise and employment growth across County Galway.
- Support zoned employment lands across the County.
- Retain Athenry as a Place of Strategic Potential.
- Support the Bia Food Innovation Hub at Athenry.
- Support the Strategic Economic Corridor, former Galway Airport site and Atlantic Economic Corridor.
- Support development of a HealthTech Campus in County Galway.
- Support a Circular Bioeconomy and Upcycling Hub in East Galway.
- Recognise the economic role of Ballinasloe, Tuam, Athenry, Gort, Loughrea and smaller towns.

4. Infrastructure and Connectivity

The submission states that future growth depends on the delivery of strategic and enabling infrastructure, including transport, rail, water, wastewater and energy infrastructure.

Specific Recommendations

- Support the N6 Galway City Ring Road as part of the Galway Transport Strategy.
- Support sustainable transport, active travel, public transport and regional connectivity.
- Support continued rail investment, including double-tracking or associated measures.
- Support delivery of East Galway Main Drainage as part of the Galway Wastewater Strategy.
- Prioritise water and wastewater infrastructure in key settlements, including Ballinasloe.
- Align growth objectives with Uisce Éireann and other infrastructure investment programmes.
- Identify infrastructure delivery as a key priority in the Draft RSES.

5. Climate Action and Renewable Energy

The submission refers to Galway County Council's Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy and Landscape Character Assessment and highlights the County's role in renewable energy generation.

Specific Recommendations

- Support renewable energy generation at appropriate locations.
- Support grid infrastructure and energy storage.
- Ensure renewable energy development has regard to landscape, environmental and community considerations.
- Support continued engagement on regional renewable energy planning.

6. Settlement Hierarchy and Rural Development

The submission seeks support for the County settlement hierarchy and the role of Key Towns, smaller towns, villages and rural communities.

Specific Recommendations

- Support the settlement hierarchy set out in the Galway County Development Plan.
- Recognise Ballinasloe and Tuam as Key Towns and recognise Athenry as a "Place of Strategic Potential".
- Recognise Gort, Loughrea and other towns as important growth and service locations.
- Support rural regeneration, village renewal, vacancy reduction and community-led investment.
- Support appropriate rural housing based on local need.
- Recognise the role of remote working and improved connectivity in rural development.

7. Gaeltacht, Islands, Marine Economy, Digital and Energy Networks

The submission highlights the importance of the Gaeltacht, islands and coastal communities, as well as the strategic role of the marine economy, Ros an Mhíl Harbour, Galway Port, seaweed industry, digital connectivity and electricity networks.

Specific Recommendations

- Support the Irish language and cultural integrity of Gaeltacht communities.
- Support sustainable development of island and coastal communities.
- Support improved communication and connectivity for offshore communities in line with Our Living Islands.
- Recognise Ros an Mhíl Harbour and Galway Port as strategic marine and economic assets.
- Support marine, fisheries, aquaculture, offshore renewable energy and seaweed sectors.
- Support investment in port, harbour and marine-related infrastructure.
- Support high-quality digital connectivity and resilient electricity infrastructure.
- Address grid capacity limitations affecting County Galway's future growth.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-65](#)
 Submission by: Mayo County Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Mayo Considerations

Summary of Submission

The submission from Mayo County Council is strategic and infrastructure-focused. It seeks stronger recognition of Mayo's role in supporting balanced regional development, the Atlantic Economic Corridor, renewable energy, connectivity, enterprise, education, marine infrastructure and coastal communities. The submission also includes a series of proposed Regional Policy Objectives for Mayo, with an appendix assessing the objectives against SMART criteria.

1. Balanced Regional Development and Settlement Role

The submission states that Mayo's location between Galway and Sligo should be more clearly recognised in the RSES. It argues that the absence of a designated Regional Growth Centre in Mayo creates a gap in the regional settlement structure and limits the recognition of Mayo's role in supporting balanced regional development.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise Mayo as a strategic linking platform between Galway and Sligo.
- Support the Atlantic Economic Corridor as a national economic spine.
- Designate Castlebar-Westport as a Regional Growth Centre.
- Strengthen the role of Ballina as a Key Town.
- Recognise the role of smaller towns and villages in supporting rural hinterlands and balanced regional development.

2. Strategic Connectivity and Enabling Infrastructure

The submission identifies transport and infrastructure deficits as significant barriers to Mayo's growth. It highlights the importance of improved north-south connectivity, national road upgrades, rail investment, Ireland West Airport and strategic freight infrastructure.

Specific Recommendations

- Progress the Western Rail Corridor north of Claremorris.
- Support the M17 / dual carriageway north of Tuam and upgrades to the wider national road network.
- Support Ireland West Airport and the delivery of the Airport Strategic Development Zone.
- Improve multi-modal access to Ireland West Airport.
- Support enhanced access to Ballina and other strategic settlements.
- Support the N84 Ballinrobe Bypass.
- Support a Castlebar rail freight and logistics hub.

3. Renewable Energy, Grid Infrastructure and the Green Economy

The submission highlights Mayo's existing contribution to renewable energy generation and identifies the county as having significant potential to support national and regional climate and energy objectives. It emphasises that grid reinforcement and energy infrastructure will be required to unlock further renewable energy development, green energy parks and associated enterprise opportunities.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise Mayo's role in renewable energy generation.
- Support electricity grid reinforcement and energy infrastructure in Mayo.
- Support the North Connacht 110 kV project and other transmission and distribution upgrades.
- Support green energy parks, energy storage, hydrogen, bioenergy, solar and marine energy opportunities.
- Recognise Mayo as a strategic renewable energy and energy-export county.
- Ensure renewable energy development is balanced with landscape, tourism, environmental and community considerations.

4. *Economic Development, Education, Skills and Innovation*

The submission identifies opportunities to strengthen Mayo's economic role through enterprise development, tourism, education, skills, innovation and town-centre regeneration. It highlights the role of Atlantic Technological University, Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board and strategic regeneration sites in supporting future growth.

Specific Recommendations

- Support strategic employment and enterprise growth in Mayo.
- Strengthen the role of education, skills and innovation in supporting regional economic development.
- Support the phased redevelopment of the former Military Barracks in Castlebar as an education, skills and regeneration hub.
- Support tourism, town-centre regeneration and place-based investment.
- Strengthen links between education providers, enterprise agencies and employment growth.

5. *Marine, Coastal and Island Infrastructure*

The submission seeks stronger recognition of Mayo's marine, coastal and island infrastructure. It highlights the importance of piers, harbours, island access, coastal tourism, offshore renewable energy and climate resilience, with particular emphasis on Roonagh Pier and connectivity to Clare Island and Inishturk.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise piers, harbours and coastal access points as strategic regional infrastructure.
- Prioritise Roonagh Pier and island connectivity to Clare Island and Inishturk.
- Support marine and coastal tourism infrastructure.
- Support offshore renewable energy opportunities, including AMETS.
- Provide a structured, multi-annual funding approach for marine infrastructure.
- Integrate climate adaptation, coastal protection and resilience into infrastructure planning.

6. *SMART Regional Policy Objectives*

The submission includes proposed Regional Policy Objectives for County Mayo and assesses them against SMART criteria. These objectives are intended to provide specific, measurable and implementation-focused policy support for Mayo's key settlement, infrastructure, energy, education, economic and marine priorities.

Specific Recommendations

- Include clear and measurable RPOs for Mayo's strategic priorities.
- Ensure RPOs support infrastructure delivery, regional growth, climate action and economic development.
- Use SMART criteria to strengthen implementation, monitoring and accountability.
- Include objectives that provide policy support for Mayo's settlement, transport, renewable energy, enterprise, education and marine infrastructure priorities.

Northern Ireland/Cross Border Local Authorities

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-5](#)
 Submission by: Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Cross-Border Regional Development and SEA Scoping

Summary of Submission

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council made a single coordinated submission in response to two separate but related statutory consultations - the review of the NWRA RSES and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Consultation. The submission sets out the Council's views on the future spatial, economic and environmental development of the region. For the purposes of this report, the relevant planning and policy matters have been summarised under the RSES consultation, while environmental and sustainability-related matters have been summarised separately under the SEA Scoping consultation.

1. *RSES Consultation*

The submission focuses on balanced regional growth, rural development and the unique opportunities and challenges associated with cross-border areas. It advocates for a place-based approach that supports regional towns, rural communities and border settlements alongside key urban centres. It also highlights the importance of enhanced North-South cooperation, strategic infrastructure investment, sustainable tourism, renewable energy, digital connectivity and the transition to a low-carbon economy. Particular emphasis is placed on recognising the role of border settlements, strengthening cross-border networks, supporting the all-island economy, and protecting important tourism, landscape and environmental assets through sustainable development principles.

2. *SEA Scoping*

The submission supports the SEA Scoping process and highlights the importance of embedding sustainable development principles throughout the RSES. Particular emphasis is placed on the protection of landscape character, biodiversity, tourism assets, cultural heritage and environmentally sensitive cross-border areas. The submission recommends continued engagement with key environmental authorities and statutory consultees, including DAERA Natural Environment Division and the Historic Environment Division, to ensure appropriate consideration of transboundary environmental effects, biodiversity, heritage conservation, climate change adaptation and environmental protection objectives throughout the preparation of the Strategy and associated environmental assessments.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-21](#)
 Submission by: Derry City & Strabane District Council
 Issues raised/Theme: North West City Region, Infrastructure Priorities, SEA Scoping

Summary of Submission

Derry City and Strabane District Council made a submission in response to the pre-draft RSES consultation and also provided comments on the SEA Scoping Report. For the purposes of this report, the relevant planning and policy matters have been summarised under the RSES consultation, while environmental and sustainability-related matters have been summarised separately under the SEA Scoping consultation.

1. RSES Consultation

The submission focuses on the strategic role of the North West City Region, encompassing Derry, Letterkenny and Strabane, as a functional cross-border economic area and the fourth largest agglomeration of population on the island of Ireland. It seeks recognition of the North West City Region within the national hierarchy of city regions and advocates for a Metropolitan Area Spatial Strategy and Transport Strategy to support its future growth.

The submission highlights long-standing challenges relating to peripherality, historic underinvestment, infrastructure deficits, the presence of the border and regional imbalance. It supports the strengthening of Letterkenny as a Regional Growth Centre and emphasises the importance of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership, cross-border governance and cooperation between Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council.

The submission identifies key investment priorities including the A5 Western Transport Corridor, N14 Strabane-Letterkenny link, A2 Buncrana Road upgrade, Letterkenny-Derry-Portadown rail connection, Letterkenny Transport Hub and wider all-island rail connectivity including connections towards Sligo. It also highlights the importance of climate resilience, cross-border tourism, links between the Wild Atlantic Way and Causeway Coastal Route, and alignment with the Council's Local Development Plan Strategy 2032.

2. SEA Scoping

The submission notes the importance of recognising the environmental, economic, social and cultural links between Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council as part of the wider North West City Region.

Derry City and Strabane District Council confirms that it is content with the SEA process and the proposed SEA Framework, including the Strategic Environmental Objectives relating to population and human health, biodiversity, soil, water, air quality, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape.

The submission recommends that regard be had to the Council's adopted Local Development Plan Strategy 2032 and associated Sustainability Appraisal documents, which incorporate SEA and provide relevant baseline data, legislation, policies, plans and programmes for the District. It also notes the revised Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland.

Utilities and Infrastructure Providers

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-83](#)
 Submission by: Land Development Agency (LDA)
 Issues raised/Theme: Housing Delivery

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to housing delivery, strategic land activation, Galway MASP, infrastructure prioritisation, governance and economic regeneration.

The Land Development Agency outlines its expanded role in delivering affordable, social and cost rental housing on State and strategic lands, including under Delivering Homes, Building Communities 2025-2030. It seeks ongoing engagement with the Regional Assembly, particularly in relation to Galway MASP, strategic site activation and infrastructure prioritisation.

The submission recommends stronger governance and delivery structures, including formal engagement between the Regional Assembly, LDA, local authorities, infrastructure providers and relevant national taskforces. It also suggests a Regional Infrastructure and Delivery Forum to align land use, infrastructure and investment priorities.

The submission highlights the need for the RSES to clearly address housing targets, settlement hierarchy, Key Towns, strategic growth areas, Transit-Oriented Development, higher-density development in accessible locations, and the activation of State and strategic lands.

It also seeks stronger infrastructure sequencing to support housing delivery, including transport, water services, energy, education and social infrastructure. Specific reference is made to Sandy Quarter and Galway Port Inner Harbour lands, which the LDA considers should be identified in the RSES and Galway MASP as strategic residential-led development areas.

The submission also raises the need to plan for the relocation of heavy industry, logistics, utilities and SEVESO-related uses where these constrain strategic urban regeneration sites, and to align regeneration objectives with targeted funding.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-70](#)
 Submission by: Uisce Éireann
 Issues raised/Theme: Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to water services infrastructure, wastewater capacity, sustainable growth, environmental carrying capacity and the alignment of regional development with infrastructure delivery.

Uisce Éireann supports balanced regional development but emphasises that growth must be aligned with the sustainable management of water resources, wastewater capacity, environmental constraints and long-term investment planning. It highlights the need for clear infrastructure prioritisation, long-term funding certainty and close coordination between the Regional Assembly, local authorities and infrastructure providers.

The submission recommends that the RSES have regard to key water services policy and investment frameworks, including the Water Services Strategic Plan 2050, National Water Resources Plan, Regional Water Resources Plan North West, Water Action Plan/River Basin Management Plan, National Wastewater Strategy Framework, Draft Galway Wastewater Strategy, National Sludge Management Plan/Draft National Bioresources Strategy and Uisce Éireann's Capital Investment Plan 2025-2029.

The submission seeks strong RSES policy support for demand management, leakage reduction, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, nature-based solutions, Integrated Urban Wastewater Management Plans, biodiversity net gain, water quality protection and land-sea planning. It also highlights relevant regional projects including the Galway Wastewater Strategy, Terryland Water Treatment Plant, Galway water network upgrades, Letterkenny and Inishowen Water Supply Upgrade, Ballina and Lough Talt Water Supply Upgrade, and the Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-93](#)
 Submission by: Eirgrid
 Issues raised/Theme: Electricity, Infrastructure, spatial planning

Summary of Submission

The submission from EirGrid relates to electricity transmission infrastructure, grid capacity, energy security, renewable energy integration, climate action and infrastructure delivery.

EirGrid's first submission highlights the critical role of the transmission grid in supporting population growth, economic development, electrification, renewable energy, energy security and climate targets. It states that the RSES should include clear policy support for the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of the electricity grid.

EirGrid's second submission provides more detail and identifies short- to medium-term priority projects in the Northern and Western Region, including:

- Flagford-Sligo Capacity Needs.
- Donegal Capacity Needs / Donegal-Srananagh Corridor Reinforcement.
- Letterkenny Substation redevelopment.
- North Connacht 110 kV Project.
- North South 400 kV Interconnection Development.

The submission notes that these projects form part of a wider programme of over 45 planned projects in the Region, as identified in EirGrid's Strategic Framework for Grid Development for the Northern and Western Region.

Specific Recommendations

- Support the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of the electricity grid.
- Support grid infrastructure required to integrate renewable energy and decarbonise the energy system.
- Recognise electricity infrastructure as critical to regional economic and spatial development.
- Support coordinated delivery of electricity, water and transport infrastructure.
- Safeguard strategic energy corridors from development that could compromise grid delivery.
- Ensure local authority plans consider energy infrastructure, including substations and grid requirements.
- Support EirGrid and ESB Networks grid development plans over the lifetime of the RSES.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-44](#)
 Submission by: Gas Networks Ireland
 Issues raised/Theme: Renewable Gas and Biomethane Opportunity;
 Strategic Energy Infrastructure and Network Development;
 Hydrogen and Future Energy System;
 Alternative Fuels and Transport Decarbonisation

Summary of Submission

The submission from Gas Networks Ireland relates to renewable gas, biomethane, strategic gas network infrastructure, hydrogen, alternative fuels and integrated regional energy planning.

Gas Networks Ireland highlights the role of the national gas network in supporting energy security, decarbonisation and the transition to renewable and low-carbon gases. It notes that the Northern and Western Region has significant biomethane production potential, particularly in counties such as Cavan and Monaghan.

The submission recommends that the RSES recognise renewable gas, including biomethane, as part of the Region's decarbonisation pathway, particularly for hard-to-abate sectors and uses that may not be fully served by electrification.

It also seeks support for the safeguarding, upgrading and optimisation of strategic gas network infrastructure, including infrastructure required for biomethane injection, network upgrades and future renewable gas connections.

The submission further highlights the longer-term role of renewable hydrogen and requests that regional planning policy does not constrain future hydrogen-related infrastructure where appropriate and consistent with national policy.

The submission also seeks support for alternative fuels infrastructure, including bioCNG refuelling at appropriate strategic locations, particularly in relation to freight, logistics corridors and the TEN-T network.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise renewable gas, including biomethane, as part of the regional decarbonisation pathway.
- Support safeguarding and upgrading of strategic gas network infrastructure.
- Support biomethane injection infrastructure, network upgrades and associated connections.
- Avoid sterilisation of strategic energy infrastructure corridors.
- Support alternative fuels infrastructure, including bioCNG refuelling.
- Recognise the potential future role of renewable hydrogen, where consistent with national policy.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-82](#)
 Submission by: ESB
 Issues raised/Theme: Electricity Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission from ESB relates to the role of electricity infrastructure as critical enabling infrastructure for population growth, housing delivery, economic development, climate action, renewable energy and regional competitiveness.

ESB states that the RSES should explicitly recognise electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure as critical national and regional infrastructure. It highlights the need for a plan-led and infrastructure-led approach to growth, ensuring that settlement, housing and employment strategies are aligned with existing and planned electricity network capacity.

1. Electricity Infrastructure and Growth

The submission highlights the importance of electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure in supporting compact growth, housing, employment, enterprise and public services across the Northern and Western Region.

Specific Recommendations

- Support delivery, reinforcement and future-proofing of electricity infrastructure.
- Safeguard substations, grid corridors, wayleaves and access routes.
- Align housing and employment growth with electricity network capacity.
- Support early engagement between local authorities and ESB Networks.

2. Climate Action, Renewable Energy and RRES

The submission supports the preparation of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy and states that renewable energy delivery must be closely aligned with grid capacity, storage, system flexibility and infrastructure planning.

Specific Recommendations

- Support a plan-led and grid-integrated RRES.
- Translate renewable electricity targets into county-level spatial policy.
- Support grid reinforcement, energy storage, repowering and system flexibility.
- Support long-duration energy storage and clean energy hubs.

3. Marine, Offshore Renewable Energy and Land-Sea Planning

The submission highlights the strategic role of the Atlantic coastline in supporting offshore renewable energy. It identifies the need for onshore grid infrastructure, port capacity, landfall locations, substations, transmission reinforcements and coordinated land-sea planning.

Specific Recommendations

- Safeguard infrastructure required for offshore renewable energy.
- Support port infrastructure, grid connections and landfall locations.
- Align the RSES with the National Marine Planning Framework and DMAPs.
- Support integrated clean energy hubs where appropriate.

4. Economic Development, Growth Centres, EVs and Digital Infrastructure

The submission states that electricity infrastructure is essential to economic development, all-island energy cooperation, enterprise investment, EV charging and telecommunications infrastructure.

Specific Recommendations

- Align strategic employment locations with electricity infrastructure capacity.
- Support electricity infrastructure in Galway MASP, Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns.
- Support EV charging infrastructure and telecommunications infrastructure.
- Recognise all-island electricity cooperation as important to regional resilience.

5. Implementation and Monitoring

The submission places strong emphasis on delivery, coordination and monitoring. It supports regional delivery forums, early identification of infrastructure constraints and monitoring indicators for electricity infrastructure and renewable energy delivery.

Specific Recommendations

- Include electricity infrastructure indicators in the RSES monitoring framework.
- Strengthen coordination between NWRA, local authorities and infrastructure providers.
- Support regulatory and planning sandboxes for innovative energy technologies.
- Ensure RPOs support infrastructure-led and plan-led development.

Transport and Connectivity

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-36](#)
Submission by: National Transport Authority (NTA)
Issues raised/Theme: Transport

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the integration of land use and transport planning in the RSES and is made by the National Transport Authority under Section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2024.

The NTA notes that the Galway Transport Strategy 2016 is the current transport strategy for the Galway Metropolitan Area and that the new Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy is currently being prepared, with public consultation expected in late 2026 and finalisation in 2027.

The submission recommends that the RSES support the “Avoid-Shift-Improve” approach by promoting compact growth, development in higher-order settlements served by public transport and active travel, and the careful management of rural development to avoid increased car dependency.

It also recommends support for Local Transport Plans, demand management, reduced car parking provision in well-served urban areas, mobility management, Safe Routes to School, EV charging infrastructure, freight decarbonisation, electric bus depots and protection of the strategic function of the national road network.

The NTA identifies priority transport projects for the Region, including Connecting Ireland, Town Bus Network Programme, CycleConnects, Safe Routes to School, rail investment in line with emerging Irish Rail and NTA priorities, new depots, national road investment and regional/local roads under the NDP. For Galway Metropolitan Area, priorities include BusConnects, the Galway Metropolitan Area Cycle Network, Galway City Ring Road and Park and Ride.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-24](#)
 Submission by: Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)
 Issues raised/Theme: Transport

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to transport infrastructure, national roads, critical infrastructure delivery and the integration of national investment priorities into the RSES.

TII outlines its role in managing, maintaining and operating national roads and existing Luas infrastructure, and in delivering transport projects identified in the National Development Plan and associated Sectoral Investment Plan for Transport 2026-2030.

The submission highlights the importance of aligning the RSES with Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework, National Development Plan, National Strategic Outcomes and National Policy Objective 107, particularly in relation to compact growth, enhanced regional accessibility, sustainable mobility and international connectivity.

TII emphasises the need for strong coordination across national, regional and local levels to support critical infrastructure delivery, including transport, energy, water and flood relief infrastructure. It also highlights the importance of making best use of existing infrastructure and protecting the resilience and function of the national road network.

The submission recommends that the RSES reflect the NIFTI intervention hierarchy of Maintain, Optimise, Improve and New, and that existing Regional Policy Objectives relating to transportation and national roads should generally be retained and refined to ensure consistency with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines, national investment priorities and the Galway Metropolitan Transport Strategy.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-34](#)
 Submission by: Irish Rail
 Issues raised/Theme: Rail Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission from Irish Rail relates to the role of rail as a strategic enabler of regional balance, compact growth, climate action, economic development, rural accessibility and freight connectivity in the Northern and Western Region.

The submission recommends that the RSES include a dedicated Rail Strategy, aligned with the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, Rail Project Prioritisation Strategy, Rail2050, the National Planning Framework, National Development Plan, NIFTI, Climate Action Plan, National Sustainable Mobility Policy and relevant EU/TEN-T policy.

It states that existing and future rail corridors and station catchments should be recognised as strategic regional assets and planned for in a coordinated way through settlement strategies, county development plans, local area plans, MASPs, transport plans and infrastructure programmes. The submission places particular emphasis on rail-led compact growth, Transport-Oriented Development, station-area planning, active travel, Local Link, bus integration, Park and Ride where appropriate, and improved accessibility.

The submission supports service frequency, reliability, accessibility, line-speed and capacity improvements on the Dublin-Galway, Dublin-Westport/Ballina and Dublin-Sligo corridors. It identifies the need for passing loops, station upgrades, signalling improvements, double-tracking of strategic sections, future electrification and other measures to support higher frequency rail services.

In relation to the Western Rail Corridor, the submission supports the reinstatement of the Athenry to Claremorris section and notes that Irish Rail is progressing design work, with funding allocated under the National Development Plan Sectoral Plan for Transport. It also recommends that the RSES consider future reinstatement of the Claremorris to Collooney section in the context of the required review of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review by 2034.

The submission further recommends safeguarding future rail corridors for Donegal and the North-West, including Letterkenny to Derry/Londonderry via Strabane, and future North Midlands connectivity serving Cavan, Clones and Monaghan towards Armagh. It also highlights the importance of cross-regional and cross-border coordination with adjoining Regional Assemblies, the NTA, Department of Transport, Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, Translink and local authorities.

Rail freight is identified as a major opportunity for the region, particularly through Ballina, Westport, Claremorris, Galway and Sligo, and through the development of a Western Rail Freight Arc connecting the West with ports including Shannon Foynes, Waterford, Dublin and Rosslare Europort. The submission seeks support for freight terminals, logistics planning, port connectivity and rail-served economic development.

Specific Recommendations

The submission recommends that the RSES:

1. Include a dedicated Rail Strategy for the Northern and Western Region.
2. Recognise rail corridors and station catchments as strategic spatial planning assets and critical infrastructure.
3. Support rail-led compact growth, Transport-Oriented Development and mixed-use development within existing and future station catchments, subject to proper planning, infrastructure capacity and environmental assessment.
4. Safeguard existing, disused and potential future rail corridors from development that could prejudice future rail construction, reinstatement, station provision, electrification, freight opportunities or other network improvements.
5. Support capacity, frequency, reliability, accessibility and journey-time improvements on the Galway, Mayo/Westport/Ballina and Sligo corridors.
6. Support double-tracking of strategic sections, including Athenry-Galway and Athlone-Portarlinton, and support passing loops, station upgrades, line-speed improvements and future electrification.
7. Support the reinstatement of the Western Rail Corridor between Athenry and Claremorris and consideration of future reinstatement of the Claremorris to Collooney section through the review of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review.
8. Safeguard future rail corridors serving Donegal and the North-West, including Letterkenny-Derry/Londonderry.
9. Safeguard future North Midlands rail connectivity, including potential links serving Cavan, Clones, Monaghan and Armagh.
10. Support integration between rail, regional bus, TFI Local Link, Connecting Ireland services, active travel, Park and Ride and demand-responsive transport.
11. Support rail freight growth, including enhancement of existing and potential freight facilities at Ballina, Westport, Claremorris, Galway, Sligo and other appropriate locations.
12. Support improved rail connections to ports, inland terminals and strategic logistics corridors, including the Western Rail Freight Arc.
13. Support station accessibility, step-free access, inclusive design, passenger comfort, customer information and safer interchange facilities.
14. Support climate resilience and adaptation of rail infrastructure, including protection from flooding, coastal change, storm events, extreme heat and other hazards.
15. Support designation of key rail infrastructure as critical infrastructure, including Athenry-Claremorris and double-tracking of the Galway/Mayo-Dublin corridor sections.
16. Support Irish Rail, the NTA and the Department of Transport in seeking EU and other funding opportunities for rail investment in the region.
17. Include implementation and monitoring measures for rail delivery, including mapping of corridors, station catchments, project milestones, passenger frequency, journey-time improvements, accessibility upgrades, freight growth and corridor safeguarding.

Submission No. **NWRA-C1-90**
 Submission by: Ireland West Airport
 Issues raised/Theme: Aviation

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the strategic role of Ireland West Airport in supporting regional connectivity, tourism, economic development, employment and balanced regional development across the West, North West and Midlands.

1. Strategic Role of Ireland West Airport

The submission highlights Ireland West Airport as a key regional transport and economic asset. The Airport recorded 946,000 passengers in 2025 and provides direct access to 21 international destinations across the UK and Europe. It serves a catchment of approximately 1.2 million people and is identified in the submission as an important gateway for tourism, business travel and international connectivity.

The submission notes the Airport's role in supporting the Wild Atlantic Way, Atlantic Economic Corridor, regional tourism, employment and overseas visitor spend. It also refers to the Airport's community/public ownership structure and local authority shareholding.

Specific recommendations

- Recognise the strategic regional role of Ireland West Airport in the revised RSES.
- Support the Airport as a key gateway for the West, North West and Midlands.
- Reflect the Airport's role in tourism, economic development, employment and international connectivity.

2. Regional Airports Programme

The submission refers to the Department of Transport's Regional Airports Programme 2026-2030 and welcomes continued Government support for regional airports.

It notes that Ireland West Airport is reliant on support under this programme to maintain safety, security and compliance infrastructure, and to progress capital and sustainability-related projects. The submission welcomes the expansion of the programme to airports with up to 3 million passengers but states that an increased annual funding envelope will also be required.

Specific recommendations

- Continue support for Ireland West Airport under the Regional Airports Programme.
- Ensure the Regional Airports Programme has sufficient funding to meet capital, safety, security and sustainability requirements.
- Support the role of regional airports in balanced regional development and connectivity.

3. Transport Connectivity

The submission highlights the need for improved surface access to the Airport. It notes the Airport's location close to the N5 and N17, but states that public transport options remain limited, particularly from towns and villages in Mayo, Roscommon and Leitrim.

The submission seeks further investment in regional bus services to and from the Airport and improved road access, including upgrade of the N17 from Tuam through Claremorris to Sligo and the North West. It also identifies the Western Rail Corridor as important to the Airport's future growth and seeks continuation of the corridor to Sligo, with a sustainable link to the Airport from Charlestown.

Specific recommendations

- Improve regional bus services to and from Ireland West Airport.
- Support improved road access to the Airport, including upgrades to the N17 corridor.
- Support further development of the Western Rail Corridor to Sligo.
- Provide for a sustainable transport link between Charlestown and the Airport.
- Improve low-carbon transport access to the Airport.

4. Ireland West Airport Strategic Development Zone

The submission highlights the Ireland West Airport Strategic Development Zone, designated in 2017, as a site of strategic economic importance. It states that the SDZ and associated Planning Scheme provide an opportunity to develop the Airport Business Park as an economic hub of national and regional significance.

The submission identifies potential for aviation-related enterprise, including Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul facilities, and states that enabling infrastructure is required to activate development lands and support high-skilled employment.

Specific recommendations

- Recognise the strategic importance of the Ireland West Airport SDZ in the RSES.
- Support delivery of enabling infrastructure, including services and utilities, to activate SDZ lands.
- Support aviation-related enterprise and employment opportunities at the Airport Business Park.
- Support the development of the SDZ as a regional economic hub.

5. Sustainability and Climate Action

The submission highlights the Airport's commitment to sustainability, including participation in Airport Carbon Accreditation. Ireland West Airport has committed to a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.

The submission notes that improved public transport, rail connectivity and low-carbon access to the Airport would assist in reducing emissions associated with passenger travel.

Specific recommendations

- Support the Airport's sustainability and carbon reduction objectives.
- Support low-carbon access to the Airport through improved bus, rail and sustainable transport connections.
- Support sustainability-related infrastructure investment at the Airport.

Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-68](#)

Submission by: Enterprise Ireland

Issues raised/Theme: Infrastructure, Skills, Enterprise Ecosystems, Competitiveness

Summary of Submission

The submission from Enterprise Ireland discusses several areas that will be relevant for the draft RSES; focusing on topics such as infrastructure, skills development, employment hubs and regional competitiveness.

In their submission, Enterprise Ireland recommends that the draft RSES needs to have an explicit and deliberate focus on enterprise, with a particular focus on private companies with the ambition and capacity to export, scale, and grow from regional locations.

The submission notes the importance of closely aligning with the future "Enterprise 2035", National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022 – 2027 (S3), the White Paper on Enterprise, Government Action Plan on Market Diversification and the Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity.

The submission from Enterprise Ireland states that infrastructure deficits should be highlighted by sub-region, outlining details in terms of location, enterprise impact and required interventions. In this regard, Enterprise Ireland highlights the importance of strengthening regional connectivity – across all modes – as being central to supporting the internationalisation of Irish enterprise.

Enterprise Ireland's submission states that universities and research institutions should be further leveraged as regional economic anchors, and that improved use of real-time labour market data and forecasting will be necessary to ensure policy responsiveness.

Furthermore, Enterprise Ireland states that the draft RSES needs to clearly articulate and prioritise the globally competitive enabling conditions that underpin business success, with a strong emphasis on infrastructure and a future-ready skills base.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-94](#)

Submission by: IDA Ireland

Issues raised/Theme: Enterprise Development, Competitiveness, Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

At a high-level, the submission from IDA Ireland discusses several topics that will be relevant for the draft RSES, focusing on areas such as enterprise enabling infrastructure, employment creation, regional competitiveness in terms of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Next Generation Sites (NGS).

The submission from IDA Ireland outlines a wide range of recommendations for the draft RSES. In this regard, IDA Ireland's submission recommends that the draft RSES needs to – amongst other things – to provide explicit policy support for existing and future FDI alongside indigenous enterprises, to explicitly recognise relevant national industrial land and enterprise strategies – such as the Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity – while positioning NGS as strategic enablers of investment in the region.

Furthermore, the submission also recommends support and a coordinated approach for the delivery of wider infrastructure assets that are central to supporting enterprise development, such as the electrical grid, water and transport.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-52](#)
 Submission by: Fáilte Ireland
 Issues raised/Theme: Tourism and Landscape (including Renewables)

Summary of Submission

The submission from Fáilte Ireland relates to the role of tourism in supporting sustainable regional development, rural communities, employment, cultural heritage, natural assets and the visitor economy. Fáilte Ireland welcomes engagement with the Regional Assembly on the review of the RSES in its role as the National Tourism Development Authority and a prescribed body in the planning process.

1. Tourism Context and Policy Framework 2025-2030

The submission highlights tourism as one of Ireland's most important indigenous industries, supporting employment, local enterprise and economic activity across urban and rural areas. It notes the particular importance of tourism in rural communities where visitor spend supports jobs, services and wider local economic activity. The submission recommends that the revised RSES has regard to the Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030 and aligns with its objectives relating to sustainable growth, regional balance, competitiveness, climate action, digital transformation, support for tourism SMEs and community wellbeing.

2. Fáilte Ireland Regional Experience Brands

The submission notes that the Northern and Western Region includes parts of three Fáilte Ireland regional experience brands, namely the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Ireland's Ancient East. It recommends that the tourism section of the revised RSES be updated to reflect the relevant Regional Tourism Development Strategies and Destination and Experience Development Plans.

3. Landscape Protection

The submission emphasises that landscape, scenery, amenities and environmental quality are key tourism assets. It recommends a coordinated approach to landscape categorisation across local authorities and consistency between the three Regional Assemblies, particularly in counties adjoining regional boundaries.

4. Renewable Energy

The submission supports the transition to renewable energy in appropriate locations, subject to proper planning and sustainable development. It recommends that renewable energy planning be informed by receptor and sensitivity analysis to avoid significant impacts on heritage, amenities, protected views, scenic routes and other tourism assets.

5. Marine and Coastal Areas

The submission highlights the importance of coastal and marine tourism to local communities and regional economies. It recommends strong policy support for the protection of marine ecosystems and for climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation in coastal areas, having regard to coastal erosion, climate change impacts and the Tourism Sectoral Adaptation Plan.

Third Level Institutions

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-56](#)
 Submission by: Atlantic Technological University
 Issues raised/Theme: Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Regional Development, Infrastructure, Skills, Enterprise, Cross Border, Climate Action, Blue Economy

Summary of Submission

The submission from Atlantic Technological University is a detailed document which contends that ATU should be recognised as a regional infrastructure due to its nine-campus, region-wide presence and its role in education, skills development, research, innovation, enterprise support, climate action, and cross-border collaboration.

The submission focuses on regional considerations such as high-quality higher education, Balanced Regional Development, Skills, Innovation and Enterprise, Enabling Infrastructure, Climate Action and Just Transition, Cross-Border and All-Island Collaboration and Collaboration and Governance.

The issues highlighted within the submission point to a small number of interconnected enabling considerations which ATU feel are central to supporting access, growth and regional cohesion. These include housing and accommodation, transport connectivity, research and innovation capacity, skills development aligned with Smart Specialisation, and collaborative approaches to delivery.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-68](#)
 Submission by: University of Galway
 Issues raised/Theme: Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Infrastructure, Sectoral Specialisms

Summary of Submission

The submission from University of Galway focuses on a wide range of relevant areas for the draft RSES, including the provision of high-quality higher education and research infrastructure and supporting sectoral specialisms in the Northern and Western Region of Ireland.

The submission from the University of Galway outlines details regarding seven overarching strategic themes, which have been outlined below:

1. Embedding research, innovation and higher education as core regional infrastructure
2. Growing established and emerging industrial sectors through targeted investment
3. Providing for a healthy, inclusive region where quality of life drives prosperity
4. Supporting sustainable, place-based and community-led development
5. Ensuring digital equality and AI inclusion across our region
6. Addressing critical infrastructural deficits in housing, connectivity and energy systems
7. Enabling cross-regional collaboration as a key enabler for shared success

Broadly speaking, the submission from the University of Galway states that the draft RSES should explicitly recognise research, innovation and higher education infrastructure as a critical enabling infrastructure that supports the economy of the Northern and Western Region of Ireland. In conjunction with this, the submission notes that infrastructure deficits are affecting the competitiveness of the region, and that deficits in areas such as housing, transport and energy need to be addressed.

Furthermore, the submission documents key industries that should be supported in the draft RSES – including the medical technology sector, the cultural and creative industries, renewable energy, the blue economy and ICT – as well as highlighting the importance of supporting digital and AI capabilities.

Health and Safety

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-1](#)
 Submission by: Geoff Hynes, HSA
 Issues raised/Theme: Health and Safety

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the role of the Health and Safety Authority in land-use planning.

It outlines the need for planning policy to address major accident hazard sites in line with relevant EU Directive requirements and highlights the importance of consultation distances and appropriate mapping of such sites. It also emphasises the need for policies on the siting of new developments in proximity to these establishments. The submission provides a list of notified establishments within the region for consideration.

Environment, Biodiversity Heritage and Landscape

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-4](#)
 Submission by: Marine Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)
 Issues raised/Theme: Marine Activities

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the role of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) and the integration of marine and terrestrial spatial planning in the RSES. It highlights the statutory requirement for the RSES to align with the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) and to support coordinated land-sea planning. The submission emphasises the strategic importance of the Northern and Western Region in supporting offshore renewable energy, the blue economy, ports and marine infrastructure, coastal resilience, environmental protection, and integrated land-sea planning.

The submission highlights the importance of ensuring alignment between the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and national marine planning policy, including the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF), future Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs), and the evolving maritime planning framework established under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021.

The submission recommends that the RSES strengthen policies relating to marine spatial planning, offshore renewable energy, ports and maritime infrastructure, environmental protection, coastal resilience and governance. It also proposes a range of high-level policy objectives to support sustainable maritime economic development and integrated planning across the land-sea interface.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-19](#)
 Submission by: An Taisce
 Issues raised/Theme: Environment

Summary of Submission

The submission from An Taisce is wide-ranging and relates to the overall direction of the RSES, with a strong focus on climate action, biodiversity, environmental limits, sustainable settlement patterns, transport, water, land use and SEA monitoring.

An Taisce recommends that the RSES be informed by the Doughnut Economics framework, ensuring that development supports social wellbeing while remaining within climate, biodiversity and ecological limits. It also seeks stronger implementation measures, targets, indicators, monitoring and public participation.

The submission places significant emphasis on compliance with climate legislation, carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. It recommends that the RSES avoid contradictory objectives that support decarbonisation while also promoting carbon and energy-intensive development.

The submission also highlights the biodiversity and water crises and recommends stronger objectives for nature restoration, carbon sinks, peatlands, wetlands, water quality, floodplain restoration and catchment-based planning.

In relation to settlement and transport, An Taisce supports compact, walkable and serviced settlements, town centre regeneration, reuse of existing buildings, reduced vacancy and dereliction, and the curtailment of unsustainable one-off housing and ribbon development. It also calls for stronger integration of land use and transport, with priority given to active travel, public transport, rail and modal shift away from private car use.

The submission further raises issues relating to renewable energy, data centres, marine planning, agriculture, the National Land Use Review, cross-border environmental cooperation and the need for a robust SEA process.

Specific Recommendations

The submission recommends that the RSES:

1. Be informed by Doughnut Economics and the need to operate within ecological limits.
2. Include strong implementation measures, targets, indicators and monitoring.
3. Ensure full public participation and avoid future consultation periods clashing with other RSES consultations or holiday periods.
4. Demonstrate compliance with climate legislation, carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings.
5. Integrate climate action and biodiversity protection throughout the Strategy.
6. Support nature restoration, carbon sinks, peatland, wetland and woodland protection and restoration
7. Prioritise compact growth, walkable communities, brownfield development, reuse of existing buildings and town centre regeneration.
8. Curtail unsustainable one-off housing and ribbon development, particularly where driven by urban-generated demand.
9. Require housing growth to be accompanied by transport, schools, childcare, health, recreation and other community infrastructure.
10. Prioritise active travel, public transport, rail, intermodal transport and regional cycle networks.
11. Avoid road capacity increases that would induce further car-based travel.
12. Assess airport expansion and data centre development against climate and energy obligations.
13. Ensure the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy is ecosystem-led and avoids sensitive biodiversity and landscape areas.
14. Avoid support for new fossil fuel-based energy generation.
15. Strengthen catchment-based water management, floodplain restoration, nature-based flood solutions

and Water Framework Directive compliance.

- 16. Address septic tank and domestic wastewater treatment risks in rural areas.
- 17. Apply an ecosystem-based approach to marine planning and coastal adaptation.
- 18. Integrate the National Land Use Review, when available, into the draft RSES.
- 19. Include objectives for cross-border environmental cooperation with Northern Ireland.
- 20. Ensure the SEA is legally robust, evidence-based and includes clear mitigation, monitoring and remedial action.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-7](#)
Submission by: Heritage Council
Issues raised/Theme: Heritage

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the protection, enhancement and integration of cultural, built, natural and marine heritage within the RSES. The Heritage Council structures its submission around seven key themes: strategic planning and settlement patterns, renewable energy development, natural heritage, architectural heritage, archaeological heritage, landscape and marine matters. The submission emphasises the need for dedicated heritage policies within the RSES, support for compact growth and heritage-led regeneration, protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecological networks, landscape character assessment, heritage-informed renewable energy planning, and recognition of the importance of coastal and maritime heritage. The Heritage Council also highlights the role of the RSES in providing clear strategic direction to local authority development plans and ensuring alignment with national heritage, biodiversity and climate policy objectives.

Flooding

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-6](#)
Submission by: Office of Public Works (OPW)
Issues raised/Theme: Flood risk

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to flood risk management, climate adaptation and the integration of flood resilience into spatial planning across the region. The OPW highlights the importance of implementing the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines, applying the sequential approach and Justification Test, and ensuring flood risk is addressed at the plan-making stage. The submission requests continued support for Flood Risk Management Plans, flood relief schemes, nature-based solutions and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), while also emphasising the need to consider climate change impacts, coastal change, flood mapping and strategic flood risk assessment in future regional planning policy.

Community and Social Infrastructure

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-79](#)
Submission by: Sport Ireland
Issues raised/Theme: Sport Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

Sport Ireland highlights the significant health, social and economic value of sport and notes that population growth will increase demand for local, sub-regional and regional sports facilities, including pitches, parks, swimming pools, tracks, indoor facilities and centres of excellence.

The submission recommends that the RSES include a dedicated section on sport, physical activity and outdoor recreation, and that a strategic regional sports infrastructure plan be prepared to identify regionally significant sports infrastructure needs.

It also seeks stronger protection and delivery of local sport and recreation amenities through settlement planning, including shared-use facilities, community hubs, universal design, better public transport and active travel access, and closer links between greenways, parks, sports facilities and outdoor recreation areas.

Specific Recommendations

- 1. Include a dedicated RSES section on sport, physical activity and outdoor recreation.
- 2. Prepare a Strategic Regional Sports Infrastructure Plan.
- 3. Safeguard and enhance sport amenities in all communities.
- 4. Support accessibility, inclusion and universal design in sports facilities.
- 5. Integrate sport and active recreation with climate and active travel goals.
- 6. Recognise and support outdoor recreation as a strategic regional asset.

Gaeltacht, Islands and Rural Communities

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-46](#)
 Submission by: Údarás na Gaeltachta
 Issues raised/Theme: Regional Development, Enterprise, Tourism, Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission from Údarás na Gaeltachta focuses on the protection and sustainable development of Gaeltacht na Gaillimhe, Gaeltacht Mhaigh Eo and Gaeltacht Dhún na nGall. The submission highlights that the Northern and Western Region contains 83% of the total Gaeltacht population and seeks stronger policy support for the Irish language, Gaeltacht communities, enterprise, housing, infrastructure and monitoring.

1. Gaeltacht, Language Planning and Cultural Resilience

The submission states that the Gaeltacht is a unique linguistic, cultural and community asset and should be more clearly recognised in the RSES. It seeks the inclusion of Cultural and Linguistic Resilience as a key principle.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise Gaeltacht na Gaillimhe, Mhaigh Eo and Dhún na nGall as spatial, linguistic and cultural assets of national and regional importance.
- Include Cultural and Linguistic Resilience as a key RSES principle.
- Support implementation of Gaeltacht Language Plans.
- Require settlement-specific objectives for Gaeltacht areas.
- Support Priority Area Plans for Gaeltacht settlements under Section 72(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2024.
- Require Language Impact Assessments and language enurement clauses for residential development in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas.
- Address vacancy in Gaeltacht settlements.

2. Housing and Infrastructure

The submission identifies housing, water, wastewater, public transport, walking and cycling as critical to sustaining Gaeltacht communities.

Specific Recommendations

- Prioritise water and wastewater upgrades in Gaeltacht areas.
- Support improved public transport, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.
- Support the potential role of Údarás na Gaeltachta in housing delivery for Irish-language communities.
- Align development plans with the forthcoming National Planning Statement on Gaeltacht housing.

3. Enterprise, Innovation and Community Development

The submission highlights Údarás na Gaeltachta's role in enterprise, employment, remote working, innovation, digital skills, community development and social enterprise. It refers to the gteic hub network, Irish-language digital innovation, cultural tourism and the potential for Gaeltacht-based enterprise.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise Údarás na Gaeltachta as a key economic development partner.
- Support Irish-language enterprise, digital infrastructure, cultural tourism and the gteic hub network.
- Explore a public service Irish-language hub in the Gaeltacht.
- Support innovation along the western and northern Gaeltacht coastline.
- Support Ros an Mhíl as an operational hub for offshore renewable energy, wave energy and green hydrogen.

- Support social enterprise and research-led Gaeltacht enterprise in areas such as agri-food, marine biotech, sustainable materials and digital creative industries.

4. Renewable Energy and Sustainability

The submission highlights An Ghaeltacht Ghlas and the need to balance renewable energy, sustainability, landscape character and community benefit.

Specific Recommendations

- Support community energy projects in Gaeltacht and rural areas.
- Ensure renewable energy policy does not adversely impact Gaeltacht landscape character.
- Engage specifically with Gaeltacht communities and Údarás na Gaeltachta on renewable energy planning.

5. Monitoring and Engagement

The submission seeks stronger monitoring of the impact of regional planning on the Gaeltacht and continued engagement with Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Specific Recommendations

- Include linguistic monitoring indicators in the RSES monitoring framework.
- Commit to formal engagement with Údarás na Gaeltachta in RSES and development plan processes affecting the Gaeltacht.

General Submissions

Settlements

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-23](#)
 Submission by: Brady Shipman Martin C/O Ballymore Group
 Issues raised/Theme: Settlements - Athlone

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the future strategic role of Athlone, including the Athlone Green City Vision, cross-regional planning, population growth, infrastructure delivery, renewable energy, education and economic development.

1. Strategic Role of Athlone

The submission identifies Athlone as a pivotal urban centre within both the Northern and Western Region and the Eastern and Midland Region. It highlights Athlone's role as a regional centre for employment, services, education, public services, transport and retail.

Specific Recommendations

- EMRA and NWRA should work together on a coordinated strategy for Athlone.
- Athlone should be recognised as a key strategic settlement capable of supporting balanced regional development.
- The RSES should recognise Athlone's cross-regional role and wider regional influence.

2. Athlone Green City Vision

The submission promotes the Athlone Green City Vision as a nationally significant opportunity to deliver sustainable urban growth outside Dublin. It proposes significant long-term population, employment, education and renewable energy growth in Athlone.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise the Athlone Green City Vision as a key opportunity for sustainable regional growth.
- Support Athlone as a potential Green City pilot.
- Consider long-term city-scale growth for Athlone, including population growth in excess of traditional regional town targets.

3. Infrastructure, Funding and Delivery

The submission states that major infrastructure investment and coordinated funding will be required to realise Athlone's growth potential. It highlights transport, public transport, active travel, water services, waste, energy, communications and strategic infrastructure.

Specific Recommendations

- Identify Athlone-related strategic infrastructure priorities.
- Align RSES objectives with national and EU funding opportunities.
- Provide implementation measures to support coordinated delivery.

4. Climate, Renewable Energy, Education and Economy

The submission links the Green City Vision with climate action, renewable energy, education, innovation and economic growth. It highlights the role of TU Shannon and the potential for Athlone to support green technology, employment and regional competitiveness.

Specific Recommendations

- Support renewable energy, energy storage and green technology opportunities.
- Support third-level education and innovation linked to sustainable city development.
- Promote Athlone as a centre for employment, education, climate action and regional economic development.

Submission No. **NWRA-C1-38**
 Submission by: Cootehill Chamber of Commerce
 Issues raised/Theme: Settlements - Cootehill

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the role of Cootehill as an employment, industrial and service centre within the wider Cavan-Monaghan-Border economic corridor. It highlights the importance of medium-sized regional towns in supporting enterprise, community life, rural sustainability and balanced regional development.

1. Role of Regional Towns

The submission states that regional towns such as Cootehill already support significant employment, enterprise and service functions, but continue to face infrastructure, housing, transport and utility constraints.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise the strategic economic role of medium-sized regional towns.
- Support regional towns as employment centres, service hubs and sustainable population centres.
- Ensure regional development policy is practical and deliverable for smaller and medium-sized towns.

2. Infrastructure, Energy and Connectivity

The submission identifies infrastructure delivery as a key barrier to balanced regional development, particularly water, wastewater, electricity, grid resilience, digital infrastructure and transport connectivity.

Specific Recommendations

- Prioritise infrastructure-led growth in regional towns.

- Accelerate investment in water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Strengthen electricity grid resilience and regional energy capacity.
- Improve east-west and inter-regional transport connectivity.
- Recognise the importance of regional corridors, including the R178.
- Support digital infrastructure and remote working capacity.

3. Enterprise, Skills and Town Centre Economies

The submission highlights the role of indigenous enterprise, agri-food, manufacturing, engineering, logistics, retail, hospitality and professional services in Cootehill and its wider hinterland. It also identifies the need for improved education, training and skills facilities serving the Cavan-Monaghan area.

Specific Recommendations

- Support indigenous enterprise ecosystems and town-centre economies.
- Support regional education and skills facilities.
- Support SME digital transition and measures to reduce expenditure leakage from town centres.
- Strengthen links between education, apprenticeships, enterprise and regional planning.

4. Housing, Regeneration and Quality of Life

The submission raises concerns about housing delivery, vacancy, town-centre living and the practical challenges associated with over-the-shop and upper-floor residential reuse.

Specific Recommendations

- Expand and simplify regeneration and over-the-shop grant schemes.
- Support adaptive reuse, vacancy reduction and town-centre living.
- Support public realm, community facilities, cultural infrastructure, sports facilities, healthcare access and town regeneration.
- Recognise quality of life as a key factor in population retention and enterprise investment.

5. Climate Transition and Cross-Border Potential

The submission supports climate action but states that transition policies must reflect the realities of rural and regional economies, particularly areas with agri-food and industrial activity. It also highlights Cootehill's location within the wider border region and the need for stronger cross-border and inter-regional coordination.

Specific Recommendations

- Support practical and regionally balanced climate transition policies.
- Support circular economy, anaerobic digestion and biomethane opportunities where properly planned.
- Enhance cross-border and inter-regional economic coordination.
- Strengthen collaboration between local authorities, enterprise agencies and infrastructure providers.

Gaeltacht, Islands and Rural Communities

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-35](#)
 Submission by: Comharchumann Forbartha Árann
 Issues raised/Theme: Offshore Islands

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the long-term sustainability of island communities, with a particular focus on Inis Mór and the Aran Islands.

Comharchumann Forbartha Árann highlights concerns regarding population decline, the loss of young people from the island, and the difficulty for young islanders and families to return home due to limited employment opportunities, housing barriers, planning restrictions and the high cost of island construction.

The submission identifies remote and flexible working as a significant opportunity for island regeneration, but states that this opportunity is being constrained by planning and housing issues. It calls for a review of planning policy for offshore islands, greater flexibility for local people seeking to build homes, and ring-fenced housing grants or financial supports that reflect the higher cost of island construction.

The submission also seeks targeted Government measures to support island repopulation, including tax incentives for young workers and families, restoration of the Island Allowance for teachers and essential public service workers, and ring-fenced childcare funding suitable for small island services.

It further highlights the need for a joined-up Government approach to island sustainability across housing, education, transport, childcare, enterprise, infrastructure and community development. Specific reference is made to the urgent need for ring-fenced funding for the wastewater scheme on Inis Mór, which is identified as a critical infrastructure deficit affecting housing, economic activity and population growth.

Community and Social Infrastructure

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-71](#)
 Submission by: Galway Children & Young People's Services Committee
 Issues raised/Theme: Youth Services

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to youth social infrastructure, with a focus on the need for dedicated, non-commercial youth spaces in Galway City and other main settlements. It highlights the absence of a city-centre youth space in Galway and states that such facilities would support wellbeing, social inclusion, creativity, community safety, compact growth and access to services.

The submission proposes RPOs to support a network of youth spaces, including a flagship Galway City facility, and to require local authorities to identify youth infrastructure deficits through Development Plans

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-2](#)
 Submission by: John Moran, Mayo Plus
 Issues raised/Theme: Rural Development

Summary of Submission

The submission included a number of separate attachments. The overall submission presents a rural development approach entitled '360 Degree Development'. It proposes a county-based hub and spoke model to support rural communities and improve delivery of funding programmes. The submission highlights challenges including depopulation, business closures and cost of living pressures. It emphasises community-led development and stronger engagement with EU initiatives such as the Rural Pact. The approach is presented as a scalable model to revitalise rural economies.

Transport and Connectivity - Rail

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-9](#)
 Submission by: West on Track
 Issues raised/Theme: Rail infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the strategic importance of the Western Rail Corridor (WRC) and its role in supporting regional development, sustainable transport and the Atlantic Economic Corridor. It notes the inclusion of the Athenry–Claremorris section as a priority project within the National Development Plan and advocates continued policy support for the restoration of the corridor as a passenger and freight railway.

The submission highlights the potential of the WRC to improve regional connectivity throughout the Northern and Western Region of Ireland, strengthen economic linkages between key settlements, support tourism and facilitate a modal shift from road to rail. It also supports the future restoration of the Claremorris–Collooney section, the provision of additional stations and park-and-ride facilities, and the progression of a rail link between Letterkenny and Derry as identified in the All-Island Rail Review.

The submission emphasises the contribution of rail infrastructure to balanced regional development, climate action objectives, freight movement, accessibility and the long-term development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-10](#)
 Submission by: Western Inter County Railway Committee
 Issues raised/Theme: Rail Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the strategic importance of the Western Rail Corridor (WRC) and advocates for the reinstatement of the full railway alignment between Limerick and Sligo for passenger and freight services, with the longer-term objective of extending rail connectivity to Donegal and Derry.

The submission supports the existing RSES Regional Policy Objectives relating to the Western Rail Corridor and welcomes the designation of the Athenry–Claremorris section as a priority project under the revised National Development Plan. It also supports the provision of additional stations and park-and-ride facilities and the protection of the railway corridor for future rail use.

The submission highlights the role of rail infrastructure in supporting balanced regional development, sustainable commuting, freight movement, tourism, economic competitiveness, education, healthcare accessibility and climate action. It further advocates for the progression of a rail link between Letterkenny and Derry, as identified in the All-Island Rail Review, to support the development of the North-West City Region.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-27](#)
 Submission by: Sustainable Community Area Network, Milltown
 Issues raised/Theme: Rail Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to rural rail connectivity and the Western Rail Corridor, with a specific focus on the proposed provision of a rail halt, park-and-ride facility and protection of the existing freight shunt at Milltown, Co. Galway.

The submission proposes that RPO 6.13A be amended to refer to the “Athenry-Tuam-Milltown-Claremorris-Sligo Rail” and that RPO 6.13B be amended to refer to the extension of the railway line from “Athenry-Tuam-Milltown-Claremorris-Sligo”.

The submission highlights a range of potential benefits associated with a Milltown halt and freight shunt, including reduced traffic on the N17, support for climate targets, reduced commuting times, improved accessibility, support for rural development, enhanced tourism connectivity, improved access to education and healthcare, and opportunities for sustainable freight movement from the adjoining business and industrial park.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-42](#)
 Submission by: Milltown Community Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Rail Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the proposed inclusion of transit-oriented development at Milltown, Co. Galway as part of the Western Rail Corridor framework.

The submission proposes the inclusion of a railway halt, park-and-ride hub and requests that the RSES include a specific Regional Policy Objective supporting the provision of a passenger railway halt at Milltown. The submission states that a rail halt at Milltown would support sustainable commuting to Galway and other regional centres, reduce traffic and emissions along the N17 corridor, support compact growth and Town Centre First principles, and create stronger links between housing, employment, education, healthcare and public transport. It also identifies the potential for park-and-ride facilities and local enterprise benefits arising from the co-location of the proposed halt with Milltown Business Park.

The submission also raises wider strategic issues including the need to address the region’s innovation deficit, support third-level and research infrastructure, improve digital connectivity and broadband monitoring, protect strategic transport corridors, promote integrated rail and greenway strategies, support balanced regional development and compact growth, and include climate resilience and grid transmission planning up to 2040.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-64](#)
 Submission by: Woodlawn Heritage Group
 Issues raised/Theme: Rail Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to rail connectivity, rural regeneration and housing, with a focus on Woodlawn Station and the wider rural area it serves. It highlights the importance of retaining and improving rail services at Woodlawn, including the proposed reinstatement of the second platform, and states that improved rail connectivity could support commuting, access to services, reduced car dependency and rural regeneration. The submission also suggests that housing growth could be directed towards existing rural transport hubs such as Woodlawn, helping to support local services and reduce pressure on Galway City.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-66](#)
 Submission by: Ballyglunin Community Development CLG
 Issues raised/Theme: Rail Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to rail connectivity, sustainable transport and rural regeneration, with a specific focus on the proposed provision of a Park-and-Ride Rail Halt at Ballyglunin as part of the Western Rail Corridor. It states that Ballyglunin is well placed to serve a wider rural catchment, due to its location on the N63 and proximity to the reinstated rail line, and could support commuting, reduced car dependency, access to Galway City and improved rural connectivity.

The submission also highlights wider benefits relating to climate action, modal shift, the Atlantic Economic Corridor, tourism and heritage, including links to the restored Ballyglunin Station and its association with The Quiet Man.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-67](#)
 Submission by: Galway LUAS (GLUAS)
 Issues raised/Theme: Light Rail for Galway

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the provision of Light Rail Transit in the Galway Metropolitan Area and seeks its inclusion in the RSES.

GLUAS refers to the Galway Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study, prepared for the National Transport Authority and published in October 2024, which found strong east-west travel demand, potential for significant modal shift, no critical technical constraints, and potential patronage of approximately 13 million passengers per annum. The submission states that light rail would support compact growth, Transport-Oriented Development, reduced car dependency, climate action, improved public transport access, reduced congestion, urban regeneration and delivery of the National Planning Framework population target for Galway.

It also highlights the potential role of light rail in connecting major employment areas, hospitals, universities, strategic growth areas such as Ardaun, Park and Ride sites, Ceannt Station and the wider rail network serving the Northern and Western Region.

The submission requests that the draft RSES include, at a minimum, further studies on route options to advance the Galway Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study, with a view to identifying an Emerging Preferred Route.

Greenways

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-28](#)
 Submission by: Sligo Greenway Co-op Ltd
 Issues raised/Theme: Greenways

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the proposed Sligo Greenway on the disused Collooney to Bellaghy railway corridor. It seeks recognition of the project as a regionally significant piece of sustainable transport, tourism and active recreation infrastructure.

It also highlights the potential for future cross-border connectivity towards Enniskillen via the historic SLNCR alignment and notes that the project is currently delayed due to issues around use of the disused rail corridor.

The submission requests the inclusion of RPOs to support:

1. Delivery of the Sligo Greenway on the disused Collooney to Bellaghy railway corridor.
2. Productive use of strategic State-owned linear corridors, including disused railway alignments, for sustainable transport and greenway purposes.
3. Cross-border greenway connectivity from Sligo to Enniskillen.
4. Integration of regional greenways with rail, airport access and the National Cycle Network.
5. Resolution of inter-agency issues where they are delaying greenway delivery.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-15](#)
 Submission by: Sligo Greenway Co-op Ltd
 Issues raised/Theme: Greenways

Summary of Submission

This submission shares the same themes as Submission NWRA-C1-28 from Sligo Greenway Co-op. It relates to the same proposed 35.5km Sligo Greenway from Collooney to Bellaghy, using the disused railway line

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-29](#)
 Submission by: Brendan Quinn
 Issues raised/Theme: Greenway

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the Western Rail Trail Campaign and is made on behalf of over 26,000 signatories seeking a greenway on the closed railway alignment from Athenry to Collooney until such time as a railway may be possible.

The submission argues that the RSES should align with national rail policy, including the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, and should not include rail objectives north of Claremorris where the submitter states there is no current national policy support for reopening the line.

It supports the use of the closed railway corridor, particularly north of Claremorris, as a greenway to protect the route in public ownership, support tourism, active travel, rural economic development and links to the National Cycle Network.

The submission also suggests that the Athenry to Claremorris section could be used as an interim greenway until such time as rail delivery progresses, with potential for a parallel greenway/railway arrangement in the future.

Specific Recommendations

- The submission recommends that RPO 6.11 be amended to reflect the outcome of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review and national policy relating to the Athenry to Claremorris section.
- It recommends that RPO 6.13 be amended to remove references to the Claremorris to Sligo section as a rail objective.
- It seeks support for the Sligo Greenway and for the use of the route north of Claremorris as a greenway until such time as a railway may be possible.
- It also requests that the existing RSES greenway mapping/reference to the Collooney to Athenry/Quiet Man Greenway route be retained and strengthened.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-37](#)
 Submission by: East Mayo Greenway
 Issues raised/Theme: Greenways

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the proposed East Mayo Greenway from the Sligo/Mayo border at Charlestown through Swinford, Kiltimagh and Claremorris, with a wider ambition to connect to Milltown, the Sligo Greenway, the SLNCR Greenway and the Great Western Greenway.

The submission supports the use of the closed railway alignment as a greenway, on the basis that any permission or licence could be conditional on the route being returned for railway use if required in the future.

It refers to previous submissions from Irish Rail and the Department of Transport to the Mayo County Development Plan, which supported the protection of the Western Rail Corridor as a transport corridor and allowed for consideration of greenway use, particularly north of Claremorris.

The submission highlights the potential benefits of the greenway for active travel, tourism, rural economic development, recreation, health, cycling, sustainable transport and better use of an existing disused transport corridor.

It also notes that the SLNCR Greenway and Sligo Greenway were identified in the existing RSES greenway network and states that these projects should continue to be recognised and supported in the RSES.

Specific Recommendations

The submission recommends support for the proposed East Mayo Greenway along the disused railway corridor.

- It seeks recognition of the wider greenway network linking Enniskillen, Sligo, Charlestown, East Mayo, Turlough, Westport and Achill.
- It recommends that the Western Rail Corridor be protected as a wider transport corridor rather than solely as a railway corridor.
- It supports interim greenway use of the disused railway line, subject to future rail requirements.
- It seeks continued recognition of the Sligo Greenway, SLNCR Greenway and related greenway routes in the RSES.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-55](#)
 Submission by: The Quiet Man Greenway
 Issues raised/Theme: Greenways

Summary of Submission

The submission requests that the RSES include objectives to:

1. Support the use of the closed Athenry to Claremorris railway route as an interim greenway until such time as realistic plans to reopen the railway are progressed.
2. Support the inclusion of a parallel greenway alongside the railway when the Athenry to Claremorris rail line is planned for reopening.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-53](#)
 Submission by: Marie Casserly
 Issues raised/Theme: Rail/Greenways

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to railway, greenway and sustainable transport objectives in the RSES, with a particular focus on the Western Rail Corridor and the need for regional transport objectives to align with national rail policy.

The submission raises concern that the existing RSES rail objectives, particularly references to reopening the former railway from Claremorris to Sligo/Collooney, may no longer reflect current national policy as set out in the All-Island Strategic Rail Review and Irish Rail's Rail2050 strategy. It argues that any future reference to rail connectivity north of Claremorris should accurately reflect national policy and should not create expectations around projects that are not currently funded, planned or identified for delivery.

The submission requests that references to reopening the former Claremorris to Sligo railway be removed or amended unless they clearly align with the All-Island Strategic Rail Review. It also supports wider strategic rail priorities, including improvements to the Dublin-Sligo line, improved North-West connectivity and future rail links to Derry/Letterkenny.

The submission also places strong emphasis on greenway and cycling infrastructure as a regional economic development priority. It highlights the potential of greenways to support rural regeneration, tourism, local enterprise, employment, sustainable transport and quality of life, with particular reference to the Sligo Greenway network and its proximity to Ireland West Airport Knock.

Specific Recommendations

The submission recommends that the RSES:

1. Align railway and transport objectives with the All-Island Strategic Rail Review and Rail2050.
2. Remove or amend references to reopening the former Claremorris to Sligo railway unless they accurately reflect current national policy.
3. Avoid including aspirational infrastructure objectives without a clear evidence base or delivery pathway.
4. Support priority rail improvements, including the Dublin-Sligo rail line and improved strategic connectivity to the North-West.
5. Give greater recognition to greenway and cycling infrastructure as core regional economic development infrastructure.
6. Support the Sligo Greenway network and wider active travel infrastructure as a means of supporting tourism, rural regeneration, employment and sustainable transport.

Walking and Cycling

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-73](#)
 Submission by: Lorraine Darcy
 Issues raised/Theme: Walkability and access

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to walkability, local accessibility, settlement connectivity and economic sustainability. It argues that walkability should be understood as a core spatial planning and economic issue, not just a transport or design matter. The submission highlights that missing links, indirect routes, disconnected estates and poor permeability can increase car dependency, reduce access to services, weaken town centre viability and undermine compact growth.

The submission states that the RSES has an important role in ensuring that accessibility, land use, transport, public realm and service provision are planned as connected systems rather than isolated interventions.

It includes proposed Regional Policy Objectives relating to walkability, continuous walking and cycling networks, integration of accessibility with settlement growth, identification of missing links, cross-boundary coordination, reduced car dependency, access to key services and monitoring of measurable outcomes.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-75](#)
 Submission by: Sligo Cycling Campaign
 Issues raised/Theme: Cycling and connectivity

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to active travel, local accessibility, sustainable mobility and the need to reduce car dependency for short journeys. It states that the RSES should place local connectivity and accessibility at the centre of regional planning, particularly through planned, continuous and safe walking and cycling networks within settlements.

The submission highlights that compact growth alone does not guarantee accessibility, and that poor permeability, missing links and lack of safe active travel infrastructure can result in continued car dependency, even where services are close by.

It recommends stronger integration between land use, housing, schools, public transport and active travel, with particular regard to CycleConnects, Connecting Ireland, the National Sustainable Mobility Policy, Moving Together 2026-2030, climate legislation and the National Planning Framework.

The submission also suggests that active travel teams should be more multidisciplinary and that a regional shared-services approach could help support better planning, design and delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure.

Utilities and Infrastructure - Road Infrastructure

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-39](#)
 Submission by: ARUP
 Issues raised/Theme: Carrick-on-Shannon Bypass

Summary of Submission

The submission from Arup, on behalf of Leitrim County Council and Roscommon County Council, relates to the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon Bypass and Traffic Management Project.

The submission highlights the strategic importance of the N4 corridor as part of the TEN-T comprehensive network, providing a key link between Dublin, Sligo and the wider North West. It states that the existing N4 through Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober is constrained by congestion, poor alignment, limited bridge capacity and high traffic volumes, including HGV traffic through the town centre.

The submission states that the project would remove a major bottleneck on the N4, improve journey reliability, enhance regional accessibility, support economic growth and improve road safety. It also highlights that the project includes active travel, traffic management and public realm benefits for Carrick-on-Shannon and Cortober. The submission notes that the project is currently at Phase 3, involving design and environmental evaluation, following completion of earlier options assessment work. It also refers to the Carrick-on-Shannon Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031 and states that the project would support compact growth, placemaking, town-centre improvements and sustainable transport measures.

The submission seeks stronger and more explicit policy support in the RSES for the N4 corridor and for the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon Bypass and Traffic Management Project as critical enabling infrastructure for balanced regional development, economic competitiveness, regional connectivity, social inclusion and quality of life.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise the strategic importance of the N4 corridor.
- Support the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon Bypass and Traffic Management Project.
- Identify the project as key enabling infrastructure for regional growth.
- Support improved regional accessibility and connectivity to the North West.
- Recognise the role of the project in reducing congestion and improving road safety.
- Support active travel, traffic management and placemaking in Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober.
- Provide stronger implementation-focused policy support for critical regional transport infrastructure.

Services - Retail

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-32](#)
 Submission by: Tesco Ireland
 Issues raised/Theme: Retail and Grocery Sector

Summary of Submission

The submission from Tesco Ireland relates to the role of the retail and grocery sector in supporting regional accessibility, employment, economic activity, supply chains, compact growth and sustainable communities in the Northern and Western Region.

The submission states that Tesco Ireland contributes to the Region through its retail stores, neighbourhood convenience formats, online grocery services, click-and-collect facilities, distribution networks and associated logistics infrastructure. It considers convenience-led retailing to be an important part of community and economic infrastructure, particularly in rural towns, neighbourhood centres and established settlements.

The submission highlights changing consumer behaviour, the growth of online grocery services and the need for modern retail formats that integrate physical retail, digital commerce and logistics functions. It seeks a flexible retail policy framework that can respond to omnichannel retailing, changing operational requirements and evolving retail formats.

The submission also requests support for appropriately zoned and serviced lands capable of accommodating modern retail, logistics and distribution infrastructure, including convenience retailing across a broader range of zoning categories such as mixed-use and employment lands.

The submission further highlights the employment, supply chain and sustainability role of the retail sector, including support for Irish producers, regional resilience, sustainable freight movement, energy-efficient stores, low-carbon logistics and reduced travel demand through accessible local retail provision.

Specific Recommendations

The submission recommends that the RSES:

1. Recognise the strategic role of the retail and grocery sector as economic, social and community infrastructure.
2. Support a flexible and responsive retail planning framework that reflects changing retail formats, online retailing and operational requirements.
3. Support the continued provision and modernisation of convenience-led retail infrastructure.
4. Support investment in modern retail distribution, logistics and fulfilment infrastructure.
5. Recognise the role of the retail and grocery sector in employment, Irish supply chains, food and drink producers and economic resilience.
6. Support the identification of appropriately zoned and serviced lands for retail, logistics and distribution infrastructure.
7. Support greater flexibility for convenience-led retail development across a broader range of zoning categories, including mixed-use and employment zonings.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-43](#)
 Submission by: Lidl Ireland GmbH
 Issues raised/Theme: Retail and Grocery Sector

Summary of Submission

The submission from Lidl Ireland relates to the role of accessible grocery retail and local services in supporting compact growth, regeneration, sustainable mobility, town and village renewal and liveable communities.

The submission states that day-to-day retail and local services should be recognised as essential supporting infrastructure, particularly in the Northern and Western Region given its dispersed settlement structure, rural communities, ageing population and reliance on smaller towns and villages for local services.

The submission highlights the importance of planning retail provision alongside housing growth and transport infrastructure. It argues that if grocery retail and local services are absent, delayed or too limited in scale, residents may remain dependent on longer-distance car-based travel for routine shopping needs.

The submission supports a town-centre-first and plan-led approach to retail development, consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines, while also seeking a practical and context-sensitive approach to neighbourhood, district, town and village-level retail provision.

Specific Recommendations

The submission recommends that the RSES:

1. Recognise accessible day-to-day retail and local services as essential infrastructure for sustainable communities, reduced travel demand and 10-minute towns/15-minute communities.
2. Support the coordinated delivery of housing growth, local services and community infrastructure.
3. Reinforce town and village centre vitality through appropriately scaled retail and mixed-use development, consistent with the sequential approach and Town Centre First policy.
4. Recognise the role of local retail and services in supporting community resilience, accessibility and independent living, particularly in smaller settlements, rural areas and areas with ageing populations.
5. Support realistic and evidence-based approaches to neighbourhood retail provision capable of meeting day-to-day and weekly shopping needs.
6. Support a context-sensitive and plan-led approach to retail planning that reflects the different settlement types and community needs across the Region.

Postal Services

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-33](#)
 Submission by: An Post
 Issues raised/Theme: Postal Services

Summary of Submission

The submission from An Post relates to the role of postal, logistics and delivery infrastructure in supporting regional accessibility, economic activity, employment, eCommerce, supply chains and sustainable development in the Northern and Western Region.

The submission states that An Post is a critical component of the Region's infrastructure network, providing post offices, Delivery Service Units, logistics facilities and essential services to urban, rural and peripheral communities. It highlights the particular importance of An Post in supporting communications, financial services, online retail, SMEs and day-to-day services in rural areas.

The submission notes the growth of eCommerce, changing logistics demands and the need for modern, consolidated logistics and parcel handling facilities. It identifies the need for strategically located and serviced lands capable of accommodating postal, logistics and distribution infrastructure.

The submission also highlights An Post's role in employment, regional connectivity, supply chain resilience and economic competitiveness. It notes the need for infrastructure that supports extended operational hours, fleet accommodation, EV charging, servicing areas, staff parking and access to strategic transport corridors.

The submission further emphasises sustainability and climate transition, including fleet electrification, energy-efficient facilities, low-carbon logistics, EV charging infrastructure and reduced transport emissions through more efficient distribution networks.

Specific Recommendations

The submission recommends that the RSES:

1. Support the continued modernisation and expansion of postal, logistics and delivery infrastructure throughout the Region.
2. Support strategically located and consolidated An Post Delivery Service Units and hubs.
3. Recognise An Post's contribution to regional economic activity, employment, connectivity and essential service provision.
4. Support the identification and provision of appropriately zoned and serviced lands in accessible locations for logistics and distribution infrastructure.
5. Support a flexible planning framework that recognises the operational requirements of postal and logistics infrastructure, including extended hours, fleet accommodation, EV charging, servicing requirements and strategic transport access.

Economic Development, Employment and Tourism

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-41](#)
 Submission by: Western Development Commission
 Issues raised/Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise, Infrastructure, Housing, Remote Working

Summary of Submission

The submission from the Western Development Commission highlights several topics that will be relevant for the draft RSES. In this regard, the submission from the Western Development Commission focuses on topics such as infrastructure, enterprise development, remote working and town / village regeneration.

In terms of infrastructure, the submission from the Western Development Commission highlights the importance of delivering infrastructure projects such as – but not limited to – the N6 Galway City Ring Road, the N17 redevelopment, the Donegal Ten-T Project, as well improving the rail, water, wastewater, electricity, airport and port infrastructure of the Northern and Western Region of Ireland.

The submission also highlights key industrial specialisms in the region – such as Med-Tech, Manufacturing and the Creative Economy – the economic potential of remote working, and the need for the draft RSES to have an emphasis on the wider rural economy outside of traditional sectors associated with rural communities. Furthermore, the Western Development Commission acknowledges the importance of supporting development in the key urban centres of the Northern and Western Region of Ireland, while also advocating for growth in smaller rural towns and villages.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-16](#)
 Submission by: Niall O'Donnellan
 Issues raised/Theme: Regional Development Issues, Cross-Border, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Skills, Enterprise

Summary of Submission

The submission from Niall O'Donnellan and Dr. Brendan McCormack focuses on growing the northwest region in the context of All Island balance regional development, by fostering economic growth and social development as follows:

1. Regional Productivity and Income Growth: Focus on accelerating real productivity and income growth across the Northern and Western Region (NWR) through Smart Specialisation (S3), Regional Enterprise Plans, innovation, research, and skills enhancement.
2. Cross-Border Collaboration and Synergies: Emphasis on leveraging the region's cross-border location to enhance scale and synergies, particularly through collaboration with Northern Ireland and other regions on the island of Ireland.
3. Spatial and Economic Development: Development of key sub-Regional Growth Centres, including Galway City Metropolitan Area, Letterkenny/NW City Region, Sligo/cross-border Rural Northwest, Athlone Green City, and counties Cavan and Monaghan, with a focus on balanced urban-rural development.
4. Innovation and Research: Strengthening the region's innovation ecosystem by integrating research priorities with smart sectoral strategies, increasing private-sector R&D investment, and fostering collaboration between universities, enterprises, and government.
5. Skills and Capabilities Development: Enhancing skills and capabilities through education, training, and lifelong learning, with a focus on addressing labour market demands and supporting smaller businesses and micro-enterprises.

6. Regional Leadership and Agency: Building leadership capacity at regional, local, and community levels to initiate, connect, develop, and deliver impactful projects, while fostering collaboration and alignment among stakeholders.
7. Shared Regional Messaging: Developing and promoting a unified regional message to attract investment and support for the region's economic and social development.
8. Long-Term Vision for Regional Balance: Advocating for a tri-region urban-rural structure across the island of Ireland to achieve balanced regional development and counterbalance the dominance of the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-13](#)
 Submission by: InterTradelreland
 Issues raised/Theme: Regional Development Issues, Renewable Energy, SMEs, All-Island Economy

Summary of Submission

The submission from InterTradelreland focuses on a wide range of relevant areas for the draft RSES, with a particular focus on matters that will further support cross border collaboration and trade, female entrepreneurship, high-valued sector development, renewable energy and the wider development of the all-island economy.

The submission highlights various initiatives that could support progress in these areas while acknowledging the importance of improving the competitiveness and productivity of the region's enterprise base and increasing trade opportunities for SMEs across the region.

Furthermore, the submission from InterTradelreland documented how their research had found that Ireland's net zero targets can only be achieved through collaboration on an all-island basis, and that significant supply chain opportunities exist for SMEs across the island in the merging offshore wind sector.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-74](#)
 Submission by: IBEC
 Issues raised/Theme: Renewables Energy, Infrastructure, Smart Specialisation, Agglomeration Economies, Skills Needs, Housing and Compact Growth, Competitiveness

Summary of Submission

The submission from IBEC focuses on a wide range of relevant areas for the draft RSES, including the provision of high-quality infrastructure – whether it be transport, energy and enterprise – agglomeration economies, smart specialisation and housing development.

The submission recommends the delivery of actions relating to improving the region's road connectivity, rail network, offshore energy potential, water and wastewater infrastructure. In conjunction with this, IBEC's submission also highlights the importance of cross border development.

The submission also highlights the importance of addressing the infrastructure deficits associated with the Northern and Western Region of Ireland as well as the need to address the region's weak urban structure via the delivery of compact growth targets under the revised National Planning Framework (NPF).

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-84](#)
Submission by: Galway Chamber of Commerce
Issues raised/Theme: Infrastructure, Housing, International Connectivity and Aviation, Digital Transformation and AI, Competitiveness

Summary of Submission

The submission from Galway Chamber of Commerce highlights a wide range of areas that will be relevant for the draft RSES. In this regard, the submission from Galway Chamber of Commerce focuses on topics such as infrastructure, housing delivery, international connectivity – specifically in the context of aviation – and marine infrastructure in Galway.

In terms of infrastructure, the submission from Galway Chamber of Commerce highlights the importance of delivering the N6 Galway City Ring Road, the BusConnects Galway project, improved regional and intercity rail connectivity, investment in active travel infrastructure and facilitating upgrades to water, wastewater and energy infrastructure in Galway.

The submission also highlights the need for accelerated housing delivery, further activation of serviced landed, viability measures for urban residential development as well as support for key innovation assets such as the University of Galway and the Atlantic Technological University. In conjunction with this, the submission from Galway Chamber of Commerce also notes that the RSES should recognise the strategic importance of Galway Port as a critical economic and maritime infrastructure for the region.

The submission from Galway Chamber of Commerce notes that the RSES needs to recognise and prioritise Galway as the key economic driver for the region while the submission also notes the importance of the RSES having a strong ambition for employment growth in the city and the wider metropolitan area. Furthermore, the submission acknowledges how infrastructure deficits in the region, housing supply pressures and underinvestment in regional connectivity are limiting economic opportunities for Galway.

Environment, Climate, Biodiversity Heritage and Landscape

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-20](#)
Submission by: Dark Sky Ireland
Issues raised/Theme: Dark Skies Policy

Summary of Submission

The submission from Dark Sky Ireland relates to artificial light at night, biodiversity, landscape character and the protection of dark sky resources within the Northern and Western Region.

The submission states that artificial light at night should be recognised as an environmental pressure, with potential impacts on biodiversity, ecosystem function, ecological connectivity, landscape character, human health and environmental quality.

It highlights the importance of the Region’s dark sky resources, including Mayo International Dark Sky Park at Wild Nephin National Park, which is identified as an internationally significant asset for biodiversity, tourism, education, rural regeneration and regional identity.

The submission notes the potential for a county-wide International Dark Sky Reserve in Mayo and seeks stronger regional policy support for the protection and sustainable management of dark skies across the Region.

The submission recommends that the RSES include a specific Regional Policy Objective addressing artificial light at night, light pollution, dark sky protection, ecological networks, sensitive habitats, responsible lighting design and monitoring of cumulative impacts.

Specific Recommendations

The submission recommends that the RSES:

1. Recognise artificial light at night as a regional environmental pressure.
2. Support the protection and sustainable management of dark sky resources.
3. Include policy support for Mayo International Dark Sky Park and the proposed county-wide International Dark Sky Reserve.
4. Require Development Plans and Local Area Plans to address artificial lighting, light spill, sky glow and impacts on biodiversity.
5. Support mapping of areas where low levels of artificial illumination should be maintained.
6. Promote responsible lighting based on need, appropriate intensity, limited duration and avoidance of unnecessary illumination.
7. Support monitoring and evidence-based approaches to cumulative light pollution impacts.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-22](#)
 Submission by: Friends of Mayo Dark Skies
 Issues raised/Theme: Dark Skies Policy

Summary of Submission

The submission from Friends of Mayo Dark Skies raise substantially similar issues to Submission NWRA-C1-20 and relates to artificial light at night, biodiversity, landscape character and the protection of dark sky resources within the Northern and Western Region.

The submission identifies artificial light at night as an environmental pressure which can impact biodiversity, ecosystem function, ecological connectivity, landscape character, human health and environmental quality. It states that light pollution is spatial and cumulative in nature and should be addressed through regional planning policy.

The submission highlights the importance of Mayo International Dark Sky Park at Wild Nephin National Park, noting its international status, its role in biodiversity protection, education, sustainable tourism, rural regeneration and regional identity. It also refers to the proposed county-wide International Dark Sky Reserve in Mayo.

The submission recommends that the RSES include explicit policy support for the identification, protection and sustainable management of dark sky resources across the Region, with particular reference to Mayo International Dark Sky Park and the proposed Mayo Dark Sky Reserve.

Specific Recommendations are the same as those listed in Submission NWRA-C1-20

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-25](#)
 Submission by: Hedgerows Ireland
 Issues raised/Theme: Hedgerows and Biodiversity

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the role of hedgerows in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, with particular regard to biodiversity, landscape, green infrastructure, climate resilience and ecological connectivity.

It states that hedgerows are an important part of Ireland's ecological infrastructure, providing habitat, supporting pollinators, regulating water, storing carbon and connecting habitats across the landscape. The submission argues that the RSES should move beyond general policy support for biodiversity and provide clearer direction for delivery through Development Plans and planning decisions.

The submission emphasises that established hedgerows should be retained as a priority and that compensatory planting should not be treated as equivalent to the retention of existing hedgerows. It also recommends that hedgerows should be identified, mapped and assessed as part of green infrastructure networks, including through use of the Hedgerow Appraisal System or similar recognised methodology.

The submission raises concerns regarding roadside hedgerow management and suggests that the application of Section 70 of the Roads Act 1993 should be reviewed to ensure consistency with biodiversity, climate and nature protection obligations, including the protection of nesting birds.

The submission includes suggested Regional Policy Objectives relating to the recognition of hedgerows as regional green infrastructure, retention and protection of hedgerow networks, integration of hedgerows into

development and land-use planning, strengthening ecological connectivity and climate function, monitoring and reporting, and roadside hedgerow management.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-92](#)
 Submission by: The Galway Association of An Taisce
 Issues raised/Theme: Wastewater Infrastructure, planning and environment matters

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to wastewater infrastructure, environmental capacity and the ability of the Galway Metropolitan Area to accommodate planned population growth.

Galway Association of An Taisce raises concerns regarding capacity constraints in the wastewater collecting system serving the Galway Agglomeration, including Galway City, Oranmore, Garraun and Bearna. The submission notes that while treatment capacity may be available at Mutton Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, this does not mean there is sufficient capacity in the wastewater network.

The submission refers to delays in key wastewater infrastructure projects identified in the current RSES, including the Galway Drainage Area Plan, the Galway Wastewater Strategy and the Merlin Park/Doughiska wastewater bottleneck project.

Specific Recommendations

- Implement the recommendations of the Galway Drainage Area Plan Stage 4 Report as soon as possible.
- Support wastewater network upgrades in the Galway Agglomeration.
- Ensure compliance with EPA Waste Water Discharge Licence D0050-1.
- Address environmental and flooding risks associated with wastewater network constraints.
- Provide short- to medium-term wastewater capacity to support planned population growth.
- Accelerate the Galway Wastewater Strategy to support long-term growth in the Galway Metropolitan Area, Athenry and Moycullen.
- Recognise the distinction between wastewater treatment capacity and wastewater network capacity in infrastructure planning.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-17](#)
 Submission by: Mary Bourke
 Issues raised/Theme: Nature based solutions, catchment-based approach to river basin management

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to Nature-based catchment management solutions, designed to store water, slow runoff and improve catchment flow functions. It highlights that Nature-based Solutions have the potential to reduce flood risk, improve water quality and support biodiversity as part of an integrated approach. The submission recommends that Nature-based Solutions can contribute to the outcomes of the National Planning Framework, particularly in relation to climate resilience, sustainable resource management and green/blue infrastructure.

The submission recommends adopting the catchment as the spatial unit rather than administrative boundaries. It references multiple international catchments that cross the Northern & Western Assembly into Northern Ireland and the need for cross-boundary coordination. It calls for greater cross-boundary coordination for Nature-based Solutions in shared NWRA catchments.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-81](#)
 Submission by: Friends of the Irish Environment
 Issues raised/Theme: Climate resilience, renewable energy and green/blue infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission supports the objective of achieving a carbon-neutral, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable region. It calls for continued efforts to reduce emissions rather than reinforcing existing high-emission trends and keeps within carbon budgets and an evidence base to support this transition. It emphasises the importance of Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) and Nature-based Solutions. It stresses that economic activity should take place within defined emissions limits and the importance of monitoring.

The submission calls for strengthening the integration of climate, biodiversity and economic policy. It describes the need to adhere to environmental limits, as defining a “safe operating space” within which development can take place. It calls for prioritisation of infrastructure that improves accessibility while reducing environmental impact and for clarity around how broader outcomes, such as quality of life and wellbeing are assessed. It welcomes the recognition of circular economy principles.

It highlights the benefits of integrating local authority climate action plans within a broader regional framework. The submission emphasises the need for a stronger, more integrated approach to coastal erosion and flooding.

It welcomes the development of Regional Renewable Energy Strategies (RRES) and calls for the rewetting of both blanket and raised bog areas. The important role of bioenergy and hydrogen are highlighted and the need for transit orientated development.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-45](#)
 Submission by: Feasta
 Issues raised/Theme: Regional Development, Enterprise, Tourism, Infrastructure

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to wellbeing-led regional planning, ecological limits, housing, land use, public value capture and community-led regeneration.

Feasta recommends that the RSES include measurable objectives for wellbeing, climate action, biodiversity, housing security, access to services and public transport. It supports compact growth, active travel, affordable housing, community participation and stronger environmental thresholds.

The submission also seeks distributional tests for major investments and public value capture where public investment increases land values or development potential.

Built Environment

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-18](#)
 Submission by: Irish Green Building Council
 Issues raised/Theme: Built Environment

Summary of Submission

The submission states that construction and the built environment account for a significant proportion of Ireland’s emissions, including both operational emissions from buildings and embodied carbon associated with materials, construction, maintenance and disposal.

The submission emphasises the need to address whole-life carbon and embodied carbon through the planning process. It recommends prioritising the reuse of existing buildings, making more efficient use of existing infrastructure and requiring whole-life carbon assessment at planning stage.

The submission also recommends greater attention to structural materials, including concrete, steel and timber, and suggests that Environmental Product Declarations should be required for key structural materials to support transparency and lower-carbon material choices.

The submission further highlights circularity as a key planning consideration, including adaptability, design for deconstruction and pre-demolition audits. It also raises the need for a more coordinated and consistent approach to biodiversity in planning, including the mitigation hierarchy, green and blue infrastructure, biodiversity checklists and early involvement of ecologists in development projects.

Specific Recommendations

The submission recommends that local authorities and planning policy should:

1. Prioritise the reuse of existing buildings wherever possible.
2. Require whole-life carbon assessment at planning stage.
3. Encourage lower-carbon structural materials and efficient use of concrete, steel and timber.
4. Require Environmental Product Declarations for key structural materials.
5. Integrate circular economy principles into planning, including adaptability, deconstruction and pre-demolition audits.
6. Strengthen biodiversity integration in planning through consistent standards, checklists and guidance.
7. Apply the mitigation hierarchy as a central principle for nature-led planning and design.
8. Support green and blue infrastructure mapping and County Biodiversity Areas.
9. Provide clear guidance for developers and practitioners, including early involvement of ecologists.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-31](#)
 Submission by: Irish Concrete Federation
 Issues raised/Theme: Construction Concrete and Aggregates

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to the long-term sustainable supply of aggregates and construction materials required to support housing, infrastructure, climate action and regional development.

The Irish Concrete Federation outlines the role of the aggregates and concrete products sector in supplying essential materials for homes, transport, energy, water, education, health and agricultural infrastructure. It states that delivery of Project Ireland 2040, the National Development Plan and housing targets is dependent on a reliable supply of crushed rock, sand and gravel.

The submission refers to the ICF/RPS report Essential Aggregates, which estimates that Ireland will require approximately one billion tonnes of aggregates to 2040. It highlights concerns that the replenishment of authorised aggregate reserves is not keeping pace with demand and that lengthy planning timeframes are creating uncertainty for future supply.

The submission seeks stronger national, regional and local planning policy for aggregates, including identification and protection of important aggregate reserves from development that could prejudice their future use. It also recognises that extraction must be carried out sustainably, with regard to environmental protection, heritage, residential amenity and appropriate site rehabilitation.

Specific Recommendations

- The submission recommends the preparation of a National Policy Statement on the long-term sustainable supply of essential aggregates.
- It recommends that Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies facilitate the provision of a regional supply of authorised aggregates sufficient to meet local and regional needs.
- It recommends that County Development Plans include specific provisions to ensure the replenishment of authorised aggregate reserves to meet local and regional needs.
- It also recommends additional training and resources for planning authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála in relation to aggregate extraction and quarry planning.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-3](#)
 Submission by: David Barton Community Campaigner
 Issues raised/Theme: Architectural Heritage

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to a community campaigner's representation on planning policy across the UK and Ireland, with a strong focus on heritage and design. It advocates for the protection, restoration and promotion of traditional vernacular architecture and historic buildings as central to sustainable development. The submission emphasises the role of design codes, conservation areas and heritage assets in shaping high-quality places and supporting local identity. It highlights links between heritage conservation and climate action, particularly through embodied carbon and reuse of existing buildings. A wide range of detailed recommendations are provided, including policy, funding, skills development and community engagement measures. The submission also promotes greater collaboration between local authorities, communities and specialist organisations to support heritage-led regeneration.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-62](#)
 Submission by: McCutcheon Halley/Irish Waste Management Association
 Issues raised/Theme: Role of waste management and resource recovery companies in supporting sustainable development

Summary of Submission

The Irish Waste Management Association (IWMA) is the national trade association representing the waste management, recycling, resource recovery and circular economy sector in Ireland. The submission highlights the importance of coordinated infrastructure delivery. It identifies recurring issues relating to the absence of suitable land allocations for waste infrastructure and calls for strategic policy supports and safeguarding or zoning of lands, and calls for stronger integration of waste infrastructure planning with population and housing growth projections.

It highlights the need for nationally and regionally important waste infrastructure as recognised in the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024–2030, and the strategic importance of biological treatment and resource recovery infrastructure as highlighted in the National biomethane and bioeconomy policy. It emphasises inconsistent treatment of waste management facilities across local authority areas and a lack of long-term infrastructure capacity planning.

Renewable Energy

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-87](#)
 Submission by: Statkraft
 Issues raised/Theme: Renewable Energy

Summary of Submission

The submission from Statkraft relates to renewable energy delivery, the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, grid infrastructure, energy storage, Green Energy Hubs, biodiversity and implementation.

Statkraft supports regional and county-level renewable energy capacity allocations and recommends that targets should provide certainty for local authorities, communities and investors. It states that targets should be treated as minimums rather than limits and should be supported by a consistent methodology across the three Regional Assemblies.

The submission identifies grid capacity as a key constraint in the Northern and Western Region and calls for stronger alignment between renewable energy zoning, grid investment and long-term energy planning. It also supports co-located and hybrid renewable projects, including Green Energy Hubs combining wind, solar and battery storage.

Specific Recommendations

- Prepare a clear and deliverable Regional Renewable Energy Strategy.
- Set regional and county-level renewable energy targets.
- Prioritise strategic grid reinforcement and grid capacity.
- Support energy storage, hybrid projects and Green Energy Hubs.
- Include clear implementation, monitoring and reporting arrangements.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-69](#)
 Submission by: Sean Finan- Irish Bioenergy Association
 Issues raised/Theme: Bioenergy, energy security, carbon emission

Summary of Submission

The Irish Bioenergy Association, is a representative body for the bioenergy sector in Ireland.

The submission emphasises the strategic role that indigenous renewable energy systems can play in supporting regional economic development, energy security, climate mitigation and rural diversification. It highlights the importance of bioenergy for the provision of heat, electricity and transport in terms of decarbonisation and economic development. The ongoing challenges around public perception and community acceptance are described.

The need to grow and develop the sector into the future with the right measure of supports and policies is emphasised. The potential role of bioenergy in balancing the electricity system, ensuring security of energy supply, diversifying the energy mix, and increasing local energy generation is underlined.

The submission calls for the recognition of bioenergy as a strategic economic sector, the creation of a bioenergy clusters and a stronger emphasis on integrated energy infrastructure planning.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-77](#)
 Submission by: MKO
 Issues raised/Theme: RRES allocations

Summary of Submission

The submission from MKO relates to renewable energy planning, the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, local authority renewable energy targets, onshore wind, solar PV, project attrition, zoning and grid infrastructure.

MKO states that the RSES has an important role in translating national climate and renewable electricity targets into regional and local planning policy. The submission notes that the First Revision to the National Planning Framework identifies minimum additional targets for the Northern and Western Region of 1,389 MW of onshore wind and 959 MW of solar PV by 2030. MKO emphasises that these should be treated as minimum targets rather than caps.

The submission recommends that the RSES and Regional Renewable Energy Strategy provide clearer direction to local authorities, including local authority renewable energy capacity allocations, consistent renewable energy strategies, wind energy zoning and spatial mapping. It states that wind energy zoning should be based on unconstrained suitable land and should include sufficient additional provision to account for project attrition.

MKO places particular emphasis on project attrition, noting that a significant proportion of renewable energy projects do not progress through the full development process. It recommends that the RSES and Regional Renewable Energy Strategy provide sufficient spatial headroom to ensure that national and regional targets can be met.

The submission also identifies electricity grid capacity as a critical constraint on renewable energy delivery and recommends stronger alignment between renewable energy planning, transmission and distribution grid investment, large energy users and national climate policy.

Specific Recommendations

- Treat NPF renewable energy allocations as minimum targets rather than caps.
- Provide local authority renewable energy capacity allocations.
- Ensure local authority renewable energy strategies align with the RSES and RRES.
- Base wind energy zoning on unconstrained suitable land.
- Provide additional spatial headroom to account for project attrition.
- Align renewable energy planning with grid capacity and infrastructure investment.
- Strengthen RPOs supporting onshore wind, solar PV, grid infrastructure and decarbonisation.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-63](#)
 Submission by: Energia Renewables
 Issues raised/Theme: Renewables

Summary of Submission

The submission from Energia relates to renewable energy delivery, the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, onshore wind, solar, battery storage, hydrogen, grid infrastructure, project attrition, community benefit and the economic opportunities associated with renewable energy.

Energia supports the role of the RSES in translating national climate and renewable electricity targets into regional and local delivery. It states that the RSES should move from high-level policy to a practical, delivery-focused framework that enables renewable energy deployment at scale.

The submission places particular emphasis on project attrition, noting that renewable energy strategies should account for the fact that only a proportion of early-stage projects are ultimately delivered. Energia recommends that the RSES and RRES provide sufficient spatial headroom and pipeline surplus to meet renewable energy targets.

Grid capacity is identified as a key constraint. Energia recommends that grid infrastructure be treated as an enabler of renewable energy delivery, with stronger alignment between renewable energy planning, EirGrid investment, grid upgrades, energy storage and system flexibility.

The submission also highlights the need to balance renewable energy delivery with biodiversity, nature restoration, landscape and environmental considerations. It states that renewable energy and nature restoration should be considered as complementary goals where appropriately planned.

Energia also identifies economic and community benefits arising from renewable energy, including investment, jobs, local enterprise, community benefit funds, Green Energy Parks, co-location of renewable energy with large energy users, private wires and long-duration storage.

Specific Recommendations

- Prepare a delivery-focused and opportunity-led RSES and RRES.
- Account for project attrition and provide spatial headroom.
- Ensure renewable energy targets are flexible and scalable, not fixed ceilings.
- Align renewable energy planning with grid investment and EirGrid plans.
- Support energy storage, system flexibility and grid upgrades.
- Support Green Energy Parks, private wires and co-location with large energy users.
- Recognise renewable energy as a driver of climate action, energy security and regional economic growth.
- Promote biodiversity, nature restoration and renewable energy as complementary objectives.
- Support community engagement, community benefit funds and public awareness.
- Plan beyond 2030 to 2040 and towards net zero by 2050.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-61](#)
 Submission by: Bord Gáis Energy
 Issues raised/Theme: Energy Parks, Energy generation and storage, Infrastructure, Economic opportunities

Summary of Submission

The submission from Bord Gáis Energy relates to energy infrastructure, security of supply, flexible generation, energy storage, integrated energy parks, co-location of generation and demand, and regional economic development.

Bord Gáis Energy states that the RSES has an important role in enabling the energy infrastructure required to support regional growth, economic competitiveness and the transition to a low-carbon energy system. It highlights the need for a more coordinated and strategic approach to energy infrastructure, centred on flexible generation, energy storage and co-located demand.

The submission notes that national policy, including Climate Action Plan 2025, supports the delivery of at least 2GW of new flexible generation capacity by 2030. It states that flexible generation and energy storage are critical to maintaining security of supply, supporting grid stability and enabling higher levels of renewable energy integration.

Bord Gáis Energy recommends that the RSES prioritise strategic locations with existing gas and high-voltage electricity infrastructure, including locations close to the national gas network and 220kV substations. It states that these locations can reduce infrastructure costs, minimise environmental impact, support faster delivery and enable future use of low-carbon gases such as biomethane and hydrogen.

The submission also supports integrated energy infrastructure, including energy parks and the co-location of generation, storage and large energy users. It states that this approach can reduce pressure on the grid, support renewable energy use, attract energy-intensive investment and create strategic industrial clusters.

The submission emphasises the need for the RSES to support delivery and implementation, including clearer prioritisation of critical energy infrastructure, alignment with national investment frameworks, coordinated planning processes and monitoring of delivery.

Specific Recommendations

- Recognise flexible generation and energy storage as critical enabling infrastructure.
- Support strategic energy locations with existing gas and electricity infrastructure.
- Prioritise the efficient use of existing infrastructure and strategic energy corridors.
- Support integrated energy parks and co-location of generation, storage and demand.
- Support future transition to low-carbon gases, including biomethane and hydrogen.
- Strengthen implementation, delivery and monitoring of critical energy infrastructure.
- Recognise energy infrastructure as a key enabler of regional economic growth and competitiveness.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-60](#)
 Submission by: Bord na Mona
 Issues raised/Theme: Renewables, infrastructure, Energy Parks

Summary of Submission

The submission from Bord na Móna relates to renewable energy, electricity grid infrastructure, Green Energy Parks, co-location of large energy users with renewable generation, brownfield peatland sites, biodiversity, community benefit and long-term planning certainty.

Bord na Móna states that renewable energy and grid infrastructure should be recognised as critical enablers of housing delivery, climate action, enterprise development, energy security and regional economic growth. The submission highlights the Northern and Western Region's role in delivering national onshore wind and solar PV targets and seeks a positive, plan-led approach to accelerating renewable energy infrastructure.

The submission identifies electricity infrastructure as a fundamental constraint and recommends that the RSES support grid upgrades, increased network capacity and safeguarding of strategic energy and transmission corridors.

Bord na Móna also supports Green Energy Parks, combining renewable generation, storage and large energy users, and recommends that the RSES support the co-location of large energy users with renewable energy infrastructure, in line with national policy on Large Energy Users.

The submission highlights the potential of Bord na Móna's historic industrial peatland landbank in Donegal, Mayo, Roscommon and Galway to support renewable energy, grid infrastructure, peatland rehabilitation, biodiversity enhancement, nature-based solutions and local amenities.

Community benefit is also emphasised, including local employment, commercial rates, community benefit funds, near-neighbour funds and rural regeneration.

Specific Recommendations

- Support renewable energy generation and the Region's role in meeting wind and solar targets.
- Recognise electricity grid infrastructure as critical enabling infrastructure.
- Prioritise grid upgrades and safeguard strategic energy corridors.
- Support Green Energy Parks and co-location of large energy users with renewable generation.
- Prioritise brownfield and rehabilitated peatland sites for renewable energy.
- Support peatland rehabilitation, biodiversity enhancement and nature-based solutions.
- Recognise the community, economic and rural regeneration benefits of renewable energy.
- Promote long-term planning certainty and alignment between national, regional and local renewable energy policy.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-58](#)
 Submission by: SSE Airtricity
 Issues raised/Theme: Wind, Grid infrastructure, Repower, landscape

Summary of Submission

The submission from SSE relates to renewable energy delivery, onshore wind, the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, grid capacity, repowering, biodiversity, landscape, Green Energy Parks, flexible generation and the electrification of heat and transport.

SSE states that the RSES has a central role in translating national renewable electricity and climate targets into regional and local delivery. It recommends that renewable energy capacity allocations should be treated as minimum baselines rather than caps, and should be supported by a transparent methodology which accounts for project attrition, planning constraints, grid capacity and delivery timelines.

The submission emphasises the need to support repowering, lifetime extensions and longer-duration consents for existing renewable energy sites, particularly as older wind farms approach the end of their operational life. Grid capacity is identified as a significant constraint in the Northern and Western Region, particularly in the North West. SSE recommends that the RSES support accelerated grid delivery, including transmission and distribution upgrades, to enable renewable energy development and reduce dispatch-down of renewable electricity.

The submission also seeks greater consistency in landscape and biodiversity assessment methodologies and states that renewable energy projects can support biodiversity net gain, peatland restoration and habitat management where appropriately planned.

SSE supports the recognition of Green Energy Parks as a strategic regional development tool, particularly where renewable generation, storage and energy demand can be co-located. It also highlights the need to support flexible generation, low-carbon fuels, biomethane, EV charging infrastructure, heat pumps, district heating and coordinated retrofit programmes.

Specific Recommendations

- Treat renewable energy allocations as minimum baselines, not caps.
- Provide a transparent methodology for regional and local capacity allocations.
- Account for project attrition, planning constraints and delivery timelines.
- Support repowering, lifetime extensions and longer-duration consents.
- Align renewable energy planning with grid capacity and grid investment.
- Address grid constraints in the North West.
- Support Green Energy Parks and co-location of generation, storage and demand.
- Support flexible generation, low-carbon fuels and biomethane.
- Promote consistent landscape and biodiversity assessment methodologies.
- Recognise the potential for biodiversity net gain and peatland restoration.
- Support electrification of heat and transport, including EV charging, heat pumps and retrofit programmes.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-57](#)
 Submission by: Harmony Solar Ireland Limited
 Issues raised/Theme: RRES, Solar

Summary of Submission

The submission from Harmony Solar relates to solar PV development, the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, renewable energy targets, county-level capacity allocations, spatial planning, grid infrastructure and the compatibility of solar energy with agricultural and rural land uses.

Harmony Solar welcomes the identification of renewable energy as a key opportunity for the Region and supports the inclusion of a clearly enabling Regional Renewable Energy Strategy. The submission notes the renewable electricity targets set out in the revised National Planning Framework and Climate Action Plan 2025, including the national target of 8 GW of solar PV by 2030.

The submission states that the Northern and Western Region's solar PV allocation should be treated as a minimum target rather than a cap. It recommends that county-level MW allocations should not be used to refuse otherwise acceptable solar PV developments where a target has been met or is projected to be met.

Harmony Solar also cautions against overly prescriptive spatial designations for solar PV. It recommends that the RSES and RRES use a target-led spatial planning approach, informed by robust constraints mapping, landscape and environmental considerations, and proximity to existing and planned grid infrastructure.

The submission further recommends that the RSES and RRES recognise the compatibility of solar PV with agricultural and rural land uses and its potential to support economic growth.

Specific Recommendations

- Confirm that regional and county renewable energy allocations are minimum targets, not caps.
- Ensure otherwise acceptable solar PV proposals are not refused solely because a county target has been met.
- Avoid overly prescriptive spatial designations for solar PV.
- Use a target-led spatial planning methodology informed by constraints, landscape and environmental considerations.
- Align solar PV planning with existing and planned grid infrastructure.
- Recognise the compatibility of solar PV with agricultural and rural land uses.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-14](#)
 Submission by: FuturEnergy Ireland Development DAC
 Issues raised/Theme: Renewables, Climate Change, Landscape, Energy Infrastructure, Enterprise, Communities

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to renewable energy delivery, the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, onshore wind, renewable energy targets, project attrition, grid infrastructure, Green Energy Parks, enterprise opportunities and community benefit.

FuturEnergy Ireland states that the RSES and RRES should move beyond high-level policy and provide a clear, target-led and delivery-focused framework for renewable energy development. It highlights the role of the RSES as the regional planning layer between national climate policy and local authority development plans.

The submission emphasises that renewable energy targets should be evidence-based, transparent, capable of being increased over time and should provide sufficient spatial headroom to account for project attrition. It notes that only approximately 20-25% of early-stage renewable energy projects may ultimately be delivered and recommends that this be built into target-setting and spatial planning methodologies.

The submission supports an opportunity-led spatial strategy which maps the full renewable energy potential of the Region and avoids overly restrictive or premature exclusion of lands. It also recommends consistent regional landscape methodologies and states that renewable energy development can support biodiversity, nature restoration and positive land-use outcomes.

Grid infrastructure is identified as a critical enabler of renewable energy delivery, particularly in the North West, where strong wind resources are constrained by limited transmission capacity. The submission recommends that the RSES coordinate with EirGrid's Strategic Network Study and support grid investment, storage and energy infrastructure as enablers of regional development rather than constraints on ambition.

The submission also highlights the economic development potential of renewable energy, including Green Energy Parks, co-location of renewable generation with enterprise, long-duration energy storage, and opportunities in Mayo and the wider North West. It states that renewable energy can support energy security, inward investment, employment, enterprise competitiveness and sustainable regional economic growth.

Community benefit and public acceptance are also raised. The submission highlights the role of community benefit funds, local rates, employment opportunities, recreation amenities and community engagement in supporting renewable energy development.

Specific Recommendations

- Adopt a target-led and delivery-focused RSES and RRES.
- Provide transparent methodologies for county renewable energy allocations.
- Account for project attrition and provide spatial headroom.
- Treat renewable energy allocations as capable of future expansion.
- Map the full potential of unconstrained lands for renewable energy.
- Avoid overly restrictive or premature exclusion criteria.
- Support consistent regional landscape assessment methodologies.
- Align renewable energy planning with grid investment and storage.
- Support Green Energy Parks and co-location of renewables with enterprise.
- Recognise renewable energy as a driver of energy security, economic growth and community benefit.
- Promote community engagement and address misinformation around renewable energy.

Submission No. [NWRA-C1-76](#)
 Submission by: Wind Energy Ireland
 Issues raised/Theme: Wind Energy/Renewables

Summary of Submission

The submission relates to onshore wind energy, the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy, renewable energy targets, grid infrastructure, landscape assessment, project attrition, enterprise opportunities and repowering of existing wind farms.

Wind Energy Ireland states that onshore wind will remain the “backbone” of Ireland’s renewable electricity delivery to 2030 and into the mid-2030s. The submission supports the role of the RSES and Regional Renewable Energy Strategy in translating national renewable electricity and climate targets into regional and local delivery.

The submission recommends that the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy provide a clear, stable and planned framework for renewable energy development. It seeks stronger alignment between national renewable energy targets, local authority development plans, grid capacity, spatial planning, landscape assessment and project delivery.

The submission recommends that renewable energy targets be translated into specific MW allocations for each local authority and integrated into City and County Development Plans. It also supports proactive spatial mapping and zoning of preferred areas for wind and solar development, informed by landscape and environmental sensitivity mapping.

Wind Energy Ireland places significant emphasis on project attrition and recommends that the RSES and Regional Renewable Energy Strategy provide sufficient spatial headroom and pipeline surplus to account for projects that may not progress through the full development process.

The submission identifies grid capacity and grid delivery as major constraints on renewable energy development. It supports stronger alignment between renewable energy planning, strategic grid upgrades, EirGrid planning and local authority infrastructure coordination. It also supports hybrid renewable energy sites, including the co-location of wind, solar and battery storage, renewable energy hubs and co-location with large energy users where appropriately planned.

The submission highlights the economic contribution of onshore wind, including employment, commercial rates, development contributions, landowner income, community benefit funds and regional investment. It states that the sector contributes more than €26 million annually in commercial rates in the Northern and Western Region.

The submission raises concerns regarding inconsistent landscape assessment methodologies and recommends a standardised regional landscape sensitivity hierarchy. It also emphasises the importance of early and sustained community engagement, community benefit funds and project design that responds to local circumstances. The submission states that renewable energy can co-exist with other land uses, including farming, forestry, peatland restoration, biodiversity enhancement, recreation and education. It also highlights the need to plan beyond 2030 and to support repowering and lifetime extension of existing wind farms to avoid the loss of existing renewable energy capacity.

Specific Recommendations

- Translate renewable energy targets into local authority MW allocations.
- Integrate renewable energy targets into City and County Development Plans.
- Provide spatial headroom to account for project attrition.

- Develop a standardised regional landscape sensitivity hierarchy.
- Identify preferred areas for wind and solar development through evidence-based mapping.
- Align renewable energy planning with grid capacity and grid reinforcement.
- Support hybrid renewable energy sites, including wind, solar and battery storage.
- Support renewable energy hubs and co-location with large energy users where appropriate.
- Recognise the economic and local authority rates contribution of wind energy.
- Support community engagement, community benefit funds and locally responsive project design.
- Support co-location of renewable energy with farming, forestry, peatland restoration, biodiversity and recreation.
- Plan for post-2030 renewable energy requirements and net zero by 2050.
- Support repowering and lifetime extension of existing wind farms.

Conclusion and Next Steps

4

Conclusion

The Assembly acknowledge the significant level of work, expertise and local knowledge reflected in the submissions and thank all those who took the time to participate in the pre-draft consultation process. The submissions received provide some strong and detailed evidence base for the preparation of the RSES.

The RSES has a strategic role in providing regional direction, supporting coordinated development across the region and ensuring that settlement, housing, employment, infrastructure, climate action and environmental considerations are planned in an integrated manner. Matters raised in submissions that are of strategic regional importance will be considered, where appropriate, in the preparation of the RSES, having regard to relevant national policy, statutory requirements, environmental assessment, and the role of other public bodies, agencies and infrastructure providers.

This report is an aid for the Members and Executive of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly to consider the submissions received, and consideration will be noted by the Members at the Regional Assembly Monthly meeting in July 2026.

Next Steps

Following consideration of the submissions, the Assembly Executive will proceed with the preparation of the first draft of the RSES with further engagement with the Members. The draft RSES will be prepared alongside the required environmental assessment processes, including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Regional Flood Risk Appraisal. The draft RSES and associated environmental assessment documentation will be subject to further statutory consultation in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements, with an estimated timeline of Q4 2026/Q1 2027.





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