

Strategic Roads Infrastructure Planning and Provision in ICBAN Territory

Report prepared for

**Irish Central Border Area Network
(ICBAN)**

September 2005



**By the
International Centre for Local and Regional
Development**



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Main Acronyms

BRA	Border Regional Authority
DoEHLG	Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government
DoENI	Department of Environment Northern Ireland
DRD	Department of Regional Development
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
ISNI	Investment Strategy Northern Ireland
NDP	National Development Plan
NRA	National Roads Authority
NRS	National Roads Study
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
RDS	Regional Development Strategy
RTS	Regional Transportation Strategy
RPGs	Regional Planning Guidelines

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General

- New and improved roads are required to provide an effective transport communications network in the ICBAN territory having regard to its isolated location in the North West and its restricted connections with adjoining territories and the rest of the island.
- There is general agreement that an intensified collective effort is required to pursue strategic improvements in the border area through all available channels.
- Local and regional actions to improve the transport facilities in the region on both sides of the border must take account of two recent developments.
 - The advent of a new strategic approach to planning that has been adopted from Europe and is being deployed on both parts of the island.
 - Changes in the approaches deployed by the central authorities in prioritising and allocating funds for major infrastructure projects.
- A two-track (short and long-term) local response is advisable to secure maximum benefits for the ICBAN territory from changes associated with the new planning and funding environments.
 - An enduring strategic capacity building approach consonant with the macro emphasis on long-term strategies.
 - A short-term approach to capitalise upon the limited window of opportunity afforded by the transition phase and the preparation of the new funding programmes.

Roads provision in a new planning / funding milieu

- The new strategic approach to planning on both parts of the island is articulated primarily through their respective spatial strategies, the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) in the Republic of Ireland and the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) in Northern Ireland.
- The main strategic funding programmes for both parts of the island – the new National Development Plan (NDP) and Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (ISNI) - are being shaped by the principles and trajectories of the NSS and RDS. Conformity with the NSS and RDS will be a standard precondition of securing funding for major planned infrastructure proposals.
- The strategic planning approach inherent in NSS and RDS represents a shift away from traditional ‘trend planning’ practices towards more pro-active ‘vision planning’ approaches. This has major implications for infrastructure provision including roads.
 - Strategic road provision must now be justified by demonstrating wider and coordinated regional planning commitments and consistency with the NSS / RDS (and associated) strategies.

- Roads usage data based on existing trends only will be insufficient to justify application for major roads investment: they will have to be linked to the envisioned plan scenarios.
- The strategic road commitments contained in the National Roads Needs Study (NRNS) in the Republic of Ireland and Regional Transportation Study (RTS) in Northern Ireland will continue to be the key investment priorities. However, the National Roads Authority (NRA) and Roads Services (RS) can and will adjust their road priority inventories as necessary to conform to the funding priorities of the NDP and ISNI.
- The evolution of the major spatial strategies as they progress through regional implementation will refine the content of the NRA and RTS inventories. Changes will reflect the consistency and impact of local responses to advance the wider regional objectives of the spatial strategies.

New funding opportunities

- Funding availability linked to the scope for advancing the longer-term ‘vision planning’ perspective (based on the expansion of hubs and gateways designated in the major spatial strategies) provides new opportunities to obtain funding for strategic roads infrastructure.
- A short window of opportunity exists in respect of the current funding reviews associated with the preparation of the new NDP and ISNI each of which are expected to shape the direction of strategic infrastructure investment over the period of the next six to seven years of the EU Community Support Frameworks (to 2013). A possible spending of €100 billion has been mentioned as likely to be available for infrastructure investment across the island over the next ten years.
- The mechanisms for securing critical transport infrastructure funding are available (albeit not transparently) and the challenge for ICBAN and its members is to persuade the relevant central government departments that their projects deserve immediate priority. The need to secure supporting planning actions is more problematic. An agreed planning vision is needed to substantiate forecast traffic levels and justify transport investment. However, the development of a coherent and integrated planning case in the short-term is difficult where decision-making is fragmented and funding for many sectoral activities is not directly linked to the planning process.

Joined-up planning and collaboration

- Despite the introduction on both parts of the island of a new emphasis on strategic planning and funding that is designed to promote both general prosperity and balanced regional development, local efforts to advance a new strategic regional planning vision for the border territory are severely inhibited by systematic institutional constraints associated with established organizational arrangements in the two jurisdictions.

- Unless a coordinated, proactive stance based on clearly agreed choices about transport priorities for the region is adopted and pursued in the ICBAN territory it will not be possible for member local authorities to capitalise upon the available funding in the immediate post-2006 funding transition period.
- The capacity to capitalise upon the flexibility afforded by the new planning and funding environment will require joined-up planning and cross-sectoral collaboration that builds-up from the local level. It requires actors at the local and regional levels to move as quickly as possible to a new level of strategic planning and coordinated action.

Challenges to integrated roads proposals and planning

- A review of planning and roads documents indicates that collaboration is occurring amongst the relevant agencies for the purposes of producing integrated strategic road transport planning. However, the pace of the ICBAN local authorities in linking into spatial strategies is slow and uneven across the various organizations at the different levels (national, regional, local) and more particularly across the border.
- Pro-active planning is difficult where it involves cross border collaboration. Cooperation is usually accompanied by a tradition of competition between counties and districts. The presence of the border impels many officials to refer potential decisions upwards for clearance and in Northern Ireland this appears to have become the standing protocol in some cases. This procedural style is inimical to the exploratory innovative style of planning that the new planning and funding environments are set to reward most highly.
- Improved coordination between roads and planning departments is starting to be achieved through some of the new Better Local Government arrangements in the Republic of Ireland and the introduction of PP13 in Northern Ireland. However, procedural constraints in the prevailing administrative systems in the two jurisdictions inhibit coordination to some degree. It appears to be more difficult to initiate local integration between roads and spatial planning in Northern Ireland than in the Republic of Ireland. In particular, Chief Executives of local authorities in the North have less flexibility and scope to integrate roads and planning than their counterparts in the South.

Recommendations for achieving roads infrastructure through joined-up planning

- ICBAN and its members should feed into the InterTrade Ireland study on spatial strategies currently under way. The study aims to assist the relevant government departments on both parts of the island to identify the potential of an all-island framework for collaborative action. The ICBAN input should highlight the difficulties experienced in remedying the roads infrastructure deficits and other needs of the border territories.
- Decisions about the transport infrastructure priorities of the ICBAN area will need to take account of the new strategic and vision-planning environment and the post-2006 funding

changes. A two-track (short and long-term) local response to these changes is advisable for the ICBAN territory.

- A long-haul capacity-building approach designed to advance integration with the long-term vision strategies of the NSS / RDS.
 - A short-term approach to capitalise upon the window of opportunity afforded by the transition period and associated adoption of the new funding programmes.
- ICBAN and its members should anticipate the explorative study being carried out to assist the relevant government departments on both parts of the island to devise a framework that will facilitate spatial planning and collaboration across the island. Accordingly, a pro-active vision-planning approach should be adopted for the border areas involving:
 - a long-term and facilitatory perspective geared to enabling the sub-region to plan and act strategically;
 - increased collaboration and information sharing between agencies;
 - better delivery of strategic spatial planning initiatives through new and bottom-up vision-planning methodologies;
 - improved cross-border information exchanges, together with better databases and mapping provision.
- Pending the arrival of an agreed long-term strategy for the sub-region it would be advisable to develop an agreed interim or holding position on priority roads needs with a view to capitalising upon the short-term opportunities afforded by the imminent funding environment transition. Any interim decisions about priorities must be:
 - reached quickly,
 - stated explicitly, and
 - supported by a detailed, evidence-based and coordinated planning case.
- A networking agency with a strategic orientation and enabling remit is required to address the procedural fragmentation difficulties in the sub-region and drive the case for joined-up planning and improved roads infrastructure in the context of the new opportunities provided by the spatial strategies and funding arrangements. ICBAN or a similar networking organisation could perform this role.
- A scaled-up enabling role for ICBAN (or similar entity) would involve it:
 - having a learning and knowledge-sharing brief to bring clarity to the current decision-making arena (which is opaque and in transition);
 - being a *strategic* enabler or animation and actions forum for agencies within and beyond planning;
 - providing a mechanism for informed discussion and agreement around planning for the sub-region (and perhaps having its own forward planning capacity) as a way to:
 - coordinate vision planning initiatives that correspond with the strategic vision of the NSS, RDS and associated strategic plans;
 - secure consistency and integration between local authority plan reviews on both sides of the border.

Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Strategic planning and Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Territory

This Discussion Paper has been commissioned by the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN)¹ and prepared by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD)². It examines border regional transport infrastructure in the context of the new emphasis on strategic spatial planning and other relevant recent developments that affect opportunities to improve strategic transport infrastructure in the region.

It is envisaged that the paper will provide a platform for informed discussion within ICBAN and between ICBAN representatives and senior officials from relevant government agencies and departments. It is anticipated that fruitful discussions on these issues will lead to the formation of a positive working partnership that will help to progress the provision of high-speed transport networks in the region through enhanced cross-border (roads and spatial) planning and implementation frameworks.

1.2 Strategic roads and planning study: aim, purpose and approach

The general aim of the research is to examine existing and latent linkages between spatial planning strategies and transport infrastructure provision in the ICBAN area. The *objective* of the research is to identify the scope for a more collaborative and joined-up approach to spatial planning by central government, local authorities and other relevant agencies in the Border Region.

The *purpose* of the study is to assist ICBAN to develop an informed roads transport investment infrastructure strategy. It will do this by identifying the potential for (and barriers to) improved co-operation & coordination relating in particular to the:

- respective jurisdictional competences that currently apply at different spatial scales in the Border Region;

¹ The Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) is made up of ten local authorities in the western border region, comprising Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Cavan, Monaghan, Fermanagh, Dungannon and South Tyrone, Cookstown, Armagh City & District and Omagh. ICBAN carries out a wide range of developmental activities to enhance the capacity of the cross border region. This includes acting as an implementing agent under the INTERREG IIIA Programme as well as undertaking a diverse range of specific initiatives. The staff employed by ICBAN provide executive support to its three distinct organisational components - a network of councillors, a board of management that has been incorporated as a limited company, and a funding delivery partnership.

² The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) is a North-South-US independent research partnership specialising in the field of spatial planning, governance and development on the island of Ireland. The Centre comprises four academic partners - Harvard University (the Center for Urban Development Studies in the Graduate School of Design), the University of Ulster from Northern Ireland, the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis at Maynooth University and Athlone Institute of Technology in the Republic of Ireland – together with the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh and the Clonmacnoise Foundation (a fundraising charitable trust).

- lack-of-fit between spatial plans at national/regional levels and development plans at central/local government levels;
- potential for integration between the various plans with a view to maximising the allocation and call-down on infrastructure funding from Exchequer and other sources.

The research *approach* comprised the following interrelated elements.

- A *documentary / policy review* of current/proposed strategic road transport infrastructure investment and spatial plans at all scales (local, regional, national).
- A comparative *analysis of the integration / divergence* between spatial planning at the various scales together with road transport infrastructure investment strategies. This will have regard to differences in operational planning procedures, policies and guidance applicable to spatial and infrastructure investment plans in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- With specific reference to the ICBAN territory, *identification of potential ways to improve integration / joined-up thinking and implementation* in relation to planning and strategic (road) transport infrastructure provision (based on the reviews / analysis and structured discussions with a sample of key decision-makers and stakeholders).

2. DOCUMENTARY REVIEW

Section 2 Context: old challenges, recent developments and new opportunities

2.1 Current challenges facing ICBAN Territory

The Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) encompasses the South Western counties of Northern Ireland and the middle section of the Border Region Authority, which has been described as the largest and least cohesive regional authority in the Republic of Ireland. Any attempts to promote the development of the territories within the ICBAN area face both substantive sectoral and procedural challenges.

2.1.1 Sectoral trends and transport

By virtue to its location and historical circumstances, the central border area that comprises the territory of ICBAN is both disadvantaged and marginalized relative to the rest of the island of Ireland. The extent of the regional disadvantage is recorded across a range of official socio-economic indicators, including demography, labour force, income, education and poverty levels. A review of the recent research and statistical data shows that the Border and West regions in the Republic of Ireland contain the counties with highest proportions of elderly population; lowest levels of education attainment; highest incidence of farming – especially small scale farming; highest levels of economic dependency; and lowest levels of social class. The Dublin and the Mid-East regions are at the other end of the scale. **See Figures at Appendix 1** In summary, the economic base of the ICBAN territory is relatively under-developed. It is dominated by tourism and smaller enterprises in the more traditional employment sectors. A continuing decline is being experienced in the manufacturing

(including recent high profile company closures in Donegal), agricultural and fishing sectors and this has impacted severely upon recent growth potential of the region.

After the Western region, the Border area has the least coherent and lowest density urban profile on the island. This weak urban structure in conjunction with the lack of a critical mass of population in the main towns of Sligo, Enniskillen and Letterkenny has many detrimental impacts on other sectors such as retailing, local public transport and service provision. The urban centres of Sligo, Enniskillen, Letterkenny, Derry, Cavan, Monaghan and Omagh have all been highlighted as potential growth centres in the strategic spatial strategies prepared for the North and South of the island. A polycentric networking of these centres is required to provide the region with the critical mass of population and economic interaction required to achieve prosperity in the area.

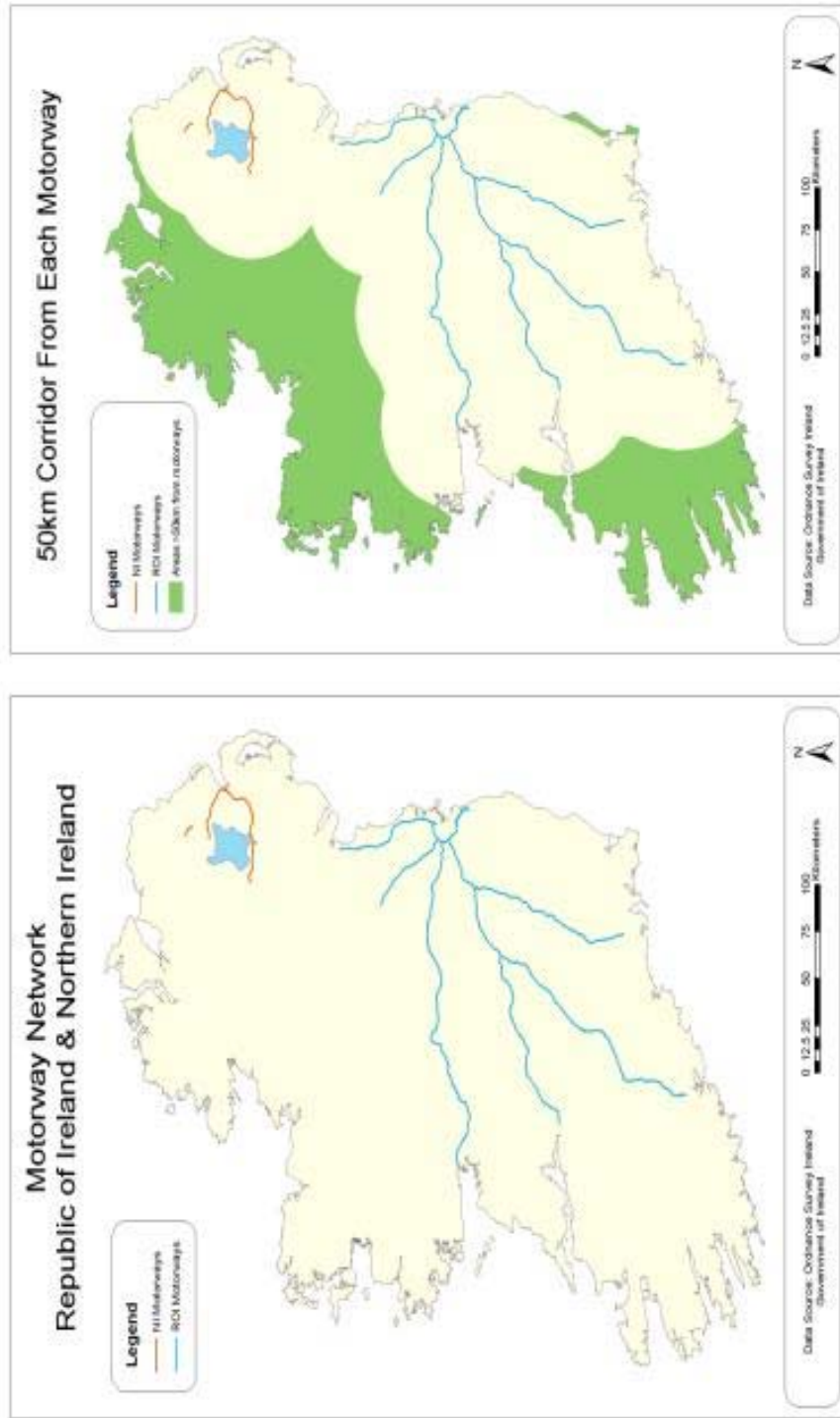
Sligo shows some signs of growth and is considered to have the potential to become a “new Galway” in the North West.³ However, this is only likely to be confirmed if it is embedded within a thriving network of other key urban centres. To enable Sligo to thrive as part of a successful polycentric network, investment is needed to improve its road links to Dublin, Belfast and other major centres across the island - including Enniskillen, Derry and Letterkenny - in addition to an enhanced network of local link roads to consolidate its catchment area.

The lack of prosperity of the ICBAN territory and its marginalization reflects and is reinforced by its comparative isolation due to the limited communications infrastructure in the region. In particular, the central and western areas of the border territories are seriously deficient in high-speed traffic routes. The absence of main line railway routes in this part of the Border Region has not been compensated for by the provision of an integrated network of roads infrastructure. **(See Figures 1 and 2)** Access to the nearest major commercial seaport at Larne is limited and poor road links to the available airports in Derry, Carrickfin and Sligo undermine the benefits of their relative proximity.

For example, benefits can be expected to accrue from closer links between the Third Level colleges in Letterkenny and Derry that would improve capacity as part of a strategic urban network to compete jointly for national R&D funding. Educational infrastructure is a critical component of regional overall competitiveness and the location of a university or prestigious third level facility is a major asset. Third level infrastructure provides a platform to create centres of excellence in research and development and innovation as well as enabling links to be developed with industry. The urban centres in the ICBAN territory do not have university

³ Sligo Institute of Technology has a good reputation and is driving successful research and development partnership initiatives with industry. It has a base of major employers, particularly in the pharmaceuticals industry, and a healthy tourism sector, with medical and financial services identified as offering potential for growth. The town also possesses a clearly defined retail, work and service hinterland. However, improved connectivity to other key urban centres is essential to achieve the gateway potential of Sligo as it is one of the smallest of the nine NSS gateways (only Letterkenny is comparably small) - and without the advantage of improved multi-linkages to other locations, including Enniskillen, it faces severe challenges in seeking to satisfy gateway critical mass / growth criteria.

Figure 2 Motorway Provision (Current and Proposed) and Access (Defined by 50 Kilometre Corridor)



status but Sligo and Letterkenny both have institutes of technology that could become major assets to their localities. Significant regional development potential exists for border territories if these institutes could be upgraded or awarded university status as part of a regional strategy to increase the critical mass of the urban centres in line with the spatial strategy principles. However, such upgrading would depend for success upon improved transport infrastructure to facilitate enhanced access and connectivity within and beyond the North West region. Obviously, the transport deficiencies identified in the region constitute a serious hindrance to this development.

The lack of an adequate transport network in the area seriously limits its connectivity to the rest of the island thereby reducing levels of access to potential goods and services markets and inhibiting latent linkages to prosperous developments in the wider economy and inhibiting prospects for regional and local growth. The transport infrastructure limitations of the region are widely acknowledged. However, issues about the delays in remedying the deficiencies and choices about which routes should be accorded priority in the enhanced transport network are unresolved.

Many commentators and stakeholders in the central border region identify the inadequate connections between east and west as a serious structural weakness. Others highlight the need for better linkages between north and south, citing the need for improved connections between the designated NSS centres in the Republic of Ireland (Sligo, Letterkenny, Monaghan, Cavan) and the gateway city of Derry. This situation is inimical to the interests of the ICBAN local authorities. Indecision and delays in deciding priorities are harmful to a region that is already suffering from economic and other disparities. The absence of unanimity and collaboration impedes efforts to advance a realistic action programme and frustrates the capacity to mobilise a cohesive case to central funding agencies

2.1.2 Procedural obstacles to effective coordination and delivery

The historic division of the island of Ireland into two political and administrative territories has also contributed to the difficulties of providing a coherent transport network in the region. Two separate and relatively disconnected urban networks have developed on each side of the border – the communications network in each case being focused on its respective metropolitan capital at the expense of an integrated cross-border network. The application of two separate legal and procedural traditions of roads and land use planning on either side of the border has over time accentuated this dilemma for the region.

The ‘disconnection’ problems associated with separate jurisdictions has been further compounded on both sides of the border by a long-standing tradition that treated transport planning and land use planning as independent and compartmentalized sectors for technical and administration purposes. Thus, until recently there has been limited impetus to achieve systematic coordination or integration between land use plans and transport plans on either side of the border. This has militated against the development of comprehensive strategies that would have been expected to highlight and address the challenges posed by the presence of the border and its impacts on natural catchment areas across a range of activities.

It is evident that new and more effective cross-border implementation frameworks need to be put in place at local and regional level to improve opportunities to secure the transportation infrastructure requirements and developmental needs of the ICBAN territory. However, local attempts to devise new arrangements to improve the coordination of overall spatial and transportation planning on a cross-border basis are hampered by delays at the macro-level in operationalising a unified approach to the two separate spatial strategy frameworks adopted on both sides of the border. Local authorities in each jurisdiction are expected to conform to these spatial planning and implementation frameworks. However, the delays in producing a joined-up macro-framework (or, in its absence, clear guidelines and information about what actions will be considered ‘realistic’ by the central authorities and funding bodies) creates uncertainty for the ICBAN member authorities and undermines their ability to advance coordinated cross-border initiatives to address the regional transportation infrastructure and other developmental needs of the region.

The problems of uncertainty and lack of clarity on a common cross-border framework are exacerbated by the absence of comparable information about two-way flows of traffic across the border. This discrepancy precludes fully informed decision-making for a wide range of sectoral activities including such basic areas as health services, journey to work and education area catchments. The map in **Figure 3** provides a snapshot of access to hospitals for the Republic of Ireland and map in **Figure 4** depicts journey to work zones also for the Republic of Ireland. In both instances the catchment area is truncated at the border area because of the unavailability of similar comparable data for Northern Ireland. This makes these maps and the information they provide less useful for planners and decision-makers in the border territories and puts them at a serious competitive disadvantage with other areas on the island where evidence based submissions are required for regional development infrastructure or other support funding. It also means that major decisions about allocating and prioritising key services are seriously incomplete. The recent recommendations of the separate reports by Hanley and Hayes on the rationalisation and location of hospital facilities for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland respectively were arrived at without the benefits of such cross border data analysis.

2.2 The wider context: changes in strategic planning and funding environments

2.2.1 The new spatial macro-strategies: ESDP, NSS and RDS

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) for the Republic of Ireland and the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland are policy documents of potentially enormous importance for the long-term development of the different parts of the island of Ireland. The strategies provide a blueprint for spatial development over an extended time (20-25 year) horizon in order to provide the basis for long-term coordination and co-operation in policy formulation and decision-making on major investment in infrastructure, including public and private transport infrastructure. The preparation of the NSS and the RDS are part of a general trend

Figure 3 Hospital Access in the Republic of Ireland (Source: NIRSA 2005)

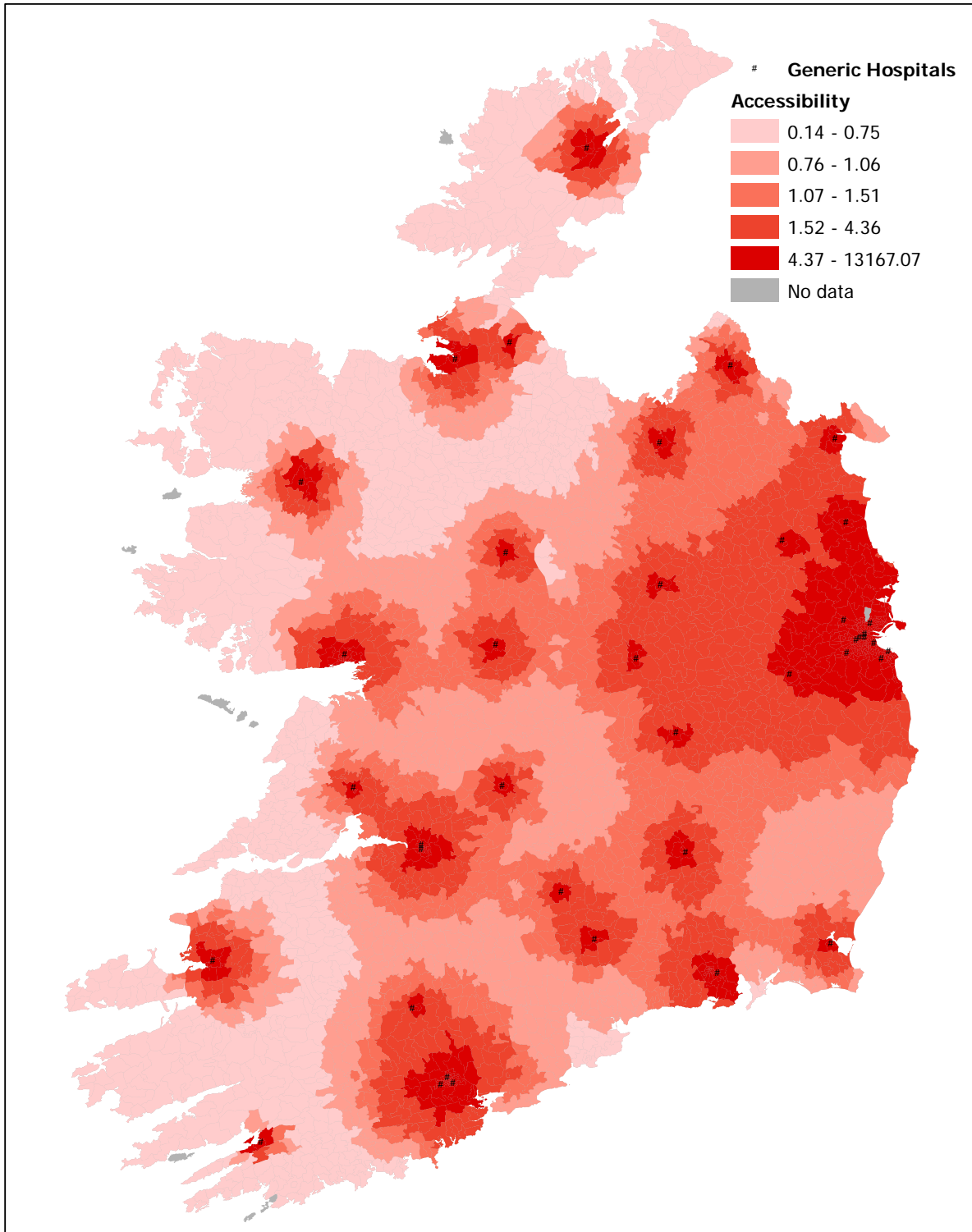
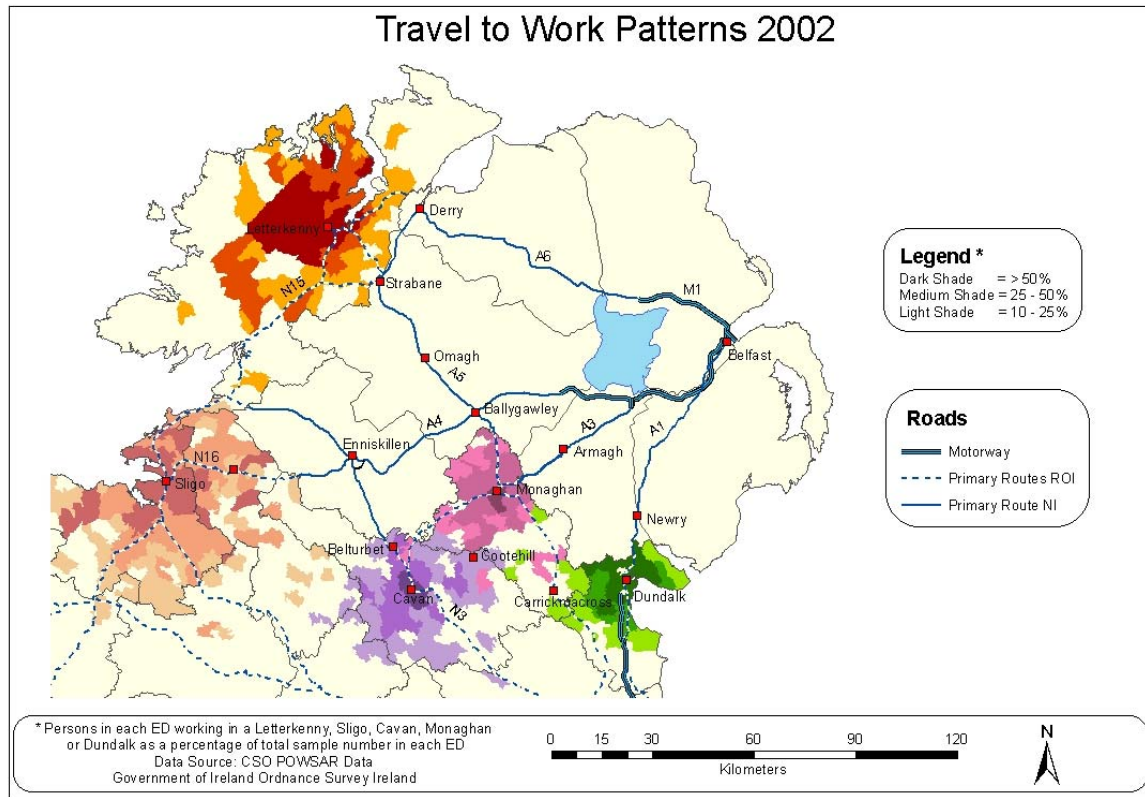


Figure 4. Journey to Work patterns (Republic of Ireland Border Region)



towards new approaches to spatial planning in Europe and the parent document of both Irish strategies is the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) published in 1999.⁴

In relation to regional development, the ESDP advocates the development of a balanced and integrated polycentric urban system together with a complementary and sustainable urban-rural relationship. It considers that this approach provides the best basis to identify opportunities for cooperation and coordination that transcends borders and lead to improved outcomes both for the relevant regional territories and the EU territory as a whole. Such ideas are clearly relevant to the ICBAN area given its marginalised location in Europe and Ireland, together with its border impediments of disconnected urban structure and fragmented urban-rural relationships.

⁴ A major factor in the adoption of the new emphasis on strategic spatial planning was the publication in 1999 by the European Commission of the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP). The ESDP was devised as an essential part of EU strategy to establish a new cohesive and integrated regional geography across the Community Territories. The strategy is designed to enhance the EU's competitiveness in global markets through a territorial strategy that balances economic integration, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

The relationship between the ESDP, spatial strategies, funding programmes and local authority development plans is summarised in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Spatial Planning Levels and Associated Strategies

Territory	Republic of Ireland (RoI)	Northern Ireland (NI)
Governance Level		
European	European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)	European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)
State	National Spatial Strategy (NSS) National Roads Study (NRS) National Development Plan (NDP)	Regional Development Strategy (RDS)* Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (ISNI)
Regional (sub-national)	Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) – Border Regional Authority	Regional Development Strategy (RDS)* Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN) Plan Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) Sub-Regional Transport Plan (STP)
Local	City / County Development Plans	Area Plans

*The physical scale of the strategy for the Northern Ireland territory is similar to that of the sub-national strategy for the Border Regional Authority (BRA) in the Republic of Ireland. Thus, as well as meeting the challenge of meshing with the NSS at an all island level, it also faces the planning coordination task of linking up with the adjacent regional strategy for the BRA (which has devised its own Regional Planning Guidelines).

The NSS and RDS both seek to address the needs of their respective territories through a framework that seeks to optimise local potential by achieving sufficient critical mass at strategically chosen locations. Through this approach they aim to provide targeted opportunities for investments leading to additional enterprise formation, and employment and population growth that will gradually lead to more balanced regional development. The main elements of the two strategies are outlined in the two maps at **Figure 5**.

It is important to recognise that both strategies support a ‘potential’ rather than a purely ‘redistribution’ based approach to development. Drawing upon the logic, principles and terminology of the ESDP, they advocate that investment be concentrated in a limited number of strong centres (the gateways and hubs) in order to achieve the *critical mass* necessary to stimulate the crucial development dynamics required to achieve successful regional and national development. Two selection categories can be identified in spatial strategy decisions about how and where to concentrate efforts to best capitalise upon ‘potential’ for growth and consequential redistribution benefits.

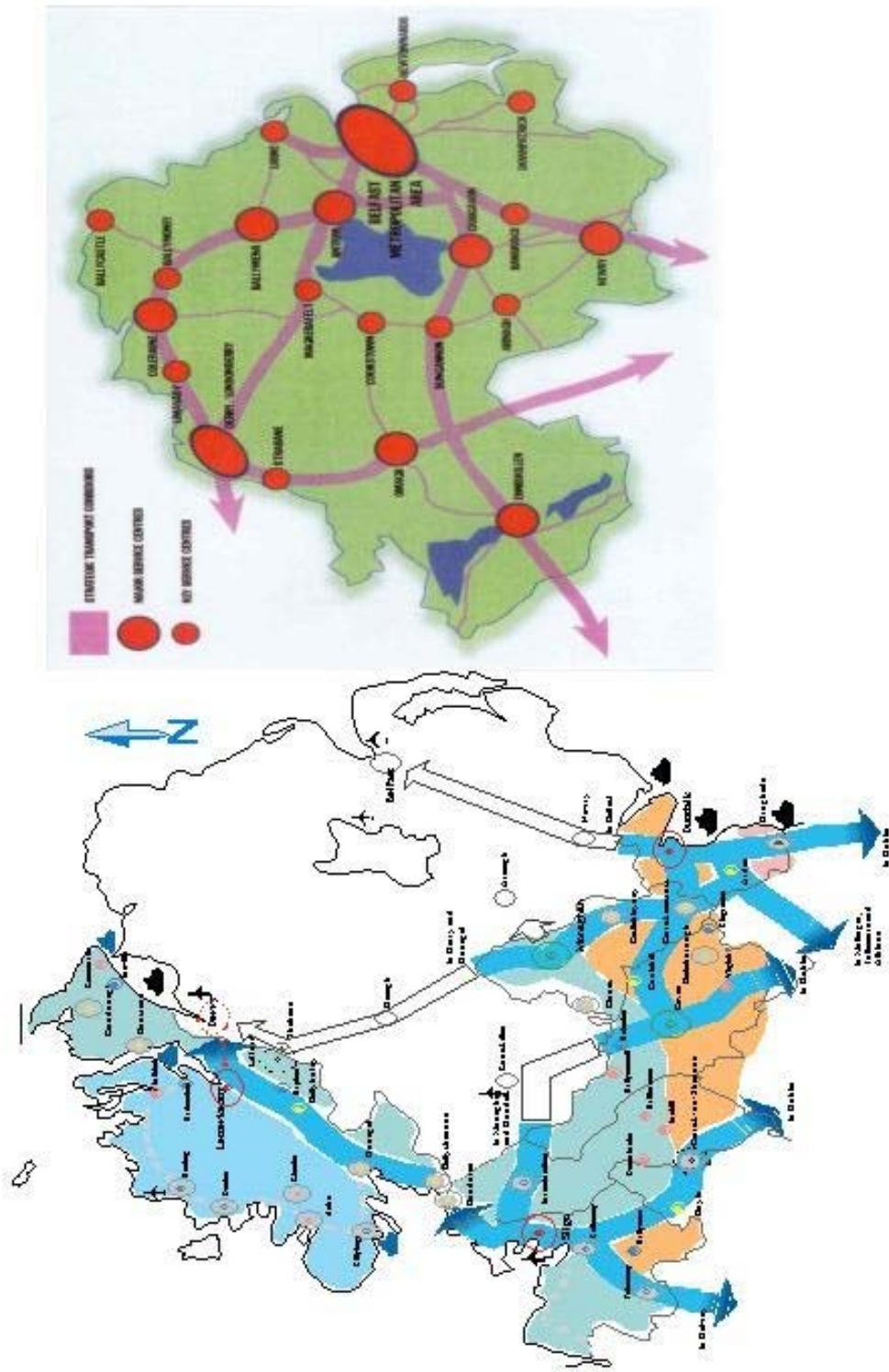
- In territories with a strong urban structure, it is considered that concentrating on developing critical mass in fewer places can achieve more benefits for wider hinterlands than approaches that attempt to spread efforts too widely.
- In areas with a weaker urban structure it involves providing a package of supports to link or cluster a number of neighbouring towns in a polycentric network in order to collectively achieve a critical level of supporting infrastructures, facilities and services.

It is evident from the above review of the ICBAN territory that it falls into the latter category. In this category enhanced coordination is an essential prerequisite to securing the resources needed to achieve sufficient integration for successful critical mass.

Planning is still obliged to engage with contemporary change in coordinated and constructive ways that avoid ad-hoc confusion, policy contradictions and wasteful overlaps. However, the new strategic planning environment requires a shift away from traditional ‘trend planning’ practices towards more pro-active vision planning approaches. Development plans that simply extrapolate future land use needs on the basis of prevailing patterns are now viewed as ‘reactive’. They tend to reproduce the same patterns and therefore the same problems. Accordingly, there is a move away from this approach towards a more creative and pro-active approach that sets out alternative envisioned scenarios. This is what the ESDP and its daughter strategies the NSS and RDS seek to do. This creates opportunities for territories to pursue strategic planning approaches that are more ambitious than the trend plan style of planning and enables them to identify an alternative destiny (i.e. vision) for the planned area rather than settle for a continuing drift in the direction of an apparently pre-set course that may be contrary to their long-term interests.

Vision statements are usually but not always growth oriented - visions can entail objectives to secure conservation rather than growth, reduction or consolidation in preference to expansion, and so on. The NSS and RDS provide spatial frameworks that are primarily concerned with issues related to the promotion of more balanced regional development within their own areas

Figure 5. National Spatial Strategy (Republic of Ireland) and Regional Development Strategy (Northern Ireland)



of jurisdiction.⁵ However, they also provide opportunities for achieving enhanced outcomes through greater coordination of the two territorial planning strategies. It is envisaged that such coordination can facilitate joined-up activity in areas of public policy and infrastructure provision that will significantly influence the geographical distribution of investments by the private sector. *A common all-island planning framework to assist this is currently being devised by the relevant government departments in conjunction with the cross-border business sector interests represented by InterTrade Ireland Limited (ITI).*

2.2.2 New funding environment: the role of NDP / ISNI

The policy aims and logic of the ESDP are currently being elaborated and promoted in member states by the EU through its funding structures. The chief instrument of influence via financial support is through its funding mechanisms. EU Community Support Frameworks (CSFs) and INTERREG funding will be shaped by the logic of the ESDP. These in turn exert a strong influence over strategic national and sub-national budgeting in the EU member states. Thus, the CSFs prepared for the two parts of the island of Ireland are consolidated in their associated strategic funding programmes – the Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (ISNI) and the National Development Plan (NDP) in the Republic of Ireland. The intermediate to long-term capital investment programmes are contained in these documents which also serve to direct the content of the rolling annualised spending of the Programme for Government (NI) and the Department of Finance budgets (RoI).

It is important to note that the full effects of the ESDP influence on funding have yet to be felt in Ireland. The ESDP was only published in 1999 and is still in the process of being stitched into territorial strategies across the EU. Its introduction overlapped with the preparation of the previous round of CSFs, and it is expected that the next round of CSFs will reflect progress and concrete action in line with its aims now that time has been allowed for its implementation. In this context, the new funding environment is in a state of transition on the island of Ireland as both the NDP and ISNI are currently being reviewed in the context of preparing the next round of CSFs.⁶ They are both obliged to take more account of the ESDP, and the ‘consequential’ Irish spatial strategies, than was expected in the earlier CSF preparation exercises.

⁵ In the Republic of Ireland, the objectives of the NSS were reinforced at regional level by the publication of new Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs). These were drawn up using the NSS as a reference framework and were intended to be a key vehicle through which its objectives are operationalised and delivered regionally. In Northern Ireland the RDS was supplemented by a complementary transport strategy the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) and its three subordinate transport plans. A function of the Regional Planning Guidelines and RTS is to provide a more concrete focus on the role of the designated hubs and gateways within their respective regions.

⁶ The CSF provides a broad EU contextual link with both the ISNI and DDP but its influences should not be overemphasized as the two spending programmes are firmly rooted in the independent British and Irish traditions for public expenditure programming. The approach in the North of Ireland is based on a ten-year strategy with three-year reviews that enable it to be ‘refreshed’ on a rolling basis. The Republic of Ireland works with five-year capital envelopes (which may be extended) and six year National Development Plans.

Republic of Ireland

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was published in 2002 in fulfilment of a government commitment in the National Development Plan 2000-2006. The NDP is the strategic funding strategy prepared by the government in conjunction with its Community Support Framework. The most recent National Development Plan 2000-2006 (NDP), which was published in November 1999,⁷ has already adopted the principles enshrined in the ESDP. It committed the government to prepare a strategy for spatial development - the subsequently prepared NSS. While the introduction of the NSS has obvious immediate implications for planning and development, it is in effect a prelude to the planning and funding required for the period commencing *after* 2006. ***The NSS is set to become the key funding allocation guidance tool for the next NDP - to cover the period 2007-2013.***

The traditional 'reactive role' of the Department of Finance as the key coordinating agency in relation to the determination of resource allocation for infrastructure and other investment decisions has changed with the advent of programmatic and strategic long-term funding. The preparation over the past decade of National Development Plans (NDPs) has marked a move away from this approach to a more pro-active strategic style of budgeting. If the Department of Finance uses the NSS to determine and guide its budgetary allocations for infrastructure in the next NDP (due in 2007), this will represent a major shift in the status of the NSS and its associated regional guidelines. Deployment of NSS strategic spatial planning principles will automatically signal that 'ad-hoc' local development plans that depart from the priorities highlighted in the NDP/NSS will be viewed as 'maverick' and 'unrealistic.' The potential harm that this may do to their potential to call-down NDP funding should exert a strong disciplinary influence on the preparation and implementation of local authority plans.

The substantive content of the NSS also creates new opportunities for counties in the northwest border area. The NSS commitments to regional balance and its identification of cross-border roads linkages with the RDS, together with the creation of a separate regional authority for the border area, provides for the first time an opportunity to significantly change and augment the NRA's roads programme. Given that this programme is still the basis for the NDP funding programmes there is now scope to capitalise upon this window of opportunity afforded by the conjoining of the NDP and NSS in 2007. Arguments based upon the current marginal status of the border region, particularly if combined with coherent and integrated proposals for necessary new transport to advance the NSS vision for balanced regional development, will carry added weight in the lead up to the adoption of the post-2006 NDP.

⁷ The NDP 2000-2006 has four core objectives: continuing sustainable national economic and employment growth; consolidating and improving Ireland's international competitiveness; fostering balanced regional development, and promoting social inclusion. The Plan involved a projected gross investment programme costing just over 50 billion euro, almost two and half times the scale of investment projected under the previous Plan for 1994-1999. The introduction of Regional Programmes with significant budgets to be administered by Regional Assemblies also highlighted a need to have an overall spatial framework to guide investment decisions and to facilitate coordination and integration across programmes.

The other main opportunity for additional roads funding arises from the Irish Government's commitment to promote the peace process in Northern Ireland through increased cross-border co-operation and activity. This will provide further leverage for advocacy of new transport infrastructure in the region based on comprehensive and viable planning proposals that have clear merit and support. Such proposals must be in a position to demonstrate a collective ability and willingness in all affected counties to pursue and deliver upon the project. This solidarity will not be evident unless there is clear evidence of integration across their respective development plans for the relevant projects.

Northern Ireland

The Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) 2002-2012 was agreed by the Northern Ireland Assembly in July 2002. The RTS is a daughter document of the Regional Development Strategy initiative, *Shaping Our Future 2025*, previously agreed by the Assembly in 2001. The RDS developed from a commitment in the Belfast Agreement and the first Programme for Government (PFG 2001) to develop an overarching framework for spatial development to create a more prosperous and fairer region. Each government department in Northern Ireland has adopted the RDS to inform public sector strategic decision-making. The RDS was identified by the PFG as a mechanism for tackling infrastructure deficiencies and helping economic and social development in Northern Ireland. Core principles such as housing allocations and balanced regional development are recognised as influencing factors in government's budget priorities. The RTS translates the delivery of those transportation issues first specified in the RDS.

The RTS identifies strategic transportation investment priorities, and potential funding sources, for Northern Ireland over the period to 2012. Over the 10-year span of the document £3.5 billion of funding is required to deliver the RTS. The delivery framework for the RTS is structured around the three subordinate transport plans and the implementing body, Roads Service, an executive agency within the Department for Regional Development. Operation of the RTS is therefore directly connected to the government budget allocations detailed in the Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget 2004-2007, which takes forward the Northern Ireland Executive's five priorities set out in the draft PFG and draft budget for 2003-2004.

Major infrastructure programmes delivered under the RTS are dependent on the draw down of centrally allocated government finance. However, given that public sector spending initiatives are measured against the Priorities and Budget, particularly the emphasis on regional cohesion and economic competitiveness, should mean that areas west of the Bann are able to significantly access government finance. In addition the fragmented local government will further influence funding allocations. However the on-going review of public administration in Northern Ireland is likely to result in the delegation of powers and responsibilities from central to local government.

At local level the role of infrastructure is seen as an important lever in delivering balanced growth and development and in improving the quality of public service delivery in Northern Ireland. The Strategic Investment Board in its Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

(ISNI) 2005-2015 indicates that it may be possible to deliver around £16bn of investment in key infrastructure but this will depend on a range of decisions on public expenditure, revenue and borrowing by future administrations. Putting in place key infrastructure is essential to attract inward investment and to stimulate economic development for all parts of Northern Ireland. The SIB report recognises that the implementation of the RTS is resulting in considerable investment in the road network and in later years of the ISNI additional investment will be targeted towards key transport routes from the principal towns and cities to the border with the Republic of Ireland.

2.3 Planning and roads transport in the ICBAN territory

2.3.1 Two separate spatial planning systems and two separate roads management systems

The funding arrangements for transport infrastructure investment have become more opaque during the transition to the new spatial strategy environment. Clearly, strategic spatial strategy is becoming an increasingly important aspect of roads infrastructure prioritisation and allocation. As the application of the new spatial emphasis evolves, its role in relation to infrastructure funding is becoming more central. The forthcoming central funding strategies on both parts of the island (the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (ISNI)) are to be underpinned by the spatial strategies. This involves a significant departure from established funding patterns. However, the links between enhanced spatial planning significance and transport funding have not been clearly articulated so that a lack of clarity has occurred about the role of the traditional roads funding arrangements and funding agencies. This lack of clarity creates additional uncertainty for those charged with developing the local and regional strategies and associated funding for supporting transport infrastructure.

National Roads Authority (NRA)

In the Republic of Ireland, the arrangements for funding major roads involve the National Roads Authority (NRA), which is mandated to plan, supervise and maintain a national roads programme. The NRA implements its programme in partnership with the local authorities and channels funding to the local authorities to meet the costs involved in delivering the approved elements of the programme.⁸ The local authorities retain control over non-national roads spending.

⁸ Exchequer investment in the roads programme over the period 2000-2004 amounts to over €5bn – more than 30% in excess of that forecast in the National Development Plan and associated ESIOIP. Expenditure allocated by the NRA for national roads in 2005 was €1.416 bn, up from €1.241 bn in 2004. Financial assistance from EU support funding for national roads over the period 2000 to 2006 is expected to exceed €800m. It is anticipated that an additional €8 bn plus will be spent on the national roads network over the period 2005-2009. This spending will include investment in major improvement works on national primary routes in the border area, including the N2, N3, N13 and N15. Investment in the N2 and N3 are viewed as being complementary to investment in the M1, which is the key North/South road for the NRA's NRNS.

The NRA programme and funding allocation is based on the findings of a *National Roads Needs Study (NRNS) 1998*. It has been updated by the *National Development Plan (NDP) 2000-2006* to take account of the improved budget situation that accompanied the economic boom and increased tax revenues since the early 1990s. The NDP provided for a major increase in investment for upgrading of national roads compared to the previous six-year planning period, and the NRA up-scaled their 1998 NRNS programme accordingly. In effect, the NRA is the main delivery mechanism of the NDP, and its 1998 NRNS continues to be the platform for NDP's Transport Strand (ESIOP).⁹ The NRA clears its multi-annual budgets (currently five-year envelopes but moving to ten-year envelopes) with the Department of Transport, which oversees the transport operational framework of the NDP for the Department of Finance. Ultimately, the Department of Finance sanctions spending on all transport infrastructures on a rolling basis, based on the five-ten year capital envelopes agreed with the Department of Transport. The NDP is the key reference document for the Departments of Finance and Transport in processing infrastructure proposals.

Roads Service (NI)

Roads Service is the sole road authority in Northern Ireland, and is an 'Executive Agency' that since 1999 has been located within the Department for Regional Development (DRD). Amongst others, Roads Service has two main functions – to ensure measures are taken to implement the Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 (RTS), and to ensure the public road network is managed, maintained and developed. The Agency's remit ranges from the building and maintenance of roads, to public car park management. Funding allocations for Roads Service are detailed in Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget 2004-2007, which takes forward the Northern Ireland Executive's five priorities set out in the draft Programme for Government (PFG) and draft Budgets.

Responsibility for policy priorities and budgetary allocations currently rests with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland following the suspension of devolution in 2002. The RTS is the vehicle for delivering many of the priorities for which Roads Service is responsible, including 'securing a competitive economy'. This document identifies a need for £3.5bn worth of funding over the 10-year lifespan, with £2.3bn of this relating to initiatives to be undertaken by Roads Service. The RTS is a component of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) initiative – *Shaping Our Future* – with three subordinate transport plans ensuring delivery of the former: the *Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN) Transport Plan*; *Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP)*; and the *Sub-Regional Transport Plan*. Annual reports are made each year to all twenty-six local authorities in Northern Ireland, outlining schemes completed and investment proposals for the incoming year.

⁹ The main objectives of the NDP for the network of national roads are to: improve reliability by enhancing capacity; improve internal road transport infrastructure between and within regions; facilitate better access to ports and airports; contribute to sustainable transport policies; and improve road safety standards and outcomes.

Island-wide roads planning and investment

In addition to being frameworks for the attainment of internal regional balance, the RDS and NSS both highlight the need for targeted investment in infrastructure on an island wide basis. The frameworks provide for developing cross-border infrastructure links between both parts of the island. Co-operation and coordination between North and South of the island is identified in both as a primary concern for successful delivery in such diverse areas as roads, electricity, energy, telecommunications, industry and tourism. The spatial strategies of both the RDS and NSS seek in a combined way to integrate land, sea and air transport in the island of Ireland with the ESDP's trans-European transport networks (TENs) – particularly the motorway and rail connections which traverse Britain and bind the two islands to the Benelux countries and northern France. The Belfast-Enniskillen-Sligo and the Derry-Omagh-Monaghan routes are recognised in the two spatial strategies as strategically unifying links within the island that will also widen and enhance connections to the EU mainland.

Of significant relevance to the ICBAN catchment area is the recognition within the NSS, and to a lesser extent in the RDS, that the central part of the Central Border Region is a 'crossroads' between Dublin, Derry, Belfast and Sligo. Both strategies identify the cross-border hubs and gateways that have an important role to play in encouraging new cross-border linkages - Sligo, Enniskillen, Armagh, Letterkenny, Derry, Omagh, Cavan and Monaghan. This highlights the importance of a well-developed strategic transport system linking the hubs to the primary centres on the island and also to the gateways identified in the two major spatial strategy documents. Clearly, a combined planning and transport case has to be made for the development of a polycentric network with supporting high-grade road infrastructure for the region.

2.3.2 The role and function of County Managers and Chief Executive in relation to spatial and roads planning in the two jurisdictions

In the Republic of Ireland the response to the challenges posed by these new trends saw the introduction of a new legal framework for planning, the Planning and Development Act, 2000, and the establishment of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), following the recommendations of the National Development Plan 2000-2006. In Northern Ireland, responsibility for planning related matters was relocated in 1999 from a monolithic Department of the Environment (DoENI) to three government departments: a slimmed-down DoENI, a Department of Regional Development (DRD) and the Department of Social Development (DSD). The structure and role of the planning service within central government and the district councils in relation to local planning remained unchanged, the DOE were left with operational planning matters and DRD were allocated strategic functions and required to prepare a Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland.

The general thrust of these initiatives on both parts of the island is towards a comprehensive and integrated approach to spatial planning, extending from the local authority level, through the regional to the national levels, as a means to attain the overall objective of balanced and

sustainable development. In both cases this is to be achieved in a manner that is compatible with the emerging supranational perspective represented by the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

Within local authorities in both jurisdictions, there is a long tradition of roads and spatial planning operating independently of each other. Such compartmentalization is a typical by-product of the specialization that fragment professional functions in local authorities in both the U.K. and Ireland.¹⁰

Strong and improving opportunities exist in the Republic of Ireland for cross departmental collaboration between planning and roads sections within local authorities because of the County Manager's role and executive powers over local authority departments. This is reinforced by the regular 'integration' and performance review meetings of Departmental Directors introduced in recent times following the Better Local Government Review which is helping to offset the long history of strong compartmentalization between roads and spatial planning. The CDBs and County Enterprise Boards in the South are helping to achieve integration across sectors *within* local authorities but are less relevant to cross county coordination in relation to infrastructure where local authority development plans continue to be the critical documents.

Chief Executives of local authorities in Northern Ireland have less flexibility than their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland. It is extremely difficult for CEOs to achieve innovative and coordinated initiatives at local authority level because the roads and land use planning personnel with responsibility for local authority districts are accountable not to the CEOs of those districts but to officials in the relevant civil service departments (DRD or DoENI). The introduction earlier this year of Planning Policy Guidelines (PP13) on integration of land use planning and transportation should create an opportunity for improved collaboration and coordination between the two compartmentalised functions.

2.4 Window of opportunity for road transport funding in the ICBAN region

In the Republic of Ireland the local authorities have independent responsibility for non-national roads but the NRA has the mandate for national roads subject to approval by the Department of Transport and funding clearance by the Department of Finance (both Departments use the NDP as their benchmark and this overrides the NRA's benchmark document the NRNS). With the NDP due to be revised in 2007 and likely to be shaped by NSS principles, a major window of opportunity has occurred to augment / upgrade the NRA listings of priority routes through the inclusion of strategic roads infrastructure in the border region. If a coherent, joined-up case can be made for upgrading of roads infrastructure in the border region it has a definite potential to be included in the forthcoming NDP in which case the NRA will be obliged to upscale its plans

¹⁰ In Northern Ireland it is the Roads Service divisions rather than local authorities that are responsible for delivery and management of roads projects. Decisions about funding and resource allocation for local authorities are centralized. The staff in the relatively divisions work with an accountability structure that prioritises reporting linkages upwards to their own departments (the DRD and DoENI) rather than horizontally

accordingly. For this to happen the unified planning and transport case would have to be prepared in accordance with the vision principles of NSS / RDS to secure endorsement from the DoEHLG (who have responsibility for promoting the NSS) and the Departments of Transport and Finance (who have ultimate sanction over what is included in the NDP).

Section 3. Current and potential coordination of strategic roads infrastructure planning and delivery in ICBAN Territory

3.1 Current levels of plan integration / coordination

The documentary review reveals that collaboration amongst the relevant agencies for the purposes of producing integrated strategic road transport planning is occurring - but at a slow and variable pace across the various organizations at the different levels (national, regional, local) and more particularly across the border.

A review of planning and roads documents indicates that some collaboration is occurring amongst the relevant agencies for the purposes of producing integrated strategic road transport planning. However, the pace of the ICBAN local authorities in linking into spatial strategies is slow and uneven across the various organizations at the different levels (national, regional, local). The matrix at **Appendix 2** provides a summary of roads related comments in the various local development plans cross-referenced against each other in the context of the higher scale strategies. The considerable number of gaps in this table is indicative of the scope that exists for additional coordination. It should be noted that this table indicates the quantity of cross-referencing but does not convey quality or degree of coordination. **Table 2** provides a short indicative summary of the degree of integration that appears to exist between the various levels based on quality and quantity of the cross-referencing content of the various documents.

There is scant evidence of common commitments to strategic roads projects and references to other local authorities, where they occur, tend to be general and aspirational rather than concrete and detailed. The area where least progress appears to have been achieved is in cross-border coordination of development plans. There appears to be a greater willingness to refer to potential coordination among planning documents in the Republic of Ireland than in the documents for Northern Ireland.

Table 2. Summary evidence from document review of ‘joined-up’ planning across planning scales

	National (RoI)	National (NI)	Regional (RoI)	Local (RoI)	Local (NI)
National (RoI)		⊕	√	⊕	X
National (NI)	⊕		⊕	X	√
Regional (RoI)	√	√		⊕	⊕
Local (RoI)	⊕	⊕	⊕		X
Local (NI)	X	√	X	X	

Symbol Key

- √ Clear plan integration / cooperation
- ⊕ Some limited plan integration / cooperation
- X** None or very limited plan integration / cooperation

- National (RoI) = National Spatial Strategy (NSS)
- National (NI) = Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and sister transport documents
- Regional (RoI) = Regional Planning Guidelines
- Local (RoI) = Local Authority Development Plans
- Local (NI) = Development / Area Plans

A number of the local plans were produced prior to the national or regional policy guidelines and this has impacted negatively on the level of vertical integration achieved to date. In some cases, particularly in the Republic of Ireland, this appears at face value to be a time-delay problem arising from the asynchronous production of the national strategy and regional guidelines on the one and the local plans on the other. This is a problem that may be addressed in due course.

There is considerable scope to achieve improved horizontal integration at local authority level in the border counties. At present, in order to improve their own situation, each local plan tends to review the topic of transport infrastructure in an insular way - i.e. they focus on the improvements necessary within their own county boundaries and very little emphasis is placed on inter-county or cross-border co-operation. The only exceptions to this were: (a) the proposed East-West link which was highlighted as an important Strategic Route by a number of different planning authorities, and (b) the Enniskillen Southern By-pass which was deemed necessary to address congestion in this key 'gateway' between North and South.

The limited progress and variable degrees of integration in the ICBAN territory compares unfavourably to other parts of the country such as the urban network in the Cork region which is making rapid progress in linking up to the spatial strategy (NSS) and economic development initiatives. For these reasons, Cork and its region already has a head start on other regions as serious contenders for 'intensified' future investment support by government departments and enterprise agencies.

3.2 Explanations for delays in achieving coordination / integration

A number of reasons for the apparent discrepancies in 'performance' revealed by the documentary review were provided by interview respondents. These include:

- Spatial strategies have very long-term focus (20 years plus) and inevitable time-lags are involved in the creation of consistent and integrated regional and local responses that conform to macro-requirements. It can take at least the statutory period required to make or update a plan for new thinking to 'trickle-down' and be incorporated into the next generation of plans. Different plan review schedules add to the difficulties of achieving coordination within the first generation of plans.
- Local authority plans in the Republic of Ireland need time to catch-up with the recently adopted NSS (2002) and the subsequently prepared Border Regional Authority Guidelines (2004). It takes time to devise plans across a range of spatial scales and there will inevitably be consequential time delays associated with the filtering process from national through regional to local levels. This applies particularly to the local plans, which have statutory time frames for adoption and review. While it is envisaged that at a later stage the filtering process will occur simultaneously at all levels (up, down and across) it is understandable that delays and other time discrepancy problems will be inevitable in the start up stage.

- Area Plans in Northern Ireland have had a longer period in which to adapt to the Regional Spatial Strategy, which was adopted in 1998. However, until very recently a great deal of uncertainty applied to the requirement for Area Plans to conform to the RDS and some plans were prepared as ‘excepted plans’ – meaning they did not conform to the RDS and associated regional transport strategies. This problem has been rectified by the issue of a joint Ministerial Statement (DRD and DETI) that requires priority to be accorded to the RDS when Area Plans are adopted.
- Any attempt to understand the barriers that need to be overcome in order to achieve more coherent spatial development in the central cross-border area must take account of the different policy contexts within which the NSS and the RDS have been formulated. The different adoption styles and timing of the two main spatial strategies – both are indicative strategies that appear to complement each other to a considerable extent but this is misleading and a common or agreed framework is necessary to overcome the different messages that they deliver to their respective jurisdictions.
- Special problems face the border region arising from the preparation of two separate frameworks for both parts of the island (NSS and RDS). The delay in combining them into a unified all-island framework has stalled considerably the necessary and potential coordination of planning and development that could, and should, occur among neighbouring counties in the interests of wider regional development. In addition to the presence of cross-border competition, rivalry also exists between all local authorities for priority investment (including who should get which road and which section first). This compounds the difficulties of achieving cooperation and undermines ability to deliver coordination on either side of the border.
- Improved coordination between planning and roads is starting to be achieved through Better Local Government arrangements in the Republic of Ireland and the introduction of PP13 in Northern Ireland. However, it appears to be more difficult to initiate local integration between roads and spatial planning in Northern Ireland than in the Republic of Ireland. Chief Executives of local authorities in the North do not exercise control over the roads or planning personnel who produce their Area Plans. Their counterparts in the South have responsibility for both roads and planning functions in the county and therefore have more scope to initiate discussions and achieve coordination between the two departments.
- Despite their similarities, two different planning systems and styles of planning operate in the North and South of the island. The planning system in Northern Ireland places great emphasis on detail and precision in relation to committed funding availability for policy proposals. This inhibits capacity to make new departures or investigate new initiatives where dedicated resources are not clearly allocated in advance. The system in the Republic of Ireland is less constrained because its policies are more open and less specific about source-funding availability. This enables it to fit better with the vision-planning model of the major spatial strategies.

- There is a broad consensus amongst respondents at the *local level* that the macro spatial strategies and their subordinate documents do not provide adequate guidance or support to those who seek to promote or coordinate development at local level. Additional guidance and support from the central / regional agencies is required to facilitate improved engagement between the region and the local level, between local levels and across border. The uncertainty and confusion resulting from the absence of such support has been a major stumbling block to local plan coordination and cooperation.

3.3 Prospects for improved coordination and collaboration – interview results

General comments

There is a widespread consensus among respondents that the *Central Border area needs an upgraded and integrated roads transport infrastructure*. The main areas of disagreement relate to the timing of the required upgrading, the priority to be accorded to prospective routes, and precise alignments that should be selected.

There is a growing *awareness of the intended role and potential of the two major spatial strategies but the level of knowledge is uneven below the level of centre state agencies*. Many local level respondents knew very little about the macro level spatial strategies and their implications. There is, however, a widely held perception that a serious disconnection exists between macro-level strategies (whatever they are) and delivery at a local level and a definite need to close this gap through better linkages and coordination.

There is broad agreement that that the *new spatial planning emphasis will influence funding and that infrastructure provision in particular will be dictated by the spatial strategies*. A few respondents considered the peace process to be more important currently than the spatial strategies in pursuing funding opportunities and the promotion of local development. However, it is acknowledged generally that there is a *need to get beyond the peace process and move to the next stage of strategic and coordinated action*.

In relation to the coordination delays caused by ‘trickle down’ time-lags, it was accepted widely that *time needs to be allowed for the local level documents to catch up with the thinking percolating down from the macro level and for enmeshing with other local plans*. This is understood and accepted by representatives at central government level with responsibility for implementation of macro-strategies and frameworks. However, it raises concerns at the local level amongst executives and practitioners in the ICBAN territory who are concerned that the *delays will entail missed opportunities for funding* and a widening of the gap between the border and other regions.

Concerns have been voiced about the often ‘invisible’ systemic obstacles to efforts to secure critical strategic infrastructure and the lost potential that this entails for catch-up development in the region. An invidious situation obtains where local authorities are required to commit to a new emphasis on strategic planning as part of a wider strategy to achieve balanced regional development while they are inhibited from doing so in a realistic and effective way under the

current *'centralised but opaque' arrangements for determining transport investment priorities*. The pro-active strategic planning for the region advocated by NSS, RDS (and associated high level reports) cannot be pursued easily under the arrangements that currently apply to the advancement of major regional projects. This applies more particularly to those projects that involve 'top-down' sanction for co-operation across both a wide range of local authorities and / or the North-South border.

Effective networking is viewed widely as a key to successful collaboration. An important theme emerging throughout the study process has been the need for greater coordination between national and gateway level stakeholders. The key personnel at each level do not always appear to be fully appraised of the situation at the other levels. It is evident from responses from the 'central level' interviewees that they are open to proposals based on joined-up vision plans and indeed that they expect such proposals to emanate from the local level. However, respondents at local level are often unaware of this situation. Formal and informal links between local organisations and national departments need to be facilitated in order that priorities can be agreed and joined-up plans developed and pursued effectively.

Better communication also featured at the top of the list as an issue in relation to North/South collaboration; it is very easy to set up the structures but a lack of communication and a lack of understanding of each others viewpoints can undermine confidence. In this regard, an organisation such as ICBAN was mooted regularly as a potential solution to these difficulties if it could develop a more active role as a facilitator of 'vertical communication' - up and down between local, regional and central levels.

Information is viewed as vital for collaborative action with the perception that lack of delivery on infrastructure (notably roads) arises from the low level of information available concerning flows on a cross-border basis. The need for *evidence-based decision-making* comes through strongly in the interviews with roads and planning experts at all levels. The potential funding sources are seen as a combination of EU and central government agencies but the ability to make a case for such funding will be of key significance. This will require more joined-up thinking and better linkages between the local authorities and clear evidence based on hard data about current and forecast population movements and traffic flows. It was suggested that organisations such as ICBAN can play a vital and positive role as they are well placed to act as intermediaries in harnessing joined-up data sources required to facilitate the strategic linking of plans and roads infrastructure proposals.

Business and enterprise representatives on both parts of the island view the new emphasis on spatial planning as an important development and indicate a desire to work with local authorities within the framework of the strategies to promote development in the new regional and gateways urban hubs outside Dublin and Belfast. They also indicated that they are interested only in a capacity building and cooperation methodologies that combine both process and results. They consider that relative to economic development, a *pilot-based capacity building approach* (centred on critical roads infrastructure or some other 'realistic' issue) would help regional and local authorities in the ICBAN area to develop a regional perspective and better understand the dynamics of regional competition within Ireland and the EU. It would also promote an understanding of how cooperation among cities within

development corridors and linked gateways and hubs can benefit the entire region. They would envisage an organization such as ICBAN having a major role in preparing supporting documentation and studies that would normally be required to justify and advance of selected pilot projects. Cork was referred to as a good example from within Ireland of an urban centre that is proactively and realistically linking up its region in line with spatial strategy priorities with a view to advancing economic development initiatives.

The *Review of Administration* under way in Northern Ireland is expressly addressing concerns about procedural delays, but many of our interviewees believe that its findings and application will not significantly improve matters. Various responses to the problems of coordination have also been instituted in the Republic of Ireland, amongst the most important of which is the recent example is the establishment of the City / County Development Boards (CDBs) as part of the *Better Local Government (BLG)* programme for reform. CDBs are meant to provide both an overall strategic framework through their strategy and a forum for ongoing discussion and co-operation. This model may be operating with greater success in other parts of the country but in the ICBAN area a degree of frustration with them was reported frequently in our interviews. While many commentators highlighted a need to reduce ‘involvement fatigue’ they still tended to emphasise a need for more local coordination to successfully operationalise spatial strategy at regional level. However, very few identified the CDBs as positive candidates for this role. The monthly hosting of coordination meetings by the Manager with his Director of Services (following the BLG restructuring of local authorities into Service Directorates) was invariably described as a “more realistic” and preferable candidate for this role in the South. *The problems of conjoining procedures on a North/South basis were viewed as a predicament for a separate ‘independent’ body.*

It was suggested by a number of respondents that ICBAN should ‘step up’ and *fill the current coordination vacuum and facilitate the move to a new level of strategic planning and coordinated action.* It could do this by developing a more formal planning coordination role and establishing its own forward planning section. Its function should be to ensure consistency between local authorities as plan reviews arises, and to lead and coordinate vision-planning initiatives consistent with the strategic vision of the NSS, RDS and other relevant macro and regional strategies.

Section 4 Summary of findings - achieving funding for roads infrastructure through joined-up planning

None of the issues raised in this report are entirely new, and few of them are unique to the ICBAN territory. The ICBAN sub-region is confronted by immediate substantive problems and by a changing contextual environment, particularly in the procedural arenas of strategic planning and infrastructure funding. These difficulties and changes present the area with both challenges and opportunities.

4.1 Assessing the challenges and identifying opportunities

Substantive context and transport needs

The ICBAN region experiences substantive and procedural problems by virtue of its history and relatively isolated location in the North West of Ireland. The region has clear deficits in transport infrastructure that undermine its connections to its regional territories and the wider island economy. This also diminishes its capacity to catch-up with more prosperous regions in both parts of the island. The region also experiences coordination and associated procedural logistic problems because of the border and the dispersed distribution of its member authorities.

There is wide agreement that current transport provision in the region is inadequate and that proposals for transport infrastructure should be improved – the main issues of contention relate to details about priorities relating to when, where and how they should be improved.

New spatial planning environment

There is broad recognition that infrastructure investment, and roads infrastructure in particular, will be dictated by the spatial strategies. The new planning environment is set to shape the future funding environment for strategic infrastructure and regional development. This creates new opportunities and added impetus and expectations that local and regional will produce proactive and realistic development initiatives focused on a limited number of linked-up (or networked) urban centres as envisaged by the key spatial strategies (NSS and RDS) and associated documents.

The RDS and NSS suggest that transport infrastructure investment is required for the necessary development of primary road corridors linking the gateways to each other and to Dublin, Belfast and Derry. It is also needed to link the hub and gateway centres internally and to their hinterlands to enable them to achieve their critical mass potential - and the improvement of non-national roads is an important dimension of strategic road system.

New funding environment and opportunities

A short to immediate ‘window of opportunity’ exists in respect of the current funding reviews associated with the preparation of the new NDP and ISNI each of which are expected to shape the direction of strategic infrastructure investment over the period of the five to six year periods of the next EU Community Support Frameworks. In the context of recent reviews of the current Community Support Frameworks for both parts of the island and the preparation of updated investment plans, statements emanating from government sources on both sides of the border indicate that an amount of €100 billion will be available for investment in infrastructure over the next ten years.¹¹

¹¹ Quoted in address by Mr. Brian Brian Cowen T.D., Minister for Finance at Conference - Towards an Island Economy: Time for a New Dialogue and Engagement – at City Hotel, Derry, Monday 25 April 2005.

All indications suggest that the allocation of available funds through the NDP and the ISNI will be guided by the relevant spatial strategies, the NSS and RDS. Moreover, conformity with the NSS and RDS will be a standard precondition of securing funding for planned infrastructure.

The strategic road commitments contained in the National Roads Needs Study (NRNS) in the Republic of Ireland and Regional Transportation Study (RTS) in Northern Ireland will continue to be the key investment priorities for the National Roads Authority (NRA) and the Roads Service (RS) Division of the Department of Regional Development (DRD). The NRNS and RTS indicate commitments to specific projects over given time horizons but they are not fixed blueprints. Where necessary, the NRA and RS can and will adjust their road priority inventories to conform to the funding priorities of the National Development Plan (NDP) and Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (ISNI). This means in effect that they will be prepared to respond positively to well-supported planning cases that are consistent with the spatial strategies logic contained in the funding programmes documents.

Joined-up planning

An abiding fear amongst many commentators in the ICBAN border territory is that the updated investment plans (NDP and ISNI) will be prepared before a new comprehensive and integrated strategy can be devised for the area thereby precluding a complete and unified case for justified additional infrastructure. If a complete and unified case cannot be made in time the contents of the next round of NDP and ISNI are bound to reflect this. The fear is that this will place any strategy subsequently developed by the border region authorities in a 'limbo' or 'do nothing' situation for the duration of the investment plans and that this will constitute a 'missed opportunity' and 'time-lag' for efforts to catch-up with other regions and may even widen the regional prosperity gap.

To avoid missing out on the 'window of opportunity' afforded by the conjoining spatial planning with the forthcoming funding allocation reviews, the ICBAN area members need to make progress quickly to insert their agreed infrastructure proposals into the new NDP /ISNI programmes for the post 2006 period. To have any prospect of success for inclusion in the funding programmes the ICBAN roads proposals must be supported by joined-up planning arguments that mesh with the major spatial strategy visions.

The supporting planning case must demonstrate the enabling role of the investment and supporting linkages to other sectors that need to be given priority in order to facilitate growth in the region. This is also necessary to alert relevant government departments so that recommended priorities and investment staging can be taken on board by departments to enable them to plan joined-up future interventions.

Falling behind - coordination and collaboration difficulties

Despite the introduction on both parts of the island of a new emphasis on strategic planning and funding that is designed to promote both general prosperity and balanced regional development, the ICBAN territory also faces severe obstacles in its efforts to comply with this

new planning regime and respond in an informed or effective way to the new funding opportunities. Local efforts to advance a new strategic regional planning vision for the territory are severely inhibited by systematic institutional constraints linked to prevailing organizational arrangements in the two jurisdictions.

A review of the relevant planning and roads documents indicates that collaboration is occurring amongst the relevant agencies for the purposes of producing integrated strategic road transport planning. However, the pace of the ICBAN local authorities in linking into spatial strategies is slow and uneven across the various organizations at the different levels (national, regional, local) and more particularly across the border. The limited progress and variable degrees of integration compares unfavourably with other parts of the country such as the urban network in the Cork region which is making rapid progress in linking up to the spatial strategy (NSS) and economic development initiatives. For these reasons, Cork and its region already has a head start on other regions as serious contenders for 'intensified' future investment support by government departments and economic agencies.

Identifying and eliminating delay problems

A range of 'reasonable' explanations can be identified for the obvious delays experienced in producing regional and sub-regional plans that conform in an integrated and coherent way with the macro-spatial strategies. Special problems exist for cooperation and coordination across border region arising from the preparation of two separate frameworks for both parts of the island (NSS and RDS). Delays in combining them into a unified all-island framework militate against the preparation of joint regional planning and development projects by neighbouring counties on both sides of the border. The local ICBAN members are especially concerned that the delays will entail missed opportunities for funding and a widening of the gap between the border and other regions.

It is more difficult to initiate local integration between roads and spatial planning in Northern Ireland than in the Republic of Ireland. Chief Executives of local authorities in the North do not exercise control over their roads or planning personnel who produce the Area Plans for them. Their counterparts in the South have responsibility for both roads and planning functions in the county and therefore have more scope to initiate discussions and achieve coordination between these departments.

Having regard to the organisational and administrative differences and constraints that apply on both sides of the border, the absence of a unified framework, or in its absence clear guidance about how to proceed, creates uncertainty for local / regional bodies. The absence of clarity about how to proceed in these circumstances creates difficulties both in making a case for investment and pursuing coordinated planning / development. The delays associated with this 'limbo situation' add to the concern of local authorities that they could miss out on the current window of opportunity to promote the development potential of the region.

These difficulties are understood and accepted by personnel in key central agencies who accept that this 'default' situation is an additional burden to the border area. However, it is considered by most respondents that the problems can and should be acknowledged locally. It is also

considered that the uncertainty issues can be addressed most effectively by local actors taking the initiative to inform themselves about the changing circumstances and moving as quickly as possible to a new level of strategic planning and coordinated action.

4.2 Addressing the challenges and embracing opportunities

Proposed responses and actions

Although investment in transport infrastructure is critical for ICBAN, in many ways the mechanisms for securing such funding are available (if not always transparent) and the challenge is one of persuading the relevant central government department that projects deserve priority. The need to secure supporting urban planning related interventions - which will be required to justify the derived demand for additional road investment - is more problematic. A planning vision is needed to substantiate forecast traffic levels and justify transport investment. However, the development of a coherent and integrated planning case is difficult where decision-making is disconnected and funding for many sectoral activities is outside the control of the planning process.

Spatial strategies and infrastructure investment do not bring about changes overnight – they are long-term in their focus and objectives. This too will be the case with the elaboration of collaborative frameworks and local responses that have a regional cross-border basis. Strategic approaches require patience - participants and project proposers must be ready to wait and prepared to act. Unnecessary delays will, of course, be damaging to local interests. Strategic infrastructure delivery via the NSS/RDS is challenged by implementation at the ICBAN regional and local level for a variety of reasons and requires a multi-level, multi-focused, multi-speed response. It is also important to respond quickly to short term and interim opportunities and to build capacity to address strategic issues.

Recommendations that emerged in the course of the study

- It is imperative that ICBAN local authorities and other members adopt a long-term planning perspective and work to prepare joined-up vision plans (in preference to trend plans) that conform to the strategic visions contained in the major spatial strategies.
- To make it possible for member local authorities to capitalise upon the available funding in the immediate 2006 funding transition period, a local proactive ‘vision planning’ stance should be adopted quickly (perhaps on an interim basis) by ICBAN members and founded on clearly agreed choices about transport priorities in the ICBAN territory. It is important to develop comprehensive and coordinated support for this project and to support the case with relevant government departments (on both sides of the border where necessary). Specific transport proposals must be backed by a detailed planning case that is consistent with NSS / RDS / RTS and other relevant strategic plans.
- ICBAN and its members should feed into the all-island framework study being carried out under the aegis of InterTrade Ireland. That study aims to assist the relevant government

departments on both parts of the island to devise a consistent framework that will facilitate spatial planning and collaboration across the island. The ICBAN input should emphasise the roads infrastructure and associated needs of the border territories and ask for them to be prioritised as core elements of any agreed common framework.

- Pending the establishment of an all-island framework (unifying the RDS and NSS) an integrated sub-regional spatial planning and action programme should be developed for the ICBAN territory. This will help to pre-empt further delays and mitigate prospects of the area falling further behind other regions due to delays in developing a case for investment support based on joined-up planning.
- Enabling a pro-active vision planning approach for the border areas will involve:
 - increased collaboration and information sharing between agencies;
 - better delivery of strategic spatial planning initiatives through new and bottom-up vision-planning methodologies;
 - improved cross-border information exchanges, together with better databases and mapping provision.
- ICBAN or some similar network should become a mechanism for discussion, agreement and capacity building around planning for the sub-region and a forward planning section for the sub-region should be established.
- A capacity building ‘enabling network’ (such as ICBAN) with a strategic planning and coordination remit could also play a key role in bringing clarity to the current decision-making arena - which is opaque and in transition. It should provide the institutional frameworks and mechanisms needed to identify and involve the key stakeholders and identify the operational linkages (horizontal and vertical) required to plan, develop and implement joined-up projects. This would include local, regional and central authorities and their respective institutional linkages to agencies involved in local and regional development in addition to private sector interests and non-for-profit institutions. If applied to ICBAN, this would involve a formal up-scaling of its brief to include *strategic* animation and actions.¹²

¹² A capacity building approach - led by ICBAN or a similar sub-regional networking body with a strategic remit - would have the advantage that the participants would be better prepared and motivated to implement policies and programmes that they themselves have defined. The lead agency would work in cooperation with national, regional and local authorities and other key stakeholders to develop tailored programmes to address specific challenges in strategic context. It would seek to:

- build a common understanding among the stakeholders on the key issues, challenges and opportunities;
- draw on best practices that highlight underlying concepts and key actions that are tailored to local conditions and aspirations;
- help regional and local authorities to draw linkages among reinforcing activities and to better understand the economic impact and leveraging factors of planning decisions and infrastructure investments;
- reach consensus on an approach or strategy and supporting policies, programs and projects;
- define specific activities and responsibilities for implementation within the respective competencies of implementing partners; development of realistic work plans tied to funding—both public (local, regional, central) and the private sector; and

- There is an urgent need to confront the problems associated with incomplete knowledge amongst many key personnel about the role and functioning of roads and spatial planning on the other side of the border. An immediate and useful way to address these difficulties would be to arrange high-level conferences / workshop bringing together the relevant specialists and interest groups on each side of the border to enable them to compare how the administrative, planning and roads procedures work. The learning from this exercise can be built upon to explore obstacles to, and prospects for, collaboration for mutual gain. It should also be followed-up by meetings to identify and agree substantive joint-projects that could be pursued on a realistic basis in the short, medium and long terms. The first conference should probably start with roads and spatial planners and be extended to other groups very quickly thereafter. There is a strong possibility that the conferences would be either fully or part funded by the DoEHLG and DRD. Those departments might also be willing to organise some of the events although indications are that their preference is that all initiatives should emanate from and be managed locally.
- Evidence-based planning is a major problem for joined-up planning in a border region that is severely deficient in cross-border datasets. ICBAN, or a similar organisation, must drive efforts to collate, analyse and utilize all relevant information, including cross-border data, required to advance the spatial planning arguments that will enable the area to catch up with other territories and achieve balanced development. The following suggestions are regarded as essential actions for any efforts to create an ‘enabling learning milieu’ for the Border territories through improved information collection, flows and usage.
 - Provide common and synchronised information and datasets for key sectors to facilitate common forecasting and planning at local and regional scales.
 - Agree common indicators of significance for spatial planning and strategic road provision.
 - Agree a framework for indicating measures that would be beneficial on a cross-border collaborative analysis action: e.g. travel-to-work-areas; labour and housing markets; key transport corridor movements; shared infrastructure/services.
 - Produce common standardised thematic maps to assist with scoping and developing actual/specific collaborative actions for agreed key border area issues.
 - Apply the new tools and technologies for data capture, analysis and presentation to enhance quantity and quality of the ‘knowledge platform’ in the region.¹³

-
- facilitate the collation and use of quantitative and qualitative indicators for proposing, monitoring and implementing projects.

¹³ In relation to improved information and analysis needs, a potentially useful and very timely development for the ICBAN region has been the recent availability of the MOLAND Spatial Indicators Project, which appears to offer a unique tool to assist public sector decision making in both Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. MOLAND consists of a land use reference database and ancillary data sets for the reference year

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(2000) for both Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. The ancillary datasets consist of an extensive range of socio-economic and statistical data. As well as these data sets, MOLAND uses a modelling tool to explore the consequences of spatial planning and policy decisions, and to monitor and assess where development in urban areas is likely to take place. It is possible that this could provide a helpful platform for preparation and progress of joined-up studies in relation to spatial queries that transcend the geographical limitations of the border. For example, use of the model can help in the forecasting of scenarios of where to build new roads and what the resulting effects of these roads, if built, will be on development in the surrounding area.

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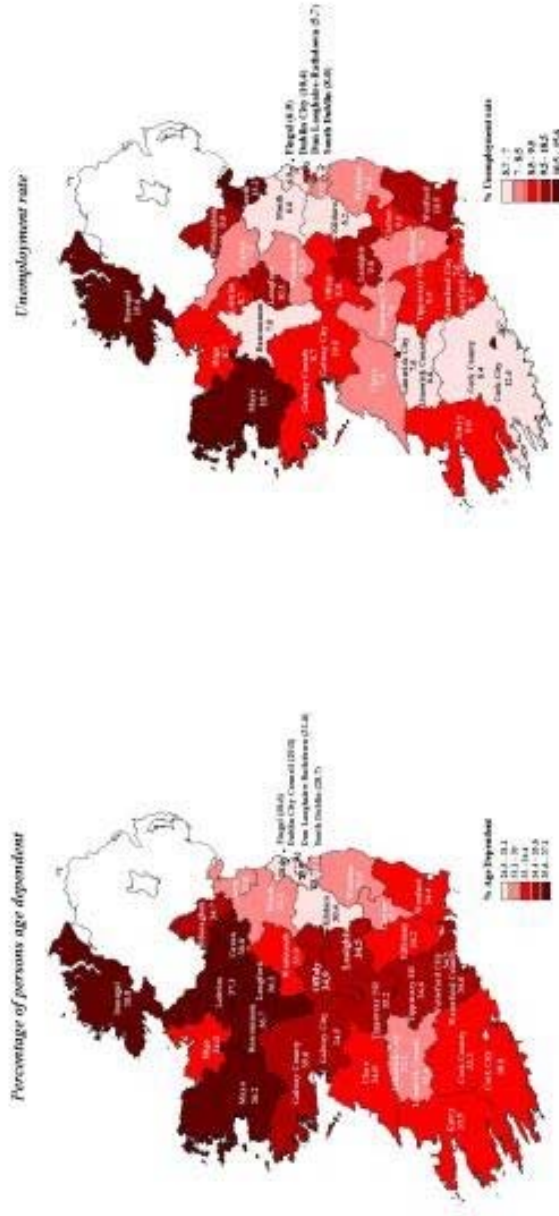
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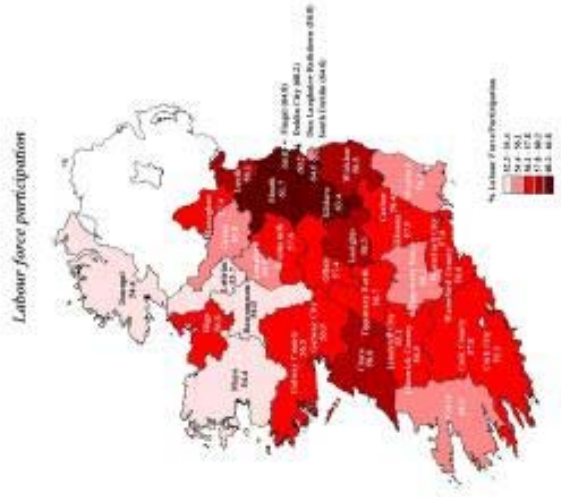
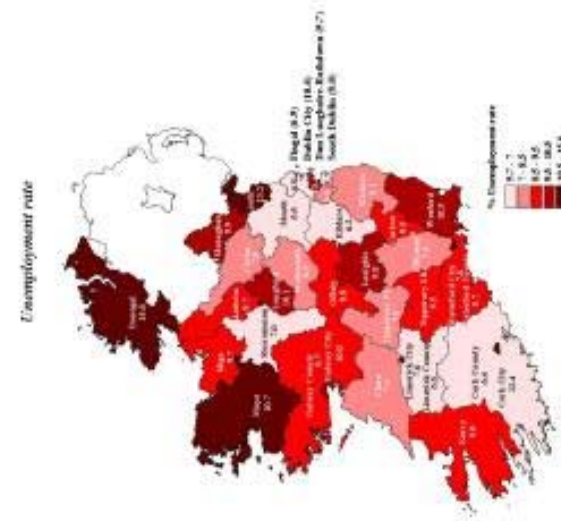
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**Appendix 1 Contextual Problems in Border Region Counties (Republic of Ireland):
Age dependency and Unemployment**



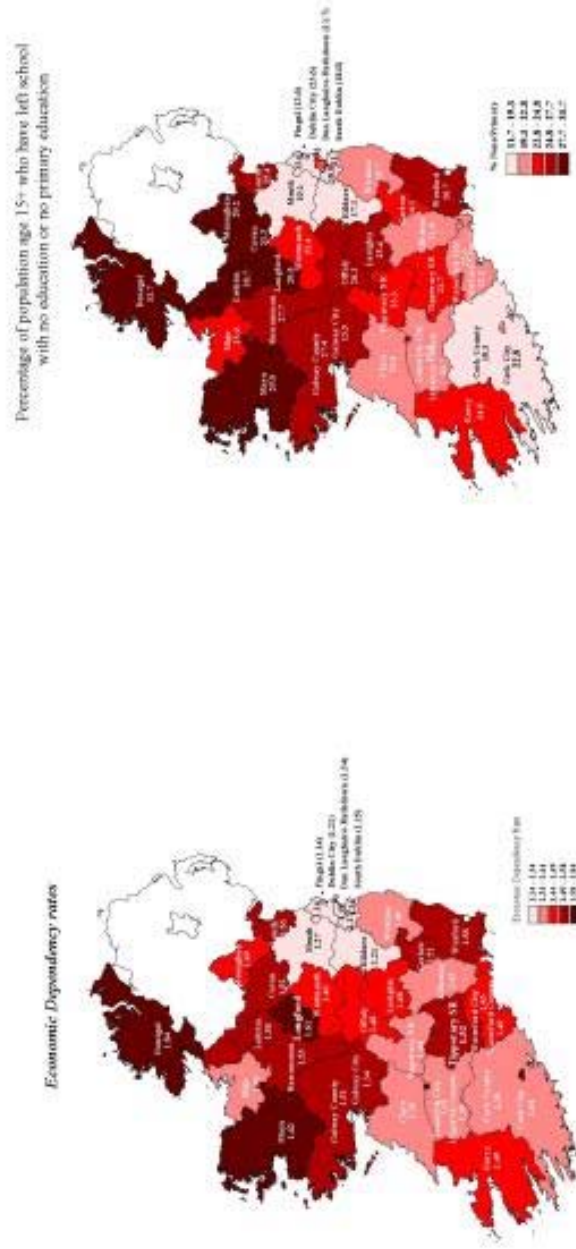
Source: ESRI / NIRSA (2005)

**Appendix 1 Contextual Problems in Border Region Counties (Republic of Ireland):
Unemployment and Labour Force participation**



Source: ESRI / NIRSA (2005)

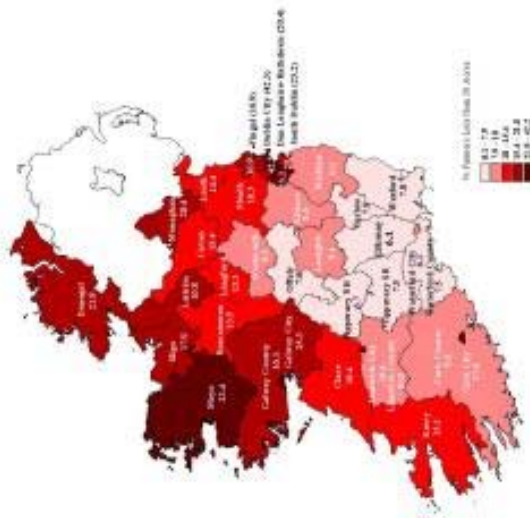
**Appendix 1 Contextual Problems in Border Region Counties (Republic of Ireland):
Economic Dependency and Early School Leaving**



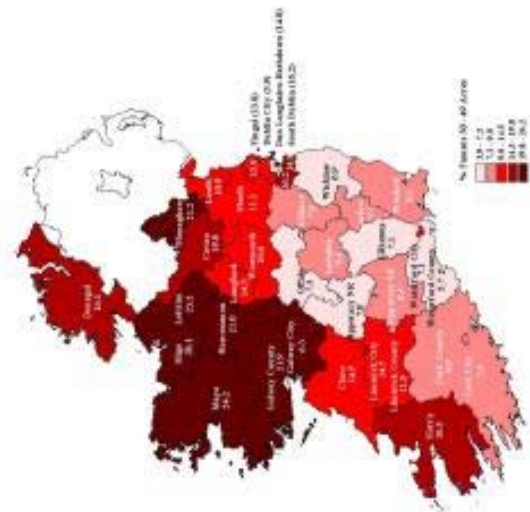
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**Appendix 1 Contextual Problems in Border Region Counties (Republic of Ireland):
Percentage of Farmers in Small Scale Farming:**

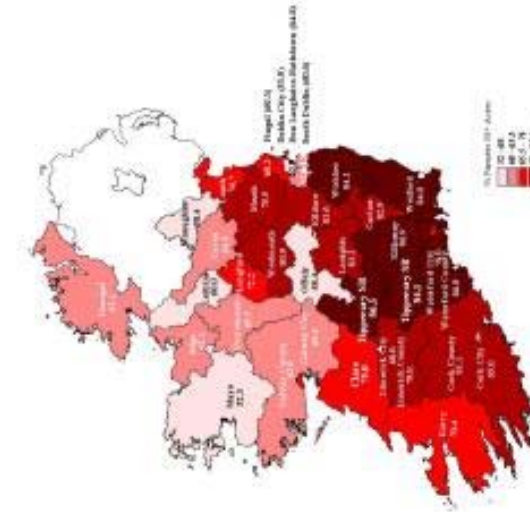
< 30 acres



30-49 acres



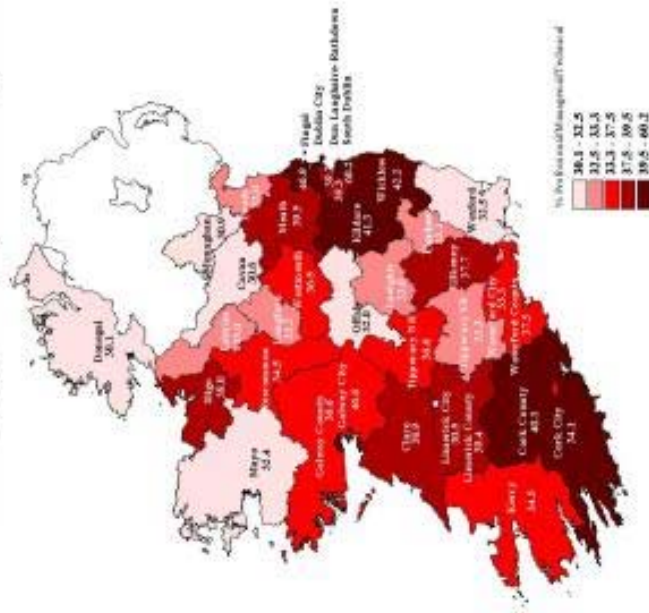
50+ acres



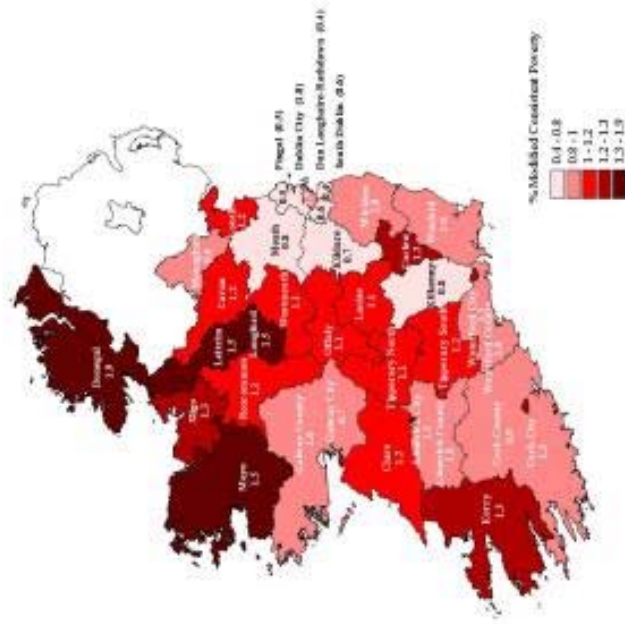
Source: ESRI / NIRSA (2005)

**Appendix 1 Contextual Problems in Border Region Counties (Republic of Ireland)
Social Class and Consistent Poverty Rates**

Percentage of population professional / managerial class



Modified Consistent Poverty - NSHQ



Source: ESRI / NIRSA (2005)

Appendix 2 Cross References to Strategic Transport in Development Plans

	Regional Planning Guidelines - Border	Monaghan County Dev Plan	Donegal County Dev Plan	Leitrim County Dev Plan	Cavan County Dev Plan	Cavan Town & Environs Dev Plan	Sligo County Dev Plan	Sligo & Environs Dev Plan	Armagh City & District Plan	Cookstown District Council	Dungannon & South Tyrone Area Plan	Fermanagh Area Plan	Omagh area Plan
Regional Planning Guidelines – Border (2004)		* Monaghan-Omagh-Newry-Belfast key route * Absence of East-West road link an issue	* Letter-kenny-Derry key regional linkage * Ballyshannon – Enniskillen linkage identified	* R280 important strategic corridor (in absence of national route)	* Cavan-Enniskillen key route; * Absence of East-West road link an issue		* Sligo-Enniskillen key route					* Enniskillen a gateway to South	
Monaghan County Development Plan (1999)	* East-West route provide access to cross-border dev. centres – Armagh, Omagh, Dungannon, Enniskillen				*National road links with Cavan				* Need for hi-tech corridor linking both				* N2 to link important key route Dublin Derry v Omagh
Donegal County Development Plan (2000) & Draft Plan (2005)	* Strengthen road links to Eastern Seaboard & Strengthen links with Derry	* Support East-West road link * N2 linking Dublin to Omagh and on to Derry/Letterkenny gateway		* Road links with North Leitrim need developing	* Support east-west Road link * N3 links to N15 key		* N4 links to Donegal (N13 and N15) need developing *Need to upgrade Sligo-Derry link	* Strengthen road links with Sligo				*Realign Ballyshannon – Belleek * Strengthen road links with Enniskillen (to Ballyshannon)	* Strengthen road links with Omagh
Leitrim County Development Plan (2003)	* R280 link N4, N16 & N15	*Support East-West route	* N4 link to N15 need upgrade		* Support East-West route	* N3 main transport corridor	* N4-N16 route key * Realign N16 in Leitrim * Support East-West Route					* A509 via Cavan – link to Enniskillen * Funds needed for roads linking counties	
Cavan County Development Plan (2003)	* Regional roads important	* Support East-West route				* Link N3 and N55 through bypass * Local roads important	* Support East-West route	* N16-A4 important corridor				* N3 link to A509 key route * Upgrade border roads * Promote cross-border working	

Cavan Town & Environs Development Plan (2003)		Support East-West route					* Support East-West route					* N3-A509 main corridor * Upgrade border roads	
Sligo County Development Plan			* Develop road links with Donegal (national)					* Improve Sligo town route				* Develop road access with Fermanagh (national)	
Sligo & Environs Development Plan (2004)			* Link Sligo with Derry via Donegal (N15/A5)				* Investment in N16				* Invest in N16/A4/M1 (Sligo/Ennis killen/Belfast)	* Improve connections to NI centres; Invest in N13/N15 links to A5 & A6	
Armagh City & District Council Plan		* Develop links with Monaghan (A3); upgrade roads											
Cookstown District Council Plan (2004)											* Protected routes linking to Dungannon		* Prote routes linking Omagh
Dungannon & South Tyrone Area Plan (2005)		* Ballygawley strategic point on A4 and A5 * Invest A5 links to N2 (part of TENS)	* Improve A5 links with N14 at Lifford				* Links Sligo to Dungannon via Enniskillen (A5)			* A29 important link corridor			* Links Armagh Omagh (A5); P Western Corridor
Fermanagh Area Plan (1997)			* Important links with Donegal; main route to South/Dublin		* Need for investment in N3; linking to A509/A32								
Omagh Area Plan (1987)										* A505 link to Cookstown		* A32 links to Enniskillen from Derry	