

Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework

Submission by South East Chambers Co LBG

Introduction:

The South East Chambers Co represents the regional views and interests of the following 8 Chambers of Commerce located in the towns and counties of South East of Ireland:

- Carlow
- Dungarvan
- Enniscorthy
- Kilkenny
- Gorey
- New Ross
- Waterford
- Wexford

Separate submissions to the NPF are being actioned by these Chambers individually and this document aims to bring all the individual views together into one regional submission for the South East.

Regional overview:

The South East region is underperforming and is not getting its share of economic growth. The challenges facing the region can be summarised as:

1. **High Unemployment:** The south east has a higher level of unemployment (i.e. one of the highest in the country at 9.4% compared to 6.8% nationally).
2. **Low levels of Wealth:** The Gross Value Added (GVA) per person in the region is the 3rd lowest of the 8 regions in the country at c71% of the national average and disposable income at c93.5% of the national average is also 3rd lowest.
3. **Lower Quality Jobs:** The bulk of the labour force are still employed in relatively lower quality jobs (e.g. only 25% of all manufacturing jobs are in high technology related areas; and the region has the lowest rate of STEM-related graduate employment in the country), and there is still an over-reliance on traditional enterprises and low skilled service work and part-time employment.
4. **Low Third Level Profile and Capacity:** The region has lower third level education attainment rates and relative under investment in the existing third level education base.
5. **Brain Drain:** Circa two thirds of students accessing third level education do so outside of the south east and only circa 40% subsequently return to the region.

6. **Lack of Property Solutions:** There is a lack of high quality office accommodation available, especially for inward investment projects. The IDA are committed to build two new Advance Technology Buildings (i.e. in Carlow and Waterford) by the end of 2018. However, these alone will not be sufficient to cater for the significant levels of FDI the region needs.
7. **Housing Shortages in the main Urban Centres:** While the situation in the south east is not as critical as in the major cities, there is a shortage of housing in the region.
8. **Insufficient FDI:** While recent IDA supported announcements (e.g. Nypro Healthcare, West Pharma, Bausch & Lomb, Opko, etc.) in the region are welcome, the south east with circa 11% of the state's population is not attracting a fair share of FDI. FDI employment in the region grew by just over 4% in 2016 – the second lowest of all 8 regions.
9. **Insufficient number of HPSUs:** While the region has some great indigenous innovative enterprises that have started and scaled in the past 10 years (e.g. Eirgen; NearForm; etc.) there are just not enough of them.
10. **Regional Collaboration:** It is essential that the south east unites and collaborates (e.g. for the purposes of branding and selling the region; attracting inward investment; and delivering on essential regional infrastructure.)

Priorities for the South East region:

The South East Chambers have identified the following issues as the main priorities for the region which must be addressed in the NPF.

Economic Development:

- The need for balanced regional development recognising that the South East needs an urban centre of consequence.
- Investment for the IDA to construct advanced factories and office buildings across the South East

Education:

- Delivery of a Technical University in the South East
- ETB to increase the availability of apprenticeships across the South East
- Invest in increasing the number of secondary school places across the South East

Regional Airport:

- Delivery of a Regional Airport of appropriate scale

Ports:

- Investment in the development of the ports of Bellview and Rosslare

Tourism:

- Recognise the importance of tourism and invest accordingly

- Development of Green ways and Blue ways throughout the region.

Health:

- Development of hospital and health services to ensure fair and equal service provision across the whole region.
- Fast track the rollout of primary care centres across the South East

Transport:

- Maintain existing bus service connectivity across the South East
- Invest in rail line from Rosslare to Dublin and reopen Wexford to Waterford rail line
- Roll out charging stations for electric cars
- Increased investment in road infrastructure which connects the region with key urban centres in Ireland

Broadband:

- Speedy roll out of the national broadband plan
- Increase investment in 4G and 5G technologies

Energy:

- Increase investment in Ocean Energy and Solar Energy Projects across the South East

Water:

- Upgrade existing infrastructure across the South East

Housing:

- To cater for the aging population, future housing stock to be fitted with assistive technologies and lifts
- The NPF must contain robust plans and resource commitments to deliver sufficient housing to redress the current housing shortage

Conclusion:

The long term aim should be to make the South East a great place in which to live and do business. Currently a poor performing region, the delivery of a successful NPF should have the effect of bringing unemployment levels in the region below the national average, Gross Value Added (GVA) levels above the national average and third level education investment and capacity at a par with the rest of the country. Then it truly would be a place where businesses and people can thrive.