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2.0 Existing Policy and Guidance Framework

The Limerick Framework Implementation Plans (LRFIPs) are positioned in the wider context of relevant EU, national, regional, and local level policy frameworks. This fit is critically important for successful implementation and in order to position the regeneration programme to secure mainstream funding to continue with the regeneration process in the city in the medium- to longer-term.

This section presents an evaluation of current orientations of policy in key areas relevant to the LRFIPs. It connects policy frameworks at EU level, to national policies and local level implementation arrangements. Over the last two to three years, the public sector reform agenda has been taking shape, resulting in changes in institutional arrangements and policy priorities in key areas of government policy relevant to the LRFIPs. The public sector reform agenda has been influenced by the current fiscal and economic crisis but also addresses long-standing structural problems.

2.1 EU Level

It is important that the overall approach and content of the LRFIP are in keeping with best practice in the wider European context and that an integrated approach is adopted to regeneration and development of the regeneration areas themselves and the city as a whole. A number of important developments at European level are relevant here, including the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European cities, the role of cities as "engines of economic growth in Europe", as reflected in the Europe 2020 strategy, and the stronger priority given to sustainable urban development in the EU Structural and Investment Funds (2014-2020)

2.1.2 Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities

The "Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities" was drawn up to facilitate agreement on common principles and strategies for urban development policy across EU Member States. It commits Member States to initiate a political debate on how to integrate the principles and strategies of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities into national, regional and local development policies. It further seeks to use the tool of integrated urban development and related governance structures to guide implementation and to promote balanced territorial organisation based on a European polycentric urban structure.

Under the Charter, all dimensions of sustainable development should be taken into account, namely: economic prosperity, social balance and a healthy environment. The Charter recognises that cities cannot fulfill their function as engines of social progress and economic growth unless holistic strategies and coordinated action by those involved in the urban development process, reaching beyond the boundaries of individual cities, are prepared. Specifically, the Charter recommends:

i) Making greater use of integrated urban development policy approaches - a process in which the spatial, sectoral and temporal aspects of key areas of urban policy are coordinated and where the involvement of economic actors, stakeholders and the general public is essential.

ii) Modernizing infrastructure networks and improving energy efficiency

iii) Proactive innovation and educational policies

iv) Creating and ensuring high-quality public spaces, where a 'Baukultur' approach is recommended whereby the sum of all the cultural, economic, technological, social and ecological aspects influencing the quality and process of planning and construction is promoted

v) Special attention to deprived neighbourhoods within the context of the city as a whole. A policy of social integration which contributes to reducing inequalities and preventing social exclusion is seen as the best guarantee for maintaining security in our cities, including:
• Pursuing strategies for upgrading the physical environment
• Strengthening the local economy and local labour market policy
• Proactive education and training policies for children and young people
• Promotion of efficient and affordable urban transport.

The LRFIP adopts an integrated urban development approach to regeneration in accordance with the principles of the Leipzig Charter.

2.2 Planning Context

The Limerick City Development Plan is part of a systematic hierarchy of land use and spatial plans, including the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines. It is informed by the plans and strategies of the Government and other public agencies in general. Through the Planning and Development Act 2000, the following hierarchy of policy in relation to planning is established:

• National Development Plan (NDP);
• National Spatial Strategy (NSS);
• Regional Planning Guidelines;
• County, Borough and City Development Plans;
• Local Area Plans.

The LRFIP represents lower level local planning and thus it is important that its framework sits comfortably within the hierarchy of existing policy. Ultimately this LRFIP will feed up into the City Development Plan and be adopted as part of the development plan process.

2.2.1 National Context

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) sets out a programme of integrated investments aimed at underpinning Ireland's ability to grow in a manner that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. It states that the Atlantic Gateways of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford have much initial potential through strengthened individual cities, enhanced connectivity and a collaborative approach to planning and promotion, to develop a second major metropolitan corridor on the island of Ireland.

Perhaps of most interest to the preparation of the LRFIP and the implementation of Regeneration policies in Limerick is the Social Housing Provision and Renewal Sub Programme contained within the NDP. This programme is being targeted at the provision of an expanded range of tailored social housing support and an accelerated programme of renewal and improvement of the existing stock. The aims of the LRFIP are very much in line with the aims of the Sub-Programme which seeks to deliver a greater quantity of social housing options and at the same time to improve the overall quality of this tenure. Thus in line with the NDP, the LRFIP commits to delivering high quality development in mixed community settings with proper attention to the planning and design of new housing to ensure that developments do not

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contribute to or reinforce social segregation.
The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is a 20-year plan which aims to promote a better balance of population, jobs and development between the regions. It has identified a number of Gateway Cities including Limerick, which are the focus for population and economic growth in their respective regions. It gives effect to the development of Gateways like Limerick as national and regional engines of growth and establishes a coherent hierarchical, spatial structure. Some of the key aspects of the NSS which have influenced the LRFIP are the:

- Spatial structure set out in the strategy in relation to the Mid-West region including the designation of the Limerick/Shannon Gateway;
- Role of Gateways and the need for critical mass;
- Role of linkages in terms of good transport, communications and energy networks;
- Suggested range of policy responses to strengthen communities;
- The need for effective integration of land use and transportation policy within the spatial structure of urban areas.

The Atlantic Gateways initiative is based on the NSS and aims to mobilise the gateways of Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway through interaction and collaboration to create a critical mass in the regions to balance that of Dublin.

"Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, are environmentally sustainable and contribute to a high quality of life for residents". This is a key message in Our Sustainable Future, a Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012), which seeks to guide social inclusion, sustainable communities and spatial planning in Ireland. The report highlights how developing sustainable communities involves a range of social issues such as improving social inclusion and reducing poverty. This is a key guiding principle in the preparation and implementation of the LRFIP, which focuses as much on the social pillar as it does on the physical and economic pillars. The report further highlights why communities must be enabled to identify and address social and economic issues in their own areas and promotes the involvement of local communities in advancing sustainable communities. This approach is very much adopted in the LRFIP and supports the mechanism for extensive ongoing consultation with the regeneration communities.

Finally the report notes that the residential sector is a major contributor to national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with the EPA forecasting that the sector accounts for 12% of total national emissions over the 2008-2012 period. The report states that in order to meet our climate change targets, all housing will need to be designed or retrofitted to cost-optimal standards. This is a key guiding principle within the LRFIP and has influenced the proposed retrofit strategy detailed in the plan.

There are a number of other relevant National Guidelines which have been issued by the Minister and which have influenced the overall direction of the LRFIP. Accordingly in setting out the overall Implementation strategy and associated objectives, the LRFIP has considered, *inter alia*, the following guidelines:

- Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2008)
- Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide 2008 Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (2007)
- Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2007)
- Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities (2007)
- Landscape and Landscape Assessment: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2000)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Local Authorities
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines Housing Policy Statement (2011)
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013)

2.2.2 Regional Context

Within the policy framework of the NSS and the Atlantic Gateways Initiative, the Mid West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022, (RPGs) sets out a detailed development strategy for the Mid-West region. The RPGs recognise the impact of the current economic downturn, emphasising the need to focus development in the locations with the greatest potential. To achieve this, a stronger central core is needed that will drive growth in the wider region. As such, the RPGs prioritise the development of the Gateway and Hub to achieve the critical mass and value-added investment which the wider region requires.

The RPGs identify a 'zone' based strategy for the region and proposes that the identified zones be developed in ways that reflect their particular characteristics. Zone 1 which includes Limerick City is the core area of the region and one of the key requirements for this zone as set out in the RPGs is to consider how residential development will be accommodated on brownfield and redevelopment sites as well as in greenfield locations. The LRFIP seeks to deliver on this key requirement by regenerating existing residential units and communities within the existing urban fabric and settlement.

The Draft Mid-West Area Strategic Plan (2012) (MWASP) is a Planning, Land Use and Transportation Strategy, currently being developed to provide a comprehensive integrated transport and land-use plan in the Mid-West Region for the next 30 years. The plan stresses that the city must be an attractive place to live, work and visit so that it can function as the focus of the region and requires revitalization to achieve this. Quality of life is essential and in cities it is derived from a range of components. These include the availability of employment; access to social, cultural and amenity facilities; good public transport and a well-planned living environment, including public realm, which is fit for purpose. The MWASP states that responding to this challenge, amongst other things, will require progress on the Regeneration Programme. It also refers to the importance of the Regeneration Programme in achieving population targets for the city and the need to support the development of "Central Limerick" relative to "Suburban Limerick".

The Limerick and Clare Joint Housing Strategy, 2011-2017, prioritises the Limerick/Shannon Gateway, followed by Ennis, as the primary locations in the region for residential development. In the Gateway, the growth of the city is prioritised to rebalance recent patterns of development which saw significant population increase in the Limerick suburbs. The Strategy acknowledges that the NSS and RPG population targets are ambitious, particularly as there has been a sudden slowdown in housing output. The Strategy states that the Regeneration Programme in particular is critical to redirecting population growth into Limerick City and to the success of the Gateway overall. It finds that insufficient growth in the regeneration areas would have serious implications for the implementation of regional and national policy.

The Retail Strategy for the Mid West Region, 2010 - 2016, states that Limerick City Centre has fallen behind other cities in the State and no longer performs to its Tier 1 Status in the shopping hierarchy. The Strategy highlights that if the city centre is not prioritised as a retail destination, it will accelerate the broader deterioration of the city. Limerick City Centre is in urgent need of comprehensive retail development to prevent further erosion of its retail position and stimulate the wider regeneration of the city. The Strategy seeks to re-establish Limerick City Centre at the top of the regional hierarchy as the preferred location for new retail development in the Limerick Metropolitan Area.

The Retail Strategy however also identifies lower tier retail development within identified District Centres throughout the city and highlights Roxboro as such a centre. It specifically refers to this District Centre in the context of ongoing regeneration in the area and states that "in the short term, it is possible there may be pressure for the regeneration of the Roxboro Centre, which should be supported in accordance with the growth strategy outlined in the regeneration programme, provided that it does not significantly increase the amount of retail floorspace nor alter the mix between convenience, comparison and services floorspace". Outside of Roxboro District Centre, other centres with potential for retail development within the regeneration areas are the neighbourhood centres. These offer potential to accommodate a local catchment and provide top-up shopping facilities.

The main aim of the Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy 2012 is to develop a framework to coordinate the objectives and targets of key stakeholders in a cohesive and integrated plan for the area and to work together in ensuring the provision, management and use of quality facilities and services for everyone, including future generations. The strategy is sub-regional and high-level in its approach, and does not, therefore, focus on community-based or community-level facilities although it does recognise their importance. The need to provide for those who are in danger of being marginalised and excluded is promoted within the strategy and it is acknowledged that most organisations have regard to this need when

developing strategies. The LRFIP has adopted a 'life-cycle' approach in consideration of recreational requirements in the regeneration areas to inclusively provide for all groups in society. The provision of recreation and sports facilities is an integral part of the LRFIP.

2.2.3 Local Context
Whilst there are a number of policy documents at local level influencing development within the city and which have guided the LRFIP in its overall approach, there is only one statutory document with legal effect guiding and controlling development, namely the Limerick City Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (CDP). It is therefore imperative that the framework of the LRFIP sits comfortably within the City Development Plan and that its implementation strategy is ultimately adopted as part of the development plan process.

The CDP sets out Limerick City Council's policies for the development of Limerick City to 2016 and beyond including the regeneration areas. The CDP confirms that up to 70% of the increase of the population for the Limerick/Shannon Gateway has been allocated to Limerick City thereby mandating the need to support considerable future public investment in regeneration in the city. The CDP proposes to increase population by 21,450 persons by 2022, thereby necessitating the provision of an additional 9,149 residential units. Existing undeveloped land in the city (excluding regeneration areas) has the potential to accommodate 5,678 units and the CDP states that the regeneration areas have an indicated capacity of 4,400 additional units (133 hectares). The CDP states that "given the compactness of the city it is not possible to prioritise areas other than the regeneration areas" and has committed to the provision of 2,000 additional units prior to 2016 with the balance of 2,400 provided in the period after that. Whilst the delivery of 2,000 new residential units within the regeneration areas prior to 2016 is not likely, having regard in particular to the current economic situation, the LRFIP seeks to ensure that it continues to facilitate the provision of such units and puts in place suggested mechanisms to stimulate private development within the regeneration areas. The CDP strongly supports ongoing regeneration in the city and the work of all of

those involved. It has two strong policies which seek to support the implementation of the Regeneration Programme in a coordinated and sustainable manner and to co-operate with the Regeneration Agencies (now the Office of Regeneration) and the other agencies in the region to deliver the goals and objectives set out in the Regeneration Programme (policy RG1). It also seeks to zone the regeneration areas in a flexible manner to facilitate the delivery of the Masterplans (policy RG.2). It highlights that the delivery of a much stronger social mix is paramount to the success and sustainability of the new housing estates in the regeneration areas and acknowledges that such a mix has to be greater than just mixed tenure. The CDP states that it hopes to change the tenure structure within the regeneration areas from its existing status of 60% private ownership and 40 %[1] rental to 80% private ownership to 20% rental (page 55 of the CDP).

The CDP is clear in its support for regeneration stating that "it will offer sufficient flexibility that will allow the Masterplans to be implemented in a coordinated and sustainable manner" (pp.56). Furthermore it specifically requests that LRFIPs are prepared for the four areas setting out the key priorities that will guide development in the future. Whilst it acknowledges that the priorities shall differ for each of the areas it does request that a number of principles are incorporated into the LRFIP including the requirement for environmental assessments, economic strategies, permeability plans, design codes and sustainable energy zones. The LRFIP has been prepared having regard to these requirements (with the exception of a sustainable energy zone[2]) and incorporates the necessary strategies, codes and plans to provide for a holistic document in accordance with the CDP. In addition to the principles referenced above, the CDP also sets out a number of local objectives that shall be addressed within the LRFIP for each of the four regeneration areas. Whilst the objectives are specific to each area, they are very much focused on the four pillars promoted within the LRFIP including economic, social, physical and environmental issues. These objectives have been assessed in the context of available funding and the current economic climate and have been incorporated into the LRFIP in so far as possible. In any case, a number of the objectives stated

[1] Small Area Population Statistics CSO 2011
[2] It was an objective in Chapter 7 of the Limerick City 2010-2016 Development Plan that the regeneration area, or a portion of it, should be established as a Sustainable Energy Zone. As Limerick City was not one of five the Authorities chosen for this program and the programme has since closed, the Office of Regeneration will nevertheless endeavour to increase the environmental performance of the proposed refurbishment project through the Better Energy Communities Program from SEAI. The Better Energy Communities Programme is the national upgrade programme to retrofit Ireland's building stock and facilities to high standards of energy efficiency, thereby reducing fossil fuel use, running costs and greenhouse gas emissions. The purpose of this program is to test new and innovative approaches to achieving high quality and efficient delivery of improvements in energy efficiency within Irish communities. We will work with SEAI to show how we can develop our refurbishment program in innovative ways to fit the criteria of this program.

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in the CDP have already been carried out in the development of the LRFIP including the preparation of a Flood Risk Assessment for King's Island, the development of amenity strategies and the wider consideration of social issues and deliverables.

The Limerick City Centre Strategy 2008 looks at a number of themes with the aim of enhancing and improving the city centre, including access and movement, urban design, urban living, heritage and culture and environmental management. It has compartmentalised the central area structured around the city centre into four different zones. The only zone to touch the regeneration area is the Medieval Zone adjoining St. Mary's Park. It does not however include St. Mary's Park. The Strategy clearly states that "although the Regeneration Areas fall outside the scope of the defined 'City Centre' Limerick City Council recognises the necessity for clear co-ordination and will seek to work with the regeneration agencies (now the Office of Regeneration) to ensure that the focus areas are clearly linked with the city centre and fully benefit from the service, amenities and public transport links intended to be provided as part of this strategy". The LRFIP is focused on introducing measures to achieve not only greater permeability within the regeneration areas but also greater connectivity with adjoining areas and the city centre and has thus had regard to such relevant proposals within the City Centre Strategy.

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2.3 Economic Context

2.3.1 Eu Structural and Investment Funds (2014-2020)

In EU Structural and Investment Funds (2014-2020), there is a stronger emphasis on urban and regional development, the role of cities as engines of growth and the importance of vibrant and inclusive urban centres. These priorities are linked to objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and targets (as outlined below). Implementation of local development is supported in the new phase of EU Structural Funds and new instruments have been introduced namely: Community-led Local Development and the Integrated Territorial Investment Instrument and a stronger emphasis on "financial engineering" using loan or investment funds rather than grant funding. The instrument to support urban development and regeneration is known as JESSICA (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas). It is an initiative of the European Commission developed in co-operation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). EU Member States can choose to invest some of their EU structural fund allocations in revolving funds to help recycle financial resources to accelerate investment in Europe's urban areas. In the EU Structural and Investment Funds at local level, the emphasis is on integrated approaches implemented via a common strategy and multi-stakeholder partnership. The local area-based strategy should respond to local needs and potential and involve a process of community participation.

2.3.2 Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-2016: Medium Term Exchequer Framework

The Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-2016: Medium Term Exchequer Framework provides details of the funding that will be provided up to 2016. This framework has temporarily replaced the NDP due to the financial crisis. It has limited allocation of funding but it does commit to continue to provide funding to any project that is already at contract stage. In the case of Limerick, this includes King John's Castle and Limerick Riverside development in the city. The framework also makes a commitment to continue to provide funding for the Limerick regeneration areas. Though one-off projects may be announced, any project that is not specifically mentioned within this framework will not receive funding.

2.3.3 Action Plan for Jobs, 2013 Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation

The Action Plan for Jobs outlines a broad range of initiatives that provide the policy context for key issues that will support the delivery of an economic strategy for Limerick Regeneration. This 2013 Plan is centred on seven "Disruptive Reforms", described as "high-impact measures" (and 333 actions across Government departments). The "Disruptive Reforms" are mainly medium- to longer-term measures targeting new sectors with potential for job growth (ICT, energy), opportunities for business development (e.g., on-line trading) and including one measure targeting the long-term unemployed. In the context of proposed economic regeneration programmes, the following support the fundamental objectives of the LRFIP.

- JobsPlus – an introduction of new incentives to encourage businesses to recruit long term unemployed people.
- Youth Employment package – aimed at ensuring young people who are not working or studying receive an offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship.
- Application of National Pension Reserve Fund to support SMEs to include SME Equity Fund, SME Turnaround Fund and the SME Credit Fund.
- Creation of a Microfinance loan fund scheme to enable access to alternative funding sources for micro-enterprises.
- Establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Micro-Enterprise and Small Business.
- Devising a Government Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship that will also include a focus on Youth Entrepreneurship and Female Entrepreneurship.
- Maximising procurement opportunities that will include the examination of inclusion of Social Clauses in future procurement.
- Development of a National Plan for Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprise and SMEs to promote more dynamic and internationally competitive SMEs by providing targeted support to the sector.
- Greater focus placed on the manufacturing value chain and services that support it.
- ForfÁS review of social enterprise and role in supporting local employment.

2.3.4 Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, April 2013

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) advises the Government on future skills requirements and is a group comprised of representatives of business, employees, education, training, Government departments and State agencies. The EGFSN Statement of Activity 2012 outlines projected skills needs at national and sectoral levels, priority education and training requirements in addition to advising Government on the content, delivery and outcomes of education and training programmes. Among the key sectors for prioritisation by the EGFSN were Cleantech, Sustainable Building, International Business Services, Food & Drink, Tourism and Cultural which are consistent with the sectoral focus in the economic strategy for regeneration. The focus on green economy skills and niche food and beverage skills complies with the training and employment focus proposed in LRFIP.

2.3.5 National Digital Strategy, June 2013, Department of Communications and Natural Resources

Government's new National Digital Strategy (NDS), "Doing More With Digital" (2013) highlights the importance of digital industries to the national economy. Based on research commissioned as part of the development of the new digital strategy, digital industries now account for 4.4% of GDP and support 95,000 jobs. As such, the sector is as important in terms of jobs as agriculture, forestry and fisheries and is just slightly smaller in scale than financial services. Digital is shaping Ireland's future at a faster rate. The National Digital Strategy is seen as an important first step in broadening the focus from solely looking at connectivity to creating a vision and building momentum on digital adoption. This involves bringing together different public and private sector activities in the digital domain. The launch of the strategy marks a "whole of government" approach to digital. The strategy focuses on the role of Government and of society in general in fostering digital engagement. It highlights the social and economic benefits that can accrue from this. The NDS emphasises the importance of "getting more people on line", getting small businesses involved in trading on-line, roll-out of education programmes in digital skills, jobs requiring digital skills and e-Inclusion. Initiatives to further promote to e-government and e-Health are also included.

The initial phase of the National Digital Strategy is focused on:

1. stimulating the indigenous economy by helping small Irish business to expand on-line,

2. support in preparing the next generation for future jobs and,

3. making sure everyone in society benefits from digital.

Key initiatives in the National Digital Strategy include:

Indigenous Businesses and Jobs: Indigenous small businesses, such as taxi drivers, hairdressers, restaurants and local shops servicing the local domestic market, are seen as the backbone of communities, provide essential local employment. While internet-based trading is proven to help small business to grow, many such businesses have no significant on-line trading presence. Linked to this, under the National Digital Strategy, Government is launching the Trade On-Line Voucher Scheme providing vouchers, up to €2,500, to 2,000 small businesses. These funds are to help them get the resources, training and expertise needed to develop an on-line trading presence.

Education: In the modern workplace, knowledge of how to perform a variety of tasks on-line is growing in importance. Across Europe only 1 job in 10 will not need a digital skill by 2015. To improve digital skills from a young age, cooperation across government has enabled 100Mbps broadband to be made available to every second level school in the country. This is seen as the foundation for developing a range of interventions to support schools and teachers learning from each other, sharing best practice, and facilitating young people using digital technology.

Inclusion: Experience has shown that with the right support and training, even the oldest people in the population have the ability to harness the potential of the internet and improve their quality of life. The NDS commits to halving the number of non-liners by 2016, bringing an additional 288,000 people into the digital community. Schemes such as BenefIT4 will provide €1.4m in funding for these types of training programs in 2013 alone, reaching 24,000 people in locations across Ireland.

2.3.6 Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016
The Limerick City Development Plan highlights the focus that will be placed on areas of regeneration as part of the overall Economic Development Strategy. The Plan has highlighted many advantages of developing these areas as part of the overall economic strategy. These include the optimisation of existing infrastructure and local resources and the proximity of residential or mixed use areas to key economic assets that will provide employment. Other key objectives include the development of Business Improvement Districts, attention to derelict sites and provision of supports to facilitate development.

2.3.7 Supporting Economic Recovery and Jobs Locally, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government 2012
The Supporting Economic Recovery and Jobs Strategy outlines measures being taken by Local Authorities to assist enterprises in the areas of business charges, local enterprise support and economic growth. In association with the sectoral strategy, over 2,000 separate actions and enterprise supports were identified as the basis for future planning that included economic development strategies and promotion, financial incentives and the provision and maintenance of enterprise infrastructure. It is also proposed to establish Socio-Economic Committees in each local authority to bring a greater coherence and oversight to the range of local and community development interventions – this is also addressed below in relation to local government reform.

2.3.8 Local Government Reform / Alignment with Local Development Companies
Proposals to strengthen local democracy and local government and to align local government with local development are being progressed. The detailed proposals of government were presented in Putting People First, Department of Environment Community and Local Government, and the Final report of the Local Government / Local Development Alignment Steering Group (October 2012.)

Focusing on the local Limerick situation, a new single local authority to replace Limerick City and County Councils is being created. The re-organisation linked to the amalgamation will be completed by the time of the election of a single authority in mid-2014. Under the dual manager for Limerick City and County Councils, convergence of policies and practices is progressing, the Economic Development Directorate has been set up, a new Office of Regeneration established under the Director of Service, Home and Community and a new management structure for joint City and County-wide service delivery is in place.

In terms of the broader reform of local government, key proposals include the development of a national local and community development policy which will set out national priorities and a framework for a cross-government approach at local level. This is combined with setting up an Inter-Departmental Group to support the development of that policy and a "whole of government approach" to local and community development. This includes a coordinated approach in planning budgets and targeting resources. An important emphasis is for local government to take on a greater role in economic, social and community development, extending the functions of local government into new areas.

Key instruments for planning and implementation of the policy locally are:

- The development of five-year County/City local and community plans covering all state-funded local and community development interventions.
- The setting up of a Socio-Economic Committee (SEC) in each county / city council, established on a statutory basis and comprising representatives of the local authority, state agencies, local and community partners and other stakeholders. The City / County Development Boards are to be disbanded with some of their functions transferred to the SECs and some into the local authority.
- New Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) will be integrated with local authority business support units to create a one-stop-shop for business support.
- In the reform of local structures and planning, consideration is to be given to how the new / reformed structures can act as implementation mechanisms for EU Structural Funds in local development (e.g., LEADER in rural areas, and integrated urban development, use of financial engineering instrument for investment in infrastructure and other projects in cities, namely JESSICA) in the forthcoming period of EU Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020. All of these proposed changes and potential to develop new opportunities have been taken into consideration in the preparation of LRFIPs.

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2.3.9 Limerick 2030 – An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick, 2013

The new economic and spatial plan for the city, 'Limerick 2030 – An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick' (June 2013) sets out a number of objectives to change the infrastructure of the city centre and deliver a new vision for Limerick as a leading centre for commercial investment in the Mid-West region. The plan is published as a draft document for public consultation. It is intended to incorporate the plan into the Limerick City and County Development Plans. The cost of delivering the plan is estimated at €250 million, mainly based on private investment. It is estimated to have the potential to deliver 5,000 new jobs in the city centre and some 12,000 full-time equivalent jobs overall. The Limerick 2030 plan is structured around three main elements; an Economic Strategy, a Spatial Strategy and a Marketing Plan.

The Economic Strategy aims to position Limerick to capture a greater share of knowledge-based investment, supporting innovation, enterprise and new start ups. It aims to capitalise on existing strengths including the presence of three Higher Education institutions in Limerick (University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick Institute of Technology), the city's ICT and digital assets and its reputation for knowledge and technology-based businesses.

The Spatial Strategy aims to transform "the look" of the city centre through a number of "transformational" city centre projects. It is especially focused on developing the city centre's retail potential as the prime shopping location in the region. It aims to reposition to city as a desirable place to do business, and attract new investment and enterprises into high quality and flexible space in the city. Amongst the transformational projects included in the plan are the following:

- A renaissance of Limerick's waterfront and the creation of an iconic destination building 'The Limerick Cultural Centre'.
- 'Great Streets' – the transformation of the three main streets; O'Connell Street, Catherine Street and Henry Street; re-development of the Arthur's Quay area to create a new city square;
- Refurbishment of Cruises Street and expansion of the shopping area (Penneys / Debenhams) there; creation of a new City Square/Plaza in the heart of the city.

- A city centre higher education campus to include facilities from LIT, UL and MIC as well as the development of the Opera Centre site as a location for new business and an Innovation Hub. This will be closely aligned to the city's colleges providing space and support for fledgling businesses.
- Restoration of the Georgian Quarter.
- Renewal of Colbert Station creating better links with city centre facilities through a new public transport interchange.

The Marketing Plan will include coordinated efforts across all sectors to rebrand and sell Limerick while challenging existing perceptions of the city. This includes highlighting Limerick as a resilient, attractive and forward-looking city, with academic energy and an edge in industry, culture, leisure and sport.

The objectives of the Limerick 2030 strategy include creating conditions for long-term growth and maximizing the local employment impact from the development and regeneration of the city. It has obvious strong links to the LRFIPs, targeting the regeneration of the most disadvantaged estates in the city. Opening up new opportunities in terms of local employment, education, and cultural life in the city could create favourable conditions for reducing disparities within the city, integrating the estates into the economic, social and cultural life of the city.

2.4 Social Context

2.4.1 Social Inclusion
The Government's **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016)** together with social inclusion elements of the National Development Plan (2007-2013) and, the latest social partnership agreement, Towards 2016, are the key policy documents detailing government's strategy and targets to support social inclusion for groups who are most vulnerable in society. However, these policies were published and targets for achievement of outcomes set in a different context (pre-recession) to that which now prevails. In terms of the orientation of social inclusion policy, key features are:

- the adoption of the life-cycle approach – i.e., recognising the needs of people at different ages but also cumulative effects (e.g., of deprivation) over the life-course
- promotion of a more joined-up and multi-disciplinary approach to policy making and
- the coordination of inputs from a wide range of players and integrated service delivery.

The goals of the **National Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016** are presented in terms of reaching specific poverty reduction targets by 2012 (interim target) and 2016 specific high level goals and corresponding targets are set for each stage of the life-cycle. The stages of the life-cycle are identified as: children (education-focused), people of working age (employment and participation focused), older people (community care services to maintain health and well-being and to support independence and activity into old age) and people with disabilities (employment and participation). High level goals and targets for poverty reduction are also set in relation to communities (housing, health and integration of migrants).

The approach to meeting the poverty target (overall and specific by life-cycle / group) is based on the three inter-connecting themes of income support, activation and services. Progress on the national poverty target was negatively affected (and partially reversed) in 2009/2010 linked to the impact of the economic recession particularly the rise in unemployment. Taking into account the severity of the economic crisis and that a new phase of strategic planning and programming is in development at EU level, new

priorities and targets are set for the forthcoming period (2014 to 2020). These are adopted within the broader framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy (the newest statement of strategic direction and priorities at EU level). With the onset of the economic crisis, Government has prioritised the following (National Reform Programme[3], Department of An Taoiseach, 2012):

- To protect the most vulnerable from the worst impact of the crisis;
- To reform income supports for children and people of working age;
- To strengthen activation policy to support people back into work.

The **National Reform Programme for Ireland (updated in 2012)** has identified targets for Ireland with reference to the Europe 2020 Strategy – in relation to poverty reduction, revising those set originally in 2007. In 2012, Government set sub-targets for reducing poverty in jobless households, as part of the national social target for poverty reduction (National Social Target for Poverty Reduction, October 2012, Department of Social Protection). The national level indicators are aligned with those set at EU level, as all EU Member States are required to set their own poverty target as part of Europe 2020 Strategy.

The **National Social Target for Poverty Reduction** in Ireland seeks to reduce consistent poverty to 4% by 2016 (interim target) and to 2% or less by 2020. This is from a baseline in 2010 of 6.2%. Ireland's contribution to the EU poverty target under Europe 2020 is to lift a minimum of 200,000 people out of the risk of poverty or exclusion by 2020 (representing 1% of the EU level target) taking 2010 as the baseline year. In the Ireland, new sub-targets for reducing poverty among children and jobless households (i.e., measured using household work intensity) will be set because of the higher risk of consistent poverty[4] amongst these groups and their importance in overall social and economic policy. The sub-target related to children in poverty is based on narrowing the differential in consistent poverty between children and adults; the sub-target related to poverty reduction in jobless households is to reduce the concentration of the population in consistent poverty in these households. At EU level, the Europe 2020 Strategy sets out the priorities and targets in areas of social policy and economic development, to be achieved for the EU and

Member States. Europe 2020 is a ten-year growth strategy addressed to overcoming the economic crisis as an immediate priority and the shortcomings of the growth model with a view to creating conditions for a more competitive economy with higher employment levels. The strategy is centred on delivering growth that is "smart", through more effective investments in education, research and innovation, "inclusive", by tackling job creation and poverty reduction, and "sustainable", through a move towards a low carbon economy. It is centred on five goals with high level targets set for each goal: employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and poverty reduction and climate change / energy.

The strategy also includes seven "flagship" initiatives in the following areas: innovation, the digital economy, industrial policy, employment (agenda for new skills and jobs), youth (education, transition to work, responding to high rates of youth unemployment), poverty (including improved access to work, social security, essential services such as healthcare and housing, etc. and education, social innovation, new partnerships between public and private sector). Targets set at EU level are translated into national targets in each EU Member State, reflecting different situations and circumstances. EU level targets related to the five goals and Irish targets set[5] are shown in the Table 1.1.

Thus the target for Ireland in its National Reform Programme is set at 60% by 2020. Ireland is just above the target for school drop-out rates (10.5%) and has set its target for this indicator at 8%.

In terms of policy responses to meet these targets relevant to the LRFIP, the employment priority and targets are addressed in Government's Action Plan for Jobs 2012/2013 and Supporting Economic Recovery and Jobs Locally, as outlined above, and Pathways to Work 2012 initiative (outlined below). In relation to early drop-out from education, the key measures are contained in Government's action plan (2005) for DEIS (Delivery of Equality of Opportunity in Schools) and other recent initiatives including the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy amongst Children and Young People (2011). In terms of poverty and social exclusion, policy responses to the crisis of unemployment are particularly relevant (e.g., the priority given to long-term unemployed, changes in

3   The National Reform Programme outlines to the European Commission the progress the State has made to date in achieving national Europe 2020 targets.
4   "Consistent poverty" is the official Government approved poverty measure used in Ireland. It was developed independently by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). This measure identifies the proportion of people, from those with an income below a certain threshold (less than 60% of median income), who are deprived of two or more goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living.
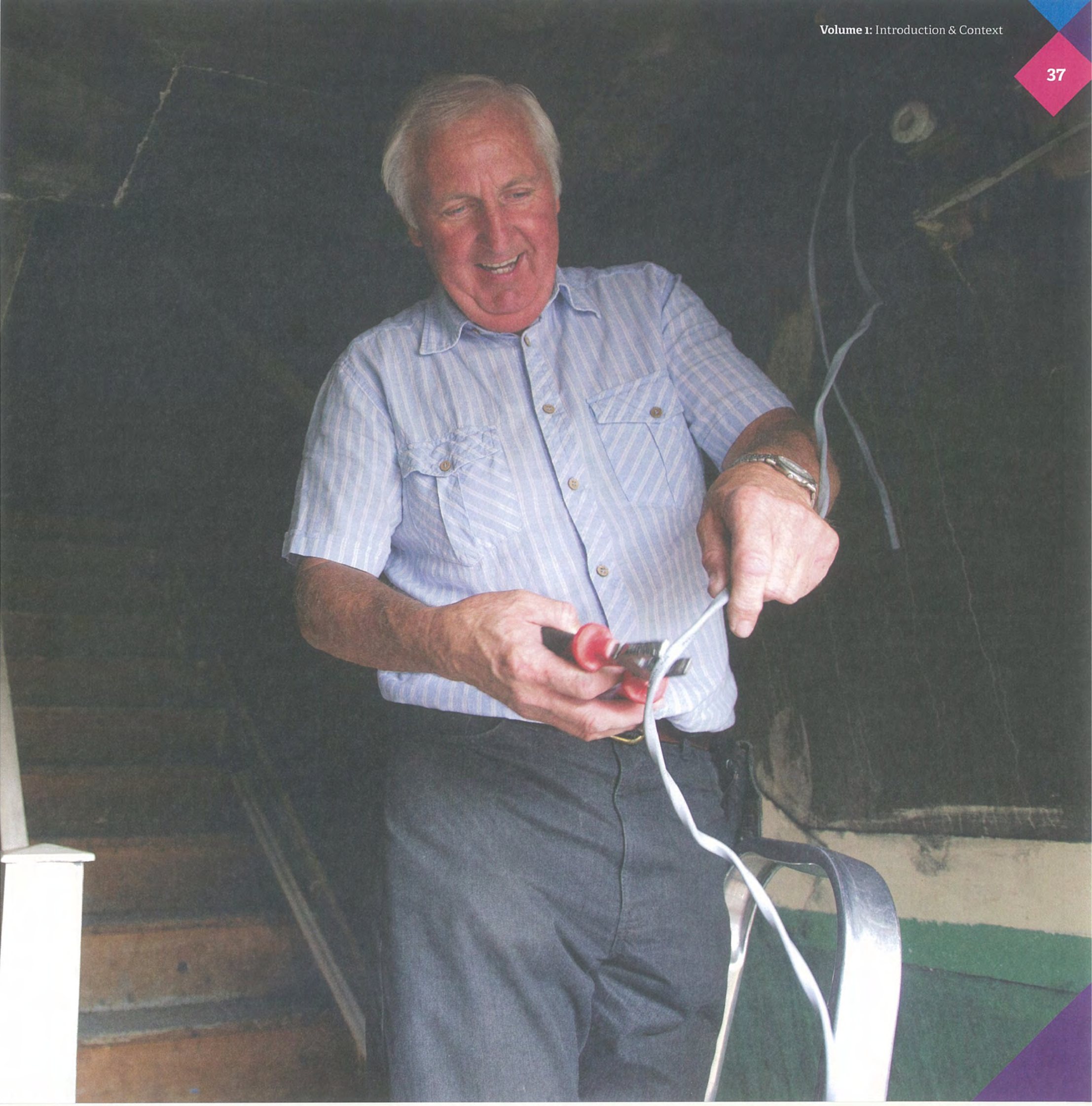5   Source: National Reform Programme for Ireland, (updated 2012), Department of An Taoiseach.

2. Policy Context

social protection to better support the transition from welfare to work, and the strong focus on activation measures), as well as social protection policies / income support, initiatives in education (e.g., reduction in early school leaving, back to education initiatives, access to third level) and services to children and families, older people and people with disabilities.

Five High Level Targets: Definition	EU Level (EU Wide)	Ireland
Employment: increase in the employment rate (%) for men and women aged 20-64 years	75%	69-71%
R&D / Innovation: combined public and private investment levels in this sector as % of GDP	3%	2%
Climate Change / Energy: (i) Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions % lower than 1990 (ii) Increase in % of energy from renewables (iii)% increase in energy efficiency	20% or even 30% if conditions are right 20% 20%	20% 16% Move towards 20%
Education: (i) Reduction in the school drop-out rates (%) (ii) Increase in rates (%) of 30-34–year-olds completing third level education	Early school leaving: Below 10% Third level education 30-34 year olds: At least 40%	Early school leaving: 10.5% in 2010, target 8% Third level education 30-34 year olds: 60%
Poverty / Social Exclusion: Reduction in the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion	20 million fewer people in / at risk of poverty	200,000 fewer people in / at risk of poverty

Table 1.1: Targets set at EU level are translated into national targets

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2.4.2 Activation of the Unemployed

Major reforms are taking place in activation of the unemployed. Many of the reforms are also linked to reforms in the further education and training sector (addressed below) and social protection. The impetus for the reform came from the challenges presented by the economic crisis including the extremely high rates of unemployment and increased demand for further education and training which could lead to "pathways to employment". The reforms are also guided by the needs of the economy (to develop in new areas of market demand) and weaknesses of effectiveness and coherence of the system of activation and training in place that was in place over many years, the latter centred on the role of FÁS.

Government policy on labour market activation was elaborated in the Pathways to Work initiative (February 2012) working in tandem with Government's Action Plan for Jobs (2012, 2013), as described above.

A key objective of labour market activation policy is "to prevent the drift into, and reduce, long-term unemployment". Long-term unemployed people have greater difficulties of re-entry to work and a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. The approach is to engage with every unemployed person, particularly, those at risk of long-term unemployment to provide them with a pathway to work. Pathways to Work has five strands:

I. More regular and on-going engagement with the unemployed
II. Greater targeting of activation places and opportunities
III. Incentivising the take-up of opportunities
IV. Incentivising employers to provide more jobs for people who are unemployed, and
V. Reforming institutions to deliver better services to the unemployed.

Various targets were set, including targets for moving long-term unemployed people into work by 2015 (75,000), reducing the average time spent on the Live Register from 21 months to less than 12 months by the end of 2015, by working with employers, increasing the proportion of vacancies filled by the Department's employment services from the Live Register (to 40% by 2015) and ensuring that each person in receipt of job-seeker payment fulfils their personal responsibility "to engage fully with the employment and training supports provided by the State, as a pre-condition for

receipt of their welfare payments" (Pathways to Work: Government Policy Statement on Labour Market Activation, February 2012).

To inform the targeting of resources on those groups most at risk of long-term unemployment as well as those who would benefit most from interventions, the Department of Social Protection with the Economic and Social Research Institute has developed the Probability of Exit (PEX) profiling model. A "one-stop-shop" approach linking activation (employment services, access to training / further education and employment placement) and welfare entitlements centred on the Intreo model (activation services) and PEX is envisaged with full roll-out / implementation to local labour / NEES offices. A stronger relationship between DSP and employers is also part of the approach with a view to identifying, accessing and providing a good match of candidates to vacancies.

Further aspects of the approach are:

*   A greater focus on supporting people to keep them close to the labour market, taking into account areas of emerging skills needs identified through the work of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and other relevant data;
*   "A systematic approach to the evaluation of programme impacts ... informed by the development of standardised data collection and reporting requirements and the sharing of data between relevant Government Departments and agencies" (Pathways to Work: Government Policy Statement on Labour Market Activation, February 2012);
*   Working with a mix of policy instruments including: employment services (interview, career / job advice, job placement, job recruitment), education and training, incentives / wage subsidies to employers and reforms of the welfare system to incentivise the transition to work.
*   Exploring the potential for payment for activation service interventions contingent on outcomes achieved for unemployed people.

2.4.3 Further Education and Training

Reforms in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector are strongly connected with the activation agenda. Focusing on institutional reforms in education, training and activation, FÁS (the national training and employment agency) is being disbanded and its services will be delivered by other agencies. In

January 2012, FÁS employment services were transferred to the newly-created National Employment and Entitlements Service (NEES), now known as Intreo Offices, Department of Social Protection. An important objective of this reform is to promote greater integration of passive (social protection / welfare) and active labour market policies.

On the Further Education and Training (FET) side, SOLAS (a new Further Education and Training Authority) is being established to replace FÁS (announced July 2011). An implementation plan is developed so that arrangements are put in place during 2013 to facilitate the transfer of funding for Further Education and Training to SOLAS in 2014. SOLAS, operating under the responsibility of the Department of Education and Skills, is tasked with overseeing funding and providing policy direction for the wide range of quality further education and training programmes and promoting greater integration within the sector. Additional reforms in the FET sector include the merger of Vocational Education Committees and the reduction in the number in the state from 33 to 16 Education and Training Boards (announced June 2011). Education and Training Boards (ETBs) have an expanded role compared with the VEC in the delivery of further education and training. Limerick City, Limerick County and Clare County have been merged to form the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). Institutional arrangements for an integrated further education and training sector – i.e., SOLAS, operating with a network of ETBs - will be fully in place by the end 2013 or early in 2014. The reformed FET sector will prioritise unemployed people, particularly long-term unemployed people, in keeping with government's "Pathways to Work" initiative. However, the FET sector will promote access to all learners – unemployed people, people in employment, school leavers including early school leavers, people with disabilities, people changing careers / jobs and part-time learners.

Key principles informing the development of SOLAS and the new integrated FET sector are as follows:

*   Learner centred provision including flexibility in service delivery options.
*   Outcome-based delivery including the development of appropriate measurement and data collection system by SOLUS which provide learner feedback and monitor progression into work placements, further education etc.

- Clear strategic direction in policy which must be evidence-based and allow for the appropriate prioritisation of scarce resources.
- Integrated and co-ordinated provision across the FET sector, greater co-ordination with the National Employments and Entitlements Service (Intreo Offices) in relation to the unemployed and greater co-operation with the higher education sector to facilitate progression to third level.

An important part of the existing system in VECs, particularly relevant to disadvantaged populations with low levels of educational qualification, is the Adult Education Guidance and Information Service (AEGIS), funded by the Department of Education and Skills. This service, reaching into communities, is important in getting people back into learning.

Key trends in FET are:

- The provision of shorter and more focused education and training courses and the use of on-line and blended learning, to increase the volume of provision and improve flexibility vis-à-vis learners and efficiencies in provision.
- The need to focus specific resources and provide additional supports to those furthest from the labour market is also acknowledged (e.g., via measures / support services offered by Local Development Companies).
- Delivery of the further education and training component based on a wider range of providers in the public, private and community / voluntary sector (rather than overwhelming reliance on a state training agency / public provision) and use of open calls / tendering.

Focusing on those in the population with adult literacy difficulties, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)[6] acknowledges the policy commitment and increased resources in further education in recent years, but also identifies some limitations in choice and weaknesses in the overall FET system to address the needs of this group , namely:

- Part-time courses offering insufficient tuition time (only two hours' tuition per week) to make sustainable gains;
- Insufficient accreditation offerings at Levels 1 and 2. For example, according to FETAC, 42% of VECs do

not offer this level of accreditation, whilst these levels are not available at all from other statutory providers.

- Providers reluctant to adopt blended learning opportunities;
- Limited integration of literacy across the curriculum in further education and training;
- Limited joined-up thinking between providers in relation to the literacy needs of clients.

These new orientations in policy and new initiatives and approaches in activation policy have been taken into consideration in developing the strategy and the detailed programme of action in LRFIPs (i.e., in the social programme and economic regeneration strategy).

2.4.5 Education of Children and Young People

Key measures for addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are contained in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), National Action Plan, 2005. Measures under DEIS are addressed to children from pre-school (aged 3 years) through primary and second level education (up to 18 years) and are described as "one element of a continuum of interventions ... which include second-chance education and training .. access measures for adults to support increased participation by under-represented groups in further and higher education and the on-going development of provision for pupils with special educational needs".

The 2005 DEIS Action Plan for Educational Inclusion provides the framework for implementation of a support programme to address educational disadvantage, the key elements of which are: (i) a standardised system for identifying, and regularly reviewing, levels of disadvantage and (ii) an integrated School Support Programme (SSP). The DEIS School Support Programme brings additional resources to schools located in most disadvantaged areas.

Key measures implemented within this framework include: integration of both the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme into the SSP framework; targeted measures to tackle problems of literacy and numeracy which include family literacy, early

education, primary and second-level education and the role of the local authority library system; in schools in most disadvantaged urban communities (DEIS Band 1 schools in urban areas), maximum class sizes of 20:1 in junior classes (infants through second-class) and 24:1 in senior classes (third through sixth-class); promotion of greater curricular choice and an enhanced role of information and communication technologies (ICTs); promotion of increased access to third-level for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, in co-operation with the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education; enhanced professional development for principals, teachers and other personnel in schools and a stronger focus on integration of services and partnership working in the community.

While the evidence indicates that progress is being made in terms of improving standards of attainment in DEIS schools, at individual and school levels[7], educational underachievement and early school drop-out remain at higher levels for children from socially disadvantaged communities compared with children not resident in such communities. For instance, two-thirds of pupils in the most disadvantaged schools achieve at or below the 20th percentile on standardised tests (compared to 20% nationally), and performance declines as pupils progress through the school. [8]

With the publication of Government's Literacy and Numeracy and Learning for Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Amongst Children and Young People 2011-2020[9], improvements in literacy and numeracy have high priority. This strategy includes specific reference to the role of DEIS in improving outcomes for children and young people in most disadvantaged communities and alternative educational provision including Youthreach. The importance of early childhood education and family literacy initiatives as well as the role of parents and the link between parental educational attainment and education outcomes for their children) are also stressed. Targets are set for improved attainment, to be realised by 2020.

6   NALA submission (February 2011) on: the contribution the further education sector, and in particular adult basic skills provision, might make to meeting the Skills Strategy objectives, taking into account the resource constraints of the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014, and the role of further education and adult basic skills provision within the overall further education and training sector.
7   Weir, S. (2011) A Report of the First Phase of the Evaluation of DEIS. Dublin: Educational Research Centre, St. Patrick's College, Dublin 9.
8   National Economic and Social Council (2008). The Irish Economy in the Early 21st Century. Dublin: NESC.
9   DES (2011) Literacy and Numeracy and Learning for Life: Full report. (http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/lit_num_strategy_full.pdf)

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2.4.6 Children and Families

A new Children and Young People's Policy Framework is in development in 2012-2013, Department of Children and Youth Affairs. This builds on the three goals of the first National Children's Strategy: Our Children - Their Lives (2000-10), namely: (i) children will have a voice in matters that affect them; (ii) their lives will be better understood and (iii) they will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development.

The new policy framework will provide "a seamless, whole-of-childhood approach to policy making" and focuses on key developmental periods for children and young people, namely:

· Prenatal, infancy, early childhood (0 to 6 years)
· Middle childhood years (6-12 years)
· Adolescence and early adulthood (12 plus years).

Existing policies in relation to children focus on promoting a whole child/whole system approach; and better outcomes for children and families. In terms of "better outcomes", national service outcomes for children and young people are identified in government policy, as follows: children are economically secure, healthy both physically and mentally, supported in active learning, safe from accidental and intentional harm, secure in their immediate and wider physical environment, part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and community and included and participating in society (The Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook, Office of the Minister for Children, Department of Health and Children, 2007). The national policy framework also identifies five essential characteristics of services to be achieved, namely:

· Connecting with family and community strengths.
· Ensuring quality services.
· Opening access to services.
· Delivering integrated services.
· Planning, monitoring and evaluating services.

In order to enhance the status and improve the quality of children's lives, the key emphases in policy are: a focus on prevention, early intervention, community service provision, out-of-home care when needed and child protection (Children First – Child Protection Guidance).

With the establishment of the new Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) in June 2011 and the proposals to roll out the new Child and Family Support Agency (Report of the Task Force on the Child and Family Support Agency, July 2012), there is a stronger effort to drive "coordinated actions across a range of sectors, including health, education, youth justice, sport, arts and culture". Responsibility for child protection, child welfare (HSE), youth justice (Department of Justice and Equality), early years education and National Education and Welfare Board (DES) and the Family Support Agency (Department of Social Protection) have been transferred to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, to promote greater integration in policy and delivery of services to children and young people. The model of the new Child and Family Support Agency (CFSA), as recommended by the Task Force, identifies services to be directly delivered by the Agency and inter-face services – services provided by other agencies / organisations which will be aligned with the Child and Family Support Agency "in a defined and structured way".

The proposed direct or core services to be provided by the CFSA are as follows:

· Public Health Nursing addressed to children;
· Community-based Speech and Language Therapy for children, including Speech and Language Therapists that are part of specialist teams such as the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service (ACTS);
· Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS);
· Psychology services to children;
· All Domestic and Sexual Violence Services, with the exception of Sexual Assault Treatment Units;
· The National Education and Welfare Board;
· Children's Detention Schools (it was recommended that these are directly managed by the new Agency).

It was recommended that a structured interface be maintained with Garda Youth Diversion Projects. While Young Person's Probation should remain within the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality, it was recommended that its potential inclusion in the remit of the CFSA should be reviewed later. Hospital social workers in maternity and paediatric hospitals should continue to be based in the hospitals but it was recommended they be employed by the Agency, and receive continuous professional development under the CFSA.

Key principles underpinning the service models of the CFSA were identified by the Task Force. They include:

· A child centred model where children are consulted and involved in matters and decisions that affect their lives;
· The provision of services to support families at all levels along a continuum, drawing on the levels or hierarchy of needs as identified in the Hardiker model (from Level 1, all children to Level 4, children at the highest levels of need);
· A focus on strengthening services at universal level with a view to preventing problems from arising in the first instance and intervening to manage problems at the earliest opportunity.
· An emphasis on early intervention, community based services and the promotion of an integrated service delivery model.
· Strengthening the role of Children's Services Committees (CSCs) whereby CSCs are identified as the key interface between core CFSA services and other services, including universal services. The CSCs are expected to provide the structure and mechanism at local level for interagency working, planning, co-ordinating and overseeing delivering of services.
· A service delivery model with clear and consistent referral pathways for children and families, based on their assessed needs and with responses appropriate to meeting these needs.
· The use of standardised assessment procedures and protocols to support the development and use of various pathways, linking with Children First (child protection) processes and procedures, as a key referral point from universal services.
· A system of information sharing between core CFSA services and other services.

2.4.7 Youth Justice

Policy related to youth justice focus on a children and young people who are particularly vulnerable – i.e., children at risk of or with a history of offending who find themselves in the criminal justice system. The overall statutory response to children and young people offending is contained in the Children's Act 2001 (as amended) where a "twin-track" approach is provided – i.e., a child welfare and a justice approach. Following a review of the youth justice system (Review of Youth Justice, 2005), Government agreed a programme of reforms including changes to legislation and the establishment of the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) in the Department of Justice,

Equality and Law Reform, working closely with the Office of the Minister for Children. With recent institutional changes, IYJS operates as an executive office within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and is staffed by officials from DCYA and the Department of Justice and Equality. It has responsibility for leading and driving reform in the area of youth justice.

The IYJS focuses on diverting children from crime and the criminal justice system, promoting restorative justice, enforcing community sanctions, facilitating rehabilitation and, as a last resort, providing for detention (National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010). The main direct interventions to respond to children and young people offending or at risk of offending are:

- Garda Youth Diversion Programme / Garda Youth Diversion Projects for young people at risk of offending or further offending;
- The Probation Service (Young Person's Probation) for young people appearing before the courts for offending behaviour and
- Children's Detention Schools for those young people whose offending is either repeat or serious in nature.

High level goals of the Irish Youth Justice Service (National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010) are as follows:

- To provide leadership and build public confidence in the youth justice system;
- To work to reduce offending by diverting young people from offending behaviour;
- To promote the greater use of community sanctions and initiatives to deal with young people who offend;
- To provide a safe and secure environment for detained children which will assist their early re-integration into the community;
- To strengthen and develop information and data sources in the youth justice system to support more effective policies and services.

The Review of Youth Justice (2005) identified a number of areas for improvement including: that the youth justice area would benefit from an increased emphasis on preventative measures/early intervention; insufficient integration of services/inter-agency co-operation exists at present; and addressing the data / research deficit.

These areas have been part of the reform programme in youth justice. With the creation of the new Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2011) and in the proposals for setting up the CFSA, as described above, a more "joined up" and harmonised approach in policies, a strong emphasis on preventive measures and policies underpinned by research are being progressed.

At local level, IYJS is working in partnership / cooperation with the wide range of agencies / services with a role in service provision to children and families, within the broader framework of Children's Services Committees. As well as engagement in planning and coordination at this level, the CSC is also involved initiatives in restorative justice (led by Youth Justice). The Probation Service (Young Person's Probation) works in partnership with communities, local services and voluntary organisations, to reduce offending and to make communities safer. Community-based probation projects have the key role in supporting re-integration of offenders including employment placement, accommodation, drug treatment, education and training, restorative justice initiatives and other services.

In terms of proposed / new developments, a new residential facility is planned for children in detention (2015) to replace the existing detention schools; the use of a risk assessment tool (Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory) is being applied from 2010; and a new behaviour management training programme was also rolled out from 2010. Within the framework of Garda Youth Diversion Projects, there is a stronger focus on education and employability skills linked to personal development to support integration to the mainstream (education, training, work opportunities).

2.4.8 Health
In health, significant reforms are also proposed. The Programme for Government proposed the introduction of a Universal Health Insurance with equal access to care for all, a strong emphasis on the development of primary care and removal of services from hospitals into Primary Care Teams, centred on GP practices, and the further development and roll-out of community-based models of care.

Proposals outlined in the Programme for Government have been further elaborated in the Future Health – A

Strategic Framework for Reform of the Health Service 2012–2015. The core of the health reform programme is a single-tier health service, supported by Universal Health Insurance (UHI). Key features of the proposed system include: that the population will have equal access to healthcare based on need, not income; universal primary care, with GP care free at the point of use for all; social care services will be outside of the UHI system but integrated around the user; and the service will remain, fundamentally, publicly provided. The reforms in social care, for instance, are intended to help older people and people with disabilities to live in their homes for as long as possible rather than go into residential care. Future Health sets out "the building blocks required" prior to the introduction of UHI including key actions that need to be taken. Future Health is built on four pillars of reform.

I. Health and Wellbeing: with a new focus on the need to "move away from treating ill people, to concentration on keeping people healthy".
II. Service Reform: this is intended to move services "away from the current hospital-centric model of care towards a new model of integrated care which treats patients at the lowest level of complexity .. and as close to home as possible".
III. Structural Reform: Key concerns of the reform here are to promote good governance, avoid duplication and ensure a strong regional focus in managing performance and delivering value for money.
IV. Financial Reform: this is oriented to ensuring that the financing system is based on incentives that are "aligned to fairness and efficiency, while reducing costs, improving control and also improving quality".

2.4.9 Older People
Healthy ageing, increasingly, is a global priority in the field of health promotion. Since the 1990s, the World Health Organisation (WHO), Ageing and Health Programme (1995), views ageing within a life-course perspective – i.e., ageing is not confined to an age group of people defined as "elderly". The WHO Programme aims to achieve a sustained and continuing improvement in the health status and well-being of older persons. The WHO's Active Ageing Policy Framework (WHO 2002) has influenced the strategic framework of such programmes in national contexts including Ireland.

In Ireland, the health strategy, Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You (Department of Health and

2. Policy Context

Children 2002) is based on the principles of equity, people-centredness, quality and accountability and set out four national goals: (i) better health for everyone; (ii) fair access; (iii) responsive and appropriate care delivery and (iv) high performance. In terms of services for older people, the strategy envisaged more coordinated public services provision, integrated care and more flexible community support services including funding for community groups to facilitate volunteers in providing support services for older people and informal care giving; and regional advisory panels / coordinating committees for older consumers and their carers to give older people a voice.

With the broader health system again under major reform, the role of primary care and the need for integrated models of care are strongly emphasised. However, in current times of austerity, all aspects of services are affected by expenditure cuts including community-based services such as home help.

Specific issues of key importance in policy in relation to health and well-being of older people are as follows:

- Community-based independent living and care is a priority, drawing on informal networks of family and community, community-based and voluntary organisations and statutory services.
- Independent ageing requires holistic and integrated approaches to provision, moving beyond health to include social, economic and community infrastructure at local community level. Security, housing (type, quality, tenure) transport and access to essential services are key issues. Community-based and integrated care models, however, require developed and responsive local delivery mechanisms.

2.5 Housing Context

2.5.1 Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities 2007

This document presents a vision of the future of housing up to 2027. The clear aim is to obtain more effective delivery in ways that ensure that individuals in need of support are offered options tailored to their needs. It highlights how use must be made of the country's land resources in the construction of new housing schemes by integrating housing provision with necessary transport and other physical infrastructure, social infrastructure and amenities. The concept of a "life-cycle approach", where social services are tailored to meet needs as they change over a person's lifetime, is a key underpinning of the document. The document sets out a range of actions to achieve the vision and these actions have been considered in the preparation of the LRFIP in so far as they relate to urban design, housing design and quality. The document also influences the approach promoted in the LRFIP relating to tenure diversification and the support schemes available for social housing tenants seeking home ownership. The supporting best practice guidance document titled 'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities, 2007' is intended to assist in the implementation of the policies set out in this document. The aim of the Guidelines is to identify principles and criteria that are important in the design of housing and to highlight specific design features, requirements and standards that have been found, from experience, to be particularly relevant. This document is heavily referenced in the LRFIP and has significantly influenced the overall approach to development and refurbishment in the LRFIP.

2.5.2 Towards 2016: Community and Housing

This ten year framework for social partnership focuses on four main areas to achieve the objectives of creating sustainable communities. It seeks to:
+ Continue improvements in the quality of houses and neighbourhoods;
- Tailor housing services to those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs;
- Develop inter-agency cooperation where there is a care dimension; and
- Maintain the impetus for the delivery of housing at affordable prices to the market.

The approach seeks to ensure that all housing is seen as being on an equal footing whether provided fully by the State or supported in some way. The document states that a critical factor in determining housing interventions is the requirement for a clear perspective as to the scale and nature of need, including local variations. In framing responses, account should be taken of individual and family circumstances and each person's position in the life-cycle. It promotes the life-cycle approach which places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by assessing the risks and the supports available at key stages of the life-cycle. The holistic approach of the LRFIP which examines social, economic and physical requirements within the regeneration areas is very much in accordance with the approach set out in this document.

2.5.3 Housing Policy Statement 2011

The vision for the future of the housing sector in Ireland is "based on choice, fairness, equity across tenures and on delivering quality outcomes for the resources invested". The overall strategic objective of national housing policy is "to enable all households access good quality housing appropriate to household circumstances and in their particular community of choice".

The Housing Policy Statement issued in response to the current economic climate now recognises the high and often disproportionate value placed on owner-occupation that has been so detrimental to Ireland's economy. It also recognises the need to restructure the social housing investment programme to allow for the delivery of new social housing through more flexible funding models. The main focus in terms of supports provided by Government will be on meeting the most acute needs. Whilst the social housing leasing initiative and, in particular, the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), will continue as long-term social housing supports, the Government is also fully committed to developing other funding mechanisms that will increase the supply of permanent new social housing. Such mechanisms will include options to purchase-on-lease agreements, build-to-lease, and the sourcing of loan finance by approved housing bodies (housing associations) for construction and acquisition.

State-provided housing supports are prioritised towards meeting "the most acute housing needs". Key measures outlined in the housing policy statement document are as follows:

- More equitable treatment of housing tenure. The hierarchical structure of housing tenure and the value-judgments that under-pin this - with home-ownership at the top and state support for rental at the bottom (rent supplement / social housing tenancies) – is seen to have an important role in leading the housing sector, the economy and the wider society to its current position, contributing to inequality and financial distress on certain home owners.
- Maximising the delivery of social housing supports within the resources available, with the main focus here on meeting the most acute needs. The restructuring of the social housing investment programme will allow for the delivery of social housing provision through more flexible models including leasing and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) – the use of which has grown substantially in recent years and is now a form of social housing. Such schemes will form part of long-term social housing support.
- Transfer of responsibility for long term recipients of rent supplement to local authorities.
- Working with new mechanisms for the delivery of permanent social housing. In addition to social housing leasing and the RAS, funding mechanism to increase permanent social housing will include: options to purchase-on-lease-arrangements, build-to-lease, sourcing loan finance by housing bodies, and pursuing options for sourcing residential units as social housing from NAMA.
- The standing down of all affordable housing schemes. As housing has become more affordable in the current housing market, and linked to the disproportionate value placed on home ownership historically and the impact of that, it is considered that there is no need for the State to continue to support "affordable" housing programmes.
- Publication of Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities
- Delivery of housing supports for households with special needs and homelessness. The framework includes supports for older people, the availability of housing adaptation grants, provision of Traveller-specific accommodation and interventions to alleviate homelessness.
- Creating an enabling regulatory framework to

support the increasingly prominent role of the voluntary and cooperative sector in housing delivery. This sector is considered to have an important role in overcoming vertical segregation in housing and has good potential to promote mixed tenure communities by providing housing for sale, for rent and social renting.
- The implementation of measures to tackle anti-social behaviour across all housing tenures.

The Policy Statement acknowledges the direct causal link between the mono-tenure approaches adopted in the past and the extremes of deprivation found now in some social housing estates. It refers to existing problems in urban centres such as Limerick and states that housing supports should be better aligned with broader supports for the physical, social and economic renewal and rebirth of these areas. Whilst market conditions do not support the PPP model at present, the Statement refers to the greater reliance than ever on the Exchequer to support regeneration projects. The objective is to improve the quality of existing social housing stock through regeneration and improvement works programmes, and the return of vacant stock to effective use within the shortest timeframes possible. These are core objectives of the LRFIP which is fully aligned with the new policy direction outlined in and shaped within the Housing Policy Statement 2011.

2.6 Environmental Context

Significant new legislation relating most notably to planning and environmental protection has been enacted in recent years. Such legislation has had a significant influence on the regeneration programme and is also heavily influencing future development in the city.

2.6.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes, and in this case the preparation of the LRFIP. Article 1 of the EU Directive states "The objective of the SEA process is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of specified plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment". The SEA process is integrated into the preparation of the LRFIP by:

- Carrying out consultations with the prescribed environmental authorities;
- Preparing an Environmental Report in conjunction with the preparation of the LRFIP;
- Integrating environmental considerations, physical regeneration measures and the formulation of high level objectives;
- Publishing information on the decision;
- Monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans/ programmes.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment process is an iterative process, carried out in conjunction with the preparation of the LRFIP. The principal reason for doing so is to ensure that negative environmental impacts are highlighted at an early stage enabling them to be effectively 'designed out' as soon as possible. The result is a LRFIP which will have had due regard to the environmental issues pertaining within the area. It should be noted that results from the SEA process will be fully considered and integrated into the preparation and making of the LRFIP. The SEA Report will highlight the significant environmental issues which need to be addressed and monitored over the lifetime of the plan. These will include, *inter alia*,

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groundwater and surface water quality, the protection of water supply, wastewater treatment and flooding.

2.6.2 Habitats Directive Assessment

The EU Habitats Directive, 92/43/EEC, provides the legislative framework for the protection of habitats and species throughout Europe through the establishment of a network of designated conservation areas known as the Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network includes sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), under the EU Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Birds Directive. In general terms, these sites are considered to be of exceptional importance in terms of rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species within the European Unit. There are twenty four Articles contained within the Habitats Directive. Article 6 is viewed to be one of the most important as it determines the link between land use and conservation.

It requires competent local authorities to carry out an 'Appropriate Assessment' (Habitats Directive Assessment) of plans and projects that, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, are likely to have a significant effect on European designated sites (Natura 2000 sites), and includes the preparation of the LRFIP. This is to ensure that the favourable conservation status of the Natura 2000 network, both within and outside the Plan area, is maintained.

A Natura Impact Report is currently being prepared to:

- Provide a strategic approach to mitigation which may result from the development scenarios presented under LRFIP;
- Provide a framework within which future development projects arising from LRFIP can be advanced, particularly as they are progressed to the development stage in accordance with Article 6.3 of the European Union (EU) Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

The findings and mitigation recommendations of the NIR will influence and guide the LRFIP and where appropriate, will be incorporated within the LRFIP.

2.6.3 Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) (WFD) establishes a framework for the protection of all surface waters and groundwater at EU level and aims to achieve a good ecological status (or a good ecological potential for heavily modified water bodies) and a good chemical status by 2015. In meeting the requirements of the WFD, the Shannon River Basin Management Plan 2009 – 2013 (SRBMP) has been prepared. This is a management plan designed to protect and improve the water quality of the river basin both in terms of surface and ground water. It identifies the possible sources of pollution and through the mandatory measures of the Water Framework Directive has identified actions necessary in order to improve the water quality of the region. Any potential impacts from future development on waters have been mitigated through the consideration of objectives established in the SRBMP and the application of such objectives against consideration of proposals within LRFIP to ensure sustainable development.

2.6.4 Towards a New National Climate Policy: Interim Report of the NESC Secretariat 2012

This report acknowledges that the ability to achieve climate policy objectives sustainably is also critically influenced by spatial planning and development. Whilst changes to the spatial pattern of development do not have much impact on emissions in the short-term, the report acknowledges that they do have a large impact over time. In promoting sustainable neighbourhoods the report identifies five key principles of sustainable housing and development including:

- Sustainable Urban Densities;
- Consolidated Urban Areas;
- Compact Urban Satellites;
- Rapid Communication Networks;
- Sustainable Rural Settlement.

These principles are promoted in the LRFIP particularly having regard to the planned physical regeneration framework and the objective to make the most efficient use out of existing valuable urban land. The proposed refurbishment programme seeks to contribute to the reduction sought in national emissions generated by residential development by refurbishing and retrofitting to cost-optimal standards.

2.6.5 Mid-West Climate Change Strategy 2012

The aim of the Climate Change Strategy for the Mid-West Region is to clearly identify the solutions to the challenge of reducing energy related emissions and to outline the actions to be taken to meet the requirements under the Kyoto Protocol. The strategy identifies renewable energy, transport, built environment and industrial/commercial development as key sectors where action needs to be taken. Unsurprisingly within Limerick City (2004) the transport sector had the highest consumption in energy terms at 36% and accounted for 28% of CO_2 emissions. However, the residential sector was found to be the highest contributor in terms of emissions, at 30% of CO_2 emissions. The strategy promotes residential energy performance over and above national targets to address the high emissions in the residential sector. These principles are promoted in the LRFIP particularly having regard to the planned physical regeneration framework which includes a substantial refurbishment programme.

2.6.6 Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future. A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020

Smarter Travel is the government policy which sets out a long-term plan to achieving a sustainable transport system for Ireland. The plan outlines how this can be achieved through a range of actions such as encouraging modal shift away from the car, promoting fuel efficiency and new technology, and improved planning. The plan recognises that current transport and travel trends in Ireland are unsustainable, and that if we continue with present policies, congestion will get worse, transport emissions will continue to grow, economic competitiveness will suffer and quality of life will decline. The key targets of smarter travel are to reduce work-related commuting by car from 65% to 45%, and increase other modes such as walking, cycling, public transport and car to 55%. The document acknowledges that the focus of smarter travel reform should primarily deal with major urban centres where greater benefit may arise from investment. Although car ownership in the regeneration areas is low and the percentage of people travelling by foot and on public transport is well above the national figure, there are opportunities to increase other modes of transport such as cycling. Connectivity and accessibility are also other issues which the LRFIP must address in the context of Smarter Travel.

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2.6.7 Limerick City – Ireland's Smarter Travel Demonstration City 2012 – 2016

Limerick City has been designated as one of three Smarter Travel Demonstration Areas in Ireland. The city is due to receive funding of €9 million over the next five years to roll out a wide range of measures and interventions targeted at encouraging people to use more sustainable modes of transport and to engage in transport planning. The central aim of Limerick Smarter Travel is to reduce car usage from 51% to 37% by 2016 while increasing cycling from 3% to 14%. The key objective of the Limerick Smarter Travel proposal is to connect four key hubs within the boundaries of Limerick City and Limerick County, getting citizens in these areas to use sustainable modes of transport. The four key hubs are Castletroy, Corbally, the city centre, and Southill. Whilst it is acknowledged that car ownership within the regeneration areas is low and the use of public transport, particularly in Southill, is high, there still remains significant opportunities to not only further increase the numbers of people traveling on foot or using public transport, but also to reconnect the regeneration areas with the city. As a result the LRFIP has had strong regard to the proposed measures outlined under this programme.

2.7 Evaluation of Policy & Strategies

An overview of policy at EU and national level presents the strategic policy context of the LRFIP and these factors have been taken into consideration in preparing the overall strategy. A key finding is that policies are in a state of reform. This is strongly linked to the impact of the economic and fiscal crisis but also to other factors (beyond the crisis) including the challenge to work towards a new growth model. The policy context covers a wide range of sectoral policy fields and the overall picture is one of complexity. Key conclusions emerging from the review in terms of trends in policy are as follows:

- EU-level strategy and policy provides the macro level framework. Increasingly, policies at this level have a direct impact on national policies in terms of goals (and corresponding targets) and the approaches adopted in policy.
- The Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-2016: Medium Term Exchequer Framework provides a commitment to continue to provide funding for the Limerick regeneration areas.
- National policy seeks to deliver a greater quantity of social housing options and at the same time to improve the overall quality of this tenure.
- The concept of a "life-cycle approach", where social services are tailored to meet needs as they change over a person's lifetime, is a key underpinning provision of social housing in Ireland in current national policy. The life-cycle approach is also applied in social inclusion policy.
- Communities must be enabled to identify and address social and economic issues in their own areas and be actively involved in promoting and advancing sustainable communities.
- At a regional level the Regeneration Programme is seen as a critical component in redirecting population growth into Limerick City.
- Limerick City as a whole must be revitalised to become an attractive place to live, work and visit so that it can function as the urban centre of the focus of the region. There are many strategies in place at a regional and local level to deliver this revitalisation. Limerick 2030 is the most recent articulation of the vision for Limerick City, aiming to reposition the city as a leading centre for commercial investment, retail and education in the Mid-West region. As well as bringing shoppers, businesses and jobs and educational opportunities back into the city, the plan aims to develop the city as a destination for visitors linked to

transformation of the city centre and capitalisation on its cultural heritage, cultural industries and sport.

- The Limerick County Development Plan is very clear in its support for regeneration stating that "it will offer sufficient flexibility that will allow the Masterplans (2008) to be implemented in a coordinated and sustainable manner".
- The Limerick County Development Plan seeks to change the tenure structure within the Regeneration Areas from its existing status of 60% private ownership and 40% rental to 80% private ownership to 20% rental.
- There is a need for better integration of land use and transport planning in the city and there is significant potential for the regeneration areas to benefit from a number of Smarter Travel Initiatives in the city, in particular Southill.
- Significant new legislation relating most notably to environmental protection has had a significant influence on the regeneration programme and is also heavily influencing future development in the city.
- The LRFIP represents lower level local planning and thus it is important that its framework sits comfortably within the hierarchy of existing policy.
- The role of cities as "engines of economic growth" and sustainable urban development have stronger focus in EU and national policies. The approach is based on integrated territorial approaches and a common local strategy. The strategy should address in a balanced and holistic way the social, economic and environmental challenges, involve a multi-stakeholder approach and robust local governance structures,
- Social policies continue to place a strong focus on promoting social inclusion and poverty reduction. New targets are set for poverty reduction by 2020. This includes a sub-target to reduce child poverty. The more difficult conditions for achieving poverty reduction with the current economic recession are also acknowledged.
- The well-being of children and families including reduction of child poverty, as stated above, and achieving better outcomes for children have a strong focus in national policy. A key proposal relates to the setting up a new Child and Family Support Agency to drive this effort. The new agency will bring services currently under the remit of different departments and agencies (health, education) into a single unified structure and will aim to produce stronger integration of

services for children. At local level, Children's Services Committees are expected to play a key coordinating role.

- Employability and work are clearly identified at all policy level (EU, national, local) as the key route out of poverty and exclusion. Current policy especially targets the long-term unemployed and households with low work intensity.
- Taking advantage of opportunities provided by digital technologies / industries is a further policy priority. Getting more small businesses involved in trading on-line, greater absorption of digital by all age groups in the population (more off-liners on-line) through education programmes at all levels and roll-out of ICT infrastructure to support this, e-health, e-government and e-inclusion are all promoted.
- There is strong focus on addressing needs of people affected by social disadvantage (a needs-based approach) including the development and use of common assessment tools (e.g., in relation to children), flexibility to address different needs (e.g., of adult learners). Developing plans to address problems but also drawing on individual / family / community strengths and monitoring progress by adopting the "pathways" approach (e.g., in activation policy, in further education and training, in management of chronic illnesses in health) are key elements of policy processes. These types of processes apply across a wide range of social policies (health, children, further education and training) and employment / activation policy.
- In relation to specific groups / individuals, greater user involvement is promoted, for instance, in health, policies in favour of older people, children, education and adult learning. Stronger engagement of citizens and communities in decision-making is a feature of new approaches to local and community development. These apply in the roll out of community-based planning models linked to the reform of local government and in specific areas including estate management.
- Social policy demonstrates a strong focus on preventive action and early intervention to prevent more serious problems arising over time: for instance, in relation to children and families, children / young people at risk of offending, older people at risk, etc. This orientation in policy is linked to the development of high quality universal services.
- Targeting resources for remedial actions to deal

with problems for those groups with the most acute needs (e.g., in family support, youth justice, young people who are at risk of drop out from school, housing, etc.) are further features across social policy and in housing policy.

- There is a strong focus on the need for improved coordination and integration across policy fields. This applies at all stages of the policy process: in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Further impetus is given to this priority at national level in some areas of policy (e.g., new inter-departmental structure in local development, new national policy framework in local development, the setting up of the Child and Family Support Agency) and also at local level (e.g., the creation of SECs in local government reform, strengthening the role of Children Services Committees in coordination and planning of interventions in favour of children and families). There is also a stronger focus on evidence-based policy making.
- There is an increasing emphasis on finding new solutions to problems, on social innovation and on drawing on the assets / resources that are available in local communities in more effective ways. This is reflected in new approaches in housing policy, in enterprise and employment policy (job creation) and local development.
- In general, there is a focus on improved governance, stronger accountability and transparency in the use of public money, better management practices and showing evidence of results achieved under publicly-funded interventions.