



Submission to the Southern Regional Assembly RSES Issues Paper



Kilkenny County Council

February 2018





Executive Summary

Kilkenny is at the heart of the South East Planning Area and this, combined with its economic and tourism/cultural based assets, endow it with a unique opportunity to allow it to maximise its contribution to Waterford's Gateway role, and to the entire region. Kilkenny has significant capacity to deliver sustainable growth. The Abbey Quarter in the city centre has the potential to deliver 60,000sqm of mixed residential and employment use. The two planned neighbourhoods of Loughmacask and the Western Environs in Kilkenny City (both within the overall concept of the compact 10 minute city) have capacity for circa 4,800 homes to accommodate circa 12,500 people (a 47% increase over 2016 levels). In addition the established neighbourhood of Ferrybank, as an urban area in the south of the county, has significant capacity for population growth in the region of 12,600 with improved services now supported by Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund funding. The Belview Port area, with its strong existing industry and employment, has significant existing capacity for expansion, with 190 hectares of land zoned for development as a strategic employment zone. The County's District Towns of Callan, Castlecomer, Graigueenamanagh and Thomastown, along with its smaller towns and villages, contain significant growth potential in areas such as agriculture, food, energy and tourism. These towns, with established communities have the capacity for planned population growth.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) must ensure that the necessary investment in critical infrastructure to enable this potential to be realised is planned and programmed into the forthcoming RSES.

The importance of regional co-operation has long been acknowledged by Kilkenny County Council, and the Council now calls for enhanced measures in this regard. The most pertinent example of regional co-operation is the joint submissions to the National Planning Framework (NPF) on behalf of the five local authorities of the South East Planning Area. That submission called for the establishment of a regional implementation group for the South East Planning Area to co-ordinate high level cross boundary issues and ensure delivery of NPF and RSES objectives. This submission supports that proposal, and goes further in proposing practical measures to improve strategic planning and service delivery for the region. These measures include preparation of the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), a joint Retail Strategy, aligning local development plan preparation, and a Service Delivery Plan. The Council believes regional co-operation, through enhanced regional structures, is the way forward. The RSES now offers the opportunity to enshrine the principles of collaboration in strategic planning policy at regional level.

The approach advocated in this submission is for a tailored approach to effective Regional Development utilising the strengths and opportunities of the South East. This will reduce the disparity between the South East Waterford City Region (SEWCR) and other regions, by embracing the spatial development opportunities specific to the South East within the Southern Regional Assembly Area resulting in more effective regional development.¹

¹ SEWCR joint submission to NPF conclusion





Key Points

Regional **development** requires regional **co-operation**

- This submission reaffirms the Joint Submission to the NPF and the RSES on behalf of the five local authorities of the South East Planning Area.
- A united South East Waterford City Region will be anchored by Waterford City, and supported by the City of Kilkenny, along with the urban centres of Carlow, Wexford and Clonmel.
- The region's track record in collaboration is a strong base on which to build future initiatives (the Three Sisters bid for the European Capital of Culture, the South East Action Plan for Jobs, joint regional initiatives on tourism, and Waterford Regional Airport and the Regional Greenways Office are good examples of existing and past cooperation).
- Establishment of a regional implementation group – this is imperative².
- Practical measures are proposed here; preparation of MASP, a joint Retail Strategy, alignment of local plan preparation and a Service Delivery Plan. It is recommended that existing legislative mechanisms and practices such as Section 85 Agreements and shared service models be utilised fully to ensure cross-local authority working arrangements take place with cost apportionment to be agreed.
- Oversight on implementation of strategic objectives through Regional Assembly by measuring compliance against implementation of RSES and NPF would be an essential element of any structure for Regional cooperation.
- Local and regional co-operation is the way forward. Discussions are already underway between local authorities to establish a regional office for strategic policy development and implementation.

Kilkenny is positioned to support **sustainable growth of the Region**

- Abbey Quarter (city centre) has the potential to deliver 60,000sqm of mixed residential and employment use.
- Refurbishment of the existing Brewhouse building will commence Q3 2018
 - (Part 8 granted and detailed design underway)
- The City's future expansion areas of Loughmacask and the Western Environs have capacity for circa 4,800 homes, 12,500 people, within the overall concept of the compact 10 minute city.
- Infrastructure (road, water services and public park) to enable delivery of 800 houses and two post primary schools in the Western Environs of Kilkenny city is at pre qualification tender with a commencement date in Q2 2018 and a contract of 18 months
- In Kilkenny city there is extant permission for 860 housing units as at Jan 2018.
- Ferrybank/Belview has a new Local Area Plan with capacity to deliver 886 units in the northern suburbs of Waterford City.





- The Ferrybank area has the potential to deliver significant sustainable growth in the context of the targets set for Waterford City in the Draft NPF. The Planning, Land Use and Transportation Study (PLUTs) provided for an additional 12,400 people, or 42% of the overall growth envisaged in the PLUTs, to be located in the neighbourhood of Ferrybank. Similar ambitious targets should be allocated under the MASP for the greater Waterford City region.
- Kilkenny's District Towns of Callan, Castlecomer, Graigueamanagh and Thomastown, along with the smaller towns and villages, have significant growth potential in areas such as agriculture, food, energy and tourism. Well established and serviced communities in these rural towns have the capacity for significant population growth utilising planned land use and place making principles.
- The RSES must ensure that the necessary investment in critical infrastructure, including fibre broadband, for these areas will be planned for, to enable these opportunities to be realised.

Kilkenny's **economic** strengths and **potential** can **propel** the **City Region**

- The Belview Port area, in close proximity to Waterford, with its strong industry and employment base, has significant existing capacity for expansion; 190 hectares are zoned for development as a strategic employment location.
- The Abbey Quarter in Kilkenny City can cater for the current growth areas of financial development, design and animation and also city living.
- City Business parks also have capacity for sustainable employment growth, within a short distance of new homes.
- Kilkenny's tourism attractions continue to evolve (e.g. Medieval Mile Museum), as a Hero site within Ireland's Ancient East, this can be a potential game changer for Kilkenny and the South East Waterford City Region, attracting further tourist revenue and boosting job creation.

Kilkenny is perfectly positioned to **activate development of SEWCR**

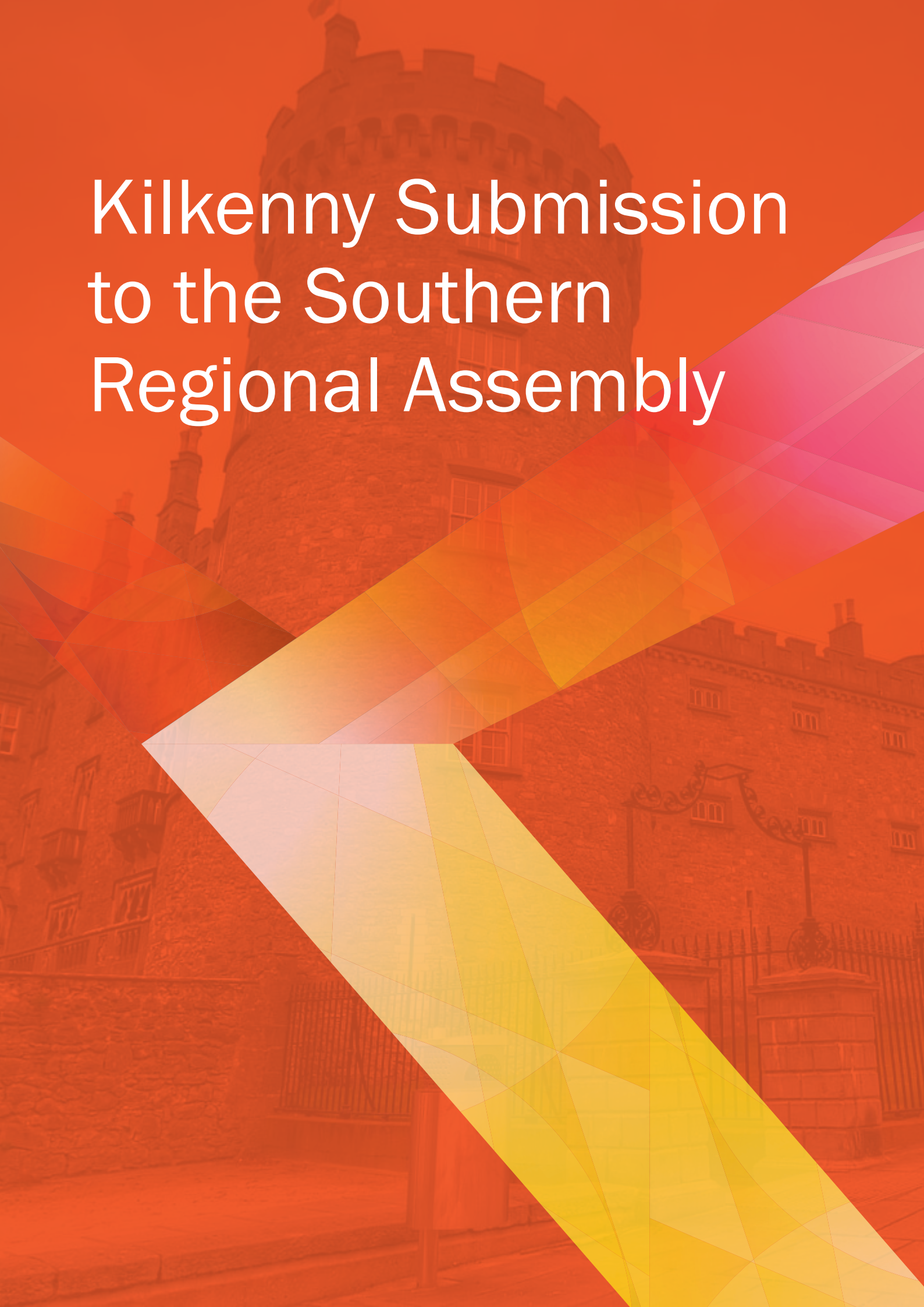
- Quality of life in Kilkenny is renowned; environmental and heritage resources plus our tourism success have yielded dividends in terms of attracting both public and private sector investment.
- Sense of place and identity is a matter of county pride; our festivals, sporting culture, character of built environment all contribute.
- Success is evident in statistics; growth of population is exceeding the national average.
- Kilkenny's accessibility is second to none; on national motorway and rail networks with links to an international seaport, adjacent to two Institutes of Technology and situated in a strategic location at the heart of the South East Planning Area (SEPA), between Carlow, Waterford, Wexford and Clonmel.
- Kilkenny City will be home to a campus facility as part of the new multi-campus Technological University of the South East (TUSE), currently being progressed by the Institute of Technology



Carlow and the Waterford Institute of Technology. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) projects that demand for third level full time education will increase by over 38,000 students on 2014 enrolment levels (or c22%) by 2029. This future growth level supports the case for the TUSE and Kilkenny City is of sufficient scale, has the transport connectivity and associated support infrastructure and services to accommodate some of the additional student capacity that will be provided by the TUSE.

- Kilkenny contains the critical mass and has the distance from Dublin to be capable of being successful in sustaining itself in employment terms, not to repeat mistakes of commuter-driven development
- **The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy must acknowledge the capacity and ability of Kilkenny to contribute as a critical regional driver.**



The background features a photograph of a historic stone building, likely a castle or tower, with a crenellated roofline. The image is overlaid with a vibrant, semi-transparent geometric pattern consisting of various shades of orange, red, and yellow, creating a modern, abstract aesthetic. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant, overlaid on the image.

Kilkenny Submission to the Southern Regional Assembly

Introduction

The National Planning Framework

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is leading the preparation of the National Planning Framework, or 'NPF', on behalf of Government, with input from other Departments and Agencies. This high-level framework (*Ireland 2040 Our Plan*) will guide and direct future development and investment in Ireland and will be the overall Plan from which other, more detailed plans will take their lead. This will articulate shared national development goals, including improved living standards, quality of life, prosperity, competitiveness and environmental sustainability and will provide greater clarity for private sector investment.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) are mandated by Section 23 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) which sets out in detail the required content and objectives of every regional spatial and economic strategy.

The principal purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of the emerging NPF and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the regions.

In general terms, the issues to be addressed by a RSES can be summarised as follows:

The **economic elements** will focus on:

- Creating and sustaining quality jobs
- Identifying the regional attributes that are essential to enhancing regional economic performance including:
 - the quality of the environment
 - the qualities of cities, towns and rural areas
 - physical infrastructure
 - social, community and cultural facilities and
 - Proposals for augmenting the economic performance of the region

The **spatial strategy** will address the location and provision of:

- Employment, industrial and commercial development
- Retail development
- Transportation (including public transportation), water services, energy and communications networks, waste management facilities
- Educational, healthcare, sports and community facilities
- The preservation and protection of the environment and its amenities and landscape qualities



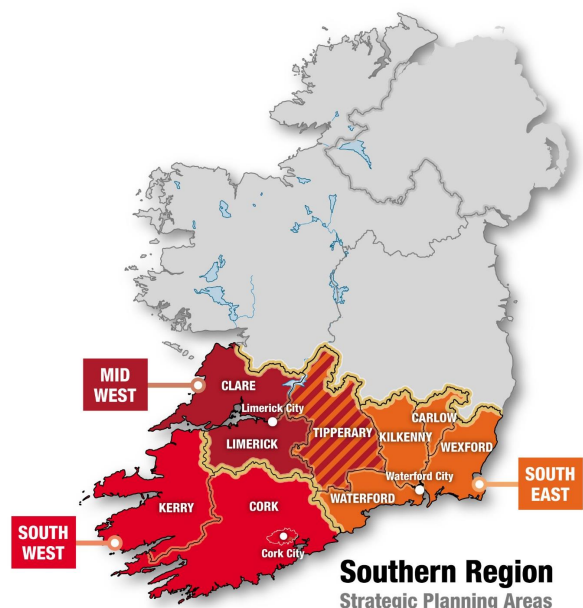
- The promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas, including the promotion of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change

The Draft NPF clearly recognises many key roles for the RSESs in developing distinctive regional planning strategies which will build on the broad policies set out in the Draft NPF and which will guide the plans and policies of local authorities, state agencies and private sector investment over the years ahead. Some of the more significant of these policy directions include:

- Co-ordination and alignment of population and jobs growth at a regional level
- Preparation of Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for the Cork, Limerick and Waterford Metropolitan areas as part of the RSES.
- Identification and quantification of locations for strategic employment growth in the cities, their immediately adjoining suburbs and other suitable locations including brownfield industrial sites, and sites immediately adjoining rural natural resources.
- Identification of a number of large regionally distributed towns where (in addition to and in support of our cities and their immediately adjoining suburbs) future population and jobs growth will be focused
- Ensure that the RSES provides for and guides targeted population growth of Ireland's smaller towns and rural areas at an average rate of 15% across the region
- Ensure that the RSES considers and addresses relevant maritime spatial planning issues and the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports
- Identification and prioritisation of key future growth enablers required to deliver our full regional potential in the interest of both the region and the state as a whole

The Southern Region

The **Southern Region** consists of the administrative areas of Carlow, Cork, Clare, Kerry, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Wexford County Councils, Limerick City and County Council, Waterford City and County Council and Cork City Council. The region covers about 42% of the total land area of the country and had a total population of almost 1.6 million people at the time of the 2016 census.



The Southern Region has a number of significant advantages such as:

- Three out of four Regional Cities (Cork, Limerick and Waterford) located within the region
- Positive population growth of almost 3% over the last five years
- Rural areas characterised by resilient rural communities supported by a strong network of towns and villages
- A modern and diverse industrial base with established cluster and specialisms in high value sectors such as pharmaceuticals, life sciences, aviation, precision engineering, ICT, food and beverages
- An impressive record of employment growth with 62,600 new jobs created in the last five years
- Two Universities and five Institutes of Technology with a combined full-time student population of approximately 55,000 and an additional 12,000 part-time students
- Two out of three state airports at Shannon and Cork as well as two regional airports in Kerry and Waterford
- Four out of five Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports of National Significance at Cork, Shannon Foynes, Belview and Rosslare
- An extensive coastline with significant Marine Resource potential

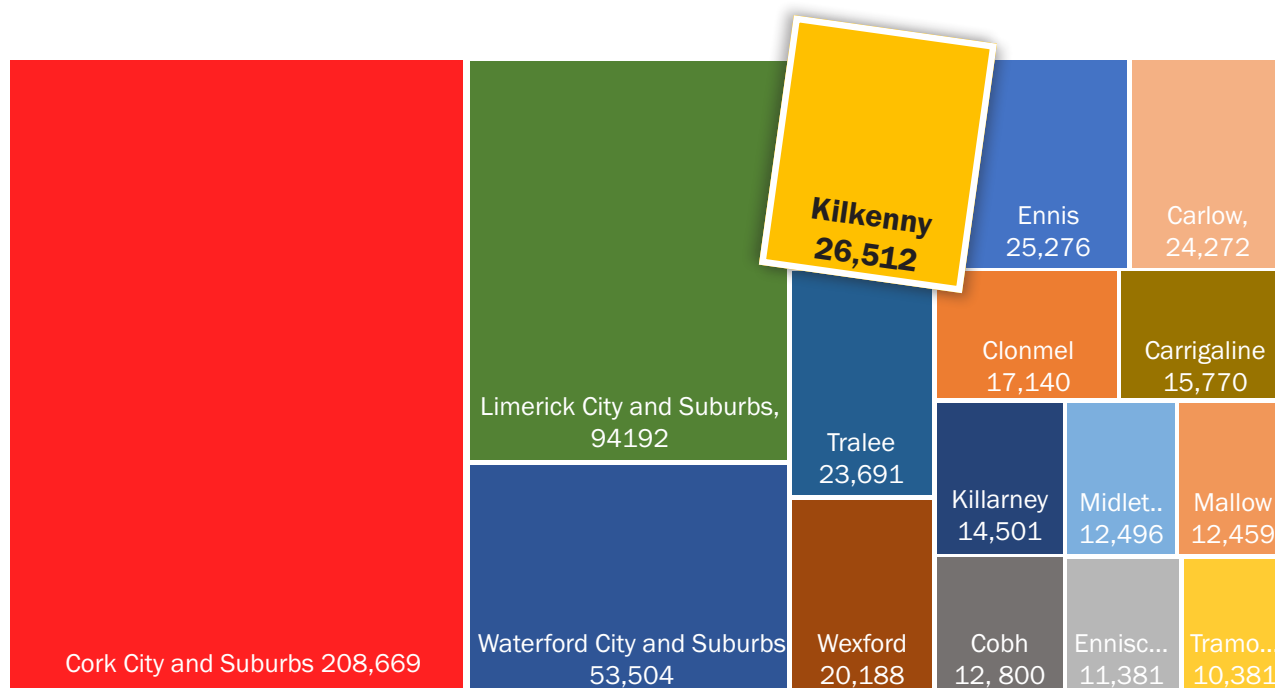
The Draft NPF recognises these inherent advantages and sees the Southern Region as having a significant role to play in accommodating projected demographic and economic growth in the most optimal and sustainable manner.

Settlement Hierarchy

The Draft NPF states *“There is scope for potential growth in all large towns in Ireland. In the context of Ireland 2040 as a National Framework, this will be determined by the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for each Regional Assembly area, also taking into consideration the potential of smaller towns and rural areas.”*

Outside of the three cities in the region, Kilkenny is the next largest settlement in terms of population.





Source Issues Paper Southern Regional Assembly Nov 2017

Kilkenny is one of only 7 of the large towns in the state with a population of more than 25,000 people in 2016. These large towns have a primary role, as due to their critical size they now contain a high level of services. In the case of Kilkenny, its administrative function (as a County town), health services (including St. Luke's General, Kilcreene Orthopaedic and Aut Even private hospitals), its pivotal location in the South East and its hot spot status for tourism, places it in a position of uniqueness within the settlement hierarchy. This needs to be recognised in the settlement hierarchy and the role of these towns should be highlighted within the RSES. It is recognised in the Draft NPF which requires the RSES to "identify a number of large regionally distributed towns where future population and jobs growth will be focused".

The settlement hierarchy in the RSES needs to sub divide the category of large town of > 10,000 into two streams of 10,000 - 20,000 and 20,000+ to recognise the role and function of Kilkenny and comparable towns within the **Southern Region**.

Kilkenny has a potential role in conjunction with Waterford City, based on the deepening economic relationship between south Kilkenny and Waterford City. Kilkenny has developed highly successful tourism, built on the heritage of the city, the attractiveness of other towns and rural parts of the county and improved accessibility to Dublin. These environmental and heritage resources, plus tourism success and the general quality of life in Kilkenny, are yielding dividends in terms of attracting investment.



MASPs

According to the Draft NPF in tandem with and as part of the RSES process, arrangements will be put in place to enable the preparation of five co-ordinated Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for the Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford Metropolitan areas.

The MASPs will be provided with statutory underpinning to act as twelve-year strategic planning and investment frameworks for the city metropolitan areas.

They will address high-level and long term strategic development issues including:

- physical development patterns and strategic growth areas.
- strategic infrastructure, particularly in the transportation and water services areas.
- large scale regeneration and the location of housing and employment.
- metropolitan scale amenities such as regional parks and walking and cycling networks.

The MASP for Waterford City must be based on its area of influence and extend beyond the original area of the 2004 PLUTS study if it is to deal effectively with transport, employment and recreation at a strategic level for the greater Waterford City area.

KCC supports cross boundary collaboration at county and regional level to achieve more sustainable outcomes for the MASP. Kilkenny County Council will support the establishment of an appropriate political and administrative structure of leadership and oversight for the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans with the active participation of relevant regional and local authorities and other stakeholders.

There are a number of key shared strategic areas that need to be delivered in a joint manner as follows:-

- **Preparation of a MASP** for the greater Waterford area containing a unified vision and including the issue of additional river crossings and a framework for implementation of its recommendations.
- **A joint retail strategy** for the South East Waterford City Region. This should be commenced immediately, led by WCCC as required by the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 and 2002.
- **A Service Delivery Plan.** A comprehensive review of service delivery of all local authority services and functions within the greater Waterford Area (MASP boundary) should be carried out to identify opportunities to maximise efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of service delivery to the communities and businesses. This report should lead to the delivery of a comprehensive Service Delivery Plan to be implemented jointly through formal agreements between local authorities.
- **Alignment of Statutory Land Use Plans.** The Waterford City Development Plan and the Ferrybank/ Belview LAP to be aligned in terms of timeframes relating to review and adoption.



Regional Structure

As the Regional Assemblies will be preparing the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies following on from the NPF, an implementation structure needs to be established to ensure delivery of actions. This is a Strategic Action suggested in the combined SEWCR submission⁴.

It is the proposal of Kilkenny County Council that a Project Delivery group be established similar to the structure currently delivering under the South East Action Plan for Jobs.

The purpose of the Regional group would be to provide horizontal coordination and implementation of the objectives of the NPF and the RSES.

This Regional group should be made up of a core steering committee with sectoral expertise sourced and brought in on a task or project specific basis as appropriate. This structure should facilitate full Regional collaboration or bi-lateral project-based working relationships between counties as appropriate. The value in developing cross-county working relationships as well as Regional scale ones is important.

Growth Targets

Outside of the five cities, there were 41 'large' towns, each with more than 10,000 people and home to a further 16% of the national population, in 2016⁵.

The targeted population growth for large towns with >10,000 population in 2016 set out to be 20-25%, in the NPF⁶.

Kilkenny County Council agree with the thrust of the Draft NPF which points to a limited number of large towns emerging from the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) process as potential regional growth drivers for their surrounding catchments⁷.

Kilkenny is in a position to have such a role given its position in the settlement hierarchy (largest town), its historical growth rates above the national average and its planned spatial neighbourhood development. While much progress has been made in Kilkenny in recent years to create a vibrant and innovative City and county attracting people to make their homes and companies to set up and build their businesses there is no doubt that:

- improving economic conditions,
- proximity to an overheated Dublin City and
- improved connectivity throughout the region,

will result in more opportunities for Kilkenny to diversify economically and to grow in demographic and spatial terms. It is essential that the necessary conditions and investments required to support this growth is recognised and provided in the RSES to allow Kilkenny maximise its contribution both to the South East Waterford City Region and nationally.

⁴ National Planning Framework: The South East Waterford City Region Joint Submission p17

⁵ NPF p41

⁶ NPF p48

⁷ NPF p131



Infrastructure

Kilkenny County Council supports the recommendations of the joint submission by the 5 local authorities of the SEPA. It is the view of this Council that the SEWCR is based on modern economic, infrastructural, demographic and social interrelationships and potential, rather than historical administrative areas. To achieve this ambition and to grow the SEWCR to its maximum potential, a number of key recommendations need to be provided for in the RSES:

- The RSES should provide for clear support for the establishment of a multi-campus Technological University in the South East, building on the existing high quality third level institutions within the South East. The delivery of the TUSE is seen by Kilkenny County Council as a transformational project.
- To maximise the public investment which has already taken place, and to fully utilise the potential of key strategic sites in public ownership, the RSES must support the development of key strategic sites in the SEWCR, including Ballingarrane Technology Park, the North Quays, Trinity Wharf, Abbey Quarter and Kickham Barracks.
- The SEWCR welcomes the strong support given to the development of greenways and blueways in the draft NPF. There are further opportunities within the Region to continue to build on the potential of greenways and blueways for the benefit of both our communities and visitors. These opportunities must be recognised and facilitated in the RSES.
- Clear policy support for the progression and delivery of an up-grade of the N24 to motorway standard linking Limerick with Waterford and the N25.
- Improvement to N25 Route from Rosslare to Cork, linking Rosslare, New Ross, Waterford and Cork
- Public transport connectivity between the Regional Towns within the South East should be protected and enhanced to deliver a realistic alternative to the private car.
- The RSES must identify the need for a faster rail link from Waterford, serving Kilkenny and Carlow, to Dublin to maximise the city's proximity to the Capital. There should also be support to retain and invest in the Waterford to Limerick Rail line and to the reopening of the Rosslare rail line
- Waterford Airport must be recognised as a national infrastructural asset with the potential to grow and develop into a regional airport providing short haul connectivity, not only to the south east but to the wider eastern and southern region. There should be a clear commitment in the RSES to grow and develop the Airport throughout the lifetime of the RSES.
- The RSES must clearly support the extension of the runway at Waterford Airport to accommodate jet carriers and strengthen air transport services to and from the South East Waterford City Region.
- There must be support within the RSES, to provide public transport connectivity to Waterford Airport.
- The RSES must clearly facilitate the growth of Rosslare/Belview Ports to ensure that connectivity to Europe is strengthened following Brexit. The Ports should be supported in their development and acknowledged as key economic drivers for both the region and the Country.



- The RSES must support the growth and development of health services appropriate to the size and scale of the City Region. In particular Waterford University Hospital must be prioritised as a centre of excellence for the South East.
- The impending impact of Brexit on Rosslare Euro Port would support the upgrading of the N80 (Central Spine concept as contained in the NSS) as a strategic linking corridor within the Country. This route would connect a network of strong urban centres strategically located proximate to Dublin City which could build synergistic competencies attractive to FDI companies. The upgraded route would enable easier movement of freight and other public and private transport, facilitating access to other regional and rural destinations.
- Expedite the rollout of the National Broadband Plan to ensure that all parts of the region can access high speed broadband. Broadband connectivity is of critical importance for attracting investment, facilitating economic growth and stimulating innovation.

Conclusion

This submission has focused on the strategic issues facing Kilkenny within the context of the preparation of the RSES. Local leadership plays an important role in driving regional development, from the planning and delivery of critical infrastructure and the development of concentrated and well planned urban development to the facilitation of enterprise development through stimulating networking, agency collaboration and targeted regional initiatives.

The following overarching goals should be achieved for the SEWCR :

- A region of critical mass with a strong Waterford City of circa 83,000 people.
- Strong supporting City of Kilkenny and Urban areas of Carlow, Wexford and Clonmel
- The Technological University of the South East delivered
- A region that offers an alternative choice for location of development and is complementary to Dublin.
- A region that is a driver of economic growth in the National context.

The successful development of the South East Waterford City Region of which Kilkenny City & County is an integral part will be facilitated by effective working relationships, co-ordination and partnership.

This submission has outlined Kilkenny's capacity to deliver economic development and sustainable communities for the Region. It has also outlined real proposals to develop new ways of working on a cross – local authority basis within the Regional Assembly structure which can, with legislative support, deliver cooperation and implementation of objectives.

Kilkenny and the SEWCR have the potential to shape Ireland's development to 2040 and with the right supports can do so.



