



## **‘Ireland 2040 Our Plan’ National Planning Framework**

### **Carlow County Council**

**Submission to  
Department of Housing, Planning,  
Community  
and Local Government**



30<sup>th</sup> March 2017





## CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	1
2.	NPF A Place Making Strategy – Our Capital, Cities and Towns	1
3.	Strategic Importance of Carlow Town	2
4.	Carlow’s Strategic Location - Zone of Influence	3
5.	Regional Context South East Region	6
6.	Potential of Rural Carlow Quality of Life	7
7.	Investment in Infrastructure <sup>8</sup>	8
8.	Investment in Enterprise & Employment	11
9.	Investment in Education	14
10.	Investment in Tourism	17
11.	Conclusion	18

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APPENDIX 1 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	20
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Carlow County Council welcomes the Governments consultation process for the preparation of a strategic planning and development framework for Ireland, to cover the period between now and 2040. The Council particularly welcomes the emphasis on Health and Well Being; Place Making; Sustainability and Infrastructure. It is noted the Framework will take account of projected growth and development and likely population increases over the period, from circa 4.7 million people today to over 5.5 million in 2040, setting out national policy in relation to important issues such as channelling and managing growth in a way that will support quality of life, sustainable economic development and an environment of quality, whilst capitalising on the potential of places.

Whilst the National Planning Framework (NPF) will provide a decision-making framework from which other plans will follow, such as Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, City and County Development Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans, Carlow County Council wish to take this opportunity to participate in the consultation process and to outline the strategic issues considered relevant. As a local authority, responsible for a broad range of local development functions, including economic development and planning, housing, infrastructure, mobility, and traffic management, community development and environmental protection, the Council has the ability to deliver at a county level and will play a key role in the implementation of the NPF. It is noted that the Framework will be a high-level document that will provide the framework for future development and investment in Ireland, providing a long-term and place-based aspect to public policy and investment, aiming to coordinate sectoral areas such as housing, jobs, transport, education, health, environment, energy and communications, into an overall coherent strategy. Carlow County Council believes, that in order to ensure that positive outcomes arising from national growth be shared by people throughout Ireland, the

potential of all areas will need to be realised, relative to their capacity for sustainable development.

## **2. NPF - A PLACE MAKING STRATEGY – OUR CAPITAL, CITIES & TOWNS**

The Dublin City Region now accounts for 40% of the national population and 49% of economic output (2016) with the spatial pattern of Dublin’s influence now extending to adjoining counties, including Carlow. It is also acknowledged that the country requires a strong international capital city, having regard to its competitors’ in the EU and beyond. In this regard, the Council agrees with the principle that Dublin and Ireland’s four regional cities offer significant potential to be the focal point to drive growth and development in their regions and that beyond the city catchments, there is also a network of large urban towns /centres and in particular County Towns that can play a supporting or complementary role. Carlow Town is one of those large urban centres. It is critical that county towns, such as Carlow Town, are acknowledged in the NPF as having significant potential to contribute to the delivery of growth at a national, regional and/or inter regional level.



## Recommendations

- *Maintain Dublin as a strong international capital city.*
- *Prioritise the four city regions outside of Dublin with focus on the South East Waterford City Region – Waterford City is now Dublin's nearest city region and gateway to Britain and Europe.*
- *Recognise the significant potential of County Towns to contribute at a national, regional and/or inter-regional level.*

### 3. STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF CARLOW TOWN

During the period 1996 to 2016, the population of the country increased from 3,626,000 to 4,758,000 (31%). In this context, the population of County Carlow increased from 41,600 in 1996 to 56,900 in 2016, an increase of 37%, placing it amongst the fastest growing in the country and the second fastest growing county in the South East Region. Notwithstanding the fact that the country has come through a serious recession and economic downturn, County Carlow's economic performance has been well above that anticipated for it at the time of preparation of the National Spatial Strategy. Based on economic evidence available, it is clear that Carlow has developed a significant inter regional role, well beyond its designation in the National Spatial Strategy. The population of Carlow town has grown to circa 24,300, an increase of 62% during the period 1996 to 2016 and having regard to its zone of influence, is projected to continue to grow at this rate.

Carlow Town is one of the fastest growing for the following reasons:

1) It has a **strategic location** and extensive catchment area extending well beyond the county boundary.

2) Substantial **investment in infrastructure** has taken place, including high quality physical, social, cultural and economic infrastructure which has been a key factor from a competitiveness perspective. The location of a significant zoned land bank in Carlow Town and in close proximity to M9 Interchanges 4, 5 and 6, demonstrates that the county is well placed, in regard to its mix of zonings, to accommodate the demands of a modern self-sustaining urban growth centre.

3) It has a **diversified economic base** in terms of its employment workforce.

4) It has an expanding **enterprise, engineering, manufacturing and pharmaceutical base** which is consistent with the changing economic landscape of Ireland Inc.

5) It has **strong third and fourth level educational base** which has been a substantial catalyst for economic development. The Council acknowledges the critical role of Carlow's higher educational infrastructure in supporting and driving economic activity in the catchment area. The Institute of Technology in Carlow continues to maximise the benefit and potential of its location at the centre not just of the South East Region, but also the Greater Dublin Area (Dublin and Mid East). Carlow College (St. Patricks) also plays a pivotal role in the provision of higher education in the region.

6) Its growing **tourism** sector supported by a network of towns and villages with an abundance of other attractions which, when combined, offer a good **quality of life** for its residents, student and visitor population.

7) Availability of more affordable land, housing and services supported by high quality **social/community infrastructure and recreational / sports facilities**.





### Recommendations

- *Regional Cities to be complemented by the County Town / main Urban Centre in each County in the Region, i.e. Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford and Clonmel in the South East Waterford City Region.*
- *Importance of County Towns like Carlow complementing the role of Dublin and Waterford Cities, growing at an appropriate scale to accommodate employment growth at a sustainable level.*
- *County Towns to play a key role and be acknowledged as having significant potential to contribute at a national, regional and/or inter-regional level - Carlow's growth has been influenced by a number of factors, including its proximity to Dublin City.*

#### 4. CARLOW'S STRATEGIC LOCATION - ZONE OF INFLUENCE

From a strategic location perspective, Carlow is positioned to the North of the South-East region, making it the county which is closest to Dublin and the Mid-East region. The hinterland served by Carlow extends well beyond its county and regional boundaries, stretching well into the Greater Dublin Area / Mid-East Region. **Carlow's location is best described at the centre of a national strategic growth circle, with its zone of influence extending into the Greater Dublin Area / Eastern and**

**Midlands Region and equally into the South East / Southern Region.**

Carlow's inter-regional role is supported by the following trends:

- **Population growth** influenced in part by its location on the periphery of the Greater Dublin Area<sup>1</sup>, within commuting distance of Dublin City and large employment centres on the outskirts of Dublin City and within the GDA. Over the past decade, the County's population has increased in part, as a result of supply and affordability constraints in the Dublin housing market. While this trend may have diminished somewhat, Carlow is now in a position to capitalise on its location, by encouraging firms to locate in the county where there is a pool of experienced workers who currently commute from Carlow to their place of work.
- **Enhanced Connectivity** being located 50 minutes from Dublin and 45 minutes from Waterford City, via the M9 and improved rail links northwards and southwards. The county is also situated approximately 85kms from the ferry ports of Rosslare, Waterford and Dublin. Similarly, it is located 95kms from Dublin Airport and 90km from Waterford Regional Airport.
- **Ability to attract major international companies** due to a number of factors, including proximity to airports and ports, location between the Dublin/Mid-East and South-East Regions and the qualified workforce reflecting the presence of IT Carlow. Further investment is however, required to support a sustainable economy at a local and regional level. Some recent investments include:
  - The €300 million investment by Merck Sharp and Dohme, a leading international company in the healthcare sector. The new Carlow facility, supports the company's expanding global

<sup>1</sup> The Greater Dublin Area is defined as Dublin and the Mid-East counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow.

business in human vaccines and biologics, creating over 300 new high value jobs.<sup>2</sup>

- The US company Unum has created 150 professional jobs in a new software services centre to support its global income protection business.
- The relocation of 200 employees from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to Carlow i.e. the Companies Registration Office and the Workplace Relations Commission to Carlow. The choice of Carlow as a location for such activity is further testimony to the potential that it has to offer.
- €25 million investment in new distillery by Walsh Whiskey, partnered with Italian Drinks Company Ilva.
- **Educational establishments** in the County have developed substantial links between the Institutions of Higher Education in Carlow and the surrounding regions. Almost 30% of the registered students at Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC) come from Dublin / Mid-East Region, whilst almost 22% come from the South-East Region excluding Carlow.

Further links have developed including;

1) The role of the Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC) in servicing enterprises across the South East and Mid-East regions as evidenced from the range of business support services provided to start-up companies across both regions.

2) The higher educational programmes provided through centres in Carlow, Wicklow and Wexford, in

conjunction with other organisations in Laois, Kilkenny and Kildare.

3) ITC's Wexford Campus, located in Wexford Town, which has been providing full time courses in Wexford since 1995 and now offers courses to degree level in Business, Humanities Art and Architectural Technology; and

4) The collaborative links between Carlow College (St. Patricks) and Trinity College Dublin.

Such links demonstrate the potential of both colleges IT Carlow and Carlow College (St. Patricks) for exploiting their strategic location. These improved linkages together with the trends set out above, have led to Carlow developing a far more **significant inter regional role**. It is this strategic location which has strongly influenced Carlow's economic success to date. Thus, while the population of the county is now circa 56,800, Carlow actually serves a catchment area of circa 700,000 persons, which would correspond to a workforce of around 350,000 or 15% of the entire workforce across the State.

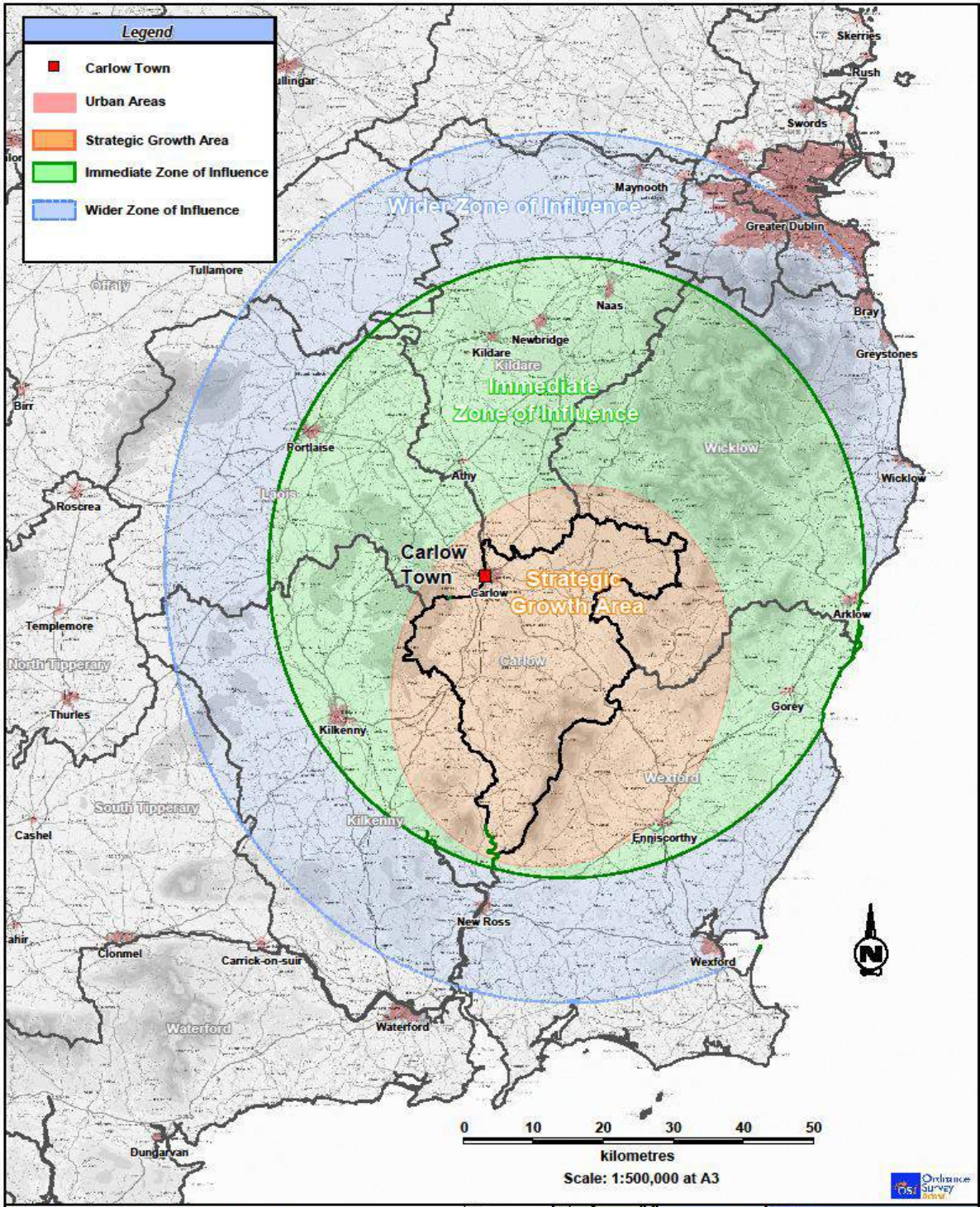
## Recommendation

- *The NPF to recognise county and regional boundaries on an inter-regional basis and the Regional Assemblies to co-ordinate and ensure more effective sub-regional and regional outcomes.*

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<sup>2</sup> Speaking at the construction commencement ceremony, Dr. John T. McCubbins, Vice President of Global Vaccine Manufacturing for the global healthcare company, Merck Sharp and Dohme, stated: "Carlow has strong leadership and a deep commitment to economic development that is very evident from the level of economic activity currently taking place in the Town. It is centrally located and has an excellent Institute of Technology, capable of supplying the necessary skills that we require. It is a very attractive place to live, with a wide range of competitively priced housing and plenty of amenities. Carlow is an excellent location to commence the next chapter of Merck's presence in Ireland"



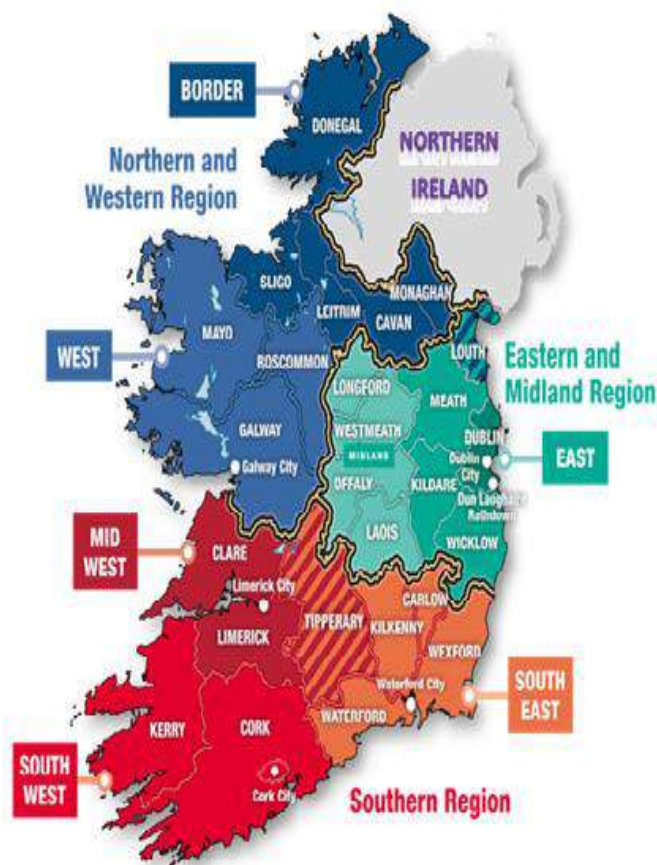


Project	<b>Carlow Economic Review Strategy</b>	Figure	<b>3</b>			<b>Issue Details</b> Drawn: F. Gillingberg    Project No.: 08103 Checked: R. Murphy    File Ref.: P008183M/0002003 Approved: R. Murphy    Scale: 1:500,000 at A3    Drawing No.:    Rev.: Date: 23/02/2009    M0002    000 <small>Notes: 1. This drawing is the property of RPS Planning &amp; Environment. It is a confidential document and must not be copied, used, or its contents divulged without prior written consent. 2. All levels are referred to Ordnance Datum, Mean Sea Level. 3. Ordnance Survey Ireland License EN 0000206 &amp; S00001008 Copyright Government of Ireland.</small>	
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## 5. REGIONAL CONTEXT - SOUTH EAST REGION

With the possible prioritisation of city regions in the NPF, the Council notes that three of the four cities outside of Dublin are in the Southern Region, with the focus on Waterford City in the South East. It is the view of Carlow County Council that effective regional development is critical, to relieve development pressure on Dublin and create additional growth in the South East and other Regions.



The development of regional cities however, must be complemented by each of the main urban centres in each county in the region, i.e. Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford and Clonmel in the South East. These locations have capacity for “growth” and have significant potential to contribute at a regional level. Combined, the regional city and county towns will have the capacity to deliver over the period of the NPF. Carlow has a real opportunity to contribute economically, given its strategic central location between Dublin and

Waterford which has been enhanced by the provision of the M9. A key issue for Waterford City is achieving critical mass, with an ambition to grow population from 50,000+ to 100,000+ by 2040. If the South East Waterford City Region is to grow, the region is dependent on:

- Waterford being a strong performing city and a strong driver of the economy.
- Counties Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Tipperary and Waterford working collaboratively to develop a nationally significant economic social and sustainable location, achieving balanced regional development.
- The strengthening of services in the South East Region including:

**Health** - Upgrading of Waterford Regional Hospital – freeing up capacity in hospitals in Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny General Hospital, Kilcreene Orthopaedic Hospital Kilkenny and Clonmel Regional Hospital.

**Travel** - Upgrading of Waterford Regional Airport to an appropriate scale, capable of handling 300,000 – 400,000 passengers.

**Development of the ports** – particularly Rosslare as Ireland’s prime European link.

**Transportation Improvements** to the N80, N25 and remaining N24.

**Education** - development of a multi campus Technological University for the South East (TUSE), which is critical for the optimum social and economic development of the region.

**Economic Development Growth / Employment Creation** - At the height of the recession in 2011, whilst unemployment in the State was 14% and is now down to 6.7% at the end of the last quarter of 2016, unemployment in the South East Region peaked at 17% in 2011 and is

now down to 9.4% at the end of quarter four 2016. Implementation of the Government's 'Action Plan for Jobs' is critical, to reduce this level of unemployment to the national average.

**Tourism Programme Development** – potential for the Region:

- Development of Regional Greenways
- Progress implementation of Ireland's Ancient East
- Creative Ireland - Arts, Culture, Festivals and Venues.

Notwithstanding the fact that County Carlow is located in the South East Region, as previously outlined, Carlow has developed a far more significant inter regional role as addressed in Section 4 above.

### ***Recommendations***

- ***South East Region to be complemented by the main Urban Centre in each County in the Region, i.e. Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford and Clonmel, to deliver growth and contribute to an effective city region.***
- ***That the National Planning Framework supports and highlights the importance of the establishment of a multi campus Technological University for the South-East, with the primary centres in Carlow and Waterford and outreach campii in Wexford and Kilkenny.***
- ***The NPF to recognise county and regional boundaries on an inter-regional basis and the Regional Assemblies to co-ordinate and ensure more effective sub-regional and regional outcomes.***

## **6. POTENTIAL OF RURAL CARLOW - QUALITY OF LIFE**

The Council agrees that the challenge for the NPF is to achieve an appropriate balance between supporting Ireland's agricultural communities and other traditional rural-based economic activity, while simultaneously fostering sustainable economic diversification and development in rural areas. Ireland's rural towns and villages must be protected and vibrant rural communities sustained. Rural areas and the importance of key agri industries, agriculture, food production, energy, etc. are of significant importance.

District Towns such as Tullow (4,600 – 95% increase between 1996 and 2016) and Bagenalstown / Royal Oak (3,500 - 30% increase between 1996 and 2016) are located in rural areas that are experiencing significant levels of population growth. Their proximity to Dublin, Carlow Town and Kilkenny City means that they are experiencing development pressures which must be planned effectively. These centres have well developed services and community facilities and have the capacity to accommodate additional growth (subject to certain physical infrastructural investments).

Other smaller towns and villages in the county, such as Borris, Hacketstown, Rathvilly, Ballon and Leighlinbridge, also have the community and social infrastructure in place and must be protected from rural decline. Improving the lives of those living and working in rural communities is a priority for Carlow County Council and must be a priority in the NPF in line with the objectives of the 'Action Plan for Rural Development'.

## Recommendations

- *An appropriate Settlement Strategy be developed – Current planning policy relating to ‘Core Strategy’ requires review to meet supply and demand and to prevent towns and villages being eroded through population decline.*
- *Investment in regeneration of rural towns and villages to be prioritised – a long-term strategy is required, including implementation of the Governments Action Plan for Rural Development - 'Realising our Rural Potential'.*
- *Investment in physical and social infrastructure and improvement of the public realm and recreational / amenities facilities, in the interest of People’s Health and Wellbeing and quality of life.*
- *Public Transport services must be enhanced.*
- *Communication- / Connectivity - High quality and affordable broadband in all areas is required - Rollout of the National Broadband Plan.*
- *Support the provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations thereby promoting labour market participation among parents and supporting parents in accessing training, education and employment.*

## 7. INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

The success of Ireland’s economic transformation requires an understanding and swift response to the changes in the global business environment. Moreover, inward and indigenous investment today demands a more comprehensive range of facilities to compete on a global basis, compared to previous years, such as good transportation links (road, rail, airports and ports), good quality

telecommunications, as well as a high degree of social and environmental standards. Investment in quality infrastructure is a key driver of economic growth and competitiveness and ultimately enhances the quality of life of those who benefit from it. It is the locations which offer a well-developed infrastructure in respect of all of the above that will allow businesses to gain a competitive edge and compete on a global scale. The NPF will influence the delivery of strategic national infrastructure contributing to the spatial pattern of development. It will also contribute to key national objectives in areas such as transport, water, wastewater / flooding, waste, climate action, broadband/telecommunications, energy, health, education, community and tourism. Critical infrastructure must also be planned having regard to the potential impacts of climate change and future proofed. Developing the potential of green infrastructure will be required with environmental networks to complement more traditional infrastructures.

The significant investments in a combination of priority infrastructure projects in the surrounding regions as well as in Carlow itself, have been and will continue to be fundamental in supporting the higher levels of economic activity and improved quality of life. Key areas for investment are outlined hereunder with strategic priorities for County Carlow outlined in Table 1.

- **Transportation and access:** Carlow, due to its strategic location, has benefited from considerable investment which has taken place under *Transport 2*, in upgrading the national road network across the Mid-East and South East Regions. Locally the Council has invested significantly in the upgrading of Carlow Towns’ road network to facilitate ease of access. Developing relief roads around the principal towns will improve traffic movement in the towns by relieving traffic congestion, removing heavy goods vehicles from town centres thereby improving quality of life. Transportation and

accessibility must be continuously improved. (Refer Table 1: Strategic Priorities).

- **Water and Wastewater** investment at a regional and county level is critical to ensure the sustainable development of settlements throughout the County. (Refer Table 1: Strategic Priorities).
- **Environment and Climate Change:** Sustainable planning is important to maintain a good quality environment. The planning system has influence across a wide range of sectors, both directly and indirectly and interacts with many common issues related to effective environmental management, including water services, landscape, flood risk planning, coastal and marine management, climate mitigation and adaptation and land use change. Carlow County Council will take a proactive approach to climate change adaptation by integration adaptation into the development of relevant policies, plans and programmes. (Refer Table 1: Key Recommendations)
- **Rail:** Carlow is served by the Dublin to Waterford intercity line, (via Carlow, Muine Bheag and Kilkenny), which over recent years has improved journey times and safety across the network. Further investment provided new rolling stock which allowed improved service frequencies with potential also for additional carriage of freight via the rail Network. The increased use of the rail network during the night for freight will be essential. A modern, efficient and dependable passenger and freight rail network has a crucial role to play in terms of promoting County Carlow for business, industrial, residential and recreational purposes. There are other benefits too in terms of sustainability, reduced congestion and reduced car generated pollution. (Refer Table 1: Strategic Priorities).
- **Smart Economy and Broadband:** Carlow County Council is currently engaging with the Department

of Communications Climate Action and the Environment (DCCA) to assist with the formulation and future rollout of the National Broadband Plan (NBP). The NBP is currently in the competitive dialogue phase of the Procurement process with three shortlisted bidders and to date while there are no specifics available in terms of infrastructure requirements to support the rollout, it is estimated 10,000 premises, homes and businesses, located in County Carlow will be covered by the NBP. This should involve the provision of a fibre-to-the-home solution for each of these premises utilising a combination of underground ducting where available and overhead poles to carry the fibre. Open Eir have recently announced a high speed broadband commercial rollout plan for rural Ireland, running to 2018, to cover 300,000 premises throughout Ireland. This may result in the removal of over 3,000 premises from the NBP for Carlow. (Refer Table 1: Key Recommendations)

- **Housing:** Carlow County Council recognises the importance of housing delivery and supports the objectives of Rebuilding Ireland which is a whole-of-Government Plan split into 5 key pillars designed to:
  1. Comprehensively address homelessness
  2. Increase the supply of social housing by 47,000 units by 2021
  3. Increase the total output of all housing supply (social, private and rental) to at least 25,000 per annum by 2021
  4. Improve and modernise the rental sector and
  5. Make the best use of the housing stock.

(Refer Table 1: Key Recommendations)



<p><b>TRANSPORTATION / ACCESS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Address, where feasible, infrastructural deficiencies that may be hindering economic development and aim to ensure that sustainable infrastructural development precedes economic development.</i></li> <li>• <i>NPF to be catalyst for prioritisation of Government Investment in infrastructural development.</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Strategic priorities for County Carlow:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ <i>Upgrading of the N80 National Secondary Route. The section of the N80 through Carlow, forms part of the designated EUROROUTE from Rosslare to the Midlands. This EUROROUTE has previously been identified as a priority in the South-East Regional Planning Guidelines as well as in Transport Infrastructure Ireland Policy Documents.</i></li> <li>➢ <i>The N80 intersects with the M9 Dublin - Waterford Motorway at Junction 5 (Rathcrogue). A Feasibility Study commissioned by Carlow Co. Council has provided evidence that this Interchange presents an opportunity for a National / Regional Logistics Park facility.</i></li> <li>➢ <i>Proximity of Powerstown / Junction 6 to the Rail Line – Development potential for the region.</i></li> <li>➢ <i>Completion of Carlow Southern Relief Road.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>WATER AND WASTEWATER</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>NPF to be catalyst for Irish Water Investment, to ensure continued growth and to accelerate the provision of water and sewerage services to eliminate any delay in the progression of development. Irish Water Programme to recognise and align delivery with the spatial planning framework and needs and priorities identified.</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Strategic water investment priorities for County Carlow</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ <i>Requirement for Irish Water to invest in the Water Services Infrastructure in the county, so that the county is resilient in meeting the demand and allow for growth not only for drinking water but also waste water facilities.</i></li> <li>➢ <i>Short to Medium Term - upgrading of all waste water treatment plants in the major population centres of Carlow Town, Bagenalstown, Tullow and Borris.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Renewable Energy Developments - NPF Policy required if country is to achieve climate change and energy obligations. National Policy for both wind and solar farms is urgently required.</i></li> <li>• <i>Waste Management Policy for the Country and Regions - NPF to influence Policy.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>RAIL</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>NPF to be catalyst for prioritisation of Government Investment in infrastructural development.</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Strategic priorities for County Carlow</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ <i>Upgrading of the existing stations at Carlow and Muine Bheag and also increased car-parking provision</i></li> <li>➢ <i>Provision of a second line from Kildare Town to Carlow</i></li> <li>➢ <i>Maximise potential for strategic location of Rail Line at Junction 6 on the M9, which has significant development potential for the region</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>SMART ECONOMY - BROADBAND</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Connectivity – Rollout of National Broadband Plan (NBP) to be included as a priority in the NPF.</i></li> <li>• <i>NPF to actively support the provision of advanced communication networks and services throughout the Country, providing installation of such does not negatively impinge on the landscape or local environment.</i></li> <li>• <i>Promote home based working through the provision of high speed internet services</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>HOUSING</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Delivery of 'Rebuilding Ireland' and determination of the country's future housing needs, having regard to projected population growth.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Current planning policy relating to 'Core Strategy' can have negative implications, curtailing new housing developments which are urgently required to meet supply and demand. Core Strategy principles need to be reviewed as part of the NPF, to prevent further decline of our towns and villages.</i></li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Infrastructural Priorities for Co. Carlow

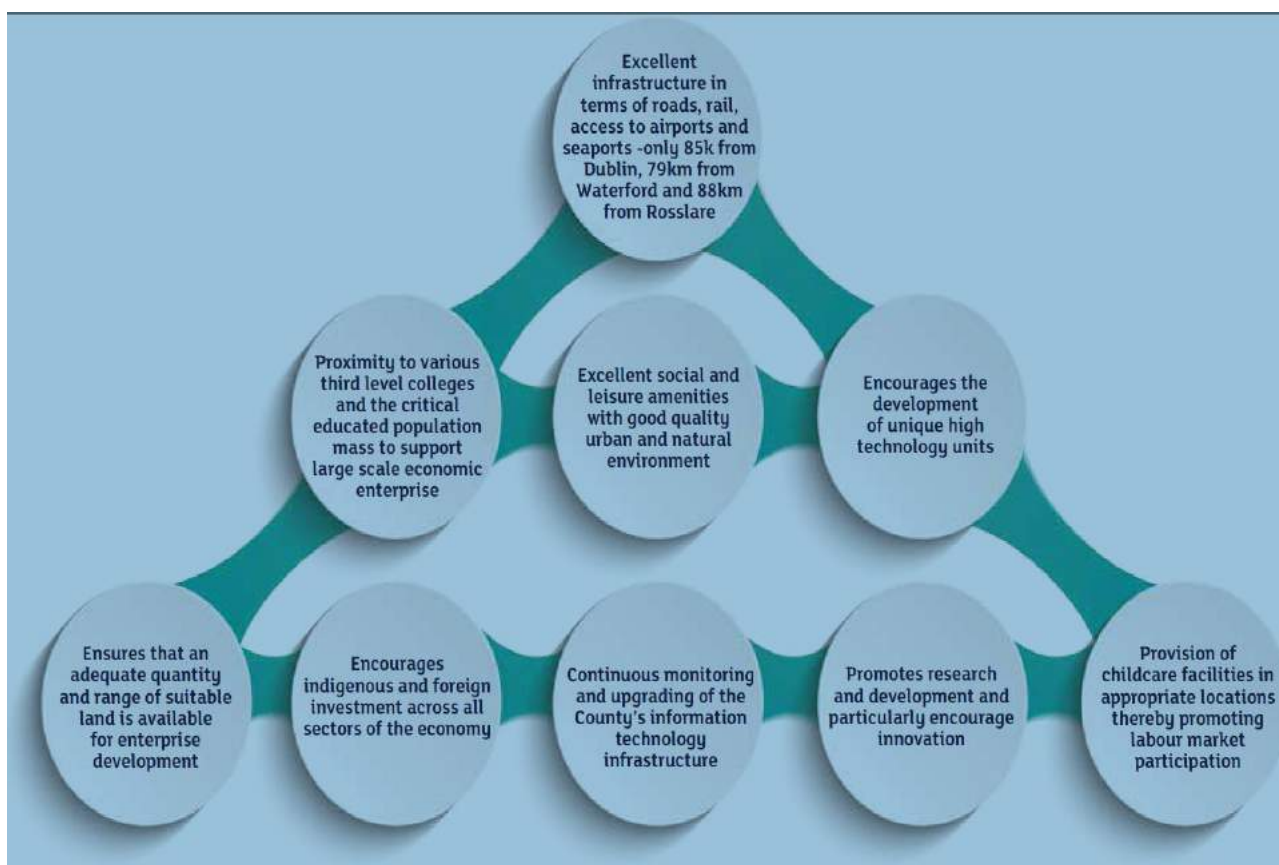


## 8. INVESTING IN ENTERPRISE & EMPLOYMENT COUNTY CARLOW - A STRONG ECONOMIC BASE

Traditionally the economy of the county has been characterised by education, engineering, manufacturing and food manufacturing, based on commodities produced in a rich agricultural hinterland. The local economy has changed significantly in recent years. The industrial base is now made up of a wide variety of industries ranging from multi-national enterprises employing skilled workforces of upwards of 100 people to smaller indigenous enterprises serving local to international

markets. There is huge potential for investment in County Carlow at a local, national and international level. At a local level, the county has a highly skilled and educated workforce, a central and accessible location, a clean environment with attractive towns, villages and countryside, excellent educational facilities and an excellent quality of life. It holds a strategic location in the South East with an inter-regional role as previously outlined.

The strengths of Carlow County, in attracting and supporting industry and business are outlined in figure 1.



**Fig 1:** Strengths of County Carlow

The economy of Carlow is based primarily on engineering, manufacturing, education, agriculture, retailing and services. Examples of each sector is outlined in Table 2.

<b>Pharma / Life Sciences</b>	Merck Sharp and Dohme employing 300 in Carlow Town, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies.
<b>Manufacturing / Engineering</b>	Autolaunch in Bagenalstown has created 300 plus jobs and have further expansion proposals Burnside Group in Tullow, Bagenalstown and Carlow employ circa 800 PB Machine Tech in Bagenalstown have further expansion proposals Alltech / Keenans in Borris, exporting worldwide Oglesby & Butler; Tanco, Thermo Air; High Spec Engineering
<b>Drinks Industry</b>	Walsh Whiskey Distillery Company has invested €25m in a world-class Distillery and Visitor Centre in Bagenalstown with the creation of 55 permanent and 40 temporary jobs O'Haras Brewing Company is investing in further development at Dunleckney Maltings
<b>Services</b>	US company Unum, has created in excess of 150 jobs to date Carlow based company Netwatch has engaged in a multimillion euro expansion both on the domestic and international fronts
<b>Retail</b>	Carlow has been the recipient of two major retail developments – the Carlow Retail Park and the Fairgreen Shopping Centre. The Carlow Retail Park (12,635 gross sq. m.) accommodates one of the largest Woodies DIY stores in Ireland (5,017 gross sq. m) providing approximately 600 surface car parking spaces close to the town centre. The Fairgreen Shopping Centre opened nearby in 2002 and has recently completed Phase 2 of its construction. Anchored by Tesco and Heaton's, it comprises of a total of 18,000 gross sq. m. and accommodates high street retailers. The retail sector has contributed significantly to employment and to the economic growth of the county, however, the economic downturn has impacted on the sector and posed many challenges for town centres. It is hoped the recently announced proposed commencement of redevelopment of the Penney's site will stimulate further development and urban regeneration. The major retail outlets are located in Carlow Town and some medium sized food retailers are located in the county towns of Bagenalstown and Tullow which provides them with critical mass they require for their business to thrive.
<b>Agri Business</b>	Agriculture continues to play a very important role in the County Carlow economy and the agri-food sector is one of the most dynamic and important indigenous industries in the Irish economy. The sector remains one of Ireland's most important indigenous industries, accounting for 7.7% of gross value added at factor cost and providing 8% of employment. Furthermore, the agri-food sector sources 74% of raw materials and services from Irish suppliers, compared to 40% for all manufacturing concerns. Low import dependence and the low level of profit repatriation in the industry means that the net inflow of funds to the Irish economy from these exports is much higher than that from other sectors. Therefore, every €100 from the exports from the bio-sector (agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food, and drink industries) contributes around €52 to GNP while the 'non bio-sector' equivalent contributes around €19.
<b>Agriculture and Food in Carlow</b>	Agriculture has traditionally been the mainstay of rural economies and while it has experienced major change in the past 30 years, it will continue to play an important role in County Carlow. However this sector is multifaceted with a number of new emerging non-agricultural resource based dependent activities such as agri-food. Agriculture in Carlow supports thousands of jobs in the rural economy, both directly in food & drink processing and also in the wider agri-industry, including input suppliers, agricultural contractors, jobs in auctioneering, transport and engineering and in accountancy, legal, veterinary and other agri advisory services. Carlow can be considered to follow the national trends in relation to the sector as it follows national policy which in turn is strongly influenced by EU policy.
<b>Agri-Enterprise</b>	Agriculture in Carlow supports hundreds of jobs in the rural economy, both directly in food and drink processing and also in the wider agri-industry, including input suppliers, agricultural contractors, jobs in auctioneering, transport and engineering and in accountancy, legal, and

	veterinary and other agri-advisory services. The main agri-business currently within County Carlow are Kepak, Ballon Meats Ltd, Leinster Marts, Tullow Livestock Sales, Alltech, Hi Spec Engineering and Tanco.
<b>Revival of the Sugar Beet Industry</b>	<p>Ireland has a demand for 165,000 tonnes of sugar annually, all of which is imported at a current annual cost of c€130 million per annum. An indigenous production facility would enhance the security of sugar-using industries. Studies carried out demonstrate that the establishment of a profitable modern, integrated bio-refinery plant in Ireland, to produce sugar, bio-ethanol and a number of other products, would</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainably generate significant profits and cash flow</li> <li>• Produce sugar and bio-ethanol competitively and replace imports</li> <li>• Help meet Ireland’s bio-fuel targets from indigenous resources</li> <li>• Generate significant employment</li> <li>• Support the rural economy in a sustainable, environmentally friendly way</li> </ul> <p>Many benefits would accrue, such as Financial; Large-scale import substitution and security of supply for two important commodities i.e. sugar and bio-fuel; Competitive production of sugar and bio-ethanol; A major boost for employment and the rural economy; Support to farmers and a significant contribution to the achievement of mandatory EU bio-fuel use targets. Lands in the South East and Mid East meet all of the requirements and it is now opportune, as part of the NPF, to prioritise the revival of the sugar beet industry.</p>
<b>Logistics</b>	<p>Following an evidence based economic assessment by Future Analytics Consulting on behalf of Carlow County Council, it has been concluded that Carlow has identifiable potential for a regional logistics park that could function as a vital conduit for employment led growth in County Carlow, the South East and the wider economy. The report states that the future economic development of Carlow and the South East must be grounded in a clear appreciation of the national context and the contribution the county can make in continuing the path towards more balanced economic growth. Given its key strategic location, with excellent connectivity links to the Greater Dublin Area and the key national freight gateways of the Port of Waterford and Rosslare Europort, the provision of a regional logistics park in Carlow will provide a considerable asset in reinforcing and enhancing future economic development</p>

**Table 2:** Key Employment Industries Co. Carlow

## Recommendations

- *Support the revival of the sugar beet industry and the construction of a new bio-refinery, which has the potential to create 5,000 jobs.*
- *Refer to County Carlow's strong economic base and potential for future development*
- *Refer to the benefits of and encourage the establishment of a Logistics Park for the country on lands adjacent to Junction 5 on the M9.*
- *Encourage collaborative structures at a regional level focusing on economic development.*
- *Provide the framework to ensure appropriately located lands for industrial and commercial development is identified in key settlements / rural areas as appropriate.*
- *Encourage the expansion of existing industries and businesses and the development of new industrial or service sector undertakings.*
- *Support the IDA in the promotion of foreign direct investment and establishment of new industries.*
- *Support Enterprise Ireland in the promotion of inward investment in the Country.*
- *Encourage and facilitate the development of 'green' industries, including industries relating to renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies, and waste recycling and conservation.*

## 9. INVESTING IN EDUCATION – A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. COUNTY CARLOW - A STRONG THIRD AND FOURTH LEVEL EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH BASE

Carlow is home to two well established institutions, the Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC) and Carlow College (St. Patricks), both of which have substantial links with the surrounding regions. It is estimated that the third-level student population is in excess of 7,500 with a combined full-time equivalent staff of around 850 in institutions of higher education.

### **Institute of Technology Carlow**

The Institute of Technology Carlow plays an important role in the South East and the Mid-East / Greater Dublin Area, in the provision of internationally recognised higher education and research opportunities and in the development of enterprise and industry, particularly in the South East Region. IT Carlow is a university-level institution, providing higher educational full-time taught programmes from levels 6 – 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications, along with research programmes at level 9 and 10 and enterprise development opportunities, through its centres in Carlow and Wexford. The Institute also provides part-time programmes in Carlow, Wexford, Wicklow, Kilkenny, Kildare (the Curragh), Mayo, Shannon and Dublin (An Cosan, Tallaght). The Institute has cooperation agreements with Higher Education Institutions in 38 countries, on every continent and presently has an international student population of 10% of its full time student population. IT Carlow's strengths include:

- Ireland's 4<sup>th</sup> largest Institute of Technology.
- Approaching 7,500 students, 45,000 graduates and an employee base of 800.
- €100 million 5 year campus capital development programme (developments such as the Aerospace Research Centre;

Dargan Centre and Haughton Building recently opened).

- c.700 innovative, industry focused programmes up to PhD Level.
- 300 Industry support engagements through our Research & Commercialisation Support Centre (2016).

IT Carlow's educational activities are complemented by various campus-based specialist centres and campus companies which provide a comprehensive range of infrastructure, business support services and specialised resources for start-up companies. In a recent survey of firms assisted under the Innovation Voucher Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland, IT Carlow was found to have worked with the most companies, ahead of any other institution or university. Moreover Dublin based firms accounted for the largest proportion of those assisted under the scheme, an indication of ITC's research focus in the Dublin Region.

The Institute has a track record of academic and industrial impact in thematic areas including;

- Bioenvironmental technologies (EnviroCORE)
- Product design and innovation (DesignCORE)
- Interactive applications software and networks (GameCORE)
- Health sciences (HealthCORE)
- Engineering (EngCORE)

IT Carlow continues to maintain and develop its linkages at all levels with Commercial Enterprises, Industries, Statutory Bodies, State Agencies and International Organisations in order to create economic development through technology transfer and education.

### **Multi Campus Technological University of the South East**

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, published in January 2011, recommended the consolidation of the

Institute of Technology sector and creation of a small number of multi-campus technological universities. The association between IT Carlow and IT Waterford will be further enhanced with the development of a Multi Campus Technological University for the South East (TUSE). A university for the south-east is critical for the optimum social and economic development of the region.

IT Carlow Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018 and 'Vision Statement for the South East Technological University (SETU), refers to their 2030 Vision and states:

*"We have developed this plan through a broad inclusive consultative process. Our staff, learners, collaborative partners and external stakeholders have brought their considerable knowledge, experience and abilities to deliver on this five year plan, while also setting the overarching direction to achieve our 2030 Vision – To be Ireland's Leading Technological University, Inspiring Individuals – Transforming Society. Over the duration of this plan we intend to make considerable progress towards the multi-campus Technological University for the South East of Ireland envisaged in the Programme for Government. This is being done in partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology. Our shared vision of the new type of University has been articulated in a joint submission to the Higher Education Authority in 2012 – The South East Institutes of Technology in the Future Higher Education Landscape. This shared vision has greatly informed the current Strategic Plans of both Institutes as we continue to work together to ensure that the new Technological University – with campuses across the South East Region in the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford – will become a reality and will be well placed to meet future national and regional regions."*

The Strategic Plan goals and strategy is focussed on:

- Learner Experience and Graduate Attributes
- Knowledge Creation, Application and Exchange



- Strategic Collaborations and Partnerships
- Societal, Economic and Environmental Impact
- Reputation, Public Confidence and Sustainability

**Carlow County Council supports the proposed multi campus Technological University for the South East, which is critical for the optimum social and economic development of the Region.**



### **Carlow College**

Carlow College (St. Patricks), founded in 1782, offers a wide range of courses in humanities and social studies to its strong student population at graduate and post-graduate levels. The college has international partnerships with Carlow University, Pittsburgh and with St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa. At home Carlow College agreed a new strategic collaborative partnership with Trinity College Dublin in 2007 in the humanities and social sciences areas. The two institutions recognised the potential for exploiting their strong synergies particularly in the South Leinster region: TCD as a city university renowned for its research, Carlow College as a regional hub engaged in the delivery of flexible programmes in the humanities and social sciences.

**Carlow County Council supports the continued development and expansion of Carlow College in providing higher educational facilities to students within its catchment area.**



### *Recommendations*

- *That the National Planning Framework supports and highlights the importance of the establishment of a multi campus Technological University for the South-East, with the primary centres in Carlow and Waterford and outreach campii in Wexford and Kilkenny.*
- *Programmes and initiatives operated through the innovation and enterprise ecosystems need to be included within the context of the NPF, to ensure multi-annual access to funding, including capital investment.*
- *Encourage research and development linkages between industry / business and local third and fourth-level institutions.*
- *Promote and facilitate appropriate educational / training measures to ensure a suitably skilled local workforce.*



## 10. INVESTING IN TOURISM - A GROWING TOURISM BASE SUPPORTED BY A STRONG NETWORK OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Tourism is significant to the economy and culture of County Carlow and makes an important contribution to the local economy, with income derived from tourist activity being distributed across a wide range of economic sectors. In 2015, 62,000 visitors contributed €30 million to the local economy. Carlow County Council, over a long number of years, has demonstrated serious commitment to the development and promotion of Carlow as a holiday destination of repute with various investments throughout the County e.g. Ducketts Grove, Oak Park Forest, VISUAL, Town Parks, County Museum etc. In 1999 the Council commissioned the first Tourism Development Strategy for County Carlow, which functioned as a strategic document to guide the future growth of the industry, from a tourism development and marketing perspective. Effective institutions to guide proper planning were seen as vital to the development of a sustainable tourism industry within the county.

Carlow Tourism Ltd. is a partnership between Carlow County Council, agencies, community and the tourism industry within the county, providing a cohesive approach to tourism marketing and development planning. Public sector investment in the county has also stimulated revenue and occupancy for the private tourism sector and has given both small and large scale providers the confidence to invest or reinvest, be that in the accommodation or attractions sector.

Government policy on tourism, as set out in People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2025, commits to “an enhanced role for Local Authorities and recognition of the contribution of communities to tourism”. Specifically the policy envisages that Local Authorities will (amongst other roles):

- Continue to act as primary developer of a range of public tourism infrastructure, including outdoor tourism infrastructure and urban and rural heritage;
- Act as a link between the State tourism agencies and communities by supporting community effort with regard to major national tourism initiatives such as the Gathering;
- Support community effort in destination development, including assisting communities to align their efforts with the tourism agencies brand architecture and consumer segmentation model.

Carlow County Council and Carlow Tourism are committed to the performance of these roles.

### *Recommendations*

- *That the NPF builds on the strengths of each County, giving priority to sustainably developing the tourism product, festivals and events and to consolidate the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors (investment required in County Carlow on the development of Duckett’s Grove; Altamont Gardens and the Dolmen).*
- *Encourage new investment in the Tourism sector with specific reference to accommodation in terms of choice, location and quality of product.*
- *Promote and assist the further development of services provided along the rivers and their tributaries for enhancing the growth and promotion of this industry further, especially as a tourist activity (e.g. implementation of recommendations outlined in the Barrow Corridor Study).*
- *Encourage investment in the development and promotion of rural walks and Greenways.*
- *Support and promote the importance of the arts and the craft sectors for tourism.*



## **11. CONCLUSION**

Carlow County Council respectfully requests that the foregoing be considered in the context of the preparation of the National Planning Framework.

It is noted that structures will be developed and put in place to ensure that the NPF and its main proposals are given top-level commitment, including of a budgetary and investment nature and are therefore appropriately driven and will include regular monitoring to measure progress and re-focus accordingly. The Framework should ensure better regional growth, rather than the current strategy which has resulted in far greater growth in the Dublin Region, despite its regionalisation objectives.

Carlow County Council looks forward to receiving a copy of the Draft National Planning Framework for consideration.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**‘Ireland 2040 Our Plan’  
National Planning Framework  
Carlow County Council  
Submission to Department of Housing, Planning, Community  
& Local Government**

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

A PLACE MAKING STRATEGY – OUR CAPITAL, CITIES & TOWNS

CAPITAL & CITIES

- *Maintain Dublin as a strong international capital city.*
- *Prioritisation of four city regions outside of Dublin, with focus on the South East Waterford City Region – Waterford is now Dublin’s nearest city region and gateway to Britain and Europe.*
- *Recognise the significant potential for County Towns to play a key role and be acknowledged as having significant potential to contribute at a national, regional and/or inter-regional level.*

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF CARLOW TOWN

- *Regional Cities to be complemented by the main County Town / Urban Centre in each County in the Region, e.g. Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford and Clonmel in the South East Waterford City Region.*
- *Importance of County Towns like Carlow complementing the role of Dublin and Waterford Cities, growing at an appropriate scale to accommodate employment growth at a sustainable level.*
- *County Towns to play a key role and be acknowledged as having significant potential to contribute at a national, regional and/or inter-regional level - Carlow’s growth has been influenced by a number of factors, including its proximity to Dublin City.*

CARLOW’S STRATEGIC LOCATION - ZONE OF INFLUENCE

- *County and regional boundaries to be recognised on an inter-regional basis and the Regional Assemblies to co-ordinate and ensure more effective sub-regional and regional outcomes (for example – whilst Carlow is located in the South East / Southern Region, its zone of influence extends into the Greater Dublin / Eastern and Midlands Region).*

SOUTH EAST REGION

- *South East Region to be complemented by the main County Town / Urban Centre in each County in the Region, i.e. Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford and Clonmel, to deliver growth and contribute to an effective city region.*
- *That the NPF supports and highlights the importance of the establishment of a multi campus Technological University for the South-East, with the primary centres in Carlow and Waterford and outreach campuses in Wexford and Kilkenny.*

- *The NPF to recognise county and regional boundaries on an inter-regional basis and the Regional Assemblies to co-ordinate and ensure more effective sub-regional and regional outcomes.*

## POTENTIAL OF RURAL IRELAND

- *An appropriate Settlement Strategy be developed – Current planning policy relating to ‘Core Strategy’ requires review to meet supply and demand and to prevent towns and villages being eroded through population decline.*
- *Investment in regeneration of rural towns and villages to be prioritised – a long-term strategy is required, including implementation of the Governments Action Plan for Rural Development - 'Realising our Rural Potential'.*
- *Investment in physical and social infrastructure and improvement of the public realm and recreational / amenities facilities, in the interest of People’s Health and Wellbeing and quality of life*
- *Public Transport services must be enhanced.*
- *Communication- / Connectivity - High quality and affordable broadband in all areas is required - Rollout of National Broadband Plan.*
- *Support the provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations thereby promoting labour market participation among parents and supporting parents in accessing training, education and employment.*

## INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

### (a) TRANSPORTATION / ACCESS

- *Address, where feasible, infrastructural deficiencies that may be hindering economic development and aim to ensure that sustainable infrastructural development precedes economic development*
- *NPF to be catalyst for prioritisation of Government Investment in infrastructural development.*
- *Strategic priorities for County Carlow:*
  - *Upgrading of the N80 National Secondary Route. The section of the N80 through Carlow, forms part of the designated EUROROUTE from Rosslare to the Midlands. This EUROROUTE has previously been identified as a priority in the South-East Regional Planning Guidelines as well as in Transport Infrastructure Ireland Policy Documents*
  - *The N80 intersects with the M9 Dublin - Waterford Motorway at Junction 5 (Rathcrogue). A Feasibility Study commissioned by Carlow Co. Council has provided evidence that this Interchange presents an opportunity for a National / Regional Logistics Park facility*
  - *Proximity of Powerstown / Junction 6 to the Rail Line – Development potential for the region*
  - *Completion of Carlow Southern Relief Road*

### (b) WATER & WASTEWATER

- *NPF to be catalyst for Irish Water Investment, to ensure continued growth and to accelerate the provision of water and sewerage services to eliminate any delay in the progression of development.*

*Irish Water Programme to recognise and align delivery with the spatial planning framework and needs and priorities identified*

- *Strategic water investment priorities for County Carlow*
- *Requirement for Irish Water to invest in the Water Services Infrastructure in the county, so that the county can continue to meet the demand and allow for growth not only for drinking water but also waste water facilities.*
- *Short to Medium Term - upgrading of all waste water treatment plants in the major population centres of Carlow Town, Bagenalstown, Tullow and Borris. All are at capacity and the plants require immediate investment to facilitate future growth.*
- *Long term investment in the upgrading of the NRWSS at Rathvilly and the replacement of the ageing AC trunk main from Rathvilly to the main population centres. Critical is a central reservoir at Graiguenaspidogue, serving Carlow Town and the Central Regional Scheme, to avail of the full potential of the Carlow North Regional Water Supply Scheme at Rathvilly.*

#### **(c) ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

- *Renewable Energy Developments - NPF Policy required if country is to achieve climate change and energy obligations. National Policy for both wind and solar farms is urgently required.*
- *Waste Management Policy for the Country and Regions - NPF to influence policy.*

#### **(d) RAIL**

- *NPF to be catalyst for prioritisation of Government Investment in infrastructural development.*
- *Strategic priorities for County Carlow:*
- *Upgrading of the existing stations at Carlow and Muinebheag and also increased car-parking provision*
- *Provision of a second line from Kildare Town to Carlow*
- *Maximise potential for strategic location of Rail Line at Junction 6 on the M9, which has significant development potential for the region*

#### **(e) SMART ECONOMY - BROADBAND**

- *The Southern Region should be one of the leaders on the digital age – Preparation and implementation of Digital Strategy for the region*
- *Connectivity – Rollout of National Broadband Plan (NBP) to be included as a priority in the NPF*
- *NPF to actively support the provision of advanced communication networks and services throughout the Country, providing installation of such does not negatively impinge on the landscape or local environment*
- *Promote home based working through the provision of high speed internet services*

#### **(f) HOUSING**

- *Delivery of 'Rebuilding Ireland' and determination of the country's future housing needs, having regard to projected population growth*



- *Current planning policy relating to 'Core Strategy' can have negative implications, curtailing new housing developments which are urgently required to meet supply and demand. Core Strategy principles need to be reviewed as part of the NPF, to prevent further decline of our towns and villages*

#### INVESTING IN ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT

- *Support the revival of the sugar beet industry and the construction of a new bio- refinery, which has the potential to create 5,000 jobs.*
- *Refer to County Carlow's strong economic base and potential for future development.*
- *Refer to the benefits of and encourage the establishment of a Logistics Park for the country on lands adjacent to Junction 5 on the M9.*
- *Encourage collaborative structures at a regional level focusing on economic development.*
- *Provide the framework to ensure appropriately located lands for industrial and commercial development are identified in key settlements / rural areas as appropriate.*
- *Encourage the expansion of existing industries and businesses and the development of new industrial or service sector undertakings.*
- *Support the IDA in the promotion of foreign direct investment and establishment of new industries.*
- *Support Enterprise Ireland in the promotion of inward investment in the Country.*
- *Encourage and facilitate the development of 'green' industries, including industries relating to renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies, waste recycling and conservation.*

#### INVESTING IN EDUCATION - A STRONG THIRD AND FOURTH LEVEL EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH BASE – A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- *That the National Planning Framework supports and highlights the importance of the establishment of a multi campus Technological University for the South-East, with the primary centres in Carlow and Waterford and outreach campi in Wexford and Kilkenny.*
- *Programmes and initiatives operated through the innovation and enterprise ecosystems need to be included within the context of the NPF, to ensure multi-annual access to funding, including capital investment.*
- *Support research and development linkages between industry / business and local third and fourth-level institutions.*
- *Promote and facilitate appropriate educational / training measures to ensure a suitably skilled local workforce.*

#### INVESTING IN TOURISM A GROWING TOURISM BASE SUPPORTED BY A STRONG NETWORK OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES

- *That the NPF builds on the strengths of each County, giving priority to sustainably developing the tourism product, festivals and events and to consolidate the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors.*
- *Encourage new investment in the Tourism sector with specific reference to accommodation in terms of choice, location and quality of product.*

- *Promote and assist the further development of services provided along the rivers and their tributaries for enhancing the growth and promotion of this industry further, especially as a tourist activity.*
- *Encourage investment in the development and promotion of rural walks and Greenways.*
- *Support and promote the importance of the arts and the craft sectors for tourism.*