

Press Release
20 October 2006

Gateway Investment Priorities Report launched by Minister Roche.

Mr. Dick Roche TD, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, launched a report (20 October 2006) entitled *Implementing the NSS: Gateway Investment Priorities Study*. The report, jointly commissioned by the Department for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Forfás, aims to provide renewed impetus to the development of the nine Gateway locations identified in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) launched in 2002.

The report presents an overview of NSS Implementation progress in each of the nine Gateways. It also identifies key investment needs in the Gateways, and proposes mechanisms through which these can feed into the new 2007-2013 NDP and other national policies and programmes.

In welcoming the report, the Minister said that “Ireland is experiencing unprecedented population growth in recent years, mostly as a result of net immigration. In the period 2002 to 2006, the country’s population grew by over 317,000, which represents an increase in the population of just over 8%. We now have the opportunity to stimulate a more balanced regional development by creating dynamic cities that provide a competitive and vibrant environment for enterprise, and a high quality of life that attracts people to live there.”

Martin Cronin, Chief Executive of Forfás, endorsed the findings of the report and said that “Gateway cities play a crucial role as key drivers in developing competitive regions in modern knowledge-based economies. In the emerging global economy, trade and investment decisions will increasingly be influenced by competition from international cities and regions.”

Two recurring themes were identified during the analysis of each Gateway, where the pace of development and implementation needs to be urgently increased:

Improved investment prioritisation and funding availability in favour of the Gateways. There is a need now to focus on addressing the challenge of accelerating the development of the Gateways. In a resource-constrained environment, it is essential that regional strategies are produced that deliver more than just piecemeal improvements scattered across a region. To address this, the report calls for a re-affirmation of the role of the Gateways as drivers of growth in the next NDP, with an explicit commitment to meeting their investment needs.

Improved coordination of Gateway planning and investment within and among local, regional and national levels. Gateway development involves not just physical infrastructure, but also the development of labour force participation, the enterprise and economic base, skills, R&D, and cultural and recreational infrastructures. This need for a packaged approach presents significant challenges. It requires clear and dynamic leadership for the coordination of a wide number of stakeholders across government departments, regional and local stakeholders. Good communications among these stakeholders is essential to ensure clarity of vision and ongoing commitment to the focused development of each Gateway. The report proposes a number of mechanisms designed to enhance communication among relevant stakeholders, including the establishment of a Gateway Implementation Group that would proactively drive progress.