



**Irish Academy of Engineering – Southern Committee**

**February 2019**

## **Submission on draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for Southern Region**

### **1.0 Introduction:**

The Academy welcomes the publication of the draft RSES and its detailed policy analysis and implementation objectives for the region over the next 12 years. We are generally very supportive of the policy objectives and recommendations in the Report. We have a number of comments on some aspects of the draft and these are outlined in the comments hereunder.

### **2.0 Comments**

#### **Project Priorities:**

We welcome the comprehensive list of infrastructural projects in the draft RSES. We agree that the list covers all the projects necessary to provide the capacity for the Southern Region to grow as outlined in the National Planning Framework. However we are of the opinion that some priority and target completion dates need to accompany the list and be coordinated with the National Development Plan. As an example, the M20 needs a high priority as does the proposed upgrading of the N25 and the N24 to ensure good connectivity between the three metropolitan areas. It will be difficult to monitor progress on the implementation of the RSES objectives unless some priorities and timeframes are included.

#### **Atlantic Economic Corridor and Regional Connectivity:**

We would like to see more detail on how the concept of the Atlantic Economic Corridor can be progressed. This will be an important catalyst in the growth of the Region. In our previous submission, we suggested that some incentives be created for inter-city cooperation and that some funding would be ring-fenced specifically for this purpose. The Northern Powerhouse project in the UK has implemented this strategy. Examples could include joint research between the Third Level Institutions. It is also interesting that the Northern Powerhouse initiative has prioritised investment in the connectivity between the cities.

Efficient connectivity between the three metropolitan areas in the Southern Region will be a key enabler. This includes both physical and digital. To provide a real counterbalance to the East, there has to be synergy between the three regions and connectivity is key to achieving this. The issue of public transport connecting the metropolitan areas does not appear to get a lot of coverage in the document. Upgrading infrastructure to the Southern Region's ports and airports is also vital.

**Cork MASP:**

It is important that the CMATS is published and its key recommendations embedded in the final RSES. In relation to the proposed public transport corridor linking Mahon with Ballincollig, it is important that planned housing density along the corridor is appropriate to support its viability.

**Energy:**

The RSES recognises the potential of the region to be a leader in the area of energy. The 'Energy Cork' project could be extended to Limerick and Waterford.

**Ports:**

We fully acknowledge the increased importance of the four southern region ports in the context of Brexit.

We welcome the policy objectives on the Ports but would question the aspiration for Waterford and Rosslare Europort to achieve Tier 1 status. This could take from the focus on the Tier 1 ports in Cork and Shannon/Foynes.

**Broadband:**

The delay in the rolling out of the Government's broadband plan will seriously impact the development of the Region, in particular outside the metropolitan areas. The SRA needs to ensure that the installation of broadband parallels the other infrastructure projects identified.

The roll out of the National Broadband Intervention Plan needs to be prioritised in the towns and areas identified in the draft RSES as having key growth potential.

**Monitoring and Reporting:**

As stated above, it will be difficult to monitor progress without some form of target schedule for the key projects identified in the RSES.

We note that Key Regional Indicators will be identified and monitored. It is important that these indicators have a quantifiable element to them.

We would suggest that the RSES Monitoring Committee include representation from relevant external/industry sources.