

COMMUNICATIONS

WASTE

THE STATE OF IRELAND 2014

WEST (Galway/Mayo/Roscommon) – 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 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 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

- ▶ Progress the planning approval process for the Galway City Bypass
- ▶ Get planning consent for the first phase of the Port of Galway redevelopment
- ▶ Commence construction of the M17/18 Gort to Tuam Motorway Scheme

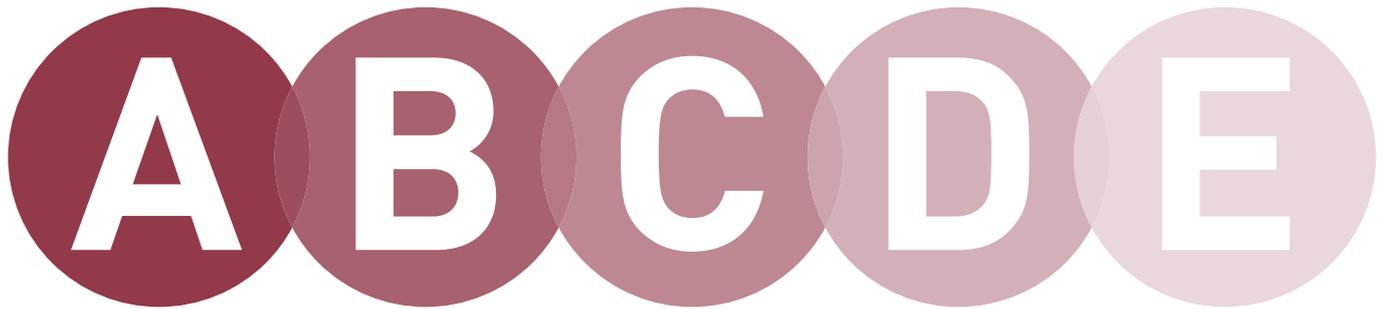
Five-Year

- ▶ Increase investment in sustainable and public transport infrastructure in both urban and rural areas, including cycling and pedestrian facilities
- ▶ Ensure the long term future of Ireland West Airport through development of a viable business model
- ▶ Progress the upgrade of the N5 Route from Westport to Turlough and Scramoge to Ballaghderreen.

Sector	Grade
Road: Motorways	C
Road: Other routes	D
Rail	C+
Airports	C
Sea ports	D
Sustainable transport	C

OVERALL GRADE

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 west of Ireland.

Galway is the principal city in the west region and is serviced by both motorway (M6) and rail connections to the capital city. Other principal regional towns – primarily Castlebar and Roscommon – are serviced by rail and national road routes but not motorway. National road routes emanating from Galway city connect it to Sligo city (N17) and onto Donegal (N15) in the north and Limerick city (N18/M18) in the south through to Cork via the N20. Access to the west of Galway county is via the N59 and to Castlebar via the N84.

The rail line from Galway to Dublin provides nine direct services per day for the region's capital and main urban centre of population. There are five direct services provided to Castlebar and Roscommon to and from Heuston station.

The west region is well serviced by air, sandwiched between Ireland West Airport providing access to Great Britain and Europe. To the south, Shannon Airport provides access to other continents. Galway Airport no longer provides commercial services and has not done so since 2011.

Galway Harbour is classified as a port of regional significance under the National Ports Policy 2013, facilitating commercial freight and cruise passenger services to the area.

Roads

The completion of the M6 motorway route including the upgrading of the M50 interchange at Lucan has allowed traffic to and from Galway to the capital to achieve journey times that are comparable to the rail service. In 2011 Galway City Council replaced some of the roundabouts in the city with signalled controlled traffic junctions and an intelligent lights control system to aid traffic flow move more freely around the city. However, the city is still a 'pinch point' for traffic movement within the county as travellers from the west to the east and vice versa still have to travel within the city's urban network to access national routes inevitably leading to traffic congestion.

The proposed Galway City Bypass project is designed to alleviate road travel for visitors and commuters to Galway and its environs. However, this project has been considerably delayed and is unlikely to reach planning consent for another two years.

Major road schemes in Galway that are at planning stage include the N59 Moycullen bypass and the N59 Clifden to Oughterard route. The N17/18 Gort to Tuam PPP scheme is currently at tender and is seen as critical in improving journey times to and from Shannon Airport / Limerick and the south to facilitate further economic growth in the region.

The N5 serves as the national route from Westport to Dublin through Roscommon and the midlands. The N5 Turlough to Westport scheme oral hearings commenced recently and the project is currently at submission stage. The Roscommon section is particularly poor and in need of investment. Mayo will benefit from one scheme in Roscommon – the N5 Ballaghaderreen bypass which is under construction. A number of major road schemes in Mayo have been suspended due to the economic downturn including two improvement projects on the N17 from Tuam to Claremorris and Tubbercurry to Knock including the Charlestown bypass.

Similarly improvement works on the N61 linking Athlone to the north of Roscommon county have been suspended.

Sustainable Transport

The development of the Great Western Greenway has resulted in increased cycling and walking tourism along the route of the old disused railway line from Westport to Achill Island in Mayo. Similar schemes are being developed across the country and one is currently proposed to run along the old disused railway line from Claremorris to Collooney in Sligo. Galway County and City Councils have proposed developing a number of cycling and walking routes to benefit tourism but also to reduce the number of journeys by car its citizens complete. Currently this stands at 71 per cent for the county and 63 per cent for Galway city – one point below the national average. The city fairs well for journeys by foot at 16 per cent - the national average is 10% - and journeys by bicycle at five percent - three points above the national average of two per cent.

NUI Galway currently operates a 'park and ride' facility for students and staff. A public bike scheme similar to that currently operating in Dublin is scheduled to commence in the city in July 2014.

Rail

There has been passenger decline across all rail routes due to the economic downturn and in the case of Galway city, the improved motorway route to Dublin has further contributed to this. Investment in the rail network to reduce journey times from Galway to Dublin is critical to ensure the service is competitive. There are train links to Limerick from Galway city which also serve some commuter towns along the line facilitating worker, shopper and tourism traffic.

There is no funding earmarked for rail improvements between Westport and Dublin – this line also serves Roscommon town – and with no investment planned in roads, the transport links will continue to decline. The rail freight line from Ballina direct to Dublin Port and Waterford Port

is a significant strategic transport link for the region facilitating the export of goods from the region.

Air

The west region is well serviced by air transport with both Ireland West Airport and Shannon airport allowing access to UK, European hub cities and continental destinations.

Ireland West Airport is the largest non-State owned regional airport but it continues to receive funding from the Exchequer. Since opening in 1986 it is now a critical piece of economic and social infrastructure for the region. A recent report prepared by a study group commissioned by An Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD has recommended that the airport achieve commercial viability in the light of the review of policy of future support of regional airports. The report concluded that without Exchequer support after 2014, the airport could face closure within a short period. Given that the airport generated 900,000 bednights, supports 102 direct full time jobs and generates 817 full time jobs in the area, it would be an economic blow if the airport closed. In December 2013, it was confirmed that the airport, along with other regional airports, will receive funding until 2023 when it should then be a commercially viable operation.

Shannon airport is a transatlantic airport and in 2012 just under 1.4 million passengers passed through the airport. As well as serving the tourism market, Shannon is an important link for the business and technology parks that are located in proximity to the airport as well business travellers to and from the multinational located in Galway.

The runways at the airport have the capability to accommodate the largest type of aircraft now in operation.

Seaports

The Port of Galway has recently submitted a €126 million plan to build a new deepwater port and reclaim land from Galway Bay under the Strategic Infrastructure Act. The new development plans will allow it to attract larger commercial and cruise vessels thereby benefiting the local economy.

Galway occupies a strategic location in respect of wave-energy on the west coast, but opportunities to support major offshore projects are limited due to the restrictions on the current harbour because of space and tidal constraints. The new development plans are also critical to realising this potential.

The first phase, if approved, would commence in 2015. This is the first project to apply for planning permission on grounds of "imperative reasons of overriding public interest" or IROPI.