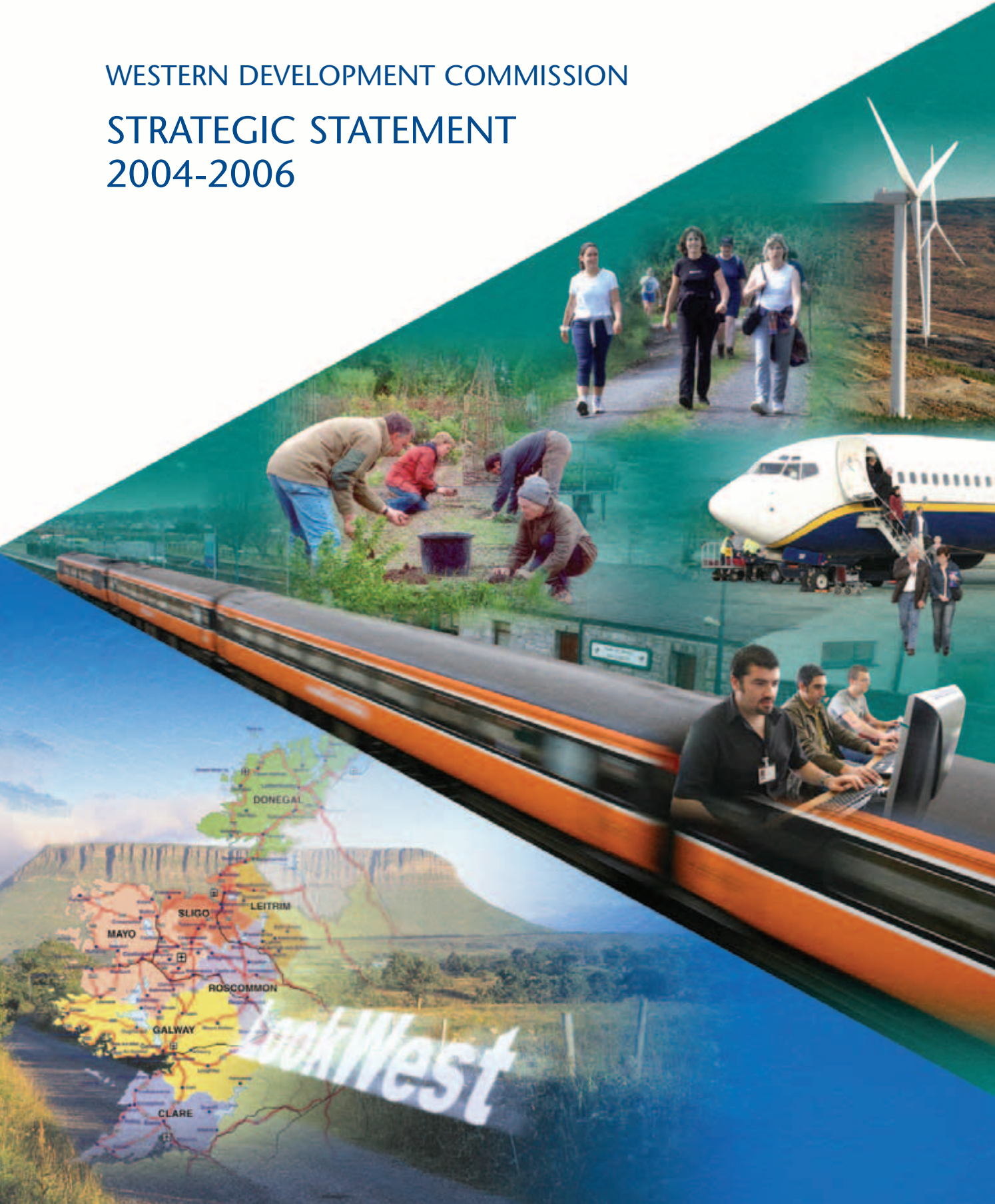




# WESTERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION STRATEGIC STATEMENT 2004-2006



*Look West*

The Western Development Commission (WDC) welcomes the benefits brought to the Western Region by the recent rapid growth in the Irish economy. Despite these improvements the WDC remains concerned about the continuing disparity between our Region and the rest of the country. Furthermore, we recognise that even within the Western Region development has been patchy: some parts have benefited significantly from economic growth and from Government and private investment, while others have not.

This means that the WDC still has much work to do to help to achieve the Government's goal of balanced regional development. In this, our third Strategic Statement, we focus organisational efforts on those key areas which we believe will bring maximum benefit to the people of the Western Region and to the country as a whole.

The WDC has established good relationships with key interests at national, regional and local level. Maintaining and developing these relationships will be an integral part of the success of this Strategic Statement, enabling us to work with others in promoting the development needs of the Western Region.

The WDC recognises that the success of this Strategic Statement also depends on the commitment and competencies of the organisation's staff. We are therefore committed to the continuing staff development and training provided through the framework of our new human resource strategy and Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

The WDC's Strategic Statement 2004-2006 gives us the opportunity to make explicit our expected outputs. The implementation of our plans and the achievement of the Strategic Statement's goals in a comprehensive and open manner will be the WDC's priority in the coming years.

**Lisa McAllister**  
Chief Executive

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# 1. Background

The activities of the WDC are influenced by a variety of factors, including the economy, social needs and Government policies.

## Policy context

The National Development Plan 2000-2006 (NDP) and the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) each reflect a national policy objective of balanced regional development. The work of the WDC is influenced and underpinned by this objective.

Despite investment in infrastructure development under the NDP, there are still major gaps in infrastructure in the Western Region. The WDC is concerned about continuing imbalances in expenditure and disparities in the provision of key infrastructure in the Western Region. It is committed to ensuring that the Region gains the full benefit of NDP investment and that its concerns continue to be addressed in any future plans.

Regional policy is also important. Apart from County Clare, which is in the Southern and Eastern Region, six of the seven counties in the Western Region have Objective 1 status through their inclusion in the Border, Midlands and West (BMW) Objective 1 region. The WDC's Strategic Statement reflects the necessity for the Western Region to make the most of its Objective 1 status between now and the end of 2006.

## Economic and social context

The Western Region has benefited significantly from the rapid growth of the Irish economy, which has given rise to new employment opportunities and has attracted both returning migrants and others to the region. Despite this growth the disparity in wealth and economic growth between the Western Region and the rest of the country remains significant. Economic growth and development within the Region has also been uneven: while some areas have reaped significant benefits, others continue to face employment and investment difficulties. The WDC recognises that balanced development within the Western Region is essential.

In recent years rapid economic growth has been accompanied by significant social change both nationally and within the Western Region. Change is visible in working practices, increased participation of women in the workforce, the ageing population profile and greater ethnic diversity. Social change has brought many benefits to communities across the Region but also poses new challenges, all of which affect the context in which the WDC operates and influence its strategic goals.



## 2. The Western Development Commission

The WDC has a unique focus on the Western Region. The counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare are included in its remit. The WDC works to ensure that the interests of the Western Region are always considered at the highest levels of Government.

### Functions

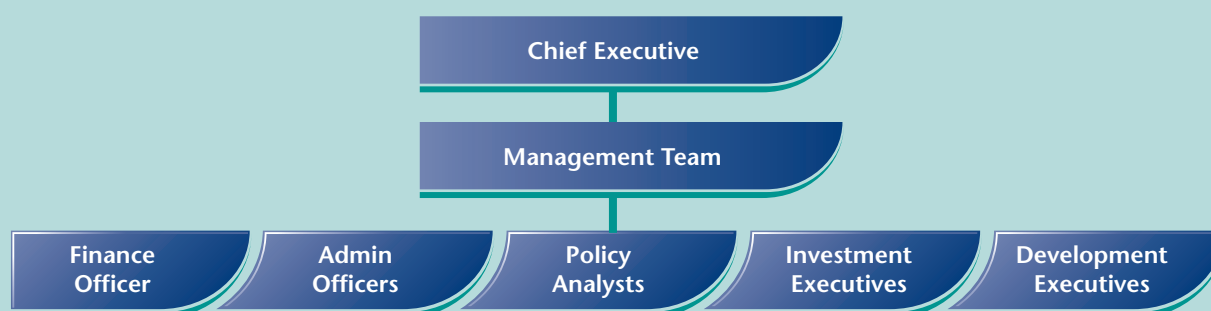
The activities of the WDC are governed by the Western Development Commission Act, 1998. The WDC works to ensure that economic and social policy and practice meet the development needs of the Western Region effectively. The Region's productive sectors, infrastructure and rural communities are of particular interest.

The WDC is responsible for the management and administration of the €32 million Western Investment Fund (WIF). This dedicated fund provides risk capital on a commercial basis to projects and businesses through equity and loans and thus fills a funding gap identified by businesses and community groups in the Region.

### Structure

The WDC is made up of twelve members appointed by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Éamon Ó Cuív, TD (see Appendix 1 for current membership).

The Commission is supported by a committed executive located in Dillon House, Ballaghaderreen, County Roscommon. The organisational chart below shows the staffing structure.



### Working with partners

The WDC recognises the importance of partnership in its work. It ensures that its contribution to the development of the Western Region adds value to the achievement of national Government policy. To this end, the WDC actively fosters and encourages strategic regional initiatives in a variety of sectors through working in partnership with other agencies, local organisations and community groups.

The WDC works strategically with Government Departments and agencies, and with local and regional authorities, as well as with commercial companies operating or investing in the Western Region and with the voluntary and community sector in the Region.

## Corporate governance

The WDC is required to implement and observe the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (Department of Finance, 2001). In complying with this Code, the WDC has developed a coherent and strategic approach to the development, management and implementation of its policies and goals. This approach is ongoing, and has resulted in the implementation of new functions and policies, including audit and internal audit function, financial and risk management, partnership process, human resource management, quality customer care and a communications policy.

The WDC reports on progress on all of the above in its annual reports and in its Sustaining Progress Action Plan.

## Vision

The Western Development Commission's Vision for the Western Region is:

*a thriving and diverse region that meets the economic, social and cultural needs of individuals, enterprises and communities.*

## Mission

*The Western Development Commission aims to be an effective and influential force in achieving economic and social development.*

## Strategic outlook

The WDC's Strategic Statement sets out a challenging programme of work for the organisation to the end of 2006.

It is the result of careful consideration of:

- the WDC's legislative remit, particularly its role in fostering and promoting economic and social development and in operating the WIF
- the national objective of fostering balanced regional development in the NDP and the commitment to achieve this through better regional distribution of public and private investment
- the scale and complexity of the challenge of economic and social development in the Western Region
- the very positive response to the WDC's work to date from a cross-section of interests in the Region, and the widely expressed demand for the WDC to develop its operations along the lines put forward in this Strategic Statement
- the need to put in place a strategy that brings together the various functions of the WDC, as set out in the WDC Act
- the necessity to enable the WDC's policy, action and investment functions themselves to be a model of integration and partnership.

## 3. The WDC Strategy 2004-2006

**The WDC's Strategic Statement uses existing regional strengths to secure a better social and economic environment for the Region.**

The Statement is organised around four strategic aims:

- to foster and promote job creation and the transfer of skills to the Western Region
- to contribute to the creation of a quality economic and social environment by highlighting and supporting opportunities for improvements in the Western Region's transport, communications and energy infrastructure
- to stimulate the creation of a quality business and community-based enterprise environment across the Western Region
- to create vibrant and sustainable enterprise in the rural areas of the Western Region.

These aims provide a clear focus for the work of the Commission to the end of 2006. Under each, the WDC has defined strategic objectives, which both inform and drive dedicated actions. Desired outcomes will be achieved by the allocation of appropriate resources to each action.

## Strategic Aim 1:

*To foster and promote job creation and the transfer of skills to the Western Region.*

### Strategic objective:

- *To create a high level of awareness among key audiences in the private and public sector of the positive living and working advantages that the Region has to offer.*

WDC Actions	Outputs	Performance Indicators
Create and implement an effective promotional programme for the Western Region.	National promotion campaign illustrating the benefits of living and working in the Region.	Promotion campaign launched and ongoing. Website providing basic information and links to other relevant websites.
Increase awareness of policy-makers and other relevant groups of the need to support enterprise activity and the transfer of knowledge and skills to the Region.	Regionally-focused contributions to the formulation of national policy, illustrating the Region's potential to create enterprise and exploit knowledge.	Contributions to national policy by WDC alone or with other bodies in the Region. Level of engagement with key decision-makers.
Monitor economic, demographic and social changes through data assembly and analysis of regional trends.	Up-to-date data and analysis of key trends in the Western Region.	Publication of key regional data and trends. Extent of consultations with WDC in relation to regional development issues.

## Strategic Aim 2:

*To contribute to the creation of a quality economic and social environment by highlighting and supporting opportunities for improvements in the Western Region's transport, communications and energy infrastructure.*

### Strategic objective:

- *To participate actively in the development of the Region's infrastructure and, where appropriate, to invest in relevant projects.*

WDC Actions	Outputs	Performance Indicators
Support the development of Knock International Airport (KIA) as an international access point and regional development hub.	Economic impact of KIA measured and documented.	Report on economic impact of KIA completed and circulated.  Level of engagement with regional and national interests regarding KIA and update on progress.
Monitor the provision of broadband telecommunications infrastructure in the Western Region.	Analysis and comment which supports the rollout of broadband infrastructure, especially to smaller centres of population and rural areas.	Provision of periodic updates on the deployment of broadband in the Region.
Identify and highlight necessity for improvements in the Region's transport infrastructure by monitoring the development of road networks and public transport services in the Region.	Progress reports on regional transport infrastructure. Briefings and meetings held with key transport infrastructure decision-makers. Updates on progress on WDC recommendations.	Continued awareness at national policy level of the WDC's priorities for investment in road and rail infrastructure in the Western Region.
Participation in Western Rail Corridor Expert Working Group.	WDC contribution to Working Group and final report.	Views of WDC reflected in final report.
Monitor energy infrastructure planning and development in the Region.	Provision of briefing documents highlighting opportunities for improvement in regional energy planning. Briefings and meetings with key energy infrastructure providers and decision-makers as required.	Continued awareness at national level of the energy needs of the Western Region.



## Strategic Aim 3:

*To stimulate the creation of a quality business and community-based enterprise environment across the Western Region.*

### Strategic objectives:

- *To support a strong portfolio of innovative SMEs, community projects and regional initiatives that contribute to the economic and social development of the Region.*
- *To deliver growth in the performance of the Western Investment Fund.*

WDC Actions	Outputs	Performance Indicators
Manage WIF – a €32 million investment programme dedicated to supporting enterprise activity in the business and voluntary sectors.	A successful and balanced portfolio of investments in the Region.	Investment of €12-14m in 15 SMEs and 15 Community Projects in 2004-06. Provision of 10 social, cultural or economic infrastructure facilities.
Secure State Aid approval from European Commission (EC) to continue operating the Western Investment Fund after 2006.	EC approval received to continue the WIF past 2006 with increased investment limits.	Approval received from the European Commission to make the requested amendments to the operation of the WIF.
Make strategic investments that have a significant impact on the regional economy.	Investment in regional strategic projects.	Two strategic projects in place.
Identify and develop joint projects that contribute to improving the regional economy.	Projects with regional impact developed in partnership with other interests, prioritising those which involve the WIF.	Degree to which projects are identified and progressed.

## Strategic Aim 4:

*To create vibrant and sustainable enterprise in the rural areas of the Western Region.*

### Strategic objective:

- *To cultivate the development of rural enterprise activity based on the sustainable exploitation of the Region's natural strengths and resources.*

WDC Actions	Outputs	Performance Indicators
<p>Continue to support sustainable rural tourism through the Western Development Tourism Programme (WDTP) and the Green Box.</p> <p>Influence national rural tourism policy using analysis of its impact in the West and the experience gained through WDTP and Green box.</p>	<p>Innovative rural tourism projects.</p> <p>Rural Tourism Performance Report completed.</p>	<p>Number of sustainable projects developed.</p> <p>Level of engagement with national policy-makers.</p> <p>Update on support for the rural tourism sector.</p> <p>Policy influenced to provide increased funding and support for the rural tourism sector.</p>
<p>Continue to support the development of the organic agri-food sector through facilitation of Atlantic Organics and the Western Organic Network (WON).</p> <p>Facilitate the transfer of Atlantic Organics and the Western Organic Network to counties Galway and Clare.</p> <p>Influence national policy on organic agri-food, based on the experiences of projects developed in the Western Region.</p> <p>Review implementation of Blueprint for Organic Agri-Food Production in the West.</p>	<p>Organic agri-food networks, partnerships and events.</p> <p>Organic networks and services established in Clare and Galway.</p> <p>Participation in National Organic Steering Committee and engagement with key decision-makers.</p> <p>Report completed.</p>	<p>Number of networks, partnerships and events developed.</p> <p>Number of networks, partnerships and services established in Clare and Galway.</p> <p>Effective participation and level of engagement with national policy-makers.</p> <p>Number of recommendations implemented and progress made since publication of Blueprint.</p>
<p>In partnership with communities, research and produce a guide on community ownership of wind farms.</p> <p>Develop pilot project to foster community or small-scale local ownership of renewable energy projects in the Western Region.</p> <p>Re locally-owned wind farms, influence national policy to provide: a) an appropriate and regulatory environment; and b) specific financial and advisory support structures.</p>	<p>Quality information for communities and policy-makers on community ownership of wind farms.</p> <p>Pilot project.</p> <p>National policy-makers made aware of support required for community-owned wind farms.</p>	<p>Guide published and circulated.</p> <p>Successful facilitation of pilot project.</p> <p>Level of engagement with national policy-makers and appropriate recommendations produced.</p>
<p>Promote best practice in rural development by sharing the models developed by the WDC.</p>	<p>WDC rural development models available in published form and shared with relevant agencies and groups.</p>	<p>Published report on models of rural development available and disseminated to relevant agencies and groups.</p>

## 4. Organisation

### Strategic Objective:

- *To operate the WDC as a competent and effective organisation that complies fully with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2001).*

WDC Actions	Outputs	Performance Indicators
Develop Customer Charter.	WDC Customer Charter with standards of service, including complaints procedure, clearly set out for customers.	Charter published. Provision of professional efficient service in line with Charter commitments. Performance evaluation in annual reports.
In line with Official Languages Act, develop specific measures to improve service provision in Irish language.	All required documents published bi-lingually. Requested services available in Irish.	Facilitation of customers requesting to do business in Irish.
Develop advanced financial management system.	System in place to meet the management and financial needs of the WDC.	Effective financial reporting for management and parent Department.
Carry out detailed expenditure reviews, including risk management.	Reviews carried out and detailed follow-up action plans produced. Risks identified, evaluated and managed.	Proposed improvements in processes and efficiency identified and implemented by Executive.
Implement Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, including Codes of Business Conduct.	Code of Practice in place and implemented where appropriate.	Conformity with relevant legislation. WDC managed objectively and effectively.
Implement effective PMDS and upward feedback for all staff.	Role profiles identified for all staff. Appropriate training identified and carried out. Positive and proactive policy in place.	Open transparent performance management system for all staff. Individual strengths and development needs identified.
Develop a comprehensive staff manual, including a human resources strategy.	Completed set of updated policies and procedures in place.	All staff fully aware and with clear understanding of WDC policies and procedures.
Implement team and cross-functional working.	Teams established to correspond with key areas of Strategic Statement.	Effective use of skills within the organisation.
Develop and implement IT strategy.	Strategy completed and implemented. WDC website updated.	Effective IT system maximises support for the business needs of the WDC and its customers.
Develop and implement WDC communications strategy, including identifying a WDC corporate identity.	Communications strategy in place and communications team set up.	High public profile. Positive image of the WDC with key customers.
Set up effective partnership process to monitor the Sustaining Progress Action Plan.	Partnership Committee representing all staff in place.	All relevant amendments to policy brought to Partnership Committee. Number of agreements reached through partnership process.
Promote work-life balance.	Availability of atypical working arrangements (eg flexi-time and parental leave).	Organisation able to maintain effective level of service while offering flexible working arrangements. Staff satisfaction.
Promote policies on diversity and gender equality.	Equality-proof WDC publications where relevant.	Effective gender and equality proofing process in place.

## 5. Implementing, Monitoring and Reporting

The WDC Strategic Statement will be implemented through the preparation and delivery of annual work programmes. In addition, the WDC is committed to supporting the goals and objectives for better management as expressed in *Sustaining Progress, 2003*.

The WDC's annual reports will include updates on progress in achieving the strategic aims and objectives set out in this Strategic Statement. Annual reports will be presented to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and laid before the Oireachtas. They will also be made available to stakeholders, key customers, clients and the general public.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1:

### Members of the Western Development Commission from 31st January 2002 to 30th January 2005.

Mr Michael Farrell (Chairperson)	Retired CEO, Connacht Gold
Cllr Mary Bohan	Member, Leitrim County Council
Ms Alice Bonner	Member, Donegal County Council
Ms Tish Gibbons	Branch Secretary, SIPTU, Galway
Mr Billy Grimes	Lecturer, Killybegs Tourism College
Mr Seán Hannick	MD, Killala Precision Components, Co Mayo
Mr Joe Healy	Farmer, Co Galway
Mr John MacNamara	Economist, Co Galway
Mr Paddy McGarry	Retired Principal, Roscommon VEC
Mr Des Mahon	County Manager, Mayo County Council
Ms Martina Minogue	Director, E-training International, Co Clare
Mr Pádraig Ó Caomhánaigh	Community Activist, Co Galway

### Members of the Western Development Commission from February 2005.

Mr Michael Farrell (Chairperson)	Retired CEO, Connacht Gold
Cllr Mary Bohan	Member, Leitrim County Council
Ms Mary Devine O'Callaghan	Office Manager, Co Roscommon
Ms Tish Gibbons	Branch Secretary, SIPTU, Galway
Mr Pat Gilmore	Publican and Farmer, Co Galway
Mr Billy Grimes	Lecturer, Killybegs Tourism College
Mr Greg Jackson	Auctioneer, Co Mayo
Mr Des Mahon	County Manager, Mayo County Council
Ms Martina Minogue	Director, E-training International, Co Clare
Mr Pádraig Ó Caomhánaigh	Community Activist, Co Galway
Mr Ray O'Donoghue	Council for the West, Co Galway
Dr Katie Sweeney	Head of Centre, GMIT, Co Mayo

## Appendix 2:

### Abbreviations and terms used in this Statement.

<b>BMW</b>	Border, Midland and Western Regional Assembly
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>Green Box</b>	Ireland's First Area-Based Integrated Ecotourism Plan which is currently being implemented by a dedicated Green Box staff. Its objective is to develop and market a network of ecotourism areas which offer value holidays in underdeveloped areas and includes the development of Green Standards and a Certification Scheme.
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NSS</b>	National Spatial Strategy
<b>PMDS</b>	Performance Management Development System
<b>WDC</b>	Western Development Commission
<b>WDTP</b>	Western Development Tourism Programme – a multi-agency programme charged with implementing the recommendations of the <i>Blueprint for Tourism Development in the West</i> , WDC, 2000.
<b>WIF</b>	Western Investment Fund
<b>WON</b>	Western Organic Network