



# **Regional Planning Guidelines Review for the Mid-West Region 2010-2022**

Submission from the  
**Western Development Commission**  
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# Submission from Western Development Commission (WDC) to the Regional Planning Guidelines Review for the Mid-West Region 2010-2022

## 1. Introduction

The Western Development Commission (WDC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the review of the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) for the Mid-West Region 2010-2022.

The WDC is a statutory body whose primary purpose is to promote economic and social development in the **Western Region**, comprising the Mid-West county of Clare along with Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal. The WDC operates under the aegis of DCRAGA<sup>1</sup> and its main aim is to ensure the region maximises its full potential for economic and social development. This is done by:

- identifying and analysing the key social and economic issues for the region and making policy recommendations;
- supporting the sustainable development of the rural economy through strategic projects;
- promoting the benefits of living, working and doing business in the region through the LookWest.ie campaign; and
- providing risk capital to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the WDC Investment Fund.

Given the WDC's role in regional development, the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) provides a framework for many of its activities, in particular the promotion of balanced regional development. The WDC made a submission to the original formulation of the NSS and has also recently made an input to the current refresh and update of the NSS. As the overall aim of the RPGs is to ensure the successful implementation of the NSS at the regional, county and local level, the WDC's submission to this review draws on many of the issues raised in our recent input to the NSS refresh. The WDC is also represented on Clare County Development Board.

In this submission, the WDC will concentrate on the areas relevant to the review of the RPGs in which the WDC has direct experience. Spatially the focus will be on county Clare, the only county within the Mid-West Region which falls within the WDC's remit. Therefore we have not addressed all of the headings outlined in the Issues Paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

## 2. Current Regional Development Strategy for the Mid-West Region

The Issues Paper summarises the current regional development strategy for the Mid-West Region. The WDC's views on balanced regional development, what it should be trying to achieve and how it might be effectively delivered, were set out in a paper to the WDC Policy Conference *Delivering Balanced Regional Development: A Challenge for Policy* in May 2008. The WDC believes that the regional development issues and required policy responses discussed in that paper are relevant to the current review and now even more urgent in light of the downturn in the economy.<sup>2</sup>

Appropriate investment strategies are required to ensure that the gateway (Limerick/Shannon) and hub (Ennis) in the Mid-West Region can grow to fulfil their respective roles. The Mid-West RPGs have an important role in setting out these strategies, but more fundamental is the need to ensure that the spending Departments adopt a spatial perspective in their sectoral expenditure decisions. In this regard, the postponement of the Gateway Innovation Fund is regrettable as it represented an important step in recognising a commitment to the objectives of the NSS and balanced regional development.

While the regional development focus of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) is on the gateways, with the assumption that achievement of critical mass in the gateways will drive development of their 'gateway regions', in reality the interactions between a gateway and its region are complex and not well understood. For example in the Mid-West Region there are areas of north Clare which fall within the natural hinterland of the Galway gateway rather than Limerick.

This complexity of interactions means that the WDC is concerned about the development approach outlined in the current Mid-West regional development strategy whereby the economic strategy focuses almost exclusively on Zone One (Limerick city, Shannon and Ennis). It is stated that

*'The benefits of economic and service development, accruing from the development of Zone One, will be made accessible to the people of the other zones by providing improved transport links.'* (p. 2)

In addition, the discussion of current national policy trends in the Issues Paper is focused on the role of competitive cities. Clearly Zone One, containing the Mid-West's gateway and hub, is the largest employment area for the region and will be the key driver for the region's development. However an economic strategy which focuses solely upon the growth of this zone, with the intention that commuting will spread the benefits to smaller towns and rural areas, ignores the potential of these areas to develop economically in their own right and at their own scale. It also fails to fully recognise the two-way interdependencies between large urban centres and smaller towns and rural areas, and the role played by smaller areas in the value-chain of products and services which are ultimately produced in the urban centres.<sup>3</sup> The widespread impact of the cutbacks at Dell on suppliers located across the Mid-West, including in small towns and rural

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<sup>2</sup> This paper can be downloaded at [www.wdc.ie/DeliveringBalancedRegionalDevelopmentConference\\_000.htm](http://www.wdc.ie/DeliveringBalancedRegionalDevelopmentConference_000.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Feser, E. and Isserman, A. (2009), The Rural Role in National Value Chains, *Regional Studies*, Vol 43, Issue 1, February 2009

areas, is a vivid illustration of the interdependencies between a city and its wider region, as well as the risks of over reliance on economic activity in the city.

In 2006 48% of the Mid-West's population (175,000 people) lived outside of Zone One. An exclusive focus on developing this zone means that the potential contribution of other areas to the overall development of the region may be lost and Zone One will likely experience significant diseconomies associated with excessive commuting. Such an approach will also likely reduce the quality of life enjoyed by people across the Mid-West Region, individuals living in areas outside of Zone One will be required to undertake long commutes and those living in Zone One will experience reduced quality of life due to increased levels of traffic congestion.

The Mid-West outside of the gateway and hub is predominately rural – characterised by medium-sized and small market towns, villages and open countryside. The recent buoyancy in the economy, particularly in construction, has generally enabled these rural economies to absorb the decline in the primary sectors of agriculture and fisheries, and some elements of industry. As employment opportunities expanded, many rural areas gained population. However, employment in rural areas is under pressure with the downturn in construction activity, pressure on the local services sector and reduced activity in the sub-supply sector with the loss of foreign-owned companies. The economic challenges and potential of rural areas, and rural towns, must be incorporated within the Mid-West RPGs and their economic futures should not be tied exclusively to the development of the gateway and hub.

Rural towns act as the focal point for employment, trade and services for their rural hinterlands. The origins and current profile of such towns are diverse e.g. seaside ports and resorts, market and administrative centres, dormitories for larger urban centres. Many of their traditional functions are changing with consequent employment and service impacts.

The Mid-West's RPGs should facilitate rural towns to adapt to changes in the rural economy. In order to do that a process to assess a town's particular assets, and its economic, social and environmental strengths and weaknesses should be developed (this could be based on a process similar to the 'Healthcheck' used in England). This could lead to an Action Plan for each town linked into the County Development Plans, RPGs and the NSS. The advantage of this approach is that, although the same process would apply to all towns, the strength of each town is individually assessed and developed.

### **3. Economic Development Issues**

Clearly many of the economic and employment issues in 2009 are different from those in 2004 when the RPGs were prepared. For example the unemployment rate in the Mid-West Region in 2004 was 5% compared with 8.5% in 2008.<sup>4</sup> The number of people on the live register continues to increase (there was an 88% increase in the number of people on the live register in the Mid-West between March 2008 and 2009 to bring the total to 32,899<sup>5</sup>) and the unemployment rate is likely to rise further over the course of 2009. At the end of 2008 the rate in the Mid-West Region was higher than the national average (8.5% v 7.7%). The RPGs will therefore need to

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<sup>4</sup> CSO, Quarterly National Household Survey 2004 and 2008

<sup>5</sup> CSO, Live Register March 2009

incorporate job creation and training and support for the unemployed to a greater extent than currently.

The WDC prepared a briefing paper *Employment and Unemployment in the Western Region 2000-2008*<sup>6</sup> in late 2008 which may be of benefit during the review of the Mid-West's RPGs. In the WDC's view, the key enterprise and employment issues for the Mid-West Region, which need to be taken into account in the RPGs, are:

- *Decline of the construction sector*: In 2006 11% of all employment in the Mid-West Region was in construction, the same as the national average. Rural areas of the region however had a greater reliance on construction employment e.g. it was 15% in Kilrush, making them more vulnerable to the current decline. This decline has reduced off-farm employment opportunities for farmers and also created a large cohort of unemployed young men with low educational qualifications.
- *Reliance on locally traded services*: The locally traded services sector<sup>7</sup> accounted for over a third of all employment in the Mid-West in 2006. As such it is the largest employment sector and is particularly important for small and medium-sized towns with limited manufacturing and international services activity. As this sector depends on local demand it is reliant on the level of activity, purchases and wages in other sectors of the economy e.g. construction, export businesses, the public sector. Growth in inward investment and public sector employment can also underpin demand for locally traded services and lessen the impact of industrial closures.<sup>8</sup> The enterprise and employment elements of the RPGs must recognise the interconnections within the Mid-West's regional economy between enterprises which export and those which trade locally.
- *Skills profile of the labour force*: In 2006 27% of the people aged over 15 years, whose full-time education has ceased, in the Mid-West Region had a third level qualification (29% nationally). The educational attainment level of the workforce has improved significantly over the course of the decade, however the improvement for younger women has far exceeded that for younger men.<sup>9</sup> The buoyancy of the construction sector which offered well-paid jobs to young men is likely to have played a role in this. Thus, while the current skills profile of the workforce has improved from previous periods, there is still a considerable skills challenge, particularly for young men. There will also be a need for the provision of up-skilling and retraining for older workers becoming unemployed from traditional manufacturing and construction.
- *Return of the brain drain*: Over the past 15 years the Mid-West Region has experienced significant growth in its human resource base due to increases in the economically active population, improved education levels and inward migration. Human capital has been central to the region's economic growth, and will be one of the main factors in economic recovery.

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<sup>6</sup> This briefing paper can be downloaded at [www.wdc.ie/publications\\_reports.html](http://www.wdc.ie/publications_reports.html)

<sup>7</sup> This includes wholesale, retail, hotels, restaurants, transport, storage, communication, banking, financial services and real estate.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, the WDC regards relocation of public sector jobs as, in effect, a form of inward investment in the services sector, with the stable jobs involved providing longer term security than is the case with some other forms of inward investment. An exploratory study of public sector relocations to the region showed that on average for every five jobs relocated, an additional job is created in the local economy. WDC (2008), *Moving West: An exploratory study of the social and economic effects of the relocation of public sector offices to towns in the Western Region*

<sup>9</sup> CSO, Quarterly National Household Survey Educational Attainment Q2 2002 – Q2 2008

Facilitating the region's workforce to remain in the Mid-West should be a key goal of the Mid-West's RPGs.

Again, in relation to enterprise and employment, the WDC would be concerned about an exclusive focus on Zone One. Research commissioned by the WDC shows that areas in the Mid-West Region outside of the main centres of the gateway and hub are important places of employment. For instance analysis of the Ennis town labour catchment shows that 44% of those living there actually work in rural areas (places with less than 1,000 persons in county Clare).<sup>10</sup>

These data highlight the significance of employment centres in rural locations. Further analysis shows that this employment is not just based on agriculture and the RPGs should recognise the dispersed nature of employment. It will be important that supports for the recently unemployed to access re-training and re-skilling should also be made available in smaller centres.

#### **4. Industrial and Commercial Issues**

The strategies of the state development agencies for the Mid-West Region need to be aligned to ensure a coherent approach to industrial development across the region. Zone One should be a priority for the development agencies in terms of industrial and commercial development. This is critical to achieving critical mass in these centres and ensuring their capacity to fulfil the role envisaged for them in the NSS and RPGs.

However, as mentioned above, development agency strategies should not exclude other centres and rural areas, as large parts of the Mid-West Region fall outside of Zone One. Indeed the current spatial extent of the Zone One labour catchment could be seen as unsustainable in a situation where 78% of those living in Clare and 75% of those living in Limerick travel to work by private vehicle.<sup>11</sup>

Significant industrial activity and employment is taking place in areas beyond the gateway and hub and the retention of this activity must also be a focus of the Mid-West RPGs and future industrial strategies. For example in Thurles, which is neither a gateway nor hub, there were 3,236 residents at work in 2006.<sup>12</sup> It would be regrettable if too great a focus on the attraction of new industry to Zone One was at the expense of existing employers in this and other areas. The Mid-West RPGs should incorporate recognition of the important industrial and commercial role of centres not designated a gateway or hub.

The NSS recognises the key role of indigenous enterprise. In 2007 41% of all state supported employment in the Mid-West Region was in Irish owned companies. Over the five year period 2003-2007, while there was a net loss of 333 jobs in state assisted foreign-owned companies in the Mid-West there was a net increase in Irish-owned companies of 1,273 jobs.<sup>13</sup> The significant job losses at Dell have highlighted the vulnerability inherent in over reliance on foreign-owned investments.

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<sup>10</sup> Meredith and Foley (2008), Local and Regional Labour Markets in the Western Region: Spatial Analysis of Daily Mobility Patterns, 2006 for WDC

<sup>11</sup> CSO Census of Population 2006, Vol 12

<sup>12</sup> CSO Census of Population 2006, Vol 7

<sup>13</sup> Forfás Annual Employment Survey 2007

Therefore, the WDC is concerned that the Issues Paper states '*Economic growth is not being driven by locally based industry which has declined*' (p. 8). While it may be the case that the current downturn is leading to declining employment in local industry, as we have seen above the indigenous sector has played a central role in the economic development of the Mid-West. In recent years it has out-performed foreign-owned companies in the assisted sector. The Mid-West needs to position itself to encourage indigenous enterprises, more so now than ever. This can be achieved through supporting innovation (in both high-tech and traditional enterprises) and encouraging business start-ups<sup>14</sup> to enable the region to contribute to the 'smart economy'.

WDC research has shown that indigenous firms will set up in the Mid-West Region, including in small and medium-sized towns, largely because of the residential location or preference of the entrepreneur (provided the facilities at specific sites meet their needs).<sup>15</sup> A growing number of Irish-owned high-tech firms that produce and utilise sophisticated ICT and employ highly skilled and creative workers are located in the region.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, some firms in more traditional manufacturing sectors are also becoming more innovative, globally competitive and growing their export markets. It is important that the Mid-West RPGs recognise the contribution of Irish-owned manufacturing firms to local economies and that enterprise support policies are directed to sustaining those that are competitive and can maintain employment.

For rural areas, sectors based on natural resources such as renewable energy,<sup>17</sup> food production, rural tourism, the creative sector<sup>18</sup> and marine need to be prioritised, and creative and innovative strategies that maximise their employment and growth potential put in place.

## **5. Transportation Issues**

### **5.1 Road**

The road infrastructure of the Mid-West Region is fundamental to both its economic and social development. The vast majority of internal transport in Ireland, both private and business, is conducted via the road network. Road transport is even more important in rural areas where there is relatively limited access to public transport. For example 78% of those living in Clare travelled to work in a car or van compared with 70% nationally in 2006.<sup>19</sup> There is considerable scope to enhance public transport options in the Mid-West Region both rail (see below) and also bus. Bus transport clearly depends upon a high quality road network.

While completion of the M7 Major Inter Urban (MIU) route to Limerick will be of major benefit to the region, it will make the deficiencies in the road network in the rest of the region even more apparent. Completion of the N18 Crusheen-Gort dual-carriageway will greatly enhance access

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<sup>14</sup> The WDC Investment Fund has supported 50 start-ups, the majority outside gateways. Data from the Revenue Commissioners show that the growth of small businesses in the seven western counties 2003-2007 has exceeded the state average.

<sup>15</sup> WDC (2007), *Rural Businesses at Work: Case studies of rural enterprises in the Western Region*

<sup>16</sup> e-teans International Ltd, Scariff, Co Clare; Magico Software, Ennis, Co Clare

<sup>17</sup> WDC (2008), *Wood Energy Strategy for the Western Region*; WDC (2004), *To Catch the Wind*

<sup>18</sup> The WDC has undertaken baseline research on the creative sector in the Western Region and identified the potential for further growth of this sector. WDC (2009), *Creative West: The Creative Sector in the Western Region*

<sup>19</sup> CSO, *Census of Population 2006*. These figures relate to those who drive and also those who travel as passengers.

between the region and the West. However the delay in construction of the connecting N18 Gort-Oranmore section will reduce the benefits of greater interconnections between Galway and the Mid-West as part of the Atlantic Gateways Initiative. It is vital that the Mid-West RPGs outline the importance of road connections, not only within the region, but also connections with neighbouring regions. Enhanced access to Dublin is not sufficient to stimulate regional development in the Mid-West.

The WDC considers the main road infrastructure priorities for Clare, which should be incorporated in the RPGs and completed by 2015, to be:

- Completion of the M7 to Limerick.
- Completion of the N18 Crusheen-Gort dual-carriageway.
- Construction of the N18 Gort-Oranmore dual-carriageway to complete the interconnection with Galway.
- Improvement of the N67, N68 and N85 linking west Clare with Zone One.

Enhancing road connections to international access points is necessary if the full benefits of direct international air access to the Mid-West are to be realised. Shannon Airport is served by the N18 and also by the M7. Improvements to these routes will extend the catchment area for the airport and in particular the N18 will improve connections with Galway, an important source of both business and tourist passengers.

## **5.2 Rail**

The current railway network of the Mid-West Region consists of radial services to Limerick, Ennis and Galway from Dublin and services from Ennis to Limerick. Passenger numbers have increased on each of these services due in part to greater frequency of services, better timetabling and improved rolling stock. The Mid-West RPGs should include a statement on the importance of further planned improvements to enhance the attractiveness of rail as a sustainable public transport mode.

The Government has committed to a phased re-opening of the Western Rail Corridor (WRC), linking the NSS gateway of Sligo to the gateways of Galway and Limerick. Services on the first section of this line, from Limerick to Ennis have been in place since 2003 and have proved very successful. Services from Ennis to Athenry, enabling rail travel between Galway and Limerick with onward connections to Cork and Waterford, are due to commence in August 2009. This will radically improve the public transport links between the Atlantic Gateways and will encourage much greater interaction between them enabling an improved regional balance in economic activity. The next phases of the WRC will connect Galway to Tuam (2011) and Claremorris (2014).

The WDC believes it is vital that journey times, timetabling and rolling stock on these services are optimised to maximise passenger take-up. Sufficient Park and Ride facilities and much better integration with other transport modes are also required and the RPGs should reflect this. Furthermore the WRC adds considerably to the options for rail freight transport in the Mid-West.



### **5.3 Air**

International air access is vital to connecting the Mid-West Region to the UK, Europe and the rest of the world. The WDC believes that quality services to and from the Mid-West Region's international airport at Shannon is fundamental to connecting the region globally. The RPGs should contain a commitment to ensuring that Shannon Airport is enabled to continue to support the enterprise and tourism needs of the region connecting suppliers and customers to international markets.

Improving land journey times and access to and from the airport, thereby extending the airport's catchments, will also be important in supporting the development of Shannon Airport. Improvements to the surface transport links to the airport is required, in particular the N18.

## **6. Energy and Communication networks**

### **6.1 Energy**

Quality energy infrastructure and supply are essential to underpin the economic development of the Mid-West Region. Appropriate investments in energy infrastructure will allow the region to compete in attracting industry, maintaining existing enterprises and developing the renewable energy sector.

Quality and reliable electricity supply is critical for productive economic activity, as well as for the quality of life of those living in the region. Investment in electricity infrastructure is key to meeting the future needs of the region and also to enabling the Mid-West to capitalise on the important natural energy assets in the region. The Mid-West Region has some of the best conditions in the world for the generation of electricity from wind and wave energy. Developing the electricity grid will enable the electricity produced in the region to be exported to other parts of the country, and beyond in future. The RPGs should clearly facilitate the development of such important strategic infrastructure and ensure that local planning guidelines reflect this.

The Mid-West Region has a significant proportion of the national forestry asset, Clare alone has 7%.<sup>20</sup> This is also an important renewable energy resource which can be used for producing heat, and the Clare Wood Energy Project has been doing significant work in the county to develop this. The WDC has recently launched a strategy for the development of wood heat in the Western Region. It was found that the growth of the wood energy sector, in the Western Region, as proposed under the regional strategy would result in the following impacts:

- Generate 477MW of heat energy by 2020 utilising 472,000 tonnes of timber with an annual value of €1.7 million to the farming sector
- Increase annual Gross Value Added (GVA) in the Western Region of €15 million by 2020
- Create 887 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs by 2020
- Generate CO<sub>2</sub> savings of 619,000 tonnes per annum by 2020 (This would be a benefit of €6.9m in 2020 if carbon is valued at €15 per tonne).

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<sup>20</sup> Forest Service (2007), National Forest Inventory, Republic of Ireland

A significant proportion of these benefits will occur in Clare and might be replicated throughout the Mid-West Region. Therefore the RPGs should seek to facilitate the development of wood heat and provide clear direction for the development of this sector.

## 6.2 Communications

Availability of high quality affordable broadband infrastructure is essential to the economic and social development of the Mid-West. While significant advances have been made in rollout nationally and to larger regional centres, using fixed, wireless and mobile technologies, and larger towns are relatively well-served, progress in rural areas has been limited. Even when broadband is available, services are often patchy, unstable, and with limited capacity. As Next Generation Networks (NGNs) requiring ever higher bandwidths come on stream, there is a real danger that broadband capacity in areas outside of large centres will be insufficient to support NGNs and that the spatial digital divide will widen.

The WDC believes it is important that local and regional authorities take the lead in facilitating the rollout of high quality affordable broadband infrastructure in their planning regulations, and through support for the development of fibre-based open access networks, including providing ducts as part of infrastructure development programmes. A facilitative approach to road openings and infrastructure sharing should be adopted.

## 7. Tourism

The NSS identified tourism as a sector which had considerable potential to contribute to the development of the Mid-West Region. The Mid-West has considerable natural and manmade assets which make it an attractive tourist destination, including highly scenic coastlines and a number of world class visitor destinations.

The Shannon Region experienced a 20% increase in the number of overseas visitors and a 26% increase in overseas tourist revenue between 2005 and 2007. Some 67% of these overseas visitors were holidaymakers. Domestic tourism is also vital to the Mid-West with 40% of total tourist visits to the Shannon Region in 2007 being made by domestic tourists.<sup>21</sup> Tourism is not distributed evenly across the region however, and a number of iconic attractions including the Cliffs of Moher, Bunratty Castle and the Ailwee Caves play a critical role in the region's tourism product.

There is potential for rural tourism to be developed more widely across the region and to contribute more to the rural economy. The Mid-West RPGs should incorporate a commitment to rural tourism and the wider dispersion of tourism development across the region. The WDC has been involved in this area since publishing research and an action plan<sup>22</sup> in 2001 intended to stimulate the rural tourism product in the Western Region. As a result the multi-agency Western Development Tourism Programme (WDTP) was established to oversee implementation of the action plan through a pilot programme of innovative rural tourism projects.<sup>23</sup> Some of the projects initiated by the WDTP include Walking in the West (a guide for the development of long

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<sup>21</sup> Fáilte Ireland, Shannon Region Fact Sheet 2007

<sup>22</sup> WDC (2001), Blueprint for Tourism Development in the West: An Action Plan for Rural Areas

<sup>23</sup> A case study of the approach taken in the WDTP and its activities is contained in WDC (2006), The WDC's Model of Rural Development

walking trails), the Tourism Tastes Trails and the Green Box (Ireland's first integrated eco-tourism destination). These are examples of innovative tourism products based in rural areas and servicing niche markets. The WDC believes such an approach should be included in the RPGs.

## **8. Rural Development Issues**

The NSS suggests that many of the strengths of smaller towns and villages lie in their capacity to accommodate employment, residential and other functions on the basis of their lower costs and quality of life. However, the functions of rural areas and small and medium-sized provincial towns, and their contribution to the achievement of the NSS and RPG objectives, have not been very clearly defined.

Rural areas are often seen as residential locations from where workers commute to larger urban centres. The WDC believes that the Mid-West's RPGs should not envisage rural regions solely as sites for consumption, or as sources of labour for regional centres thereby giving rise to extensive commuting. This strategy would run directly counter to the trend of rural population growth in recent years, where most rural dwellers have been able to work relatively close to where they live.

Rather, the Mid-West's RPGs should facilitate small and medium-sized provincial towns and their rural hinterlands to develop at their own scale. They can continue to be active and dynamic parts of the productive economy, beyond the agriculture, tourism and natural resource sectors which are often assumed to be the dominant sectors of the rural economy.

The findings from the WDC's LookWest.ie campaign, as well as the WDC's exploratory study on the relocation of public offices to rural towns,<sup>24</sup> illustrate that people want to live and work in rural areas. The motivations for this vary between individuals, but quality of life emerges as the primary motivating factor. A situation where people want to, and do, live in rural areas, but job creation strategies concentrate on gateways and hubs only, creates a situation of unsustainable and undesirable commuting patterns.

## **10. Conclusion**

This review of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Mid-West Region presents a significant opportunity to address the challenges facing the Mid-West in a more difficult economic situation. The WDC hopes that this submission will be of benefit to this process and would welcome an opportunity to meet with the Mid-West Regional Authority to discuss this submission.

**Western Development Commission  
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<sup>24</sup> WDC (2008), Moving West: An exploratory study of the social and economic effects of the relocation of public sector offices to towns in the Western Region

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