

Appendix 8: Regional Document

Regional Issues for Counties in the South East Region

Background

The South East Region as a whole is lagging behind other regions on the basis of a number of key social and economic indicators. A brief review of these indicators follows.

Two types of indicator have been used –

- Those that compare the performance of the Region to the National Average
- Those that compare the performance of the region to that of other regions outside the Dublin area.

These two approaches have been adopted as it would be unreasonable to expect the region to perform to the national average with respect to some indicators because of the undue influence of Dublin whereas, in other cases, the Dublin influence is less relevant.

(Please note – data on this table currently being rechecked)

Indicator	(a) National	(b) Rural	(c) Region
Percentage with third-level education	19.0		14.7
Tourist Numbers relative to population		5.0	5.4
Tourist Expenditure relative to population		.84	.70
Unemployment (%)	3.9		4.9
Average Income Index (State = 100)	100	83	79
Index Vehicle Registrations/Population	1		0.9776
Population Dependency (Dependent age groups as ratio of active age groups)	0.696		0.757
Forecast Population Growth ¹	25.9		0.7

1. Regional Population Projections by the CSO. These projections are based on current trends assuming no intervention.

Need for Regional Co-operation

It is clear from these figures that the South East Region has been performing less well than the National Average with respect to many indicators and even less well than the average of comparable regions with respect to some. In the light of these figures it is clear also that the counties in the Region need to co-operate to ensure that the Region's position is improved over the next period of time.

Regional co-operation is difficult to achieve. Traditionally our allegiances, the organisation of our national sports and our system of local government, have combined to make the county the focus of attention. In such an environment competition rather than co-operation between counties has been the norm. However, this is changing and must change. There are many issues that transcend county boundaries and these require a regional focus in order to maximise co-operation and minimise inappropriate competition between counties. Some of these issues can only be addressed through regional co-operation, while others will benefit from a regional focus.

Regional Focus

The areas for which it has been agreed that a regional focus is required are –

1. The provision of third level education
2. Energy provision
3. Public Transport
4. Tourism
5. Information Technology
6. Major projects

The following actions are proposed under each heading.

Third Level Education

It is important that the South East Region is not disadvantaged socially or economically by the absence of a University within its boundaries. It is also important that the highest quality third-level education is provided in a manner that will ensure the maximum participation in education by the people of the Region and that the social, cultural and economic life of the Region is enhanced to the greatest extent possible.

As an initial step, the Institutes of education will be requested to participate in a forum to examine the needs of third-level education in the Region and the ways in which such education might be provided in a coherent and integrated way.

Part of the remit of the group will be to determine appropriate targets for third-level education in the region in order to ensure that the region performs no less well than the rest of the country with regard to the percentage of the population that reaches

degree level or better in education terms and the extent to which location of the education institute attended is related to future occupational location.

Some of the ways in which this might be achieved are as follows –

- Creation of shared teaching programmes
- Creation of shared research programmes
- Creation of shared accreditation systems
- Co-operation in the provision of outreach services
- Co-operation in curriculum development
- Co-operation in international projects
- Co-operation in distributing areas of expertise and focus between the Institutions and in supporting applications by Institutions for specialised centres and facilities
- Sharing of physical resources
- Mutual recognition of modules
- Development of new systems of administration and accreditation

It will be expected that this forum will produce a report within 12 months of its formation and that actions would commence immediately following the acceptance of the report.

Energy Provision

1. Energy Needs

- The strategic energy needs of the region will be assessed.
- The means of satisfying these energy needs will be identified
- Discussion will be held with energy suppliers regarding the impact of this provision on the various counties within the region in terms of distribution network needs
- A strategy will be developed for agreement by all counties within the region.

2. Renewable Energy

- The Region's renewable energy potential will be assessed
- Regional targets for local supply of energy will be identified
- The most suitable areas for the provision of renewable energy projects will be identified
- Such projects will be promoted by the Region as well as by local authorities

3. Energy Management

- A network of local energy agencies will be established
- Co-operative projects in energy conservation will be developed and implemented with regional assistance

Prior to the establishment of the Energy Agencies it is proposed that an inter-county group be established to pursue the actions outlined above.

Public Transport

The counties of the Region will cooperate to ensure the following by incorporating them in the brief of the Regional Transportation Strategy Study –

- That all county towns are linked through rail and bus systems
- That all county towns should be linked with the rest of the country through rail and road
- That all towns with a population of over 1000 should be linked with other towns through the bus system
- That all sea-ports are developed and provided with levels of access that will ensure their benefit to the region
- That an airport development strategy is implemented that will ensure the establishment of a viable airport of a nature that will enhance the economic and social life of the region

Tourism

Before any large-scale tourism development is pursued by any county, the impact on the region as a whole will be considered. Where the development can be shown to have positive region-wide impacts it will be supported by all in the region.

Where a major tourism development, one of which only can be accommodated in the region is proposed for a particular location, the provision of that facility will be supported by the region unless a similar proposal is envisaged for some other county.

All counties agree to support a regional tourism strategy. This strategy will focus on the development of facilities within the region. It will reflect the requirements of sustainable tourism, the use of the region's strengths and the distribution of tourism development throughout the region so that all areas of the region benefit from tourism.

The commitment of counties to such a strategy will also extend to the implementation of a regional tourism marketing strategy and to the provision of resources to implement such a strategy under the guidance of the South-East Regional Tourism Organisation.

Information Technology

Information will be gathered to identify the needs of regional organisations and industries and services within the region and to identify any barriers to development or administration that the existing network may present. Information will also be identified about the service provision that is planned by the network providers in the region.

The project to facilitate the provision of a distribution system for cabling at a regional level that would be under the control of the local authorities will be supported by the Region as a whole.

A Regional Information Society Strategy and Action Plan has been prepared. The local authorities will facilitate the implementation of this plan.

An Information Technology task group be set up within the Region This group would include representatives from each local authority, Forfás, the Third Level Institutions and the ISPs. to implement these strategies.

Major Projects

Where a major proposal is being considered within any county –

- The regional implications of the proposal will be specifically considered as part of the project evaluation
- The support of the other counties within the region will be sought for the proposal
- Where such support is not available a process will be put in place to evaluate the competing claims of different counties and an attempt would be made to gaining consensus on the best way forward.
- Where agreement cannot be reached the counties will pursue their individual projects without the expectation of regional support

As an action it is proposed that an agreed mechanism be established to implement these processes and that an identified officer of each Local Authority be assigned the task of ensuring that the agreed mechanisms are implemented.