



# REGIONAL ASSEMBLY UPDATES

Our new section reports on the latest news, EU funding projects, programmes and events from the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA), the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) and the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA).

Following the dissolution of the Border Midland Western (BMW) and Southern & Eastern Regional Assemblies (SERA), the former eight regional authorities and two regional assemblies were consolidated under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to form the Southern, the Northern and Western and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assemblies.

The Southern and Northern and Western Regional Assemblies manage European co-funded regional programmes. They both also have functions in relation to European Territorial Co-operation programmes.

The three Assemblies promote coordinated public services and monitor proposals which impact their regions. They advise public bodies of the regional implications of their policies and plans.



## SOUTHERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

### ASSEMBLY IS ROOTED IN WATERFORD CITY

*The SRA's new HQ has formally opened for business on O'Connell Street in Waterford City in an historic building (constructed between 1919 and 1922).*

It was one of the first concrete framed buildings in Waterford city. Purpose-built for the Provincial Bank, it later became the AIB Bank, continuing to house a bank until the early 1990s. It was subsequently converted into the Bank Bar and Restaurant in the mid-2000s.

John Paul Phelan TD, Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, told assembled guests at the opening of the new HQ of the important role the Assemblies have assumed in regional spatial and economic development.

Minister Phelan urged the forging of a common purpose that speaks of regional, that in turn benefits the local. He described his and the Government's support for strengthening of the regions, which he envisages as a natural outcome of the new National Planning Framework.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr John Brennan noted "the success we have enjoyed in the management of European programmes and more latterly in laying the bedrock for regional economic and spatial strategies, strengthens the argument for regional structures in Ireland".

Established on 1 January 2015, the Southern Regional



Cathaoirleach, Cllr John Brennan, John Paul Phelan TD, Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Waterford City and County Mayor, Cllr Pat Nugent, and Stephen Blair, SRA Director, pictured outside the Assembly's new HQ at 30, O'Connell Street, Waterford.

Assembly has 34 members, 27 of whom are nominated from the constituent local authorities and 7 due to their membership of the Committee of the Regions. The councillors are supported by the staff of the Assembly, mostly based at Assembly House in Waterford City.

For more information visit [www.southernassembly.ie](http://www.southernassembly.ie)



## IRELAND - WALES PROGRAMME FUNDS CHERISH

The *CHERISH* (Climate, Heritage and Environments of Reefs, Islands and Headlands) project – ‘Climate Change and Coastal Heritage’ – is a new €5.2 million, five-year project funded under the EU’s Ireland-Wales Programme 2014-2020.

SRA and WEFO (Welsh European Funding Office) manage the Ireland-Wales programme. The project supports specialist organisations in Wales and Ireland to employ cutting-edge technologies such as seabed mapping, drone aerial survey and laser scanning to analyse coastline and island archaeology and cultural heritage sites most affected by climate change, coastal erosion, storminess and rising sea levels.

Hydrography, geology, archaeology, built and maritime heritage, remote sensing and environmental science will all be employed in furthering this research.

During this summer, GSI INFOMAR vessels conducted inshore surveys along the east coast including Wexford. Preliminary data has revealed shipwrecks, sand waves and geological folding.

GSI has also been conducting trials of coastal surveys from drones. This baseline data will be important context to the archaeological work conducted by the Discovery Programme for *CHERISH*.



The *CHERISH* Heritage Week, at Kilmore Quay in Wexford in August, was organised in conjunction with INFOMAR – a joint venture between the Geological Survey of Ireland and the Marine Institute. Contact LindaShine@DiscoveryProgramme.ie or visit [www.discoveryprogramme.ie](http://www.discoveryprogramme.ie)

## MARIE PROJECT IS UP AND RUNNING

An inter-regional project was born from a desire among partners to convert debate on Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI) into tools for regional development. The five-year *MARIE* project was approved for a grant of €1.62m (ERDF) by Interreg Europe Programme late last year.

The SRA is one of 10 project partners of a consortium, which is working to improve regional public policy that supports delivery of RRI in design, production and distribution of innovation in Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) Sectors, focusing on three types of RRI support action; Quadruple Helix; Open Innovation; Information & Tools for RRI application.

Using inter-regional activities, communication and stakeholder engagement, partners will develop action plans that will result in improved policy instruments, more and better targeted funding for RRI delivery, increased capacity among innovation actors and consolidated partnerships of quadruple helix innovation chain stakeholders.

*MARIE*’s first inter-regional learning event was hosted by the incubator CesenaLab, Italy in February. The partners from eight European regions and co-ordinated by CISE (a special agency of the Chamber of Commerce of Flori-Cesena, Italy), gathered together to learn more about the RRI concept. They were supported by local and regional stakeholders with experience in innovation, sustainability and social and environmental responsibility.

The second inter-regional learning event, hosted by the Greek partners in Athens in May proved very productive. RRI good practises identified by each partner were explored, as was the method of gathering data relating to mapping RRI in each partner region.

Local and regional stakeholders working in the areas of innovation and social entrepreneurship also shared their knowledge and experience with participants.

For further information visit [www.interregeurope.eu/marie](http://www.interregeurope.eu/marie)

## EMPOWER PROGRAMME PROJECT

The SRA is one of the partners of an inter-regional project, which aims to reduce carbon output by dynamically monitoring energy efficiency in buildings. The *EMPOWER* project hit the ground running in January 2017.

The five-year, nine-partner project was approved for a grant of €1.90m by the Interreg Europe Programme late last year.

The nine regions are working in partnership to share experience, solutions, and good practice to develop and deliver better public policy to reduce carbon emissions and innovative use of financial instruments.

Joint activities, such as peer review, good practices identification and study visits will feed into the development of nine Regional Action Plans aimed at enhancing their low carbon policy instruments.

The partners have been busy with the first set of activities, including a kick off meeting in Slovenia in January and a peer review event in Venice in March.

The peer review event brought together key stakeholders from the partner regions to get ideas on how to improve regional policies and review the planned improvements to the targeted policies.

Running until 2021, the project will benefit building users, decision-makers, SMEs in the energy sector, and investors by applying cost-effective energy monitoring to reduce energy demand, using new technology, and improving how various decision-makers work together on low carbon policy.

For further information visit [www.interregeurope.eu/empower](http://www.interregeurope.eu/empower)



# NORTH & WEST IS EURO ENTREPRENEURIAL REGION 2018

The Northern and Western Region has been named as European Entrepreneurial Region 2018 by the EU, in recognition of the 'enormous strides' the region has taken to foster entrepreneurship and reverse decades of decline, which has been mainly achieved through regional collaboration between the local authorities and enterprise support agencies.

**T**he European Entrepreneurial Region 2018 award is a huge boost for a region which has developed policies that are transforming the area 'from adversity to advantage', making it "one of the most resilient and ambitious places in Europe", the EU's Committee of the Regions noted in a statement.

The designation as European Entrepreneurial Region 2018 will be marked with a series of keynote events and initiatives throughout next year to support and build on existing and new job creation projects and innovation across the northern and western region.

It comes at a crucial time for the region, which comprises counties Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Sligo, Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan, as it looks for ways to insulate itself from the unpredictable impacts of Brexit and offers an alternative economic focal point to Dublin and the east coast.

In winning the award, the North West region follows in the footsteps of Northern Ireland, which was named European Entrepreneurial Region in 2015, while previous winners include Glasgow, Barcelona, Lisbon and Paris. All have used the year to establish successful programmes and schemes to encourage innovation and job creation.

David Minton, Director of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA), who accepted the award on behalf of the region, said it's an opportunity for a part of Ireland that



Joann Hosey Director of Connaught & Ulster at Bank of Ireland, Minister for Community and Rural Affairs, Michael Ring, pictured with David Minton, NWRA Director, who accepted the award on behalf of the region.

has been traditionally marginalised to emerge stronger and more attractive as a place to live and work for young people, adding it was a viable alternative to living on the hugely overburdened east coast.

He noted that the past eight years has seen regional and national policy invest in innovation, people and education. "Eight years ago, employment levels in the construction industry were decimated due to economic stagnation. A commitment has emerged not to repeat the mistakes of the past. In committing to resilience and investing in sustainability, this region has become truly entrepreneurial."

He said that the concept of 'entrepreneurship as a career' has



also come from smart programmes such as the ‘Young Entrepreneur of the Year’ and ‘New Frontiers’ – Enterprise Ireland’s national entrepreneur development programme for innovative, early-stage start-ups.

Winning the title to be European Entrepreneurial Region for 2018 validates the move to task local authorities with enhanced economic duties and subsequent establishment of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network, according to Minton.

#### INNOVATIVE AND RESPONSIVE

“It was a competitive process with cities and regions from across Europe vying for the valuable title, which recognises entrepreneurial eco-systems and regional policies that enable innovation and enhanced economic activity. This region has some of the most innovative and responsive local authorities in the country. It deserves the recognition.”

Having a unique regional perspective, the NWRA stretches across eight counties and one city (Galway) – nine local authorities – with a population of nearly one million people, 45,000 businesses and boasting over 65,000 third level students.

Home to the ‘Coolest Place on the Planet’ and the ‘Best Place in Ireland to Live’, Galway is one of the top 10 fastest growing cities in Europe and will be European Capital of Culture in 2020. NUI Galway is in the Top 1% ranking globally, while the region’s Institutes of Technology lead the way in harnessing a digital and global campus.

“Not bad, but add in the title of Adventure Capital and the burgeoning Blueway’s tourism proposition and we have a truly unique place. A place that boasts emerging sectors focusing on life sciences, advanced manufacturing, marine economy, tourism, entrepreneurship and over 140 multi-national companies,” Minton pointed out.

The North West’s top five multinationals exported over €10bn worth of product and services from rural areas in 2016. “This region can be the most resilient, low carbon and dynamic place in the world and a future net exporter of energy, water, services, global technology and most importantly ideas.”

Adding the European Entrepreneurial Award is another example of how a region can collaborate effectively. Over the past year the Regional Assembly Members have developed a clear focus, emanating from the conference in late 2016 titled ‘One Region One Vision’.



Regional Assembly members from Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Sligo, Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan, pictured at the presentation of the award with Minister Michael Ring.

#### SMARTPLACES PROJECT

Now underway is the SMARTPLACES project in partnership with local authorities, the Western Development Commission and NUI Galway. This project grew out of last year’s conference and aims to gauge the readiness of the region to participate in the smart economy of the future.

“Early results are looking positive but most importantly the project is mapping out policies required to replicate the success of places like Helsinki. Some of these strengths include propositions such as North West Partnership, Atlantic Economic Corridor, Ireland West Airport Knock, Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Blueway, the fastest growing city in Europe, Upper Erne Economy Project and many more.

“Working with some of the most dynamic and innovative local authorities in Europe the Assembly is firmly placed within the local government family. Linking national policy with local



stakeholders the Assembly has attempted to challenge the consensus and ask the question 'what could we achieve with real investment?' Furthermore, recent CSO figures show equally unprecedented growth in employment figures in the west.

### COLLABORATIVE AWARD

David Minton says it is a regionally collaborative award. "Working with all of our local authorities and enterprise support agencies (IDA, Enterprise Ireland, WestBic, Udaras na Gaeltachta, WDC and the Local Enterprise Office) the partnership led an application at EU level for the title."



David Minton, NWRA Director – "This region has some of the most innovative and responsive local authorities in the country. It deserves the recognition."

Endorsed by Minister for Community and Rural Affairs, Michael Ring TD, the application was a standout with support from over 140 industry and businesses. Focusing on 'Thinking Small First' Minton is emphatic though that this award recognises small business, entrepreneurs and risk takers across our communities.

The challenge now for the NWRA and its director is how the Assembly continues to enable these levels of growth through responsive regional and economic planning.

"We have more indigenous enterprises than Tel Aviv (The World Start-up City), let's tell that story to the world. This ecosystem has been unleashed through over 40 incubation and enterprise spaces such as those facilities in The Cube, WESTBIC, Portershed, Co-lab, Building Block, The Hive and many more. This region is perfectly placed to lead Ireland into 2040.

The NWRA (members and staff) have crafted a simple strategy over the past 12 months and interprets its role simply. The Assembly aims to:

1. **Create Better Places** – developing the most effective regional spatial and economic strategies replicating international best practice.
2. **Maximise EU & Exchequer funding** into this region to unleash its latent economic potential.
3. **Act as a platform for collaboration** through EU projects, economic programmes and national initiatives.

"An example of this work, launched in November 2016, was the diploma in EU funding targeted at the local authority sector. Over 55 colleagues from across the country have participated on this programme, building the capacity of our local authorities to secure EU funds."

### RECOGNITION FOR RISK TAKERS

At the award presentation Minister Michael Ring said: "For me this

award is about recognising the risk taker – from entrepreneurs, to small business owners and indigenous enterprises growing in scale. The region is now finally recognised as one of the most vibrant, responsive and entrepreneurial places in Europe.

"Innovative and creative entrepreneurs across the region have led the way for young people, inspired a generation and are now operating at a global level; all from the west of Ireland. This is just one example reflected in every corner of this region."

Minister Ring said that next year will be an incredible opportunity to celebrate entrepreneurship as a career for everyone. "Ireland has produced some of the world's leading entrepreneurs and business people. They are in every sector and industry. This award is another opportunity to tell their story."

Ian Brannigan, CEO of the Western Development Commission (WDC) said the spirit of entrepreneurship was driven by the efforts of a collaborative alliance to nurture regional entrepreneurship. This included unique offerings like the WDC'S Western Investment Fund, which has supported 2,700 jobs, innovative regional promotion platforms ([www.lookwest.ie](http://www.lookwest.ie)), a regional focus and a network of collaborative LEOs supporting over 45,000 businesses.

Marc Kiwitt of the Committee of the Regions, the EU's assembly of Regional and Local Representatives, said: "The European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) project identifies and rewards EU regions and cities that show an outstanding and innovative entrepreneurial policy strategy, irrespective of their size, wealth and competences. The Northern and Western Region must be congratulated on the successful achievement for 2018."

For more information visit <http://cor.europa.eu/Pages/welcome.html> and <http://nwra.ie/>



# A NEW CATHAOIRLEACH AT EMRA

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) elected two Fianna Fáil councillors as its new Cathaoirleach (Cllr PJ Reilly) and Leas Cathaoirleach (Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald) at the Assembly's Annual General Meeting in July.

**F**ianna Fáil's Cllr PJ Reilly was appointed by Longford County Council to the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) when it was established in 2015. This followed his election as a member of Longford County Council representing Granard area in 2014.

Prior to that he served as Mayor of Granard Town Council from 2011-2012, and was also the chairman of the Abbeylara New Pastoral Council, a Directing Member of the Granard Area Action Committee, a member of Longford County Council SPC Housing Committee and HSE Health Forum for the Dublin/Mid Leinster Area. He is one of two councillors to represent Longford County Council on the Assembly.

Leas Cathaoirleach Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald is member of Laois County Council and has been a member of the Assembly since its establishment.

## 38 ELECTED MEMBERS

With over 2.33 million people living in the region, the main settlement centre is the Dublin Metropolitan Area, which is supported regionally by key strategic county towns.

The Assembly is comprised of 38 elected members who are principally elected by their peers in the 12 city and county councils to represent them regionally.

## EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

EMRA helps to manage a Regional Operational Programme which distributes co-funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to various applicants from across the community, government, business and research sectors of our economy.

EMRA staff represent Ireland on a number of monitoring committees for European funding programmes such as North West Europe and Atlantic Area. The Assembly supports the activities and initiatives of the Irish National Delegation to the Committee of Regions through the Brussels-based Irish Regions European Office.

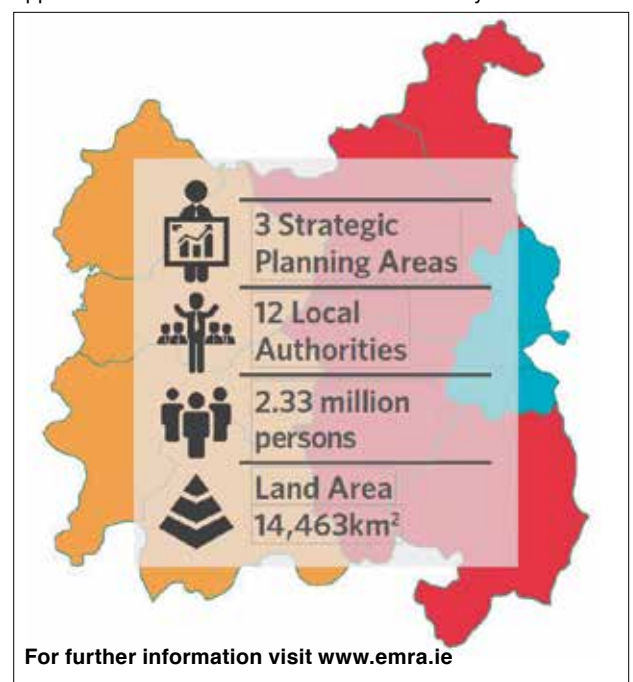
The Committee, a European body constituted of representatives of local governments from across the EU, plays an important role in crafting European legislation and advising the European Commission on many of its draft proposals.

## REGIONAL PLANNING

The main strategic planning functions of EMRA will be the preparation and adoption of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to replace the



Jim Conway, Director of Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), congratulates PJ Reilly, following his appointment as Cathaoirleach at the AGM in July.





existing Regional Planning Guidelines. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy will be prepared in tandem with, and directly informed by the draft National Planning Framework (NPF) titled 'Ireland 2040', which has been published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The objective of the strategy will be to support the implementation of the NPF and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing long-term planning and economic frameworks for the regions. They will be the bridge between the spatial and economic dimensions of the national policy with the implementation instruments at local level, including the county and city development plans of the local planning authorities, and the local economic and community plans of the local authorities and Local Community Development Committees.

The strategy will be prepared in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended. In a new departure the regional spatial strategies shall be prepared taking account of the economic dimension of the strategies, this is a reflection of the Assembly's enhanced role in economic development.

It is intended that the strategy will be developed

in collaboration with key stakeholders in the region – local authorities, state agencies, public bodies and private sector representatives – using an evidence-based approach to underpin the formulation and adoption of regional policy by the elected members of the Assembly.



ESCAPE  
— from —  
THE EVERYDAY

The Hunters Yard Hotel  
at Mount Juliet Estate  
opens Autumn 2017.

Contact 056 777 3094 or  
e-mail [events@mountjuliet.ie](mailto:events@mountjuliet.ie)  
for further information

Mount Juliet Estate and  
Tetrarch Capital congratulate  
Kilkenny County Council  
on the excellent work  
undertaken by the  
Council since our investment  
in Kilkenny in 2014

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