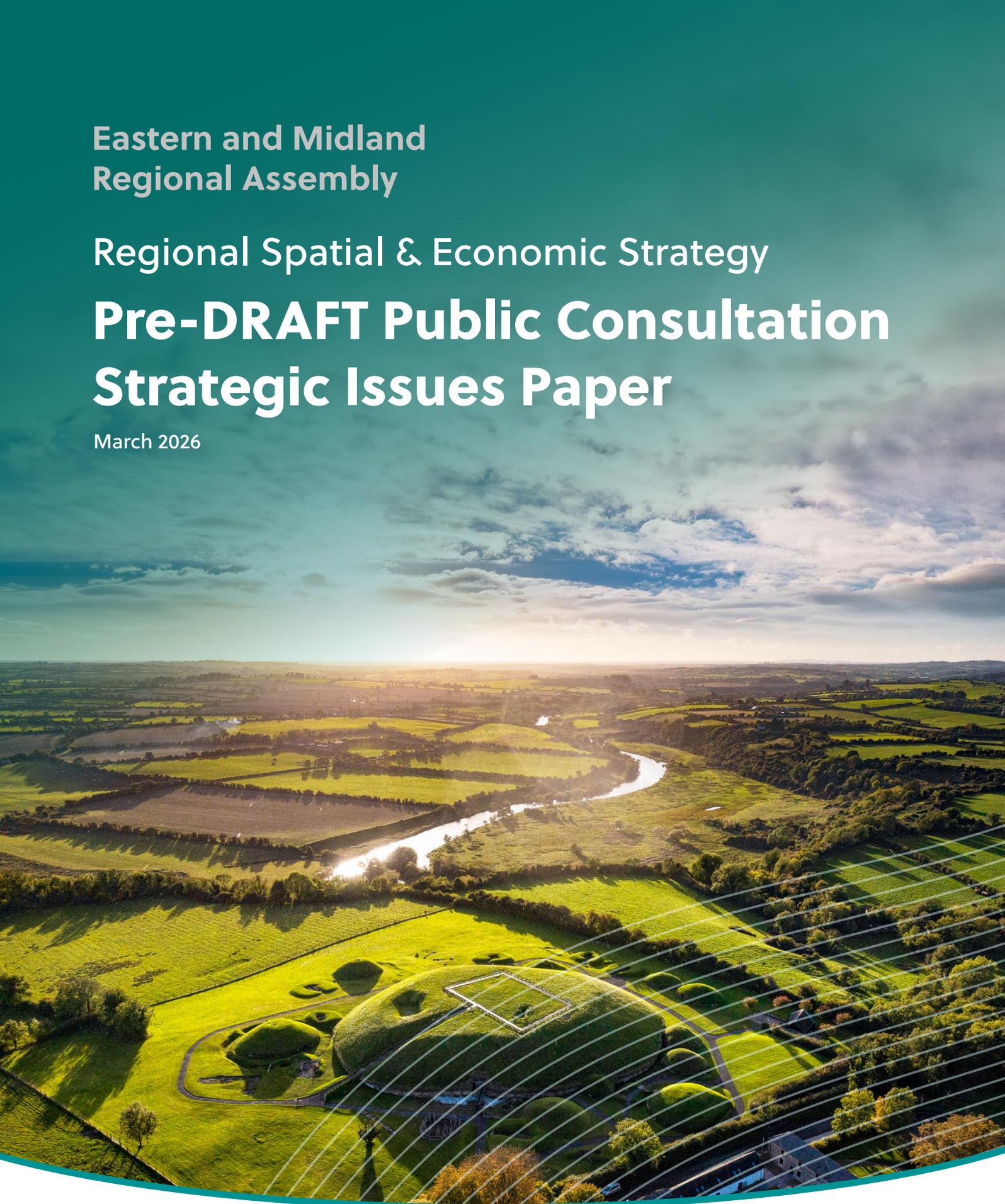


Eastern and Midland
Regional Assembly

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy

Pre-DRAFT Public Consultation Strategic Issues Paper

March 2026



Tionól Réigiúnach an
Oirthir agus Lár Tíre
Eastern and Midland
Regional Assembly



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Introduction

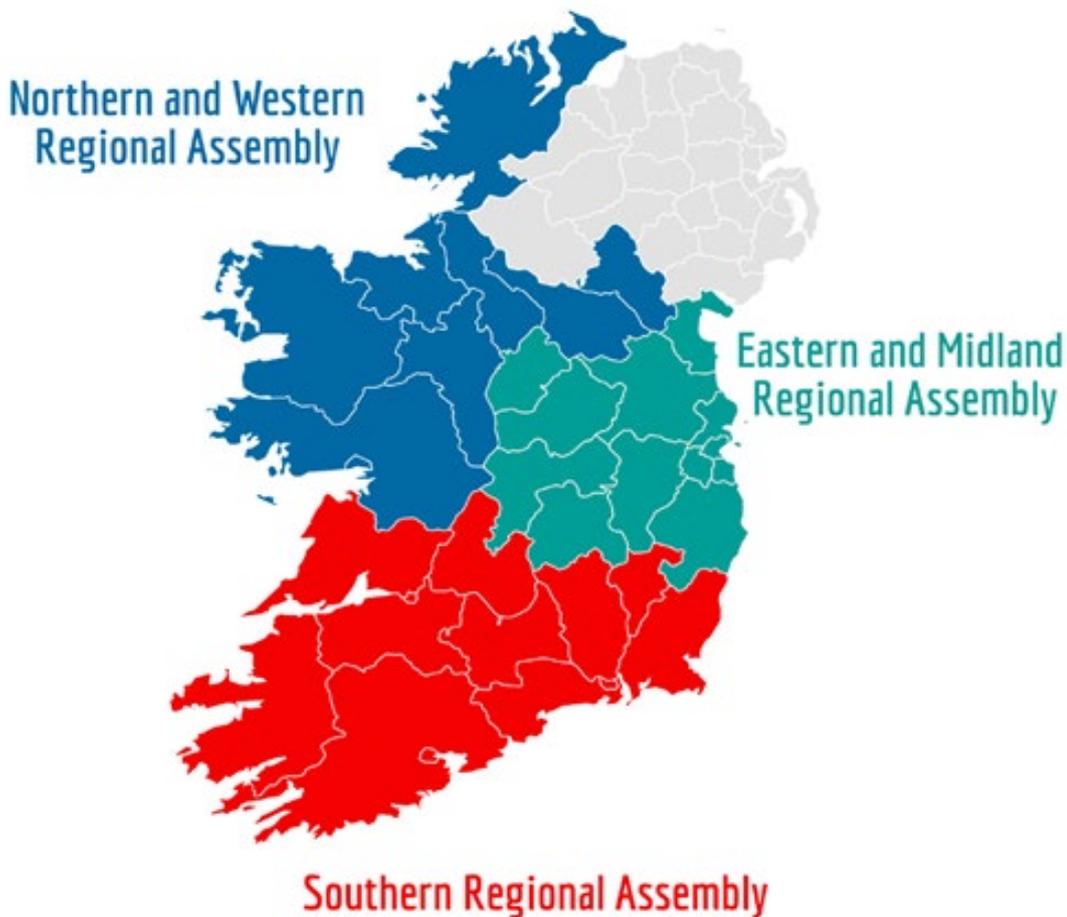
The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) is commencing a review of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region, which will build on the progress made under the first RSES which was made in 2019. The RSES identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy direction on how to address them.

The Assembly is inviting individuals, communities, local authorities, state agencies and government departments to help it set a new vision and the focus of the future growth and betterment of all people in the region and beyond.

What is the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly?

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) was established in January 2015 along with the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) and the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA). The Regional Assemblies are part of the local government structure in Ireland which comprises the 31 local authorities (city and county councils) and three Regional Assemblies.

In simple terms the Regional Assembly helps decide how your region grows, where money is invested, and how councils plan for the future, shaping policy, investment and regional development outcomes.



The functions and work of the Regional Assembly include:

- Formulation, adoption and implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) to bridge the gap between national planning and economic policies and local implementation, ensuring regional development is strategic, coordinated and sustainable.
- Coordination and oversight of Local Economic and Community Plans.
- Management of the EU Just Transition Fund, overseeing the implementation of the European Regional Development Fund for the Southern, Eastern and Midland Programme, contact point for URBACT and EUI, and partnering in some European projects.
- Management of the Irish Regions European Office.

In carrying out its functions, the Regional Assembly provides a strategic link between the EU, national and local levels, with a democratic mandate provided through elected members from constituent local authorities.

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is comprised of 42 elected members. The elected members are appointed by the constituent local authorities within the region, together with members who serve by virtue of their membership of the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

The 12 local authorities in the EMRA region are Dublin City Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council, Kildare County Council, Laois County Council, Longford County Council, Louth County Council, Meath County Council, Offaly County Council, South Dublin County Council, Westmeath County Council and Wicklow County Council.

These local authorities are divided into three sub-regional areas or Strategic Planning Areas (SPA) namely the Midland, Eastern and Dublin SPAs.



Regional Profile

The Eastern and Midland Region, with a population of over 2.5 million people (Census, 2022), serves as an international gateway to the island of Ireland with major airports and ports on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) and strategic national road and rail links.

The Dublin Metropolitan Area, which extends across Dublin city and suburbs and parts of counties Kildare, Meath and Wicklow, has a population of 1.5 million people (Census, 2022) and is the economic engine of the country, accounting for half of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Rural areas extend across the region connected by the Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk, and a network of Key Towns that support economic and population growth outside of the capital. This is the fastest growing region in the country in terms of population, with a young and diverse demography.

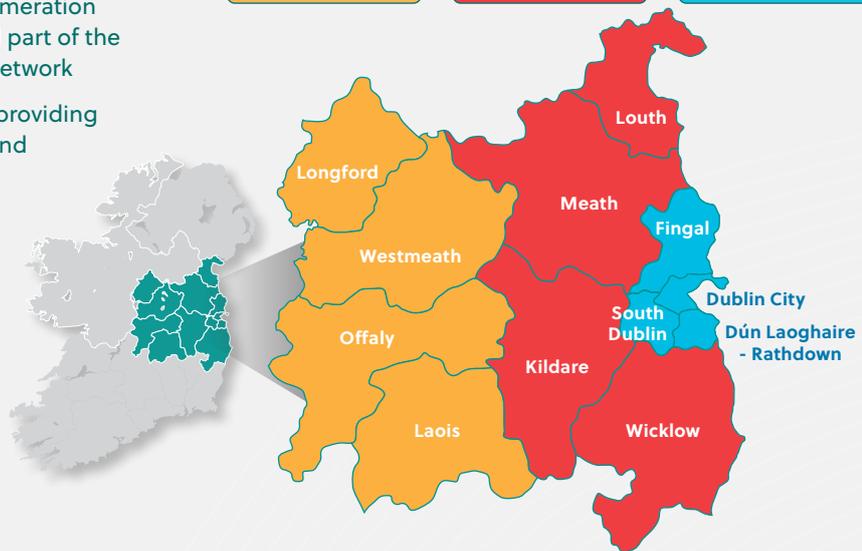
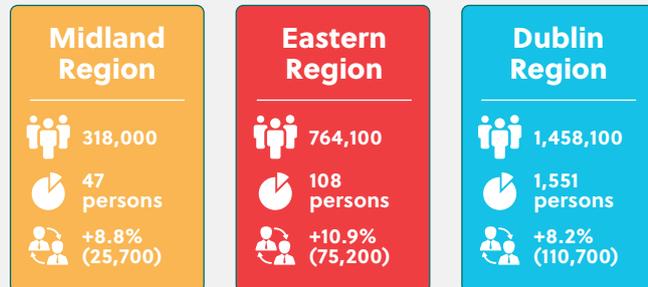
Statistics

- Largest in population with over 2.5 million people
- Smallest in land area covering c.14,500 sq km
- Fastest growing region with 211,000 more people (+9%) between 2016 and 2022
- Capital city region with 1.5 million people in the Dublin Metropolitan area
- Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor is the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland and part of the trans-European transport network
- National economic engine providing more than 1.3 million jobs and half the national GDP*



3 Strategic Planning Areas

12 Local Authorities





What is a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy?

A Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a long-term plan for how the region will grow and develop.

It sets out where new homes, jobs and services should be located, how transport and infrastructure should be planned, and how the region can support economic growth while protecting the environment. The strategy guides local authorities in preparing their development plans and local economic and community plans. It aligns regional enterprise activity through the Regional Enterprise Plans and helps ensure that investment across the region is coordinated, sustainable and benefits communities.

The Strategy incorporates a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) to provide an integrated land use and transportation strategy for the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

The objective of the RSES is to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and investment framework for the region. The Planning and Development Act 2024 also identifies areas that the RSES needs to make provision for, which includes, but is not limited to, housing, employment, retail, transport, onshore renewable energy, marine and coastal matters, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and protection of the environment.

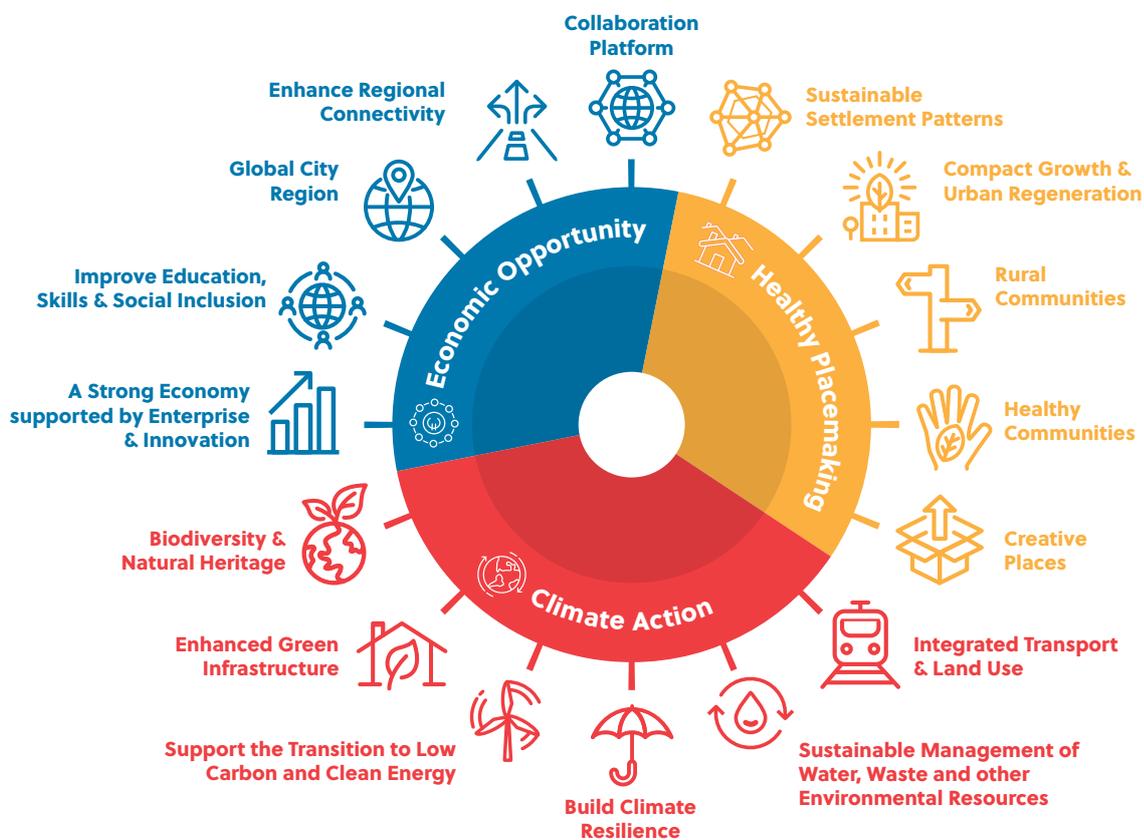
The RSES is implemented by means of engagement with local authorities, government departments and relevant public bodies to align local development and economic plans with its core principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action, and Economic Opportunity. This alignment promotes the integration of regional priorities into national policy and the RSES performs a pivotal role in regional investment alignment, ensuring that strategic infrastructure delivery in transport, water, and housing is integrated with national funding streams, such as the NDP and enterprise funds, to drive the sustainable development of the region.

The RSES will align with national planning policy and national enterprise policy, aligning with Regional Enterprise Plans, and informing Development Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans at city and county level.

What is the current Vision & Key Principles of the RSES 2019-2031?

The Vision of the RSES 2019-2031 is to:

create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all.



KEY PRINCIPLES

Healthy Placemaking

To promote people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit and study in.

Climate Action

The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon economy recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.

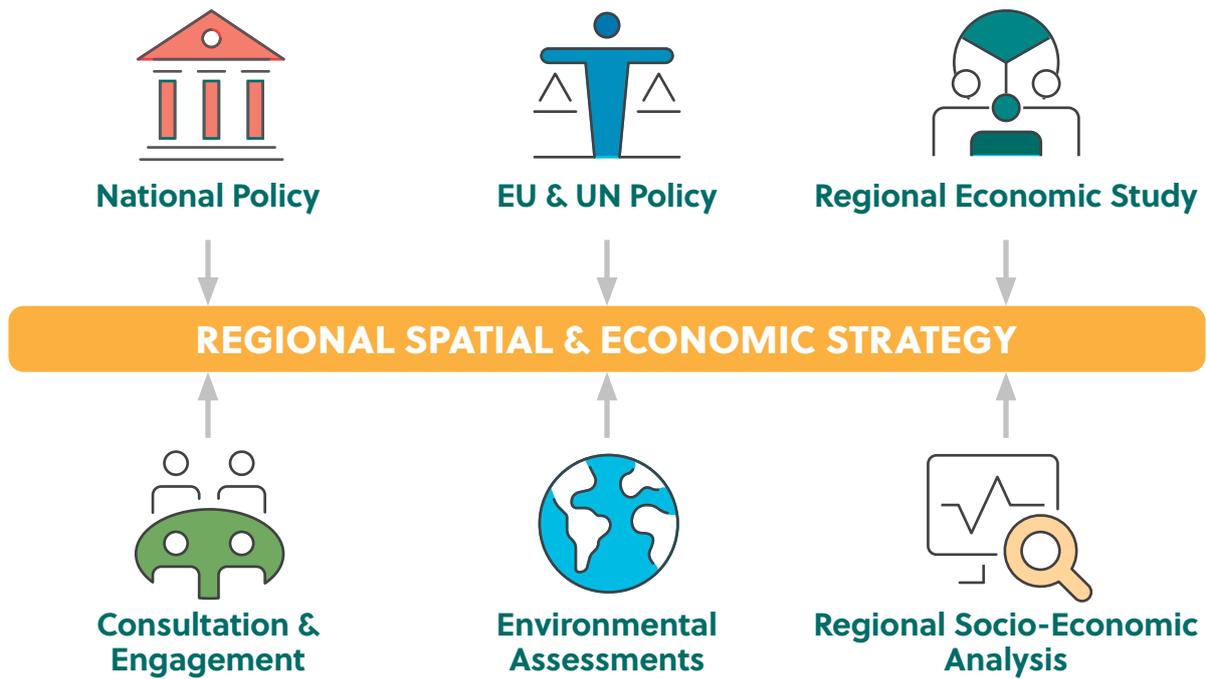
Economic Opportunity

To create the right conditions and opportunities for the region to realise sustained economic growth and employment that ensures good living standards for all.

Key Principles of the RSES 2019-2031

Key Principles reflect the pillars of sustainable development and are about quality of life for citizens, a strong, stable economy and good standard of living supported by good environmental quality. The principles are 'healthy placemaking', 'climate action' and 'economic opportunity'.

What will inform the RSES?



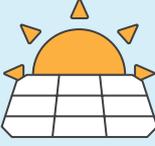
The Policy Hierarchy



Purpose of this Strategic Issues Paper

This document is designed to facilitate the consultation process underpinning the review of the RSES and making of a new RSES for the region.

It provides a broad overview of the main issues for consideration, which are presented under the themes of:

 <p>People & Places</p>	 <p>Connectivity & Infrastructure</p>
 <p>Quality of Life & Healthy Places</p>	 <p>Regional Renewable Energy</p>
 <p>Economic Development & Employment</p>	 <p>Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan</p>
 <p>Environment & Climate</p>	 <p>Implementation & Monitoring</p>
 <p>Marine Spatial Planning & Coastal Zone Management</p>	 <p>Environmental Assessments</p>

Each section includes questions to prompt consideration of important issues, but there is no requirement to answer these questions directly in your submission. Furthermore, there are topics which crosscut the different thematic areas such as circularity, all-island cohesion and the various aspects of sustainable development (environmental, economic and social considerations). Respondents are encouraged to consider these perspectives together and reflect on how the RSES can best integrate principles of healthy placemaking, climate action and economic opportunity, while supporting more coordinated spatial and economic development across the region.

The review process consists of six stages. Initial research has been undertaken to provide an evidence base for the revised RSES. This Strategic Issues Paper is published as part of the pre-draft public consultation stage, which will be followed by the preparation and publication of a draft RSES, including environmental assessments. A consultation on this draft will be conducted before the RSES is finalised.

RSES review process

01



Research, Analysis and Preparation of Strategic Issues Paper

02



Pre-Draft Public Consultation including SEA Scoping

03



Preparation of Draft RSES and Environmental Assessments

04



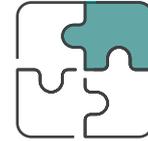
Public Consultation on Draft RSES and Environmental Assessments

05

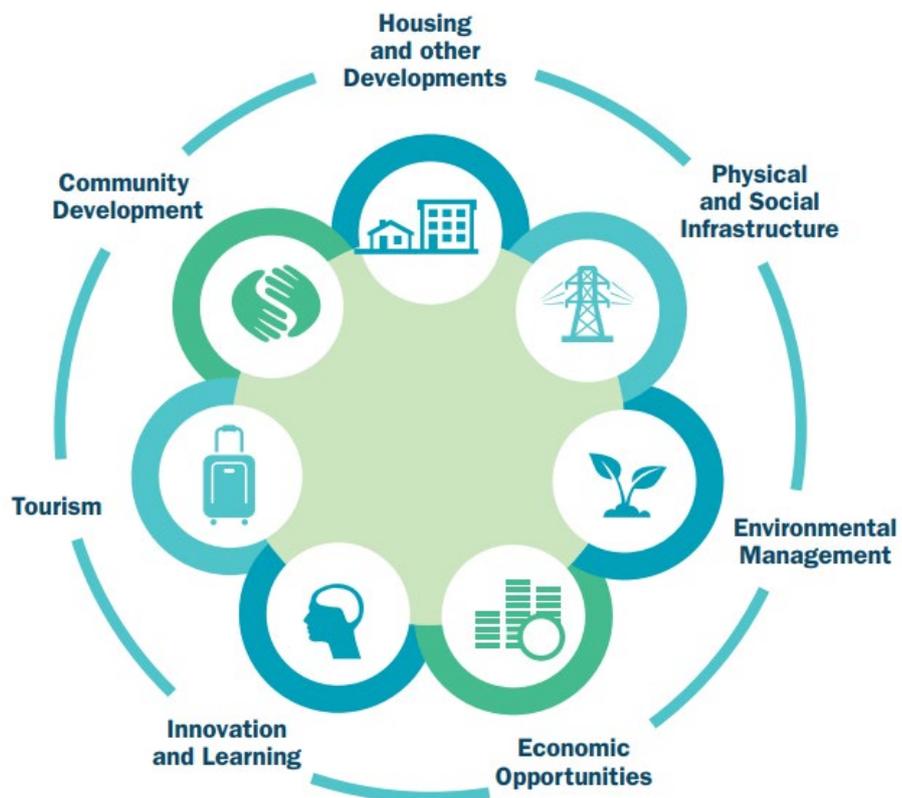


Public Consultation on Proposed Material Alterations

06



Making the RSES and Publication of Final Environmental Assessment Documents



Source: NPF 2025 Shared Planning Challenges in Ireland and Northern Ireland



FOR CONSIDERATION

What should the Eastern and Midland Region look like in the future?

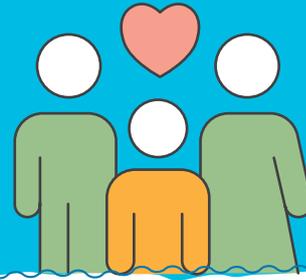
What vision and key principles should the RSES have?

How can the RSES support sustainable prosperity, innovation and improved quality of life, while delivering long-term social resilience and environmental sustainability?

How do we position the Eastern and Midland Region as one of the most sustainable and attractive regions in Europe?



People and Places



The Settlement Strategy of the RSES is a framework for long term sustainable growth and development of the region, setting out where housing, employment, infrastructure and services should be located. Its purpose is to ensure there are healthy places to live and work with a good quality of life for all.

TOTAL POPULATION 2025

2,687,000

49.2%

of State in 2025

(5,458,600)

EASTERN AND MIDLAND REGION POPULATION IN 2025



2,687,000 (CSO ESTIMATE)

2016-
CSO Census

2,328,517

2022-
CSO Census

2,540,307

2025-
CSO Estimate

2,687,000

2030-
NPF Target

2,810,307

2040-
NPF Target

3,010,307

The Strategy draws on population distribution and density to define a hierarchy of settlements, based on their size, role and function. Cities and towns of sufficient scale and quality will drive regional growth and investment, thus allowing the region to compete internationally. A key focus of the Strategy is on sustainable settlement patterns; particularly compact growth aligned with higher density objectives, employment growth, service provision, integrated transport and land use; and town centre revitalisation and regeneration, supporting compact settlement patterns, sustainable mobility, and town centre vitality. Furthermore, aligning development with infrastructure capacity will be critical to delivering sustainable growth. Sustainable rural development is promoted and there is an emphasis on reducing disparities between areas, supporting growth in employment, enhancing regional connectivity and ensuring protection and sustainable management of environmental resources, for a healthy and climate-resilient society.

The existing settlement hierarchy for the region comprises Dublin City, its suburbs and metropolitan area (which includes parts of counties Kildare, Meath and Wicklow), Regional Growth Centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk and several Key Towns. It sets policy responses and highlights the growth enablers for the Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns and rural places which encompass towns, villages and their rural hinterlands (as designated within local authority Development Plans). It also considers links to settlements in other regions and Northern Ireland.

The RSES must make provision for:

- Identifying the **location of housing**, including provision to meet any NPF regional population growth and housing targets for each local authority housing development strategy,
- Identifying any **key towns** in the region, with the capacity to complement a Regional Growth Centre (Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk),
- Identifying settlements, or parts of settlements which straddle local authority boundaries where a **coordinated area plan is required**, based on the importance of the settlement for population or employment growth, and
- Identifying **sustainable settlement patterns and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas**; and prepare a **metropolitan area strategic plan (MASP)** for Dublin which is an integrated land use and transportation strategy (see section on Dublin MASP).

The NPF sets a range of targets for population, economic and housing growth:

NPF Targets for 2040

- 50% of national population growth will occur in the Eastern and Midland Region.
- 50% of the population and employment growth will be focused on Dublin and 4 other cities.
- 25,400 – 38,000 homes to be delivered in the region between 2025-2040.
- Target population of 3 million in EMRA, that is, 470,000 above the 2022 population of 2.54 million.
- Target population increase of 296,000 in Dublin City by 2040 (to a minimum of 1.56 million). The population was 1.263 million in 2022.
- 40% of all new housing to be built within existing urban footprints (50% in cities / 30% elsewhere)
- Athlone and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry have key roles for regional development as Regional Growth Centres including Drogheda-Dundalk along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

URBAN AND RURAL DWELLERS*

27.3% LIVING
IN RURAL
AREAS
(694K)



72.7% LIVING
IN TOWNS
(1,8M)

*NPF/EMRA DEFINITION OF URBAN
= SETTLEMENTS > 10,000 POPULATION

HOUSING TENURE

886,996 

Owner-
Occupied

64%

31%

Rented

20%
Private

11%
Social

KEY ISSUES FOR THE REGION

Sustainable, Compact & Vibrant Settlements

The Settlement Strategy of the RSES will seek to deliver compact urban form and higher density objectives, brownfield site regeneration, vacant or derelict site redevelopment, and relocation of existing uses in existing urban centres. Development will be prioritised in areas where there is existing and planned infrastructure capacity, and there will be a focus on demand management to maximise its use and the delivery of key enabling infrastructure and utilities. The sustainable development of rural areas of the region is important, to address disparities, provide access to employment, connectivity, environmental management and climate resilience.

Key Towns in the Region

The selection of Key Towns in the current RSES was guided by several criteria and indicators to determine those settlements with greatest capacity and potential to grow sustainably. It considered their size and roles, local strengths, business support systems, transport links, and the capacity of the environment and infrastructure. Additional Key Towns may need to be included in the new RSES.

Transport Orientated Development (TOD)¹

TOD seeks to maximise the provision of housing, employment, public services and leisure space in close proximity to high quality transport services. Large-scale TOD will be a key consideration of the Dublin Metropolitan Area, but TOD principles should be applicable at the appropriate scale throughout the region.

High Quality Homes and Places to Live

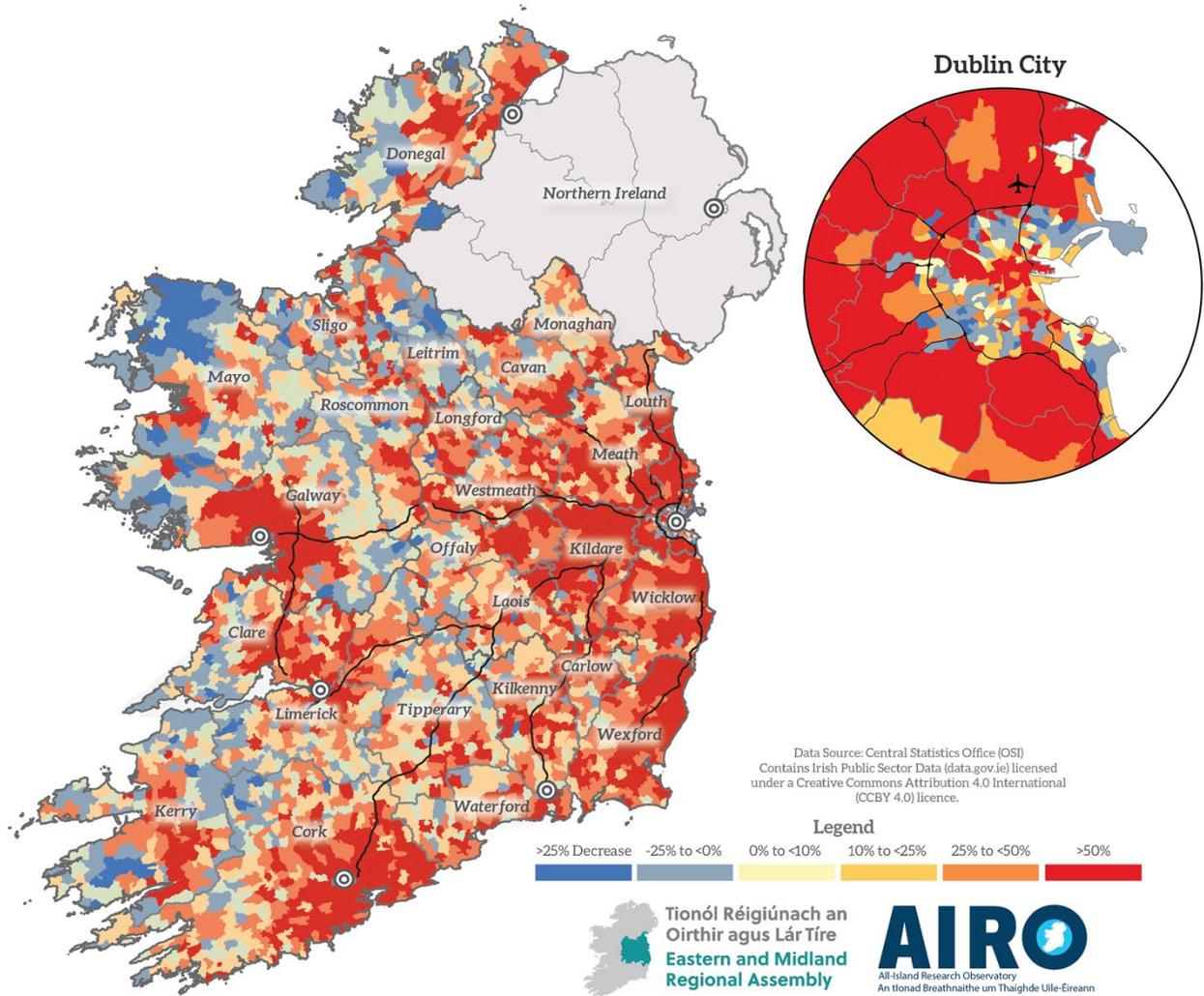
The delivery of homes in the region goes hand in hand with the need to create attractive, liveable, well designed and high-quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities who enjoy a high quality of life and well-being. Opportunities to reuse or revitalise existing housing stock will be a key component of delivering homes in the region.



¹ Transport orientated development is identified in the NPF as a form of urban development that seeks to maximise the provision of housing, employment, public services and leisure space in close proximity to frequent, high quality transport services.

Population Change (%), 1991 to 2022

by Electoral Division (ED)



Total Population in Eastern and Midland Local Authorities: 2022 and % Change 1991-2022 (de-facto)



FOR CONSIDERATION

What measures should the RSES include to guide the strategic location of new residential development?

How can the RSES support the delivery of sufficient housing supply across the region while maintaining compact and sustainable settlement patterns that reduce travel demand and car dependency?

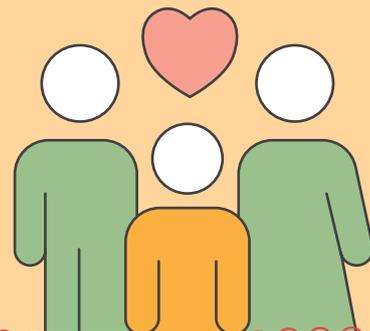
What criteria should the RSES use to select Key Towns in the region?

How can we strengthen rural service hubs to reduce long-distance commuting?

How can the settlement strategy in the RSES support economic vitality in the region?

What innovative approaches can revitalise smaller towns and villages experiencing decline?

How can the RSES support the delivery of housing targets of the NPF in towns and villages of all sizes, which in turn support wider communities?



Quality of Life & Healthy Places



The Eastern and Midland Region has a large and diverse population, attracting people from all over Ireland and abroad who come to live, work, visit, invest and study. Planning for people, homes and communities, is a key component of the RSES.

Where we live, the identity and character of the area, and how we interact with this environment, are inextricably linked, and it has a profound impact on physical and mental health, wellbeing, and quality of life. In addition, land across the region is subject to increasing and often competing demands from housing, infrastructure, agriculture, biodiversity protection, and climate mitigation and adaptation. Healthy placemaking focuses on creating healthy and attractive places to support continued economic success, improvement in living standards and quality of life for people of the region and is a cross-cutting principle which informs all aspects of the existing RSES².



² The 15-minute city describes a place where urban inhabitants can access everything (or almost everything) they need within a quarter of an hour's walk or cycle from their home.

What is a Healthy Placemaking Approach?

Healthy placemaking has emerged from spatial planning, public health and community design research and the Healthy Placemaking Strategy in the current RSES includes several elements, as follows:



Source: Existing Healthy Placemaking Strategy in the RSES 2019-2031

Public Realm

Create high-quality public spaces that promote health and wellbeing, using good urban design to make vibrant, safe, and accessible urban areas.

Sense of Place

Opportunities for people to interact and foster a sense of belonging. Culture, the Arts and heritage-led regeneration offer opportunities to enhance the identity and character of places.

Sustainable Travel

Supporting people to be physically active in their daily lives with an emphasis on active travel (walking and cycling) and sustainable mobility (public transport) over car-based travel, in the planning, layout and design of places. It also supports opportunities to deliver the 15-Minute City concept and create connected, compact, accessible and walkable neighbourhoods.

Recreation & Open Space

Providing safe, well-connected green spaces for people of all ages to enjoy and be active, while also supporting nature, managing water, and building climate resilience.

Strong Inclusive Communities

Ensuring everyone has good access to health, education and services. Opportunities for local communities to be involved in creating spaces to address their needs, for safety and inclusion.

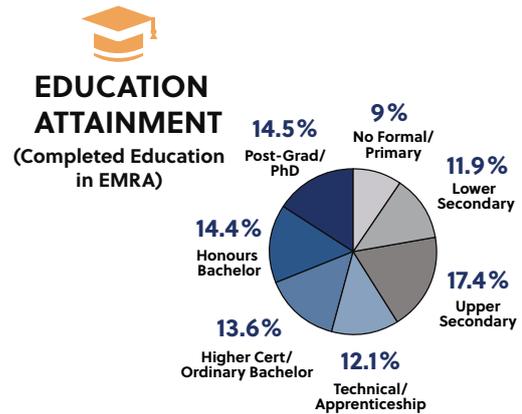
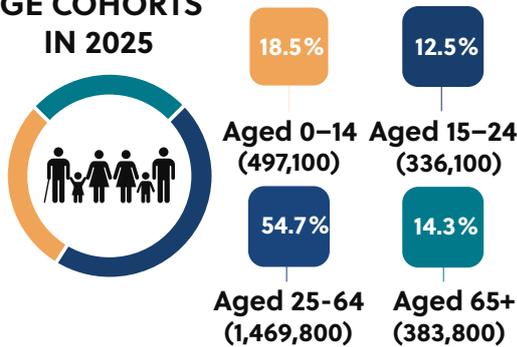
Physical Infrastructure

Providing good connectivity and infrastructure to attract investment, diversify local economies, and support communities, services, employment and social interaction.

The NPF seeks to:

- Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.
- Support public health policy including the Healthy Ireland Framework.
- Prioritise walking and cycling and physical activity facilities in the design of communities.
- Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society.
- Implement language plans in Gaeltacht areas, service towns and Irish Language Networks.
- Focus on meeting the needs and opportunities of an ageing population.
- Align population and employment growth with childcare needs.
- Deliver between 25,400 – 38,000 homes in the region between 2025-2040, sustainable development and homes which are adaptable.

AGE COHORTS IN 2025



The RSES shall make provision for:

- Identifying facilities relating to third level education, healthcare and sports to serve the region, and
- Protecting the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht.

KEY ISSUES FOR THE REGION

Healthy Placemaking

The RSES will need to ensure that it supports a good quality of life for the people living in the region. There are many aspects to healthy placemaking (such as sustainable travel, sense of place, inclusive communities, public realm and infrastructure) and the RSES must capture these, across its strategy.

Planning for Regional Scale Facilities

The RSES must identify third level education, healthcare and sports facilities to serve the region. Land use and the integration of transport planning are important considerations for the provision of, and access to, such facilities.

Protection of Gaeltacht Areas

The RSES must protect its two Gaeltacht areas - Ráth Cairn and Baile Ghib, in County Meath, areas which are important to the linguistic and cultural heritage of the region. The NPF highlights the importance of implementing language plans, support Gaeltacht service towns and the Irish Language Networks.





FOR CONSIDERATION

How can we create attractive, healthy, and high-quality urban and rural places, revive town centres, and reverse decline in rural areas?

How can the RSES support improvements to local walking and cycling networks in established settlements in order to improve accessibility and reduce short car journeys?

When it comes to third level education, including further education and training sector, healthcare and sports, what regional scale facilities are needed and where?

How can regional spatial planning contribute to healthier environments across the region, including reducing environmental health risks and addressing inequalities in environmental exposure and access to healthy environments?

How can we protect and strengthen the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht, while supporting its long-term sustainability?



Connectivity & Infrastructure



Connectivity and Infrastructure are essential for sustainable growth and strong communities. Good transport links, utilities, and digital networks boost economic development while helping create attractive, well-connected places, where people wish to work and live. They also support communities by providing access to essential services such as schools, healthcare, public transport, and housing.

Good Regional infrastructure shapes patterns of accessibility, trade and mobility across the region and connectivity and infrastructure are essential for sustainable growth and strong communities. Good transport links, utilities, and digital networks boost economic development while helping create attractive, well-connected places, where people wish to work and live. They also support communities by providing access to essential services such as schools, healthcare, public transport, and housing.

The link between land use planning and infrastructure delivery for the growth of communities is more important than ever.



The RSES shall make provision for:

- **Identifying the provision of transportation** (including public transportation), water services, energy and communications networks and waste management facilities.
- **An indication of priorities for infrastructure of scale** relating to transportation (including public transportation), water services, waste management, energy and communications networks and the provision of educational, healthcare, retail, cultural and recreational facilities.
- Provision of information on potential **sources of funding** for infrastructure.

The Regional Assembly will work with infrastructure providers, statutory agencies, elected members and the public to identify these strategic infrastructure priorities, that supports the development of sustainable communities.

KEY ISSUES FOR THE REGION

Airport and Ports

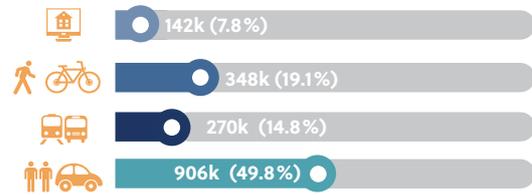
Dublin Airport is the gateway for the country to the rest of the world and its main hub for air traffic in and out of the State. In 2025, Dublin Airport contributed 2.9% of the national GDP and handled 36.43 million passengers, accounting for 81% of the national total. It also manages 91% of the State's air freight, highlighting its strategic role in both passenger and freight transport.

Dublin Port is the largest in the country and handles 80% of all cargo freight in the State.

Both international gateways are key for economic competitiveness in the Trans-European (TEN-T) road, rail and port network.

In line with the NPF, the RSES will support the strategic roles of Dublin Airport and Dublin Port and safeguard these assets as the State's primary international gateways. In addition to recognising the strategic importance of major gateways such as Dublin Airport and Dublin Port, the review of the RSES provides an opportunity to reflect on how the wider system of national and international connectivity operates across different transport modes. It is also recognised that national and international climate targets will require sector appropriate just transition in the context of a carbon-constrained global economy.

MEANS OF TRAVEL TO WORK & EDUCATION



Public Transport and Active Mobility Infrastructure

Integrating land use and transport planning is essential for economic growth, environmental protection, and quality of life. This means managing travel demand, investing where it has the most impact, and reducing commuting pressures by promoting walking, cycling, and public transport. National policies support Transport-Orientated Development and emphasise that future communities must rely less on car ownership to meet sustainability and climate goals.

In line with the NPF, the RSES will support the delivery of key public transport projects such as BusConnects, DART expansion and LUAS extension programmes, Metro Link and the Greater Dublin Metropolitan Cycle Network, along with the provision of regional park and ride facilities and improved interchanges to provide a fully integrated public transport network to ensure the continued success and competitiveness of the region. Furthermore, the recommendations of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, as highlighted in the NPF, will be supported by the RSES. The RSES will also continue to support the Rural Transport Programme to deliver enhanced regional accessibility, strengthening our rural economies and communities.

However, one of the key challenges facing the region is the need for better alignment between population and employment growth and the delivery of enabling transport and infrastructure. In line with the NPF, the RSES will seek to ensure that infrastructure delivery is targeted in the right locations within the existing built-up area of cities, towns and villages.

KEY ISSUES FOR THE REGION

Roads

The road network in the region is critical to assist economic growth and regional connectivity. There is significant development along key transport corridors outside Dublin, but there continues to be limited north to south connectivity, placing additional demand on the M50 and contributing to traffic congestion.

The RSES will continue to support investment in strategic road projects, particularly those that strengthen north-south and intra-regional links, which are essential to support economic development, and improve accessibility across the region, noting that improvements to public transport and active travel, as well as traffic management measures, are the key to addressing traffic congestion.

In line with the NDP 2025, there will be continued support around the protection and maintenance of the existing road network to ensure the safe and efficient travel of all road users across the region, as well as targeted new road investment. In particular, the RSES will address the need for multi-modal transport management, and the role of roads in enhancing public transport services and efficient freight delivery.

Water Services

Water and wastewater systems underpin compact growth, protect public health and environmental quality, and enable the delivery of housing, employment and enterprise development across the region. Resilient and climate-aligned water infrastructure is critical to achieving the objectives of the NPF and the NDP 2025.

The RSES will support key regional water and wastewater projects identified in the NPF and by Uisce Éireann.

Key projects include the Greater Dublin Drainage Project, the Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade and Expansion, and the Eastern and Midlands Region Water Supply Project. Together, these will deliver strong, reliable infrastructure and support future growth across the region.

Waste and Circular Economy

The region must sustainably manage waste, becoming more resource efficient, reduce resource consumption, create less waste and divert material (once considered waste) to beneficial reuse.

The RSES will support the application of circular economy principles whereby waste is designed out and support behavioural change across sectors to encourage meaningful reuse. It will also support the circular bioeconomy so that renewable biological and biodegradable resources are kept in use.

Communications & Energy

High-quality communications help attract high-value, knowledge-based jobs to the region. Digital connectivity supports regional development, business growth, access to public services, and social inclusion. Although progress has been made, gaps still exist, especially in rural and remote areas. In line with the NPF, the RSES will support the National Broadband Plan to keep the region competitive.

Moving to a carbon neutral, secure, and balanced energy system is a major challenge for the region. Issues like grid congestion and long connection times threaten climate and housing goals. However, the region has potential to support national energy targets through renewable energy, grid-enabled housing, community energy projects, and new energy connections to Europe and the UK. In line with the NPF, the RSES will support key electricity grid projects to meet growing demand and support future growth.



FOR CONSIDERATION

In your view, what are the key infrastructure priorities to support the growth of the region?

How can the RSES improve digital connectivity in our region?

How can regional spatial planning support stronger integration between ports, airports, rail infrastructure and regional transport systems?

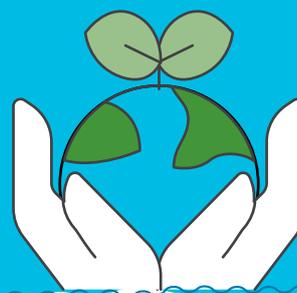
How can infrastructure planning improve international access and strengthen the regional transport network?

How can the RSES support healthier and more sustainable mobility patterns, including walking, cycling and public transport, while reducing congestion and improving air quality in towns and urban centres?

How can the RSES support rural transport and accessibility?



Environment & Climate

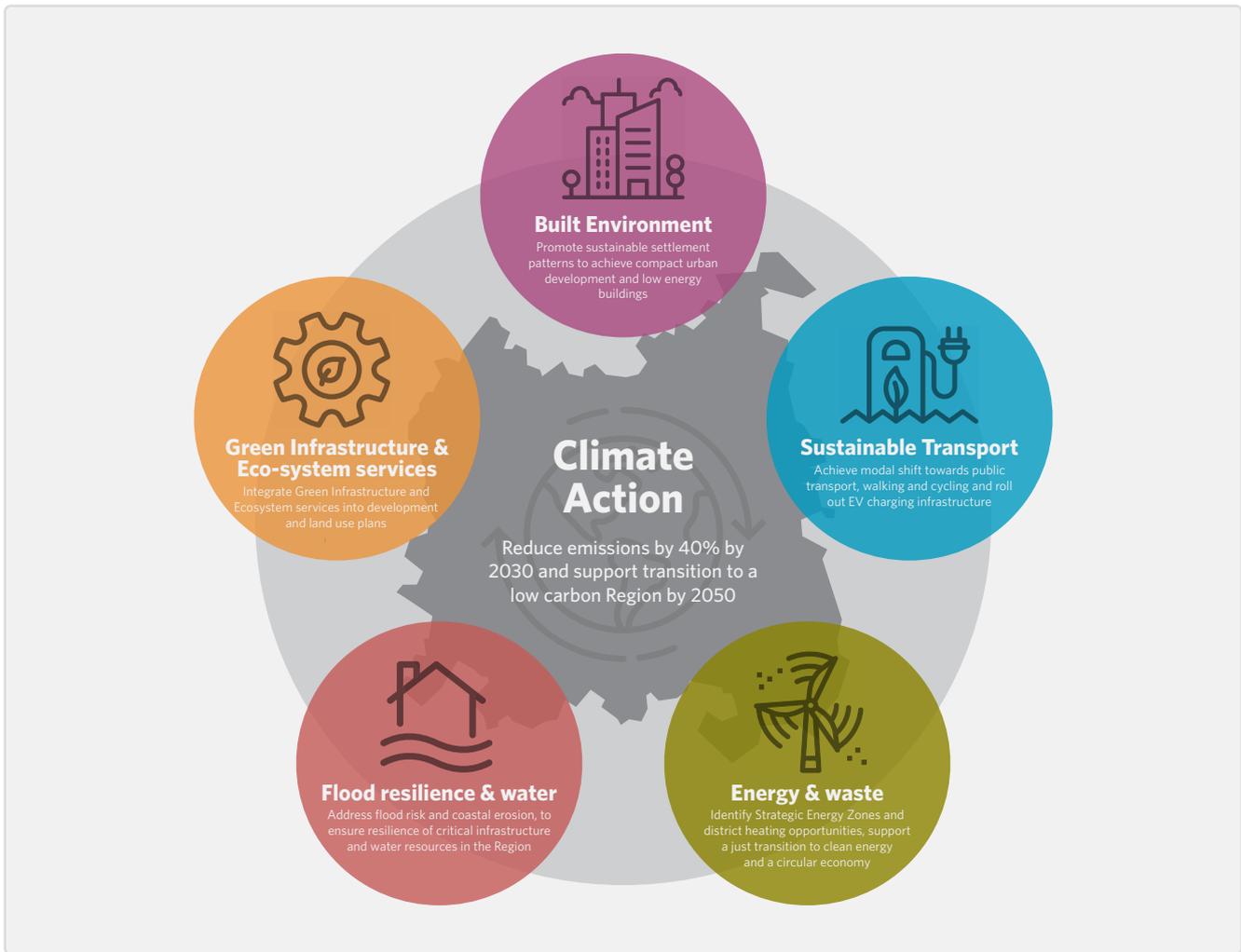


The Eastern and Midland Region is home to diverse landscapes of immense natural beauty, ranging from the eastern seaboard and the Dublin-Wicklow Mountains to the River Shannon and the peatlands of the Midlands. Land use decisions influence the services provided by landscapes, including water regulation, carbon storage, flood management, food production and recreational amenities.

Issues such as air pollution, environmental noise, water quality, light pollution and access to green space may affect communities in different ways. Land may also be understood as a strategic natural asset that underpins a wide range of forms of natural capital, including soils, water systems, habitats, hedgerows, wetlands, peatlands and landscapes that support biodiversity, carbon storage and ecological resilience. The review of the RSES provides an opportunity to consider how these assets can be protected and restored while accommodating development needs. Environmental systems such as rivers, wetlands and floodplains operate at catchment scale and frequently extend beyond administrative boundaries and planning jurisdictions. These assets contribute significantly to the climate and environmental resilience of our region, as well as to our cultural identity, quality of life, and tourism.

The NPF aims to achieve a carbon neutral, climate-resilient society, protect natural resources, and enhance amenities and heritage. To support this, the RSES will promote a climate-neutral, environmentally sustainable economy that respects environmental limits and planetary boundaries. It will be in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and will support major EU Directives and obligations including the Water Framework Directive, the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, the Habitats Directive, the Nature Restoration Law and EU climate and energy targets. Working with relevant authorities and bodies in Northern Ireland is also essential to manage shared environmental resources.





Source: Existing Climate Strategy in the RSES 2019-2031

The RSES shall make provision for:

- **Climate action:** Adaptation and mitigation consistent with national policies and measures.
- **Renewable energy:** Meet national targets for onshore renewable energy to facilitate electricity grid infrastructure, make provision for energy security, and promote steps for coordination and cooperation between public bodies.
- **Landscape:** A strategy relating to landscape and landscape character that coordinates the categorisation of landscapes, in terms of their capacity to absorb particular types of development, across the region to ensure a consistent approach to the protection of the landscape.
- **Environment and Biodiversity:** Preservation and protection of the environment and its amenities, including integration of the National Biodiversity Action Plan and the archaeological, architectural and natural heritage of the region.
- **Marine & Coastal Matters:** Facilitate coordination of land-sea interactions and coastal zone management in response to sea-level change in a manner consistent with the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF).
- **Flooding:** A comprehensive regional flooding and flood management plan.

KEY ISSUES FOR THE REGION

Climate Transition

The RSES will support climate adaptation and the just transition to a carbon neutral, sustainable, circular economy across all sectors supporting a prosperous and healthy society, respecting planetary boundaries and in compliance with environmental and climate laws.

Energy Transition

The RSES will provide for a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy to implement Regional Renewable Electricity Capacity Allocations as stated in the NPF, for onshore wind and solar (see section on Regional Renewable Energy).

Biodiversity

In line with the NPF, the RSES will align with the National Biodiversity Action Plan to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and will support the implementation of the National Restoration Plan. It will support Green and Blue Infrastructure in urban and rural areas to protect ecosystems and manage flood risk using Nature-Based Solutions and Sustainable Drainage Systems.

Landscape and Heritage

The region requires a consistent approach to landscape character assessment to protect special areas that extend across administrative boundaries. Cultural, scientific and built heritage assets must also be protected while leveraging their value for tourism and urban renewal.

Water and Marine Resources

Maintaining water quality is critical, as agriculture and urban wastewater discharges remain significant pollution sources. The RSES will address adequacy of water supply and wastewater capacity to support urban growth targets. Coastal management must proactively address sea-level rise, and coastal flooding and erosion through plan-led adaptation responses, especially in areas most at risk (see section on Marine Spatial Planning and Coastal Zone Management).





FOR CONSIDERATION

What measures should the RSES include to make the region climate resilient and more environmentally sustainable while supporting attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban and rural places?

How can the RSES best set out the order of priority and sequencing for regional infrastructure (water, transport, energy) to ensure development occurs within environmental limits?

How can the RSES best integrate principles to support the implementation of Nature-Based Solutions, SuDS and Green and Blue Infrastructure?

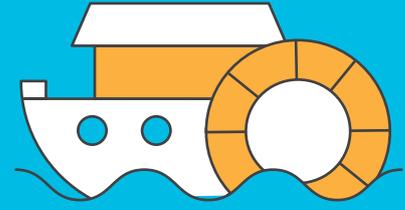
How can the RSES help protect and improve our region's unique heritage, landscapes, seascapes and cross-boundary systems, including support for cooperation between local authorities, state agencies and landowners?

How can the RSES support sustainable and multifunctional approaches to land use across the region, balancing development needs with the protection of biodiversity, water resources and landscape quality?

How can the RSES support rural transport and accessibility?



Marine Spatial Planning & Coastal Zone Management



With more than 270km of coastline from Carlingford Lough in County Louth to Kilmichael Point on the Wicklow-Wexford border and extending into the Irish Sea, the region has a thriving and bustling coastal and maritime area along the coastal planning authorities of Louth, Meath, Dublin and Wicklow.

The RSES shall make provision for:

- A **strategy relating to marine and coastal matters** that facilitates the coordination of land-sea interactions for coastal planning authorities within the region, and
- **Coastal zone management** as a consequence of sea level change, including the **identification of strategic infrastructure**.

The RSES will **support** the implementation of the NMPF, National Marine Planning Policy Statement and NPF.

What is integrated Land & Marine Planning needed for?

01

Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals

03

Coastal protection including 'Good' environmental status in the marine and coastal environment

02

Support of coastal communities, and improvement to quality of life and well-being

04

Support of coastal and maritime economy

KEY ISSUES FOR THE REGION

Sustainable Use and Management of Coastal and Maritime Areas

The RSES will set a framework for sustainable long-term use and management of coastal and maritime areas, policies of regional significance and regional priorities.

Climate Resilience

The RSES will need to incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures to account for a one metre sea level rise this century, the impacts of storm surges and coastal flooding on communities, the economy, the environment and infrastructure. To align with the NPF, the RSES will support a new National Coastal Change Strategy and Management Plans and promote nature-based solutions to manage coastal change and identify communities, habitats, heritage and assets in coastal areas at potentially significant risk.

Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs)

The RSES will align with the National DMAP and support the preparation of other DMAPs as required by the NPF; and the designation of 30% of Ireland's marine areas within Marine Protected Areas by 2030 for healthy and resilient marine ecosystems.

Sustaining Coastal Communities and Economies

The RSES will support coastal communities and necessary infrastructure, the maritime economy, and smart specialisation by focusing on the strengths of the maritime economy in the region.

Ports and Port Infrastructure

The RSES will promote the role, function and long-term infrastructural requirements of strategic ports particularly Tier 1 & 2 ports (as per the National Ports Policy) linked with the effective growth and sustainable development of the Dublin City region. The RSES will emphasise the role of ports and port infrastructure in facilitating Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE), its development, maintenance and operation, while ensuring protection of biodiversity.

Electricity Transmission Grid

To facilitate ORE, onshore, offshore and non-grid infrastructure will need to be upgraded and extended to enable domestic or international electricity grid connections, bringing the energy ashore and connecting to major sources of demand. The RSES will support the development of a national sub-sea interconnector around Ireland to connect Ireland to the European transmission grid.

Interjurisdictional Coordination and Cooperation

The RSES will support co-operation and a coordinated approach to terrestrial and maritime area planning within the region, on the island, transboundary or relating to jurisdictional issues with the UK and EU, to support coherent planning of the shared sea basin.

Implementing an Integrated Land and Marine Planning Approach

The RSES will support implementation and monitoring of integrated land and maritime planning.

Protecting the Marine Environment

The NMPF emphasises the importance of avoiding, minimising or mitigating significant adverse impacts on the environment and sets overarching marine planning policies and specific planning policies in the areas of environmental ocean health, thriving maritime economy and engagement with the seas, setting out key sectoral and activity policies for a range of areas, relevant to the RSES.

Climate Action Targets

- 80% renewable electricity by 2030
- 5 GW of installed offshore wind capacity by 2030 and 2GW non grid capacity to produce renewable hydrogen*
- 20 GW of offshore renewable energy (ORE) by 2040*
- 37 GW (ORE) before 2050 from fixed/ floating turbine, wave and tidal technologies

* The Future Framework for ORE Policy Statement (2024)

Ports and Harbours

- Dublin Port underpins international trade and economic activity moving Irish goods by sea, and is a key logistics and distributions hub
- Howth is a strategically important Fishery Harbour Centre
- Drogheda Port is Ireland's largest regional port and has an important role for regional employment and services
- Dún Laoghaire and Wicklow Ports are also ports identified as being of regional significance
- Many smaller harbours serve rural communities

Dublin Bay Biosphere

UNESCO recognised Dublin Bay, designating North Bull Island as a Biosphere for its rare and internationally important wildlife, habitats, their ecological value and the communities which live and work in the area. It extends to over 300km² in area.



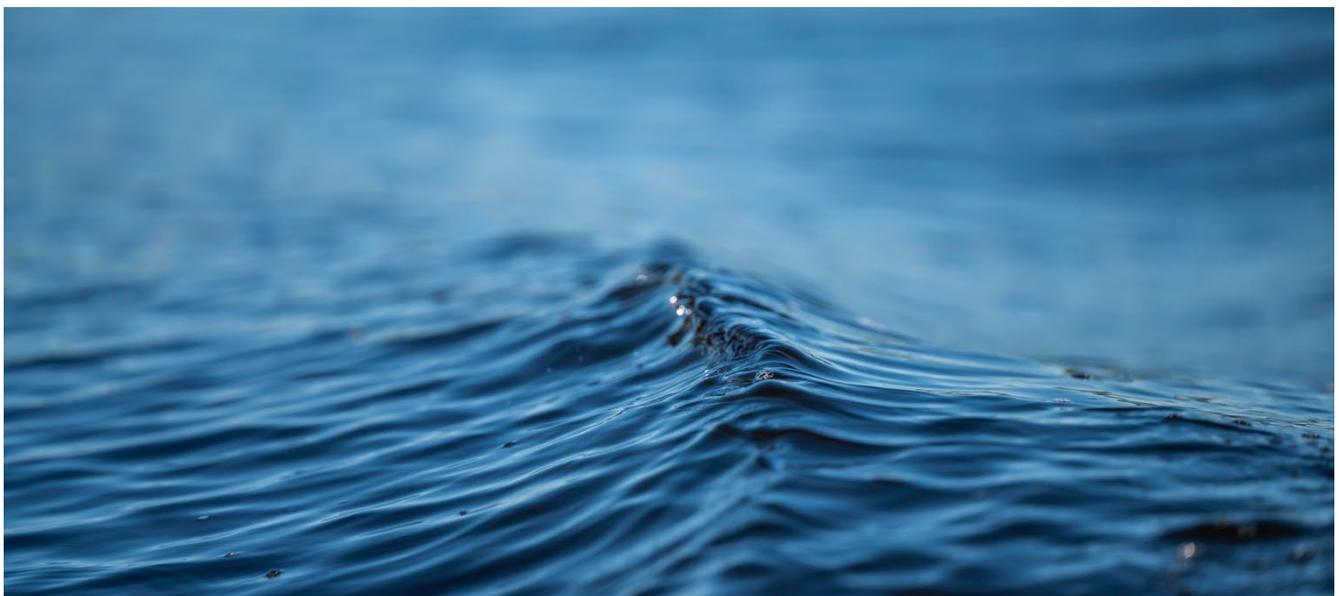
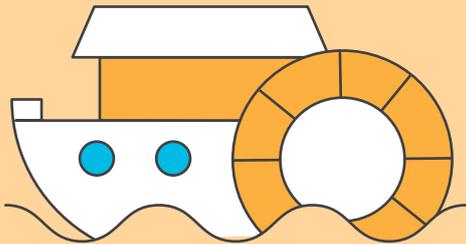


FOR CONSIDERATION

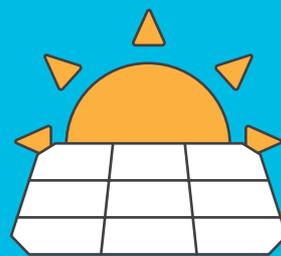
What will sea level change mean for this region and what mitigation and adaptation measures do we need for coastal communities and infrastructure? Which coastal settlements in the region in particular will be affected?

How can marine spatial planning in the region better integrate fisheries, tourism, biodiversity protection and offshore renewable energy?

What approach should the RSES take to coordinate land-sea interactions in the region?



Regional Renewable Energy



The objective of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) Paris Agreement is to limit the increase in global temperature to below 2°C, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Greenhouse gas emission (GHGs) impact on global temperatures and thus the priority is to reduce these emissions. In 2025, the EU committed to cutting c.66-73% of GHGs by 2035, compared to 1990 levels and 90% reduction by 2040, paving the way for **climate neutrality by 2050**.

The NPF similarly focuses on a transition to a carbon neutral and climate resilient society. It requires climate considerations to be integrated into statutory plans and guidelines, more energy efficient development, a roll-out of renewables, protection of carbon pools and sustainable supply chains in the circular bioeconomy³.

Climate Action Targets

- 51% reduction in GHGs to 2030, climate neutrality by 2050
- 9 GW of installed onshore wind capacity by 2030
- 8 GW of solar PV by 2030
- 500 MW of local community-based renewable energy projects
- Increased micro and small-scale generation
- 5.7 TWh of indigenous biomethane by 2030
- 2.7 TWh of district heating installed capacity across residential & commercial buildings by 2030

A new **Regional Renewable Energy Strategy (RRES)** will form part of the RSES. Its purpose is to meet national onshore wind and solar PV targets and identify these targets for county level; identify and facilitate electricity grid infrastructure for domestic use or export, including upgrade projects and support infrastructure; make provision for energy security; and promote steps for coordination and cooperation between public bodies.

The NPF also states that a coordinated approach to the development and expansion of the electricity grid is necessary.

³ The bioeconomy comprises “the production of renewable biological resources - such as crops, forests, fish, animals, and micro-organisms and the conversion of these resources and waste stream residues, by-products or municipal solid waste into value added products, such as food, feed, bio-based products and **bioenergy**” (European Commission, 2012, in NPF).

Regional Renewable Electricity Capacity Allocations

	Energised Capacity 2023 (MW)	Additional Renewable Power Capacity Allocation (MW)	Total % of National Share in 2030	Energised Capacity 2023 (MW)	Additional Renewable Power Capacity Allocation (MW)	Total % of National Share in 2030
	Onshore Wind			Solar PV		
EMRA	284	1,966	25%	306	3,294	45%
Other Regions	4,383	2,367	75%	139	4,261	55%
Total	4,667	4,333		445	7,555	

Source: Adapted Table 9.1, NPF 2025

KEY ISSUES FOR THE REGION

Allocation of Renewable Electricity Capacity Targets (Wind and Solar PV)

The NPF identified regional renewable electricity capacity targets for onshore wind and solar photovoltaic (PV), and the RSES must make provision for a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy (RRES), translating these regional targets to the local authority level. The region will need to generate 25% of the national share of onshore wind and 45% of the national share of solar PV, and local authorities will subsequently plan for the delivery of MW output in their Development Plans.

Securing a Sustainable Energy Supply and Competitiveness

The RSES and RRES will support national energy policy which is based on sustainability, security of supply and competitiveness and a reduction of emissions in the electricity sector. Sustainability and security will be achieved by shifting from a fossil fuel-based energy system to a renewables-led electricity-led system, maximising Renewable Energy (RE) potential, building flexibility into the system and integrating into Europe's energy system. Gas will support the transition to RE and management of the transmission grid, but rapid growth in electricity demand is projected over the decade. The wholesale electricity market operates on an all-island basis and international interconnection will add security to the supply and enhance regional competitiveness.

Opportunities and Challenges for Renewable Energy (RE)

RE is a new source of employment, supporting economic growth and contributing to social, economic and environmental well-being in local communities. However, infrastructure associated with RE and landscape protection and management must be considered. There are also opportunities for co-location with other land uses in rural and urban areas for the delivery of RE, provided they are complementary and environmentally robust.

Other RE, Energy Storage and Repowering Potential

In addition to onshore wind and solar, the NPF promotes the development of biomethane and hydrogen. Other forms of RE include hydro, ocean and wave energy, solid biomass, renewable waste and landfill gas. The growth and development of efficient district heating is also supported by the NPF. As non-renewables are phased out, different technologies will become increasingly prominent or less so, depending on design advancements, ability for rapid deployment, operational reliability and viability. The storage of renewable energy will be a key component of future energy infrastructure, as will extending the life of or repowering existing renewable energy plants and projects. These will be important considerations in the RRES and RSES.



FOR CONSIDERATION

What targeted measures should the RRES set to meet the regional onshore wind and solar PV targets?

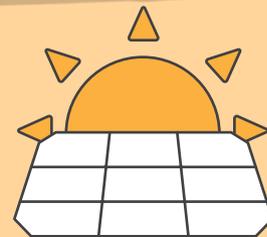
What enterprise opportunities are emerging in Renewable Energy and where?

How do we manage our sensitive landscapes, biodiversity, nature restoration and Renewable Energy generation?

Are there parts of the region which are better suited to different types of Renewable Energy?

How do we balance renewable energy development with landscape protection and encourage community acceptance?

How can Renewable Energy be co-located with other land uses?



HOUSEHOLDS WITH RENEWABLE ENERGY

18.6%



165,009
households

Economic Development & Employment



The Eastern and Midland Region accounts for approximately 60% of the State's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 49% of the total population of the State, according to Eurostat data. Although the region has a young workforce and many high-value service industries that boost productivity, the housing affordability crisis and shortages in housing and infrastructure are hindering a just transition to a sustainable and resilient economy.

Furthermore, the strong economic performance of Dublin contrasts with underperformance in the Midlands and parts of the Mid-East. The Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC), as the largest economic agglomeration in Ireland, offers an opportunity to develop critical mass and enhance all-island cohesion and potential. The review of the RSES provides an opportunity to consider how growth within the region can support both national competitiveness and balanced development, as well as how balanced regional development might support the transition toward a more resilient and less fossil fuel-dependent regional economy. This may include consideration of how regional planning can support a wellbeing-oriented economy that improves social outcomes and economic opportunity while reducing emissions, protecting natural systems and improving long-term resource security.

The NPF and the economic policies of the government place an emphasis on enterprise, skills and innovation capacity to support the delivery of a strong, competitive and balanced economy. The NPF supports the economic potential of the DBEC, promotes the sustainable development of the rural economy and sets out several objectives to guide strategic population and employment growth, while enhancing innovation and competitiveness.

The RSES shall make provision for an economic strategy that:

- Identifies **regional strengths and opportunities**, having regard to economic and employment trends
- Identifies the **regional attributes** that are essential to **enhancing regional economic performance**, including the **quality** of the environment, urban and rural areas, physical infrastructure, and social, community and cultural facilities
- Sets out proposals to **maintain or enhance key attributes** delivered through **public bodies, private investment and action**
- Identifies the means of **maintaining and enhancing overall regional economic performance** in accordance with **national economic policy**

The current Economic Strategy within the existing RSES sets out five economic principles to achieve sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient growth for the region.



Source: Existing Economic Strategy in the RSES 2019-2031

KEY ISSUES FOR THE REGION

Smart Specialisation and Clustering:

The RSES will support the leveraging of the region's strengths and advantages, while developing clusters in certain areas to create economies of scale and stronger networks.

Placemaking and Orderly Growth:

The RSES will support strategic, transport-orientated employment development and, specifically, the strengthening of Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns and the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor as regional economic drivers. Housing availability, infrastructure provision and environmental quality can also influence the ability of regions to attract and retain workers and investment.

Resilience:

The RSES will support the diversification of local economies and the development of innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems for sustained national growth that can withstand external shocks.

Sustainability:

The RSES will support economic development that strengthens communities, improves quality of life and protects natural resources that are critical to our environmental and economic well-being into the future.



FOR CONSIDERATION

How can the region build on its economic strengths to drive sustainable growth and competitiveness, while aligning skills and education to future needs?

What sectors, including emerging sectors, should be prioritised in the region, and why?

Which locations offer the greatest potential for strategic employment growth, and what barriers must be addressed to unlock this potential, including along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor?

How can the RSES support a form of sustainable prosperity that improves quality of life, health and wellbeing for communities across the region while reducing environmental pressures and resource dependency?

How can balanced regional development support a more resilient and carbon neutral regional economy, including opportunities for regional growth centres and key towns to support low-carbon enterprise, energy transition and sustainable employment growth?

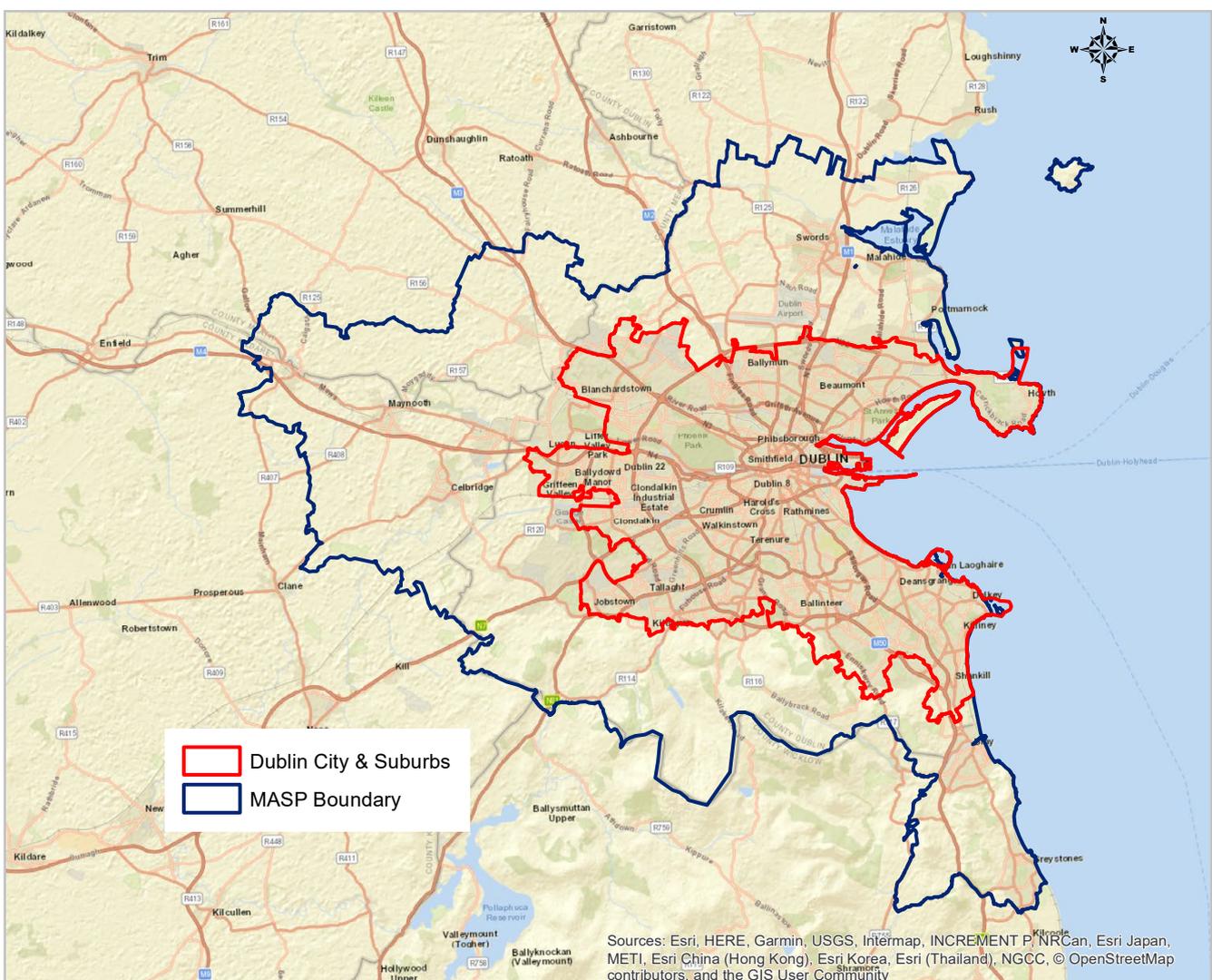
What spatial policies are needed to support indigenous SMEs alongside multinational investment?



Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan for Dublin (MASP)



The Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA) is the main international gateway to Ireland and includes the built-up area of Dublin City and its suburbs and its commuting zone.



Source: Figure 5.1 of the RSES 2019-2031 illustrating the Dublin MASP boundary

The existing Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Dublin is an integrated land-use and transportation strategy for the Dublin Metropolitan Area, and it forms part of the current RSES.

The Vision stated in the current MASP states:



build on our strengths to become a smart, climate resilient and global city region, expanding access to social and economic opportunities and improved housing choice, travel options and quality of life for people who live, work, study in or visit the metropolitan area."

The current RSES sets out a number of Guiding Principles for the sustainable development of the DMA which are as follows:

- Dublin as a Global Gateway
- Compact sustainable growth & accelerated housing delivery
- Integrated Transport and Land Use
- Increased employment density in the right places
- Alignment of growth with enabling infrastructure
- Social Regeneration
- Identify Future Development Areas
- Metropolitan Scale Amenities
- Co-ordination and active land management



Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan



Source: Figure 5.2 of the RSES 2019-2031 illustrating the Dublin MASP

The NPF increases the ambition for the DMA, setting a minimum target population for Dublin City and suburbs of 1.56 million by 2040, requiring the region to accommodate at least 296,000 additional people. To achieve this while avoiding unsustainable urban sprawl, the NPF mandates that 50% of all new housing in Dublin City and suburbs must be delivered within the existing built-up footprint. While focusing growth on the city core, the NPF states that the MASP may target up to 20% of phased population growth to the wider metropolitan area, provided it is directed toward new sustainable communities along planned high-capacity transport corridors. This is driven by Transport Orientated Development (TOD) and the 15-minute City concept, prioritising high-density, mixed-use residential development along high-capacity public transport corridors.

The RSES shall make provision for the following measures to secure the effective implementation and monitoring of the MASP:

- An **indication of priorities for infrastructure of scale** relating to transportation (including public transportation), water services, waste management, energy and communications networks and the provision of educational, healthcare, retail, cultural and recreational facilities.
- An **order of priority for infrastructure provision.**
- **Provide information on potential sources of funding** for infrastructure.
- **Investment and actions across different sectors needed to deliver planned growth and development,**
- **Coordination between constituent local authorities, and the cooperation of public bodies.**
- The **monitoring and reporting arrangements** required to measure and evaluate progress in implementing the MASP.

The NPF also requires a review of the existing governance of the MASP to ensure coordinated and effective implementation and monitoring.

KEY ISSUES FOR THE DUBLIN METROPOLITAN AREA

Compact Growth -

Dublin is Ireland's only global city of scale and its performance is critical to national economic competitiveness. The MASP will identify strategic locations for future development areas along planned high-capacity transport corridors. While growth will be focused on the city core, up to 20% of phased population growth may be targeted to the wider metropolitan area if served by high-capacity transport.

Enabling Infrastructure and Transportation -

The sustainable growth of the Dublin Metropolitan Area is dependent on the timely delivery of infrastructure. Key priorities will include the promotion of greater co-ordination between local authorities, public transport and infrastructure providers for the phased delivery of sites and the expansion of the public transport network (DART+, MetroLink, Luas expansion, and BusConnects) and critical water and energy services. Furthermore, the MASP will support Dublin Port and Dublin Airport as vital national entry points and logistics hubs.

Climate Action and Natural Resources –

The MASP will identify strategic environmental assets, including the Dublin Bay UNESCO Biosphere, which form a natural "greenbelt" that must be preserved and protected while enhancing Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI). It will also support the "no net loss" of the biodiversity mandate and the forthcoming National Restoration Plan.



FOR CONSIDERATION

How should the existing Dublin MASP vision be refined to ensure the region competes as a sustainable, international city while achieving climate neutrality by 2050?

What, in your view, is the order of priority and sequencing for regional infrastructure (water, transport, energy) required to unlock the MASP's strategic development areas?

How can Dublin build on its economic strengths and emerging sectors to drive sustainable growth and competitiveness?

How can we best manage the 20% phased growth allowance in the wider metropolitan area to ensure it is directed only toward sustainable communities on high-capacity transport corridors?

What measures can be introduced to enhance the governance structure of the MASP?



Implementation & Monitoring



The RSES supports delivery of the NPF and government economic policy by providing a long-term regional planning and investment framework, aligned with national planning policies.

Its success depends on strong coordination across national, regional, and local levels, with the RSES acting as a key delivery tool for Project Ireland 2040.

Effective implementation requires clear coordination, streamlined governance, focused public investment, and a robust monitoring framework to track progress against key NPF objectives.

The RSES shall make provision for:

- **Investment and actions across different sectors needed to deliver planned growth and development.**
- **Consideration of the coordination** between constituent local authorities, and the **cooperation of public bodies.**
- The **monitoring and reporting arrangements** required to measure and evaluate progress in implementing the RSES and MASP.

Oversight: The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) independently monitors implementation of the RSES and advises the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.



Implementation

The existing RSES sets out Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs), which identify actions and measures to assist implementation of the regional policy. A similar mechanism can be utilised in the new RSES, while ensuring the mechanisms are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) to facilitate effective implementation.

Some of the key mechanisms in the RSES to support its implementation include:

- Identifying strategic infrastructure, and an order of priority for infrastructure provision, within the region.
- Providing a development framework for the region to guide local authority development plans.
- A Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) to facilitate improved coordination and delivery of strategic sites in Dublin's Metropolitan Area (see section on Dublin MASP).
- A Regional Renewable Energy Strategy to meet national targets; identify and facilitate electricity grid infrastructure for domestic use or export; make provision for energy security; and promote steps for coordination and cooperation between public bodies (see section on Regional Renewable Energy).

The RSES will also directly influence the content of local authority Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) which must align with the RSES, thereby providing for further implementation of national and regional policy at local level.

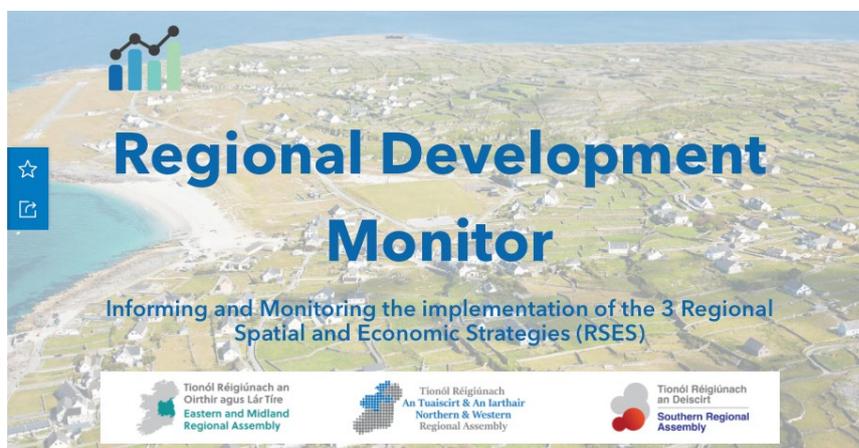
Environmental Monitoring

Monitoring will be carried out in order to identify, at an early stage, any unforeseen adverse effects due to implementation of the RSES, and to be able to take remedial action. Measures to monitor significant environmental effects of the implementation of the RSES will be included in the SEA Statement. Indicators will be selected to ensure transparent tracking of environmental accountability.

Monitoring

Planning legislation sets out that every four years, the Regional Assembly will prepare a Monitoring Report to evaluate progress in securing the overall objectives of the RSES. To facilitate this, the Regional Assembly may request, three years after the first revision of the RSES, a report from a person/body setting out progress made in supporting the objectives of the RSES applicable to that person/body. These bodies include local authorities within the region, the OPR, MARA, NTA, other public bodies and such other persons as may be prescribed. This Monitoring Report will be issued to the OPR which will then consider the report and may make recommendations to the Minister in relation to measures required to support the implementation of the RSES further.

Ongoing monitoring will be facilitated through the [Regional Development Monitor \(RDM\)](#) which has been established by the Regional Assemblies as the key monitoring tool for the RSES, providing a platform to track ongoing progress using indicators tied directly to national objectives.





FOR CONSIDERATION

What actions should the RSES include to strengthen governance for the RSES and the MASP and to better direct public investment?

How can the RSES monitoring framework better integrate environmental, economic and social outcomes, while reflecting statutory climate obligations and the transition to a low-carbon regional economy?

How might implementation of the RSES be supported through coordinated projects, pilot initiatives, cross-border cooperation or European funding programmes?

What metrics and indicators should be used to link economic and social outcomes with environmental and climate goals?

What elements should be monitored to ensure the success and effective implementation of the RSES?

How can the RSES set clear priorities and sequencing for regional infrastructure, so serviced land is delivered in line with housing targets?

What actions should the RSES include to improve coordination between local authorities, public bodies, and infrastructure providers?

How can the Regional Development Monitor be further developed to improve transparency and accountability?



Environmental Assessments



The environmental assessment of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which includes consideration of the potential environmental impacts arising from the implementation of policies and objectives, is a crucial element of the strategy preparation process. The assessments include a Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Regional Flood Risk Appraisal.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), in accordance with European law (EU Directive 2001/42/EC), aims to provide a high level of protection to the receiving environment and promote sustainable development by contributing to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of the RSES. The SEA is carried out in parallel to the preparation of the RSES and includes a systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the strategy.

Appropriate Assessment

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) aims to promote the maintenance of biodiversity through the conservation of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The Directive placed an obligation on Member States of the EU to establish the Natura 2000 network of important ecological sites, made up of Special Protection Areas (SPAs), established under the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC), and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), established under the Habitats Directive itself. An Appropriate Assessment (AA) is an assessment of potential effects of a plan or project, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, on protected European sites (Natura 2000 sites). The RSES will be subject to screening for AA, and, if likely significant effects on any European site cannot be ruled out, the RSES will be subject to screening for Stage 2 AA.

Regional Flood Risk Appraisal

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Ministerial Guidelines (2009) sets out the requirement for the RSES to be accompanied by a Regional Flood Risk Appraisal (RFRA). A RFRA will provide a strategic assessment of types of flood risk in the region and will assist in making informed flood risk policies.

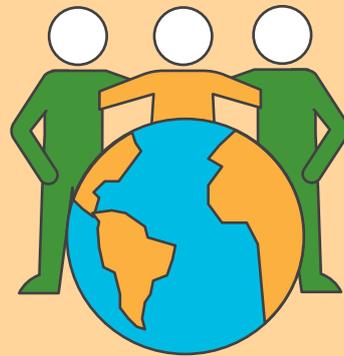
Reports in relation to all of the above assessments will be available for public inspection in conjunction with the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.



FOR CONSIDERATION

What SEA indicators should be used to track environmental mitigation across the twelve local authorities in the region?

How can we ensure full integration of SEA, AA and RFRA processes into the plan making of the RSES?



How to Make a Submission/ Observation

01 Online:

Via the EMRA Consultation Portal on the website consult.emra.ie



02 Post:

Written submission to the following address:

Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly,
3rd Floor North,
Ballymun Civic Centre,
Main Street, Ballymun,
Dublin 9.
D09 C8P5



Submissions / observations must be in writing and will be accepted from **Thursday 26th March 2026 until 5pm on Friday 22nd May 2026.**

Please make your submission via **one medium only**, with electronic or hard copy.

All submissions must include the following:

- Your name and details of any organisation, community or representative group, or company you represent
- An address for correspondence
- Your submission on relevant planning issues for the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Your submission will be taken into consideration prior to the preparation of the Draft RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region.

This initial pre-draft consultation is only the first step in the process of preparing and adopting a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region and there will be other opportunities later in the process for you or your organisation to further express your views and make additional submissions.





**Tionól Réigiúnach an
Oirthir agus Lár Tíre**
**Eastern and Midland
Regional Assembly**

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