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# Chapter 2

# Core Strategy

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## 2.1 Introduction

The overall strategy for the County provides a coherent, integrated statement of the policies and objectives that need to be implemented in order to achieve the vision of how the County is to develop in the future.

This vision was derived from the public consultation phase of the preparation of this Plan, the direction of the Elected Members and the experience and views expressed through the preparation of the Functional Area Local Area Plans throughout the County.

In the formulation of policies and objectives in this Plan, the Planning Authority has had regard to all National and Regional guidelines and policy documents issued by other Government Departments and State agencies. These policies are intended to facilitate development throughout the County and regulate it in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

The Council is obliged, in the performance of its functions, to have regard to all government policies and guidelines (see S28 Compliance) and it is within the context of these policies that local policies are developed.

### 2.1.1 National Context

#### *National Development Plan 2007-2013 / National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020*

The National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 (NDP) is a blueprint for the economic and social development of the Country up until 2013. One of the principal objectives of the plan is to promote balanced regional development. This plan builds on the previous NDP which identified the need for a National Spatial Strategy, in order to promote regional development throughout the Country by the identification of a number of development corridors as Gateways and Hubs in individual regions. These development corridors have

been designated to act as development growth areas that will be promoted in terms of infrastructure and investment to act as economic drivers for their region.

The identification of development corridors is only the initial step in the process of balanced regional development. The success of the Spatial Strategy, in its role of achieving strong and sustainable economic growth, is dependent on a number of factors including the development of an area's *Potential, Critical Mass and Linkages*.

The policies and objectives contained in the County Development Plan promote these concepts through facilitating improved linkages and promoting the development of critical mass at appropriate locations while also protecting and promoting the potential of the County for sustainable development.

In addition to the economic and spatial objectives, an improved quality of life is also an objective of the NDP. It is considered that proper spatial planning can contribute to an improved quality of life and it is one of the overall objectives of this Plan to achieve this.

### 2.1.2 Regional Context

#### *South-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022*

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) were developed on the basis of guidance provided through the National Spatial Strategy and a wide range of plans that exist at individual agency level throughout the region. The task of the guidelines is to provide a broad canvas to steer the sustainable growth and prosperity of the region and its people up to 2022. Among the goals outlined in the guidelines is the goal to '*promote the sustainable development of Mallow and Tralee/Killarney as vibrant hub towns - creating a critical mass in terms of population, employment and services, which will enable them to attract investment and people – thereby supporting the role of*



*the Gateway and delivering balanced regional development within the Southwest, through energising smaller towns and rural areas within the sphere of influence’.*

### **Key Elements of the Strategy include:-**

- Growth in the Hubs towns of Tralee and Killarney must be prioritised.
- Towns close to the Hubs should have organic employment-led growth, bolstered to a certain extent by commutes to the Gateways/Hubs. These towns should retain their own character and provide improved services and quality of life to people living within their catchments.
- Rural and peripheral areas should, at least, retain their current population levels. This goal shall be best achieved by making them more attractive places to live, by increasing service provision in towns and villages.
- A hierarchy of settlement types will be identified. Key roles will be assigned to these towns to help deliver the objectives of the guidelines.
- Promotion of the Tarbert / Ballylongford landbank as a strategic location for sustainable industrial / energy type development in the region.

### **2.1.3 Local Context**

#### **Meitheal Chiarrai and Action Plan**

Meitheal Chiarrai is an economic, social and cultural development strategy for the development of the County (2011 and beyond).

#### **Údarás na Gaeltachta – Beartas Forbartha 2005-2015**

The Údarás na Gaeltachta Development Strategy 2005–2015 outlines the economic, social and cultural development policies for the Gaeltacht and contains particular policies for cultural and linguistic initiatives and language based projects.

### **Putting People First**

One of the main reforms outlined in ‘A Guide to Putting People First: Action Plan for Effective Local Government’ is the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs). These committees have oversight and responsibility for local development and community-related funding in their area. One of the roles of LCDCs is to develop a six year Economic and Community Plan by 2015.



#### **2.1.4 County Development Plan 2009-2015**

The 2009-2015 County Development Plan was drafted at a time of economic prosperity and growth. However, the current Plan coincides with the global economic recession and as such, levels of economic activity and population growth envisaged for the plan period were not realised. The economic downturn has posed several challenges which are affecting the realization of the targets set in the 2009- 2015 Plan namely:-

- *Increased economic uncertainty and subsequent falling levels of investment.*
- *Total stagnation of construction arising from an oversupply in the housing and commercial market.*
- *Unemployment & emigration.*
- *Reduced retail activity.*
- *Increased rates of commercial vacancy.*
- *Legacy of a number of unfinished housing and commercial developments.*
- *Deficiency in public finances.*

## 2.2 Strategic Planning Approach

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 amends Section 10 of the Principal Act by introducing the requirement of a “core strategy that shall show that the development objectives in the development plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines”.

This Plan sets out an ‘evidence-based’ Core Strategy for the future development of the County. It sets the overall population targets and development strategy for the County for the period of the Plan. In this context, the population targets will form the basis for guiding the scale and location of new developments within the County up to 2021.

This Core Strategy provides relevant information to demonstrate consistency with the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) and sets out core aims and strategic goals that, in turn, determine and shape growth locations, population distribution and land use zoning.

### 2.2.1 The Strategic Aims of the Core Strategy are to:-

- Set out a vision and blueprint for the future sustainable development of the County and maximize its potential in the context of the development of the South West Region.
- Prioritise sustainable development at appropriate locations within the Hub towns of Tralee and Killarney as an economic driver for the County.
- Support the achievement of more sustainable towns and villages appropriate to the scale of the Settlement and its position in the Settlement Hierarchy.
- Facilitate the development of sustainable and socially inclusive communities.
- Protect and conserve the heritage of the County by safeguarding its cultural, natural and built heritage.
- Support the creation of a compact urban form in all settlements in Kerry.
- Protect and support rural areas through careful management of physical and environmental resources and the facilitation of appropriate sustainable development.
- Support sustainable agriculture and agricultural related development in County Kerry and strengthen the contribution that agriculture and the food sectors make to the local economy.
- Consolidate population growth and employment in areas best served by public infrastructure and transport.
- Support sustainable tourism development in Kerry and strengthen the contribution that tourism makes to the local communities, culture and economy of the County.
- Promote and support the integration of land use and transport and encourage a modal shift to greater use of sustainable modes of transport, including public transport, walking and cycling.
- Integrate measures to adapt to and mitigate against climate change in all policies, objectives and actions of Kerry County Council and its key stakeholders.
- Ensure that future development patterns in County Kerry accord with the sustainable management of water resources.
- Promote the use of Irish within the wider community and provide linguistic support for the Gaeltacht as an Irish-speaking community.



- Sustainably support arts and culture as a significant resource in County Kerry. Facilitate and support professional arts development. Engage with the community and arts/cultural tourism in partnership and co-operation with relevant agencies in order to enhance quality of life for all citizens and visitors.

## 2.2.2 Supporting Elements

Achieving these aims for County Kerry also requires a number of supporting elements which are briefly addressed below.

### 2.2.2.1 Sustainable Communities

Sustainable Communities are defined as “places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life”. Kerry County Council considers that the promotion of sustainable communities is a prerequisite to the sustainable development of County Kerry and will seek to implement this approach.

### 2.2.2.2 Economic Development

This Development Plan seeks to provide the policies which will help to allow the County to reach its potential and maximize its contribution to the economy of the South West Region, in a sustainable manner.

The Hub Towns of Tralee and Killarney will be promoted as anchors for regional growth. These towns are located in a growth corridor which provides locational advantages in terms of access to strategic rail and road networks and to Kerry International Airport. These centres shall be prioritised for economic development and investment. They will continue to be the focal point for regional population growth and employment in order to sustain and attract economic activity and build upon the significant investments made to-date in these areas.

The Tarbert / Ballylongford landbank will

also be promoted as a location of choice for sustainable and appropriate industrial / energy type development, facilitated by the availability of a deep water resource.

### 2.2.2.3 Infrastructure and Services

The Core Strategy of the Plan will seek to achieve and support the aims of national policy as contained in ‘Smarter Travel’ and ‘Spatial Planning & National Roads; Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ DoECLG 2012. The key aims of these documents include maximising the efficient use of the transport network, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, reducing transport emissions, improving accessibility to transport, adopting a hierarchy of transport users with pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the top of the hierarchy and considering land use planning and transport planning together.

The provisions of infrastructure and supporting services for development, particularly water and waste water services, is critical. Kerry County Council will direct growth towards settlements and centres where capacity is available and will strive in consultation with Irish Water to seek the expansion of services necessary to support the development strategy in this Plan, in accordance with the sustainable management of water resources.

### 2.2.2.4 Heritage

County Kerry’s landscape, character and culture are vital assets that help the County compete as Irelands prime tourism destination and a location of choice for investment. The identity of Kerry is intrinsically linked to its heritage and many of the cultural sites in Kerry, such as An Blascaod Mór and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Skellig Michael are synonymous with Ireland and are of international importance.

While it is recognised that heritage interests require protection for their own intrinsic values, there are also potential significant economic and social benefits to promoting the value of the

built, cultural and natural heritage assets and investing in their protection, management and appropriate enhancement. The vast potential for heritage to contribute to the economic re-positioning of the County is a strength that must be harnessed. It is the intention of this Development Plan to actively support the protection, conservation and appropriate enhancement of the cultural heritage in Kerry to benefit residents and visitors alike and to target cultural tourism as a major economic driver in the County.

#### 2.2.2.5 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

The Council recognises that Climate Change is a global threat with local consequences. While uncertainties surround the magnitude and extent of climate change impacts, the Council is committed to addressing climate change in a proactive manner through the careful consideration of policy guidance and strategies.

If unmanaged, climate change will have dramatic adverse effects on peoples' lives, the environment and the prospects for growth and development.

The National Climate Strategy 2007-12 states that there is an economic consensus that the costs of inaction will greatly outweigh the costs of action and that progressive climate change policies, based on innovation and investment in low-carbon technology, are consistent with global economic growth. The 2012 *National Climate Change Adaptation Framework, Building Resilience to Climate Change* notes that climate change impacts will often be most evident at local level. Planning and development control will therefore play a crucial role and there needs to be locally tailored policies and responses to climate change through mitigation and adaptation.

In this regard, the landscape of the County can assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Soils and forests can act as significant carbon sinks which prevents or slows down

the release of carbon into the atmosphere therefore it is important to manage these carbon sinks. In addition, greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced through other measures already outlined in this Plan, such as energy conservation, exploitation of sustainable renewable energy resources, innovative building design and materials and improved integration between land use planning and transport.



The County Council will promote sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas, including the promotion of measures to:-

- Reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long term decline in non-renewable resources,
- Reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions,
- Address the necessity for adaptation to climate change, in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.

#### 2.2.2.6 Sustainable Development and Flood Risk Assessment

The frequency, pattern and severity of flooding are expected to increase as a result of climate change, becoming more uncertain and more damaging. Climate change could potentially have a very significant effect on flooding in the longer term. Higher sea-levels



and wetter winters, with more intense rain storms, together with possible increases in storminess could significantly increase both the frequency and intensity of flooding. To address this issue, the Council will comply with the provisions of the "Planning System and Flood Risk Management" Guidelines by ensuring that, where relevant, flood risk is a key consideration in preparing development and local area plans and in the assessment of planning applications. The issue of flood risk is dealt with in more detail in the Natural Environment and Flood Risk Management Chapter and in the Development Management Guidelines. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of this Plan has also been carried out and is included in Volume 4.

## Core Strategy

It is an objective of the Council to :-

CS-1	Ensure that the future spatial development of County Kerry is in accordance with National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the South West Region.	CS-3	Consider Article 6(3)(4) and Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, the Surface Water Regulations 2009 and the relevant measures of the River Basin Management Plans 2009-2015, in the assessment of development proposals.
CS-2	Consider the availability of transport infrastructure, environmental carrying capacity, availability and/or capacity to provide Waste Water Services, education and other socio-economic objectives, in the assessment of development proposals.	CS-4	Restrict development in areas at risk of flooding in accordance with the DEHLG Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Flood Risk Management (2009).
CS-5		Have regard to sequential development and the prioritisation of sustainable infill and brownfield development in the assessment of development proposals in urban areas.	
CS-6		Promote the integration of land use and transportation policy and to prioritise provision for sustainable cycling and walking travel modes and the strengthening of public transport.	
CS-7		Prioritise the sustainable development of the Linked Hub Towns of Tralee and Killarney and the Tarbert / Ballylongford landbank, in line with National and Regional policy.	
CS-8		Facilitate sustainable development in the towns and villages in the County, of a nature that supports their defined role at County and Regional level, at a scale appropriate to the availability of supporting infrastructure.	



<b>CS-9</b>	Provide for rural residential development in accordance with Rural Settlement Policies and Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines (2005).
<b>CS-10</b>	Have regard to Department of Environment “Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines” (2009) issued to planning authorities in relation to the scale of residential development appropriate to settlements within the hierarchy.
<b>CS-11</b>	Support the <i>National Climate Change Strategy</i> and the <i>National Climate Change Adaptation Framework, Building Resilience to Climate Change</i> on an ongoing basis through implementation of supporting objectives in this Plan, particularly those supporting use of alternative and renewable energy sources, sustainable transport, air quality, coastal zone management, flood risk management, soil erosion and promotion of the retention of and planting of trees, hedgerows and afforestation subject to compatibility with environmental designations and legislative requirements.

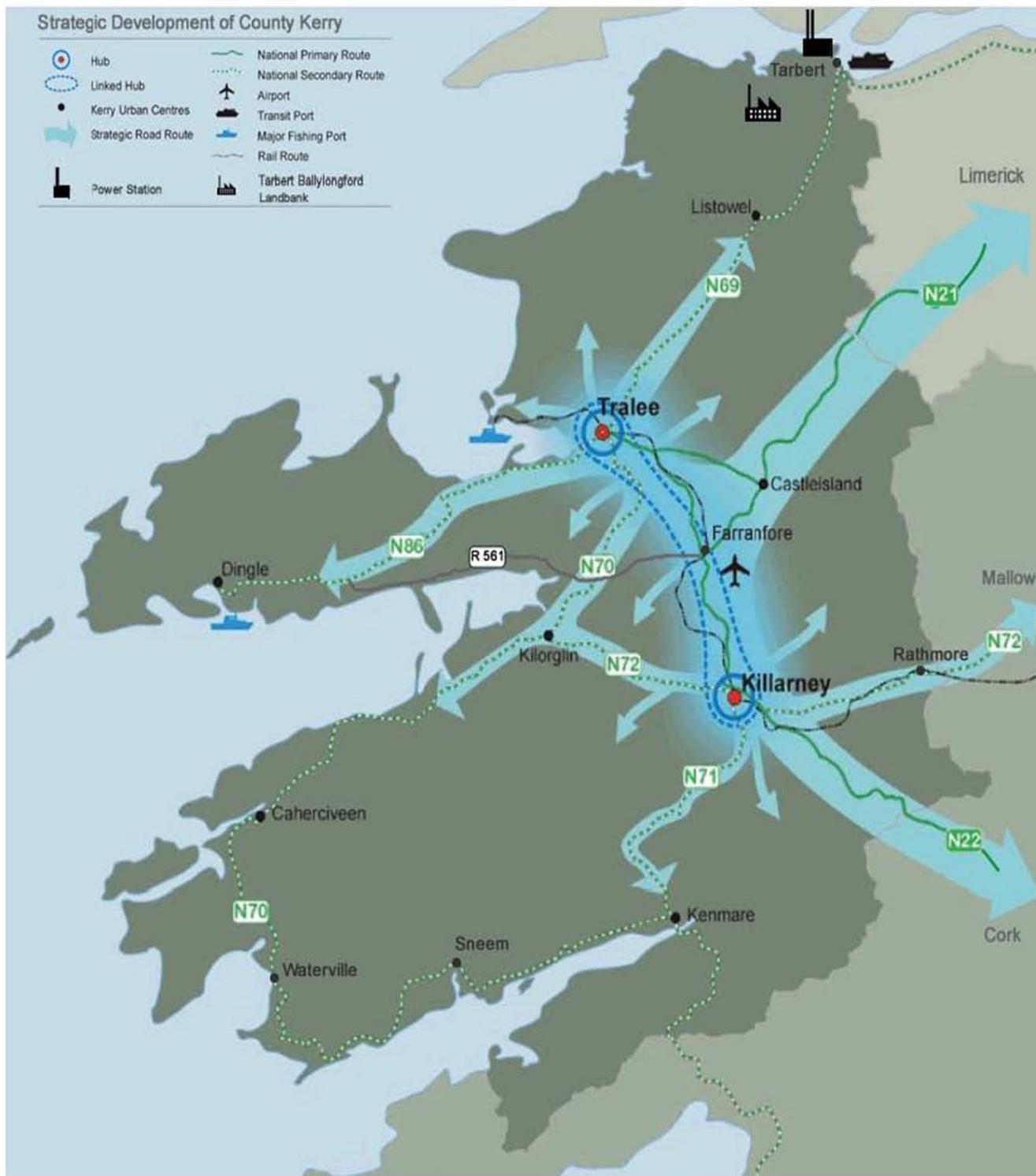
must be achieved through the strengthening of the urban settlement structure in parallel with ensuring that the resources of rural areas are developed to offer a viable future to rural dwellers.

The RPGs for the South West Region (2010) chose a balanced approach to regional development – recommending the prioritisation of key urban settlements in terms of population and investment growth, while at the same time sustaining and revitalising rural areas (see Map 2.1).

In accordance with these principles, the Core Strategy defines a spatial development framework for County Kerry which prioritises growth in the Hub Towns of Tralee and Killarney and consolidation of other key towns, while seeking to support rural areas mainly by strengthening the smaller towns and villages throughout the County.

## 2.3 Growth Consistency with the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG)

Having identified Tralee and Killarney as Hub Towns in 2002, the NSS emphasises the role of balanced development at local level, which



Map 2.1  
Core Strategy Map

### 2.3.1 Municipal Districts

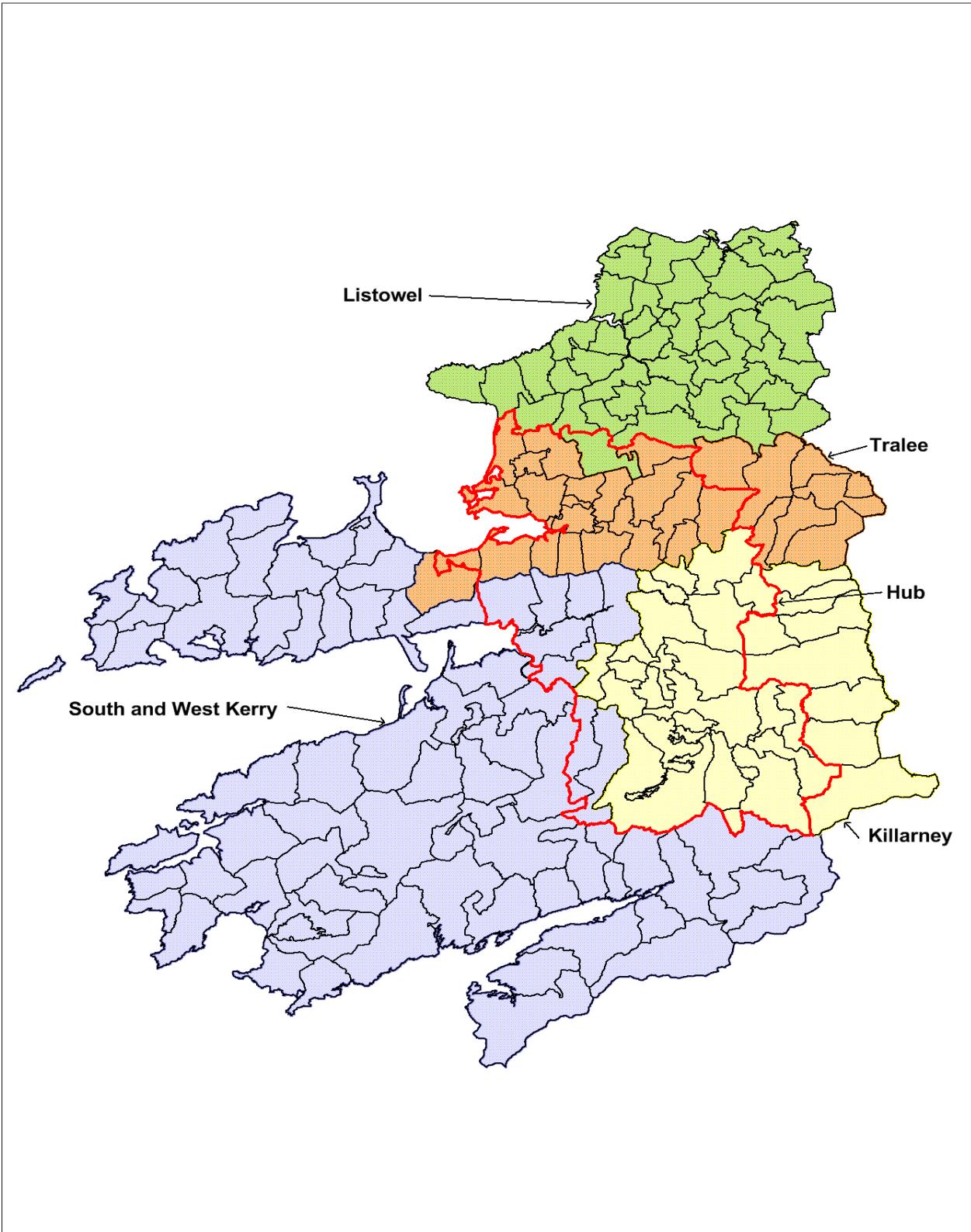
The Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013 has reconfigured the County into four Municipal Districts for electoral and local government purposes. The four new Districts are:- (A) Tralee (B) Killarney (C) Listowel and (D) South and West Kerry as set out in Map 2.2. With the abolition of the Town Councils in Tralee, Killarney and Listowel, the responsibility of land use planning in the towns has transferred to Kerry County Council.

The Tralee Killarney Linked Hub as set out in the Southwest RPGs is outlined in red on Map 2.2 and overlaps the four Municipal Districts.

It is important to identify functionality within the Municipal Districts and the complementary roles of the settlements, throughout the County, in order to meet the needs of local communities and to identify areas where consolidation and strengthening of services is required. Accordingly, it is the intention of the Council to prepare Local Area Plans for each of the Municipal Districts during the lifetime of the Plan.

Strategic Plans	
It is an objective of the Council to :-	
<b>SP-1</b>	Prepare Local Area Plans for each of the Municipal Districts during the lifetime of the Plan.
<b>SP-2</b>	Prepare a Strategic Economic Plan for the County during the lifetime of the Plan.
<b>SP-3</b>	Prepare a 5 year Local Community Development Plan in conjunction with the proposed Local Community Development Committee.





**Map 2.2**  
Municipal Districts & Linked HUB Area (outlined in red)

### 2.3.2 Population Projections & Spatial Distribution

The CSO 2011 indicated that the population of County Kerry was 145,502, which was an increase of 3.7% on the 2006 population of 139,835. This percentage increase was amongst the lowest in the State, which showed an overall increase of 8.1% (national average) over the same period. This increase is dispersed across the County with 66% of the 166 Electoral Divisions (EDs) experiencing population growth, while the remainder experienced a decline. The more peripheral areas to the west and south west of the County experienced declines while the EDs in central Kerry adjacent to the Hub towns experienced growth.

The key message of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines is that critical mass, in cities and large towns, is essential to facilitate balanced regional development. By building up populations in the Tralee/Killarney Linked Hub and other towns, services such as public transport, water services infrastructure and amenity can be enhanced. This will contribute to creating attractive settlements which in turn will attract investment and people.

The Census of Population 2011 indicates that the population of the Linked Hub and towns is increasing in size which is a positive step for building critical mass in the large towns. However, significant population increases have continued in the rural areas classified as *Rural Areas under Strong Urban Influence*, while the centre of the Linked Hub towns experienced population loss. In addition, more than 1 in 4 houses in the County (including holiday and second homes) were highlighted as vacant on census night.

Continuation of this pattern of population distribution and vacancy levels is unsustainable in terms of infrastructure provision, water quality and transport cost. In order to address these unsustainable trends, the Settlement Hierarchy as set out in the CDP 2009-15 has

been modified in this Plan.

### 2.3.3 Future Population Growth

The population projections for County Kerry are detailed in Table 2.1 below. The Census 2011 returns are used to inform population and growth predictions for the Plan. The 2015 population figure is based on a 0.8% p/a increase from 2011 as per the DoECLG.

Using the growth rate of 0.88% p/a as per the DoECLG and in accordance with the South West RPGs, the projected 2021 figures have been extrapolated. The population of the County is projected to increase by 8,108 during the life of the Plan.

In the South West Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) the Tralee-Killarney Hub Towns are envisaged to be the focused engines of growth in County Kerry. The aim is to position the Hub towns as sufficiently sized urban zones to attract additional employment and population, which will increase their competitiveness and attractiveness as national and regional investment locations.



	Population	RPG
2011 Census	145,502	152,350 (estimate)
2015 Estimate	150,214	162,866
2021 Target	158,322	172,893
<b>Total Growth 2015-21</b>	<b>8,108</b>	<b>8,908</b>

Table 2.1  
Population & Target 2011-2021

	Population (2011 Census)	Population Allocation
Total County Growth	<b>145,502</b>	<b>8108</b>
Total Linked Hub (including rural)	<b>75,702</b>	<b>6243</b>
Tralee Killarney Hub Towns	33,554	4750
Northern Area	<b>36,819</b>	<b>972</b>
Western Area	<b>32,981</b>	<b>893</b>

Table 2.2  
Population Growth 2015-2021

The South West RPGs allocates 77% of the total population growth to the Linked Hub area with **4,750** persons allocated specifically to the Hub towns. Table 2.2 above indicates the allocation of population to the various planning areas in accordance with the boundaries set out in the South West RPGs.

The remaining population growth of **3,358** is allocated to each Municipal District based on the percentage population that each area has relative to the overall population of the County.

### 2.3.4 Population Distribution

The population growth of 8,108 is allocated to the four Municipal Districts of Tralee,

Killarney, Listowel and South/West Kerry. In line with the South West RPGs there is an emphasis on the growth of the Tralee Killarney Hub. The population growth allocation for the Tralee-Killarney Hub towns is in line with the South West RPGs with 4,750 being allocated to the two towns on a percentage of existing population basis roughly 60:40 ratio split.

Municipal District	Existing Population 2011	Population Growth
Tralee	40,051	3,480
Killarney	38,040	2,525
Listowel	28,538	890
South/West	38,873	1,213
<b>Total Population Growth</b>		<b>8,108</b>

**Table 2.3**  
**Growth Allocation 2015-2021**

