

COMMUNICATIONS

WASTE

THE STATE OF IRELAND 2014

NORTH WEST (Sligo/Leitrim) – TRANSPORT

ENERGY

TRANSPORT

WATER AND FLOODING

Foreword



The State of Ireland report is an independent assessment of economic infrastructure in Ireland in 2014, where members of Engineers Ireland gauge the existing quality and future needs of the Republic of Ireland's infrastructure in communications, energy, transport, waste and water.

In this, the fourth year of the report, we have chosen to focus on transport infrastructure and I would like to thank our north west regional branch for their time and commitment in producing this overview. The ambition of the report is to offer a fair and accurate appraisal of the current state of transport infrastructure in the north west of Ireland, including the actions which are believed vital to improve the condition of that infrastructure underlining the importance of long-term planning.

Any infrastructure is, by definition, economic infrastructure, as it is the internal facilities of a country that make business activity possible. Very clearly, given the country's existing financial limitations, a process of prioritisation needs to be undertaken with respect to the recommendations outlined in the national and regional reports. Therefore, this expert advice is intended to inform those who make investment decisions about infrastructure in Ireland.

John Power
Chartered Engineer
Director General

RECOMMENDATIONS 2014

12-Month

- ▶ Widen Hughes Bridge in Sligo town to improve the main crossing point over the Garavogue Estuary along the N4 / N15.
- ▶ Advance the N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin road development through the planning process.
- ▶ Develop the Sligo/Leitrim and northern counties greenway.
- ▶ Progress funding mechanism to develop plans to upgrade the N16 Sligo to Enniskillen national primary route.

Five-Year

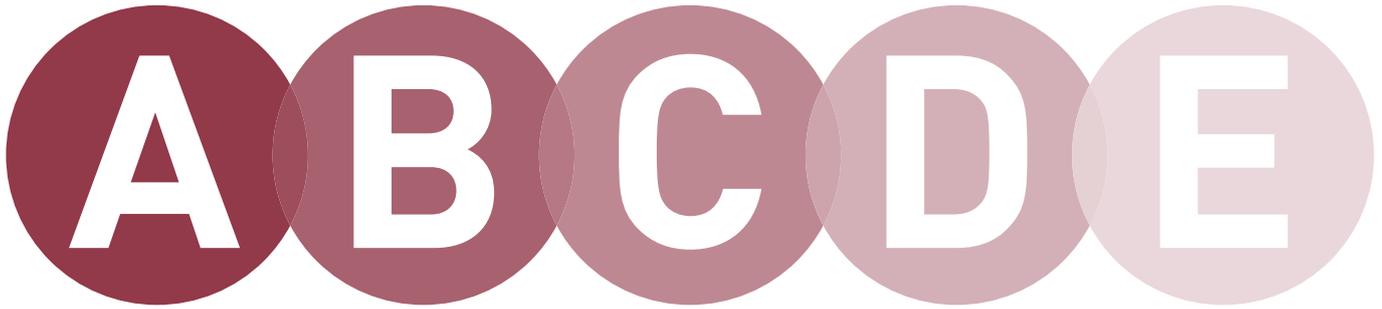
- ▶ Develop the Eastern Garavogue Bridge.
- ▶ Construct the N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin road development.
- ▶ Advance the N4/N15 Sligo to the county boundary road development.
- ▶ Progress the proposed N17 Tubbercurry bypass and the N17 Tubbercurry bypass to Collooney road developments through the planning process.

Sector	Grade
Road: Motorways	n/a
Road: Other routes	C
Rail	B
Airports	B
Sea ports	n/a
Sustainable transport	B

OVERALL GRADE

C

GRADING SYSTEM



Well maintained, in good condition, appropriate capacity and planning for future development.

Acceptable standard, properly maintained, able to meet demand, though investment needed in the next five years.

Inadequately maintained, and/or unable to meet peak demand, and requiring significant investment.

Below standard, poorly maintained, frequent inability to meet capacity and requiring immediate investment to avoid adverse impact on the regional economy.

Unacceptable condition, insufficient capacity, and already impacting on the regional economy.

Why Infrastructure Matters: Ireland 2014

Productive infrastructural development is central to economic prosperity. If Ireland is to prosper, infrastructural development across every aspect of the economy will be an essential part of the process.

Our prosperity, and the future prospects of our children, depend on the continued ability of this country to attract inward investment and to trade our goods and services internationally. In both cases, our competitiveness is paramount and is hugely dependent on the quality, efficiency and reliability of our infrastructure.

Aside from its economic importance, infrastructure is the

cornerstone of modern society. We rely upon: treatment plants and water mains to supply us with drinking water; energy plants and gas pipelines for heat and light; phone and broadband to connect us for global business, social, and entertainment purposes; roads, rail and ports to deliver the goods we buy and sell; and a waste management network to recover renewable resources.

Engineers Ireland acknowledges the reality of the need to reduce public expenditure. Nonetheless, capital investment is vital to meet the Government's desire to stimulate the economy. This report is our contribution to the debate on building a sustainable future for the north west of Ireland.

Sligo town is the regional transport node for the north west region. A total of 96% of trips are by road and it is highly dependent on this form of transport. Connections to Dublin are via the N4 and to other towns and cities including Derry, Letterkenny, Galway, Limerick and Cork are via the N17/N18 Atlantic Corridor. Access to Northern Ireland, which is in close proximity, is via the N16 to Belfast, Cavan and Enniskillen. The N59 regional route to Ballina is also important for commuters, tourism and commercial travellers.

The rail line from Sligo to Dublin provides seven services per day, generally at two hour intervals reduced from eight. The town is also serviced by bus expressway corridors to Dublin, Derry, Knock airport, Belfast and Enniskillen, provided by the national bus service and supplemented by regional private bus services.

Air access to the north west region is via Knock airport, as regional scheduled services to Sligo airport have now ceased.

Roads

National Routes

Due to the number of 'legacy' roads that existed, a number of upgrade schemes were carried out in the previous two decades. However, improvements are still required along approximately 70km of national road routes. A number of road improvement schemes for the region were in the pipeline but these were suspended due to the economic downturn. Minor improvements have been carried out such as improved surfacing, lining, signing, safety measures, and maintenance.





Current strategic proposals in planning are the proposed N4/N15 Sligo to the Leitrim county boundary, consisting of 27km of proposed national and regional roads. This includes constructing cycleways and footbridges on either side of Hughes Bridge in order to create two extra traffic lanes. The preliminary design and planning is complete with tender documents prepared. Construction should commence in 2014/15 subject to NRA approval and the completion of the tender process.

Some 12km on the N4 from Collooney to Castlebaldwin is likely to be a PPP project, and is one of just two schemes in the country published in 2013 with the environmental impact and compulsory purchase orders approved for publication by the NRA. The scheme is a 2+2 dual carriageway and is designed to improve a notoriously dangerous piece of the N4. The N17 Collooney to Charlestown route, including the Tubercurry bypass, is currently at preliminary design stage. Another two schemes were planned for the N17, including the Tubercurry bypass to Knock bypass, however, this has been suspended due to funding constraints.

A preferred route was identified in the 1990s for the N16 Sligo to Enniskillen route. Low traffic volumes mitigate against the scheme's development and instead, approval is being sought to develop a three kilometre realignment from Lugnagall to Gortnagrelly.

Other Strategic Routes

The eastern Garavogue crossing scheme in Sligo town was approved by An Bord Pleanála in 2009. Detailed design work has commenced and is ongoing with construction scheduled to start in 2014/15 subject to funding. Similarly the western distributor road development planning is complete with a detailed design ongoing. These two schemes will allow development of the east and west wards of the town respectively.

Sustainable Transport

In line with the Department of Transport's *New Transport Plan for Ireland 2009-2020*, sustainable travel was identified as a key area for development to reduce the distance and frequency of car journeys. Schemes like the Greenway in Mayo and the increased use of bicycle lanes in Dublin and Galway have highlighted that there is an appetite for travel by bicycle.

The Sligo Inner Environs Development Plan (SEDP) identifies the need to build a road network to facilitate the pedestrianisation of the town centre by integrating planning for all modes of transport. A network of safe and convenient cycle routes should also link educational, cultural, recreational and retail areas and transport nodes. The plan provides for new and improved cycle routes on existing and proposed roads, along with parking facilities for bicycles at key locations in Sligo town.

A number of schemes have been introduced to the town receiving funding as part of the 'Active Travel Towns' campaign, including the Lough Gill cycle loop, school crossings and cycle lanes on the R292 at Strandhill Road to enhance commuter routes from the suburbs into and around the town centre.

Proposed new schemes include the addition of cycle and pedestrian crossings to Markievicz Bridge in the town centre and development of the recreational cycle route the 'Sligo and Northern Counties Greenway'.



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