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NORTH WEST METROPOLITAN SPATIAL STRATEGY

A SCOPING PAPER

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Abbreviations

AEC	Atlantic Economic Corridor
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIRO	All Island Research Observatory
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CAWT	Co-operation and Working Together
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CDP	County Development Plan
CPS	Cross-border Public Services
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DCC	Donegal County Council
DCSDC	Derry City and Strabane District Council
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Dfi	Department for Infrastructure
DRD	Department for Regional Development
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
ELC	European Landscape Convention
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
ESF	European Social Fund
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observation Network
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GHG	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
HNDA	Housing Need and Demand Assessment
HPC	High Performance Computing
HPSU	High Potential Start-Ups
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management

IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IPCC	Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KICs	Knowledge and Innovation Communities
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LDP	Local Development Plan
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LyIT	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
MaaS	Mobility as a Service
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NI	Northern Ireland
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NMPF	National Marine Planning Framework
NMPNI	Marine Plan for Northern Ireland
NPF	National Planning Framework
NSMC	North South Ministerial Council
NSOs	National Strategic Outcomes
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
NWCAP	North West Climate Action Plan
NWCR	North West City Region
NWGI	North West Gateway Initiative
NWRA	Northern and Western Regional Assembly
NWRDG	North West Regional Development Group
NWSGP	North West Strategic Growth Partnership
OPW	Office of Public Works
PPN	Public Participation Networks
QBC	Quality Bus Corridor
R&D	Research and Development

RDS	Regional Development Strategy
RoI	Republic of Ireland
RPO	Regional Policy Objective
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Size Enterprise
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
TEO	The Executive Office
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
WDC	Western Development Commission
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WHO	World Health Organisation

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. The North West City Region	p.4
Figure 2.2. The UN Sustainable Development Goals	p.7
Figure 2.3. The Doughnut of Social and Planetary Boundaries	p.8
Figure 2.4. North West Strategic Spatial Strategy (incl. Scoping Paper) in Context	p.17
Figure 3.1. Percentage Population Change in the North West City Region's Main Settlements 2001/02 to 2011 and / or 2016	p.19
Figure 5.1.1. Traffic Movements on the Donegal/Derry Frontier	p.43
Figure 5.2.1. Transport Connectivity – or Lack of – in the North West	p.53
Figure 5.4.1. Deprivation Map: Northern Ireland	p.83
Figure 5.4.2. Deprivation Map, Ireland	p.83

List of Tables

Table 4.1. Overview of Data-Sets Analysed	p.24
Table 5.1: Principles of Place-Making: The North West City Region	p.37
Table 5.3.1: Greenhouse gas emissions trends 1990-2018 (absolute values)	p.65
Table 5.3.2.: Greenhouse gas emissions trends 1990-2018 (per capita)	p.66

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	v
List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	viii
Emerging Strategic Issues	xii
Summary	xv
Chapter 1. Purpose of the Strategy	1
Chapter 2. The North West City Region	4
North West City Region Ireland/Northern Ireland Statement of Regional Priorities	6
The Policy Context – Supranational Influences and Frameworks	6
National and Regional Policy	9
Local Policy Context	14
Aligning the NWCR Priorities to Cohesion Policy	15
Chapter 3. The Settlement Structure of the North West	18
Spatial Planning Implications	21
Governance Implications	22
Chapter 4. A Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile of the North West	23
Demographics	24
Socio-Cultural Features	26
Economy	30
Commuting	31
Spatial Planning and Governance Implications	33
Chapter 5. The North West - A City Region in Transition: Placemaking through collaboration and diversity	35
5.1. The Economy	38
North West City Region Statement of Regional Priorities for Economic Growth and Investment	38
The Challenge and Opportunity of Transformation and the ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’	40
Key Economic Facts	42
Cohesion Policy Priorities - Shorthand for Balanced Growth	44
The Importance of Regional Growth in National Policy	45
Regional Models for Placemaking	47
Spatial Planning Implications	48
Governance Implications	50

5.2. Mobility and Accessibility	52
Spatial Planning Implications	61
5.3. The Environment	64
Climate Change Mitigation: Towards Carbon Neutrality in 2045	64
Marine Spatial Planning and Coastal Management – Challenges and Opportunities	70
Climate Adaptation and Flood Risk Management	72
Landscape Planning and Biodiversity Protection	74
Brexit and Environmental Regulations	76
Spatial Planning Implications	76
5.4. Community Well-Being	78
Overview	78
World Health Organisation – The Role of Local Authorities in Health and Wellbeing	78
The Role of Spatial Planning in Addressing Health and Wellbeing	80
Health Inequalities	82
Opportunities for Population Health-led Approaches in the North West	84
Health and Wellbeing for All Ages	85
Community Wellbeing and Climate Change - A Just Transition?	86
Spatial Planning Implications	88
Governance Implications	89
Chapter 6. Emerging Strategic Issues	91
Overarching Issues	91
The Settlement Structure	93
Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy	95
The Economy	97
Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy	99
Mobility and Accessibility	99
Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy	102
Environment	103
Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy	105
Community Wellbeing	106
Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy	108
Chapter 7. Working in Partnership	110
References	113
ANNEX 1. The ICLRD Research Team	116
ANNEX 2. Housing Completions on Monitorable Sites in Derry and Strabane (based on housing monitor reports)	118

ANNEX 3: Maps to accompany the demographic and socio-economic profile.....	120
ANNEX 4. Health Priorities – Key Resources	127
ANNEX 5. Indicative Costing & Timelines:.....	129

Emerging Strategic Issues

(Chapter 6 provides the detailed consideration of the emerging strategic issues)

This scoping report constitutes an overview of emerging strategic issues which provide a context for the concept of a cross-border spatial strategy in terms of a vibrant, innovative, green and creative region. The overarching strategic issues emerging from this report are:

- The need to develop a collaborative, place-based strategy with a shared vision, that is based on principle of place making, smart growth & healthy places;
- Potential for climate adaptation solutions to act as instigators for positive change;
- Ensuring a strong focus on economic development and regional planning - identity, place and potential;
- Establishing the City Region as a polycentric model promoting sustainable growth;
- Agreeing a meaningful joint strategy with an emphasis on mobilising assets through a regional perspective on growth and competitiveness - centred on outcomes; and
- Setting out a whole of City-Region stock take of assets.

These overarching Issues are the basis for setting out the pointers, principles and recommendations relevant to any future metropolitan spatial strategy where it can prove a worthwhile example of territorial cooperation to further build functionality across spatial borders. In this context the Strategic Issues of the scoping report focus on:

- (i) **The Settlement Structure** – where the Urban structures recognises the three core settlements that require consolidation and where account is taken of the functionality, assets and needs of the rural hinterlands. Rural development considerations are integral to the approach to this spatial strategy. The implications for the North West City Region (NWCR) include placing a focus on Urban-Rural structures to ensure that all settlements contribute to the overall sustainable development of the City Region. The structure of the proposed metropolitan area is border-blind and inter-jurisdictional approaches are required to address the issues faced by the NWCR. Central to this is the aim to provide a co-decision making context with citizens and other stakeholders to enable the planning services to be visionary and proactive.

- (ii) **The Economy** – as one of the three pillars of regional growth guiding the collaborative activities of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP), the spatial strategy seeks to support a vision and the principles on which the region’s economy needs to be supported. A wholly integrated approach to economic planning which gives expression to the best practice principles of place making and strong regions, while also going beyond a policy template which stops at the border, is what will be required for the NWCR to tackle the negative impacts of its historical infrastructure baseline deficit, and deliver a just transition which addresses the acute economic and social inequalities experienced in the region’s economy. Existing cross border collaborative working and networking arrangements between key council staff already focuses across a range of sectors, including economic development and spatial planning. In recognising the importance of existing collaborations, it will be essential that there is connectivity between these strands of work in the context of the development and implementation of a spatially-led approach to deliver the effective and sustainable development of the City Region. The paucity of comparable datasets for both jurisdictions is a barrier to evidence-based economic planning, and spatial planning more generally and consequently is a key issue for the development of the Spatial Strategy.
- (iii) **Mobility & Accessibility** - Mobility is a key determinant of economic prosperity, environmental quality, quality of life and the level of community interaction that can take place. Within the existing NW structures there is a shared commitment to continue to strengthen external transport linkages at the regional scale and central to this is recognition that future transport networks must reflect the polycentric nature of the region’s settlement pattern and increase connectivity among the cities, towns and villages and that inter-jurisdictional collaboration is required to deliver services and a meaningful modal shift in transport. Diversifying the modal choice is integral to regional competitiveness and to ensuring that transport planning is linked to housing, employment, education, health and leisure provision.
- (iv) **Environment** – Climate change will impact on land-use and on demands on natural resources into the future. Achieving climate neutrality and green transformation requires place-based leadership, drawing on the potential of spatial strategy-making processes to act as instigators of change rather than simply regulators of development. A key consideration for the spatial strategy is the preparation of a common framework for spatial and environmental planning setting a context for a joint landscape character

assessment, flood risk management, adaptive design approaches to development, increase awareness of the potential of the sea as a source of renewable energy, and sustainable governance of maritime resources. The spatial strategy submits that there is an identified need for active engagement in marine spatial planning and coastal zone management.

- (v) **Community Wellbeing** – There is an identified role for local authorities in determining and influencing the health outcomes of local communities. This scoping paper underpins the clear relationship between approaches to effective community wellbeing and spatial planning through activated relationships, working processes and models of implementation and accountability. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised for everyone the relevance of spatial planning and population health outcomes. The pandemic created space for innovation in policy and service delivery that responded to health needs and emphasised the interdependencies between economic, social and physical/environmental factors in the North West.

Ultimately what this scoping paper establishes is that there is a need for a just transition in spatial planning terms that reflect the extent to which a regional spatial planning framework takes account of, activates and mobilises the necessary joined-up working required to ensure that all boats can be lifted by a rising tide and that risks can be mitigated as much as possible.

Summary

This scoping paper was commissioned by Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council, and it was compiled by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD). The paper provides an evidence-based assessment of regional assets, potential, opportunities and challenges in respect of metropolitan spatial planning. The North West City Region (NWCR) occupies a strategic location, and it exhibits the characteristics of a discrete functional area. The region benefits from a polycentric approach to planning and governance, and there are opportunities for further progress in these regards. Planning authorities, in both jurisdictions and at all tiers, are committed to increased cross-border cooperation and to the alignment of spatial planning objectives for mutual benefit. As both councils deliver their respective sets of spatial plans and seek to strengthen commonalities and joint-working, this issues paper identifies ways in which the NWCR can contribute to summative (all-island) economic and social progress – as a vibrant, innovative, green, clean, creative and just region.

The NWCR region has a population of over 210,000, and it is at the core of the North-West, which has a total population of over 350,000. In addition to its demographic significance, the NWCR is the region's hub in terms of employment, transport and services. In common with many multi-nodal city regions across Europe, the NWCR contains several peri-urban and rural communities, whose resources can complement the functions of the urban core. Thus, in the NWCR, place-making implies engaging stakeholders in urban, rural and intermediate spaces and promoting collaborative approaches. Place-making also implies a whole-of-city-region approach, so that it captures and builds on the strong, functional, economic, social and physical ties between locations, communities, networks, businesses and institutions in both council areas and those that pertain across the wider region. Collaborative governance and joint spatial planning, as evidenced in other jurisdictions, are the bedrocks on which place-making is built and maintained.

The region's local authorities are cognisant of the imperatives associated with local government's contributions – in policy and practice – to the attainment of sustainable development objectives. In Ireland, the UK, the EU and internationally, there has been a notable strengthening of the legislative and operational frameworks to ensure that planning meets, and contributes to the delivery of, sustainable development goals. While Brexit has ruptured some Ireland-UK linkages, there remains a strong overarching institutional commitment to furthering cross-border collaboration, and the NWCR is well positioned to be able to harness the associated opportunities.

Local and regional authorities with responsibilities for the NWCR have a shared vision in respect of the principles of place-making. Inter-local authority common ground, enhanced by further collaboration and enabled by increased investment, is integral to enabling the NWCR region to devise bespoke place-making strategic actions. In this context, this issues paper identifies relevant and pertinent challenges and opportunities in respect of economic development; mobility and accessibility; the environment; and community well-being.

The regional economy is characterised by, and benefits from, seamless cross-border flows of goods, services, capital and people, and the strengthening of geographical, institutional and sectoral linkages and networks will stand the region in good stead. The vision and commitments articulated in the North West City Region *Statement of Regional Priorities* represent a local-level consensus that merits external support in order to further develop human capital and enable greater economic diversification, as the region embraces the opportunities associated with the fourth industrial revolution – underpinned by digitisation, greening and upskilling, and drawing on the region’s natural and cultural assets.

The region’s transport infrastructure is characterised by a high-level of dependence on private cars and roads, with active and sustainable modes of travel having been neglected for decades. Redressing this neglect and bringing about a modal shift in terms of transport – infrastructure provision and use - are integral to the region’s sustainability and competitiveness and to ensuring citizens have an improved quality of life. Future investment needs to focus on intra- and inter-regional connectivity, and the region’s local authorities have expressed commitments to support and enable the rollout of a modern transport infrastructure. Simultaneously, other elements of public policy, particularly spatial planning, need to be aligned, in practice, with transport in ensuring the region contributes to the overall Ireland and UK commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The region’s natural environment represents one of its most striking and distinctive sets of assets and gives it competitive advantages over other similar-sized city regions. Safeguarding natural resources is integral to the NWCR’s development and to ensuring that citizens benefit from a high quality of life. There is a pressing imperative, therefore, to take more strident steps in ensuring carbon neutrality, and this paper identifies ways in which carbon reduction commitments can be honoured in respect of transport and residential and commercial buildings. Being a coastal city region, the NWCR overlaps the marine spatial plans that now pertain in both jurisdictions, and regional stakeholders are coming

to play increasingly important roles in ensuring strategic management of the marine environment. Regional stakeholders also have significant roles to play in collaboratively striving to ensure effective landscape management and biodiversity protection.

The region's communities stand to gain from collaborative, cross-border approaches to the provision of healthcare and the promotion of well-being. Local government can facilitate such approaches, while spatial planning is a key tool in the elimination of health inequalities and the enabling of citizen's abilities to live healthily. Strategic approaches to a social model of healthcare can contribute to reducing the relatively high levels of socio-economic deprivation that afflict many neighbourhoods across the region. Moreover, these can simultaneously contribute to the aforementioned objectives in respect of protecting natural resources and achieving carbon neutrality.

This scoping paper comes at an important time for the NWCR. Despite the challenges associated with Brexit, the region stands to gain from a consolidation of its functional integration and the alignment of policy objectives in both jurisdictions. The COVID-19 pandemic has also thrown up several new challenges, but it has engendered a means of capturing the value of natural resources, and citizens and agencies are clearer and more strident in working to protect biodiversity and ameliorate the excesses of climate change. Collaborative spatial planning has the potential to harness and systematise the region's assets and to guide and support stakeholders in enabling the region to be resilient.

Chapter 1. Purpose of the Strategy

- 1.1. The North West Region of the Island of Ireland is the fourth largest urban agglomeration on the island of Ireland and experiences a national (and now external EU) jurisdictional border. In addition to being a functional economic area, the North West has a significant natural setting that includes coastline, sea cliffs, natural parklands, Lough Foyle, Lough Swilly and river valleys. It is well recognised across the island of Ireland that while the North West of the Island of Ireland faces many challenges - not least because of its peripherality from Dublin and Belfast and associated lack of strategic regional investment over many decades - it is an untapped source of great potential, economically, socially and environmentally. Post Brexit, this region represents a unique place straddling the European Union (EU) single market and the United Kingdom (UK) economy and provides a gateway for opportunity in this regard. This has significance for business across the island of Ireland. It is widely accepted that these opportunities for the region can only be released through consistent and long-term collaboration that takes account of, and mitigates challenges presented by, the border, using knowledge, structural analysis and highly skilled place-focused action in the spheres of public policy, decision making, spatial planning and collaborative working.
- 1.2. Following concentrated and focused planning, advocacy and action by both Donegal County Council (DCC) and Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) over the period 2014-2016, new operational structures were endorsed by both Governments on the island, via a North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Plenary Meeting in July 2016, that would ultimately lead to the designation of the North West City Region (NWCR) in the Irish Government's National Planning Framework (NPF), *Ireland 2040*. The NWCR is a metropolitan area with a population in excess of 212,000 people and centred on three key settlements, namely Letterkenny-Derry/Londonderry-Strabane.
- 1.3. Within the cross border context, and with Government support from both jurisdictions, the development and advancement of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP) has been a key driver for the growth of the region on an all-island basis. Through the establishment of the NWSGP, the two Councils have established strong, collaborative working arrangements with Government, North and South, to drive economic, environmental and social regeneration across three pillars: economic growth and investment; physical and environmental development; and social and community cohesion and wellbeing. These operational

arrangements reflect the realities of life in this region whereby it effectively operates as a single functional area regardless of geographical and political boundaries. This civic and cultural capital of connections and shared places, derived from the region's history as an integrated region, has endured decades of a jurisdictional border. It forms an important asset for the sustainable growth of the region and release of its full potential as a net contributor to both jurisdictions which meet within its territory.

- 1.4. Consistent with the NPF, the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)* by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) (2020) further supports the strategy and work of the NWSGP. In addition to the metropolitan core – centred on Letterkenny-Derry/Londonderry-Strabane – the NWCR is characterised by a diverse mix of urban and rural settlements, a number of which perform important regional and/or administrative functions. Understanding and harnessing the distinctive characteristics and strengths (i.e., the endogenous asset base) of these settlements is essential in improving the quality of life for the city region's population.
- 1.5. The *County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024 (CDP)* further refines the concept of the cross-border NWCR and contains a chapter solely dedicated to the border dimension, setting out the important and unique relationship with the county's adjoining jurisdiction.
- 1.6. Currently in regard to the spatial statutory planning system, Derry City & Strabane District Council (DCSDC) is governed by the *Derry Area Plan 2011* and *Strabane Area Plan* and is in the process of developing the new emerging Local Development Plan (LDP) 2032 locally. Regionally, it is governed by the *Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)* and the *Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI (SPPS)*.
- 1.7. The proposed North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy represents a further strengthening of the cross-border working relationships between both Derry City & Strabane District Council (DCSDC) and Donegal County Council (DCC). The approach is reflective of the strategic priorities of the co-designed North West Strategic Growth Plan that was published in 2016.
- 1.8. The proposed strategy will seek to commit to a coordinated approach that reflects the strategic growth properties of both jurisdictions and guide future growth and investment in the North West City Region (NWCR) and offer local, regional and national governments the opportunity to take a high-level, long-term strategic approach to the sustainable development of the region.

1.9. The aim of this document, prepared by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) on behalf of Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council, is to scope out the strategic direction and objectives required to build a resilient City Region that becomes a significant net contributor to the all-island economy – as

- (a) A *vibrant region* offering a high quality of life and wellbeing;
- (b) An *innovative region* dedicated to start-ups and entrepreneurialism;
- (c) A *green and clean region* committed to climate adaptation and secure energy via renewables;
- (d) A *creative region* building not only on a strong cultural and built heritage but also emerging strengths in creative technologies, digitalisation and software development, film, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI); and
- (e) A *just region*, steadfast in ensuring that a partnership approach is taken in the creation of a fairer, greener future for all.

1.10. This initial Scoping Document by ICLRD (see Annex 1) will provide a framework for future investigation and action to pave the way for the first North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy and provide a planning context, in its' broadest sense, for a higher value city region in the North West. As city-regions become a core concept in urban and regional planning on the island of Ireland, this document will also be critical to informing future iterations of national and regional policy; for example, the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS), the *National Planning Framework* (NPF) and *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* (RSES).

Chapter 2. The North West City Region

2.1. The North West City Region, as currently defined, is a metropolitan urban area centred on the tri-settlements of Letterkenny (County Donegal), Derry City and Strabane (County Derry/Londonderry) and surrounded by a significant number of gateway towns and rural towns and villages (see Figure 2.1). Taken together, the City Region is the fourth largest urban agglomeration on the island of Ireland, has a population of over 212,000; with the wider North West being home to a population of 350,000 people¹. This functional urban area is characterised by a dense concentration of population, employment, service provision including transport, education and healthcare. It is home to a large number of indigenous and foreign direct investment (FDI) companies, three higher and further education centres, two regional airports and the North West Multimodal Transport Hub as an emerging gateway for intra-and inter-regional connectivity.

Figure 2.1. The North West City Region



1

<https://www.donegalcoco.ie//media/donegalcountyc/business/pdfs/Initial%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Challenges%20and%20Opportunities%20of%20Brexit%20for%20the%20North%20West%20City%20Region%20150217.pdf>

- 2.2. The City Region is further defined by its rich tourism, culture and heritage offerings, industrial history, breath-taking scenery, its robust maritime tradition, the entrepreneurial spirit and creativity of its people, and its strong sense of community. In recent years, the councils have strengthened their shared approach to the effective development of these shared assets to the benefit of the region as a whole and, indeed, the all-island economy.
- 2.3. Place matters – as does geographical context (Barca *et al*, 2012). Places are shaped by their relations with other settlements, whether cities, towns or villages, and their social, cultural and institutional characteristics. Successful place-making centres on utilising local knowledge to identify need, opportunity and assets in creating liveable places (Arefi, 2014) and contributing to economic competitiveness and sustainability (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). It is a process that acknowledges the history of place – its past – in building a future. Local governments are increasingly undertaking place-making to build liveable places that are valued by communities, businesses, and visitors alike (Arefi, 2014). As such, place-making is a collective undertaking (Friedmann, 2010), with spatial planning and citizens at the centre. To be effective, place-making strategies and activities must demonstrate foresight while also being adaptable. They must also be robust – even resilient (Coaffee, 2013).
- 2.4. The concept of the ‘City Region’ has a strong basis in both economic development and urban and regional planning (Jones *et al*, 2015; Axinte *et al*, 2019). It is deeply entrenched in a region’s sense of itself, its identity and ‘place’. The City Region is viewed as bridging “local geographies, economies, and communities with global networks of knowledge, capital and culture” (Jones *et al*, 2015: 6). It is about “creating economically vibrant, environmentally sustainable and just urban cities and regions...[through] locally rooted approaches to planning and governance, supported by strong and engaged civic networks” (Jones *et al*, 2015: 17). It is centred on the “interaction between an urban core and its semi-urban and rural hinterland” (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008: 1026) and, therefore, a strong characteristic of any City Region is its functional ties.
- 2.5. The contemporary language of regional development, as articulated by academics, policymakers and practitioners, reflects an increased emphasis on ‘resilience’. Among the characteristics of resilient places are a diversified economic base, healthy demographic, low dependence on externalities (especially subsidies), multifunctionality, high quality of life, strong social capital, good public services, biodiversity and a pristine natural environment (Couch, 2016; Crabtree, 2016; Kevany et al., 2017; Peters, 2019).

- 2.6. The city-region has emerged as a key scale for spatial planning; offering “‘soft’ planning spaces that exist outside, alongside or in between administrative territories and statutory scales of planning” (Granqvist *et al*, 2020: 844). In planning for a metropolitan city region, it is critical that a multi-agency perspective is adopted, and that scoping out of the key issues covers a wide range of public policy areas.

North West City Region Ireland/Northern Ireland Statement of Regional Priorities

- 2.7. Prepared by both Councils in May 2021 and shared with both Governments at the NWSGP meeting of July 2021, this paper is a comprehensive statement of regional priorities for the North West City Region (NWCRC) and places them in a governance and policy context. The paper also, importantly, sets out potential pathways to implementation of wider EU/UK policy, and highlights the opportunity which now presents for a scaling up of innovative collaborative approaches by Central and Local Government which can optimise the NWSGP as a delivery (and demonstration) vehicle for key Programme for Government objectives in Ireland and Northern Ireland. These are elaborated on further in 2.16.

The Policy Context – Supranational Influences and Frameworks

- 2.8. The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – which encapsulate the principles of place-making, smart growth and healthy places – are increasingly informing national, regional and local policies (see Figure 2.2). Offering a shared platform in the pursuance of sustainable development, it is notable that there is significant alignment between the SDGs and emerging national/regional policies across the island of Ireland; for example, in climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, and innovation and infrastructure.
- 2.9. The EU’s framework document *Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030*² operationalises the UNSDGs, and outlines supports, actions and proposals at the levels of the EU, member states, regions and civil society. The *EU Urban Agenda*³ (launched in 2016) is highly relevant to the development of the NWCRC as a polycentric urban network that promotes liveability, the circular economy, social inclusion and a just ecological transition. The *New Leipzig Charter*⁴ (2020)

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/towards-sustainable-europe-2030_en

³ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/ and <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/node/1829.html>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2020/new-leipzig-charter-the-transformative-power-of-cities-for-the-common-good

provides a key policy framework document for sustainable urban development in Europe. The Charter highlights a city's need to establish integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and ensure their implementation is for the city as a whole, from its functional areas to its neighbourhoods. Cities are increasingly having to cope with changing framework conditions and must be supported by an ability to learn from past events and from each other. This includes adopting a flexible urban governance for the common good – including on a transboundary basis where relevant – as well as balanced implementation of just, green and productive cities.

Figure 2.2: The UN Sustainable Development Goals



2.10. The Paris Agreement⁵ (2015) provides a common framework for delivering on climate action while the EU Green Deal⁶ (2019) presents a coherent and systematic response to the environmental challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and energy security while also promoting new areas of economic growth.

2.11. Central to delivering on the goals and objectives of these international frameworks is the adoption of a model of collaborative innovation that recognises the need to balance future growth with protection of the natural environment. One model gaining traction across a number of cities and being pioneered in Amsterdam is that of the Doughnut Economics Action

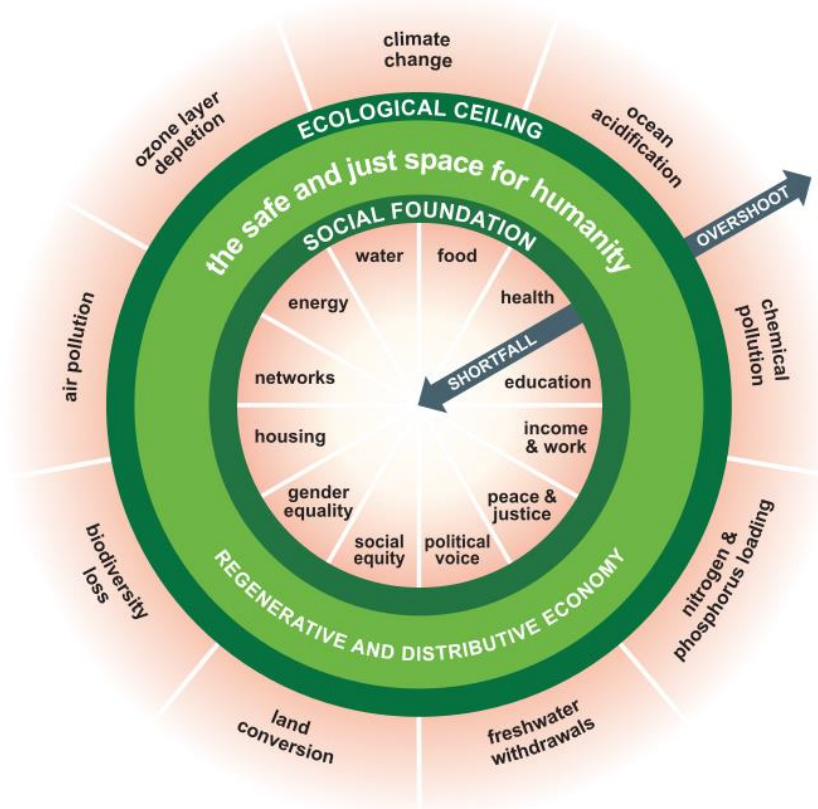
⁵ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

Lab. Doughnut Economics involves connecting neighbourhood initiatives, start-ups and civil society with the established institutions of government, business and knowledge institutions.

- 2.12. The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries (see Figure 2.3.) envisions a world in which people and planet can thrive in balance, where the social priorities of the SDGs are embraced and where, at an ecological level, every effort is made to preserve a stable climate, healthy oceans and an abundant biodiversity. The challenge is getting inside the doughnut in ways “that promote the wellbeing of all people and the health of the whole planet”. Local government and place-based leaders have a core goal to play in achieving these goals – by asking the core question of: “How can our city[region] be a home to thriving people in a thriving place while respecting the wellbeing of all people and the health of the whole planet?” (Doughnut Economics Action Lab, 2020: 5).

Figure 2.3. The Doughnut of Social and Planetary Boundaries



(Source: <https://doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics>)

- 2.13. The doughnut of social and planetary boundaries is a valuable starting point for local authorities, and the NWCR, to reflect on the opportunities, challenges, synergies and tensions of emerging

policies in their plan-making processes. At a thematic level, for example, it will visualise the implications of, and interconnections between, the City Region's energy strategy and all other policy areas. As business as usual is no longer an option, such tools are increasingly an essential part of every planner's toolkit.

National and Regional Policy

- 2.14. Ireland's National Planning Framework (NPF), *Ireland 2040*, is committed to enhancing regional connectivity and competitiveness, improving environmental sustainability and building a fairer, more equal Ireland, all the while acknowledging that this must be done in a way that nurtures well-being and quality of life (Government of Ireland, 2018). Ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) are listed in the NPF and these in turn are embedded in the *National Development Plan* (NDP) – the funding arm of *Ireland 2040*. At the regional level, the NPF gives recognition to the NWCR, defines Letterkenny as a Regional Growth Centre and makes a commitment to building on the North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) – as promoted under the 2002 *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) – by “delivering a wide range of economic, infrastructural, community and public service functions in the wider northwest” (2018, p. 41).
- 2.15. In Northern Ireland, the *Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035* also gives recognition to the North West, highlighting opportunities for cross-border networks of economic cooperation and enterprise, in the protection and management of the shared environment, and in developing a cohesive grid of cross border and trans-regional infrastructures (Department for Regional Development, 2001). Noting that “successful regions have strong and vibrant cities at their core”, the RDS identifies Derry City as the principal city of the North West, with capacity and potential for strong economic growth (2001, p.21). In terms of regional development and balancing the growth of Northern Ireland, the RDS recognises the opportunities to not only build on Derry City's designation as City of Culture 2013 but also its asset-base of being a Port City (business), a University/Learning City (education), and a Walled City (culture/tourism). The city is also home to a regional airport and a regional hospital servicing a cross-border functional area – both in economic and health care terms. The RDS recognises the North West Region as an international gateway with access by road, sea, air and rail, and therefore “the importance of further development of this core area and its economic social and other relationships and functions in strengthening the wider North West region” (2001, p.61). In this context, and acknowledging the “geographic peripherality of the North West”, current and future investment

in transport, energy and telecommunication connections are noted as being strategically important to developing the economic and social fabric of the Region (*Ibid*, p. 63).

2.16. Together with the *Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland*⁷, there is a commitment to furthering sustainable development principles and goals through “balancing social, economic and environmental objectives, all of which are considerations in the planning for and management of development” (2015: 12). This will be achieved through the core planning principles of Northern Ireland’s new two-tier planning system; namely:

- Improving health and well-being;
- Creating and enhancing shared space;
- Supporting sustainable economic growth;
- Supporting good design and positive place making; and
- Preserving and improving the built and natural environment.

These key principles are strongly reflected in the NWCR’s Statement of Regional Priorities (May 2021) as outlined in 2.6 above and 2.18 below.

2.17. The recent review of the Irish NDP reflects the 2020 *Programme for Government* mission on ‘A Shared Ireland’ and investment for mutual benefit (Government of Ireland, 2021). This includes the recent launch of the all-island strategic rail review, commissioned by the Department of Transport in co-operation with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, to examine how the rail network can improve sustainable connectivity between cities and regions (p. 159). In terms of all-island planning frameworks, the NDP emphasises the

need to plan and invest for a shared future for all on the island of Ireland, in cooperative ways, recognising the connected environmental, economic, and infrastructure challenges and opportunities now and for the years ahead (p.161).

2.18. It also notes the role of the *Framework for Co-operation on Spatial Strategies between Ireland and Northern Ireland*⁸ (2013) as providing a strong basis for examining the key planning challenges faced by both jurisdictions on the island and the potential for co-operation in spatial

⁷ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/SPPS.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2f632-framework-for-co-operation-spatial-strategies-of-northern-ireland-and-the-republic-of-ireland/>

planning. In terms of achieving mutual benefit, the Framework highlights specifically the need to “promote the development of the Londonderry/Letterkenny Gateway and the wider North West area” as well as opportunities for greater cross-border collaboration in areas such as integrated sustainable transport, economic development and energy inter-connections (2013: 15). Key to achieving this is access to consistent data at the local level, and a commitment “to integrating datasets in areas such as population, employment, transportation, housing and the environment” in particular (2013: 25).

2.19. With these common objectives, there is a commitment by both the Irish Government and The Executive Office (TEO), through the NWSGP, to support and promote the development of the North West City Region and, in so doing, to release the region’s full potential as a net contributor to the economies of Ireland and Northern Ireland/UK and add value as a cross-border functional economic area to the economy of the island of Ireland as whole. This will be achieved through collaborative structures and a joined-up approach to spatial planning.

2.20. The Irish Government’s commitment to the strategic development of the NWCR is reflected in the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)* of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA). The Strategy plays a key role in guiding future growth and investment across this trans-boundary, inter-jurisdictional City Region, offering local, regional and national governments the opportunity to take a high-level, and long-term strategic approach, to the sustainable growth of the NWCR. In addition to laying out a regional plan for the Letterkenny Regional Growth Centre (as designated within the NPF), the RSES identifies four key strategic outcomes for the NWCR – closely aligned with the NSOs and priorities of the NPF, and the eight strategic aims of the *Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035*. Those outcomes are:

- Building Inclusive and Compact Places;
- Investing in Connected and Accessible Places;
- Planning for a Vibrant Economy and Nurturing Communities; and
- Creating Resilient Places and Low-Carbon Infrastructure.

Importantly for the balanced and sustainable growth of the NWCR, the RSES recognises that Letterkenny has many of the same attributes as Derry City – albeit at a different scale. This, together with the key outcomes remain relevant to this scoping document – and to any subsequent strategic spatial strategy.

2.21. In addition to the aforementioned national spatial planning and regional development policies (See Figure 2.4.) that bear a significant influence on the future of the NWCR, there are a number of broader national and regional government policies that are also key to the future strategic growth of the region. As reflected in the *Statement of Regional Priorities* (May 2021) presented to the NWSGP in July 2021, these include:

Climate Adaptation: As both Governments move to adopt new and/or updated Climate Bills, it is clear that local government has a clear role to play, through multi-agency collaboration, in climate adaptation and mitigation planning. There is already significant cooperation taking place between both Councils of the North West on climate change; with a commitment that these will evolve into a wider North West Climate Action Plan (NWCAP). Lead by DCSDC and DCC, the NWCAP will deliver “transformation change through a strategic framework for climate action on a cross sectoral and regional basis...deliver collaboration and shared approaches and actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change across the North West” (Burns, 2019: 10). To affirm the region’s commitment to addressing the challenges posed, the North West will:

Deliver climate action on a cross sectoral multi agency basis to achieve greater adaptation and resilience to the effects of climate change while leading by example to reduce emissions and mitigate against further global warming (Burns, 2019: 10)

Economy: While both the NPF and RDS place an emphasis on building a strong economy supported by innovation, enterprise and skills, the recovery strategies being published by both Governments in response to COVID-19 strongly argue for a green recovery – couched in the SDGs, climate resilience and transitioning to a low carbon economy. The future of the economy is no longer viewed as purely about jobs and enterprise; rather it is the integration between liveability, health and well-being, community, strong natural capital and sustainability of place. For the NWCR, such integration requires a spatial framework for cooperation and a coordinated strategy and action plan across the City Region on job creation, FDI promotion, the development of innovation networks and facilities, and industry supports as a catalyst to address regional imbalance and high levels of economic inactivity and unemployment. In terms of FDI promotion and growth, the region has a strong platform on which to build. In the recently published FDI Intelligence Special Report, European Cities and Regions of the Future 2022/23, Derry City ranks as second in the Small Cities Category for Best City FDI Strategy.

Education and Skills Development: With over 35,000 students in third level and further education in the region, the NWCR is well-educated and offers a highly skilled workforce to existing and future businesses/industry. Through an MOU signed in 2018, collaboration is taking place between Higher and Further Education Institutes and key sectors and industries on alignment of needs, and skills and education progression pathways based on complementarity and progression, on further development of existing research partnerships, and on progressing the concepts of life-long learning, the 'learning city' and 'civic university'. Building on *New Decade, New Approach* (2020), a focussed strategy and implementation plan is required for the urgent substantial expansion and development of University/third level provision, student numbers and courses in the North West City Region. There is also a need for increased investment in skills/apprenticeship programmes linked to regional industry and business, existing and emerging.

Changing Work Places and Patterns: The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a massive increase in remote working with many organisations and companies reviewing their practices in this regard. This will potentially see a significant change in work patterns – with direct impacts on commuting and settlement patterns. This has implications for office and other work place development, broadband access, the provision of digital hubs for example; and as a 'live issue', its' impact on place will need to be carefully monitored and planned for.

Rural Development: It is widely recognised that rural areas make a major contribution to the regional development of the NWCR in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms. Rural areas hold much of the City Region's natural resources, heritage and biodiversity, and contribute in a unique way to the region's culture. The commitment of *Our Rural Future* (2021) and the *draft Rural Policy Framework for Northern Ireland* (2021) to arresting the decline of our towns and villages, adapting to the changing function of town centres, and to investing in the development of new rural economies and rural-based enterprise will be reflected in the spatial strategy for the NWCR is supporting rural communities.

Green Transformation: While the *North West City Region Statement of Intent on Regional Green Transformation* has been developed, there is a requirement for further scoping and analysis to be carried out from a geo-spatial, sustainability and jobs plan perspective. This would cover existing and potential sectors either evolving or emerging, looking at value and supply chains, macro-enterprise and micro-enterprise sectors, and making recommendations as to collaborative pathways and best practice stimulator models to deliver a green plan. While the

green transformation agenda in the City Region is closely aligned to the distribution and growth in renewable energies, there is a growing acknowledgement that there will be transitional challenges.

Digitalisation: The EU *Smart Cities* Initiative is already resonating with actors involved in the NWCR, while the evolving *EU Action for Smart Villages*⁹ (launched in 2017) affords opportunities for more rural communities across the NWCR to consolidate community-led local development and to further embrace technology and digital connectivity in advancing local economic development. In September 2021, a UK Parliament research briefing on smart cities¹⁰ highlighted the economic, environmental and societal benefits that can accrue through smart programmes when a tailored, place-based approach to implementation is adopted. The briefing also notes the key role of local government in the roll-out of smart programmes that address citizen needs. More recently, the UK-based independent Digital Task Force for Planning calls for the recognition of planning as an important applied science discipline which can “offer a unique place-based systems approach to coordinate multisector efforts to deliver zero-carbon, environmental net gain, a circular economy and a green industrial revolution for a fairer society” (2022, p.1). This necessitates access to better data – ideally collected and shared in real time, thinking beyond boundaries and working collaboratively.

Local Policy Context

2.22. The NWCR in its current configuration and future potential is shaped, influenced, and governed by a nested set of policy documents and statutory frameworks in place at local authority level and which are aligned to national and regional policy. These include the current *Donegal County Development Plan 2018-2024* (CDP), the *Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan* (LECP), the draft *Derry City and Strabane Local Development Plan 2032* and the *Derry City and Strabane Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan 2017-2032* – all of which encompass several complementary objectives; namely:

- Maintaining and furthering cross-border linkages and collaboration;
- Harnessing the opportunities associated with the NWCR and the linked metropolitan area;

⁹ https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages_en

¹⁰ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0656/POST-PN-0656.pdf>

- Fostering local economic development and entrepreneurship;
- Supporting the provision of greenway infrastructure, associated with economic diversification (tourism), enhanced connectivity and the promotion of active travel;
- Improving public transport provision, particularly in rural areas;
- Protecting biodiversity and harnessing natural resources, including the marine; and
- Emphasising quality-of-life, stemming from investments in enhanced community amenities and infrastructure, particularly those associated with outdoor activities and accessing the natural environment.

Aligning the NWCR Priorities to Cohesion Policy

2.23. The strategic direction of the NWCR must be cognisant of the investment priorities of the EU Regional Development and Cohesion Policy 2021-2027, namely:

- **A Smarter Europe**, through innovation, digitisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses;
- **A Greener, Carbon Free Europe**, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change;
- **A More Connected Europe**, with strategic transport and digital networks;
- **A More Social Europe**, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare; and
- **A Europe Closer to Citizens**, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

These priorities lie at the heart of the new EU cross border programme, PEACE PLUS¹¹, which represents an amalgam of previous PEACE and INTERREG funds. The programme will be available to all of Northern Ireland and the six border counties in the Republic of Ireland, as well as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF)

¹¹ The programme aims to boost economic growth and stimulate social and economic regeneration while also promoting social inclusion.

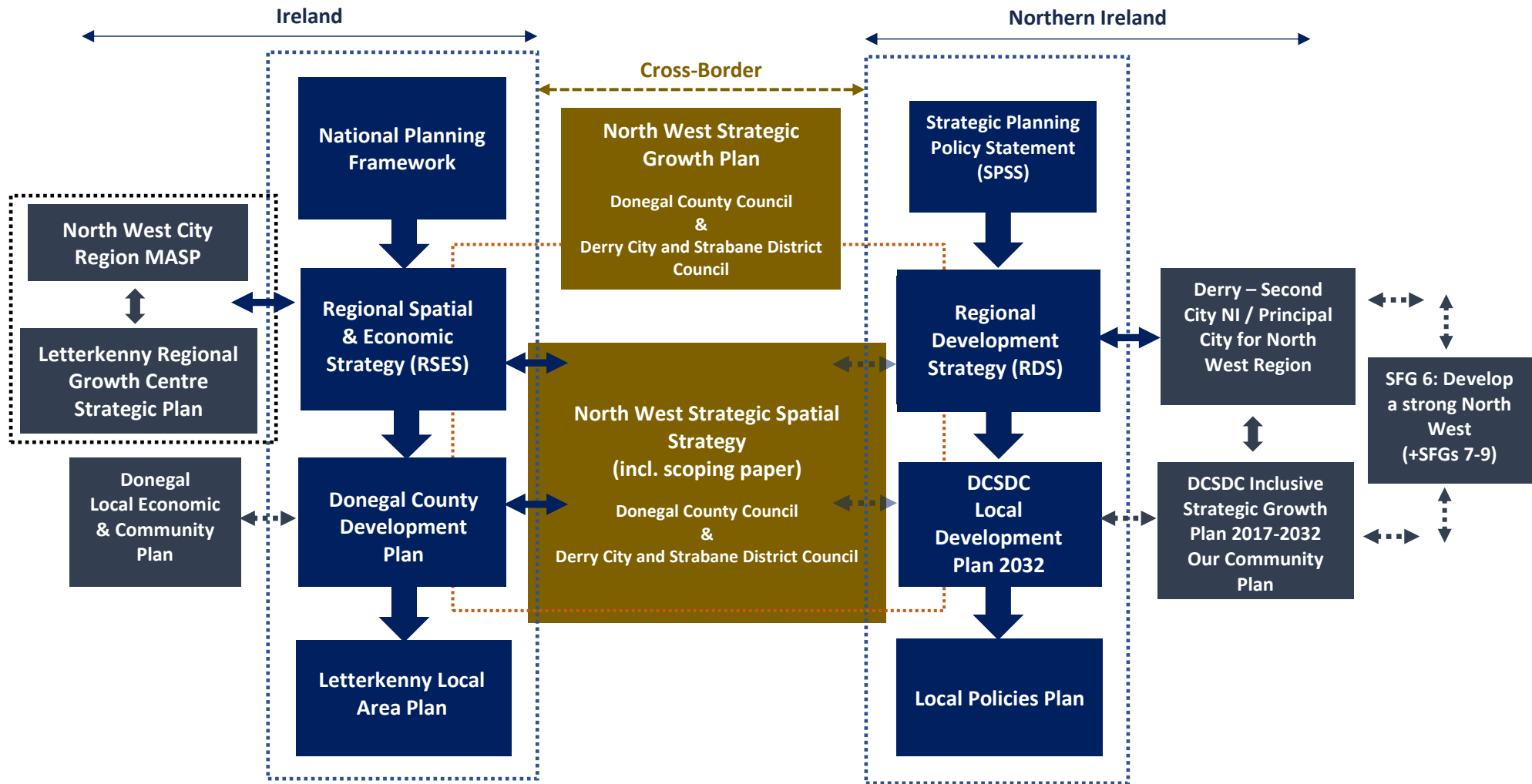
programmes under which the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) area will be recategorised as a 'Transition Region'¹².

¹² The eligibility for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) is calculated on the basis of regional GDP per inhabitant (in PPS and averaged over a three year period). The NUTS 2 regions are split into three groups for the programming period 2021–27:

- Less developed regions (where GDP per inhabitant was less than 75% of the EU average);
- Transition regions (where GDP per inhabitant was between 75% and 100% of the EU average); and
- More developed regions (where GDP per inhabitant was more than 100% of the EU average).

Under the new programme, the BMW region will have 'Transition Region' status while the Southern and Eastern Region will be classified as a 'More Developed Region'.

Figure 2.4: North West Strategic Spatial Strategy (incl. Scoping Paper) in Context



(Source: ICLRD, 2018 as part of MASP Development with NWRA; Adapted)

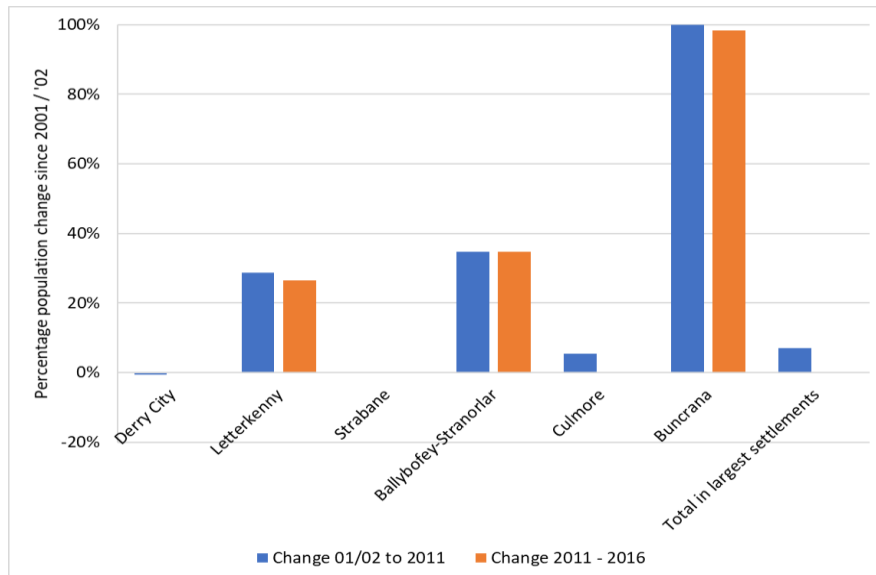
Chapter 3. The Settlement Structure of the North West

- 3.1 This chapter examines the demography and dynamics of the City Region's settlements. It draws on the Census of Population data (2001/02 and 2011 for both jurisdictions and 2016 for Ireland), and it observes the changes in settlements' populations and functions and how these impact on regional dynamics.
- 3.2 According to the Ireland NorthWest brochure, *Economic Development Initiative: Talent, Location, Partnership*, thirty-five per cent of the population of the NWCR are under 25 years of age¹³; making it one of the youngest populations in Europe.
- 3.3 Census of Population data are recorded for 54 settlements, of which 32 are in Northern Ireland and 22 are in Ireland. These range in population size from 68 persons (in Park, Co. Derry/Londonderry) to almost 85,000 in Derry City.
- 3.4 The North West City Region (NWCR) is centred on three inter-connected and inter-related settlements, namely Derry City, Letterkenny, and Lifford-Strabane. It includes these urban areas, their environs and their functional areas. Together with Bunrana on the Inishowen Peninsula, these settlements are the most populous nodes in the City Region. Adding Ballybofey-Stranorlar and Culmore, they account for eighty percent of the population. The remainder of the population resides in smaller settlements and in the inter-nodal areas of open countryside.
- 3.5 The proportion of the population living in settlements is higher in Derry and Strabane than in County Donegal; the respective figures are 88% and 62%. This can be attributed to Derry having a more consolidated urban structure than Donegal.
- 3.6 Derry City is the North West City Region's main settlement. It accounts for half (50%) of its total population, but this proportion declined by five percentage points between 2001 and 2011. Over the same period, Strabane's population declined from 9% to 8% of the City Region's total, while the proportions of the regional population living in Letterkenny and Bunrana increased from 10% to 12% and 2% to 4% respectively. This would indicate a trend of counter-urbanisation, which are adversely affecting many metropolitan zones globally, in both Derry City and Strabane, although more research is required in order to quantify the scale thereof.

¹³ http://irelandnw.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/490527_DCSDC_NWInvestment_Brochure_A4-1.pdf (p.6).

3.7 As the following graph illustrates (Figure 3.1.), Derry City and Strabane, which are two of the NWCR’s core nodes, have experienced negligible population change since 2001. Over the same period, urban centres in County Donegal have experienced considerable population growth. Buncrana is the City Region’s fastest-growing town. Between 2006 and 2016, its population grew from 3,420 to 6,785 – an increase of nearly one hundred percent. People moving from Derry City are a significant driver of Buncrana’s population growth. In Buncrana, and other settlements such as Letterkenny and Ballybofey-Stranorlar, population growth has occurred mainly in the towns’ suburbs, rather than in the urban cores. Indeed, most settlements in the City Region have experienced considerable suburbanisation, while urban cores have contracted in economic and demographic terms. As was the experience of many towns across the region, and the island as a whole, the economic downturn (2008-2013) has caused an increase in vacancy and dereliction in their town centres.

Figure 3.1. Percentage Population Change in the North West City Region’s Main Settlements 2001/02 to 2011 and / or 2016



3.8 As indicators of growth, between 2001 and 2011, the fastest-growing villages were as follows: Fahan (+113%); Manorcunningham (+101%); Ardmore (91%); Killygordan (+90%); Douglas Bridge (+86%); Ardstraw (+81%); Tamnaherin (+80%); Spamount (+76%); Maydown (+76%); Muff (+64%) and Newtowncunningham (+61%). Their growth is associated with spillover effects from Derry-

Letterkenny more than local factors. While absolute numbers are small, they are large relative to the settlements' pre-existing populations, and in some cases, new housing developments have transformed the character of villages and, in some cases, service infrastructure has not kept pace with demographic changes.

- 3.9 The functional remits of settlements are evolving; Buncrana's manufacturing role has diminished, but it is asserting new roles for itself as the gateway to Inishowen and as a tourism and recreational destination. Letterkenny is considerably smaller than Derry, but it has come to match it in terms of the breadth of regional functions it performs – as an economic and service centre. It is also a gateway to West Donegal and has recently been designated a Gaeltacht Service town (Baile Seirbhíse Gaeltachta), and a language development plan was officially launched in September 2021ⁿ. The NWCR includes part of Gaeltacht Thír Chonaill. A seven-year language development plan for North Donegal (Plean Teanga LPT Tuaisceart Dhún na nGall), which includes Termon / An Tearmann, has been approved by Government, and is currently being implemented. Derry City is progressively fulfilling the roles ascribed to it in Northern Ireland's *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS), and it is the focal point of the transport (road, rail and air) arteries that connect the City Region with other regions.
- 3.10 Housing Monitor data (Derry and Strabane) shows that, as of 2019 (the most recent reference year), there were 16,285 housing units completed, and there is a remaining potential of 11,288 units across the forty-seven settlements in Derry and Strabane. After Derry City, the settlements with the largest numbers of potential units are Castlederg (640 units), Strabane (492), Victoria Bridge (383) and Sion Mills (350). Full details, by settlement, are presented in Annex 2. In Ireland, National Policy Objective 37 of the NPF requires a housing need and demand assessment (HNDA) be undertaken in each local authority area in order to ensure long-term strategic housing needs are met, and in April 2021, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage issued guidelines to local authorities in this regard. This will be integral to the forthcoming Donegal County Development Plan. In the meantime, the local authority has used compulsory purchase mechanisms to acquire key strategic sites, such as the former ESB premises in Letterkenny.
- 3.11 The region's settlement pattern and forms pose significant challenges with respect to attaining Ireland and the UK's targets in respect of carbon reduction, and spatial planning (in housing, transport, energy generation, industrial production and food sourcing) needs to be more assertive and firm in respect of accelerating the transition to a post carbon society.

Spatial Planning Implications

3.12 While the CSO and NISRA data quantify patterns and trends up to 2016/2011, consultations with local stakeholders reveal that these have continued and, on several indicators, they have intensified. Thus, spatial planning challenges include the need to

- Strengthen the urban cores in all the main settlements and in the urban context foster policies based on sustainable urban development and compact growth strategies;
- Promote the revitalisation of villages as multi-functional civic and commercial places, with sustainable transport infrastructure, so that they enable citizens to enjoy a better quality of life, support the rural economy and reduce car-based travel;
- Ensure a more effective regulatory environment to avoid past mistakes (e.g. mica homes and the contamination of groundwater) and to definitively move from developer-led planning to planning-led development; and
- Factor rural assets, needs and potential more explicitly in planning – while most of the region’s population resides in urban areas, many of its attributes are rural.

3.13 The recent pandemic has peaked citizens’ need for access to green and blue spaces, and communities are increasingly valorising open and recreational spaces. Spatial planning has an important role to play in ensuring a greater and sustained supply of public/communal spaces and the protection of vulnerable and threatened ecosystems. There is evidence of ecosystem pressures in parts of the City Region, and the relevant authorities need to stand firm in their obligations to protect the region’s ecological assets, public resources and amenity spaces.

3.14 Planning needs to be comprehensive at all spatial tiers. Up to the recent reconfiguration of public administration in Northern Ireland, urban centres such as Derry City and Strabane had comprehensive plans, while plans for smaller settlements tended to be more generic. The current arrangements, while placing increased obligations on the planning system, offer mechanisms to enable smaller settlements to develop in manners that enhance liveability, while contributing to the region’s overall development. Uniquely as part of the community plan process, local plans are being developed by DCSDC to deliver on the outcomes of the Strategic Growth Plan at a local level with neighbourhood and community-based programmes and actions. Similar observations can be made in respect of local area plans in County Donegal, which offer a mechanism to move more

firmly beyond traditional land use planning, in respect of villages and smaller towns, to more comprehensive and integrated vision planning.

Governance Implications

3.15 Thanks to international frameworks (e.g., Aarhus Convention) and legislative requirements in both jurisdictions, planning processes have become increasingly consultative and participatory. Indeed, best practices in planning imply fostering partnership governance, including co-design and co-responsibility in the formulation and oversight of development plans. Enabling participatory planning and promoting collaborative governance require investment in community development approaches and the development of increased capacity in planning authorities and in civil society. While planning authorities are committed to citizen/community engagement, they are ill equipped to do so, as officers struggle with limited resources. Thus, interfaces can become adversarial, rather than collaborative. Moreover, structures tend to be co-terminus with administrative boundaries. In these contexts, the dynamics of settlement in the NWCR illustrate that:

- The imperative of an urgent and accelerated transition to a post-carbon society requires investment in spaces, processes and structures that enable systemic dialogue and collaborative governance involving planners, elected members, communities and other stakeholders (e.g., environmental NGOs and the social partners);
- Inter-urban (polycentric) and urban-rural partnerships that bring together formal and non-formal actors are important in enabling the City Region to realise its territorial competitiveness and sustainability; and
- Development patterns and spaces are border fluid and border blind, and if governance is to align with spatial realities, cross-border mechanisms are required, and structures that operate in similar border contexts (e.g., European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – EGTC) ought to be pursued in the North West City Region.

Chapter 4. A Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile of the North West

4.1 This chapter presents a profile of the North-West City Region in respect of the following variables:

- Demographics
- Socio-Cultural Features
- Economy
- Commuting.

The data presented here are drawn from the most recent sources for which all-island Census of Population data are available. These are the 2011 censuses conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) (Northern Ireland) and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) (Ireland). While both censuses have several common variables, there are divergences in respect of terminology, the wording of questions and the response categories provided. Thus, approximately one-third of the census data for both jurisdictions is directly comparable, and a similar proportion is partly comparable. The absence of a fully-aligned Census of Population across the island of Ireland deprives public bodies, and in particular planning authorities in border contexts, of a fully informative set of baseline indicators and benchmarks on which to make informed decisions. Thus, while authorities strive to promote evidence-based planning, they are delimited by the absence of a fully comprehensive dataset. This poses challenges to decision-makers, investors, service providers and communities, and these challenges are most acutely manifest in border locations. Redressing this data deficit is integral to effective and collaborative spatial planning.

4.2 Improving evidence-based decision-making requires not only an alignment of themes, variables and values, in respect of the census and other datasets, it will also require the simultaneous collection of data in both jurisdictions. At present, Ireland conducts a census of population every five years, while the UK does so every ten years.

4.3 While delimited by the absence of a completely aligned dataset, this chapter seeks to make a useful and informative contribution to stakeholders' understandings of regional dynamics in the North West City Region (NWCR). Drawing on the available aligned datasets, this chapter presents demographic and socio-economic data in respect of the following variables.

Table 4.1. Overview of Data Sets Analysed

Themes	Variables
Demographics	Population Change Age Profile
Socio-Cultural Features	Place of Birth Religion Housing Educational Attainment
Economy	Labour Force Workforce Participation and Composition
Commuting	Modes of Travel to work and education

Annex 3 presents a set of maps that illustrate the spatial patterns associated with the variables that are analysed below.

Demographics

Population Change

- 4.4 According to the 2011 Census of Population, the NWCR has a population of 208,541. This increased from 189,835 in 2001 – an increase of 9.9%. Over the same period¹⁴, the population of Ireland grew by 17.1%, while the population of Northern Ireland grew by 7.5%. The population of the island of Ireland grew by 14.25%.
- 4.5 Patterns of population change in the nine/ten years to 2011 indicate that growth was most concentrated in the suburbs of Letterkenny and Derry and in their surrounding peri-urban zones. Suburban population growth around Letterkenny was mainly to the west and south of the town. Suburban population growth around Derry was mainly to the city's east and south.
- 4.6 While their suburbs experienced population growth, the urban cores of Derry and Letterkenny experienced population decline. Levels of decline exceeded twelve percent in Letterkenny Town Centre and in parts of Derry City namely Shantallow, the Collon and parts of the Waterside.
- 4.7 Strabane experienced population decline in its town centre and southern outskirts – along the Melmont Road and encompassing the village of Sion Mills. Buncrana experienced population growth, but this growth was greater in the town's outskirts (Barrack Hill, Hilltown, Magherinture, Rockytown, Straboe) than in its core.

¹⁴ Ireland's Census of Population, which had been scheduled for April 2011, was deferred until 2012.

Age Profile

- 4.8 The locations with the highest proportions of children (aged 0 to 14), as a percentage of the total resident population, are predominantly in the outskirts of urban areas. In contrast, the urban cores of Derry City, Letterkenny and Strabane have lower proportions of children.
- 4.9 The locations with the highest proportions of teenagers and young adults (aged 15 to 24), as a percentage of the total resident population, are dispersed across urban areas, while rural areas, particularly those in County Donegal, generally have lower values. The locations with the highest values in Letterkenny are its town centre and the neighbourhoods adjacent to Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LyIT). In Derry, the highest values are in the city centre including the University area and in its western suburbs. Persons in this age cohort also comprise at least a fifth of the resident population in some of the housing estates around Buncrana and in the villages/towns of Kilmacrenan, Lettershandoney, Milford, Ramelton and St Johnston.
- 4.10 Persons aged 25 to 44, as a percentage of the resident population, are more prevalent in western parts of the city region than they are in its east. They comprise over a third of the population in most neighbourhoods around Letterkenny town centre, the outskirts of Buncrana and in the satellite settlements of Derry's peri-urban zone namely Bridgend, Muff and Strathfoyle. Values are notably lower (<22%) in most of the Waterside, Newbuildings and the environs of Artigarvan for example.
- 4.11 Persons aged 45 to 64 are more evenly dispersed across the city region (relative to other cohorts), and the range of values is narrower than for other age cohorts.
- 4.12 Persons aged 65 and over, as a percentage of the resident population, are most prevalent in rural areas and the core urban areas of Derry City, Letterkenny, Lifford-Strabane and Buncrana. Values are also high (relative to the city region as a whole) in Eglinton and around Ballybofey-Stranorlar.
- 4.13 A spatial analysis of the city region's internal demographic changes and age profile indicates an ageing of the population in core urban areas and a higher level of demographic vitality in suburban and peri-urban areas, most notably those in County Donegal. Thus, the data suggest a need for:
- The strengthening of the demographic structure in core urban areas, through ensuring generational renewal in areas with an older age profile;

- Ensuring that communities are age friendly and are prepared to cater for, and support, an ageing population; and
- Providing an appropriate and flexible mix of housing types, so that neighbourhoods are attractive to, and cater for, households at all stages of their lifecycles.

Socio-Cultural Features

Place of Birth

- 4.14 The City Region's population has become increasingly diverse, in respect of nationality and ethnicity, over the past twenty years, and the labour market is the predominant pull factor. Levels of diversity are lower in the NWCR than in the Belfast and Dublin metropolitan zones.
- 4.15 Persons born outside of Ireland and the UK are more likely to reside in County Donegal than in Derry and Strabane. Letterkenny stands out as the location with the highest proportion of persons born outside of these islands. Values are also above the NWCR norm (>10%) in and around Buncrana and Ballybofey-Stranorlar, as well as in parts of Derry City's urban core – mainly along the western part of the city, in the streets immediately south and west of the City Walls. Values are also above the regional norm further north – around the Magee Campus of Ulster University. The highest values in the east of the city are in Lisnagelvin.
- 4.16 Polish nationals account for the most populous nationality after Irish and/or British in the city region. The locations with the highest values, in respect of Polish-born persons as a percentage of the resident population, are Letterkenny, Buncrana, Strathfoyle and Ballybofey.
- 4.17 The locations with the highest proportions of persons born outside Ireland and the UK, as a percentage of the resident population, are Letterkenny and Buncrana and its environs. Other locations that have values in excess of the regional norm are Ballybofey-Stranorlar and the Brandywell. Values tend to be higher in settlements than in areas of open countryside.
- 4.18 Persons born in Ireland and the UK and who now reside in the other jurisdiction (rather than the jurisdiction in which they were born) are most likely to live in communities that are geographically close to their place of birth. In Derry & Strabane, border communities including Culmore, Newbuildings, Strabane and Sion Mills have higher proportions of persons born in the Republic of Ireland than do communities in the east of the council area. In County Donegal, the communities with the highest proportion of persons born in Northern Ireland are Muff, Bridgend and the environs of Lifford.

- 4.19 Persons born in the UK, excluding Northern Ireland, are most prevalent in Letterkenny and in rural areas to its west, as well as in South Inishowen.
- 4.20 The data in respect of place of birth indicate that urban areas, in particular Letterkenny, are more diverse and have a greater range of pull factors (employment, rental accommodation) than do other parts of the city region. Rural areas are more likely to attract incomers with social and familial ties as well as retirees. Thus, the data suggest, that
- inter-cultural and integration actions are most likely to be required in Letterkenny and its environs, rather than elsewhere in the region; and
 - it may be worth investigating why Derry City has, despite its size, attracted fewer migrants than Letterkenny.

Religion

- 4.21 Roman Catholicism is the predominant religious affiliation of the City Region's resident population. Catholics comprise over eighty percent of the population across most of Derry City (with the exception of the Waterside), South Inishowen, Strabane, Lifford and its environs and the communities to the south and west of Letterkenny.
- 4.22 The spatial pattern in respect of other Christian denominations (e.g., Protestantism) is the opposite to that which pertains in respect of Roman Catholics. The lowest proportions are in the locations referenced in paragraph 4.21, while the highest proportions (as a percentage of the resident population) are in the Waterside and in rural areas between Newbuildings, Claudy and Donemana. Rural areas around Raphoe and Convoys also have significant (>25%) populations belonging to other Christian denominations.
- 4.23 People who adhere to non-Christian faiths represent a small (<5%) proportion of the resident population. Values are highest in Letterkenny, and are associated with in-migration, mainly from outside the EU.
- 4.24 The spatial patterns in respect of religious adherence indicate a segregation that is well-established. There is need for continued investment to promote welcoming, tolerant and integrated communities across the City Region; building on the City Region's existing strengths in celebrating culture, traditions and heritage – integral components of place-making.

Housing

- 4.25 The majority of households, in the city region, are owner occupier. Those that are owner occupier, without a mortgage, are most concentrated in core urban areas that have an older housing stock. This is the case in Letterkenny, Derry City (mainly in the Bogside), the centre of Buncrana and Ballybofey-Stranorlar. Owner-occupier households, without a mortgage, account for over half the stock in neighbourhoods in the east and north of Derry City namely Pennyburn/Springtown and along the Limavady Road. They represent a similar proportion (>50%) of households in Eglinton, the environs of Buncrana, Convoy, Milford, Ramelton and Raphoe.
- 4.26 Households that are renting from a local authority or approved housing body are predominantly in urban centres, most notably the west and south of Derry City, the environs of Letterkenny and Lifford-Strabane. There are also notable concentrations of social-rented households in a number of the region's villages, with the highest relative numbers being in Donemana, Kilmacrenan and Raphoe.
- 4.27 Households that are renting from private landlords are almost entirely in the region's settlements, rather than in rural areas. The locations with the highest tiers of values (>25%) are in Derry City – particularly its southern and western suburbs (the Galliagh, in neighbourhoods along the northern side of the Springtown Road, in the streets between Foyle Road and the Brandywell Stadium and in neighbourhoods immediately south-west of Derry City Cemetery), Lifford-Strabane and the environs of Letterkenny – especially around the university hospital and institute of technology. Among the smaller settlements with significant proportions of households in the private rental sector are Raphoe, Kilmacrenan and Donemana.
- 4.28 The data in respect of housing are more limited than in respect of other census variables. Thus, there is a need for:
- Alignment (North-South) of data in respect of the age and energy efficiency of housing. These factors are coming into increasingly sharp focus in the context of fuel poverty and the need to accelerate the just transition to a post-carbon society;
 - Ensuring an adequate supply of good quality rental accommodation in small towns and villages that are in need of economic and demographic renewal; and
 - Through community planning and in association with local housing associations, to conduct further independent research on housing access and living conditions of migrant communities and their awareness of tenants' rights.

Educational Attainment

- 4.29 Levels of educational attainment are generally higher in Derry and Strabane than in North East Donegal.
- 4.30 The proportion of the adult population with a third or fourth-level educational qualification is generally highest in urban and peri-urban areas, including the environs of Letterkenny – particularly to the north of the town, in Derry City and other settlements in Derry and Strabane. The highest levels, in the city region, are in the north-eastern suburbs of Derry City – along the Limavady Road (A2) and Newbuildings. In these neighbourhoods, over forty percent of the adult population has a third- or fourth-level educational qualification.
- 4.31 The areas with the greatest proportions of persons whose education did not progress beyond lower second level are predominantly rural. The highest geographical concentrations are in the eastern parts of County Donegal – east of a line from Buncrana to Ballybofey. The highest values, in respect of the proportion of the adult population who completed their formal education without progressing to higher secondary, are in the environs of Manorcunningham, Burt and Burnfoot. There is also evidence of educational disadvantage in some urban areas, most notably the west and south of Letterkenny and in parts of Derry City, particularly Rosemount, the Brandywell, Pennyburn (in the west of the city) and in the parts of the Waterside that are closest to the city centre.
- 4.32 The data in respect of educational attainment correlate with age; the younger an area's profile, the higher the levels of educational attainment. Accounting for this relationship, the local-level spatial pattern in the NWCR also suggests a correlation between low levels of educational attainment and living in local authority housing. Thus, the data suggest:
- A need for outreach and second-chance education and training programmes in rural areas, particularly for males and older people; and
 - Ongoing support for preventive education interventions in areas of urban disadvantage, and the involvement of parents/guardians in supporting children's progression in education.

The nurturing of a transversal skills-base for the NWCR is not only a key principle of place-making (see Chapter 5) but is critical to advancing regional priorities in, for example, net-zero and green transformation.

Economy

Labour Force

- 4.33 Labour force participation correlates with age; high values are associated with having a high proportion of the population aged 15 to 64, as is the case in the environs of Letterkenny and in the settlements that immediately surround Derry City – in both jurisdictions – namely Bridgend, Muff, Culmore, Eglinton and Newbuildings. The areas with the lowest rates of labour force participation are those that have older age profiles, and in particular the urban cores of Derry City and Strabane.
- 4.34 There are several villages/small towns in which the labour force participation rate is lower than in the surrounding rural areas. These include Convoy, Claudy, Donemana, Eglinton, Kilmacrenan, Raphoe and Sion Mills.
- 4.35 Datasets on unemployment are configured differently in both jurisdictions. For the specific purpose of this spatial analysis, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) criteria can be applied in Northern Ireland, while the Republic's (census) dataset is based on self-declaration. Thus, while inter-jurisdictional quantitative comparisons are not advisable, it is possible to identify the relative levels of unemployment. The areas that stand out as having the highest rates are Letterkenny Town, Buncrana, Lifford, Ramelton, Strabane (town centre neighbourhoods) and parts of Derry City – mainly to its south.
- 4.36 Labour force datasets are delimited by the absence of fully aligned metrics and the operation of two distinct social security/welfare systems. In this context, and in the light of the spatial patterns elucidated here, the analysis points to a need for:
- Greater integration of workforce and welfare systems, metrics and all-island progression options for workers;
 - Specific steps to avert the hollowing out of the economic cores of villages, small towns and larger urban centres; and
 - Investments in tackling inter-generational unemployment, especially in disadvantaged urban communities.

Workforce Participation and Composition

- 4.37 There are particular sub-regional (local level geographical patterns associated with participation in the workforce and employment in particular sectors.
- 4.38 The locations with the highest values in respect of the primary sector (agriculture), as a proportion of the workforce are rural part of East Donegal – in the fertile lowlands that are drained by the rivers Finn, Deele and Swilly Burn.
- 4.39 Employment in the secondary sector (manufacturing and construction) is associated with proximity to the border – with the highest values (as proportion of the workforce) being in communities between Newbuildings and Lifford.
- 4.40 Service sector employment (professional services, retail, commerce and trade) is most prevalent among those who live in the town and in their immediate environs. Persons who work in the public sector, while generally based in urban centres, are likely to reside in smaller settlements and in the peri-urban zones around Letterkenny and Derry.
- 4.41 The data in respect of the workforce are relatively limited, thus further underscoring the need for:
- Alignment in respect of metrics and data capture, so that the benefits of the all-island economy can be best measured and reviewed at sub-national level; and
 - More refined data in respect of the locations of jobs (as well as the geography of the workforce – place of residence).

Commuting

Modes of Travel to Work and Education

- 4.42 The CSO and NISRA record and publish commuting-related data at several spatial scales, including at small-area level. The variables that are common to both datasets include ‘mode of transport’ and ‘distance travelled’. In addition, the CSO collects data on journey times, which are arguably more relevant than physical distance given the levels of congestion in some metropolitan areas and the poor quality of infrastructure in many rural areas.

- 4.43 Approximately, two-thirds of all journeys to places of work and education are made by private modes of transport, and figures are similar in both jurisdictions. In the NWCR, rural and peri-urban areas exhibit the highest levels of dependency on private transport.
- 4.44 Approximately a quarter of commutes in the main urban centres are made by using so-called green or active modes of travel (walking or cycling). The highest values are in Derry City, Letterkenny, Buncrana and Lifford-Strabane. Some smaller towns and villages have levels of active travel use that are similar to those that pertain in the large urban centres. Such settlements include Ballybofey-Stranorlar and Raphoe.
- 4.45 Levels of public transport use are generally, albeit slightly, higher among commuters, who reside in the Derry & Strabane Council area than in County Donegal. This may reflect further underlying factors relating to levels of service and availability of public transport options for commuters in rural areas or wishing to move between settlements outside of existing routes. Monies have been committed to seek to provide a regional transport hub in a central location in Letterkenny under URDF/Exchequer funding to further strategic connections (public and private) across the North West. This compliments the INTERREG-funded North West Multi Modal Transport Hub (NWMTH) in Derry City and established strategic transport linkages within the DCSDC local authority area.
- 4.46 The data in respect of commuting patterns indicate that the NWCR has:
- A persistently high and unsustainable level of dependence on private modes of transport;
 - Limited public transport provision, other than arterial connections into Derry City, and to a lesser extent into Letterkenny;
 - Low levels of cross-border connectivity in terms of public and active modes of travel – few bus connections and a wholly inadequate walking and cycling infrastructure. The City Region has one rail link – from Derry/Londonderry to Belfast, and since the 1960s there have been no rail services west of the Foyle. A seasonal ferry service (for pedestrians and most types of vehicles) – Lough Foyle Ferry - operates between Quigley's Point (Greencastle, Co. Donegal) and Mcgilligan Point (NI). This service is largely oriented towards serving tourist traffic, and it provides an important connection between the Wild Atlantic Way and the Causeway Coast.

Spatial Planning and Governance Implications

4.47 In 2015, the ICLRD and the All-island Research Observatory (AIRO) published *The Atlas of the Island of Ireland – Mapping Social and Economic Patterns*. This pioneering work aligned census of population data for Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the authors mapped comparable variables at Small Area (SA) level. Over the past six years, the ICLRD-AIRO atlas has been used and referenced by policy-makers, practitioners, academics and civil society, all of whom welcome it as an important tool in supporting evidence-based decision making and collaborative approaches to spatial planning. As this chapter has shown, however, significant data deficits remain in respect of all-island demographic and socio-economic data and redressing these deficits ought to be a policy priority. Furthermore, it is essential that alignment in respect of datasets be accompanied by investment in data collation, visualisation and dissemination, so that best practices in evidence-based planning and development are mainstreamed. This ought to include the development of an interactive digital interface – in real time. In order to enable users to make maximum use of the evidence, this interface needs to include not just census of population data, but data relating to the work of statutory bodies.

4.48 Notwithstanding the aforementioned data and temporal limitations, this chapter provides an informative baseline profile of the NWCR. Among the features it highlights, which are relevant to spatial planning and governance are:

- Lower levels of population growth than those experienced on the island as a whole;
- Greater demographic vitality in suburban and peri-urban areas than in core urban areas, particularly in the case of Derry City;
- Higher levels of in-migration to County Donegal than to Derry and Strabane;
- Some persistent weaknesses in the more rural parts of the region – manifest in a demographic and economic hollowing-out of villages. As their social and economic functions decline, some rural settlements tend to become commuter settlements, rather than vibrant villages;
- Emerging development pressures in areas of high amenity; for example in South Inishowen (Donegal) and along the A5 (North of Strabane), along the A6 (North West, North and North East of Clady), South of Clady/ Donegal border and North, North West and South of Castlederg (and south of Garvetagh);
- Inter-generational deprivation in some urban neighbourhoods – manifest in low levels of workforce participation and low levels of educational attainment; and

- Limited cross-border multi-modal connectivity and high levels of dependency on private modes of transport.

4.49 While there are some differences between the two jurisdictions (e.g., greater population diversity in County Donegal), the majority of the features and patterns elucidated by the data are common to both council areas; they transcend the border. Thus, cross-border collaborative governance is integral to their management.

Chapter 5. The North West - A City Region in Transition: Placemaking through collaboration and diversity

5.1. The North West City Region, focused on the three core settlements of Letterkenny-Derry/Londonderry-Strabane, is characterised by a diverse mix of urban and rural settlements. Understanding and harnessing the distinctive characteristics and strengths (i.e., the endogenous asset base) of these areas and settlements is essential in improving the quality of life for the City Region's population. The current vision for the City Region is that by 2038,

The North West City Region Metropolitan Area and Letterkenny Regional Centre will be Connected, Vibrant, Resilient and Inclusive (NWRA, 2020, p.227).

5.2. In delivering on this vision, the City Region has the potential to be a pioneer in the type of systemic transformations required in addressing the key generational challenges being faced today – including climate change, biodiversity loss, changing demographics, food security, and energy security. Much work has already occurred in identifying green transformation opportunities across a range of sectors – including the role of spatial planning – and in developing regional energy and climate adaptation strategies.

5.3. Other challenges such as Brexit and COVID-19 are, on the one hand, negatively impacting on the growth prospects of sectors such as retail, trade, and tourism (Grant Thornton, 2021¹⁵; Ulster University Economic Policy Centre, 2017¹⁶). As sectors that have already been undermined by decades of underinvestment, this is leading to economic disparities across the wider North West. On the other, Brexit is generating opportunities to positively build on the region's strategic gateway location to both Europe and the United States and the rich cultural heritage and environmental/landscape attributes that are on offer as changing patterns of work begin to emerge and people seek a greater work-life/wellbeing balance.

5.4. The concepts of place-shaping and place-making are now part of the everyday language of planners and policy-makers across the public sector (Pugalis, 2010). Their utility has broadened

¹⁵ Grant Thornton (2021). *Responding to Brexit - An Investment Plan for Donegal and the North West Region*, March 2021. Study Commissioned by Donegal County Council (unpublished).

¹⁶ *Initial Analysis of the Challenges and Opportunities of Brexit for the Derry City and Strabane and Donegal County Council areas – The North West City Region*; see <https://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/f1f1bbb6-e336-4acf-9fd9-5e1e171fe43f/Initial-Analysis-of-the-Challenges-and-Opportunities-of-Brexit-for-the-North-West-City-Region-150217.pdf>

beyond just public spaces to embrace and encompass all the unique qualities and asset-bases of settlements, together with the principles of place-making and wider sustainable development goals. By emphasising the significance of ‘place’ in the policy realm, the role of local government as drivers and enablers of effective development with “responsibility for their own economic fortunes, and for striking the right balance between economic, environmental and social objectives and concerns” (Lyons, 2007: 13) has never been stronger.

- 5.5. Importantly, in the context of the NWCR, the roll-out of place-making policies cannot always be confined within administrative boundaries; cross-boundary working will be integral to successful place-shaping and City Region building.
- 5.6. Under the principles of place-making, proposals contained within any spatial strategy should be based upon a design-led and participative process and should seek to deliver on the six qualities of place – namely, distinctive, safe and pleasant, welcoming, adaptable, resource efficient and easy to move around and beyond (see Table 5.1).
- 5.7. This scoping paper attempts to overlay the strategic spatial opportunities and challenges of the NWCR, as a functional economic area, with the transformative and developmental ambitions of two government systems and associated stakeholders. Inevitably, this paper must consider the broader regional/inter-territorial context within which the subsequent metropolitan spatial strategy will sit. As evidenced throughout the remainder of this chapter, there are existing regional policy imbalances. Through this scoping paper and resulting spatial strategy, there are undoubtedly opportunities to see these as a series of possibilities to be addressed through future iterations of the RDS, NPF and RSES.

Table 5.1: Principles of Place-Making: The North West City Region

Principles of Place-Making	Objective
Distinctive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Vibrant urban cores ✓ Thriving City-Region ✓ Development of 'Eco-Quarters' ✓ Emphasis on green/low (zero) carbon development ✓ 'Learning Region'
Safe and Pleasant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improved inter-connectivity across the Regional Growth Centres ✓ High quality public realm ✓ Improved air quality ✓ Less congestion ✓ Harnessing natural capital ✓ Health and Wellbeing
Easy to Move Around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improved active travel modes – public transport, walking, cycling, etc. ✓ Less congestion ✓ Considered role of technology/digitalisation
Welcoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ease of movement ✓ Safe ✓ High quality public realm ✓ Building on culture, heritage, creative industries
Adaptable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Renewable energy districts ✓ Green Transformation agenda ✓ Supporting SMEs and start-ups through digital hubs/incubation spaces ✓ Promoting remote working opportunities
Resource Efficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Optimise use of existing resources ✓ Transversal skills-base ✓ 'Green Region' ✓ Circular economy ✓ Development of Life Adaptable Homes ✓ 'Eco-Towns/Villages'

(Source: ICLRD, 2018; Adapted from Scottish Government, 2013)

5.1. The Economy

5.1.1. This section places the issue of the economy of the North West City Region (NWCR) in the emerging context of an all-island economy and labour market, and post-Brexit business integration across the island of Ireland – and in particular in the border counties and Northern Ireland. Referencing a selection of enabling strategic policies which the NWCR can use to contextualise and deepen its already connected approach to shared development and growth of its economy, this section also examines the innovations in economic planning and the nature of collaborative working that will be required to release the full economic potential of the region in contributing to growth and sustainability through a green economic transformation. This is essential not only for the population of this cross border functional economic area, but for the wider growth, sustainability and competitiveness of the economy of Northern Ireland, Ireland and the synergies that relate to a transboundary scope for growth. The section specifically identifies the spatial planning issues associated with the region’s economic transformation and sustainability.

North West City Region Statement of Regional Priorities for Economic Growth and Investment

5.1.2. The North West City Region *Statement of Regional Priorities (2021)* has been shared with the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive via the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC). It identifies a range of priorities which have the potential to support a permanent shift away from economic instability and restricted growth towards a fully-functioning and fully-supported cross border functional economic area – driving innovation, job creation and sustainability (Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council, 2021). In addition, it has a significant role to play in delivering balanced regional and economic development on the island of Ireland.

5.1.3. The Statement recognises that ‘Economic Growth and Investment’ form one of the three pillars of regional growth around which collaborative activities under the NWSGP are organised and sets out a vision and principles on which the region’s economy needs to be supported to grow. It states that

in addition to ensuring strategic alignment, the proposed arrangement in the North West can facilitate the identification, planning, promotion, and monitoring and implementation of major public expenditure projects

and growth and development initiatives impacting on the City Region. This will provide an opportunity for enhancing risk management of major public expenditure initiatives, both capital and revenue-based, and for proactively driving best outcomes.

With respect to the current arrangements for growing the NWCR, it notes that these are based on international good practice in place-based leadership. This, in turn, is critical to ensuring that the

Effective and efficient planning and management of regional growth can lead to the Region being a net contributor to both economies, thus maximising its revenue potential in public fiscal terms (Ibid, 2021).

5.1.4 The North West Regional Priorities Paper further highlights specific agreed priorities in the economic growth area which will need to be taken account of in the creation of a facilitative spatial strategy for the region. These priorities are categorised as follows:

Centrally/nationally driven, locally/regionally supported:

- A focussed strategy and implementation plan for the urgent substantial expansion and development of university/third level provision, student numbers and courses in the NWCR;
- Increased investment in skills/apprenticeship programmes linked to regional industry and business, existing and emerging;
- A co-ordinated strategy and action plan across the NWCR on job creation, FDI promotion, development of innovation networks and facilities, and industry support as catalysts to address regional imbalance, disparity of opportunity and high levels of economic inactivity and unemployment;
- Support and investment in key transformational tourism projects and initiatives;
- Regional sustainability scoping/forecasting and jobs plan for a green economy – comprehensive and to cover existing and potential sectors either evolving or emerging, looking at value and supply chains, macro- enterprise and micro-enterprise sectors, and making recommendations as to collaborative pathways and best practice stimulator models to deliver the plan. Implementation of plan to be fully resourced; and
- Support and interventions to effectively address deficits throughout the region relating to broadband access and resilience, with particular focus on rural areas across the wider North West.

Locally/regionally driven, centrally/nationally supported:

- Ongoing development of export training and in-market support for businesses across the City Region;
- Joint promotion of the region, investment and tourism opportunities in key markets in the UK, Europe and the United States; and
- Development of a full suite of analytics of the cross-border functional economic area to support promotion, job creation, economic development initiatives and inward investment (*Ibid*, 2021).

5.1.5. The *Statement of Regional Priorities* further acknowledges the opportunities provided by the North West collaborative arrangements to achieve optimal outcomes with maximum efficiency in the management of resources and mobilisation of support systems for the regional economy to reach its full potential: noting in particular the key role of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP) in delivering benefits” relevant to the core development and post-COVID recovery agendas of both administrations” (*Ibid*, p.6).

The Challenge and Opportunity of Transformation and the ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’¹⁷

5.1.6. The island of Ireland, and within that the jurisdictional economies of Northern Ireland and Ireland, is on the brink of a challenging and unprecedented global industrial and environmental transformation that will require new modes of collaborative working across all areas of public policy planning and delivery. Industry bodies North and South (IBEC and CBI) have formally recognised the need to drive and formulate approaches to support an all-Island economy with an all-island workforce, in the 2018 Report *Business on a Connected Island*, stating:

there are significant benefits for businesses that operate on an all-island basis. As a natural economic zone with few restrictive barriers between jurisdictions, doing business in both allows additional scope, scale and substance to help drive growth and job creation (2018: p.5).

5.1.7. At a European level, the economic and digital transformation will require innovative economic

¹⁷ Government of Ireland (2021), National Development Plan 2021-30; p95.

solutions to contribute to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) targets via the EU Green Deal, and meeting the dual challenges of sustainable production and sufficient innovation to deliver a green energy transition for a Europe which is currently entering a major energy supply crisis. Nationally, governments will have their own targets within the United Nations (UN) SDG Framework and - for Ireland - the EU Green Deal framework. Regionally, the challenge for the NWCR will relate to

- a) Levering economic innovation;
- b) Identifying and accelerating growth opportunities in order to deliver a just transition for the NWCR and its people through an enhanced and sustained labour market;
- c) Supporting new sectors of the regional economy servicing requirements arising from the green transformation agenda; and
- d) The ongoing physical and environmental development and planning required to enable these goals while ensuring that climate action, biodiversity and natural heritage resources are conserved as underlying regional assets.

5.1.8. The Councils of Derry City and Strabane and Donegal have established a mechanism for joint place-based marketing and investment promotion, in the form of an established joint trade mission – Ireland North West¹⁸ - which takes place several times annually and works collaboratively with domestic investment agencies in overseas trade missions to market the whole functional economic area of the region as a joint offering to potential investors. This has been delivered with the support of the North West Regional Development Fund and represents an important complement to the current scope of investment marketing operated by state economic development agencies on both sides of the border. This innovation in developing the business base of the region is a subset of activity within what must be a wider connected and structural approach to overall economic planning for the region which has an essential spatial dimension and the necessary governance for formal and ‘soft space’ collaborative working across all relevant public, private and community stakeholders.

5.1.9. A single-jurisdictional approach to economic development in the North West has the effect of creating back to back policies and resultant delivery objectives and working processes which fail to lever the full potential of the region as a net contributor. The NWCR has recognised that a

¹⁸ <http://irelandnw.com/>

connective approach to economic development which transcends the border, combines place-based assets, and which recognises the positive impact of investment on the whole economic area, is the only way to ensure that the geographical North West of the island of Ireland reaches its full potential for both jurisdictions and their economies.

5.1.10. As such, achieving the necessary conditions for collaborative economic growth and Sustainability cannot merely be a matter of sewing the seams together of two separate jurisdictional economic development approaches. A wholly integrated approach to economic planning which gives expression to the best practice principles of place-making and strong regions, while also going beyond a policy template which stops at the border, is what will be required for the NWCR to recover, tackle the negative impacts of its historical infrastructure baseline deficit, and deliver a just transition which addresses the acute economic and social inequalities experienced in the region's economy. This section therefore draws out elements of public economic policy which form a useful basis for the approach required in the North West, rather than focusing on policies which in their design place a natural constraint on the necessary approach for the City Region.

Key Economic Facts

5.1.11. The region's economy is characterised by a cross-border workforce and integrated business networks with significant additional potential to deliver on issues identified as relevant for a thriving island economy. As noted in both the *Donegal County Development Plan (CDP) 2018-2024*, and the draft *Local Development Plan (LDP) 2032* for Derry City and Strabane, cross-border trade is an important element of the local economy and reflects a level of economic integration in the North West, particularly along the border.

5.1.12. As noted in Chapter 3, thirty-five per cent of the population of the NWCR are under 25 years of age; making it one of the youngest populations in Europe. The wider North West region currently has a higher and further education student population of just under 35,000¹⁹. Of the current population of working age (16+), 39% have a Level 3 or above qualification. When apprenticeships are added to this, this increases to 43%²⁰.

¹⁹ This data relates to higher and further education enrolments for the academic year 2015/2016 and involves the following institutes: Ulster University (Magee and Coleraine), North West Regional College, NRC - Coleraine, Letterkenny Institute of Technology and Donegal Education and Training Board.

²⁰ These percentages relate to an analysis of 2011 data for level of qualification - Level 3 and above (Age +16 yrs Northern Ireland & +15 yrs Ireland).

5.1.13. Additional key facts about the City Region are cited by the Councils in their Ireland NorthWest investment promotional communications²¹, such as

- The regional operating costs are among the lowest in Europe;
- 75% of investors re-invest in the region;
- The region has high quality wireless and high speed broadband²²;
- House prices are 4.4 times the average local wage;
- The region has outstanding natural heritage assets, tourism amenities and is home to world leading innovation and centres of excellence in all growth sectors;
- The region ranks in the top 10 global places to do business with; and
- As previously noted in the paper, the wider City Region has a catchment population of 350,000 people, with the metropolitan area population being just over 212,000.

5.1.14. Cross-border movement of workers and students between Donegal and Derry/Londonderry is significant. An analysis of traffic movements across three crossing points on the Donegal/Derry Frontier in 2015 by the Department for Regional Development (DRD) captures over 46,000 trips a day (Gallagher 2017) (see Figure 5.1.1.). A further analysis of data relating to cross-border workers and students in 2016 using Census of Population data highlights that 61% of all Ireland to Northern Ireland workers and students travel to Derry/Tyrone (Gallagher, 2017b).

Figure 5.1.1. Traffic Movements on the Donegal/Derry Frontier

Route	Traffic Movement (per week)	Traffic Movement (per work day)
Derry-Bridgend (border)	134,863	19,266
Derry-Culmore (border)	71,145	10,164
Strabane-Lifford (border)	120,569	17,224
Total no. journeys	326,577	46,654

(Source: DRD, 2015)

²¹ <http://www.irelandnw.com>

²² This is not consistently the case in all potential investment locations for the region and in the wake of dispersed working patterns post-Covid the disparities in broadband access need to be addressed- these even apply within the border villages of Donegal which have acquired a function as suburbs for Derry city.

Cohesion Policy Priorities - Shorthand for Balanced Growth

5.1.15. European Cohesion Policy determines how the EU invests in all aspects of European

Programming, including ERDF, Horizon, ESF and a range of other measures which Ireland may be eligible for funding under - either through national government channels or through regional authority mechanisms. Cohesion policy for the period 2021-27 focuses strongly on the role of SMEs in delivering the necessary 'green' and digital transformation that the EU has committed to through its Green Deal and existing policies which support ongoing cohesion and European integration. It has five policy priorities for the period in which the NWCR is aiming to secure and draw EU development funds via the PEACE PLUS Programme. These, as cited earlier in the document but repeated here in the specific context of regional economic development, are:

1. A more **competitive** and **smarter** Europe;
2. **A greener**, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy;
3. A more **connected** Europe by enhancing mobility;
4. A more **social** and inclusive Europe; and
5. Europe closer to **citizens** by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories

5.1.16. These policy priorities will, at a high level, guide the structuring and prioritisation of investments by the EU across its full range of funding streams and programming areas which the NWCR needs to be prepared and ready to lever through its approach to PEACE PLUS.

5.1.17. It is increasingly critical for government and business alike to engage with advancements in technologies and digitalisation to deliver on their strategic goals. As stated in the European Commission communique, *An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe*, Europe is the birthplace of the green tech and there are growing opportunities for SMEs to spearhead innovations in the green economy. In support of this the Commission had earmarked over €300 investment to HPSUs and SMEs for them to deliver breakthrough Green Innovation. In addition, the Strategy indicates that

'The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) will ensure that its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) are more open to SMEs and will increase their opportunity to participate in local innovation

ecosystems in particular in regions that lag behind in terms of innovation. This will be implemented through a dedicated outreach instrument (regional innovation scheme) that will strengthen ecosystems where it matters the most (European Commission, 2020, p.4)

5.1.18. The importance of ecosystems in the North West which create sustained and high level innovation involving Research and Development (R&D) active companies is high - and synergies will be required with spatial planning policy to understand how policy needs to enable SME growth in the region and not merely restrict itself to development planning for FDI. Critical to this is engagement with disruptive technologies such as big data, Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

5.1.19. In this context, regional spatial data collection, for example, needs to take account of data which can both drive and service sectoral economic growth.

The Importance of Regional Growth in National Policy

5.1.20. The Irish *National Development Plan 2021-30* (NDP) contains a number of commitments which have relevance for the economic development stakeholders of the North West, their collective future vision, strategy, and how these are articulated within a national and regional enterprise support ecosystem (Government of Ireland, 2021). In terms of economic competitiveness and innovation adoption, it refers specifically to the need for working differently and collaboratively – in mobilising all the assets of the state, economic and social infrastructure at national and regional level to ensure Ireland is to the forefront of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This NDP represents a significant step change in how resources are planned, delivered and how stewardship of public resources needs to be done in a way which is co-ordinated, which takes account of evidence, and which is flexible to meet the needs not only of sectors but of different regions.

5.1.21. There is a clear implication in the wording of the NDP that ‘Digital and Green Transition’ will not simply be a matter of existing mechanisms applying business as usual to new growth sectors. It will have profound implications for how the whole of the state’s enterprise, innovation and skills facilities work in synergy with each other and there will be a strong imperative for robust place-based ecosystems at subnational and regional levels in order to effectively deliver on this transition.

5.1.22. Across the island of Ireland, regions differ in their enterprise structure and in the occupational profiles of the enterprise bases in-situ. According to *Enterprise 2025 Renewed*, the regional economy of the North West has ‘long-standing strengths in agri-food, life-sciences, RTDI, engineering, retail, manufacturing, service sector, energy, creative sector, tourism, marine and many more’. Indeed, many of the region’s most important sectors have characteristics normally associated with clusters, meaning they are geographically concentrated and include a tailored supply chain that services the industry’. There is also the potential for the region to play its role as a net producer of clean energy. These potentials have particular implications for the Irish and Northern Ireland engineering/construction, advanced manufacturing and geosciences R&D and economic innovation agendas. The NWCR, by virtue of its dual access to both the UK and EU markets, has a key role to play in integration of business, clustering and the conditions which support growth, across the border.

5.1.23. Noting that ‘national policy needs to be attuned to regional differences’, the NDP emphasises the importance of collaborative working to unlock regional potential, and the role of both clustering and bottom-up catalyst at the level of regions, which ‘leverage the assets of the region’ (Government of Ireland, 2021, p.52). For the West of Ireland (and by implication a relevant point for the NWCR which sits at one end of the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC)), the NDP specifically identifies the AEC concept as being of sufficient scale and ambition to help deliver the step-change required in regional transition, and specifically refers to the need for higher and further education systems to be effectively connected to regional enterprise ecosystems in a way which levers their value in the high-potential, high-growth, R&D activity for the region as a whole.

5.1.24. While noting there is no equivalent of the NDP for Northern Ireland, there is a commitment by both Governments’ on the island of Ireland to the potential for development of innovative knowledge-based services and products with high export potential. For Derry City and Strabane District Council, the City Deal and Inclusive Future Fund represents the largest ever single investment package by the UK Government to this council area. Valued at £210 million, it will contribute to building a stronger, more competitive, resilient and inclusive economy, will deliver higher paid jobs and contribute to creating a more regionally balanced economy over the coming years²³. Investment through the fund will catalyse delivery of a number of projects featured within the City and District’s *Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan 2017-2032* and cross-border projects

²³ <https://www.derrystrabane.com/citydeal>

featured in the NDP, such as the advancement of strategic infrastructural and connectivity projects such in rail and roads (A6, A5 & A2 Buncrana Road)²⁴ and investment in education.

Regional Models for Placemaking

5.1.25. It will be important for the NWCR to act with awareness of synergies with other organisations and public bodies with an economic development and regional growth remit, in order to lever optimal outcomes on shared objectives. This approach will also add value to the cross-government connections which can be drawn through the engagement of government departments in the NWSGP. The smaller the piece of territory, the more important it is to place priorities in context of a wider picture.

5.1.26. *Project Ireland 2040*, the NDP, the City Deal and Inclusive Future Fund and the *Northern and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* (RSES) all place a strong emphasis on ‘placemaking’, the process by which stakeholders in a region interact, mobilise assets and resources in order to release the full competitive and sustainable potential of the region. Each realise that critical to realising regional potential in a commitment to strategic (and longitudinal) investment in ‘place’. This includes “tapping into the economic potential that remains unused, so that all parts of cities and regions can contribute to the quality of life” (Northern and Western Regional Assembly, 2020, p.10).

5.1.27. Each of the key policy documents as outlined above recognise that a more sustainable model of regional sustainable growth and development is required and strives to outline a pathway for this – while recognising that the transformation needed demands a bespoke model. The NWCR is already well-advanced in detailing its potential for transitioning towards a greener and low carbon society aligned to the SDGs and grounded in resilience and sustainability. Both the City Deal and RSES, for example, place a strong emphasis on technology and digitalisation and building a region of well-networked and vibrant urban and rural areas. The Western Development Commission (WDC) in its Strategy for 2019-2024 acknowledges the need to ‘develop a globally competitive region of vibrant connected communities that work smarter and live better’ (Western Development Commission, 2019, p.10). All of these factors are relevant for good place-making; and implies an understanding of the as yet unreleased potential of the region in key sectors with high innovation potential.

²⁴ <https://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/63564ff1-8cfb-4cd4-9d0f-16dfb5715d4f/DCSDC-City-Deal-Inclusive-Future-Fund.pdf>

5.1.28. As an agency showing leadership in untapping the potential of 'place', Údarás na Gaeltachta Has a specific place-based, integrated economic social and cultural development brief which is unique in Western Europe. With a commitment to place-based investment, it provides a range of supports to indigenous companies and to inward investors to Gaeltacht areas including the Donegal Gaeltacht; and by extension provides an important wrap-around element within the economic development ecosystem of the North West. Areas of strategic development include a commitment to a 'Green Gaeltacht', investing in the digitalisation and labour force connective supports inherent in the GTeic Hubs, growing the culture of entrepreneurship, and facilitating collaborative working at regional, national and international level to benefit the economy of the Gaeltacht.

Spatial Planning Implications

5.1.29. The North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP) arrangements provide an opportunity for testing of a shared cross border territorial approach to aligning place-based assets within a combined investment offering. This has implications for ensuring equity and consistency in supply and access to core enabling services for business growth and integration at the interface of the EU single market and the UK economy, such as broadband access, resilience and speed, and energy supply (in particular for industry in Donegal).

5.1.30. Place-based marketing must be backed up by consistent and sustained effort to ensure the internal connectivity of the region (acknowledging that the connectivity of the region to the rest of the island is a matter for national policy to take account of through initiatives such as the All Island Strategic Rail Review). Any NWCR spatial strategy must identify pathways for effectively connecting centres of population within the region, both digitally and in terms of transport infrastructure. Sustainable transport options have major implications for both sustaining and growing a regional cross-border workforce in the context of an island economy, characterised by high levels of competition between regions. The fact that the North West features almost half of the total North/South commuting load sits with strong irony alongside the fact that this remains largely dependent on private car use and commuting services between Derry/Letterkenny, Strabane and Buncrana that are wholly inadequate - both in terms of service baseline and frequency - to serve the needs of commuting workers, students, shift workers, and visitors to the region (see Section 5.2. below). Rural transport connections to urban settlements must also form part of this solution. Planning for sustainable forms of public transport which are orientated to

meet the needs of those of educational and economically active ages must form a core element of a cross-border spatial strategy. The NWSGP arrangements exist as a space in which such approaches can be progressed and public authorities have a duty of care to progress these actions which add value to the place as an investment location.

5.1.31. Green transformation is a major area of policy which will require a spatial planning approach to deliver the change required and act as a catalyst for the new 'green growth' which is possible with a whole-systems approach in the region and with both governments. Public planning, policy and investment can influence and accelerate the adaptation of existing economic sectors and the creation of new ones which can meet the need for technical services, products and systems solutions required to deliver a Green Transformation both in the region and which have export potential. Taking such an approach to catalysing green growth in the economy through creating demand for services and product solutions will have an extensive reach into various areas of built environment policy and services: including, for example, building control guidance and investment of the necessary resources for a quantum shift in energy adaptation for existing building stock, and new build planning requirements. There are also inherent opportunities in the serious challenge to the housing stock presented by the MICA crisis in Donegal. Part of a response to this crisis should be to ensure that rebuild levers sustainable building technologies and enables the regional construction sector to deliver these.

5.1.32. Physical urban and rural regeneration and land use planning, based on a regional cross-border spatial strategy, must take account of the need to deliver a sustainable economic transition for rural and urban workers including farmers - in particular recognising the potential role of farming and rural communities in environmental stewardship and provision of food security to urban settlements. Large regeneration projects can lever outcomes in this area through aligning their operations with principles of regional growth including green procurement and farm-to-fork programmes. Regeneration planning which provides pro-active solutions for protecting biodiversity will also be essential as a factor in local economic development including tourism place-based products and clustering.

5.1.33. Spatial planning for economic growth and development must take full account of the digitalisation agenda, the changes in the future of work and workforce mobility patterns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. A strong element of this will be digital enablement of key settlements to high specifications, better digital enablement of rural settlements, and modelling capital investments and planning for remote working which contribute to sustainability and

wellbeing for the regional workforce. A good example of this already in operation in the region are the GTEIC hubs established by Udaras na Gaeltachta and also adopted in Letterkenny through LyIT and Co-Lab. Clustering of other workforce supports such as childcare facilities and service amenity provision in neighbourhoods should also be taken into account.

5.1.34. The region's economic investment offering draws on the natural assets of the region. Spatial planning provides a mitigating and balancing role in creating a framework within which economic growth needs and environmental protection and conservation can be achieved in a way which identifies and mitigates risks to sustainability.

5.1.35. Spatial planning at a cross border level must provide for promotion and compliance in conservation of natural and built heritage, given the economic tourism and cultural assets that these represent for the region. Particular attention needs to be given to how the region responds to the fact that the European Commission has recently launched infringement proceedings against the Irish Government in relation to compliance with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). It must be ensured that the governance for delivery of a regional spatial strategy includes effective functional co-operation on both policy and implementation/regulation between key agencies in the statutory environmental regulation sector to ensure that regional assets are protected. It is noted that the Councils already engage strategically with a range of agencies in this regard and that this includes the Loughs Agency which has regulatory and enforcement functions delegated by both Governments for the conservation, protection and enhancement of Lough Foyle and its river systems - which lie within the territory of the NWCR.

Governance Implications

5.1.36. The governance framework exists for a strategic approach to ensuring spatial planning at the level of the cross border region enables balanced and sustainable economic growth. Governance for implementation of measures provided for within a spatial strategy will be key - to ensure focus, quality and optimal effectiveness. While implementation in a statutory and regulatory sense must fit within the jurisdictional statutory frameworks, governance for strategic co-operation and joined-up working exists and should continue to be utilised to ensure a connective approach. The NWSGP structures provide a mandated space for Government departments to work with each other and the Councils in the NWCR. Council-to-Council governance supports this arrangement through the North West Regional Development Group (NWRDG). Existing cross border collaborative working and networking arrangements between key council staff focuses

across a range of sectors, including economic development and spatial planning. However, it will be essential that there is connectivity between these strands of work in the context of development and implementation of the spatially-led approach which is required and the leadership of senior officials will be essential in modelling and ensuring this connectivity at all levels of operations and business performance. Investment should also be considered in developing joint training for members of economic and planning committees within Councils, regardless of whether these are separate or connected.

5.2. Mobility and Accessibility

- 5.2.1. Central to the sustainable development of the NWCR is enhanced regional connectivity and accessibility – both internal to the City Region and externally on a North/South, East/West axis. Like the wider Northern and Western region, the NWCR has a particularly dispersed settlement pattern and lacks comparable critical mass evident in other parts of the island. This poses numerous challenges for transport planning – not only in terms of critical mass but also topography. As such, there is a high level of car dependency in the region – as outlined in Chapter 4 (para. 4.43). Through an analysis of three of the main cross-border road networks, this region experiences over 326,577 cross-border traffic movements per week (Figure 5.1.1.); highlighting the significance of the interactions taking place via road in this cross-border region.
- 5.2.2. The growing emphasis on changing travel patterns and modal shift to reduce car dependence in favour of more sustainable modes of transportation such as walking, cycling and public transport is a central theme in national and regional policies in both jurisdictions; a societal shift that will also need to be reflected in any spatial strategy for the NWCR.
- 5.2.3. Balanced regional development to date has been hampered by the lack of a diversified transport system – which includes offering alternatives to the private car. Following decades of under-investment, the region has limited access to a motorway/dual-carriageway or rail links linking the City Region to Dublin or the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) (see Figure 5.2.1). For the NWCR’s national and regional economic competitiveness, investment in the sustainable development of its transport infrastructure is essential. At a strategic level, enhanced regional connectivity will ensure that the NWCR can act as a driver of growth and become a net contributor to the economy of the island of Ireland.
- 5.2.4. How regional connectivity is achieved is equally important. Future investments must address and align with social, environmental and economic constraints and priorities – not least climate change.

Figure 5.2.1 Transport Connectivity – or Lack of – in the North West

Motorway



Rail



5.2.5. Poor connectivity has only strengthened the perceived peripherality of the North West. Both the *National Planning Framework (NPF)* and the *Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)* for Northern Ireland provide a basis for long-term co-ordination on infrastructure development and investment, including transport. The recently published reviewed of the *National Development Plan (NDP)*, for the period 2021-2030, makes a number of commitments to the NWCR. These include:

- Continued investment in road infrastructure improvements to support all-island and border region connectivity, with a particular priority to the A5 Transport Corridor to the North West, where the Irish Government has already committed £75 million;
- An All-Island Strategic Rail Review – to include a focus on connectivity to the North West;
- Continued investment in the ports and airports of the region as critical spokes in improving regional connectivity; this includes a review of the potential for increased air connectivity on the island, including the viability of an air route from Dublin to Derry;
- On-going supports to the NWSGP through further commitments to the North West Development Fund; and

- Creating an island-wide greenway network, linking the Atlantic coast with the Eastern seaboard through greenway projects across the border region – including in Inishowen, Foyle Valley and the North West Greenway Network.

5.2.6. This is reflective of the connectivity and accessibility priorities noted by both Councils in the updated statement of regional priorities, shared with both Governments in July 2021 at the NWSGP meeting. The enabling role of infrastructure for the NWCR was noted in the original *North West Strategic Growth Plan: A Model for Regional Development and Growth of the North West of the Island of Ireland* (2016). In this Plan, regional connectivity was regarded as key to the future success of the region - not only in terms of attracting FDI and encouraging existing companies to expand, but also in growing the indigenous SME sector and developing the research excellence of the North West.

5.2.7. A comparable transportation aim in the *Donegal County Development Plan (CDP) 2018-2024* seeks to achieve quality strategic International, National and Regional links to sea, air and rail from Donegal to enable positive growth within the NWCR with connectivity between the border region and Northern Ireland considered critical to the success of the NWSGP agenda. Similar aims are present within the draft *Derry City & Strabane District Council Local Development Plan (LDP) 2032* which seeks to improve external linkages by road and public transport to the City of Derry from Letterkenny, Belfast, Dublin, Strabane and other gateways.

5.2.8. Collectively, the immediate specific priorities of these various plans include the A5/N2 North-South and A6 East-West transportation corridors, rail infrastructure, air access, and (building on the existence of significant broadband infrastructure as a result of Project Kelvin and previous initiatives) broadband access with a particular focus on the need for adequate and resilient access in rural areas.

5.2.9. These largely same priorities feature strongly in the North West Metropolitan Area Spatial Planning Framework as outlined in the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)* published by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) in 2020. The Regional Policy Objective (RPO) on 'Invest in accessible and connected places' makes the case for the provision of high quality Ten-T²⁵ routes, supporting a modal shift and encouraging active travel – all with a focus

²⁵ The Trans-European Transport Network (Ten-T) is a European Commission policy directed towards the implementation and development of a Europe-wide network of roads, railway lines, inland waterways, maritime shipping routes, ports, airports and rail-road terminals with the aim of strengthening the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union and contributing to the creation of a single European transport area. In the context of this paper, Ten-T refers to propose road upgrades.

on place-making. The RSES also notes the importance of investing in soft measures such as information and awareness raising in addition to the hard infrastructure. The *North West Transport Plan* of June 2021 undertaken by the Department of Infrastructure (DfI) further encourages the continued high levels of cooperation between Letterkenny, Derry and Strabane as pursued by the North West Regional Development Group (NWRDG) to unlock the potential of the North West and consider opportunities to improve transport / accessibility and public services in sectors such as health and education.

5.2.10. The consistency in messaging emanating for the last decade or more from the region leaves us in no doubt of the challenges – and investment priorities for the region. While there is a growing urgency to their delivery, there is a complexity to it also. As noted in Chapter 3 (para. 3.11) the region’s settlement pattern and forms pose significant challenges with respect to attaining Ireland and the UK’s targets in respect of carbon reduction, and spatial planning – including transport planning – needs to be more assertive and firm in respect of accelerating the transition to a post-carbon society.

5.2.11. Across Ireland, transport is by far the largest source of energy-related CO₂ emissions. In 2018, it was responsible for 40%²⁶. It is also the sector where CO₂ emissions have grown the most since the end of the recession in 2012. In response, the future of transport is changing.

5.2.12. This urgent transformation requires an integrated approach to planning and strategic land-use, focusing on:

- Modal shift away from cars and towards sustainable mobility;
- More compact development to reduce commuting times;
- Adaptation measures to mitigate risk to the transport network from climate change; and,
- The development and expansion of renewable fuel infrastructure (Department of Transport, 2020: 2).

Further emphasis also needs to be placed on the role of green infrastructure as a critical infrastructure – a recognition being led by Derry City and Strabane City Council’s *Green Infrastructure Plan 2019-2032*, generated as part of the LDP process.

²⁶ <https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-statistics/co2/>

5.2.13. In support of *Project Ireland 2040*, the current Climate Action Plan²⁷ (2019) adopts a number of ambitious targets to achieve Ireland’s EU 2030 emissions reduction target of 51% (compared to 2018 levels). This includes including raising the electric vehicle target to 936,000 on the road by 2030; investing in biofuels and compressed natural gas; and expanding the cycling infrastructure (Department of Transport, 2020). Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) Networks have estimated that there could be around 400,000 electric vehicles on the roads in Northern Ireland by 2030; the current number is just over 1,600 (200 figures)²⁸. These are ambitious targets dependent on energy security and a fit-for-purpose charging infrastructure.

5.2.14. All the indications are technology will, over the next decade, drive radical changes in transport. This will have profound implications for transport users and businesses as electrification, connectivity, automation, and real-time data collection and analysis continue to drive the development of new modes of travel. While indications are that merging fuel alternatives such as green hydrogen may be competitive in the future for heavy goods vehicles primarily, this still requires further investigation and trialling. In the immediate term, therefore, consideration should be given to the role of proven technologies in the future of transport and mobility.

Roads

5.2.15. As previously noted, the City Region, similar to other regions across the island, is highly car dependent. For example, in Derry, based on 2011 census data, 73% use a car to travel to work while only 10% walk and less than 5% use public transit. In contrast, Belfast statistics show that ‘over 50% of journeys less than 2k are made by made by walk or cycling and over 20% of journeys between 2 and 5 km are made by public transport. The North West Transportation Study (June 2021) notes that if Derry achieved similar modal choices as Belfast, walking, cycling and public transport use would double and car use would decline to 61% reducing autos in the city in the peak period by some 3,500 (Department for Infrastructure, 2021, p. 37-38). The Donegal CDP notes that existing public transport services providing internal and external linkages include the Bus Éireann Expressway long-distance service, linking Donegal/Letterkenny with Derry, Dublin, Sligo, and Galway. In addition, Bus Éireann/Ulster Bus and private transport operators provide local commuter routes and services throughout the County. (p. 82).

²⁷ A revised Climate Action Plan is due for publication in Autumn, 2021.

²⁸ <https://sluggerotoole.com/2021/05/23/electric-vehicles-are-the-future-and-we-need-to-invest-in-our-charging-infrastructure-now/>

5.2.16. Using Google maps, examples of existing morning commuting services between 6 am and 9 am from Letterkenny and Derry include two direct services of 40 minutes from bus station to bus station. From Derry to Letterkenny, three-morning services range in duration from 38-43 minutes. In comparable terms, travel time by auto is between 30-35 minutes in either direction.

- Letterkenny to Derry: Bus No. 64, 6:35 am-7:17 am; 8:10 am—8:57, both services are 42 minutes and include 5 stops. Other routes in the morning go through Strabane (1 hr. and 5 mins); and
- Derry to Letterkenny: Bus No. 64, 7:12 am-7:55 am, 9:12 am-9:55, 43 minutes; also Bus No. 480 operating at 8:27 am-9:05 am, 38 mins and 3 stops.

Further analysis is required to understand better the existing demand for commuting services between urban centres and the key factors influencing the modal choice of public transport/bus or car. For example, such an analysis would take into account cost, frequency, ease of access to the final destination by walking or other means, and cost of car parking at destination.

5.2.17. There is also an immediate need to understand the mobility challenges and opportunities facing rural areas, and to identify existing good practice. Any analysis on the future of mobility must explore how future transport solutions and interventions can tackle rural mobility issues and improve connectivity and accessibility while also being inclusive and practical in terms of timings and frequency. In the wider context of carbon neutrality, it will be pertinent for rural services to also increase low carbon travel options and deliver more integrated transport services.

5.2.18. Cross-border commuting is the 'norm' for large numbers living in the NWCR. Quality of infrastructure is, therefore, critical to efficient and safe travel. Utilising existing routes, there is a need to maximise the potential of what is already in place to:

- Increase transport connectivity, incl. bus and rail services between the main towns and cities to the North West;
- Enhance accessibility between key urban centres of population and their regions, including along the AEC and to the larger centres in the North West; and
- On an inter-regional basis, enhance accessibility to the North West and increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of areas more exposed to the potential impacts of Brexit.

This includes upgrades to the N2/N14/A5 and the N15/N13 link. These infrastructural needs are, unsurprisingly, also highlighted as requiring urgent delivery within the regional growth priorities of the NWSGP.

5.2.19. Also of strategic importance is the development of the TEN-T network within the City Region.

This includes the upgrade of the N2/N14/A5 to a Ten-T high quality road standard from the NWCR to Monaghan and on to Dublin; and the development of the AEC from Galway to Letterkenny and Derry to a Ten-T high quality road standard. Investment in these routes will play an important role in reducing travel times for long-distance freight and passenger traffic, integrating the main urban and economic centres, and interconnecting with other transport modes.

Rail

5.2.20. Across the City Region, rail is recognised as having a potential role to play in not only improving connectivity and accessibility but also in driving a modal shift. Donegal's CDP 2018-2024 is committed to supporting the provision of a rail link between the Letterkenny/Derry linked Gateway and on to Sligo. Similarly, the draft Derry City and Strabane LDP 2032 commits to a feasibility study to explore the potential for extending the Derry rail-line to Strabane/Omagh and to Letterkenny/Donegal as part of the development of the North West Multi-Modal Transport Hub – funded under INTERREG VA. As part of this commitment, both Council's through emerging policies recognise the need to protect established and historic railway corridors for strategic infrastructure provision.

5.2.21. The All-Island Strategic Rail Review, jointly commissioned by the Department for Infrastructure (NI) and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (RoI) will examine all aspects of the inter-urban and inter-regional rail network including decarbonising the railway, the feasibility of higher speeds, increased capacity, and improved connectivity to the North-West. This review, being undertaken by Arup, is due to be completed in 2022.

Air Access

5.2.22. Both City of Derry Airport and Donegal Airport are considered of strategic importance in the provision of international, national and regional access to the City Region. Both have experienced significant challenges in the last number of years in terms of route security – yet continue to have a key role to play in terms of facilitating delivery of goods and services, and tourists which

otherwise would have arrived by road. Within the North West *Statement of Regional Priorities* (May 2021), the Councils make the case to both Governments for continued investment in the City of Derry and Donegal Airports to ensure sustainability of vital air connectivity with Dublin, London and other key UK hubs. For the benefit of the wider North West, and with the end goal of building critical mass, there may be credence in the operators of both airports developing a joint strategy in support of coordinated development of the air access offering to the region.

5.2.23. In early 2021, the Irish Government announced the publication of a new Regional Airports Programme for the period 2021 to 2025 with a budget of €21.3 million in 2021 available to support airports in their recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 which has resulted in passenger numbers remaining low and activity being suppressed. The funding programme will also, for the first time, take account of climate objectives and support the ‘greening’ of Irish airports. Funding will be available to encourage airports to reduce emissions and to build resilience against the likely impacts of climate change. This includes achieving carbon neutrality over the next five years²⁹.

5.2.24. However, aviation is widely recognised as both one of the most carbon-intensive forms of transport and one of the most difficult to decarbonise.

Ports

5.2.25. The North West is a maritime region. Both Councils recognise the importance of Foyle Port as a key infrastructural asset for the City Region’s growth and development. As such, the development plans of both Councils commit to enhance transport linkages across the North West particularly between Derry, Strabane and Donegal, to and from its’ sea ports and the distribution of traffic from and between transport corridors. The Council’s *Statement of Regional Priorities*, as shared with both Governments, places a priority on adopting a strategic approach to the future sustainability and growth of the NWCR ports, both in the context of the region’s sustainable development and future green growth opportunities.

5.2.26. In addition to their key role in respect of marine tourism and economic development, the region’s ports also have a transport function. As noted in Chapter 4, a seasonal ferry service – Lough Foyle Ferry - operates between Quigley’s Point and McGilligan Point. This services mainly

²⁹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/18941-minister-naughton-announces-publication-of-regional-airports-programme-2021-2025/>

pedestrians and most types of vehicles. While the service is largely oriented towards serving tourist traffic, there may be the potential for this to be developed as a commuter service, as was proposed for Cork Harbour³⁰, in the future as part of the necessary modal shift.

Greenways

5.2.27. The development of a greenway network is also an essential component of any modal shift strategy. In 2015 Derry City & Strabane District Council (DCSDC) in partnership with Donegal County Council (DCC), Transport NI (TNI) and SustransNI, formally established the Active & Sustainable Travel Forum (ASTF). The *North West Greenways Action Plan (2015)* forms the basis of a strategic and co-ordinated strategy for the development of a network of greenways throughout the North West.

5.2.28. In December 2016 Derry and Strabane District Council, Donegal County Council, the Department for Infrastructure (NI) and Sustrans (the UK-based cycling and walking charity), were awarded €14.8 million funding from the EU's INTERREG VA programme, administered by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), to construct 46.5kms of cross-border greenway. The routes to be developed as part of this initiative will link Derry to Bunrana via Bridgend; Muff to Derry via Culmore; and Lifford to Strabane. Once completed, this will result in a greenway network of approximately 126.5km in the North West, of which 76.5km will be classified as high quality greenway.

5.2.29. In June 2021, the 3.7km Strabane-Lifford Greenway opened to the public; providing an alternative non-vehicular mode of travel to shops, workplaces and schools within Strabane and Lifford.

5.2.30. More recently, construction work started on a cross-border greenway between Muff (Donegal) and Derry City. This 9.7km stretch of greenway forms the opening section of the Inishowen greenway which is a noted priority under the revised Irish NDP. Strategically, this stretch of greenway will have direct connections to Holybush Primary School and Thornhill College in Derry, thus creating real possibilities for a cohort of its 2,000 schoolchildren and teachers to cycle to/from school daily.

³⁰ <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-30977616.html>

Spatial Planning Implications

5.2.31. A successful transport system is dependent on the integration with land-use planning. Future transport planning will not only have to account for meeting increased transport demand in a sustainable manner but will also need to incorporate an adaptation strategy that responds to challenges posed by the effects of climate change on the transport network (Department of Transport, 2020). In terms of spatial planning policy and practice, this will require changes to policy that enable more compact urban growth. This will lead to people living nearer to their jobs and the amenities they use - leading to a corresponding decrease in transport emissions (*Ibid*, p.8).

5.2.32. In addition, as advocated in the NPF, the location of housing and employment along public transport corridors, where people can choose to use less energy intensive public transport rather than being dependent on the car, will result in more energy efficient development (p.120), contribute to a reduction in GHG emissions, and lead to improved air quality in our towns and villages. Derry City, for example, will become one of the first cities in the UK and Ireland to have a fully zero-emission bus fleet by 2023. Announced at COP26, Derry's Foyle Metro network will now include 38 zero-emission electric buses after funding of £30million was announced for greener public transport³¹; an investment that will see the city's entire urban fleet replaced with battery-powered vehicles.

5.2.33. The respective local development plans in the NWCR emphasise the importance of integrating future land use planning with transportation. New planning concepts can help frame this approach; these include, for example, creating cities of 20-minute neighbourhoods – or 10-minute towns – where shopping, business services, education etc. are available via walking, public transit and cycling.

5.2.34. Achieving a modal shift will not be easy given the dependency on car use over walking, cycling and public transit (see para 5.2.15. above and 5.3.8 below). It will require significant investment in alternative modes – as well as focus on behavioural change. Key policy questions to be addressed in the preparation of a spatial strategy for the City Region include:

³¹ <https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/derry-goes-green-30million-investment-22055055/> / <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-foyle-west-59150049>

- How can the NWCR best co-ordinate and integrate land use and transport planning?
- How can the region best promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport in both urban and rural areas?
- In the context of a changing demographic profile, how can the needs of older and less-abled people be best addressed in a transport and connectivity plan?
- What will be the impact of emerging technologies such as E-vehicles and E-bikes on modal choices? For example, will the availability of E-bikes extend the commuting range and ease the challenge presented by hilly topography characteristic of many settlements across the City Region?
- What role can technology/digitalisation play to improve access to public transport and active travel options? For example, is there a role for Mobility as a Service (MaaS) on a cross-border, functional economic basis?

5.2.35. Given the overlap among the transportation networks and the different modes serving the NWCR, it may be helpful to consider future transportation demands and potential scenarios within a spatial framework that reflects different spatial scales and how the respective local development plans link their transportation objectives to spatial plans. These can be considered as:

1. At the **regional scale**, the respective plans and transportation policies mutually emphasise the importance of improving external networks as noted in section 5.2.4. Similar compatibility among the local plans can be appreciated to strengthen connectivity within the NWCR, between and among the main urban centres of Derry, Letterkenny and Strabane. There is a need for a better understanding of the potential impact among different modes to strengthen these linkages, for example what is the feasibility of Quality Bus Corridors (QBCs) operating on North-South / East-West axis?
2. At the **urban and the immediate functional area**, the respective plans set ambitious objectives of promoting compact growth and improved town centre accessibility, reinforced by integrating land use decisions and transportation investments, intermodal linkages, lessening auto dependency and the promotion of active travel through enhanced bicycle and pedestrian networks. For example, in Derry City, modelling shows that given the size of the city, improvements in walking infrastructure including pedestrian priority at junctions will be the most useful in attracting people away from the car.

3. Across **rural town and villages**, there is a need to focus on rural bus services to provide improved access to goods and services together with rural park and ride sites. Consideration also needs to be given to carpooling and ridesharing and bus and taxi arrangements in cooperation with organisations in the border region.

5.3. The Environment

5.3.1. This section considers the environment of the North West under a number of sub-themes; namely:

1. *Climate Change Mitigation: Towards Carbon Neutrality in 2045;*
2. *Marine Spatial Planning and Coastal Management – Challenges and Opportunities;*
3. *Climate Adaptation and Flood Risk Management;*
4. *Landscape Planning and Biodiversity Protection; and*
5. *Brexit and Environmental Regulations.*

Climate Change Mitigation: Towards Carbon Neutrality in 2045

5.3.2. The European Union is committed to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 2050. This objective is a cornerstone of the European Green Deal³². The EU Climate Law, currently under preparation is expected to include an intermediate target of a 55% net reduction in GHGs by 2030³³. This objective is reinforced at a global level by the UNFCCC Paris Agreement (COP 21³⁴) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (specifically Goal 13 focussed on Climate Action³⁵). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, published in August 2021, furthermore reinforced the urgency of climate action, and in particular the long-term impacts of current trends³⁶. The UN Secretary General António Guterres referred to the report as a “Code Red for humanity”³⁷.

5.3.3. Increased precipitation and temperatures, rising sea levels, and severe weather events will not only have implications for the future management of the natural and built environment but will also lead to disruption to business, agriculture, services and daily life. Adapting to climate change demands a joined-up and coordinated policy response from national to local government and cross-jurisdictionally. Since 2019, the UK is committed to a 100% reduction in GHGs by 2050³⁸. The *Climate Bill 2021* adopted by the Irish Government similarly contains a commitment to achieve the transition to a climate neutral economy by 2050. It furthermore makes provision for five-yearly carbon budgets which will determine the total amount of GHGs Ireland is permitted

³² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1576150542719&uri=COM%3A2019%3A640%3AFIN>

³³ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/law_en

³⁴ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/key-aspects-of-the-paris-agreement>

³⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>

³⁶ https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf

³⁷ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097362>

³⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/section/1>

to emit over the five-year period. It has been estimated that Ireland’s carbon budget for the period up to 2030 will be at a maximum around 423 million tonnes, a reduction of 35% on projections based on current trends³⁹. A Green Transformation Strategy for the North West City Region (NWCR) was drafted in March 2021⁴⁰, and subsequently adopted and endorsed by Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council and submitted to Governments North and South. This strategy document, against the background of the international and national policy context outlined above, centres on a commitment to become a carbon-neutral region by 2045:

“Our overarching goal is to become a carbon-neutral region by 2045 by protecting, restoring and enhancing its precious natural heritage and biodiversity, and achieving strong economic growth through circular, zero-waste and resource-efficient initiatives. This is currently supported by a range of strategies and projects under the four areas of Green Infrastructure, Regional Energy, Climate Action and Sustainable Economy”.

5.3.4. A Climate Action Plan for the NWCR is currently under preparation. GHG emissions from the Republic of Ireland have increased from 55.5 million tonnes CO₂ equivalent in 1990 to 60.9 million tonnes in 2018 (+9.7%). Over the same period, Northern Ireland has registered a decline in emissions from 22.9 to 19.4 MtCO₂eq (-15.3%). In both jurisdictions, a decline in per capita emissions has been registered, as emissions grew more slowly than population in the South. A reduction of 28.4% in per capita emissions has been achieved in Northern Ireland and of 20.3% in the Republic of Ireland. These are significant reductions. Per capita emissions in 2018, were (in both jurisdictions) nevertheless significantly higher than the values for the EU28 (8.2) and the UK as a whole (7.0).

Table 5.3.1: Greenhouse gas emissions trends 1990-2018 (absolute values)⁴¹

	1990 (MtCO ₂ eq)	2018 (MtCO ₂ eq)	% Change 1990- 2018
NI	22.9	19.4	-15.3
RoI	55.5	60.9	+9.7

³⁹ <https://www.marei.ie/note-on-irelands-first-two-carbon-budgets/>,

<https://irelandafternama.wordpress.com/2021/08/14/the-housing-crisis-a-concrete-dilemma/>

⁴⁰ The Green Transformation of the North West City Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland: Statement of Intent (Unpublished; May 2021)

⁴¹ Data sources (Tables 5.3.1 & 5.3.2): CSO (RoI) <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-eii/environmentalindicatorsireland2020/greenhousegasesandclimatechange/>, DAERI (NI) <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-greenhouse-gas-inventory-1990-2019-statistical-bulletin>, Eurostat population data.

Table 5.3.2.: Greenhouse gas emissions trends 1990-2018 (per capita)

	1990 (tCO ₂ eq per capita)	2018 (tCO ₂ eq per capita)	% Change 1990-2018
NI	14.4	10.3	-28.4
Rol	15.8	12.6	-20.3

5.3.5 In both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the transport sector's share of GHG emissions increased significantly between 1990 and 2018 (from 9.3% to 20.1% in the Republic of Ireland, 13.8% to 23% in Northern Ireland). In both jurisdictions emissions from energy generation declined significantly (by 11% in the Republic of Ireland and 45% in Northern Ireland). It has been calculated that the North-West Region is currently responsible for 3.413 MtCO₂eq (million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent), of which approximately 58.6% is attributable to Donegal County Council (DCC) and 41.6% to Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) (Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council, 2021b). The three most significant sectors are transport, commercial buildings and private residential buildings, which together account for 94% of total emissions. The transport sector alone accounts for 44% of emissions in the region.

5.3.6. The North West *Regional Energy Strategy* (Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council, 2021b) identifies five decarbonisation pathways, as follows:

1. Low carbon transport;
2. Low carbon heating;
3. Energy efficiency;
4. Smart energy management; and
5. Renewable generation and storage.

5.3.7. Measures specific to these pathways are outlined in further detail. The *Regional Energy Strategy* has a strong emphasis on energy supply, distribution and efficiency and associated technological solutions. It is envisaged that the NW Region in 2045 will have a localised hydrogen gas network, used for both heating and transport. This technology is currently under development⁴² and current indications, from experts in the field, are that it is not likely to become a competitive

⁴² See <https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/shareddocs/kurzmeldungen/en/green-hydrogen-for-a-sustainable-future.html>

alternative for heating and private cars⁴³. The pace of rollout will depend, among other factors, on decisions made at central government level in both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK). A reduction of 25% in the total numbers of cars on the roads is envisaged in the North West Regional Energy Strategy, with electrification or hydrogen fuels replacing the remaining 75%, and penalties for fossil fuel-based vehicles. More substantial reductions in private vehicle numbers may in fact be necessary, particularly if the carbon footprint of producing electric / hydrogen fuel-based vehicles is accounted for, and it is assumed that other regions of world will also be under increasing pressure to progress towards carbon neutrality.

5.3.8. In order to achieve zero carbon by 2045, it will be necessary to closely monitor trends in GHG emissions across all sectors on a yearly basis. Ambitious but realistic interim targets will be required in order to monitor progress towards achieving the 2045 goal. It will be necessary to implement far-reaching measures concurrently in the fields of transportation, industry, commerce, and energy generation, while also promoting efficiencies across the economy and society. At the same time, it will be necessary to provide incentives for households to radically change their consumption and travel patterns over a relatively short period of time. The public sector will need to act as a role model which businesses and households can follow. This can mean for example, that public service providers (incl. schools, hospitals, public transport) adopt and implement high energy efficiency and low emission standards within a shorter time frame. In the following, options for reducing GHG emissions and progressing towards carbon neutrality are listed. The focus here is on transport and residential and commercial buildings which account for over 90% of emissions in the region. In order to achieve carbon neutrality, a wide spectrum of initiatives will be required, some of which are dependent on large-scale investment, whereas others require behavioural change action on the part of residents, businesses and communities. Initiatives marked with an asterisk lie within the remit of the local authorities.

Options for progressing towards carbon neutrality – Transport

- Cycle highways for commuters and extensive network of high-quality cycle paths*;
- Incentives for households not to own a car*;
- Cars-sharing, mobility hubs and short-term rental schemes*;
- Incentives for purchase of e-bikes and cargo-bikes*;
- Secure parking options for large numbers of bicycles at bus and train stations*;
- Sufficiently high prices for city car-parking to disincentivise car-based travel*;
- Expansion of park and ride facilities at strategic locations*;
- Infrastructure roll-out for electric cars*;

⁴³ <https://about.bnef.com/blog/liebreich-separating-hype-from-hydrogen-part-two-the-demand-side/>

- Communal taxi services (affordable, app based, electric vehicles) focussed on wider City Region*;
- Carbon off-setting for all private and commercial flights*;
- Regulate for/incentivise flexible remote working to minimise car-based commuting;
- Introduce regular Car Free Days⁴⁴ (e.g. one Sunday per month) initially focussed on Derry City and/or Letterkenny and subsequently expanded across the region*;
- Expansion of city and inter-urban bus services with higher frequency of service and greater capacity; and
- Electrification of city bus fleet.

Options for progressing towards carbon neutrality – Residential and Commercial Buildings

- Efficient management of existing building stock, minimising vacancy rates*;
- Incentivised retrofitting of all buildings built before 2000 to ensure to adherence to high energy standards (renewable energy sources and maximum energy efficiency)*;
- Shift to low/zero carbon materials in new-build and retrofits⁴⁵ (e.g. green cement, timber frames)*;
- District heating solutions for new residential/commercial developments*;
- Heat pumps for residential and commercial buildings*;
- Incorporate decentralised energy production solutions in new developments (solar/wind)*;
- New-build within urban settlements and villages only⁴⁶*; and
- Incentivise/encourage tree-planting (as wind protection) in exposed rural areas to reduce heating costs*.

5.3.9. The NWCR is committed to driving economic growth through a green economy approach (Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council, 2021b). This commitment to economic growth over coming decades will require a radical decoupling of economic growth (growth in production and consumption) from GHGs. Studies by environmental economists indicate that this is theoretically feasible (Federal Environment Agency (Germany), 2018). In practice, however, this is a very challenging goal, and it is unclear if it can be realised in practice on the scale of a City Region. Post-growth scenarios based on sufficiency and well-being rather than increasing monetary prosperity may need to be taken seriously in order achieve carbon neutrality.

⁴⁴ The concept of Car Free Days is gaining momentum worldwide with cities such as Copenhagen, London and Vancouver leading the way: <https://www.carfreevancouver.org/>, <https://londoncarfreeday.com/>

⁴⁵ See Daly, G. (2021) The Housing Crisis – A Concrete Dilemma <https://irelandafternama.wordpress.com/2021/08/14/the-housing-crisis-a-concrete-dilemma/>

⁴⁶ It is recognised that this is an ideal aspiration. However, the cultural factors within the region which underlie the pattern of one-off rural housing and the need to support and sustain rural communities and their populations represent a realpolitik counter factor, with strong links in local development patterns, and which need further exploration. This issue is likely to also present in the context of replacement and rebuilding of housing stock affected by the current MICA crisis experienced by large numbers of families in Donegal and the wider North West.

Communicating Climate Change Ambitions and Targets and Raising Awareness

5.3.10. As discussed above, progressing towards climate neutrality requires the active support of all sectors in society, including households, businesses, public sector agencies and community organisations. The overarching goal of carbon neutrality and the means to achieving this goal must be communicated clearly to all stakeholder groups. This may take the form of a climate change plan but must also embrace appropriate forms of mass media, community engagement and mass participation events (e.g., focussed on Car Free Days) to raise awareness and encourage active individual responsibility. There is considerable potential to build on existing initiatives in the region (e.g., GAA Green Clubs scheme⁴⁷) and emerging good practice in digital methods for community engagement⁴⁸. The recently adopted Green Transformation Strategy is a starting point for societal dialogue, yet it conflates climate mitigation, adaptation and green economy promotion. These objectives require different sets of measures with varying levels of priority.

Spatial planning implications

5.3.11. Achieving carbon neutrality and green transformation will require place-based leadership, drawing on the potential of spatial strategy making processes to act as instigators of change rather than simply regulators of development⁴⁹. Achieving substantial emissions reductions from both transport and residential buildings requires a radical shift away from detached housing to semi-detached, terraced and apartments, as the carbon contribution of detached is over three times higher than of semi-detached and terraced which in turn have a carbon contribution over three times higher than apartments⁵⁰. Detached housing currently accounts for 49% of the total domestic housing stock and 61% of emissions from housing. New housing must be serviceable by an expanded and diversified public transport network. An assumption of mass private car ownership cannot be carried forward. A radical modal shift away from the private car towards public transport, cycling and walking must be facilitated and incentivised.

5.3.12. Working within carbon budgets will require a change in mindset and urban development culture with a renewed focus on compact, infill development and the efficient use of urban space. Strategic spatial planning will need to be coupled with detailed carbon accounting and forward planning. It is important to recognise that a shift towards carbon neutrality also has spatial justice

⁴⁷ <https://www.derrystrabane.com/climate>

⁴⁸ See CCAT project led by University College Dublin, <https://www.ccatproject.eu/>

⁴⁹ NW Green Transformation Strategy

⁵⁰ See ERNACT Northwest Carbon Baseline Report, CLEAN Project, Fig. 4-3, p.16.

implications as the development prospects of rural areas are curtailed and resources may inevitably be concentrated on Derry city and the larger towns. Rural living within smaller towns and villages can, however, also be facilitated, through innovative, place-specific solutions. Planning within carbon budgets will require a new planning culture and a shift in focus away from new development to the existing stock. In such a scenario, it may be expected that land markets shift significantly as the public sector takes a stronger role in steering development and climate adaptation places additional demands on available land.

Governance Implications

5.3.13. Intersecting energy and climate change planning, the *North West Regional Energy Strategy* recommends the establishment of an independent cross-border agency to act as a ‘one-stop-shop’ and single access point for information concerning the green transition (Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council, 2021b). This agency is envisaged as based on multi-agency collaboration across local government, the public sector, academia, and industry. Developing robust methodologies for carbon accounting and monitoring to trace progress towards key goals is a critical to ensuring a strong evidence base for planning decision-making. This should be pursued in a coordinated cross-border manner, in order to maximise synergies and comparability at the level of both methodologies and key indicators.

Marine Spatial Planning and Coastal Management – Challenges and Opportunities

5.3.14 With increased awareness of the potential of the sea as a source of renewable energy and at the same time of the need to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems, the sustainable governance of maritime resources is emerging as a critical issue for coastal states. In the past, the sea has provided a vital source of income for fishing communities along the coast of the NWCR. Whereas coastal fisheries are still relevant, competition for marine space has increased significantly and will likely continue to do so in coming decades. The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (NMPNI⁵¹) (Draft) and Ireland’s National Marine Planning Framework⁵² (NMPF) set out new policy frameworks for the planning and regulation of the coastal waters and Exclusive Economic Zones of both jurisdictions. At the same time, a large-scale expansion of Ireland’s marine protected area network is planned, in line with EU and international (Convention on Biological Diversity)

⁵¹ NMPNI <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/daera/Marine%20Plan%20for%20NI%20final%2016%2004%2018.PDF>

⁵² NMPF <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/60e57-national-marine-planning-framework/>

commitments to protect at least 30% of the marine territory by 2030⁵³. Extensive sections of the NWCR coast are already subject to multiple nature protection designations, indicating the ecological value and vulnerability of these coastal environments. Whereas an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) strategy for Northern Ireland was published in 2006 (2006-2026), policy direction on coastal erosion and coastal defence is particularly weak in the Republic of Ireland (O’ Hagan and Cummins 2021).

5.3.15. The NMPF is best viewed as a policy framework rather than a spatial plan and will need to be complemented by maritime spatial plans and coastal partnerships at regional and local levels (Walsh, 2021). In a submission to the draft NMPF, the North West Regional Development Group (NWRDG) commented that a coastal partnership model would be particularly suited to the North West, where it could “work to support a vibrant and sustainable local economy while respecting, protecting and celebrating the distinctive character, heritage and natural features of the marine and coastal area”⁵⁴. A cross-border coastal partnership model can prove effective in bringing together diverse coastal and marine stakeholders to foster constructive dialogue around sensitive issues and to identify synergies and strategic priorities. There is significant potential to draw on experience with coastal partnerships in England and Scotland which have been in place (with varying degrees of institutional support and funding) over a longer period of time⁵⁵.

5.3.16. The NMPI Draft Plan has a higher level of detail pertaining to existing uses and zoning designations for activities such as marine energy production. Extensive wind and wave energy zones are proposed for an offshore area, extending north and east from the mouth of Lough Foyle⁵⁶. Offshore wind energy has potential to become a significant component of the transition to renewable energy generation in the NWCR. This would, however, need to be carefully planned, with extensive consultation with stakeholder groups and local communities in addition to assessments of potential impacts on natural and cultural heritage areas and the visual seascape. The precise location of individual windfarms and associated cabling infrastructure would need to be strategically managed and coordinated to minimise impacts on marine and coastal ecosystems (incl. seabed, water column, seafaring birds). As noted above, the coastal zone will require integrated management due to competing interests and pressures. These are likely to include the following:

⁵³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/135a8-expanding-irelands-marine-protected-area-network/>

⁵⁴ NMPF, p. 103.

⁵⁵ Coastal Partnership Network <http://www.coastalpartnershipnetwork.org.uk>

⁵⁶ NMPNI, Fig, 12, p. 111.

- Increased impact of wave energy on coastal cliffs and rocky shores but impacts on the stability of coastal infrastructures;
- A coastal squeeze effect on soft shores and coastal wetlands due to sea-level rise and in some cases, hard artificial structures limiting scope for retreat inland;
- Need for hard coastal defences at critical locations;
- Increased demand for emerging and alternative economic activities at the coast (e.g., seaweed farming and aquaculture); and
- Increased coastal tourism and adventure sports activity, as traditional holiday destinations in southern Europe become less attractive/viable.

5.3.17. It may be noted that while seaweed cultivation can contribute to carbon sequestration, research at MaREI, University College Cork⁵⁷, shows that some forms of seaweed can, when mixed with cattle feed, contribute to significantly reducing methane emissions. Whereas there is a long history of seaweed harvesting in Ireland, recent years have seen a shift towards commercialisation with new entrants to the markets in both jurisdictions. As a consequence, foreshore licensing for seaweed harvesting has become a live issue in a number of places and enhanced regulation may be necessary to prevent overharvesting (O’ Donoghue & Kandrot 2021).

5.3.18. The cultural and natural heritage value of the northwest coast is increasingly recognised as an asset for tourism. In Donegal, this is currently supported through the successful Wild Atlantic Way initiative⁵⁸. There is potential to develop a counterpart to the Wild Atlantic Way for the north coast, beginning from the eastern shore of Lough Foyle. The Lough Neagh Partnership⁵⁹ provides a good practice case of collaborative local authority led sustainable tourism management. Assuming air travel becomes more expensive and less attractive in coming years and decades the appeal of the NWCR as a sustainable tourism destination may increase significantly. In addition to the appeal of Derry as a city of culture, much of this potential may lie with coastal activities from sightseeing to sea-based activities such as kayaking, surfing, boat trips and diving. The potential of adventure tourism has already been identified with respect to Bunrana and the Inishowen peninsula (ICLRD, 2020).

Climate Adaptation and Flood Risk Management

5.3.19 Donegal County Council has produced a Climate Adaptation Strategy for the period 2019-2024 (Donegal County Council, 2019). Derry City and Strabane District Council have similarly produced a Climate Adaptation Plan for 2020-2025 (2020). Both documents set out objectives

⁵⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1364032116305962>

⁵⁸ See <https://www.wildatlanticwayonline.com/map-of-donegal-wild-atlantic-way/>

⁵⁹ <https://loughneaghpартnership.org>

and fields of action for climate adaptation. They seek to improve understanding and awareness of the risks associated with projected climate change impacts for the two council areas as well as detailing specific adaptation measures. Climate change adaptation is identified as a cross-cutting tasking with differentiated roles for the local authorities, government agencies, businesses, academia, communities and individuals. DCC have compiled an 'adaptation baseline' informed by an analysis of past extreme weather events and their impacts (focussed on the period since 1970). Issues of concern include an apparent increasing frequency of strong wind events, fluvial and coastal flooding. Other impacts are emerging more slowly. These include changes in the seasonal life-cycle of animals and plants, impacts on agriculture and the longer-term impacts of precipitation, temperature change and extreme events on infrastructure, water supply and human well-being. The DCSDC Plan identifies for the most part similar issues, also drawing on the past experiences over recent decades. In both documents, the range of measures addressed reflects to a large extent the areas of competence lying with the local authorities themselves (e.g., critical infrastructure and buildings, water resource management and community services). Indeed, some measures are directed specifically at the day-to-day work of the local authorities themselves (e.g., impacts on occupational health and safety).

5.3.20. At a strategic level, flood risk management is the most significant issue requiring long-term planning, monitoring and resource input. Climate change induced sea-level rise and increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events have the potential to cause coastal, fluvial and pluvial flooding with extensive damage to property and even loss of life. What were considered 1 in 100-year events (Q_{100}) are projected to occur at much higher frequencies over coming decades. This also means that the likelihood of events occurring that are of a severity not witnessed in living memory is also increasing⁶⁰. Internationally, cascade effects, whereby multiple, mutually reinforcing impacts occur at one time or in quick succession have gained increased attention in disaster risk management. Sea levels are projected to increase by up to 94 cm by 2100 (Met Office UK, 2019). Increased sea-levels, however become critical at unusually high tides (i.e. neap tides), and when combined with storm surges and/or high levels of rainfall (Sweeney, 2020). Likely impacts include coastal flooding and accelerated erosion at vulnerable locations. Low probability events of high severity which can occur through cascade effects are known in the literature as 'black swans' (Taleb, 2007).

⁶⁰ Note that an international team of scientists has calculated the climate change footprint of the July 2021 floods in Germany and Belgium. They concluded that the probability of flood events of this magnitude occurring where they did was approximately 1 in 400 years. Due to global warming of 1^o C, this probability increased from approximately 1 in 2000 years. <https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/heavy-rainfall-which-led-to-severe-flooding-in-western-europe-made-more-likely-by-climate-change/>

5.3.21. Both Derry City and Letterkenny are comparatively sheltered due to their location and the North East orientation of Loughs Foyle and Swilly. The risk of storm surges and high tides leading to flooding along the rivers Foyle and Swilly must however be carefully monitored and planned for. As noted in the Landscape Character Assessment of the draft DCSDC Local Development Plan (LDP) 2032, Derry is one of the European cities at highest risk of coastal and river flooding⁶¹. A number of smaller settlements such as Buncrana face a higher degree of exposure. Adaptation is likely to require a combination of ‘grey’ (relying on technological or engineering solutions) ‘green’ (working with natural processes) and ‘soft’ adaptation actions (focussed on behavioural change and governance responses).

5.3.22. Adaptation measures specific to flood risk management may include the following:

- Hard coastal and river defences (dikes, groynes, levees);
- Proactive coastal zone management, including management of dunes and foreshore with the aim of protecting vulnerable intertidal ecosystems and retaining an extensive energy conversion zone to lessen the impact of wave energy at the shoreline;
- Zoning and active management of floodwater retention areas (green and blue infrastructure);
- Managed retreat in vulnerable coastal locations;
- Adaptive building design (e.g., seaside cafes on stilts, buildings on artificial mounds);
- A moratorium on building in unprotected floodplains;
- Emergency response planning (incl. evacuation plans, contingency plans assuming severe events are accompanied by power cuts, blocked transport routes etc); and
- Awareness-raising among communities, businesses and households located in areas of particularly high risk.

Landscape Planning and Biodiversity Protection

5.3.23. The NWCR comprises a rich mix of landscapes including uplands, river valleys, farmlands and coasts and seascapes. Landscape policy in both the UK and Ireland is influenced by the European Landscape Convention⁶² (ELC) which continues to apply to the UK post-Brexit⁶³. Under the ELC, the perceived character and meaning of the landscape is emphasised in addition to its ecological characteristics: “Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result

⁶¹ https://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/a2ae5280-1ccf-4a3d-b407-563f37777d19/EVB-6b-Landscape-Character-Review_1.pdf

⁶² <https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape>

⁶³ The ELC is a convention of the Council of Europe, not the European Union.

of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. The ELC has advocated an integrated cross-sectoral approach to landscape policy. From an ecological perspective, landscape diversity or ‘patchiness’; the co-existence of multiple natural and semi-natural land-uses within a landscape is recognised as critical for biodiversity protection. In this respect, the relatively small size of farm holdings and individual fields in the region may be recognised as contributing positively to biodiversity at the landscape scale (Tscharntke *et al*, 2021). At the same time, agricultural waste management and farm intensification may require closer monitoring in future years. Recent research has further highlighted the role of field boundary hedgerows in biodiversity conservation and climate resilience (Committee on Climate Change, 2019). In many respects they represent early examples of nature-based solutions (Collier, 2021). The landscapes of the NWCR represent valuable assets for the region across multiple dimensions, including the following:

- Biodiversity conservation;
- Carbon sinks;
- Cultural heritage value;
- Passive amenity value (scenic beauty, therapeutic value of open natural and semi-natural landscapes); and
- Active amenity value (outdoor recreation, tourism).

5.3.24. Donegal County Council published a landscape character assessment (LCA) in 2016 with the objective of providing a “framework for the identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of the landscape (and including seascape) of County Donegal in accordance with current legislation and ministerial guidelines and having regard to the European Landscape Convention 2000”⁶⁴. Derry City and Strabane District Council similarly prepared a LCA as part of a series of Evidence Base documents to inform the preparation of the Local Development Plan⁶⁵. On foot of a recommendation of this LCA document, a Development Pressure Analysis was subsequently published in 2019 which identified areas of sensitivity to development pressures arising from demand for both one-off rural housing and wind farm development⁶⁶. This analysis identified a reduction in development pressures in previously designated areas (e.g., as greenbelts, Highway Protection Areas or environmentally sensitive areas) and a tendency towards concentrated development pressures in undesignated areas. It is possible that policy shifts (e.g.,

⁶⁴ Landscape Character Assessment of County Donegal, <https://www.donegalcoco.ie/services/planning/planningpolicy/landscape%20character%20assessment%20of%20county%20donegal/>

⁶⁵ DCSDC (2017) Evidence Base EVB 9: Countryside and Landscape, <https://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/cf140b18-87f4-4fa7-b049-afbecef51b7f/EVB-9-Countryside-and-Landscape.pdf>

⁶⁶ DSDC (2019) Evidence Base EVB 6c: Development Pressure Analysis, <https://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/3b7ec6b2-ab4f-4004-aae9-9e8cbdc4d343/EVB-6c-Development-Pressure-Analysis.pdf>

new landscape protection designations) in one jurisdiction may lead to displaced development pressure across the international border, and indeed anecdotal evidence suggests this may have occurred in past decades. An updated, joint landscape character assessment and development pressure analysis should form a core component of a future spatial strategy for the NWCR.

Brexit and Environmental Regulations

5.3.25. To date, Brexit has had limited impact on the alignment of environmental regulations as EU Directives have been transposed into UK law (See Burns and Jordan, 2021). Nevertheless, there is significant potential for divergence in future years, particularly following reforms or revisions to key EU Directives and programmes such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) or the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Spatial Planning Implications

5.3.26. Climate adaptation, landscape management and biodiversity protection require a functional approach to spatial planning, recognising the functions performed by specific land-use types and the potential for nature-based solutions. A proactive approach to green and blue infrastructure development can contribute to provision of multiple benefits or ecosystem services ranging from climate adaptation (e.g., floodwater retention or energy conversion) to passive and active amenity values and associated health benefits. A joint, cross-border landscape character assessment, encompassing both indicators of biodiversity, heritage value, ecosystem services and vulnerability to external pressures should be prepared as a common framework for spatial and environmental planning. Specific spatial planning measures pertaining to flood risk management may also include the following:

- Zoning and active management of floodwater retention areas;
- A moratorium on building in unprotected floodplains;
- Managed retreat in vulnerable coastal locations; and
- Adaptive building design (e.g., seaside cafes on stilts, buildings on artificial mounds)

Governance Implications

5.3.27. Flood risk management in both jurisdictions requires active coordination among a number of public sector organisations such as the OPW (Ireland), Rivers Agency (Northern Ireland) and Loughs Agency as well as the emergency services. This is particularly relevant with regard to the planning of hard coastal and river defences and/or the assessment of alternatives. Preparedness in the face of low probability extreme events necessitates that residents and business owners are informed and aware of the risks pertaining to their area. This may include regional warning systems utilising a dedicated smartphone app or text messaging service such as the Katwarn system deployed in Germany⁶⁷. Effective cross-border coordination is critical to ensuring a seamless response in emergency situations.

5.3.28. Effective landscape management and biodiversity protection requires an integrated cross sectoral approach, whereby spatial planning, nature conservation and environmental policy work together, in pursuit of multiple objectives. The societal benefits of healthy, diverse ecosystems and rich natural and cultural landscapes should be communicated clearly to address all relevant stakeholders. Above all, landscape planning and management should take on a protective role, shifting the widely-held perception of nature protection regulations as little more than an obstacle to development.

⁶⁷ See <https://www.katwarn.de/en/>

5.4. Community Well-Being

5.4.1. For the purposes of this scoping paper, we have identified a number of dimensions of Community wellbeing which have direct relevance for the spatial planning agenda both locally and at the level of the cross-border territory which constitutes the North West City Region (NWCR). These themes are examined in turn, and are summarised as follows:

- World Health Organisation and the role of local authorities in health and wellbeing;
- Health inequalities;
- Opportunities for population health-led approaches in the North West;
- Health and Wellbeing for All Ages; and
- Community wellbeing and climate change (connectivity, green space, fuel poverty, food security).

Overview

5.4.2. This section identifies a range of considerations relating to community wellbeing which have relevance for spatial planning and the strategies, resourcing and implementation approaches required for a connective approach to the spatial development of the NWCR which takes into account the emerging needs of the population and communities, relating to overall wellbeing. It references the context for local authorities' role in health and wellbeing, references health inequalities as a feature of border populations, and identifies key opportunities for population health-led solutions at the level of the cross-border region. It also references the specific dimensions of policy for children and young people, and for healthy ageing, which have spatial planning implications. It emphasises the dimensions of a Green Transformation which are relevant for community wellbeing and points to these as requiring further examination in the context of any full spatial strategy for the region. Within each sub-section the opportunities and spatial planning considerations for each theme are indicated. This section also provides an overarching comment on spatial planning implications and governance implications relating to the articulation of community wellbeing themes and practice in a common cross-border spatial planning strategy and subsequent territorial or local frameworks.

World Health Organisation – The Role of Local Authorities in Health and Wellbeing

5.4.3. The World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe's 2014 Report on the Social

Determinants of Health clearly identifies a recommended role for local authorities in determining and influencing the health outcomes of the communities which they serve. In this report which links the wider socio-economic conditions of populations to the need for co-ordinated action across policy making and implementational work, it states the following:

The review makes the moral case for action on social determinants of health – social injustice kills and causes unnecessary suffering. There is also a strong economic argument. The cost of health inequities to health services, lost productivity and lost government revenue is such that no society can afford inaction. Tackling inequities in the social determinants of health also brings other improvements in societal well-being, such as greater social cohesion, greater efforts for climate change mitigation and better education (WHO, 2014, p.17).

5.4.4. Recommendation 2b of the WHO Report (2014, p.29) make a series of recommendations which are relevant for local government and in this context the Councils of the NWCR. The recommendation strongly emphasises co-design and interagency working with local leadership at their heart. It seeks to:

Ensure concerted efforts are made to reduce inequities in the local determinants of health through co-creation and partnership with those affected, civil society and a range of civic partners.

5.4.5. Specific actions recommended are as follows, and ICLRD notes a strategic fit with the existing processes of Community Planning (NI) and Integrated Economic and Social planning (IE) which currently form part of the competencies of local government in the NWCR:

- i. Ensure championing of partnership and cross-sector working by local leaders;
- ii. Ensure all actions are based on informed and inclusive methods for public engagement and community participation, according to locally appropriate context, to empower communities and build resilience;
- iii. Make the use of partnership-working more extensive, including using local knowledge, resources and assets in communities and those belonging to agencies, to foster cooperation and engagement to support community action and the diversity of local people. Physical resources such as schools, health and community centres should be used as the basis for a range of other services;

- iv. Give priority in environmental policies to measures that help to improve health and apply to all population groups likely to be affected, particularly those who are excluded (such as homeless people and refugees) or vulnerable (young and elderly); and
- v. Adopt strategies to improve air quality and reduce health risks from air pollutants for all groups across the social gradient.

The Role of Spatial Planning in Addressing Health and Wellbeing

5.4.6. The WHO 2014 report specifically identifies the role of integrative spatial planning in influencing the social determinants of both physical and mental health – in terms of spatial quality (how the built environment is planned, designed, constructed and managed and their resulting accessibility, connectedness and safety) and spatial equity (access to green spaces, facilities for play and access to healthy food).

There is likely to be a positive health effect when the quality of spaces and places encourages people to come out of their homes, take exercise, meet up with others, breathe clean air and buy (or grow) nutritious food. Green and open spaces reduce the risk of ill health, particularly in relation to anxiety, depression and respiratory disease, and help to promote recovery from illness. Policies across the Region should maintain and improve the spatial quality of neighbourhoods, while making an effort to develop and support sustainable and equitable urban design. More and better-quality green space should be introduced to urban areas (p.145/6)

5.4.7. The NWCR, through its connected approach to Green Transformation and its 2021 Policy *Statement of Intent on Regional Green Transformation*, reflect an understanding of the connectedness of spatial planning with health and community outcomes. This approach is underpinned by policy evidence on best practice. Care should be taken in the development of a regional spatial strategy to ensure that operational connectivity is achieved in the implementation of various regeneration activities, transport planning, housing development, energy policy and access to energy, neighbourhood renewal, green infrastructure and urban design - in ways which ensure that the health impact and wellbeing needs of communities continue to inform implementation.

5.4.8. The WHO report emphasises that decisions relating to planning, connectivity, and infrastructure

are often made in an environment which is shaped by the economic effects of the social determinants of health. It further specifies that the role of local government can actively shape and change the social determinants of health by “planning or delivering services that are crucial to addressing them; promoting local autonomy; responding to local need; developing local strategic planning; and providing local accountability and leadership” (WHO, 2014, p.210).

5.4.10. The COVID-19 Pandemic has emphasised the relevance of the social determinants of health

For population health outcomes. It has also emphasised the relevance of local authorities in responding to the emergency needs of their communities. Both Councils in the North West played a significant role as partners to Central Government in relation to both public health messaging on a cross border basis, and in relation to mobilising structures such as the community planning partnerships in the response to meeting the most basic emergency needs of communities and groups living with acute deprivation and need during the pandemic.

5.4.11. While recovery from the pandemic will be an ongoing process in the coming years, resilience

is also a key consideration for policy makers. The COVID-19 Pandemic created the conditions for innovations in policy and service delivery which responded to population health needs and emphasised the interdependencies between economic, social, and physical/environmental factors at the level of a cross-border territory in the North West. These interdependencies were demonstrated to have both alleviated (where collaborative action happened) and exacerbated (where actions were fractured and uncoordinated) the experience of the pandemic for communities and specific vulnerable groups within communities such as older people, children and young people, and people with disabilities and/or complex needs.

5.4.12. Overall, the WHO favours the adoption of a social model of health as contrasted to a purely

medical model of health which restricts responsibility for health to health service providers and those agencies with a public health remit. It notes that while, across Europe, there are many examples of good collaborative practice at local and community level - which is also true of the North West - a strategically connected approach to more macro-processes such as spatial planning remains a relatively unexplored area of practice and that more needs to be done in this context to optimise the impact which local authorities can have on health outcomes of their communities through action on the social determinants of health. The collaborative governance of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP) arrangements, and the associated joint working processes established between the councils and key Government Departments and

Agencies, have the potential to offer best practice solutions in this space, not only for the region itself but as inspiration for other border regions within and on the external borders of the EU.

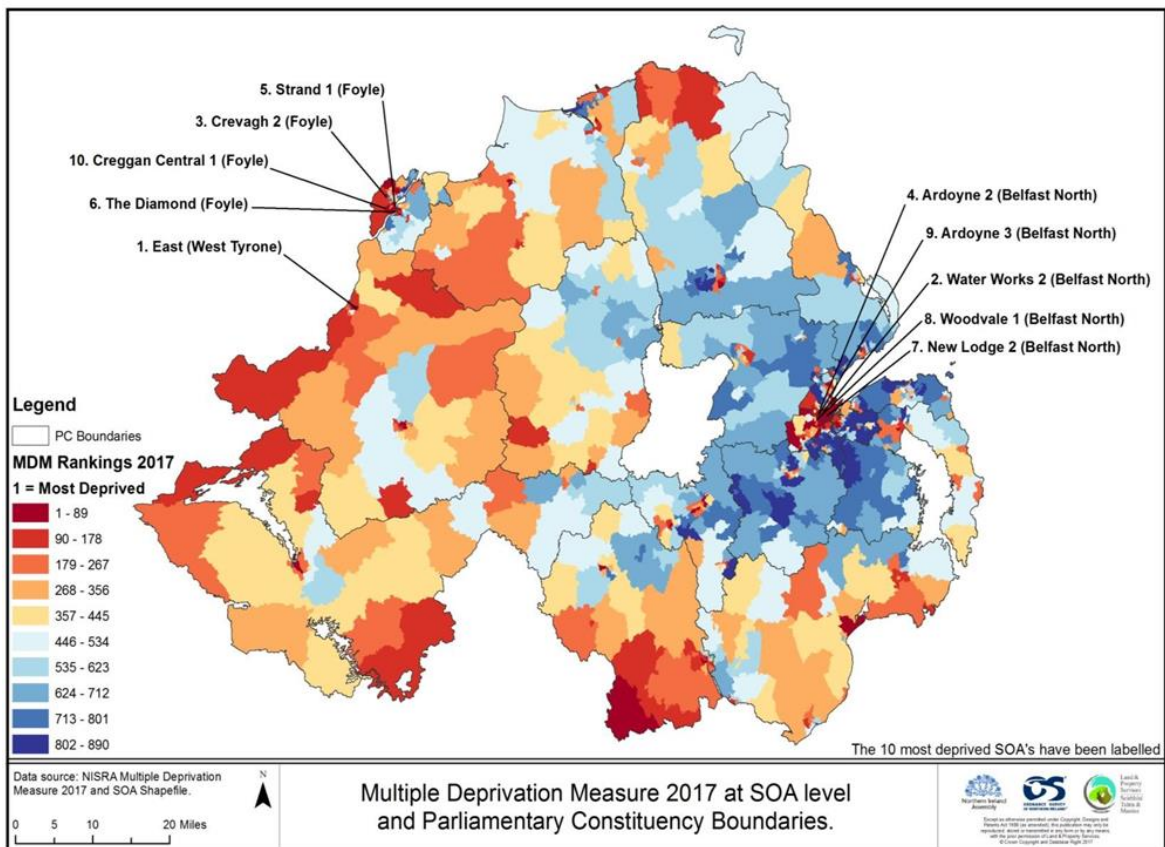
Health Inequalities

5.4.13. Understanding the role that spatial planning plays in community wellbeing requires an understanding of the geospatial distribution of health inequalities. In general, border regions experience higher levels of deprivation, peripherality (even with large urban populations), and health inequalities as a result of their distance from the centres of decision making and the frequent experience of historical underinvestment. Health inequalities relate to access to services, challenged health status against national averages (e.g., life expectancy, multiple frailty factors, prevalence of long-term conditions, mental health needs, levels of suicide and self-harm).

5.4.14. The Ireland/Northern Ireland Border Region is no exception and the NWCR holds the largest concentration of the overall border region population in its agglomeration. Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT), the cross border partnership of the health services in Ireland and Northern Ireland, has provided and regularly draws on the following two maps to illustrate the challenges of meeting population wellbeing needs in the border region. From the Maps below it is clear that some of the highest concentrated levels of deprivation exist within the territory of the NWCR, providing a strong evidence base for intervention on a collaborative basis, and intervention which is underpinned by connected, integrative spatial responses to community wellbeing needs. Communities with high levels of deprivation experience poorer physical and emotional health outcomes, children are more likely to have adverse childhood experiences which directly determine their lifelong health outcomes⁶⁸.

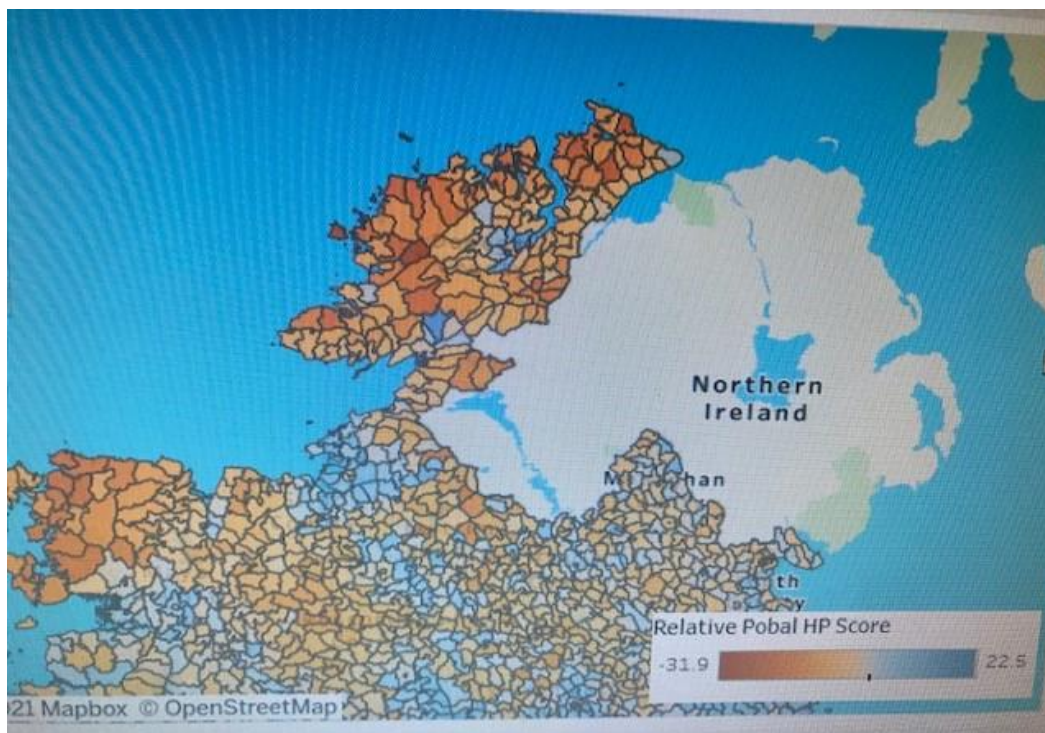
⁶⁸ The Kaiser Permanente Childhood ACES Study ([About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC](#)) was the largest longitudinal study in the world and studied the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and health problems in later life. It found direct connections between the occurrence of both mental and physical health problems including cardiovascular health, for adults who had had one or more adverse childhood experiences. It found direct links between adverse childhood experiences and the leading causes of death in adults. Living with poverty is classified as an adverse experience and this is compounded by the presence of other ACES arising from social and economic stress, family resilience factors, and mental health of parents and carers. An example of findings can be found in Stork BR, Akselberg NJ, Qin Y, Miller DC. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and community physicians: What we've learned. *Perm J* 2020;24:19.099. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7812/TPP/19.099>; last accessed on 11/10/21.

Figure 5.4.1. Deprivation Map: Northern Ireland



(Source: NISRA – Multiple Deprivation in NI)

Figure 5.4.2. Deprivation Map, Ireland



(Source: Dr Bernadette O'Keefe, HSE)

Opportunities for Population Health-led Approaches in the North West

5.4.15. A social model of health differs from a medical model of health in that a social model of health is a model which takes account of population health profiles and adapts to emerging population needs, addressing not only the symptoms and needs arising from ill health but also addresses the social determinants of health in recognition of the influence that the wider social, economic, and physical environment have on health - and how decisions on these are shaped. A social model of health, while differing from a medical model can, conversely, also facilitate the development of innovative collaboration in the medical health model, particularly in border regions. In the case of the NWCR, two specific European best practice models already exist in the form of the North West Cancer Centre and the North West Primary PCI Service.

5.4.16. The revised Irish *National Development Plan* (NDP) provides a commitment to supporting population-led solutions in health provision in the North West, referring directly to the NWCR's strategic priority of 'enhanced cross-border healthcare provision, including shared patient catchment and e-health opportunities' (Government of Ireland, 2021, p.162). This, together with the multilevel governance provided through the model of the NWCR, presents a generational opportunity for further place-based collaboration to improve access to health services in the region, particularly in a primary and community care setting, and in relation to interventions specifically aimed at supporting people to live as well as possible with long-term conditions - themselves key indicators of health inequalities. Both health services in the region are currently investing in the development of enhanced primary care facilities planning - at Derry, Strabane, and in areas of Donegal close to the border including the establishment of a new primary care centre at Buncrana. The planning implications for ensuring access and connectivity of the population to these facilities represent a significant opportunity for good practice. A range of policy frameworks exist in Northern Ireland for both public/population health, and for the commissioning and delivery of health services via integrated care partnerships and patient pathways- these also have significant implications for spatial planning and development of a spatial strategy for the North West should take account of these sectoral priorities, and should involve dialogue and co-operation with key health sector organisations on the ground via the community planning structures and at senior decision-making level.

5.4.17. The development of a full North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy should take account of

emerging programming priorities of both the HSE/Department of Health, and the Northern Ireland Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board, in order to determine the specific parameters and possibilities for spatial planning related to service access and community interventions. Further details of the programming priorities with spatial development implications that must be taken into account are noted in Annex 4.

5.4.18. In taking forward a spatial strategy which facilitates community wellbeing, and can facilitate appropriate responses at the level of the region to population health needs and the social determinants of health, the NWCR's approach should be based on co-design, a shared understanding of emerging priorities which have a spatial policy dimension or implication and should include direct engagement with both health systems via the mandated arrangements underpinning the NWSGP. The purpose of this engagement should be to identify both plans and opportunities for a spatially-connected approach to prospective plans by both administrations for the further development of access to health services, preventative population health interventions, and to codesigned responses in the North West Space which may require the facilitation offered by a regional cross border spatial strategy.

Health and Wellbeing for All Ages

5.4.19. Both health administrations on the island of Ireland have developed outcomes- based policy frameworks which address the need for optimal supports for healthy living and good quality of life for citizens of all ages and abilities. For local government, and for spatial planning at a regional level, these priorities translate into the following:

- The need to ensure equitable and accessible distribution and investment in facilities for children and young people's physical and social wellbeing;
- The need to ensure access to services and community amenities and resources takes account of the needs of older people and focuses on a preventative approach to frailty in ensuring that older people have access to both social, economic and health-related supports and services close to home and in their own communities;
- The need to ensure that where relevant, account is taken of public realm and planning design which takes account of the specific needs of young children, families, young people, older people and people with disabilities;
- The need for safe, outdoor spaces which take account of all levels of mobility needs (e.g., outdoor seating on pedestrian walkways);

- Ensuring that accessibility and proximity are given meaningful expression in both urban and rural settings and that they are planned for in recognition of their role as direct factors in mental health and addressing social isolation; this includes considering the role of enhanced public transportation services, routes and accessibility of services in dispersed rural areas;
- The need to ensure that housing development and planning for housing takes account of the needs of families, children/young people, and older people, ensuring that social isolation is minimised for all stages of life, that community connectivity is physically possible for people of all stages of mobility; and that housing is developed which can meet the needs of frail older people and their families and carers, including those living with dementia and other degenerative or long-term conditions;
- The need to ensure that urban and rural regeneration design promote mental and physical health for citizens of all ages and that connectivity planning- including both rural/urban transport services and modal shift options of walking and cycling are taken into account and optimised in spatial plans;
- The need to ensure that housing and built environment solutions in the region take account of the experience of fuel poverty of people of all ages and provide emancipative solutions in the area of affordable home energy;
- The need to consider further boosting and physically developing amenities for community wellbeing- including community resource centres, family resource centres, and healthy living centres;
- The need to consider design-led solutions which can facilitate the provision of care within communities to citizens who have additional needs- whether home-based or in a residential setting, and that the spatial design and planning of community amenities and regeneration takes into account good international practice models (e.g. Buurtzorg model for assisted living), engages with housing providers who already provide supported living housing solutions, and takes account of the needs of rural dwellers.

Community Wellbeing and Climate Change - A Just Transition?

5.4.20. The specific features of the NWCR's approach to climate action and an overall integrative approach to Green Transformation are detailed in the relevant sections of this paper. This section focuses on the specific elements of 'Green Transformation' which have particular significance for health and community wellbeing. For a region which has high levels of social and economic

deprivation alongside an emerging potential as a net contributor to the economies of both Northern Ireland and Ireland, the degree to which the latter can be achieved is dependent on the degree to which the former is effectively addressed and preventative interventions made to benefit future generations. A just transition in planning terms will be the extent to which a regional spatial planning framework takes account of, activates and mobilises the necessary joined-up working required to ensure that all boats can be lifted by a rising tide and that existing risks to community wellbeing which arise from environmental, infrastructural, land use and service planning- all of which underpin sustainable development and economic growth- can be mitigated as much as possible.

5.4.21. The NWCR, at an aggregate level, features some of the highest levels of complex deprivation on the island of Ireland. Housing, energy access, and food access are key factors which directly impact on physical and mental health. The region has historically high levels of fuel poverty as an indicator of overall deprivation, and has relied on a combination of fossil sources of energy with the consequent economic implications for communities experiencing the hard end of fluctuations in energy prices.

5.4.22. The reality of fuel poverty for families and communities is that, during winter, homes may remain unheated or only partially heated for long periods of time as families on low incomes and living on or below the poverty line struggle to conserve limited resources and make difficult choices around energy and food. The impact on mental health of adults and children is an aggravating factor in an already challenging set of deprivation experiences. Fuel poverty and lack of affordable and adequate home heating solutions are a direct factor in respiratory illness and in hospital admissions.

5.4.23. Similarly, food poverty and insecurity of access to healthy, affordable food options have a direct impact on the nutritional health of people of all ages, in particular the very young and older people. Nutrition is a direct factor in infant and child development, in the physical and mental health of young people, people of working age, and older people.

5.4.24. Regional spatial planning needs to take into account issues related to both food security and energy security and affordability in the context of a transition to a low-carbon region. The evaluation of energy, housing and rural development solutions (such as farm diversification and food production for the region) will need to consider the extent to which preferred options will deliver positive impacts for the most vulnerable.

- 5.4.25. Housing in the context of green transition cannot solely be about modelling high-tech new build solutions. It must also be about energy efficiency, at-scale retrofit across the region and adaptation of infrastructure for new energy supply solutions for existing housing stock, and access to green spaces for new and existing housing. The prospect of spiralling home energy costs, exacerbated by increased need/demand as more people work from home and growing concerns over equitable investment in – and access to - retro-insulation and renewable energy solutions for the built environment, present very real risks for community wellbeing. Spatial planning must provide a context for mitigation of these risks including through building control mechanisms. As noted in the draft *North West Climate Action Framework (2022)*, the City Region aims to be early adopters of the new green industrial revolution, and utilising new technologies in the ‘greening’ of buildings – both residential and commercial.
- 5.4.26. The development of a strategy for food resilience for the region which mobilises rural assets for reducing air miles on food consumed in the region; which provides opportunities for deprived communities to generate their own food production solutions and raise quality of life for their members; and which focuses on the connection between food and overall wellbeing and health, is essential. Spatial planning will need to take into account not only existing land use patterns but options for changes in land use linked to an improved, sustainable approach to food security.
- 5.4.27. Planning for recovery from COVID-19 is likely to involve a recognised focus on dispersed models of working, with more remote working and home working. This has both positive implications for health (avoidance of commute stress and fatigue, working closer to home, better work life balance) and also potentially negative implications for mental and physical health (lack of access to green space for exercise, social isolation of lone working from home, inadequate broadband in rural and suburban areas of the region particularly in the border villages of Donegal). Spatial planning can actively promote community wellbeing through the digital enablement of community amenities, the provision of more liveable solutions in rural areas which previously saw a high level of commute, and the development of more focused community amenities in ‘dormitory’ areas of the region which now feature an increase in the number of people both working and living there.

Spatial Planning Implications

5.4.28. The Carnegie Trust in 2021 has delivered a toolkit for co-production in the embedding of wellbeing within local government planning and service systems, designed to support effective planning for wellbeing. This toolkit should be considered in conjunction with the existing Community Planning governance model for its value in helping to develop the community wellbeing dimensions of an overall regional cross-border spatial strategy. Similarly, health and wellbeing should be key elements of any place-based engagements carried out by the planning services in the North West as part of development of a future cross-border spatial strategy.

5.4.29. A cross-border spatial strategy should fully examine and make provision for both capacity and skills development and the governance for implementation of Health Impact Assessments as a planning tool both at local level in respect of specific development planning, and also at the level of the region.

5.4.30. Consideration should be given to existing evidence review resources in the area of public health and health impact assessment in spatial planning, such as the Public Health England evidence review (2017) which is designed for local authorities and other agencies aiming to embed health and wellbeing into planning processes.

5.4.31. Data on population health is a key area of evidence which must closely inform any emerging cross-border regional spatial strategy. Both Ireland and Northern Ireland are data-rich in the context of population health needs, the social determinants of health, and the demand for interventions and services. The fact that both health systems on the island of Ireland gather extensive data on population health and service performance/activity and usage should be recognised as a regional spatial planning asset which, if it can be levered through existing collaborative governance arrangements such as (at local level) community planning and (at cross-border regional level) the NWSGP has significant potential to support an evidence-informed approach to spatial planning and community wellbeing. In this sense also, population health data -and the use of it as a component of evidence to support public decision making in local government- should be regarded as a core component of any future approaches to regional data integration, 'Smart Region' initiatives and in the creation of data sharing dashboards/repositories at a regional cross border level.

Governance Implications

5.4.32. Creating effective approaches to community wellbeing through a spatial planning model

requires activated relationships, working processes and models of implementation and accountability which are mobilised at all levels of governance- community, local area, council area, and at the level of the cross-border region. Effective delivery of impact for populations requires this model of active subsidiarity which draws in the appropriate stakeholders with appropriate levels of involvement and input.

5.4.33. The NWCR has the advantage of having developed and established working governance arrangements at the level of the cross-border region- in the form of the NWSGP - which allow for mandated input of Government Departments and Agencies into collaborative working for growth within the NWCR. The Councils, as the bodies with legal competency for spatial and land use/development planning, will need to ensure that at a subsidiary local and community level this model of interagency working, involvement of appropriate decision-makers from different sectors (particularly the health sector) is also working effectively in order to release the full potential of a shared, multi-level spatial planning and governance model for improving community wellbeing. Horizontal networks of action, good communication, and good relationships which are invested in over time will be the key to optimising the positive potential of the existing governance arrangements.

5.4.34. Advanced, multi-level governance arrangements are the framework- the culture and energy with which these are utilised and given meaning are key factors to be taken account of in the implementation of any future approaches. A full understanding and capacity to navigate and absorb the evidence on community wellbeing into local government decision making presents an opportunity to consider additional skills sets for mobilising in relation to local government spatial planning, which may have developed in other sectors (such as health economics, public health geography) and which may have a significant contribution to make to a holistic spatially-led social model of health for the cross border region. Awareness in particular of equality and health, and the social determinants of health as they affect vulnerable groups within the population including those covered by the EU Equality Directive and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, will be crucial to success in delivering a spatial planning response and stimulus to community wellbeing in the cross border region.

Chapter 6. Emerging Strategic Issues

This chapter draws together an overview of emerging strategic issues which provide not only a context for the concept of a cross-border spatial strategy in terms of key planning issues, but also highlights these as qualitative considerations which any narrative of planning or implementation should substantially address.

Overarching Issues

- 6.1.1. International literature charts how many cities, towns and regions have recovered from de-industrialisation, changing agricultural practices and an evolving tourism market – (key employment bases in the North West) - through the application of **collaborative, place-based strategies that emphasise the potential of place and harness the strengths and contributions of all spaces, sectors and actors**. New approaches to regional development have emerged over recent decades that promote partnership approaches to decision-making involving multiple stakeholders and are governed by a commitment to sustainable development principles. Their application frequently **requires policy makers and statutory bodies to make leaps of faith** and to engage more systematically with other stakeholders while ensuring that this engagement is not only procedurally underpinned by good governance but done in a way which embraces and nurtures a shared knowledge and appreciation of shared drivers for action. These in turn need to be embedded in the culture and behaviour of stakeholders who have responsibility for different aspects of place-making. Inter-agency and cross-sectoral working need to be accompanied by collaboration between places in a way which involves civic leadership and engages with local democracy, and in the North West City Region’s (NWCR) case, this implies **deepening collaboration between Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council**, and with stakeholders across the wider NWCR.
- 6.1.2. Spatial planning frameworks increasingly strive to give effect to the principles and best practices that emerge from international policy and experiences. At the global level, the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** represent a set of seventeen overarching principles that encapsulate the **principles of place-making, smart growth and healthy places** and which are increasingly reflected in EU, UK and national policy frameworks and ought to guide decisions and actions at all tiers.
- 6.1.3. As noted in Chapter 2, the **concept of the ‘City Region’ has a strong basis in both economic**

development and urban and regional planning and is deeply entrenched in a region's sense of identity, 'place' and potential. The city region concept, defined by functional and/or national economic areas, opens up discussions on alternative spatial futures and allows for the involvement of a diversity of actors in the governance of spatial development. The value that is added is in:

- The new ways of working that it can lead to;
- The opening up of discussions on an alternative spatial future;
- Its' allowing for the involvement of a diversity of actors in the governance of sustainable spatial development;
- The increased resources that it brings together to unlock significant economic growth via the agglomeration and the critical mass it generates in terms of markets for goods and services; and
- Untapping the latent potential in a region's strengths, unlocking growth in the right places and promoting development that is regionally sensitive.

6.1.4. The **city region as a model of polycentricity (and in the case of the North West, one which is transboundary and cross-border) promotes sustainable growth — allowing regions to thrive economically while preserving the environment.** It provides a platform for enabling a region to develop in alignment with compact growth principles. As noted by ESPON, polycentric development in the long-run “contributes to making cities and regions more resilient and diversified”, and “it is about building linkages and joining forces with neighbouring cities and towns in order to “borrow” size and quality, to ensure positive spill-over effects”⁶⁹.

6.1.5. City regions are increasingly viewed as **engines of growth and innovation** (Axinte *et al*, 2019), operating at a scale necessary to acquire competitive advantage. As an operational model, it recognises that the future of the economy is no longer viewed as purely about jobs and enterprise; rather it is the **integration between liveability, health and well-being, community, strong natural capital and sustainability of place.** It represents a new way of considering “spatial alignments” and the coming together of a range of like-minded stakeholders to advance a “series of ideas motivating practice and reform” (Jones *et al*, 2015a: 7). Essentially, **it entails building on the local asset-base and endogenous potential of the region. For the NWCR, such integration requires a cross-jurisdictional spatial framework;** co-produced to reflect the

⁶⁹ <https://www.espon.eu/polycentricity-2016>

strategic growth properties of both jurisdictions and guide future growth and investment in the NWCR. Such a strategy would offer local, regional and national governments the opportunity to take a high-level, long-term strategic approach to – and stake in – the sustainable development of the region.

6.1.6 Donegal County Council (DCC) and Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) acknowledge the growing rationale for **policies with an emphasis on mobilising assets and fostering a regional perspective on growth and competitiveness (through collaboration) that is centred on 'outcomes'**. To this end, the Councils are jointly committed to not only leading and delivering on economic, environmental and social well-being and regeneration in their respective areas but for the NWCR as a whole. A critical next step for both Councils is the joint development of a metropolitan spatial strategy for the NWCR which, while non-statutory, will consider the City Region's priorities – both in terms of opportunities and challenges – in a holistic, joined-up and mutually beneficial model of regional development. The idea of a strategy which can deepen the qualitative collective impact of statutory processes is one which embraces the notion that **statutory requirements for planning should be seen as the minimum standard, rather than the limit, of approaches which lead to good place-making**.

6.1.7. This Chapter considers the key strategic planning issues that a metropolitan spatial strategy For the NWCR must consider, based on the particularities of the NWCR – both in terms of its opportunities and challenges. In mapping out its development trajectory for the coming decades, the NWCR is, through this scoping paper, **taking stock of its asset base and examining how the City Region can harness its assets – be they recognised, latent and/or potential**. At the same time, it is cognisant of the challenges, and **recognises the importance of collaboration – working with neighbouring places and across all sectors – in promoting place-making**. The range of issues and the depth of analysis presented here **provide a whole-of-city region stocktake of assets and opportunities, and they set out pointers, principles and recommendations that are relevant to any future metropolitan spatial strategy**. This scoping paper represents a further strengthening of the cross-border working relationship between Derry City & Strabane District Council (DCSDC) and Donegal County Council (DCC).

The Settlement Structure

6.2.1 *Strategic Planning Issue:* While **Derry City continues to be the dominant node in the NWCR, Letterkenny's strengths lie in its demography** (growth, in-migration and age profile). Buncrana

has the fastest level of overall growth. This said, the rate of population growth is slower than that experienced across the island of Ireland as a whole over the past decade. The evident response required is for each local authority area to achieve its growth objectives. As part of this, each of these **three core settlement nodes requires a consolidation of its urban core to counteract pressure from suburbanisation and counter-urbanisation**. This is best achieved through the development/rejuvenation of brownfield sites, vacant lands, derelict properties and regeneration sites.

Governance Implications: While Derry City remains the predominant urban core, **the NWCR increasingly reflects the profile of a polycentric network of urban centres** - as advocated in the *European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)*. This implies developing a corresponding governance framework, whereby **inter-urban dialogue and collaboration are enabled and in which the urban centres take into account the functionality, assets and development needs of their rural hinterlands**. As is the case in many developed/western economies, the City Region is affected by counter-urbanisation, with the main urban core - particularly Derry City - losing population to adjoining settlements. As **counter-urbanisation is border-blind, inter-jurisdictional approaches are required in order to redress it**.

6.2.2. *Strategic Planning Issue:* The vast majority (80%+) of the City Region's population lives in urban areas. Yet, the City Region has a sizeable peri-urban zone and some rural communities - particularly in County Donegal. Thus, **rural development considerations need to be factored into spatial planning**. Some villages, particularly those that are within 10km of the Derry-Letterkenny axis are experiencing development pressures, and they will require investments to ensure that infrastructure and amenities cater for current and future population levels and growth - not only as settlements which serve the metropolitan economy but as places with intrinsic functionality and which provide a high-quality experience for residents, workers and businesses.

Governance Implications: **Urban-rural partnerships are important in ensuring that all settlements contribute to the overall sustainable development** of the City Region. Letterkenny's role as a Gaeltacht Service Town is an obvious case in point, although all settlements will benefit from more collaborative approaches (based on multi-level governance) to spatial planning. The composite nature of Derry City and Strabane District, embracing a wider rural area, is also an opportunity to advance progressive approaches which support the nature

of rural places and which also create innovative synergies between rural settlements, communities and larger urban centres.

- 6.2.3. *Strategic Planning Issue:* The **strengthening of villages and the development of civic spaces and active and public transport options** will improve citizens' quality of life and ensure that rural communities and small towns play a more positive role in, and benefit from, the City Region's development.

Governance Implications: **Co-decision-making with citizens and non-governmental actors will enable the planning system to better harness local social and knowledge capital, and to be more visionary and less reactive.** This needs to happen on the basis of an integrated city-region territory, as advocated in the ESDP and in subsequent planning frameworks in both the EU and UK. Further development of innovative and flexible consultation spaces between local government and citizens will service this end well and will complement the existing democratic civic governance relationships which exist across the region between communities and the local government representatives that they elect. Existing structures include, for example, the DCSDC Rural Issues Group and the DCC Public Participation Network (PPN).

Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy

- 6.2.4. **Development is “place-based and highly contingent on context”** (Barca *et al*, 2012: 139) – social, cultural and institutional. Successful place-making centres **on utilising local knowledge to identify need, opportunity and assets in creating liveable places** (Arefi, 2014) and contributing to economic competitiveness and sustainability (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). It is a process that acknowledges the history of place – its past – in building a future. Any metropolitan spatial strategy must, as such, require an acknowledgement and inclusion of the NWCR's diverse settlement patterns - from long-established core urban areas, through to intermediate zones, more dispersed rural settlements and the wider rural community constituency – and critically, recognise the energy and value-added that each brings to the table in terms of the wider effective and sustainable development of the region.
- 6.2.5. The settlement pattern that has evolved over the past thirty years is **not consistent with the attainment of Irish and UK targets and commitments in respect of the UN SDGs, particularly the building of sustainable communities, the protection of water and the attainment of a zero-carbon society.** The NWCR has committed to achieving net-zero carbon by 2045 in its *North*

West City Region Statement of Intent on Regional Green (May 2021). A metropolitan spatial strategy must contribute to the active implementation of this goal (see Section 6.26 below) by drawing together the linkages between the various strategies (economic, environmental, digital, etc.) and informing political/policy decisions.

6.2.6. Legislative provisions are weak in respect of enabling local authorities, particularly in Ireland, to **compile definitive property registers, activate vacant or derelict sites or to collect taxes such as the derelict sites levy**. It is critical to **understand the potential of the urban core to facilitate future compact growth** and the type of development appropriate to different locations. There is also a growing need to measure the vacancy and dereliction in the rural landscape. A metropolitan spatial strategy must take a place-based approach to national policy on town centre first/future of the high street frameworks and practices while also protecting genuine rural needs.

6.2.7. The ability to **work, socialise, do business and use services across borders is an integral part of daily life in border communities and a key citizens' rights issue for people living in cross-border regions**. While the issue of an European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation⁷⁰ (EGTC) model for cross-border cooperation in Ireland/Northern Ireland occasionally arises in relation to the work of local government, it is important to understand that EGTCs provide a European legal basis for public authorities – in the absence of an enabling domestic legal basis or competencies - to undertake the kind of collaboration that is already possible for Ireland/Northern Ireland in both domestic and international law. The North West City Region (NWCR) structures (the North West Strategic Growth Partnership and the North West Regional Development Group) represent **innovative, next-generation cross-border spatial and collaborative governance** at the subnational and regional level which are rooted firstly in the existing legal competencies of local government in both jurisdictions. Furthermore, the North West Strategic Growth Partnership – in macro north-south governance terms - is located under the aegis of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and as such finds a legal basis in the intergovernmental collaborative arrangements proceeding from the 1998 Agreement which has a statutory basis and is underpinned by plebiscite in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. As such, the NWCR model **represents a model of international best practice in collaborative**

⁷⁰ The European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) instrument is a European cooperation structure with a legal personality defined by European law and designed to facilitate and promote territorial cooperation in the European Union. Regional and local authorities of at least two Member States of the European Union can form an EGTC for carrying out actions of territorial cooperation with or without the contribution from EU funding sources (see https://www.spatialforesight.eu/files/spatial_theme/spatial/publications/Brief-2014-5-141111.pdf).

governance for cross-border working which is capable of adapting to the emerging global challenges for spatial and environmental governance in cross-border territories, and one which involves both central and local government at a level of subnational subsidiarity. The model is located **entirely within the legislative framework of two adjoining countries**, one an EU Member State and the other a neighbouring state to the EU. The potential of these arrangements as a lever for important at-scale responses to sustainability and growth, the deployment of investment, and the mobilisation of local democratic processes in support of progressive place-making. While an EGTC has not been necessary in the North West, the qualitative features of the North West model may nevertheless prove an inspiring example of how EGTCs themselves can further build their functionality to address regional issues along internal and external EU borders.

The Economy

6.3.1. *Spatial Planning Issue:* Economic Growth and Investment form **one of the three pillars of regional growth around which collaborative activities under the NWSGP are organised and sets out a vision and principles on which the region's economy needs to be supported to grow.** A wholly integrated approach to economic planning which gives expression to the best practice principles of place-making and strong regions, while also going beyond a policy template which stops at the border, is what will be required for the NWCR to recover, **tackle the negative impacts of its historical infrastructure baseline deficit, and deliver a just transition which addresses the acute economic and social inequalities experienced in the region's economy.**

Governance Implications: It will be important for the NWCR to act with **awareness of synergies with other organisations and public bodies with an economic development and regional growth remit** in order to lever optimal outcomes on shared objectives. In response to the challenges of Brexit, COVID-19, climate change and City-Region targets being set, there are enhanced opportunities to invest in **place-based marketing regionally and nationally** - as is actively being promoted in the U.S.; **this must be backed up by consistent and sustained effort to ensure the internal connectivity of the region** (acknowledging that the connectivity of the region to the rest of the island is a matter for national policy to take account of through initiatives such as the All Island Strategic Rail Review initiated in 2021). Any metropolitan spatial strategy for the NWCR **must identify pathways for effectively connecting centres of population within the region, both digitally and in terms of transport infrastructure.** Spatial planning for economic growth and development must take full account of the digitalisation agenda, and the

changes in the future of work and workforce mobility patterns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. A strong element of this will be **digital enablement of key settlements to high specifications, better digital enablement of rural settlements, and modelling capital investments and planning for remote working which contribute to sustainability and wellbeing for the regional workforce.**

- 6.3.2. *Strategic Planning Issue:* The importance of enterprise **ecosystems in the North West which create sustained and high-level innovation involving Research and Development (R&D) active companies is high** - and synergies will be required with **spatial planning policy to understand how policy needs to enable SME growth in the region and not merely restrict itself to development planning for FDI.** Digital and Green Transition will not simply be a matter of existing mechanisms applying business as usual to new growth sectors. It will have profound implications for how enterprise, innovation and skills facilities across the island of Ireland work in synergy with each other and there will be a strong imperative for robust enterprise ecosystems at subnational and regional levels in order to effectively deliver on this transition.

Governance Implications: The NWCR governance framework accommodates a strategic approach to spatial planning that enables balanced and sustainable economic growth. Governance for implementation of measures provided for within a spatial strategy will be key - to ensure focus, quality and optimal effectiveness. The NWSGP structures provide a mandated space for Government Departments, North and South, to work with each other and the Councils in the NWCR. Council-to-Council governance supports this arrangement through the North West Regional Development Group (NWRDG). Existing cross border collaborative working and networking arrangements between key council staff focuses across a range of sectors, including economic development and spatial planning. However, **it will be essential that there is connectivity between these strands of work in the context of development and implementation of the spatially-led approach which is required to deliver the effective and sustainable development of the City-Region.** The leadership of senior officials will be essential in modelling and ensuring this connectivity at all levels of operations and business performance. Investment should also be considered in **developing joint training for members of economic and planning committees within Councils,** regardless of whether these are separate or connected.

Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy

- 6.3.3. As a functional economic area, and the fourth largest urban agglomeration on the island of Ireland, **it is essential that a connected approach to spatial planning and economic development and investment** – which goes beyond procedural communication in the context of planning regulation - is adopted for the region’s sustainable and balanced growth. While, for example, public sector jobs tend to be concentrated in urban cores, public sector workers are more likely (than other cohorts) to reside in the suburbs and peri-urban zones. This delimits the attainment of the 20-minute neighbourhood/15-minute city/10-minute town concept. Any metropolitan spatial strategy must be informed by a **shared understanding of the importance of adopting a long-term economic vision for the region – informed by housing, transport, enterprise policies to name but a few – through future-orientated engagement using the quadruple helix model** (government-academia-private enterprise/industry-community).
- 6.3.4. The **paucity of comparable datasets for both jurisdictions is a barrier to evidence-based economic planning, and spatial planning** more generally. **Data-gathering agencies including local government in both jurisdictions need to ensure a more aligned and streamlined approach to data collection and publication**, whereby indicators/variables and collection dates/timeframes match one another. The proposed publication by AIRO and the ICLRD – and national statistic agencies - of an updated all-island census atlas/data-hub in 2023 post-release of the Census results, North and South, must be expedited.
- 6.3.5. While there is evidence of socio-cultural vibrancy in the vicinities of the City Region’s higher education institutes (HEIs), the socio-economic evidence also points to **persistent educational disadvantage in urban neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation**. In parallel, as documented here and elsewhere, the required skills-sets of industry and enterprise are evolving. Thus, **area-based community development and social inclusion initiatives** ought to continue to play an important role at local level. There are opportunities to build on the initiatives already underway through the Derry City and Strabane Learning City with its emphasis on fostering a culture of learning throughout life and facilitating learning in and for the workplace.

Mobility and Accessibility

6.4.1. *Strategic Planning Issue:* Mobility is a key **determinant of economic prosperity, environmental quality, quality of life and the level of community interaction** that can take place. Future investment in mobility must, therefore, contribute to economic, social, cultural progress, and the protection and enhancement of the environment. Across the North West City Region (NWCR), there is a shared commitment to continue to **strengthen external transport linkages at the regional scale**. Central to this is strengthening the transport corridors linking the core settlements of Letterkenny, Derry/Londonderry, Strabane and links onwards to Buncrana and Inishowen, and diversifying the modal choice available to people along these corridors. This includes examining the potential of green infrastructure. **A future transport network must reflect the polycentric nature of the region's settlement pattern and increase transport connectivity including bus and rail service among the main towns and cities**. Undoubtedly, the paucity of public transport connections is a significant factor in the current high-level of car dependency across the City Region. In response, the region is beginning to make strides in respect of promoting active travel, but these need to be accelerated.

Governance Implications: There is a continued need for both Councils, together with other regional stakeholders to **continue to advocate for the upgrading of the main transport corridors A5/N2, A6, and the Ten-T Routes**; the need for which is well documented and the commitment to well-rehearsed in a number of government priority statements, North and South. Inter-nodal transport connections are limited, as bus services operate on radial routes - mainly into Derry, but also to Letterkenny. **Increased cross-border collaboration is required in order to ensure a more integrated transport network and sets of services**. In addition, there is a **growing urgency to advocate for modal shift** – this includes expansion of the current regional greenways network, continued investment in the two regional airports as well as Foyle Port, and exploring the potential of QBCs and rail. Engagement with the aforementioned All Ireland Strategic Rail Review, recently commissioned by both Governments and being undertaken by ARUP, is critical in this regard. Diversifying the modal choice is integral to regional competitiveness not least in terms of:

- Providing options for the movement of people and goods;
- Providing a range of transport modes to ensure efficient and sustainable travel patterns; and
- Providing value for money.

Also critical to future mobility and accessibility is ensuring that **transport planning is closely**

integrated with housing, employment, education and leisure locations. This demands a holistic approach to transport planning informed by multi-disciplinary teams from across the two Councils – similar to the approach adopted in the development of the *Statement of Intent on Regional Green Transformation* – as well as with external agencies with a key remit in these respective sectors.

6.4.2. *Strategic Planning Issue: Mobility and accessibility within and without the region cannot be considered in isolation of global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, energy security, and changing demographics* to name but a few. Taking a longer-term perspective on future transport networks within and across the region, there are a number of key questions to be considered. For example:

- **How can the existing, and future, transport network support compact settlement patterns and commuting modes?** Can bus, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity within and between emerging suburbs and the urban cores be improved? How do new planning concepts such as 20 minute neighbourhoods and 10 minute towns apply?
- **What role will technology/digitalisation play to improve access to public transport and active travel options?** What impact will emerging technology in E-bikes and E-vehicles have on commuting patterns?
- **If/when rail and public transport are expanded, what implications does that have for the network of urban centres (Derry/Londonderry, Letterkenny, Strabane) in the short and medium term?** Would an enhanced modal choice strengthen liveability and vibrancy in the respective urban centres, creating living streets and mixed uses? Would it spur a demographic change and growth?

Governance Implications: Addressing the decarbonisation of transport and travel in the NWCR is complex. Citizens tend to be more reliant on car-based transport; they have less available public transport and tend to travel greater distances. **Congestion, and the costs of congestion, are significant and varied across the NWCR's larger towns, impacting on efficiency, economics and societal and individual wellbeing.** As noted by the Western Development Commission in a submission to the Irish Government on sustainable mobility, "It is important that congestion is eased, both to reduce the economic and social costs being incurred, and also to ensure....growth centres can deliver on the ambitious regional growth

targets”⁷¹. This is not solely the responsibility of local government – albeit settlement patterns and land-use decisions do have a role to play. In addition to requiring significant investment from Government and transport providers to deliver timely and efficient modal choice, it also **requires a significant behavioural change by not only citizens but also employers in the ‘how’ and ‘where’ business is conducted.**

Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy

6.4.3. Any metropolitan spatial strategy should be complimented by a **parallel joint regional Transport adaptation strategy with proposed implementation timeframes over 20-30 years.**

A transport strategy should consider an integrated layered approach where national, regional and local transportation investments reinforce and leverage social, economic and environmental priorities and address constraints including climate change. It must also link with the ongoing consultation as part of the All Island Strategic Rail Review. In the more immediate term and working in partnership, the Councils with the main public transport providers need to:

- **Audit all transport/mobility investments committed to the NWCR**, and to map these; thus giving a clear picture of what is proposed and the mode to which it relates, where it will service, the emerging alignment of modal choice (or not), the gaps in service remaining, and the opportunities for future prioritisation; and
- **Jointly commission research to identify potential demand for appropriate rail connections, Quality Bus Corridors/service (on North/South and East/West axis) and interim improvements in service among all bus providers.**

With both Wales and Austria, for example, having recently announced a cessation in future strategic roads infrastructure in acknowledgement of the scale of adaptation that is required to achieve global emission reduction targets and limit Earth’s warming to 1.5⁰C, there is need for the region to consider alternative transport solutions **centred on modal shift and modal choice.** Consideration, for example, will need to be given to how the multi-modal transport hubs in both Derry City (operational) and Letterkenny (planned) compliment each other, and result in improved regional and local connectivity. The City Region, through its previously developed *Regional Priorities Framework* and *North West City Region Statement of Intent on Regional*

⁷¹ <https://westerndevelopment.ie/insights/submission-to-the-review-of-sustainable-mobility-policy/>

Green Transformation, has outlined its **commitment to being a living laboratory for innovative transport technologies and service.**

- 6.4.4. In addition to public transport, the **potential demand for Mobility as a Service (MaaS) on a cross-border, functional basis – especially for rural settlements** – needs to be explored. For example, could e-bikes be utilised to form part of the commuting journey? With a growing uptake in electric vehicles, e-bikes and e-scooters, questions arise as to the issues surrounding charging stations, licencing and regulation on a cross-jurisdictional basis.
- 6.4.5. Traffic congestion can be problematic, particularly at peak times and in certain locations. Potential solutions lie in **investments in infrastructure that would ease congestion and improve walkability and circulation by bicycle.** Data is critical to informed decision-making; there is, for example, a shortage of data on public transport provided by private operators in terms of passenger numbers, frequency etc. There is a **strong case for a mobility census to be undertaken for the NWCR**; capturing mode of travel, reason behind the selection of this mode, typical distances, time travelling, frequency of journeys, whether cross-border in nature, etc. Understanding current modal choice will enable the City Region to pursue development that is sustainable and transport/mobility-oriented while also giving credence to such concepts as the 20-minute neighbourhood/15-minute city/ 10-minute town.
- 6.4.6. **Promoting the growth of regional airports while also committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become a net-zero carbon economy are not easy bed-fellows.** It is timely that the regional airports collaborate on a ‘greening strategy’ that will contribute to the City Region’s goal of carbon neutrality by 2045 while also continuing to provide internal and external route connections. Across the region, there are opportunities to improve connectivity through rail network enhancements – linking City of Derry Airport with Derry City – and a better connected public transport network, including on a cross-border basis. This would be enhanced by integrated ticketing covering, for example, bus and rail across the region.

Environment

- 6.5.1. *Strategic Planning Issue:* **Climate change will impact on land-use change and increasing demands on natural resources into the future.** There is marked evidence that the island of Ireland’s climate is changing with projections indicating that there is a likelihood of a rise in sea

levels, changes in rainfall events, increased frequency of storm events, changes to air and soil temperate and periods of increased drought (Northern and Western Regional Assembly, 2020).

Governance Implications: Achieving climate neutrality and green transformation requires place-based leadership, drawing on the **potential of spatial-strategy-making processes to act as instigators of change rather than simply regulators of development**. The *North West City Region Statement of Intent on Regional Green Transformation* policy paper notes that spatial planning strategies such as that proposed for the NWCR, will facilitate and enable a green transformation programme that will include “developing the green credentials of industry, infrastructure, housing/built environment, public realm and open spaces, urban and rural development utilising smart region initiatives, and agriculture” (2021: 15). Any metropolitan spatial strategy will be a critical tool in advancing the green transformation agenda.

- 6.5.2. *Strategic Planning Issue:* Achieving substantial emissions reductions from both transport and residential buildings **require a radical shift away from single house plots to appropriate higher densities in urban settings**. The carbon contribution of a detached dwelling is over three times higher than that of semi-detached and terraced which in turn have a carbon contribution over three times higher than apartments. Working **within fixed carbon budgets will require a change in approach and a development culture** focused on compact, infill development and the efficient use of urban space.

Governance Implications: A **shift towards carbon neutrality has spatial justice implications** as resources may inevitably be concentrated on Derry City and the larger towns. Options for rural living within smaller towns and villages can be **facilitated, through innovative, place-specific solutions**. Strategic spatial planning will need to be coupled with detailed, evidence-informed carbon accounting and forward planning. At the core of meeting the demands for quality urban spaces and meeting genuine rural community needs is addressing the latent opportunities presented by urban and rural vacancy and dereliction. A collaborative approach to understanding the demands within both council areas in the context of the NWCR is a key task of any future strategy for the region.

- 6.5.3. *Strategic Planning Issue:* **Climate adaptation, landscape management and biodiversity protection require a functional approach to spatial planning**, recognising the functions performed by specific land-use types and the **potential for nature-based solutions**. A proactive approach to green and blue infrastructure development can contribute to provision of multiple

benefits or ecosystem services ranging from climate adaptation (e.g., floodwater retention or energy conversion) to passive and active amenity values and associated health benefits. Effective landscape management and biodiversity protection requires an integrated cross-sectoral approach, whereby spatial planning, nature conservation and environmental policy work together, in pursuit of multiple objectives.

Governance Implications: A **joint, cross-border landscape character assessment**, encompassing indicators of biodiversity, heritage value, ecosystem services and vulnerability to external pressures should be prepared as a **common framework for spatial and environmental planning**. Specific spatial planning measures pertaining to flood risk management may also include the following:

- Zoning and active management of floodwater retention areas;
- A moratorium on building in unprotected floodplains;
- Managed retreat in vulnerable coastal locations; and
- Adaptive building design (e.g., seaside cafes on stilts, buildings on artificial mounds).

6.5.4. *Strategic Planning Issue:* With increased awareness of the potential of the sea as a source of renewable energy and at the same time of the need to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems, the **sustainable governance of maritime resources is emerging as a critical issue**. Competition for marine space has increased significantly and will likely continue to do so in coming decades.

Governance Implications: Our seas play a key role in the sustainable growth and development of the maritime economy. They offer, for example, the **potential to harness opportunities in the blue economy** and offshore renewable energy sector – thus contributing to the transition to a zero carbon economy. At the same time, **it is critical that growth in the ocean economy of the NWCR does not exceed the carrying capacity of the marine environment**.

Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy

6.5.5. The ongoing demands on housing supply, not only as a result of population growth, but also arising from current pressing accommodation issues such as those of homelessness, MICA, and rising construction costs, remains a key issue for the North West. The environmental and social

considerations of meeting genuine rural community needs coupled with ensuring the provision of quality housing options in towns and villages that suffer from the pervasive issues of vacancy and dereliction, along with compact urban growth, are key considerations for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy. As noted in Ireland's recent *Climate Action Plan 2021*, households account for around a quarter of the energy used in Ireland and are also responsible for a quarter of energy-related CO₂ emissions. Having expressed an interest in becoming a living lab for new innovations, there is the **potential for the City Region to become a test bed of new technologies, building techniques, and planning regulations** for future housing development, neighbourhood regeneration, and retrofitting in both the rural and urban context.

6.5.6. The **societal benefits of healthy, diverse ecosystems and rich natural and cultural landscapes** should be communicated clearly to address all relevant stakeholders and shift the role of environmental management from a negative regulatory space into a positive influence on the finite natural landscape assets of the NWCR.

6.5.7. Both Councils **must actively engage with marine spatial planning and coastal zone management**, recognising implications of climate adaptation for coastal management and future potential of offshore sustainable energy.

Community Wellbeing

6.6.1. *Strategic Planning Issue:* The World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe's 2014 Report on the Social Determinants of Health clearly identifies a **recommended role for local authorities in determining and influencing the health outcomes of the communities** which they serve. Specific actions recommended are as follows, and ICLRD notes a strategic fit with the existing processes of Community Planning (NI) and Integrated Economic and Social Planning (IE) which currently form part of the competencies of local government in the NWCR:

- Ensure championing of partnership and cross-sector working by local leaders;
- Ensure all actions are based on **informed and inclusive methods for public engagement and community participation**, according to locally appropriate context, to empower communities and build resilience;
- Make the **use of partnership-working more extensive, including using local knowledge, resources and assets in communities and those belonging to agencies, to foster cooperation and engagement to support community action**

- and the diversity of local people.** Physical resources such as schools, health and community centres should be used as the basis for a range of other services;
- Give **priority in environmental policies to measures that help to improve health and apply to all population groups likely to be affected**, particularly those who are excluded (such as homeless people and refugees) or vulnerable (young and elderly); and
 - Adopt strategies to **improve air quality and reduce health risks** from air pollutants for all groups across the social gradient.

Governance Implications: Creating effective approaches to **community wellbeing through a spatial planning model requires activated relationships, working processes and models of implementation and accountability** which are mobilised at all levels of governance - community, local area, council area, and at the level of the cross-border region. Effective delivery of impact for populations requires a model of active subsidiarity which draws in the appropriate stakeholders with appropriate levels of involvement and input. Health and wellbeing should be key elements of any place-based engagements carried out by the planning services in the North West as part of development of a future cross-border spatial strategy. Advanced, multi-level governance arrangements are the framework - the culture and energy with which these are utilised and given meaning are key factors to be taken account of in the implementation of any future approaches. A **full understanding and capacity to navigate and absorb the evidence on community wellbeing into local government decision-making presents an opportunity to consider additional skills sets** (such as health economics, public health geography) that may have a significant contribution to make to a holistic spatially-led social model of health for this transnational City Region. Awareness in particular of equality and health, and the social determinants of health as they affect vulnerable groups within the population including those covered by the EU Equality Directive and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, will be crucial to success in delivering a spatial planning response and stimulus to community wellbeing in the cross border region.

6.6.2. *Strategic Planning Issue:* The WHO report emphasises that decisions relating to planning, connectivity, and infrastructure are often made in an environment which is shaped by the economic effects of the social determinants of health. Yet, the **COVID-19 Pandemic has emphasised the relevance of the social determinants of health for population health outcomes.** It has also emphasised the relevance of local authorities in responding to the emergency needs of their communities. COVID-19 Pandemic has also created the **conditions for**

innovations in policy and service delivery which responded to population health needs and emphasised the interdependencies between economic, social, and physical/environmental factors at the level of a cross-border territory in the North West.

Governance Implications: The **existing Community Planning structures** in the region should be **formally linked to the NW Spatial Planning process** for the purpose of aligning existing interagency population health planning

- 6.6.3. *Strategic Planning Issue:* Regional spatial planning needs to **take into account issues related to both food security and energy security and affordability in the context of a transition to a low-carbon region**. The evaluation of energy, housing and rural development solutions (such as farm diversification and food production for the region) will **need to consider the extent to which preferred options will deliver positive impacts for the most vulnerable**. Housing in the context of green transition cannot solely be about modelling high-tech new build solutions. It must also be about energy efficiency, at-scale retrofit across the region, area-based planning and **adaptation of infrastructure for new energy supply solutions for existing housing stock, and about access to green spaces for new and existing housing**.

Governance Implications: As a core feature of COVID-19 recovery and resilience, spatial planning can **actively promote community wellbeing through the digital enablement of community amenities, the provision of more liveable solutions in rural areas** which previously saw a high level of commute, and the development of more focused community amenities in ‘dormitory’ areas of the region which now feature an increase in the number of people both working and living there. Spatial planning will need to take into account **not only existing land use patterns but options for changes in land use linked to an improved, sustainable approach to wellbeing** – from universal design, open space/public realm design, energy and food security.

Priorities for a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy

- 6.6.4. Understanding the role that spatial planning plays in community wellbeing **requires an understanding of the geospatial distribution of health inequalities**. In general, **border regions experience higher levels of deprivation, peripherality (even with large urban populations), and health inequalities** as a result of their distance from the centres of decision-making and the frequent experience of historical underinvestment. Health inequalities relate to access to services, challenged health status against national averages (e.g., life expectancy, multiple frailty

factors, prevalence of long-term conditions, mental health needs, levels of suicide and self-harm). **Some of the highest concentrated levels of deprivation exist within the territory of the NWCR**, providing a strong evidence base for intervention on a collaborative basis, and intervention which is underpinned by connected, integrative spatial responses to community wellbeing needs.

- 6.6.5. A just transition in planning terms will be the extent to which a regional spatial planning framework takes account of, activates and mobilises the **necessary joined-up working required to ensure that all boats can be lifted by a rising tide** and that existing risks to community wellbeing which arise from environmental, infrastructural, land use and service planning - all of which underpin sustainable development and economic growth - can be mitigated as much as possible.
- 6.6.6. Given recent experiences of the global health pandemic, together with the broader issue of a changing demographic profile, there is a **need for a training programme for elected members and planners on the principles of population health planning** to be rolled-out. Opportunities exist as part of the upcoming reviews of Community Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) to fully activate community planning structures for population health and wellbeing, using internal governance to connect this work to wider spatial planning arena.

Chapter 7. Working in Partnership

7.1. Globally, city regions are increasingly developing, and participating in, governance structures that pool resources and responsibilities and engage non-governmental actors in decision making. The need to address environmental degradation and to ameliorate the effects of climate change is a significant driver of collaborative cross-border municipal governance. Drawing on several international case studies, the World Bank (2007) articulates key principles in respect of good metropolitan governance, all of which are applicable in the North-West City Region (NWCR):

- Different governance models are appropriate in different circumstances, and models will change over time in response to needs and opportunities;
- Voluntary inter-municipal cooperation may offer a useful approach, when joint governance is not possible⁷²;
- Governance structures should cover the entire economic region, and as economic patterns change, there will be a need for inter-municipal cooperation (with other neighbouring local authorities);
- Consolidation does not necessarily reduce costs;
- Processes of governance reform can be as important as the outcomes; and
- Metropolitan governments need sufficient resources and fiscal autonomy to raise the funds they need to deliver services.

7.2. The NWCR benefits from unique place-based governance arrangements for development, within a national/regional and international policy context as well as speaking to practical pathways to delivery. These arrangements present a generational opportunity for Local and Central Government to work together in an innovative framework for the benefit of all citizens of the region and both economies. It does so through addressing the structural growth requirements of a significant area of the North West of the island that is also a cross-border functional economic area with significant potential to contribute to balanced national growth.

7.3. The new model for supporting growth in the North West, founded on the concept of place-based leadership as a means to delivering ongoing sustainable growth, has best practice in spatial

⁷² Conversely, joint governance arrangements, which are not underpinned by the necessary leadership behaviours and investment in capacity building for quality decision making and consistency of operational delivery, can remain limited in their actual effect and ability to deliver desired outcomes;

planning as its core driver. The place-based structures to support the growth of the NWCR consist of:

- The North West Regional Development Group (NWRDG), which will drive an integrated cross border approach to implementing shared priorities arising from the Community Planning/LECP processes; and
- The North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP), which involves Local Government and key Central Government representation and will deliver durable coordinated and partnership-based cooperation between the region and central government in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and in a wider East-West context.

7.4. These structures, endorsed by the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) at its Plenary Meeting of 4th July 2016, are a result of the continued engagement under the North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI), between officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Executive Office (TEO) and regional stakeholders regarding the direction and priorities for the North West.

7.5. The core objective of the establishment and continuation of collaborative working arrangements for the NWCR is to release the region's full potential as a net contributor to the economies of Ireland and Northern Ireland/UK and in doing so to add value as a cross-border functional economic area to the economy of the island of Ireland as whole. The proposed Metropolitan Spatial Strategy will build on this by seeking to commit to a coordinated approach that reflects the strategic growth properties of both jurisdictions and guide future growth and investment in the North West City Region (NWCR). This approach offers local, regional and national governments the opportunity to take a high-level, long-term strategic approach to the sustainable development of the region.

7.6. While most of the international literature focuses on inter-urban governance arrangements, an increasing body of research examines the roles of rural spaces and places in cross-border governance frameworks, and it advises on the need for inbuilt mechanisms to guard against asymmetrical power relations, so that rural interests are not dwarfed by urban agendas. As Chapter 4 has shown, this is particularly pertinent in the NWCR, given its significant rural coverage.

- 7.7. A recent (2018) briefing paper by the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) states that “cross-border metropolitan areas are a function of the growing interdependence between metropolitan catchment areas, people and markets across national borders” (2018: 3), and it notes that governance initiatives are increasingly focused on generating functional integration, rather than on adapting to a functional area. The ESPON briefing identifies the Ireland-Northern Ireland border as having ‘3 to 5’ cross-border public services (CPS) per border segment. This is similar to and greater than several inter-jurisdictional boundaries in Eastern Europe, but it is much lower than those that pertain in other geographies, most notably the borders between Germany, the Benelux countries and their neighbours. ESPON identifies nine thematic application fields in respect of CPS, and suggest that three of these, namely ‘citizenship’, ‘environmental protection’ and ‘spatial planning, tourism and culture’ operate across the Ireland-Northern Ireland border. In contrast, eight fields operate across the German-Czech border. This set of metrics indicates that there is considerable scope for the development of regional governance frameworks to support the inter-municipal collaborations already promoted by Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council, as documented by the ICLRD (2016). The ESPON research also point to the scope for the development of governance arrangements to support the development, delivery and oversight of the various recommendations proffered in this report.
- 7.8. Developing a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy for the NWCR is critical to embedding functional integration into both policy and practice. As a ‘soft’ strategy, it will stand as a complementary layer onto the ‘hard’ statutory planning system of both jurisdictions which bypass the city-regional scale.

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ANNEX 1. The ICLRD Research Team

This scoping paper was undertaken by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD), Ireland's leading provider of development supports to government and cross-border agencies in the fields of place-making and place-shaping. It is a North-South-U.S. partnership involving Maynooth University, Ulster University and University of Maryland, which was formally established in 2006 to explore and expand the contribution that spatial planning and the development of the physical, social and economic infrastructure can make to peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland, and elsewhere. A central objective of the ICLRD is to strengthen the policy and operational linkages between central, regional and local policy makers and among officials and practitioners involved in spatial planning and social and economic development across the island of Ireland. Most of our work is with regional and local government, with an emphasis on facilitating deeper collaboration and bridging the policy-praxis divide. In addition to the three core partners, the ICLRD cooperates with researchers from across the island of Ireland and Europe with similar interests (incl. University of Manchester, University of Hamburg, Mary Immaculate College – University of Limerick, University College Dublin, and Technological University Shannon) and cross border partnerships such as Co-operation Ireland.

The Team

For the purposes of this study, the ICLRD was:

Ms. Caroline Creamer is Director of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) and a Research Fellow with the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute. A qualified town planner, Caroline has for the past 20 years worked in a research and management capacity on a number of EU funded projects focusing on urban and rural regeneration, spatial planning, multi-level governance and community participation. Over the last decade, Caroline has been working with local government, regional authorities, communities and other key stakeholders in the Irish border region and Northern Ireland on policy-praxis in, for example, collaborative governance, resilience, place-shaping, rural revitalisation, and inter-territorial and cross-border development. Contact: caroline.creamer@mu.ie

Dr. Brendan O'Keeffe is a Senior Research Associate with the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD). He is an independent consultant working in the fields of social research, local development, community planning, evaluation, project management and organisational change. Brendan's current work mainly involves the use of action-research methodologies, and he is working

with a number of local authorities and civil society organisations. He is also engaged in a number of academic endeavours, and has compiled research reports on several issues including homelessness, community planning and rural development. Contact: oksocialresearch@gmail.com

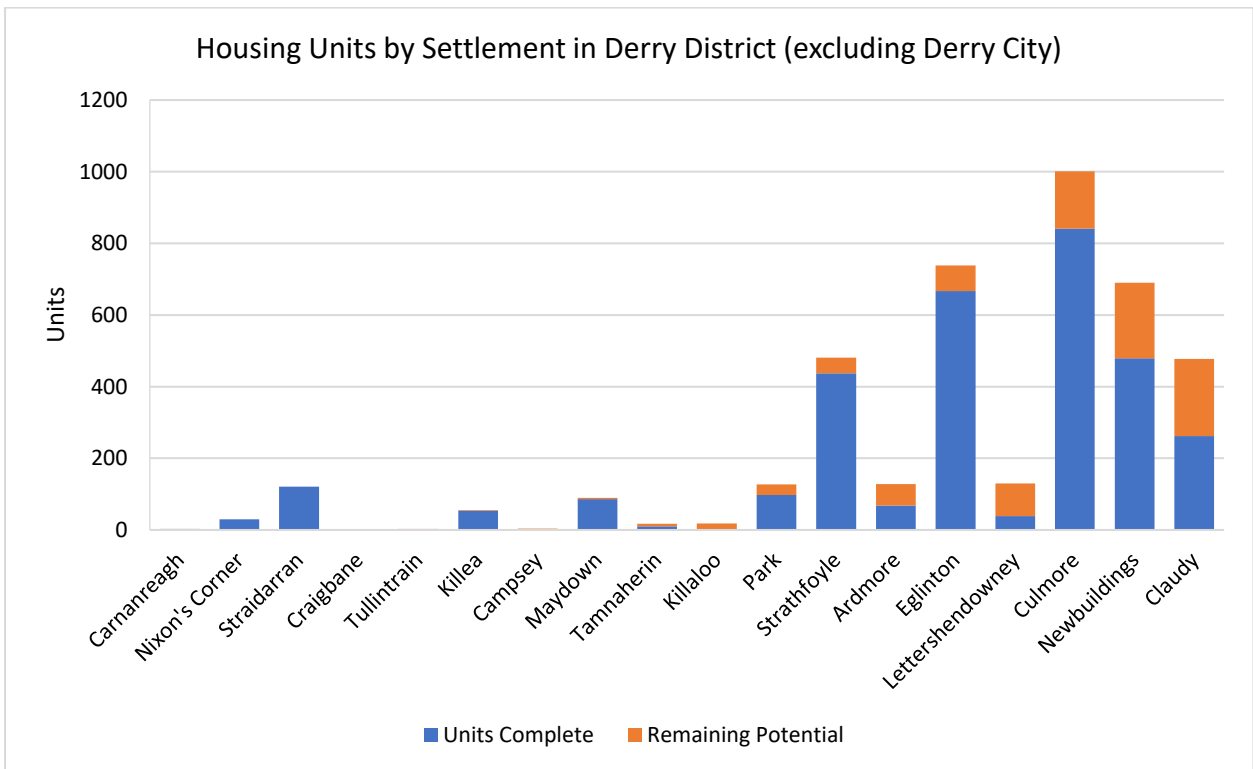
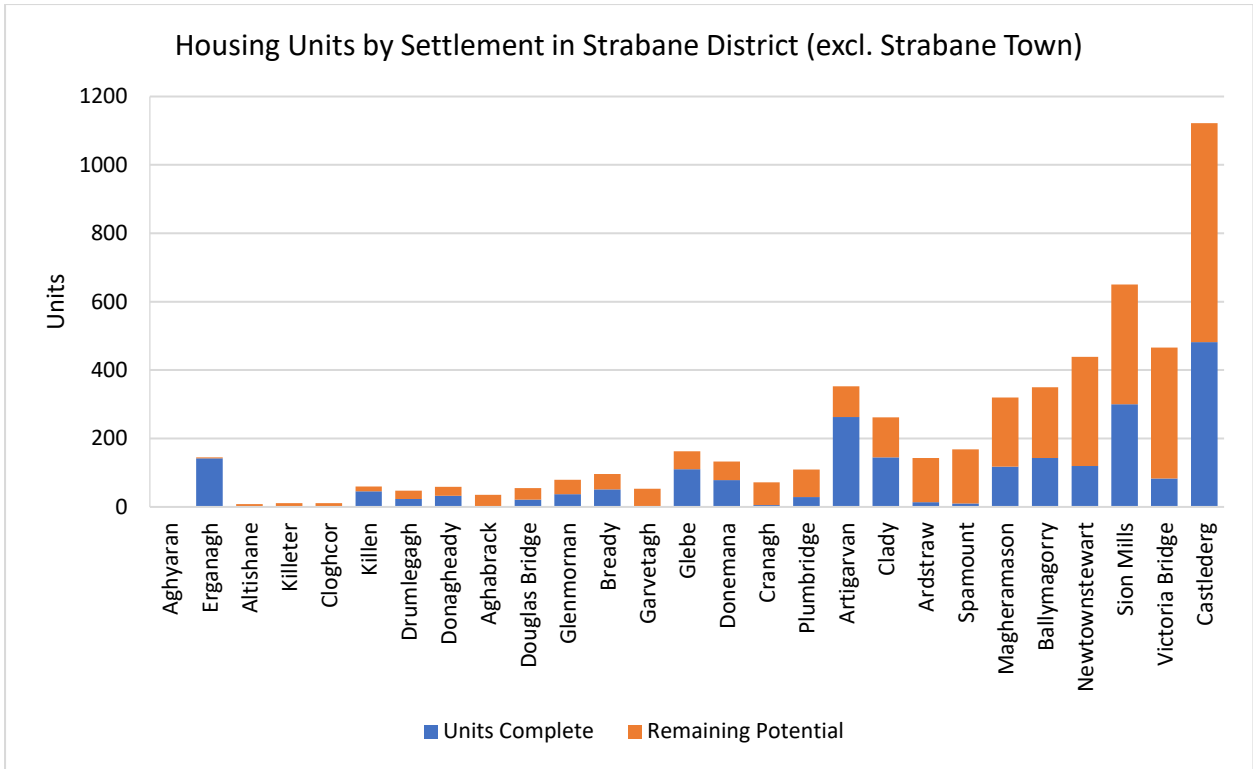
Ms. Caitriona Mullan is a Senior Research Associate with the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD). She is a specialist in inter-jurisdictional/transboundary collaborative working in spatial development and strategic change. She has a significant track record in place-based economic and social development, which she gained over two decades working in Ireland and Northern Ireland and the Border Counties in particular. An expert in stakeholder relationship management for integrative spatial development and functional territories, Caitriona has successfully facilitated and supported diverse interests to work together within evidence based models to deliver change and progress across a range of sectors in Ireland, Northern Ireland and internationally. Most recently, she has been working with ICLR/Donegal County Council/Derry City & Strabane District Council to build and facilitate the North West Strategic Growth Partnership structures - an innovative intergovernmental partnership for growth on the Ireland/Northern Ireland Border. Caitriona is a native of the North West. Contact: caitriona73@gmail.com

Dr. Cormac Walsh is a Senior Research Associate with the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD). Trained as a geographer and spatial planner (with degrees from Maynooth, Loughborough and UCD), he has expertise in the fields of spatial planning, environmental and coastal management. Through his base in Hamburg, he brings international experience and an external perspective to the table. He also works as a lecturer and researcher at Leuphana University Lüneburg (Germany). For more information, see <https://cormacwalsh-consult.eu/>.

Mr. John Driscoll is an urban planner and educator with over 35 years of international experience. He is currently an affiliate at the University of Maryland National Center for Smart Growth. Previously, John was the founding Director of the ICLR and Vice-President at the Institute for International Urban Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and worked in various capacities at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, serves on the Planning Commission in Lexington, Virginia, and engages in research and consulting work with the World Bank.

ANNEX 2. Housing Completions on Monitorable Sites in Derry and Strabane (based on housing monitor reports)

Settlement	2019	2019	2017	2017
	Units Complete	Remaining Potential	Units Complete	Remaining Potential
Castlederg	482	640	469	631
Strabane	2213	492	2093	552
Victoria Bridge	83	383	83	383
Sion Mills	300	350	290	358
Newtownstewart	120	319	116	323
Ballymagorry	143	207	118	232
Magheramason	118	202	82	238
Spamount	10	158	10	158
Ardstraw	14	129	14	129
Clady	145	117	120	142
Artigarvan	263	90	243	110
Plumbridge	29	80	29	80
Cranagh	5	67	5	67
Donemana	78	55	60	73
Garvetagh	0	53	0	53
Glebe	110	53	103	60
Bready	51	45	49	47
Glenmornan	37	42	36	42
Douglas Bridge	21	34	17	38
Aghabrack	2	33	2	33
Donagheady	33	26	33	26
Drumlegagh	23	25	20	28
Killen	46	14	42	18
Cloghcor	0	11	0	11
Killeter	3	8	3	6
Altishane	2	6	2	6
Erganagh	142	3	142	3
Aghyaran	1	1	1	1
District Totals	4474	3643	4182	3848
Settlement	2019	2019	2017	2017
	Units Complete	Remaining Potential	Units Complete	Remaining Potential
Derry	13085	10372	11486	10498
Claudy	262	215	245	227
Newbuildings	479	211	390	300
Culmore	841	160	776	216
Lettershendowney	39	91	38	1
Eglinton	667	71	658	77
Ardmore	68	60	67	61
Strathfoyle	437	44	397	84
Park	98	29	97	12
Killaloo	1	17	1	17
Tamnaherin	10	7	10	7
Maydown	86	4	86	4
Campsey	1	3	0	4
Killea	54	2	54	2
Craigbane	1	1	1	1
Tullintrain	2	1	2	1
Carnanreagh	3	0	3	0
Nixon's Corner	30	0	22	8
Straidarran	121	0	115	6
District Totals	16285	11288	14448	11526
TOTAL Derry and Strabane	16285	11288	14448	11526



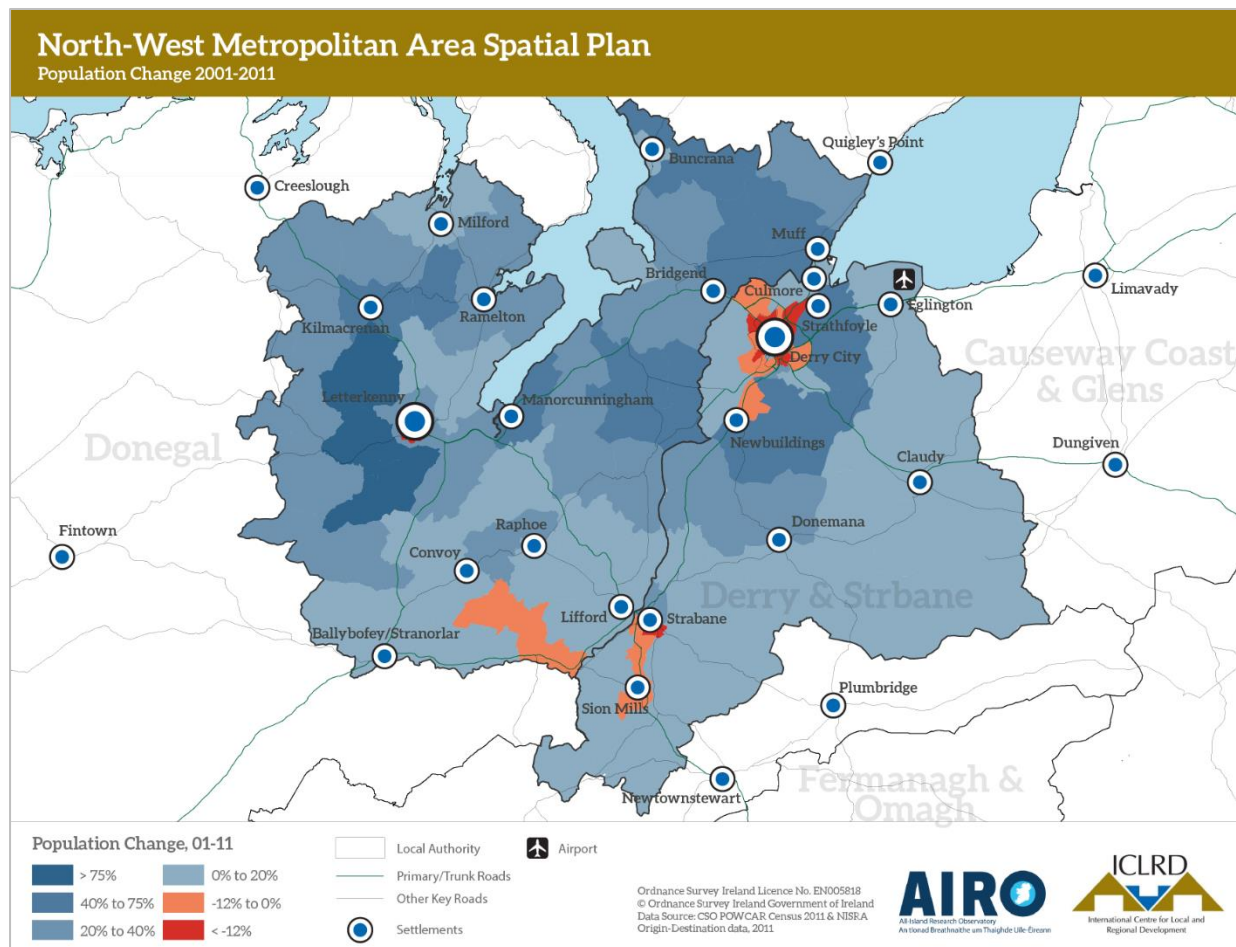
Note: Settlements are presented in ascending order, based on the number of remaining potential units.

ANNEX 3: Maps to accompany the demographic and socio-economic profile

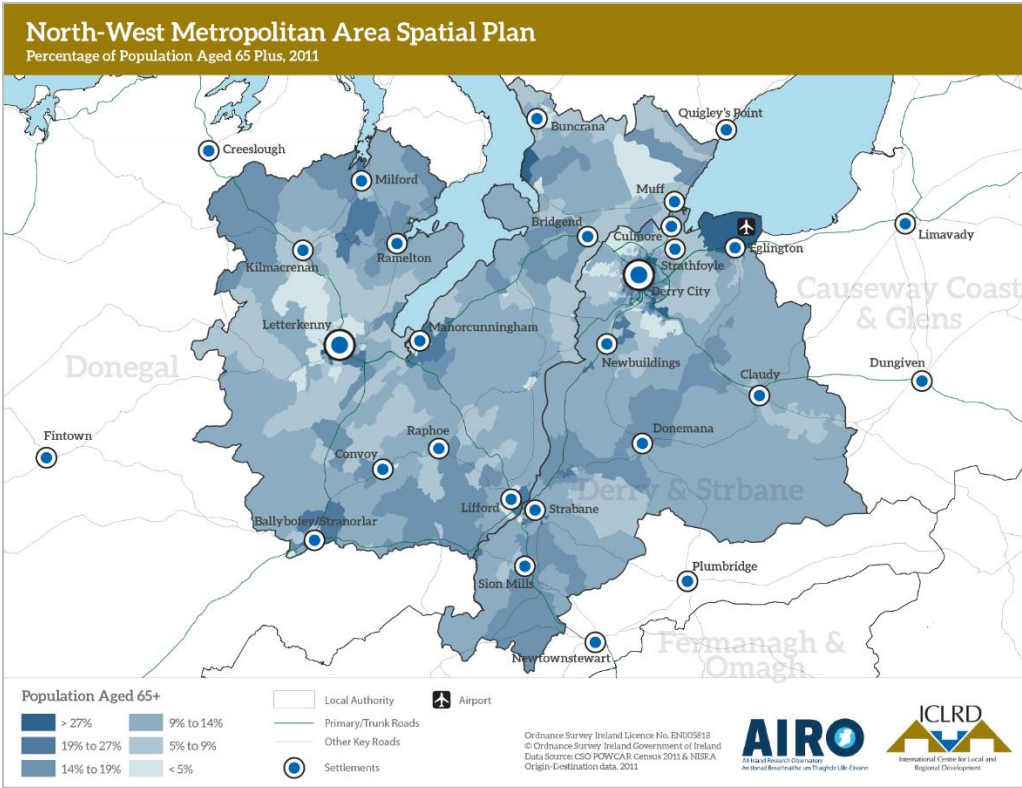
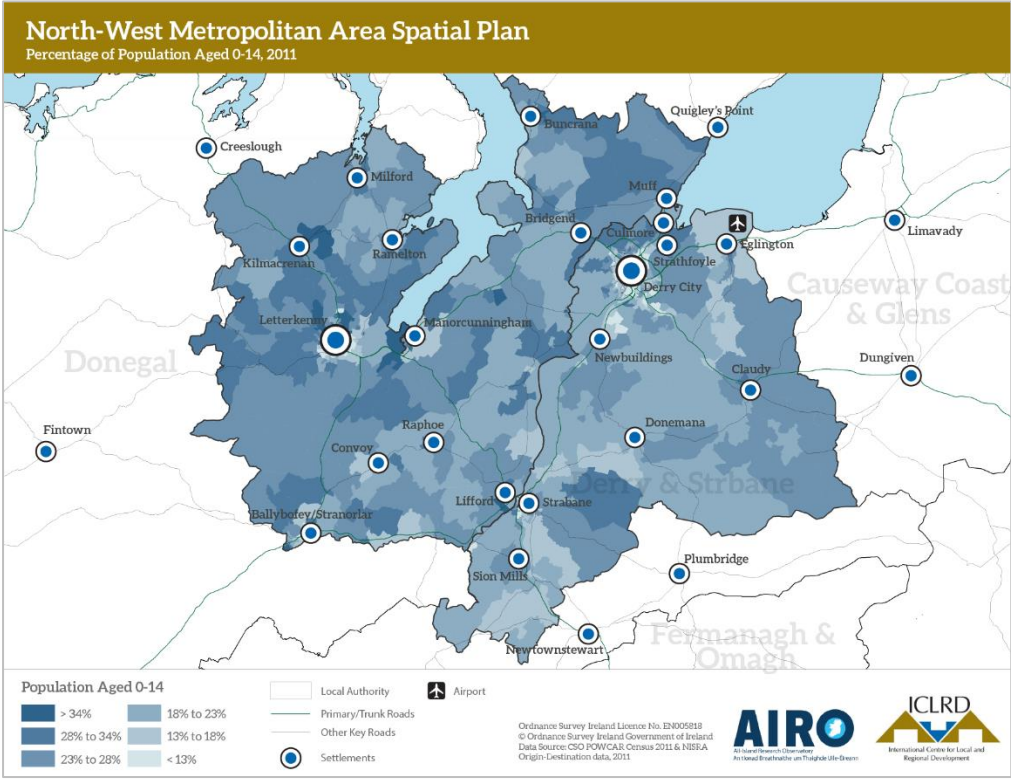
This annex presents a set of maps that illustrate the spatial patterns associated with the variables that are analysed in Chapter 4. While there are several indicators in respect of many variables, the authors have opted to present the most representative map in each case.

Themes	Variables
Demographics	Population Change Age Profile
Socio-Cultural Features	Place of Birth Religion Housing Educational Attainment
Economy	Labour Force Workforce Participation and Composition
Commuting	Modes of Travel to work and education

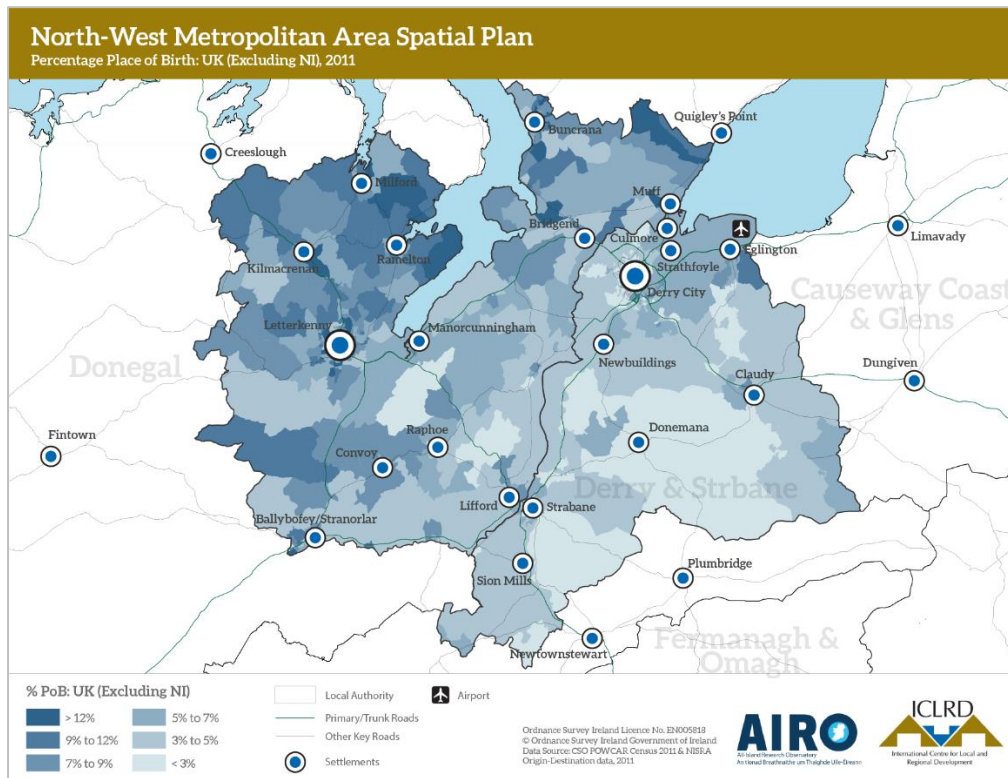
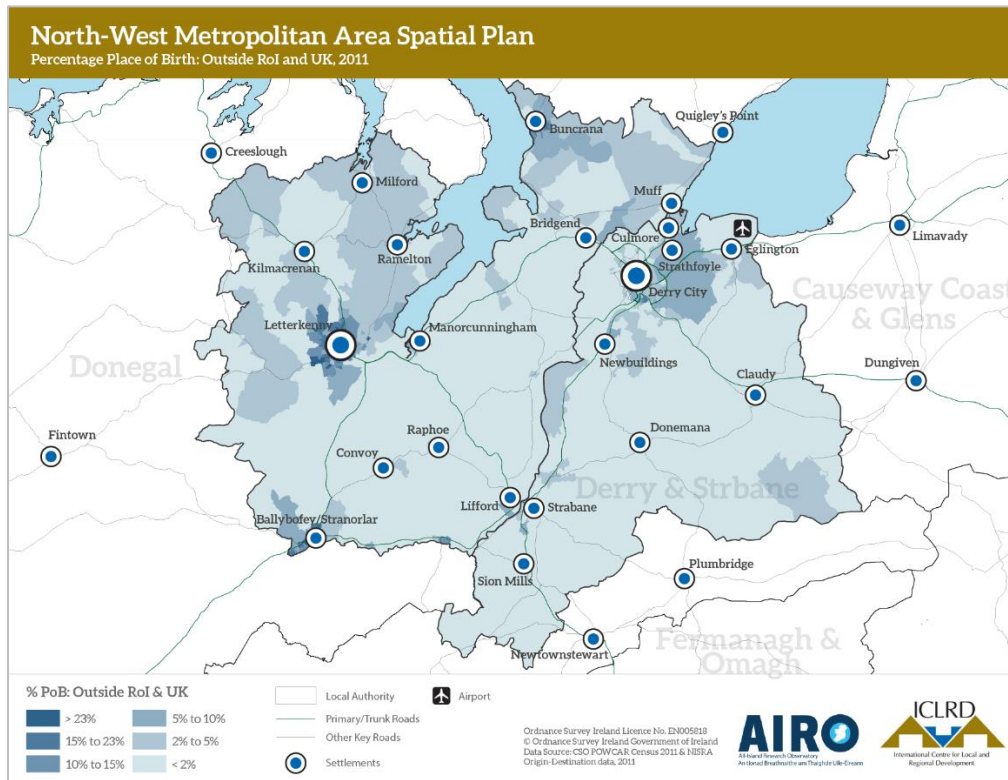
Population Change



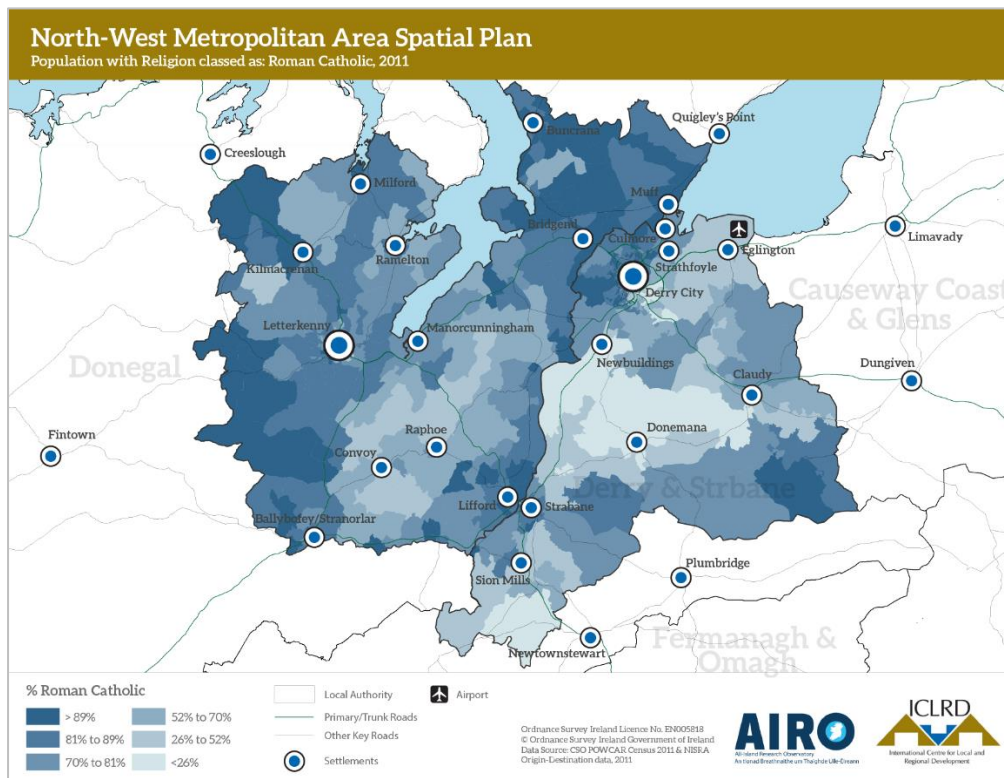
Age Profile



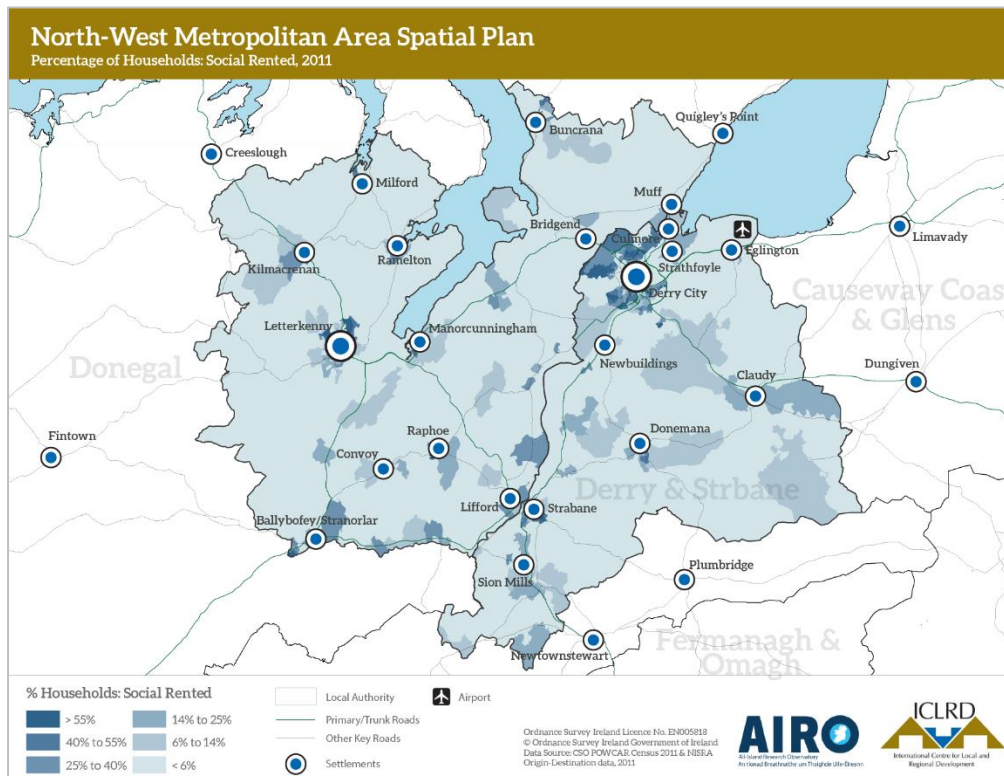
Place of Birth



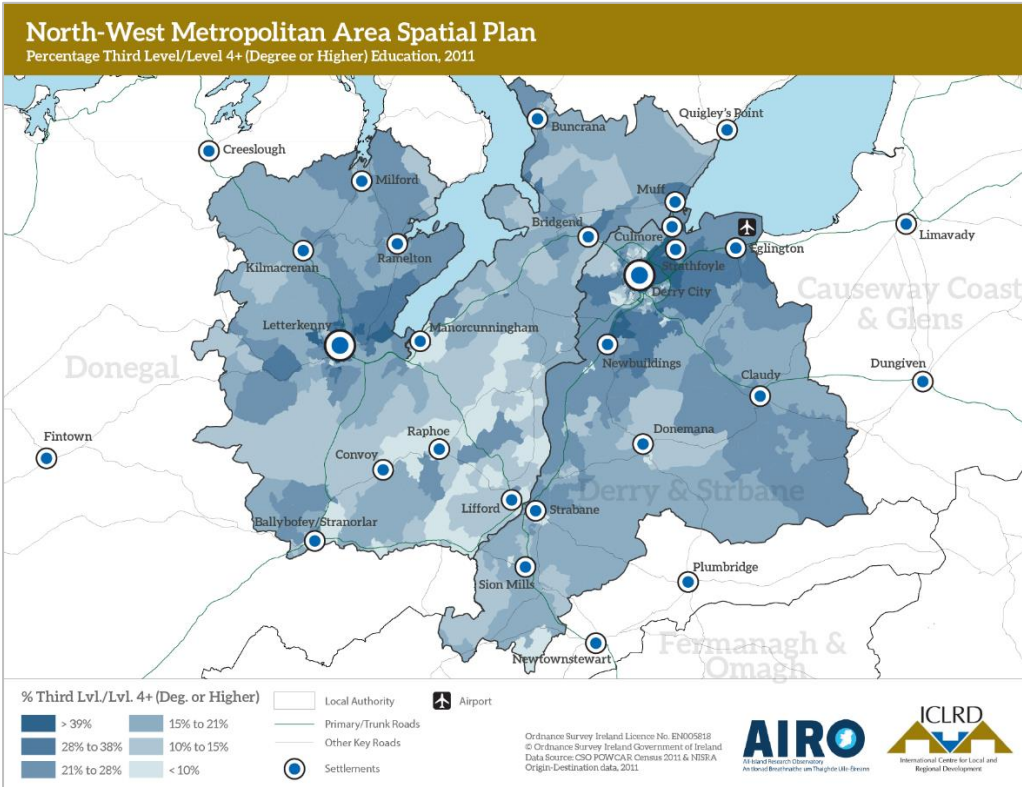
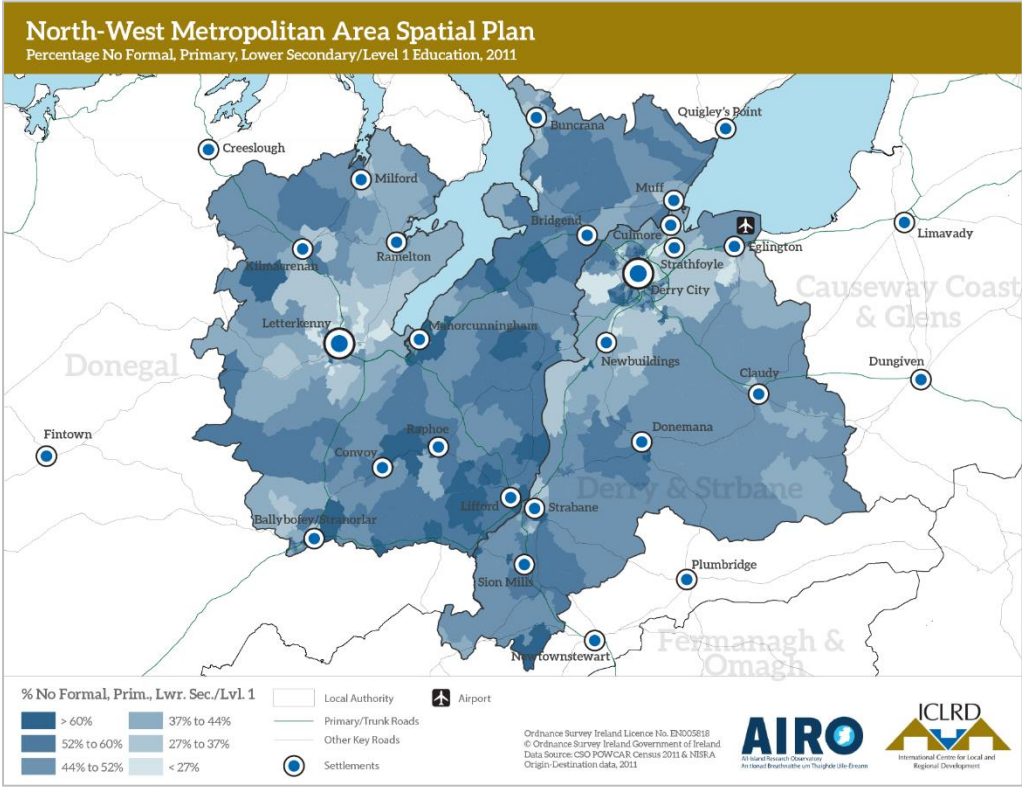
Religion



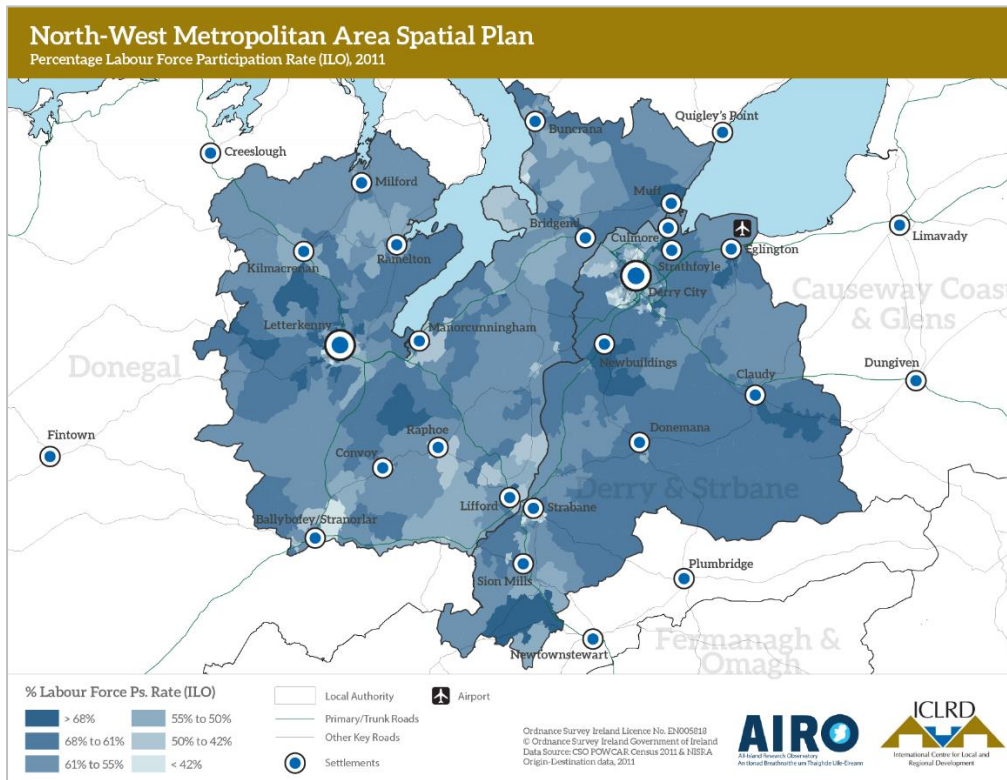
Housing



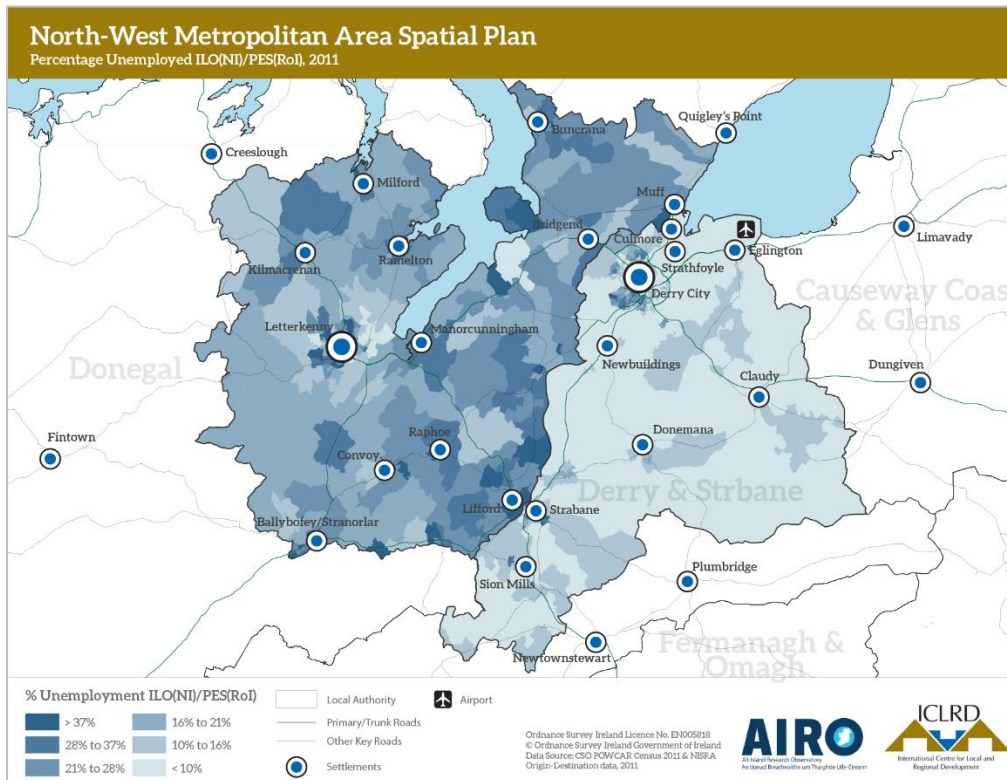
Educational Attainment



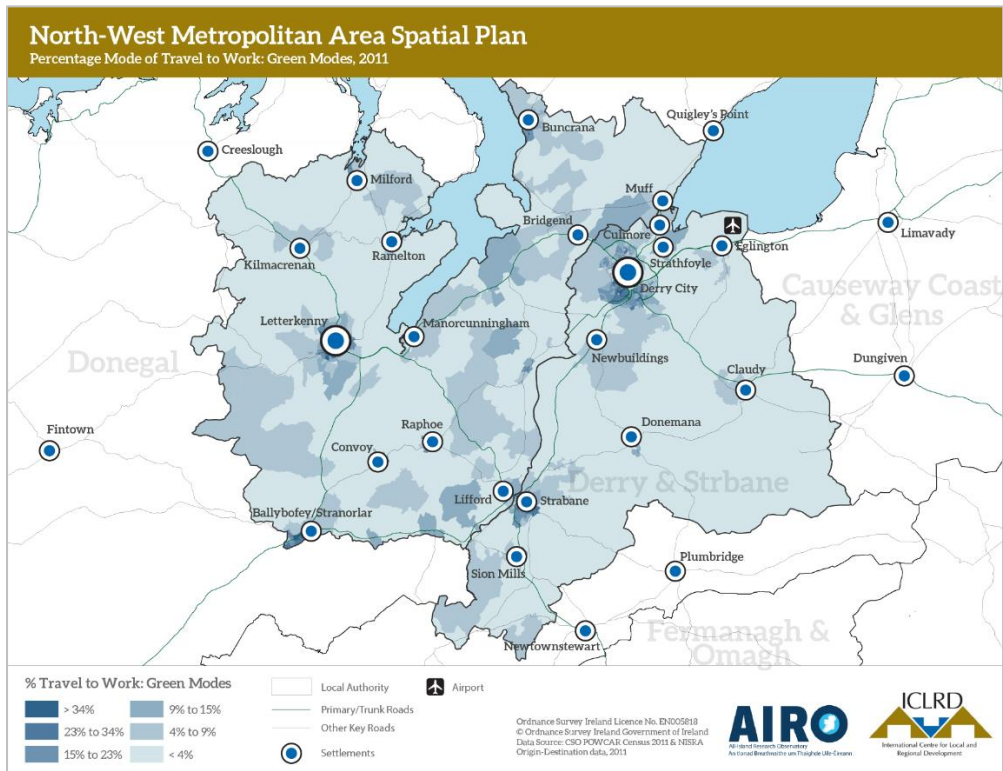
Labour Force



Unemployment



Commuting



ANNEX 4. Health Priorities – Key Resources

1. Irish National Development Plan 2021-2030: Chapter 15: Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services - [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [National Development Plan 2021-2030 \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)
2. Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework - The national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in Ireland. [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025 \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)
3. Making Life Better: a whole system strategic framework for public health 2013 – 2023 - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/health-policy/making-life-better>
4. Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/health-and-wellbeing-2026-delivering-together>
5. A Fitter future for all: A framework for preventing and addressing overweight and obesity in NI 2012 – 2022 - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/obesity-fitter-future-framework-ni-2012-22.pdf>.
6. A new sport and physical strategy in development in NI - <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/new-sport-and-physical-activity-strategy>.
7. Sport Matters Strategy 2009 – 2019 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/sport-matters-strategy#:~:text=The%20key%20theme%20of%20the%20Department%27s%20Sport%20Matters,and%20physical%20recreation%20among%20people%20with%20a%20disability>.
8. Home Accident Prevention Strategy 2015-2025 - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/home-accident-prevention-strategy-and-reports>
9. Breastfeeding: A Great Start: A Strategy for NI 2013-2023 - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/breastfeeding-strategy-2014.pdf>
10. Ten Year Tobacco Control Strategy for NI 2012 – 2022 - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/tobacco-control-10-year-strategy.pdf>
11. Sexual Health – Sexual Health Strategy and Action Plan 2008 – 2013 and addendum 2015 <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/sexual-health-promotion-strategy-and-information>
12. Protect Life 2 Suicide Prevention Strategy 2019 - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/protectlife2>
13. Mental Health Strategy 2021 – 2031 - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/mental-health-strategy-2021-2031>

14. Alcohol and Drugs. Making Life Better – Preventing Harm and Empowering Recovery: A Strategic Framework to Tackle the Harm from Substance Use 2021 – 2031
– <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/substance-use-strategy-2021-31>
15. NI Poverty Policy - <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/social-inclusion/anti-poverty>.
16. NI Fuel Poverty Strategy 2011 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/fuel-poverty-strategy>
17. Infant Mental Health Framework for NI
- <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/infant-mental-health-framework-northern-ireland>
18. Children and Young Peoples Strategy 2020 – 2030 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/children-and-young-people>
19. Active Ageing Strategy 2016 – 2022 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/active-ageing-strategy-2016-2022>
20. Homelessness Strategy 2017 – 22 – NIHE (link currently unavailable as down for essential maintenance).
21. Cancer Strategy - [Consultation on the Cancer Strategy for Northern Ireland 2021-2031 | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

ANNEX 5. Indicative Costing & Timelines:

Indicative Costings

	€	
Budget lines (per annum)	Estimates	Notes
Non-Capital Equip Purchase - Computers	6000.00	
Materials	10000.00	
Staff Travelling & Subsistence Expenses	12000.00	
Computer Software and Maintenance Fees	1000.00	
Communication Expenses	2000.00	
Consultancy/Professional Fees and Expenses	100000.00	e.g. SEA; Traffic/Transport; Data collection
Advertising	30000.00	
Printing & Office Consumables	20000.00	
Miscellaneous Expenses	3000.00	
Public Consultation costs	10000.00	
Staffing	400000.00	
Accommodation	15000.00	
Totals	609000.00	

Other potential areas of expenditure: Accommodation (incl. office furniture) if needed
 Remote working expenditure & set up
 Translation costs

Draft timelines and indicative project outline:

	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25										
Phase One																																									
Stakeholder engagements																																									
Data collection																																									
Initial analysis																																									
Preparation of working strategy																																									
Phase Two																																									
Preparation of draft																																									
SEA preparation																																									
Consultations																																									
Preparation of potential Implementation Strategy																																									
Publication of Draft Strategy																																									
Phase Three																																									
Consultations																																									
Consideration of potential amendments																																									
Publication of amendments																																									
Approval process (NWSGP & Councils)																																									
Publication																																									