

Submission to RSES

8th March 2019

The South East Chambers Group is the vehicle through which the various Chambers of Commerce based in the South East of Ireland share information, adopt best practice and make decisions on regional issues.

It is a collaboration of County Carlow Chamber, Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber, Enniscorthy Chamber, Gorey Chamber, Kilkenny Chamber, New Ross Chamber, Wexford Chamber and Waterford Chamber, collectively representing the business community across the South East Region.

Acknowledging the importance of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy as a long-term regional level strategic planning and economic framework, in support of the implementation of the National Planning Framework, the South East Chambers Group wishes to make the following observations and recommendations to the draft RSES for the Southern Region.

- Located within the Southern Region which is vast, extensive and diverse, the South East Planning Area of Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford gets **insufficient recognition** as a region with its own identity and needs. The SE has the highest unemployment rate in the country yet has huge and very real potential to act as a pressure release for Dublin. It also has strong potential to develop clusters of growth (e.g. Financial Services, IT, Pharma, Medtech, Agri-food) and to facilitate a strategic national response to Brexit.
- The RSES must set an **ambitious agenda** for an open and connected Waterford as the city of the South East Region and main driver of development in the region. The RSES must identify a pathway to deliver on this agenda.
- The proposed investments in the **North Quays, Abbey Quarter, Trinity Wharf, Kickham Barracks and Ballingarrane Park** which are referred to in the draft RSES must be prioritized and delivered as quickly as possible.
- The delivery of a **Technological University** (multi-campus model) for the South East is critical to ensuring the long-term sustainable economic development of the region. For our region to thrive, be innovative and vibrant, we must ensure the TUSE is of the highest standard and considerable investment is required in this regard. If the funding being requested and allocated isn't in line with the other Technological University Consortia, the fear is that the TUSE will not be of a standard that is required and expected by the business community in the South East.
- In Section 4.4, a specific RPO should be set out which has the "objective of developing the **Waterford- Dublin Economic Corridor** initiative along the M9 and Waterford-Dublin railway line as a driver for enterprise growth, investment and attracting entrepreneurial skills and talent to

the South East Waterford City Region as an economic compliment to the role of the Dublin metropolitan area”.

- The **N24 upgrade** (Waterford – Cahir – Limerick) to motorway standards needs to be part of the priority road projects as identified to be delivered by 2027 under RPO 159. We are now facing a time of tremendous growth and clearly the cities of Waterford, Limerick and Cork in the Southern Region will be instrumental in that vision of Southern Region being a counterbalance to Dublin. The South East region sees itself as a key component part of that 2 million or so cluster of cities, however, a much greater level of collaboration and cooperation should now be encouraged. To enable this desired level of collaboration, there needs to be greatly improved transport connectivity between all three cities. Priority should be given to upgrading the existing N24 to motorway standard running from Waterford to Limerick, connecting the M8 to Cork at Cahir and linking the M18 to Galway. (This proposal also has the support of Limerick City & County Council, Kilkenny County Council, Tipperary County Council and Waterford City & County Council as per the attached N24 Submission document). Offering major international access through four of the country’s five major ports, all of which have substantial expansion plans, and two international airports, a road network must be put in place to offer efficient connectivity between the cities as a matter of priority.
- Stronger prioritization is required on the need to step-up investment to develop **Rosslare Harbour and Waterford Port** in RPO 141 as well as investments in port access (last mile connections; M11 Oilgate to Rosslare in RPO 159; and upgrade of the N29 to Belview in RPO 160) given their strategic geographic advantage, capacity availability and recent road investment.
- The RSES should make specific reference to the setting of an objective of **Rosslare Europort** being designated as a Border Control Post.
- There needs to be a stronger commitment than currently is set out in RPO 159 to the **N80 upgrade** from Enniscorthy to Carlow, Portlaoise and the Midlands.
- More detail needs to be set out on the pipeline of **Greenways, Blueways and Peatways** in RPO 166 and 193, with specific reference to the proposed network for the South East.
- There should be a specific reference to the need for exchequer support to develop the runway in **Waterford Airport** in RPO 145.
- RPO 131 should be made more specific in terms of highlighting the regional development opportunity for the South East to access high quality, **high capacity international digital transmission connections** such as the Ireland-France Subsea Cable as well as flagging the importance of MANs and leveraging existing investment in motorway ducting.
- The potential benefits for Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford from the rollout of **Dark Fibre Broadband** line from Cork to Dublin by Aurora Telecom are not adequately referenced in the draft document.
- RPO 162 on **train connectivity** should refer to the role of better scheduling of train services and increased journey times to improve productivity, reduce carbon footprint and enhance regional accessibility.
- Enhancements to the **N25** between Cork and Waterford should also be prioritised.

- There should be more specific references from the **South East Regional Enterprise Action Plan (REAP) 2019 – 2020** to be made in the RSES in areas such as: existing clusters and their key enablers in the South East; the potential of the Smart Region concept; strengthening the region's value proposition as a first choice or second site location; more detailed policy direction on what Local Authorities should be doing to make town centres more liveable and how towns can deal with unemployment blackspots; more detail on how the enhancement in regional bidding capacity in RPO 70 specifically will be done; and more detail on key elements required to enhance the region's tourism product.
- The proposed structure of the RSES groups towns (i.e. below the 3 cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford) under the heading "Key Towns". This does not give due recognition to the larger towns. Kilkenny (26,512), Ennis (25,276), Carlow (24,272), Tralee (23,691), Wexford (20,188) and Clonmel (17,140) all have critical mass in population and as service centres in regional terms. A new band of **Urban Centre with population 15,000+** is required.
- There is a requirement for more clarity and detailed references to **Strategic Employment Locations** within the Key Towns.
- The Waterford Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (**MASP**) is not clear and requires clarification on how the MASP relates to the RSES, the County Development Plan and the Local Area Plan. it is not clear: which structure will adopt the MASP; how the MASP relates to the RSES, the County Development Plan and Local Area Plans and which are subservient to which; whether the MASP and the Local Area Plans will be informed by the proposed Urban Development Plans; whether Kilkenny's population allocation is to be used to bolster the Ferrybank Area or whether a separate allocation will be made from the Waterford MASP; If there will be a joint implementation structure proposed/agreed to coordinate infrastructure/service delivery in the MASP area.
- There is a need for more specific discussion on **sub-regional issues**, with appropriate Regional Planning Objectives which the SPAs would play a much more prominent role throughout the RSES.
- Whilst the draft document contains reference to the need for a new **Joint Retail Strategy** for the South East to be prepared, further details should be included regarding the scope of such a strategy.

In conclusion, the SE Region Chambers Group is committed to the promotion and progressive development of the SE Region and will continue to work closely with the Regional Assembly and its agents to fully implement the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy in support of the National Planning Framework.

Signed:

John Hurley.

Chairperson

South East Region Chambers