



**Waterford
CHAMBER**
IN BUSINESS FOR BUSINESS

Submission by Waterford Chamber of Commerce

*Response to draft consultation document
Ireland 2040 Our Plan
National Planning Framework*

11/10/2017

1. Waterford Chamber of Commerce welcomes the publication of the Draft National Planning Framework (DNFP) and the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing consultation process. As the leading representative organisation for Waterford business since 1787, Waterford Chamber welcomes the inclusion of Waterford City as one of the four national cities, outside of Dublin, to be targeted for growth both in terms of population and jobs.

The Chamber endorses the view that a strong metropolitan area underpinned by a long term strategic plan and focussed investment is necessary to catalyse sustainable growth and prosperity in Waterford city and the wider South East Waterford City Region (SEWCR). In addition, the South East has a vibrant rural community which is immersed in indigenous agri/food and drinks production and in tandem supplies a workforce with a strong work ethic for our urban centre. Development of our city is crucial in order that the inter-dependence between urban and rural communities is maintained.

However **Waterford Chamber contends that the population growth projections both at a national (an increase of 1m) and city level (an increase of 30,000) are underestimated and need to be revised upwards to 2m and 100,000 respectively.** This is a contention shared with many of our regional stakeholders including South East Chambers, the five Local Authorities of the South East and IBEC South East.

2. Strong collaborative government and alignment of policy, planning and capital spending between local authorities, enterprise and investment support agencies, stakeholders with responsibility for education, health, transport, tourism and communications will be critical to realise effective regional development in our city, towns and rural communities in the South East. Waterford Chamber supports the statutory backing to be put in place to underpin the framework with appropriate governance structures for monitoring and for future reviews. It does however **recommend that the NPF must be championed at the most senior level in Government through the Department of the Taoiseach and that key performance indicators need to be identified with respect to each of the national strategic outcomes in order to measure adherence, continued relevance and effective delivery of the NPF.**
3. The industry and enterprise base of Waterford city and the South East Wider City Region has transformed considerably over the last decade evolving from a traditional manufacturing and agricultural base to one which hosts key international players both in international services and in advanced manufacturing across the pharmaceuticals, medical devices, precision engineering and agri / food sectors. **Providing the enterprise, employment and educational policy directive, infrastructure and quality of life measures to sustain high end quality employment in both multinational and indigenous industries is paramount to accelerating the growth of sustainable employment in Waterford and the wider region.** It is therefore critical that in defining and planning Waterford city and the South East Wider City Region as a city region of growth and ambition that these knowledge intensive capabilities are invested in, promoted and built upon rather than merely describing Waterford ‘...as a location for back-office functions in areas...that may wish to avoid larger urban areas’, (p61). Such language used in the DNPF (p 60 & P61) to describe Waterford does not reflect Waterford as a city or region of vision, ambition or potential as is articulated in the submissions made in March 2017 both by Waterford Chamber and jointly by the five Local Authorities of the South East.

A considerable omission in the DNPf is the absence of any specific reference to the alignment of planning, policy and investment to support quality job creation and innovation through national agency structures such as IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland and the infrastructure, measures and programmes which are and will be required at a regional level to support a planned approach to appropriate job creation in our regional cities and other urban centres.

4. Waterford City & County Council has recently published its ambitious plans for the development of Waterford's North Quays Strategic Development Zone (SDZ). Waterford Chamber welcomes the acknowledgement in the DNPf (p 61) that delivering the North Quay's SDZ will be one of the key future growth enabler for Waterford. The development of the North Quay's lands will create a vibrant and complementary extension to the City centre and will form a sustainable, smart connected urban area of regional significance. It will deliver a diverse mix of retail, enterprise, residential and recreational space to cater for an expanding city population and regional hinterland. **The North Quay's project will be a transformative development project and a dynamic new economic engine for the South East. However this game changer requires priority investment under the National Capital Investment Plan.**

5. Waterford Chamber endorses the schematic presented on P 77 which outlines the hierarchy of settlements from cities to villages and related infrastructure required. This schematic includes "University" as a critical piece of infrastructure for a city. Waterford is the only city listed in the NPF without a university. Notwithstanding the very considerable success of Waterford Institute of Technology and IT Carlow, Waterford city and the SEWCR continues to be constrained in its ability to grow by the lack of a university with a wide breadth of disciplines, a strong international presence and reputation, and enhanced research capability. The impact of this is evidenced by the significantly lower level of higher education investment in RDI in the South East¹ (4%) by comparison for instance to the South West (22%) and the Dublin Region (51%). Furthermore population trends over the last 5 years in the South East region indicate a 17% decline in the 20 – 29 year old group, a significant brain drain and loss of talent from our region. Investment in and enhancement of the higher education infrastructure in Waterford and the South East is critical in order to retain and attract talent, to create and sustain high quality jobs, to provide for lifelong learning requirements of the workforce and to attract FDI to Waterford and the SEWCR. **The NPF must place greater emphasis and priority on supporting the creation of a multi-campus Technological University in the South East.**

6. Throughout the DNPf specific reference is made to the importance of enhancing accessibility between the 4 regional cities which is welcomed. Priority however appears to be given to the connecting motorway between Cork and Limerick P 123 and P 133 with inconsistent reference to Waterford. **A key priority for effective development in Waterford and the South East must be to upgrade the N25 to motorway standard thereby providing motorway connectivity between Waterford to the M8 through Cahir and onwards to Limerick.** On completion this will ensure motorway connectivity between the cities of Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway thereby connecting the South East, South, Mid East and Western

¹ http://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/About_KTI/Reports-Publications/KTI-Annual-Review-and-Annual-Knowledge-Transfer-Survey-2015.pdf

regions and enabling the four city regions to become a very real and viable counterbalance to growth and development in the Dublin region.

7. It is notable also on P 77 (*“The Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure”*), that access to quality health care in primary and community care setting need to be complemented by high quality acute care in our cities. **Specialist resources and investment in the provision of acute care, A& E and maternity services in Waterford University Hospital are vital** to ensure that it can cater for both an ageing population aswell as current and future population growth within the city and its regional hinterland.
8. The three South East ports (Belview, Rosslare and New Ross) together provide a full range of service to the South-East Region and beyond. Rosslare and Belview are Tier 2 Ports of national significance and are comprehensive ports on the Ten-T network. The ports have Ro-Ro, Lo-Lo, Bulk and passenger services/facilities providing critical connectivity and direct links to the UK and the Continent. These ports have some areas of underutilised capacity and significant scope for the expansion of freight services. In the context of critical challenges posed by Brexit the South East Ports can offer a platform for solutions that bypass the UK land bridge. Similarly the opportunity is there to reduce freight road miles and related CO2 emissions while taking some pressure off of Dublin’s road and port infrastructure. **We submit that the South East ports have a very significant role to play in the economic development of the South East and that this role is equivalent to that performed by the Tier 1 Ports (Dublin, Cork and Shannon Foynes) for their respective regions.**
9. Reference to the development and planning for the advancement of Waterford airport is absent from the DNPF. Waterford Chamber in its submission to the NPD in March 2017 clearly indicated the powerful economic impact that the extension of the runway would have on enhancing connectivity between the South East and the UK and mainland Europe. **Waterford Airport must be recognised as a key strategic infrastructural asset of the South East region with significant potential to act as a gateway for increased tourist traffic but most importantly providing the access route so essential for securing international investment and sustaining enterprises within the South East.**

In summary Waterford Chamber recommends that in order to ensure the full potential of Waterford and the South East Waterford City Region is realised, **the following key future growth enablers must be provided for in the NPF:**

- Government investment to support the development of the North Quay's SDZ which will deliver a diverse mix of enterprise, retail, residential and recreational space, creating a vibrant and complementary extension to the City centre and a dynamic new economic engine for the South East.
- Investment, policy and legislative provision to position Waterford as a University city with a Technological University of the South East of international standing and scale, providing our citizens and enterprises with the skills, knowledge and innovative competencies required into the future.
- An upgrade of the N24 to motorway status connecting the three main centres of population and employment in the Southern region, Waterford, Limerick and Cork (through the M8), as well as the ports in the South East (Rosslare, Belview/ Waterford), Foynes and Cork, strategic import and export centres with the EU and UK.
- Provision of investment and specialist resources ensuring the delivery of acute care, A & E and maternity services in Waterford University Hospital catering for an ageing and growing population within Waterford and the South East.
- Policy and investment priority to support the growth of Tier 2 Ports of Bellview and Rosslare which are and will be critical infrastructure in connecting Ireland and the South East to Europe
- Investment supporting the expansion of the runway in Waterford Airport developing it as a key strategic infrastructural asset capable of handling up to 600,000 passengers per annum providing short haul connectivity to the UK and mainland Europe.
- Capitalise on the very considerable success of the Waterford Greenway, and by connecting the Greenways and Blueways of the South East, provide a powerful tourism proposition and quality social amenities for our citizens.