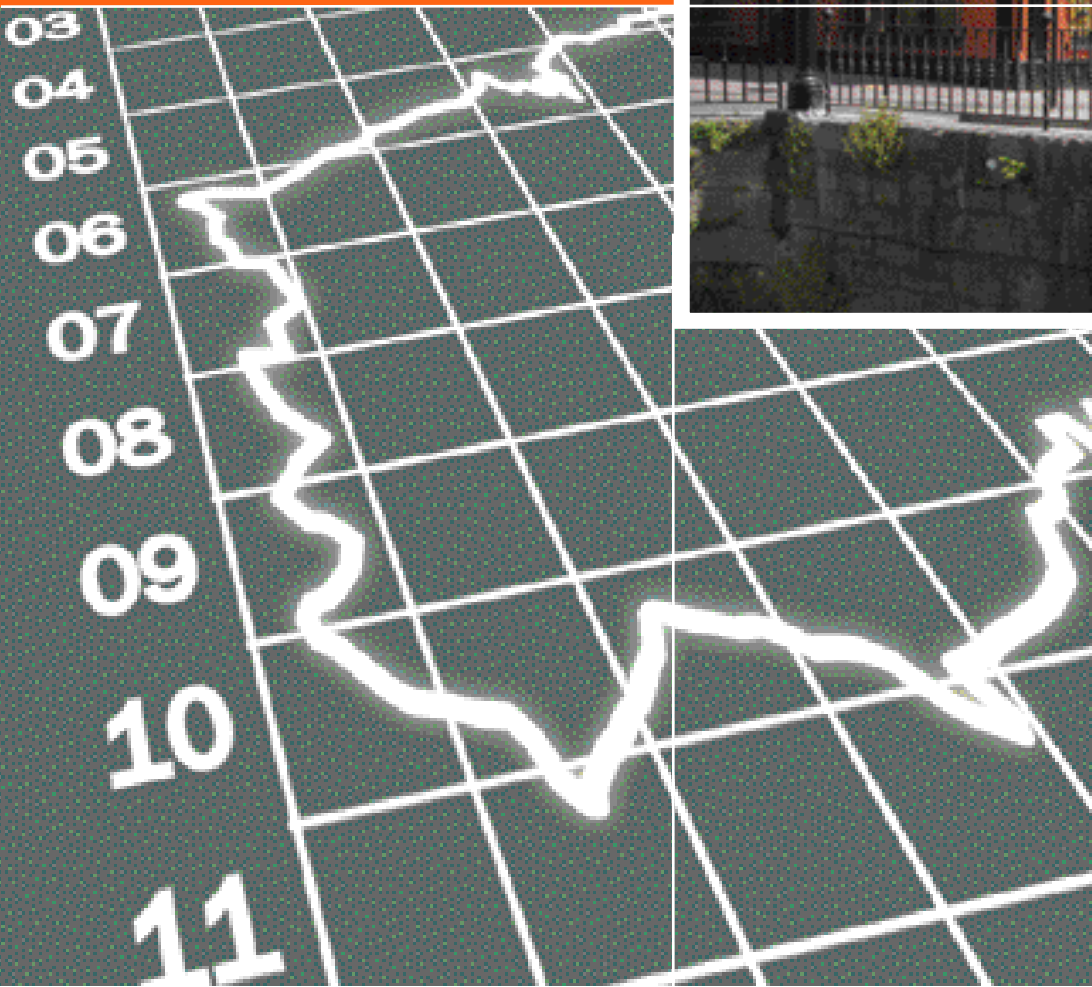


5 Balanced geographic development

5.1

Large
Towns



5.1



5 Balanced Geographic Development

5.1 Large Towns

County Limerick has a uniquely weak urban structure. In 1996 there was only one town with a population significantly in excess of 1,500. In considering the needs of County Limerick, the Board, through its various deliberations and consultations felt it is necessary to strengthen the four large towns outside the area of urban influence (population in excess of 1,000 in 1996) to increase their attractiveness as places to work and live.

The four main towns will be developed as centres that can economically and socially support their population base. The positive impact of stronger towns is that they will have a greater capacity to sustain adjoining villages and rural areas.

the facilities of a new community college, a public outdoor swimming pool, a golf course, the Demesne which is a 20 hectare publicly-owned park and the Desmond Castle.

Newcastle West is undergoing major change in terms of development; however development pressure is modest when compared to the other main towns of the Mid-West Region.

Rathkeale

Rathkeale is the second largest town in County Limerick with a population of 1,546 in 1996 which was a drop of 14% from the 1991 figure. The town is bypassed by the Limerick to Tralee Road (N21). It has two significant employers in Anderson Ireland Ltd, and Anglo Irish Beef Producers. There are successful enterprise units located in the old creamery site. The County Council is promoting the industrial park and a number of sites are in the process of being developed.

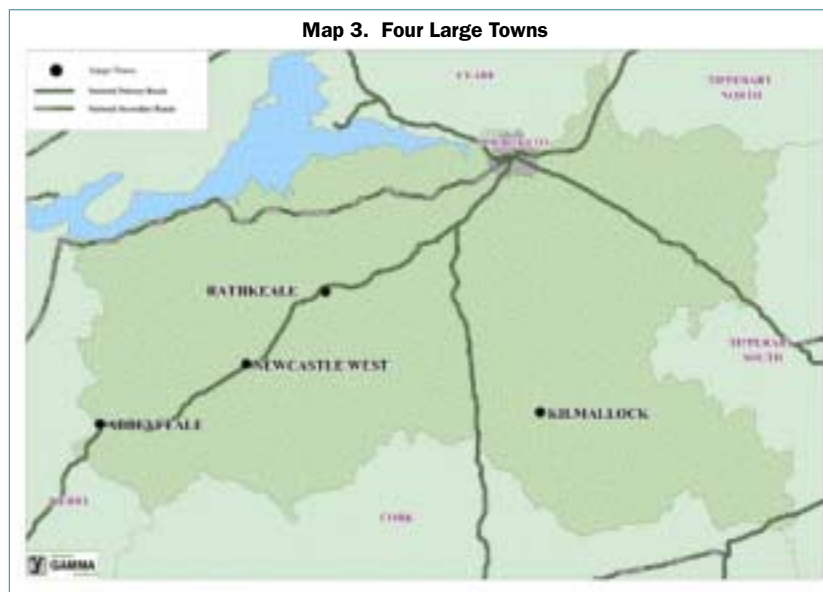
The town is unique with an estimated 40% of the population from the Traveller Community. The population of the town fluctuates due to the nomadic lifestyle of

Newcastle West

Newcastle West is the largest town in the County and the administrative centre for most public services in the West of the County. It is located on the N21 National Primary Route (Limerick to Tralee) which is the main traffic route to the South-West. Its population in 1996 was 3,618. There were 625 people employed in fifteen industries in 2001. The County Council and Shannon Development have recently co-operated in making available a 20 hectare site for industrial development.

Newcastle West is well served by educational, financial, retail and professional services. The town currently offers

Map 3. Four Large Towns



the trader-travellers who spend much of the year trading in Britain and in Europe.

Rathkeale does not have the range and number of retailing facilities that is expected for a town of its size. There has been little private house building in the town in recent times. A number of premises in the town centre are either vacant or used for storage purposes and impact on the physical appearance of the town. The town offers the following facilities, a community creche, a modern sports complex, tennis courts, an 18 hole pitch and putt course, soccer and GAA clubs. In recent years a new hotel has opened and the Limerick GAA Board developed a 5 hectare site as a County training ground for its teams. A new community college with excellent facilities has also been developed.

Abbeysfeale

Abbeysfeale is the third largest town in the County located on the river Feale on the Limerick/Kerry border. Between 1991 and 1996 the population of the town fell by 1% to 1,486. It is also located on the N21 and is subject to traffic congestion. There is one industrial estate, located to the east of the town, which houses the third largest employer in the County, Kostal, a motor components manufacturing firm.

Abbeysfeale currently functions as a services centre for the town and surrounding hinterland. It offers the facilities of a community centre, recreation park, a library and the newly constructed Irish Cultural Centre and Theatre. Sporting organisations include GAA, soccer and one of only three rugby clubs in the County. There are two post-primary schools in the town.

Kilmallock

Kilmallock is located in the South-Eastern part of the County, thirty-five kilometres to the South of Limerick City and 10 kilometres from the nearest National Primary Route N20 (Limerick-Cork). The population of the town

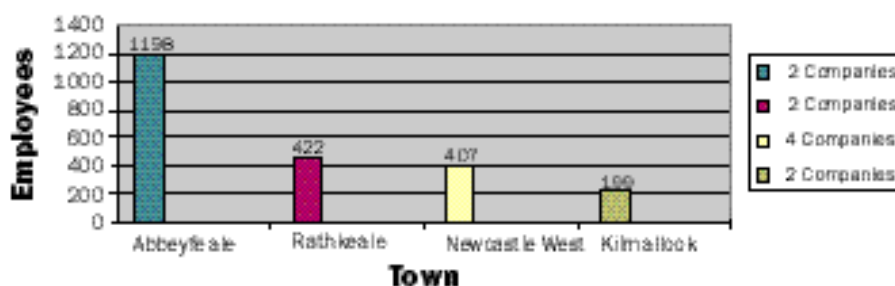
declined from 1,311 in 1991 to 1,231 in 1996. In 2001 there were nine industrial companies employing in excess of two hundred people. Existing retail provision in the town consists of a number of small retail units and supermarkets. The town has good educational facilities including the newly developed Community College and a lifelong learning centre. The following sporting and recreational facilities are on offer: GAA, soccer, town riverside park, a cross country equestrian course and a day-care service for the elderly.

Kilmallock is a fine example of a thirteenth century medieval town. The Medieval Stone Mansion, which is intended to be developed as a museum and/or multi-purpose visitor hub is now in public ownership. The town also houses the Friars' Gate Theatre, which has an extensive calendar of both amateur and professional performances. There is a clear need to develop a wider range of tourist facilities and services to support the town's primary heritage attractions.

Limerick County Council has designated Kilmallock as an information age town. The Council acts as a lead partner in the project in conjunction with County Limerick VEC, Teagasc, Ballyhoura Development Limited, Shannon Development, FÁS and local interests. The project which is well underway is delivering the following; community website, subsidised PC's to local groups and residents, drop in access points throughout the town and extensive computer training to residents of Kilmallock.

The actions identified below concentrate on addressing the infrastructural deficits which will enable the towns to retain their existing population and to attract new residents. The actions targeting additional industrial activity will encourage more people to live and work in the towns which will result in a secondary benefit of improved social and cultural services in these areas.

Figure 6. Industrial Companies based in the four large Co. Limerick Towns employing in excess of 50 people (Oct. 2001)



(Source: Shannon Development, Jan. 2002)

Goal *To develop the four large towns in the County to become stronger centres for residential, commercial and industrial development*

Objective A

To strengthen Newcastle West as a viable industrial location and also as an attractive place to live.

Action	Lead Agency/Support	Timescale		
		2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2011
Develop the Business Park to a high standard for promotions as an enterprise location	SFADCo	✓	✓	✓
Increase the broadband connectivity	SFADCo/Lim. Co. Co.	✓	✓	
Support the Desmond Ability Resource Initiative	CDB/Lim. Co. Co. MWHB/ FAS/ WLR/ Local Community	✓	✓	✓
Examine the potential of the Demesne as a social and recreational area	Lim. Co. Co./WLR/ Community Groups	✓	✓	
Provide funding for the development of high quality childcare facilities	Limerick County Childcare Committee	✓	✓	
Upgrade the water supply and sewerage facilities	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓	✓	
Enhance lifelong learning opportunities	VEC/Adult Learning Board		✓	

Objective B

To reinvigorate the town of Rathkeale

Action	Lead Agency/Support	Timescale		
		2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2011
Develop and promote Rathkeale as an industrial location	SFADCo/ Lim. Co. Co.	✓	✓	
Increase the broadband connectivity	SFADCo/Lim. Co. Co.		✓	✓
Work in partnership with property owners to renew the town centre	Lim. Co. Co./ Private Property Owners	✓	✓	
Secure a National programme similar to RAPID for the special circumstances of Rathkeale	Lim. Co. Co./ CDB/WLR	✓		
Upgrade the water supply	Lim.Co.Co./ DoE&LG	✓		
Develop a new senior traveller education and training resource centre	VEC/ Lim. Co. Co.	✓		
Support the further development of high quality childcare facilities	Limerick County Childcare Committee	✓	✓	

Objective C**To consolidate the existing strong economic and social base in Abbeyfeale**

Action	Lead Agency/Support	Timescale		
		2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2011
Work with companies to add value to their existing industrial base	SFADCo/ IDA	✓	✓	
Increase the broadband connectivity	SFADCo/Lim. Co. Co.		✓	✓
Implement a town renewal scheme	Lim.Co. Co./ Town Traders/ Community Council	✓		
Promote the tax incentives available to commercial and residential property owners	Lim. Co.Co./ Community Council/ Town Traders	✓		
Enhance post-primary infrastructure and facilities	VEC, Schools and Trustees		✓	
Further develop Traveller education services	Feale Side Board of Management/ VEC/ Local Dev. Co.	✓	✓	
Build a multi-purpose extension to the health centre	MWHB	✓		
Provide funding for the development of high quality childcare facilities	County Childcare Committee	✓	✓	
Upgrade water supply and sewerage facilities	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓	✓	

Objective D
To develop the economy of Kilmallock and protect and enhance the medieval character of the town

Action	Lead Agency/Support	Timescale		
		2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2011
Produce an action plan to exploit the economic potential of the town and hinterland, including review of existing reports	SFADCo /BD/ Lim. Co. Co.	✓	✓	
Increase the broadband connectivity	SFADCo/Lim. Co. Co.		✓	✓
Further development of the Killmallock Information Age Town Project	Lim. Co. Co./ VEC/ FAS/BD/ Kilmallock Traders Assoc.	✓		
Develop the tourism/ information potential of the Medieval Stone Mansion	CDB /Tourism Action Group/ Duchas/BD/ Kilmallock Tourism Dev. Assoc.	✓	✓	
Further develop lifelong learning opportunities	Adult Learning Board		✓	
Provide funding for the development of high quality childcare facilities	Limerick County Childcare Committee	✓	✓	
Upgrade water supply and sewerage facilities	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓	✓	
Improve the non-national road infrastructure to link with the N20 (Cork/Limerick)	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓	✓	
Seek to influence the NRA in the location of the new N20 route	CDB	✓		

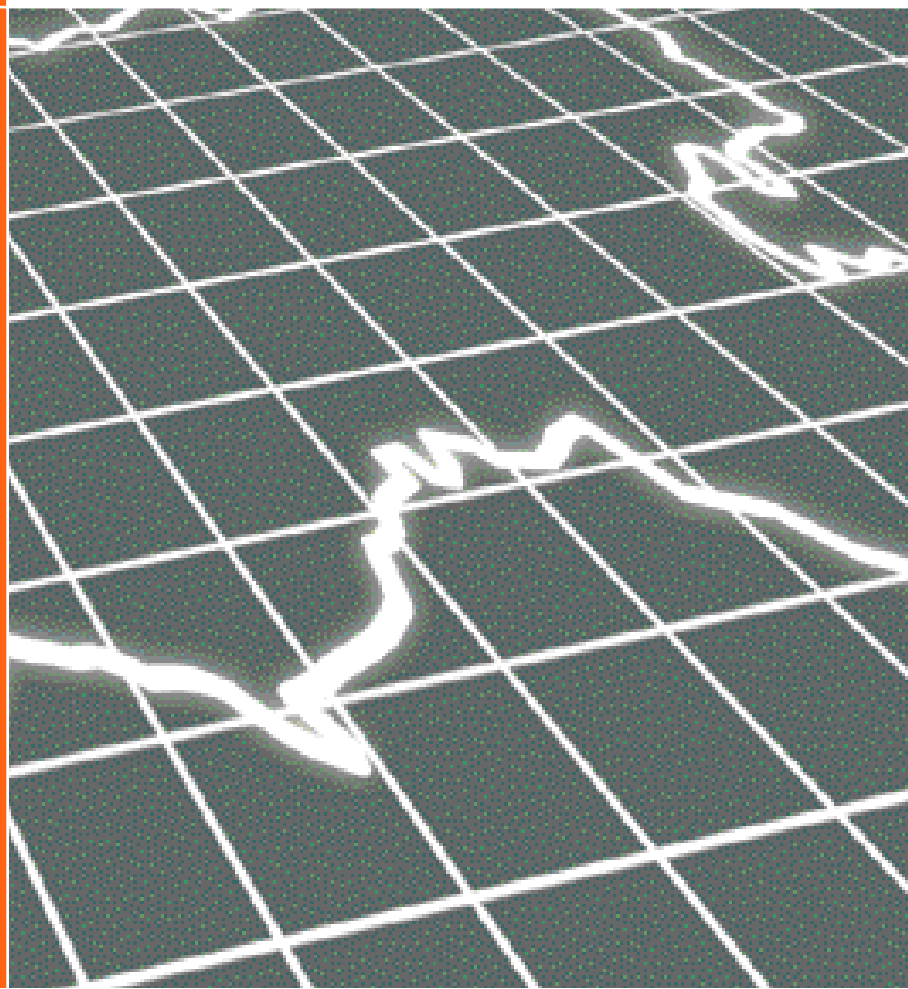
Indicators

- Population of Newcastle West/Rathkeale/Abbeyfeale/Kilmallock at next Census
- Number and size of indigenous/foreign industries in the large towns
- Number of childcare places per hundred children
- Number of broadband customers in the large towns

5 Balanced geographic development

5.2

Area of
Urban
Influence



5.2



5 Balanced Geographic Development

5.2 Area of Urban Influence

The area of urban influence is the area of the County that is adjacent to Limerick City. For the purposes of Strategic planning we define the area of urban influence of Limerick City to include the District Electoral Divisions of Adare North, Adare South, Ballybricken, Ballycummin, Ballysimon, Ballyvarra, Caherconlish West, Carrig, Castleconnell, Clarina, Clonkeen, Crecora, Croom, Dunneaman, Fedamore, Garrane, Kilpeacon, Limerick North Rural, Limerick South Rural, Patrickswell and Roxborough.

The characteristics of this area are varied. The majority of development in the suburbs of the City (Annacotty, Caherdavin, Castletroy, Dooradoyle and Raheen) has been large scale housing and where critical mass has developed there has been growth in commercial

services. However, development in the outlying rural hinterland has been characterised by ribbon development and one-off housing. The road infrastructure in this area is insufficient to cater for the increased commuter usage.

Limerick County Council adopted its Housing Strategy in 2001. This Strategy assesses current and future housing need in all tenures and works towards increasing the supply of housing to meet the different affordability levels. For the first time there is a requirement on developers to provide social/affordable units as part of private housing developments.

The Limerick Planning, Land Use and Transportation Study (PLUTS) was commissioned by Limerick City Council and Limerick County Council in March 1999, with the objective of producing short, medium and long term actions for the planning, land use and transport systems for the Limerick Region. Counties Clare and North Tipperary Council also participated in this study. The recommendations are being considered by the four participating local authorities at present.

Limerick City is the regional services centre of the Mid West Region and has a strong economic, social and cultural base. The University Concert Hall which is located in the County and the Belltable Arts Centre provide an extensive range of cultural events including art exhibitions and contemporary and traditional theatre. The focus of the actions is on ensuring that the City and environs are more accessible and to enhance the social and recreational infrastructure of this evolving urban area.

The importance of Strategic Planning for this area is addressed through the commitment to produce new local area plans. Some of the actions address the needs of the urbanised parts, including improved public transport services and new recreational areas, while specific actions are identified for the outlying towns to improve their appearance and amenities.

Map 4. Area of Urban Influence



Goal *To provide and facilitate access to the services and facilities associated with a contemporary urban area*

Objective A

To cater for the needs of the increasing population in relation to infrastructure, housing, social services and recreational needs

Action	Lead Agency/Support	Timescale		
		2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2011
Liase with the other agencies in considering and implementing the recommendations of the PLUTS Study.	Local Authorities / Mid West Regional Authority/Iarnrod & Bus Eireann	✓	✓	✓
Increase broadband connectivity	SFADCo/Lim. Co.Co./ Other Local Authorities	✓	✓	
Implement the Housing Strategy	Lim. Co. Co.	✓	✓	
Pilot cheaper rates/fees to promote access to leisure facilities by low income families at off peak times	Limerick Chamber of Commerce/ D.SCFA	✓		
Provide funding for the development of high quality childcare facilities	Limerick County Childcare Committee	✓	✓	
Avail of funding opportunities, including the planning contribution scheme, to provide for recreation areas and sports facilities	Lim. Co. Co./CDB	✓	✓	✓

Objective B
To manage the development of the towns in the area of urban influence

Action	Lead Agency/Support	Timescale		
		2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2011
Upgrade the Sewerage Infrastructure in Adare and Patrickswell	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓		
Improve the Water supply schemes in Adare, Patrickswell, Caherconlish and Croom	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓	✓	
Prepare and implement Local Area Plans for Adare, Patrickswell, Croom and Caherconlish	Lim. Co. Co.	✓	✓	
Provide new post-primary facilities in Croom	VEC, School Interests	✓		
Promote Castleconnell as a quality crafts location	SFADCo/ Tipperary LEADER/ Lim. Co. Co./ CEB	✓	✓	
Further develop the potential of Adare as a tourism hub for the County	CDB Tourism Action Group	✓	✓	
Complement the existing Tax Incentive Scheme with a Town Renewal Scheme in Croom	Lim. Co. Co./ Community Council	✓	✓	
Provide youth support services in Patrickswell and Castleconnell	Limerick Youth Services/ Youth Affairs Sub-Committee	✓	✓	
Develop a multi-purpose Health Centre in Croom	MWHB	✓		

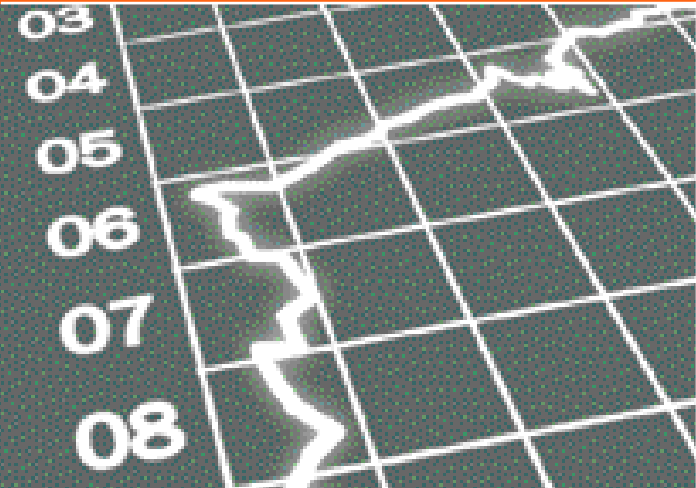
Indicators

- Population of the area
- Number of hectares developed for recreation/amenity use
- Number of social/affordable houses
- Reduction in journey times to City Centre from Adare, Caherconlish, Castleconnell, Croom and Patrickswell
- Number of new houses constructed in the towns

5 Balanced geographic development

5.3

The Shannon
Estuary
Area



5.3



5 Balanced Geographic Development

5.3 The Shannon Estuary Area

The Shannon Estuary, which extends over 100 kilometres from Limerick City to the sea, is one of the largest sheltered deep water harbours in Ireland. The economic activity in the Estuary is significant with port and industrial use. There are designated areas within the Estuary for the protection of water fowl and breeding seabirds. Barrigone, near Askeaton is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for wildlife species. Given the multiple uses and designations it is essential to plan to accommodate a mix of industry, tourism, aquaculture, shipping, recreation and conservation. To date the potential of these uses has not been exploited. The Estuary is served by the National Secondary N69 Route which in many places is deficient for the nature and volume of traffic it carries.

Map 5. The Shannon Estuary Area

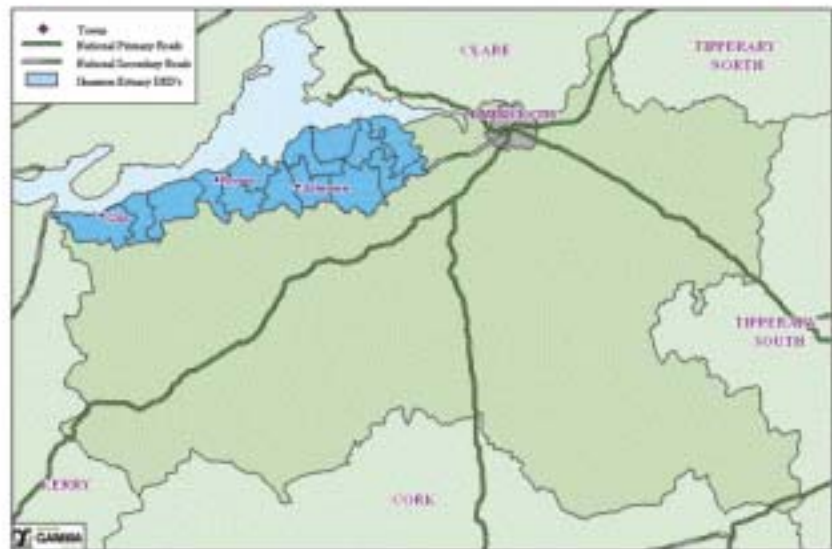


Figure 7. Structure for Development of Estuary



Limerick's new marina and navigation project has, for the first time, created the missing link between inland waterways and the open sea. A marina has been created in the heart of the City beside the Hunt Museum for boats to access the Estuary and beyond. This offers an opportunity to promote the Shannon Region as Ireland's premier location for watersports and marina related activities. Boat traffic in Limerick City is expected to increase five fold.

Shannon Development, having conducted a study in conjunction with the other relevant bodies and interests, has recommended a way forward to the development of the potential of the Estuary.

Structure for Future Development of The Shannon Estuary

The Shannon Estuary Coastal Zone Management Strategy is currently being prepared and active investment is required if its objectives are to be realised and the full potential of the Estuary is to be exploited.

Askeaton

Askeaton is a small market town about twenty-five kilometres from Limerick City, just off the N69. The population of the town declined from 893 in 1991 to 851 in 1996. Even

with its unique character and fine historic monuments, Askeaton has failed to develop its tourism potential. The services available in the town include a bank, credit union, schools and retail outlets. There are some well-maintained public recreation areas, but the town also contains a number of empty and derelict properties that detract from the overall impression of the town. There is significant industrial employment in close proximity, especially at Aughinish Alumina Ltd, Wyeth Nutritional Ireland and Southern Chemicals Ltd.

Foynes

Foynes is located thirty-two kilometres west of Limerick and is County Limerick's only seaport. The population of Foynes declined from 650 in 1991 to 558 in 1996. The

main employment opportunities are in Aughinish Alumina Ltd. and port activities. Foynes Flying Boat Museum, which celebrates the town's historic role as the hub for air traffic between the United States and Europe during the thirties and early forties, hosts an exhibition, audio-visual, graphic illustrations and a reconstructed radio and weather room. This tourism product attracts the greatest number of fee-paying visitors in the County. Future plans include the acquisition of the rest of the old terminal building and the development of a flight simulator which will be an additional attraction and used for 'Fear of Flying' courses.

Glin

Glin is a village rich in history, situated 13km West of Foynes with a legacy of buildings of architectural merit and historical importance. The centre of the village fronts onto a large square which slopes down to the Shannon Estuary. Agriculture and some local industry are now the main sources of employment in the area. The tourism potential of Glin needs further investment. Glin Castle, home of the Knight of Glin, is open to the public on a restricted basis.

Goal To develop the potential of the Shannon Estuary area

Objective A

To maximise the economic, recreational and social contribution of the Shannon Estuary area

Action	Lead Agency/Support	Timescale		
		2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2011
Prepare a report and develop sustainable opportunities in tourism, conservation and commercial uses of the Estuary	Shannon Estuary Coastal Zone Management Group	✓	✓	✓
Evaluate the economic potential of the Askeaton area including the industrial site	SFADCo	✓		
Improve the N69 route	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓	✓	
Construct the Shannon Estuary Advanced Water Improvement Scheme	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓		
Prepare and implement a Local Area Plan for Askeaton	Lim. Co. Co.	✓	✓	
Examine the growth potential of Foynes including the harbour	Shannon Foynes Port Company/SFADCo/ Lim. Co. Co.	✓		
Upgrade Askeaton and Foynes/Shanagolden Sewerage Schemes	Lim. Co. Co. / DoE&LG	✓	✓	
Further develop Colaiste Mhuire, Askeaton	VEC/School Interests	✓	✓	
Enhance lifelong learning, childcare and training at Shanagolden Education Resource Centre	VEC/ County Childcare Committee / WLR	✓	✓	
Examine the tourism potential of Glin and Askeaton	Lim. Co. Co./WLR/ SFADCo/ Tourism Sub Board	✓	✓	

Indicators

- Port traffic in Foynes (% change in volume of goods)
- Implementation of a development option agreed by the Coastal Zone Management Group
- Number of visitors to Foynes Flying Boat Museum

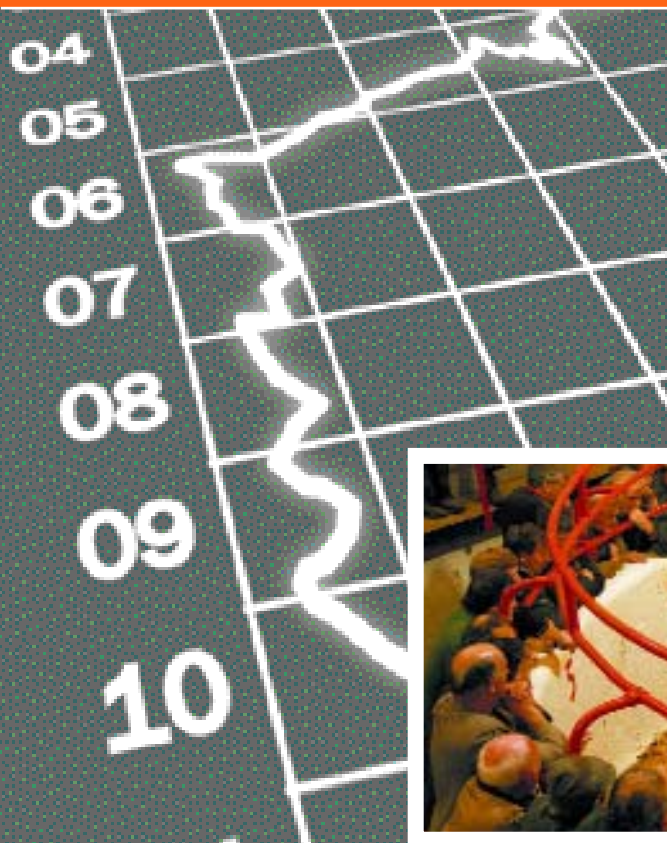


Adare Manor Hotel.

5 Balanced geographic development

5.4

Towns,
Villages and
Rural Areas



5.4



5 Balanced Geographic Development

5.4 Towns, Villages and Rural Areas

There are a large number of small towns and villages in County Limerick, most of which have shown a decreasing population in recent years. Below we outline the current issues affecting these towns and villages. Smaller towns are defined as being greater than 500 and less than 1,000 with villages and rural areas being less than 500 in the 1996 Census.

Towns

The growth of smaller towns has been curtailed due to the lack of investment in water and waste-water infrastructure. The Government's priority is to comply with the

strong in some of these areas due mainly to an active community and voluntary sector.

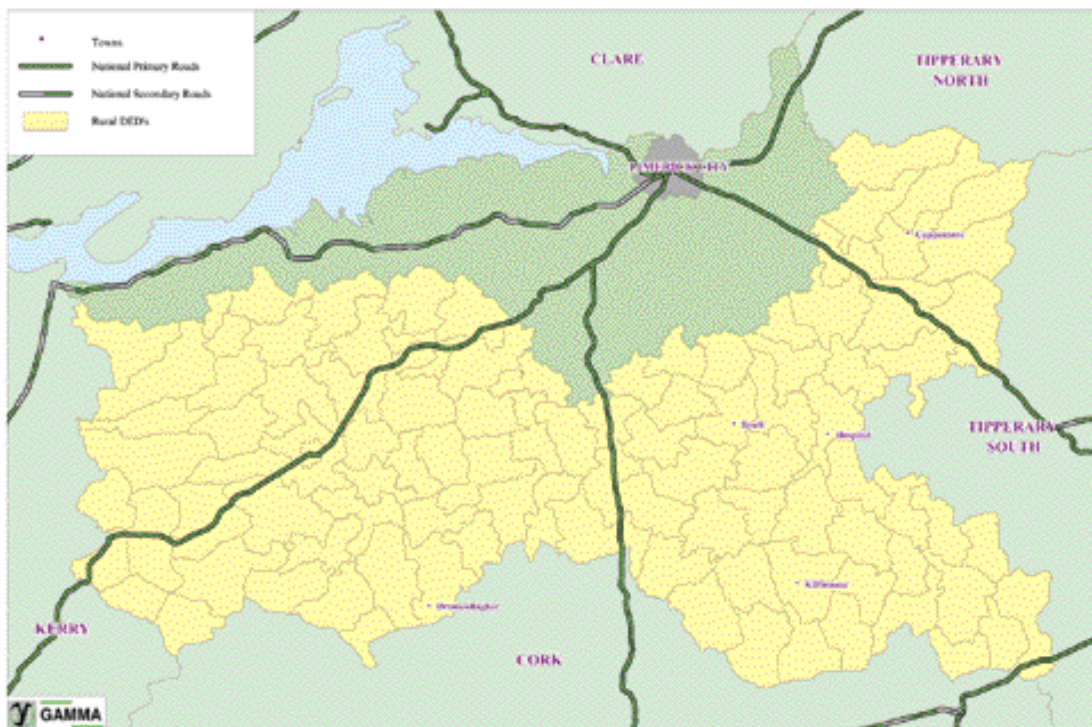
The town centres have suffered, in some cases from vacant and underutilised premises. The services function traditionally performed by small towns has declined because of the increased mobility of the population, and the large retail outlets available in Limerick City and other large urban centres.

Villages and Rural Areas

People who live in villages and rural areas are prepared to forego proximity to essential services in favour of the attractiveness of the rural environment and the more relaxed pace of life. Indeed the Quality of Life Survey referred to in Section One shows that the majority of people are happy with the area in which they live.

European Union's Urban Waste Water Directive (1991). The result of this is that the facilities in Cities and large urban centres are being prioritised and upgraded. For County Limerick the lack of investment is impacting on the ability of the towns to attract residential and commercial activity. The residential development that has occurred in these settlements has been largely social housing - which has led to a socio-economic imbalance in the population. Social and recreational infrastructure is

Map 6. Towns, Villages and Rural Areas



The smaller and remoter villages in particular are subject to selective migration with younger people leaving in response to greater opportunities for higher education and employment. A high dependency ratio exists in many of these areas. A change in working patterns has meant the focus of social life has shifted away from the home and community. This has a negative impact on sporting and voluntary organisations who are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit volunteers.

Rural transport currently lacks a fully integrated national approach. A comprehensive audit of Rural Transport, both public and private, has been undertaken in County Limerick by the County Development Board and is identifying significant gaps in services which need to be addressed. A key finding of this audit is that there is a lack of discretion at local level for planning, purchasing

and licensing of rural transport services. Rural isolation will be lessened by rural transport initiatives.

Ground waters are the source for most of the water supplies in rural areas and these are mainly managed by private group water schemes. The Environmental Protection Agency Report on the quality of "**Drinking Water in Ireland**" (2000), showed that the quality of group water schemes continues to be unsatisfactory with only 59% of samples tested being successful. One of the actions identifies the need to improve and upgrade these schemes.

Goal *To enhance towns as commercial and residential centres and to protect and sustain villages and rural areas.*

Objective A

To improve the physical, social and economic infrastructure of the smaller towns

Action	Lead Agency/Support	Timescale		
		2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2011
Promote agreed areas as locations for commercial activity	Enterprise Action Group	✓	✓	
Seek investment in water and sewerage infrastructure	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓	✓	✓
Develop Public / Private Partnerships for sewerage infrastructure	Lim. Co. Co./ Developers/ Community Groups	✓	✓	
Examine the potential of vacant or under-utilised properties in towns	Lim. Co.Co.	✓	✓	
Ensure that the number and strength of garda stations is maintained	Gardaí / CDB	✓		
Provide second level, further education and back-to-education initiatives in Cappamore, Hospital and Dromcollogher	VEC/School Interests	✓	✓	
Develop a new post-primary college in Dromcollogher	VEC/Diocese/School Interests	✓		
Promote Cappamore as a centre for indigenous e-business	SFADCo/ Lim. Co.Co./ Cappamore Development Association	✓	✓	
Further develop the Kilfinane Outdoor Education Centre	VEC		✓	
Prepare local area plans for Bruff and Hospital	Lim. Co.Co.	✓		

Objective B

To address the decline in villages and rural areas

Action	Lead Agency/Support	Timescale		
		2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2011
Support the establishment and growth of small businesses in villages	CEB/Local Dev. Cos	✓		
Enhance educational opportunities in rural areas	Preschool, Primary & Post Primary Sectors/ Adult Learning Board/	✓	✓	✓
Identify innovative ways of retaining services in villages	Local Dev. Cos./ Lim. Co. Co./ Community Groups	✓	✓	
Develop an action plan from the Audit of Rural Transport 2002	County Development Board/Rural Transport Action Group	✓	✓	
Improve and upgrade private water supply schemes	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG/ Group Water Supply Schemes	✓	✓	
Upgrade public water supplies	Lim. Co. Co./ DoE&LG	✓	✓	
Provide additional sewerage facilities in villages	Lim. Co. Co./DoE&LG Private Developers	✓	✓	
Enhance villages through the village renewal schemes	Lim. Co. Co. /Tidy Towns Groups	✓	✓	✓

Indicators

- Quantity and frequency of public transport
- Number of water and sewerage schemes upgraded
- Water quality of private group schemes and public water supply schemes
- Number of participating towns and villages in the Tidy Towns Competition
- Points received by participating centres in the Tidy Towns Competition
- Number of garda stations