

transport for the Greater Dublin Area. The establishment of such an office represents a sizeable evolution of local government leadership, which will have far-reaching and beneficial consequences for strategic planning and the integration of public services' activity in the Dublin area. It represents a major step in transforming local and regional governance in Ireland.

Collaborative Approach

Flexibility, redeployment of resources to priority areas and mobility across organisational boundaries are essential to deal with the challenges faced by the public service.

The Government is committed to a collaborative approach to the transformation of the public service – so that it can command the support and confidence of the public because of the ease of access, timeliness and quality of the services they receive, at a time of changing needs and priorities. This approach would be based on a commitment to flexibility and responsiveness in the context of agreement to reflect best practice in terms of organisation, structure and performance across the public service, and where change is facilitated on a timely basis in the context of an agreed approach to the industrial relations issues which arise.

The *Transforming Public Services* Programme is an ambitious programme of renewal for the entire public service. It is a challenging agenda which will ensure that the public service is high-performing, responsive and effective. Speaking during the Dáil debate on the recent Supplementary Budget, the Taoiseach, Brian Cowen TD, stated that “*reform can accelerate in periods of crisis, when issues that could previously be ignored have to be faced. We are in such a time.*”

Quality of Life in Gateways, Regions, Counties, Cities and Towns

Mark Callanan, Institute of Public Administration

Assessing the Contribution of Gateways to Quality of Life

April saw the launch of a new initiative to assess quality of life and development in the nine Gateway centres identified by the National Spatial Strategy. The Gateway Development Index, prepared by the Border Midland and Western (BMW) and Southern and Eastern (S&E) Regional Assemblies, is designed to measure the extent to which each Gateway is progressing in driving economic development and improving quality of life in their area. The new system will link with a National Spatial Strategy Monitoring System developed by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The index involves assessing trends across a range of key indicators including population, enterprise, environment, economic development, employment and social factors. As part of the first publication of results, a public awareness survey was also conducted to assess the views on quality of life in the Gateways, both of those living within the urban core of the Gateway itself, and of those living in the Gateway's hinterland.

The indicators chosen reflect the growing consensus on the need to move beyond traditional

macroeconomic indicators of progress to a more holistic approach in assessing quality of life as a composite indicator, based on assumptions that the social and physical environment of an area can impact positively or negatively on the well-being of people living in that area. This is also reflected in the importance attached to wider quality of life issues in their own right and as drivers of competitiveness, such as in the National Development Plan, the National Spatial Strategy, *Towards 2016*, and the recent paper by the National Competitiveness Council on well-being and competitiveness.

What Makes a Successful Gateway?

The Gateway Development Index (GDI) draws on international experience in terms of how to assess development and quality of life. Internationally, a number of characteristics are identified as being important to successful Gateways, combining both “hard” and “soft” ingredients:

- Strategic autonomy and decision-making capacity within the Gateway;
- Cultural capital and creativity/multiculturalism;
- A distinctive city core for dynamic urban centres;
- Environmental excellence;
- Absorptive capacity of new knowledge from elsewhere;
- Attractive physical settings and desirable social surroundings.

DOMAIN/INDICATOR	VARIABLE USED
1. Population Population growth Age vibrancy of population	Population change relative to national average Age dependency rate
2. Enterprise and Employment New firm formation Quality of Enterprise Unemployment rate	New VAT registrations (per 1,000 population) Share of services sector in total employment Number on Live Register per 100 workforce
3. Knowledge and Innovation Labour force quality Graduate admissions Graduate retention Third level R&D	% of labour force with third-level qualifications Third-level admissions as % of age cohort Proportion of graduates finding jobs in area R&D earnings per head of (Zone 1) population
4. Environment River water quality Drinking water quality	River water quality indicator Drinking water quality indicator
5. Transport and Connectivity Transport access Retail service availability ICT connectivity	Non-car use, travel times and public transport availability Retail outlets per 100 households PC/Internet access per 1,000 households
6. Health and Wellness Mortality Birth weight Primary healthcare	Mortality rate Average birth weight Number of GPs per capita
7. Social Facilities and Networks Social facilities Crime levels Community involvement	Number of facilities per head Number of serious crimes per capita Level of people participating in community activity

The main GDI indicators are grouped across eight domains and are illustrated in the table to the left.

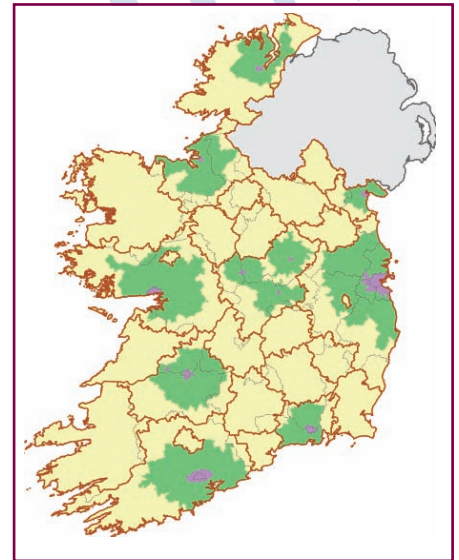
This data is drawn from a range of established information sources, including the Census/CSO, the EPA, the HSE, the Gardaí, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Higher Education Authority, and Fáilte Ireland. In a number of cases, the indicators are made up of a series of sub-indicators.

For some areas, data sources were identified as potentially available but could not be accessed during the first composition of the Index. It should be noted that “institutional capacity” was also seen as highly important to the success of Gateways – this referred to whether the institutional environment facilitates or hinders the role of Gateways, and the autonomy and capacity of authorities responsible for development within the Gateways. However, this was not included in the calculation of the Index as no robust or measurable means for calculating it could be found in the Irish context. However, the report is at pains to emphasise that this aspect should not be neglected.

Public Perceptions of Progress in Gateways

A survey to assess what residents thought of the area was also conducted to complement the data. In total over 2,300 people were surveyed across different sampling points in each Gateway. For example, they were asked to rate the Gateway on a 10-point scale in terms of the quality of business and employment, education, environment, transport and traffic, services, health, social facilities (such as sports centres, arts and culture, parks and libraries), and overall attractiveness. They were also asked whether they thought the Gateway had improved, stayed the same or deteriorated in recent years with respect to each of these.

DOMAIN/INDICATOR	VARIABLE USED
8. Affluence and Deprivation	
Demographic growth	% increase in population, dependency ratio, % of population with different levels of education, and other indicators
Social class composition	% of population with different levels of education, % of households headed by those in different professions/categories of work, mean number of persons per room
Strength of labour market	Male and female unemployment rates, % of single parent families, % of households headed by semi-skilled or unskilled workers/small farmers



Map of Gateway Urban Cores (Zone 1 in purple) and Catchment Hinterlands (Zone 2 in green)

Interviewees were also asked whether they thought there was an identifiable leadership for the Gateway, either at local authority level or at another level, such as within the community.

In each case interviewees were asked about their views on the urban core of the Gateway, whether they lived there or in the wider hinterland of the Gateway.

Where does each Gateway stop?

A key challenge for the project was to precisely identify the geographical boundaries where data would be collected. It was also considered important that a common approach was taken to defining the Gateway areas, which could also be used for hubs and other towns. Another challenge was the availability and the collection of data from various public service providers within small sub-county areas, particularly since most Gateways cut across county and city boundaries.

The approach taken was to identify two “zones” for each Gateway:

- Zone 1 is the urban core of the Gateway, namely the cities and towns within each Gateway (as identified by the CSO);
- Zone 2 represents the wider catchment area for each Gateway, based on District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) where over 20% of the resident population commute to the urban core to work (as identified in the 2006 census).

The zones identified are represented on the Map above, with Zone 1 areas indicated in purple and Zone 2 areas illustrated in green. The brown boundaries indicate areas based on travel-to-work patterns around Gateways, hubs and other county towns.

While the initial data collected for the GDI covers the nine Gateway cities/towns and their hinterlands, the report makes clear that the process could be relatively easily extended to the various Hubs identified in the National Spatial Strategy (Ballina/Castlebar, Cavan, Ennis, Kilkenny, Mallow, Monaghan, Tralee/Killarney, Tuam, and Wexford), and indeed to county towns that are not identified as either Gateways or Hubs.

Assessing Progress over Time

The main purpose of the Index is to monitor progress in each individual Gateway over time, rather than drawing comparisons between Gateways which can be misleading due to the varied profiles of each area. The data covered in the initial assessments were collected in 2006-2007. The plan is that updated data will be collected to assess progress in 2010 and 2013, which represent the mid-term and end points of the current National Development Plan.

However, the initial report on the Index does draw some comparisons between each individual Gateway and the national average score according to different headings. A summary of the scores and trends available to date for each Gateway is also provided, as well as the perceptions of people living in the urban core of the Gateway and those living in the hinterland. Some highlights are illustrated below.

Summary of Some of the First Results Emerging from the Index

Dundalk – The Dundalk Gateway shows an overall GDI well below the national average, and scores particularly low in relation to the knowledge, environment and affluence domains. However, it scores above the national average in relation to transport. Residents' perceptions of Dundalk are slightly below the national average.

Letterkenny – Letterkenny's overall GDI is also well below the national average, with three domains (transport, knowledge and environment) slightly below the average, and three well below (enterprise, affluence, and social facilities and networks). However, Letterkenny scores above the national average for population and health. The results for Letterkenny need, however, to be treated with caution because of the absence of data for Derry in this linked Gateway. Letterkenny residents have a particularly low assessment of traffic congestion, even though transport access is not rated as particularly poor by national standards.

Sligo – Sligo's overall GDI corresponds with the national average, with the health, environment and, particularly, the social domains performing strongly with low crime levels and high social participation. Enterprise and transport are at the national average, while population, knowledge and affluence are slightly below average. Sligo is perceived to be improving by residents, with particularly positive perceptions in relation to education and transport access.

Galway – Galway's GDI is above the national average, scoring well on all domains except environment and

transport (which predominantly relate to issues regarding water quality and access to public transport). It scores particularly well on the knowledge and social domains. However, residents' perceptions do not correspond with Galway's high GDI score and successes, with the survey showing average ratings for the Gateway amongst those living in the area.

Midlands Gateway – The Midlands Gateway combining Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar scores well below the national average, including in the knowledge, environment, enterprise, affluence, social and population domains, with the enterprise and knowledge domains being especially weak. However, it scores above the national average in health and transport. Perceptions of residents on the Gateway are close to the national average.

Limerick/Shannon – The Limerick/Shannon Gateway shows an overall GDI slightly below the national average. The knowledge, health and transport domains are at or above the national average, with the remaining domains somewhat below. The marked contrasts of Zones 1 and 2 are a feature within this Gateway, with Zone 2 above the national average and Zone 1 consisting of the urban core falling behind (the only exception is in the environment domain with Zone 1 performing better than Zone 2). The report suggests that these GDI findings support the current regeneration programmes underway. Residents' perceptions approximate to the average.

Cork – Cork's overall GDI is significantly above the national average, and it scores well across all domains, with only transport slightly below the national average, reflecting

relatively high levels of car dependency. In terms of residents' perceptions, those living in the hinterland of Zone 2 have a distinctly lower perception of the Cork urban core than those living in Zone 1. Residents of Zone 1 see Cork as around the national average in quality terms, while those in Zone 2 see it as somewhat below average, with low perception ratings for the transport, environmental and social domains.

Waterford – The Waterford Gateway has a lower than average overall GDI, with particularly low scores for the knowledge and enterprise domains, reflecting lower scores in terms of adult education levels, return of Waterford graduates to work, the degree of third-level R&D earnings, and a relatively low presence of service occupations among residents. However, residents are relatively positive about the urban core area.

Dublin – Dublin's overall GDI is above the national average, with the enterprise and knowledge domains well above the national average, for example, reflecting Dublin's ability to retain residents who graduate from third-level education and its status as a centre for knowledge-based businesses. However, the social and health domains are below the national average, which, for example, reflect higher crime levels. Like Cork, those living in the Dublin hinterland of Zone 2 have a distinctly lower awareness and perception of the quality of the Dublin urban core than those living in Zone 1, with particularly low perceptions in relation to education, transport and health.

As Gerry Finn, Director of the BMW Regional Assembly, stated at the launch of the Gateway Development Index, the initiative represents an important development and policy analysis tool to evaluate the impact of public investment in the Gateways, and will assist in identifying areas that require further development by different government departments, agencies and local authorities.

Separate CSO Regional Data Published

In a separate development, the Central Statistics Office also recently published a report on “Regional Quality of Life in Ireland”, presenting different social statistics and indicators of quality of life across the different regional authority areas. The report gives an interesting snapshot of some of the regional/county/city differences across 70 separate indicators, as well as presenting a social profile of the different regions. Some of the indicators include a county-by-county analysis.



Limerick – One of Nine Regional Gateways



The Galway Gateway scores well, even if residents don't share the perception of Galway as a successful Gateway.

The figures covered include statistics on:

- Population, including population density, age, dependency ratio, and nationality;
- Housing, including housing stock and vacancy rates, type of accommodation, and average housing prices between 1997-2007;
- Lifestyles, including the numbers living alone, those participating in activities such as voting and sport, internet access, and level of crime;
- Transport, including means of travel to work, distance travelled to work, time taken to travel to work, and number of drivers with penalty points;
- Health status, including life expectancy, and health indicators;
- Education, including age at which full-time education ceased, number of early school leavers, number of primary and secondary schools, pupils and teachers, number of third-level students, and Leaving Certificate grades;
- Economy, including household disposable income, GVA (Gross Value Added), unemployment rates, type and cost of childcare

arrangements, and numbers at risk of poverty;

- Environment, including air quality, river water and drinking water quality, and household waste and recycling.

The figures throw up some interesting contrasts – some perhaps expected and others surprising. For example, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Kerry seem to have the brightest young sparks with the highest proportion of A-grades in the Leaving Cert. Dublin represented the best and the worst in this respect, with a very high proportion of both A-grades and E-grades in the Leaving Cert.

Unsurprisingly, the border and western counties had the highest vacancy rates of housing, but had the smallest pupil-teacher ratios in schools. The mid-east counties of Meath, Kildare and Wicklow are counties of “early risers”, with 11% of commuters leaving for work before 6.30am, and a further 29% leaving before 7.30am.

The CSO also presents an overall profile of the different regions on the basis of the different indicators.