

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Foreword | 2 |
| 1. Background | 3 |
| 2. The Western Development Commission | 5 |
| Functions | 5 |
| Structure | 5 |
| Working with partners | 5 |
| Corporate governance | 6 |
| Vision | 6 |
| Mission | 6 |
| Strategic outlook | 6 |
| 3. The WDC Strategic Statement 2010-2012 | 7 |
| Goal 1: To inform policy-making on economic and social development in the Western Region through high quality analysis. | 8 |
| Goal 2: To promote the benefits of living, working and doing business in the Western Region | 9 |
| Goal 3: Encourage the development of the Western economy based on the sustainable development of the Western Region's strengths and resources | 10 |
| Goal 4: To provide risk capital to SMEs and Social Enterprises in their start-up and expansion phases through the WDC Investment Fund (WIF) | 11 |
| Goal 5: To operate the WDC as a competent and effective organisation | 11 |
| 4. Implementing, Monitoring and Reporting | 12 |
| 5. Appendix 1 | 13 |
| Members of the Western Development Commission from Jan 2010 | 13 |
| Abbreviations and terms used in this Statement | 14 |

Foreword

Having conducted an in-depth review of the current challenges and future opportunities facing the Western Region, The Western Development Commission (WDC), sets out in this Strategic Statement how it will achieve its legislative remit of promoting the economic and social development of the seven Western counties.

The actions contained in this document are designed to support and augment the existing richness of the region, particularly its people, its environment and its cultural heritage. The WDC is the Government Agency with responsibility for bringing together the vast tapestry of public and private interventions that will secure the economic and social development of the Western Region. As such the WDC's mission statement is clear and unambiguous where it ***"will contribute towards maximising the Western Region's full potential in order to give effect to the economic, social and cultural aspirations of the citizens of the Western Region"***.

The WDC remains committed to ensuring that the needs and aspirations of the citizens of the Western Region are voiced at the highest level in order that Government can achieve its policy on Balanced Regional Development. We believe that this balance can best be achieved by the Region maximising its potential through the sustainable exploitation of all of its resources, both human and natural. The WDC's goals are clearly aligned to the Government's national recovery strategy and the WDC is confident that the Western Region can play a very significant role on this road to recovery.

The WDC will, over the duration of this Strategic Statement, vigorously pursue the social and economic opportunities that our Region presents to its citizens. It will work to develop and promote the region as a wonderful place to live, work and do business. It will continue to promote enterprise in the region and it will develop partnerships that will harness the collective talents of the public, private and voluntary sector.

The success of this plan will be largely dependant on the continuing dedication and professionalism of our staff. We will continue to ensure that our staff are fully equipped to meet the exacting demands of their crucial role in developing the Western Region. In addition, we will continue to ensure that our work brings added value to the work of other agencies and stakeholders working in our region.

This strategic statement forms the basis of all WDC activities during the period 2010-2012. The WDC looks forward with confidence towards ensuring that the implementation of the actions contained in this statement will deliver real progress for our citizens.



Lisa McAllister
Chief Executive

1. Background



This Strategic Statement builds on the WDC's Strategic Statement 2007-2009 and is underpinned by the objective of promoting sustainable employment opportunities in the Western Region through the delivery of regional development. While it builds on our previous strategies, it also marks a departure from them as it has been developed in, and must necessarily respond to, a very different economic and social climate, both nationally and within the Western Region.

The challenges currently facing the Region are considerable, notably high levels of unemployment, restrictions on access to finance, the possibility of a return to out-migration, severe pressures on the rural economy, constrained public finances and increased competition for declining infrastructure investment. New approaches are now needed to address these challenges; approaches which tap into the underutilised potential and assets of the Western Region, while at the same time building upon the many positive developments of recent years, notably the strengthening of the region's labour force and skills base.

In responding to these challenges, the WDC's activities as set out in this Strategic Statement are consistent with the Government's national recovery strategy *Building Ireland's Smart Economy – A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal*. In the context of this national framework, particular emphasis will be placed on:

- ✱ Securing the enterprise economy and restoring competitiveness in the Western Region
- ✱ Building the capacity and value of innovation and creativity within the Western Region
- ✱ Developing renewable energy resources and infrastructure
- ✱ Highlighting the necessity for investment in critical infrastructure
- ✱ Delivering an efficient and effective public service to the citizens of the Western Region

The WDC, and this Strategic Statement, operate within the broader context of regional development policy within Ireland. The National Spatial Strategy (NSS), published in 2002, provides the overarching framework for spatial development in Ireland. It sets out the strategic framework for promoting a more efficient Greater Dublin Area, ensuring strong gateways¹ and hubs², strengthening county towns and supporting other vibrant and diversified rural regions. The National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) re-iterated the national commitment to balanced regional development through supporting the economic and social development of all regions so as to achieve their full potential.

¹ In the Western Region these are Galway, Sligo, Letterkenny (linked with Derry) and Shannon (linked with Limerick).

² In the Western Region these are Tuam, Ennis and the linked hub of Castlebar/Ballina

Regions are the building blocks of the national economy and regional development is fundamental to national growth. How regional development policy, as well as national, regional and local actors, respond to the recession will be critical to recovery. In particular, investments in infrastructure, human capital (education, training, skills) and innovation at a regional level will be key to enterprise and employment creation. It is within this context that the WDC has devised its Strategic Statement 2010-2012.

The WDC believes that the creation of sustainable employment should be centred on those sectors where the region enjoys comparative strength. In pursuit of this objective, it will be necessary to augment the region's ability to compete in the knowledge-based economy, to maximise the potential of the rural economy, to utilise the region's own resources, thus retaining and attracting a dynamic, well-educated and entrepreneurial workforce. In addition, the significant infrastructure gaps particularly in transport access, energy and broadband telecommunications will have to be addressed in order to create the competitive business environment necessary for growth.

The fact that the activities outlined in this Strategic Statement will augment and support the activities of all our stakeholders, both in the public and private domain is implicit throughout.



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 functions 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 WDC 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.

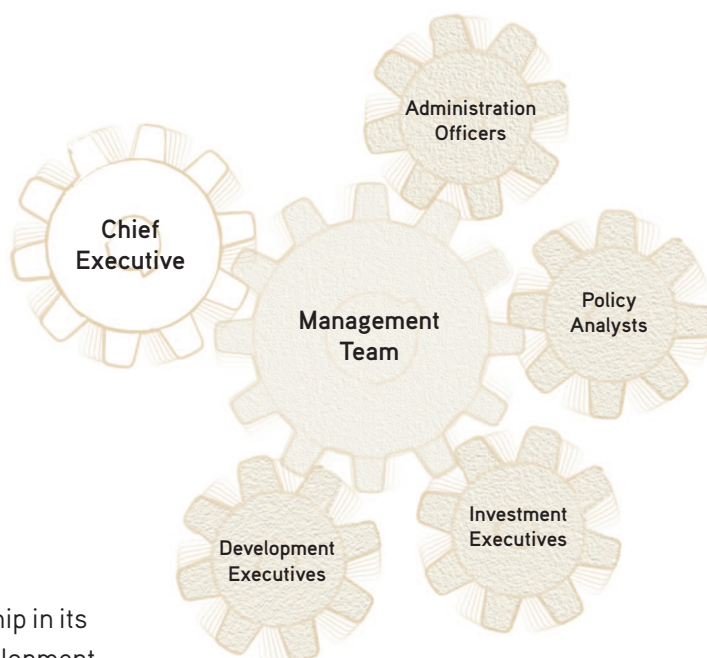
Structure

The WDC is made up of twelve members appointed by the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, Minister Pat Carey, TD (see Appendix 1 for current membership).

The Commission is supported by a committed executive located in Dillon House, Ballaghaderreen, County Roscommon. This organisational chart 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 does not duplicate the activities of any other agency, but rather it actively fosters and encourages strategic regional initiatives in a variety of sectors through working in partnership with other agencies, local organisations and community groups. It is careful not to duplicate the work of any other agency; rather it works in a collaborative way with public, private and voluntary partners to achieve specific outcomes.

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, 2009). 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.

Vision

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

To be the hub for the strategic economic and social development of the Western Region

Mission

The WDC will contribute towards maximising the Western Region's full potential in order to give effect to the economic, social and cultural aspirations of the citizens of the Western Region.

Strategic outlook

The WDC's Strategic Statement sets out a challenging programme of work for the organisation to the end of 2012.

It is the result of careful consideration of the following:

- ✱ 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 1998
- ✱ The necessity to enable the WDC's policy, action and investment functions themselves to be a model of integration and partnership.

3. The WDC Strategic Statement 2010-2012



The Statement is organised around five strategic goals:

Goal 1:

To inform policy-making on economic and social development in the Western Region through high quality analysis.

Goal 2

To promote the benefits of living, working and doing business in the Western Region.

Goal 3

To encourage the development of the rural economy based on the sustainable development of the Western Region's strengths and resources.

Goal 4

To provide risk capital to SMEs and social enterprises in their start-up and expansion phases through the WDC Investment Fund (WIF)

Goal 5

To operate the WDC as a competent and effective organisation

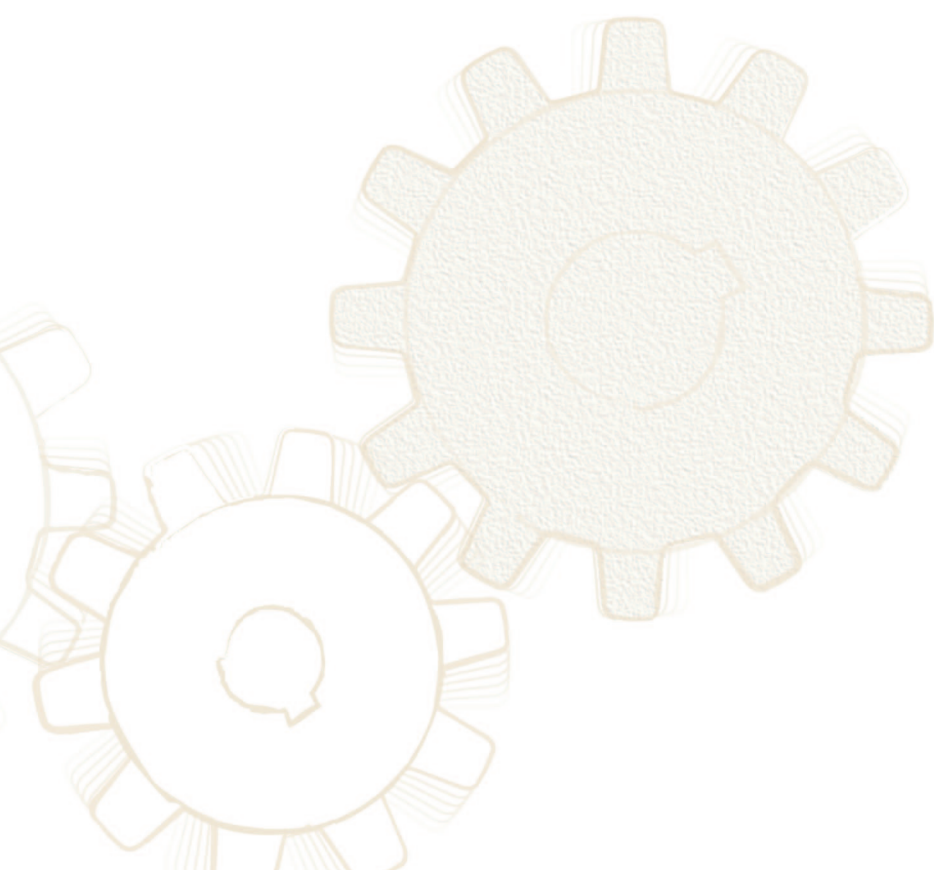
These goals provide a strategic focus for the work of the WDC for the next three years. Under each goal, the WDC has defined its strategy, outputs and potential impacts that these goals can deliver for the Western Region.

Goal 1: To inform policy-making on economic and social development in the Western Region through high quality analysis.

| WDC Activity | Output | Outcomes | Impacts |
|--|---|---|--|
| Analysis of social and economic issues and data relevant to development of the Western Region in order to inform the national and regional policy making process through reports, briefs, submissions, events and direct engagement with stakeholders | Contribution to and participation in regional policy debate, supported by well substantiated and relevant analysis of socio-economic trends in the Western Region | Key regional and national stakeholders better informed of regional socio-economic issues, particularly for the Western Region | Balanced regional development a core objective of Government policy |
| | Analysis of Enterprise, Employment & Education and Innovation issues in the Western Region and provision of new and pertinent information (e.g. labour catchments, rural employment) to policymakers | Greater awareness among key stakeholders of the enterprise, employment, education and innovation issues in the Western Region | Policy on Enterprise, Employment & Education and Innovation meeting the needs of the Western Region. |
| | Highlighting the transport, energy and communications infrastructure requirements of the Western Region through robust analysis | Infrastructural investment needs of the Western Region highlighted to key decision makers | Infrastructural investment policy addressing the infrastructural requirements of the Western Region. |
| | Analysis of the dynamics of the rural economy , inputting to policy and informing debate by highlighting issues for rural areas in the Western Region | Greater recognition of the requirements of the Western Region's rural economy in policy-making process | Policies for rural areas informed and attending to important issues for the Western Region's rural economy |

Goal 2: To promote the benefits of living, working and doing business in the Western Region

| WDC Activity | Output | Outcomes | Impacts |
|---|---|--|--|
| Position the Western Region of Ireland as a prominent global region through promoting the benefits of living working and doing business in the Western Region | Ongoing development of www.lookwest.ie and expansion into social media outlets to provide a regional platform facilitating individuals and businesses to move to the Western Region. | An enhanced facility for meeting and assisting individuals and businesses interested in moving to the Region | An improved profile for regional businesses and partners leading to increased economic activity in the Region |
| | Regional Skills Register | Regional partners informed of the skills pool available to support regional business growth or creation | Improved Regional Unique Selling Point message to support Balanced Regional Development Policy |
| | Regional Enterprise Register | Regional business growth – through sharing of enquiries with national and regional enterprise bodies. | Increased inward investment and existing business growth. |
| | Regional Network of National and International Diaspora. | Greater regional dynamism in attracting overseas SME investment | Increased contribution of Western Region to National Economy. Increase in relative Private investment in Western Region |



Goal 3: Encourage the development of the Western economy based on the sustainable development of the Western Region's strengths and resources

| WDC Activity | Output | Outcomes | Impacts |
|--|---|--|---|
| Ensure the Western region achieves its aspiration as a globally significant creative region through direct development and policy support to grow local employment and opportunities in the creative economy | Economic Impact Assessment of the "Creative West" | Increased awareness among key stakeholders of the economic contribution and potential of the creative sector in the Western Region | Increase in relative Public/Private investment in Western Region |
| | Development of Creative West Brand | A programme which directly supports regional creative businesses leading to increased penetration of Creative Products on international markets | <p>Increased Gross Value Added (GVA) of Creative Products.</p> <p>Increased export levels of creative goods and services.</p> <p>International recognition of the Region as a creative hotspot.</p> <p>Spill-over effects to the wider regional industries through innovation to the smart economy</p> |
| | Support for National Policy on Sector | Increased coherence in sector at national level | Government Policy on the Creative Sector informed and accommodating of the sector's potential within the Western Region |
| Investigate potential added value of WDC contribution to the Marine Sector | Stakeholder Mapping exercise of the marine sector in the Western Region | Increased coherence of national policy as it affects the Region's marine assets | Marine assets of the region maximised to their full renewable potential |
| Realise the western regional goal of becoming a national and international leader in exploitation and commercialisation of renewable energy sources and technologies | Through the €2.8M Raslres project funded under the Interreg IVB programme (2009-2012) that will develop and pilot local bio-energy businesses based on wood biomass initially followed by similar efforts for marine bio and reed canary grass (rcg) in the western region. | <p>Increased economic activity in the Regional bio-energy market as suppliers engage with potential clients in wood, marine and rcg.</p> <p>Lower CO₂ in the national and regional economy.</p> <p>Diversification opportunities for those involved in agriculture, engineering and construction sectors.</p> | <p>Increase in critical mass of renewable bio-energy supply and demand.</p> <p>Lower emissions, equivalent to 92,000 cars annually taken out of the regional economy</p> <p>Up to 200 jobs initially safeguarded or created.</p> <p>Over ten years 1,000 jobs created, with €15 Million Per Annum in increased revenue.</p> |

Goal 4: To provide risk capital to SMEs and Social Enterprises in their start-up and expansion phases through the WDC Investment Fund (WIF)

| WDC Activity | Output | Outcomes | Impacts |
|---|---|---|--|
| Address private sector market failure by providing risk capital to new and expanding SMEs and social enterprises. | Innovative western enterprises supported through start-up and expansion phase | Increased entrepreneurship within the region whilst supporting employment in the region | Smart Economy businesses developing to their potential in the Western Region |
| | Ongoing review of funding environment and adjustment of WIF investment strategy as appropriate including sourcing other income streams for the WIF. | Increase in enterprise investment in Western Region | Proof of Evergreen investment model delivering greater investment opportunities in the region's smart economy. |

Goal 5: To operate the WDC as a competent and effective organisation

| WDC Activity | Output | Outcomes | Impacts |
|--|---|--|--|
| Financial Control | Annual Financial Reports | WDC recognised as being efficient and fully accountable in its use of Public Funds as illustrated by a positive report from C&AG | WDC seen as providing a value for money service to the public |
| Developing and harnessing Staff Competencies | Highly motivated executive in place to manage and control the administration and business of the Commission | WDC recognised as providing high quality work to its stakeholders by virtue of the professionalism and motivation of its executive staff | WDC widely continued to be regarded as a source of high level expertise in the economic and social development spheres |
| Ensuring that the WDC develops and maintains effective communications with its various audience groups | Annual Report Press Statements Websites Conferences and Seminars Published Documents | The WDC's varied audiences are fully briefed on the relevant issues at the appropriate time | WDC recognised as a source of insightful, timely and relevant information in the areas under its remit |

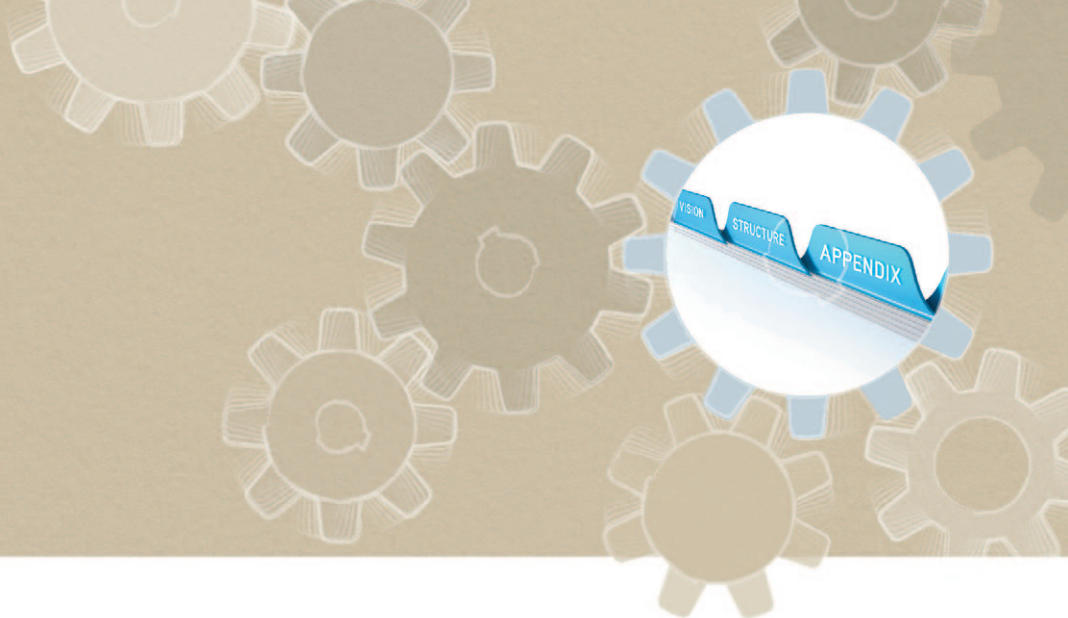
4. Implementing, Monitoring and Reporting



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 the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (May 2009)*.

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, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and laid before the Oireachtas. They will also be made available to stakeholders, key customers, clients and the general public.

5. Appendix 1



Members of the Western Development Commission from Jan 2010

Mr Michael Farrell (Chairperson)

Prof. Séamas Caulfield

Mr Jim Devenney

Ms. Mary Devine O'Callaghan

Mr. Pat Gilmore

Ms Mary Hoade

Ms Jackie Maguire

Ms Martina Minogue

Mr Diarmaid Mulcahy

Mr Pádraig Ó Caomhánaigh

Ms Helen Rochford Brennan

Dr. Katie Sweeney

Abbreviations and terms used in this Statement

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| GVA | Gross Value Added |
| SMEs | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| NSS | National Spatial Strategy |
| WDC | Western Development Commission |
| WIF | Western Investment Fund |
| C&AG | Comptroller and Auditor General |

Contact:

Western Development Commission
Dillon House
Ballaghaderreen
Co. Roscommon

Phone: +353 (0)94 986 1441
Email: info@wdc.ie
Web: www.wdc.ie



