

Sligo.

2030 **One Voice**
One Vision

LCDC 

CONSULTATION PAPER DRAFT Socio-Economic Statement



Prepared by:

On behalf of:

 **SLIGO**
COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRE CHONTAE SHLIGIGH



2030 One Voice
One Vision

CONSULTATION PAPER
DRAFT Socio-Economic Statement

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Section One

Introduction

Introduction

“Sligo 2030 will be an innovative, ambitious and collaborative plan focusing on regional growth, smart and green agendas.”

Sligo 2030 One Voice One Vision

Sligo County Council is currently in the process of developing a strategic framework which will become Sligo’s new Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) and **will be known as Sligo 2030 One Voice One Vision (Sligo 2030)**. Sligo 2030 will be an integrated and coordinated economic, social, community and spatial plan for all of Sligo, guiding the development of the city and county over the next ten years. The actions arising from the plan will be owned and driven by local government, institutions, businesses, and individual community leaders as well as the wider public.

Sligo 2030 will be an innovative, ambitious and collaborative plan focusing on regional growth, smart and green agendas. The plan will be closely informed by and take into account legislative requirements and key national policy, including the National Planning Framework - Ireland 2040 Our Plan (NPF) (2018), and the National Climate Action Plan 2019; regional policy including the Northern and Western Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (NWRAS), and each relevant policy document for County Sligo.

Crucially Sligo 2030 will be anchored in an awareness of the importance of the **Sustainable Development Goals** and how they can be applied to development at a county-level. This includes Goal 11 ‘Sustainable Cities and Communities’ which includes targets for 2030 ensuring access for all to adequate housing, transport, green and public spaces, and services, and reducing the adverse environmental impact of cities and communities.

Sligo County Council supports Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030 which has been developed by the County and City Managers Association (CCMA) to deliver on the Local Authority Climate Action Charter and Climate Action Plan 2021. Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030 provides the sectoral vision and mission that will help to build on the existing expertise and experience within local authorities and coordinate future work to maximise the leadership role and impact on climate action locally, regionally, and nationally. Sustainability and climate action are essential crosscutting themes that will underpin the development of Sligo 2030 and actions arising from research and engagement with the wider community.

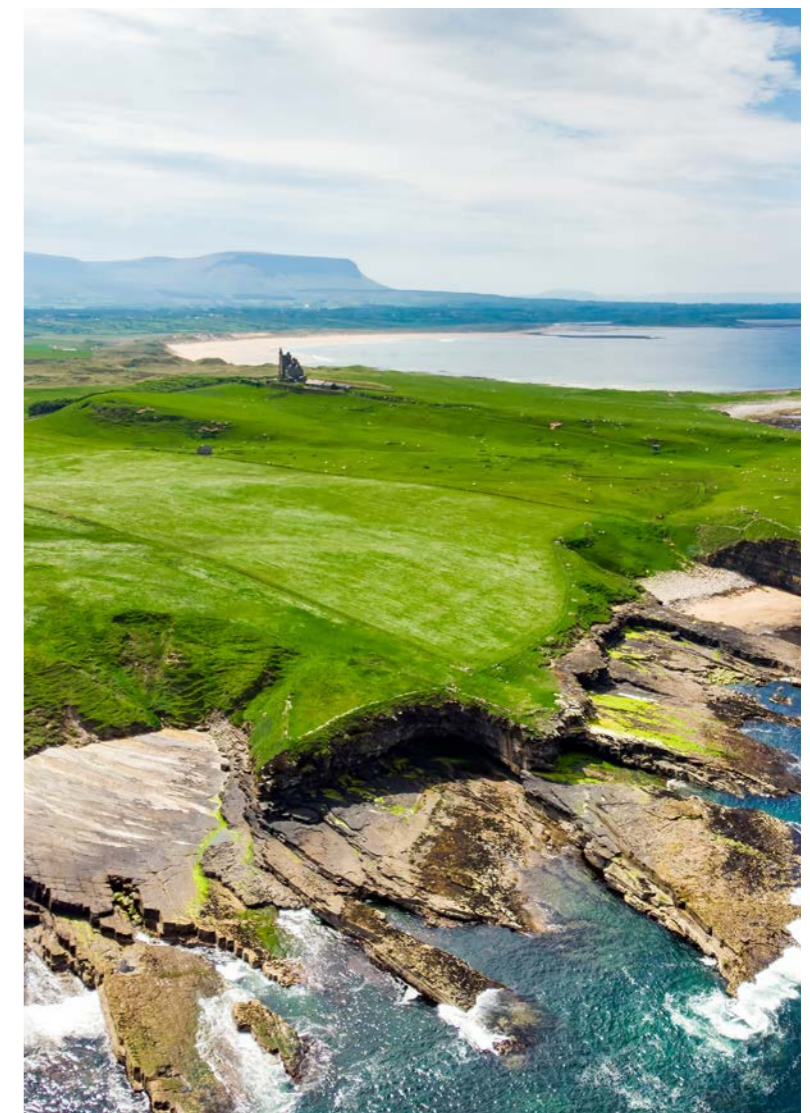


"Sligo 2030 will look to the future while building on the demonstrable successes of recent years in County Sligo..."

Sligo 2030 will also consider issues for the preparation of the Draft County Sligo Development Plan, particularly where these have a community or economic focus. Community and economic issues will each be considered in detail while being addressed in an integrated manner across the priority goals.

Sligo 2030 will look to the future while building on the demonstrable successes of recent years in County Sligo including the implementation of the previous LECP 2016-2021, which provides a strong foundation, good principles, and legacy; and the development of the innovative 'Sligo: Live Invest Visit' brand and communications project to create a more cohesive visual and message for Sligo based around the Sligo.ie website.

Brexit and Covid-19 have caused and will continue to cause significant disruption to the economy of Ireland and of Sligo. Sligo 2030 will evaluate potential impacts and consider existing and potential initiatives to foster recovery and to position Sligo for enhanced resilience to future events. It will also look to opportunities associated with increased digital reliance and the rapidly changing digital landscape.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Figure 1 Sustainable Development Goals



Implementation of Sligo 2030 will focus on **four key areas of ambition:**

Growing Sligo into its role as a Regional Growth Centre as envisaged within the NPF and the NWRA RSES, with the latter providing a framework for growth ambitions for Sligo as a key regional centre capable of leading the development of the surrounding region. Currently deemed a 'Region in Transition' by the European Commission, Sligo 2030 will seek to position County Sligo and the wider North Western Region to have equal standing with all other regions in the country, as outlined in the NWRA document 'A Region in Transition: The Way Forward' which outlines a range of recommendations and policy priorities to accelerate sustainable growth.

Positioning Sligo on the forefront of smart digital transformation building on the new Sligo Digital Strategy 2020-2023; delivering on a commitment to accelerate transition to a new digital landscape; creating the foundations to design a better Smart and Green economy, that supports innovation, collaboration and investment for residents, visitors and businesses.

Positioning Sligo as an exemplar region in addressing climate change in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes reducing carbon emissions by the public, private and community sectors; facilitating renewable energy production; and in maximising sustainable economic opportunities arising from relevant industries. Sligo 2030 will seek to localise international and national ambitions with regards to ways to address climate change, particularly as outlined in the National Climate Action Plan.

Improving the living conditions and health of the people in County Sligo by ensuring Sligo meets the needs of its citizens including in areas such as health, education, employment, childcare, housing, and transport. In line with national and local policy such as the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025, this will include building on initiatives to reduce poverty and deprivation, tackling rural isolation, empowering the elderly to continue to live at home, promoting healthy life choices and positive mental health, and ensuring connected and inclusive communities that have access to the services they need regardless of age, ethnicity or background.



Implementation of this plan will, by 2030, ensure Sligo will be a place:

- where those living in the county are more prosperous with better quality job opportunities and an entrepreneurial culture is fostered and supported;
- be more **socially inclusive place** where there is less disparity between rich and poor, and less disparity between disadvantaged areas versus affluent areas;
- where there are better and more accessible services;
- where people are happier and content with an enhanced quality of life and connected communities;
- that is at the cutting edge of technology, innovation, sustainability, and climate action; and
- that will be known as an **ambitious, vibrant, attractive, and desirable county** with exemplary quality of life where others will want to come and live and work.

Purpose of this draft Socio-Economic Statement

This draft socio-economic statement, based on research and analysis of the city and county, sets out some initial high-level goals of the new plan in Section 6. The draft socio-economic statement is an integral part of the development of Sligo 2030. It is designed to provide a basis for discussion for those who wish to have a say in the future of Sligo.

Contributions from the public are vital to ensure the plan reflects their ideas, concerns, and needs, and ultimately, to ensure that Sligo is a great place to live, invest, and visit. Sligo County Council want to hear from you on the emerging vision and high-level goals outlined in section 5 and 6. The format for engagement is described in section 7.



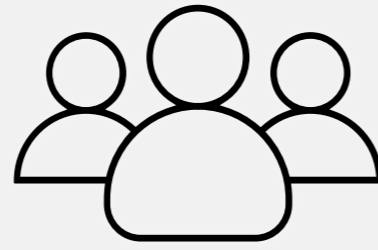
The process of creating the new plan includes the following stages:

1



Stage 1 includes preparation and collation of evidence-based data to inform the development of the plan. This includes a needs analysis assessment which builds on and analyses the data and develops a socio-economic profile of Sligo.

2



Stage 2 is the development of this draft socio-economic statement and high-level goals.

3



Stage 3 is participation which includes receiving feedback on this draft Socio-Economic Statement, surveys, focus groups, webinar and interviews with key stakeholders.

4



Stage 4 will consist of refining the goals based on consultation responses and developing measurable and timebound objectives and actions that will be key to the success of the plan.

5



Stage 5 will enable us to finalise the new Sligo 2030 plan before it is adopted, and implementation begins.

Have your say on Sligo 2030

This draft Socio-Economic Statement is a key step in the development of the Sligo 2030 plan and will form part of Stage 3 of the process – Public Consultation. All interested parties are invited to submit feedback on this document from Tuesday 15th June to Thursday 8th July. Feedback must be received in writing by email or post before 4.30pm on Thursday 8th July to sligo2030@sligococo.ie or in writing to **Sligo 2030 submissions, City Hall, Quay St, Sligo.**

Over the coming weeks a number of public consultation opportunities will be arranged and promoted, including a public webinar, community and economic surveys, focus groups and 1:1 key stakeholder interviews. Information about upcoming consultation sessions will be available

on the Council website at www.sligococo.ie/2030. **It is vitally important that the public and businesses provide feedback on this document and the high-level goals to ensure the Sligo 2030 plan accurately reflects their ideas, concerns, and needs.**

The next section provides a summary profile of County Sligo. This provides a snapshot of the County now and has helped to inform the development of an emerging vision and draft high-level goals as outlined later in this statement.



Section Two - Summary Profile of County Sligo

SUMMARY

Section Two

“ This analysis has been used to help with the initial development of the high-level goals.

Introduction

This section provides a snapshot covering Sligo County and City to inform consultation. Below are key highlights from the initial baseline socio-economic analysis of Sligo.

This analysis has been used to help with the initial development of the high-level goals and is largely based upon analysis of the 2016 Census data. This results in a gap in data between the time of the Census and 2021. However, it has been supplemented where possible with other Departmental statistics and State Agency releases as well as information from the Pobal HP Deprivation Index and the Geodirectory. By availing of currently released data, seasonal adjustments can present an accurate account of the current socio-economic landscape of Sligo County and City.

Following the completion of the stakeholder engagement process, further supplementary data consisting of up to date information will be incorporated with the baseline data to provide a secondary level of spatial context from the Census and initial datasets covering a temporal period from 2015/16 until 2020/21. Using Infrastructural Assessments within the main county settlements, an understanding will be gained of how key population cohorts interact with public facilities and how enhancements can improve these facilities in the future development of Sligo.

A predictive analytical approach will then commence using the baseline and supplementary data with National forecasts and trend analysis to create forecast figures for each Strategic Framework theme which will be agreed in advance.



Sligo is growing albeit at a slower pace than in previous periods. Sligo City has a youthful base, yet a significant elderly population across the County. As such the Council must prepare to support our aging population while continuing to attract investment to support our existing communities and encourage more people to live, visit and invest in Sligo. Key findings from this part of the analysis include:



County Sligo - Population by Gender and Age Group (2016)

County City - Population by Gender and Age Group (2016)

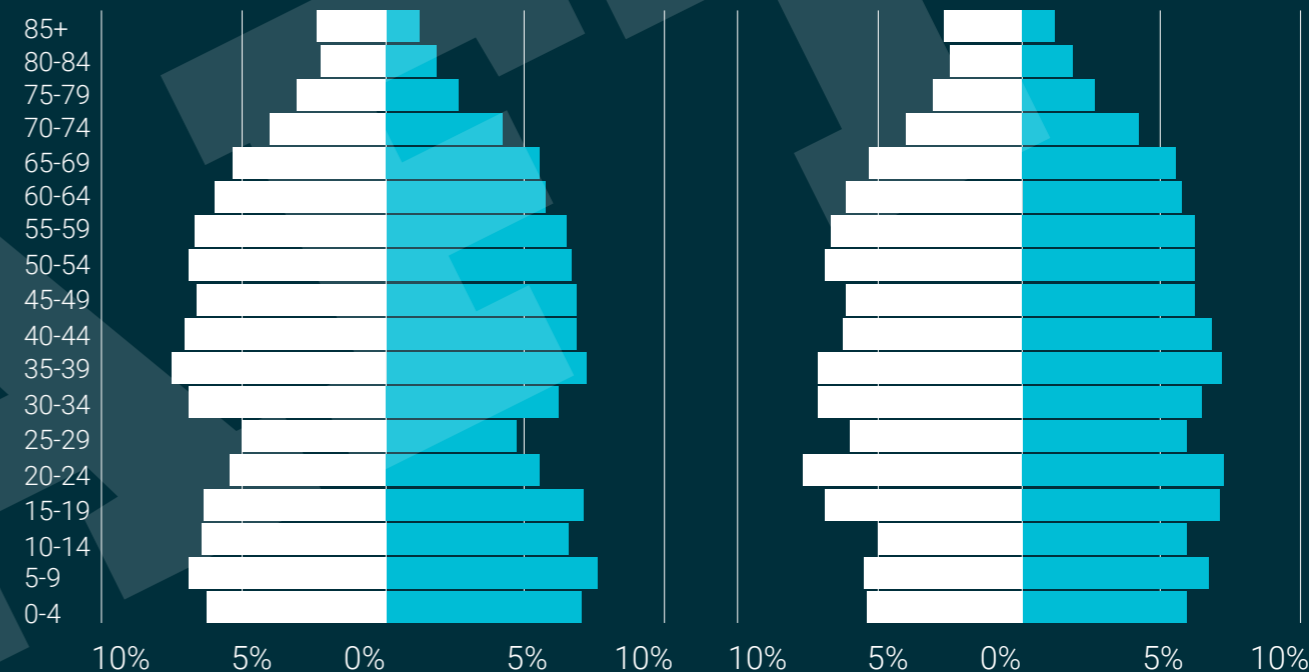


Figure 3: County Sligo and Sligo City Population Pyramid Comparison

Sligo has a population of 65,535 which accounts for 1.4% of the State's population making it the 6th smallest county in the State.

In the most recent census, Sligo City and Tubbercurry were the two largest settlements in the county.

Between 1981 - 2016, County Sligo has grown 18.1% with the population increasing by over 10,000 people.

However, in the most recent census, the population of the County grew by 0.2% - the slowest growth rate since the 1991 census. Furthermore, Sligo City experienced a decrease in population of 0.4%.

People aged 20-29 remain the largest cohort of Sligo City. However, there was a 19.9% decrease in people in that age group in the most recent census.

16% of County Sligo's population are over the age of 65 which is higher than the State average of 13%.

9% of the County's population were foreign nationals, with nationals from the United Kingdom and Poland accounting for the largest proportion of this group.

By 2031, the Border Region, of which Sligo is a part, is projected to see population growth of between approximately 2% - 7% in comparison to 2016 levels.

By 2040, the Population of Sligo county is to exceed 80,000 increasing by over 25%¹

By 2040, Sligo City is expected to have a population exceeding 47,000

50% of the population will be under 35, with a large percentage possessing Third Level qualifications in high skilled industries.

1. Sligo 2040 Vision

SLIGO 2030

One Voice One Vision

Draft Socio-Economic Statement
June 2021



Household Characteristics and Deprivation

Sligo is a changing place with an increasing number of us living in urban environments, although the majority of us still live in rural settings. Despite having comparatively affordable housing for first time buyers, the County continues to experience areas of deprivation and poverty. The County also has a significant proportion of people that live alone. As such, the Council must work to address poverty where it exists and minimise the risk of isolation for those that live alone. Key findings from this part of the analysis include:

- In the most recent census, **almost 40% of people reported living in urban areas across the County. This was an increase from 37% in 2011** and represented the biggest change in rate of urbanisation in Ireland at that time.
- Overall, **92.4% of households are categorised as houses or bungalows**, with 6.2% categorised as flats or apartments, and an average household size of 2.56 persons.
- **28% of County Sligo's population live alone**, which is higher than the state average of 23%.
- Sligo as a whole is rated as marginally below average by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index².
- **County Sligo has seen a large deterioration in its deprivation score since 2011**, with the score now sitting at -1.57, this has been a decrease from -0.54 in 2006.
- **Areas of disadvantage exist in the west of the County**, with wealth centred around Sligo City and towards Grange and Cliffony.
- **Over 6,000 people live in social housing in County Sligo**, making up 10.3% of all households in the County.
- **Single parent households account for 11.4% of households** across Sligo.
- In 2019, **Sligo was ranked as the 3rd most affordable county in Ireland for first time buyers** in a report by the North West Regional Assembly.
- **Internet connectivity is increasing** with Sligo reporting a large decrease across the County in those that do not have internet access in the last census.

2. Pobal HP Deprivation Index

Education, Training and Skills Development

Sligo is a County with fantastic educational infrastructure and high levels of educational attainment. The County has two third level further and higher education providers in the form of Institute of Technology Sligo (IT Sligo) and St Angela's College, Sligo (NUIG). These institutions offer under-graduate and post-graduate degree programmes across a range of areas including Nursing, Business, Science, Engineering and Home Economics. Additionally, a range of further education programmes and training courses are provided through the Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board. With the application for IT Sligo to become designated a Technical University, both Sligo County and City should continue to build on our educational strengths. Key findings from this part of the analysis include:

- Overall, **education outcomes are improving across the County** with those reporting having attained less than primary education declining by 14% and those with solely up to leaving certificate qualifications declining by 10%.
- The most recent census indicates that **the majority of travel to education is done by car**.
- Combined, IT Sligo and St Angela's College have approximately **10,000 students** enrolled.
- **47.7% of residents in Sligo aged 15 years and older hold some form of Third Level qualification** (i.e. NQF 6, Advanced Certificate or higher), which is **higher than the national average of 42%**.
- A further **18.5% of residents have achieved upper secondary school qualifications**.
- The **number of females with masters or higher degrees increased in the last census by 24%**.
- The number of males with masters or higher degrees increased in the last census by 22%.
- **Sligo has several research centres covering innovative areas** such as Precision Engineering, Manufacturing and Materials, Environmental Research, and Renewable and Sustainable technologies.

Economic Activity and Employment

Sligo is a designated Regional Growth Centre, accessible by air, sea, road, and rail, with an appealing work-life balance. Significant employment is provided by IDA and Enterprise Ireland supported companies. As such technological transformation must be embraced to ensure Sligo remains innovative and competitive to continue to attract new investment and create home grown enterprises. At the same time, core infrastructure, be that office space or housing, must be made available to meet the needs of potential businesses and their employees. Key findings from this part of the analysis include:

- Across the County, **the top three industries for employment** were Professional Services (28%), Commerce and Trade (19%), and Manufacturing services (13%).
- **Agriculture, forestry, and fishing** account for 7% of employment across the County.
- **Those working in lower and higher professional and manager roles has increased** to 36% in the City and 32% in the County overall.
- In the most recent census, **the unemployment rate at County level was in line with state figures (7%)**, while unemployment in the City was slightly above at 8%.
- The **average commuting time to work is 22 minutes**, with 72% of people travelling to work in under 30 minutes.
- The **majority of those travelling to work, do so by car**.
- **In 2020, IDA supported companies in the County employed 2,351 people** across sectors such as Engineering, Medical Technology, Biopharmaceuticals, Consumer Goods, and Business and Financial services.
- **74 companies were supported by Enterprise Ireland** and employed 1,992 people across the County in 2020.
- **The Innovation Centre at IT Sligo is home to over 35 businesses at different stages of development** that employ more than 100 people and generate annual sales in excess of €3 million.
- **Sligo is part of two clusters** – The Atlantic MedTech Cluster which is focused on medical devices and Tech Northwest which is an innovative tech cluster designed to drive collaboration in the sector.
- **Sligo's commercial vacancy rate for the final quarter of 2020 was 19.9% which was the highest in the state and higher than the state average of 13.5%**.
- **The National Planning Framework projects by 2040 an additional 12,000 jobs will be created throughout the county**, the largest projection coming from local Enterprise to generate 6,000 additional roles.³
- **The Tourism & Hospitality economy will also have increased by 1,600 additional jobs by 2040**, under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure is targeted to improve trails, walkways, cycleways and access to leisure or recreational facilities.

3. Vision for Potential Job Creation County Sligo 2040



Section Three

SCOT Analysis

Section Three

This section provides an overview of some of the issues and opportunities, based on the baseline profile of the county, that have been identified so far. Sligo County Council would like to hear and understand your views on what you think should be included here.

Strengths

- Designated Regional Growth Centre with access via road, rail, and air
- Significant public realm and cultural projects funded in Sligo City
- Solid manufacturing and professional services sector with a growing tech presence.
- Attractive FDI location with 26 IDA supported companies in 2019
- Major infrastructure projects such as Western Distributor Road completed in Sligo City, N4, N15/16, and the new Garvogue Bridge
- Growing internet connectivity across the county with large decreases in households without internet access
- Excellent educational infrastructure with opportunities for life-long learning and well-developed innovation & research resources
- Strong educational attainment
- New Sligo City Campus and Cultural and Learning Hub
- Rich natural and cultural heritage sitting on the Wild Atlantic Way, 200km of walking trails, a vibrant creative sector, Yeats country and archaeological sites and monuments of national and international importance
- House prices 40% less than national average and Childcare costs 30% less than Dublin
- Average commute times one of the lowest in Ireland

Constraints

- Lack of housing supply in key areas such as Sligo town
- Peripheral location in the Northwest
- Tourism potential not being realised
- Brain-drain with large numbers of young people leaving Sligo due to lack of education and employment opportunities
- Need for more serviced enterprise parks near Sligo City
- Absence of motorway to Dublin and road network to Belfast and Galway mostly sub-standard
- Fibre broadband blackspots
- Insufficient numbers of local SMEs and micro businesses exporting or looking to internationalise
- Deprivation levels increased in recent years
- Commercial vacancy level highest in the country
- Environmental impact of high rate of car use for travelling to work and education
- Childcare facilities are nearing capacity

Opportunities

- New integrated whole county approach to promote and develop Sligo under the Sligo.ie campaign
- Sligo IT University status proposal
- Further develop the tourism sector and promote Sligo as a premier destination by capitalising on unique strengths such as Yeats, and the natural environment
- Potential to become a leading Green county in Ireland as well as a leader in sustainable tourism
- Greening Sligo town through implementation of the new public realm plan, creating more climate friendly environment
- Potential to become a leading example for the use of smart technology, developing partnerships
- Opportunity to build on a new project utilising smart technology on the Eurovelo Route 1 cycle
- Capitalise on Sligo's lower cost base for doing business
- Increasing the local production, supply and use of green sources of energy
- Attract further FDI and nurture start-ups and spin-offs from current operations to increase employment opportunities

Opportunities

Capitalise on Sligo's rich cultural and natural heritage, lower house prices, education, and employment opportunities to attract and retain qualified professionals and families

Celebrate Sligo's diversity across age, ethnicity, and backgrounds

Threats

Climate change has the potential to have a significant impact on Sligo

Automation of work and skills could lead to job losses

Failure to secure buy-in from key-stakeholders, both public and private for the Sligo 2030 plan

Brexit and Covid continues to pose a threat to trade and tourism

A lack of a coordinated approach on tourism culture heritage and the arts.

Failure to adequately embrace technological change could lead to a decrease in competitiveness and losing out on FDI

Failure to address rising levels of deprivation and poverty

Failure to address brain-drain resulting in a skills gap between industry and the workforce

Inadequately addressing and raising awareness of Sligo's diverse population could lead to increased discrimination and isolation

Failure to explore options for the development of childcare facilities could leave Sligo with a shortage of childcare services





Section Four

Guiding Principles

Section Four

Guiding Principles

The Sligo 2030 plan will assist in prioritising strategic investments in areas such as transport, housing, jobs, education, health, the environment, and energy.

The plan will be underpinned by the following **guiding principles**:

- **Smart** sustainable development
- Economic and environmental **sustainability**
- A **green Sligo** that proactively addresses climate change
- An equitable society that will be **socially inclusive**.

These guiding principles underpin **four key areas of ambition**:

- Growing Sligo into its role as a **Regional Growth Centre**
- Positioning Sligo on the forefront of **smart digital transformation**
- Positioning Sligo as an exemplar region in **climate action** in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Improving the **living conditions and health** of the people in County Sligo



Figure 4 Sligo 2030 Guiding Principles

Sligo County Council acknowledges the significant and immediate impact that climate change will have and as such, sustainability and climate action will be essential cross cutting themes that underpin the entire development of the Sligo 2030 plan across the economic, social and environmental spheres.

These guiding principles have helped inform the development of an emerging vision for County Sligo, outlined in the next section.





Section Five

Local Economic and Community Plan Vision

Section Five

Local Economic and Community Plan Vision

Sligo County Council working in partnership with the Sligo Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and Sligo Economic Forum (SEF) and with the guidance of the Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development, has developed an **emerging vision for the new LECP** which will take the form of an overarching countywide strategic framework, known as Sligo 2030, to guide the development of the City and County over the next 10 years.

It is envisaged that the new plan will be an **integrated multi-sector strategy** that will be consistent with existing local, national, and international/EU plans and strategies. This will include the National Planning Framework which identifies Sligo as a regional growth centre, the Regional Spatial and Economic

Strategy, the Sligo Digital Strategy 2020-2023, the five-year Sligo Brand, Marketing and Communications Strategy adopted in 2019 and the Sligo County Development Plan 2019-2023.

While Sligo 2030 applies to all the County, **Sligo City can be a centrepiece**, embodying the ambition of the County for a transformation in the way we live, work, and enjoy time out. Development of Sligo City as a compact, green, enterprising, and creative city will contribute to an overarching goal of transforming Sligo into the leading city in the north-west region, a regional growth centre. A single, coherent concept for the city centre's public realm is an essential element to achieving this ambition for Sligo.

Figure 5 Stephen Street Cultural Plaza



The Sligo City Public Realm Action Plan (2018) describes a range of ways in which this can be achieved with detail on paving, vegetation, lighting, public art, street furniture, smart technology, building and shopfront interface. Many actions relate to other aspects of the guiding principles above, as well as other economic and social priorities. For example, greening the city is linked to climate change, public art to sense of place, signage and wayfinding to connectivity and increasing visitor dwell time, street furniture and smart technology to position Sligo as an internationally recognised smart city destination where technology will be incorporated into the fabric of our city life to provide better information, improved services, more choice, more convenience and less waste for our citizens, businesses, communities and public services.

Projects being implemented include Old Market Street, Quay Street, O'Connell Street, Rockwood Parade, Market Cross, Abbey Street, and central animated square at Stephen Street.

“It is envisaged that the new plan will be an integrated multi-sector strategy that will be consistent with existing local, national, and international/EU plans and strategies.”

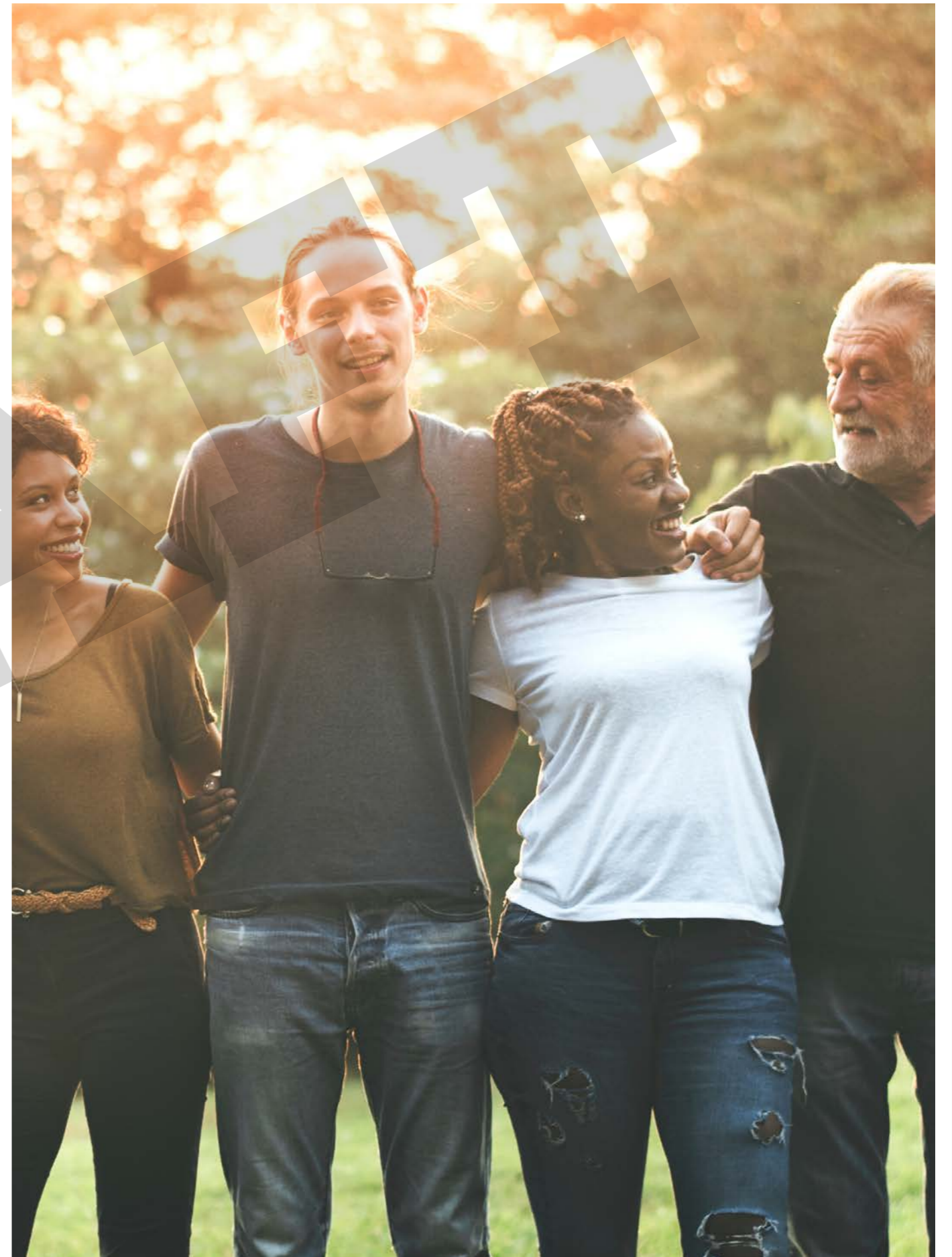
Emerging Vision

A draft vision is suggested below. While it has been developed from existing strategic documents and based upon the ambitions for County Sligo in the context of Sligo 2030, **the intention is that this vision should be a starting point; to be developed and refined during and following the consultation process, so that a shared vision for Sligo can be defined together.**

The do-nothing scenario would see Sligo continue to fall behind other counties and comparative metrics, such as commercial vacancy or deprivation, not improving. Conversely, **success will see a rising tide of socio-economic development support a more vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive society in Sligo.** For Sligo 2030 to achieve an agreed ambitious vision it must be led and supported by universities, communities, businesses, and local government working in partnership.

Our vision for Sligo is for a collaborative, innovative and inclusive county; that drives regional growth and prosperity for all; leads in utilising smart and green technology; works to the benefit of our citizens, and allows us to fully celebrate and protect our unique environmental landscape and rich cultural heritage.

The next section outlines some high-level goals to help activate this vision. Sligo County Council would like your views on the vision and the high-level goals.





Section Six

Emerging High-Level Goals

Section Six

Emerging High-Level Goals

The baseline analysis summarised above has enabled us to develop guiding principles and an emerging vision. To bring this vision to life several initial high-level goals have been identified. These high-level goals will be further refined as the Sligo 2030 Plan is developed, considering the findings from further analysis and the feedback from the consultation process.

These goals have been designed to be transformative, ambitious, and importantly to align with existing policies including the RSES, NPF and relevant economic, community, digital and climate policies for County Sligo in a socially inclusive manner.

**What do you think about these goals?
Are they the right ones for Sligo?**

Do they reflect what you think should be the economic and social priorities for the next ten years for the County and City?

Are they capable of transforming the County and helping to realise its potential as a regional growth centre, and position it as a leader in the utilisation of smart and green technology?



Figure 6 Sligo 2030 High Level Goals

Goal 1 – Sligo will be a key Regional Growth Centre that drives economic activity in the region

Embracing our status as a regional growth centre in the Northwest, sustainable economic development in the region must be driven through an innovative and collaborative approach that ensures Sligo meets the skill and infrastructure requirements of existing and new businesses. This is aligned to the goal for Enterprising Sligo, identified in the RSES, which aims to support local businesses and national or global firms located in Sligo by fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, expanding education opportunities, and providing a skilled workforce to the industry.

This could include:

- **Enabling the attraction of new investment and to build on the strengths of our innovative tech and med-tech clusters**, by providing serviced enterprise sites at key locations in Sligo town supported by enabling infrastructure (for example a future transit stop next to the proposed IDA Oakfield Business Park), supporting development of remote working hubs, seeking to develop new sectors and clusters that will lead to high end manufacturing and employment opportunities, and continuing to promote Sligo through the sligo.ie website.
- **Investing in critical transport infrastructure** to maximise the opportunities of the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) e.g. investing in public transport and measures to encourage modal shift to non-car based forms of transport, and enhancing or upgrading the N15 to Letterkenny and N17 to Galway, as well as the N4 to Dublin and the N16 to Dundalk and Belfast.
- **Connecting and servicing rural communities** to enable them to build on their existing strengths and assets as well as on developing new opportunities. This includes minimising the 'digital divide', ensuring both broadband connectivity and the provision of skills training to promote digital literacy.

- **Seeking to ensure future graduates can choose to stay in the region and to take up high quality jobs created by existing and new enterprises** by building on the success of achieving a Technological University for the North West (2022) in the area of education, training and skills development. For example collaboration between the Third level colleges, (Technological University) the Training & Education Providers (e.g. ETB) and local industry to ensure that the workforce have the skills to meet future industry needs.
- **Promoting an entrepreneurial culture that is supportive and encouraging** of new start-ups, micro-businesses, and SMEs, with a view to creating and sustaining employment opportunities and increasing exports from local companies. **Supporting innovative business practices** to support Sligo's position to be at the forefront of smart digital utilisation and climate action innovation by addressing digital barriers.

Key Question 1: How can more people be encouraged to live work and invest in County Sligo?

Key Question 2: To grow Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre, the challenge will be to grow the population in line with demand for employees; in turn more housing is required. How can developers be encouraged to deliver private residential housing, particularly within existing urban areas?

Key Question 3: What can be done to address Sligo's high commercial vacancy rates and what steps need to be taken to attract businesses to such areas?

Goal 2 – Sligo will become a leader in the utilisation of smart technology through partnership with educational and commercial third parties

Building on the initiatives already underway, embracing smart technology and accelerating our digital transformation can ensure that Sligo becomes a smart place to be through the use of technology. Living with Covid has shown us the importance of being connected, and of the benefits of online communication and business. The utilisation of smart technology is envisaged to be a cross-cutting benefit for all those who live and work in Sligo, but benefits need to be harnessed.

This could be achieved through:

- **Positioning Sligo as a Smart City destination by applying a range of smart technologies to Sligo town and County.** For example exploring the use of smart technology in farming, environmental monitoring, public transport, traffic management, parking management, waste management, and enhanced tourism application (building on a new project utilising smart technology on the Eurovelo Route 1 cycle touring route from Norway to Portugal via Ireland, optimising route planning and maximising economic potential).
- **Becoming a pilot region for new smart technologies and accelerating the deployment of smart infrastructure across our city and county,** for example by seeking funding for an early roll out of the 5G network, and deployment of smart sensors in street furniture.
- **Partnering with relevant commercial and academic third parties (e.g. Sligo IT)** to ensure Sligo is positioned as a leader in the adoption of smart technology.
- **Striving for more inclusive use of technology** by a wider range of demographics creating more connected communities while tackling rural isolation.

Key Question 4: What smart technology and initiatives could be of most benefit to Sligo's residents? Where could it help improve people's lives, for example addressing air pollution, providing better online public services etc.

Key Question 5: How can the idea of a smart economy, jobs of the future and digital transformation be used to ensure that Sligo remains a competitive and innovative place that attracts investment?

Goal 3 – Sligo will be a proactive county in the fight for climate action in line with the Sustainable Development Goals

Recognising our reality as a coastal county with a unique and diverse environmental landscape, Sligo must be protected for future generations from the threat of climate change. To do this sustainable development and climate action must be incorporated into all areas of life in the County. The Sustainable Development Goals will underpin Sligo 2030.

This could include:

- **Engaging, planning, and adapting to ensure a more resilient and climate ready Sligo.**
- **Promoting and supporting greater community involvement and business participation in sustainable environmental initiatives.** Promoting awareness of and implementing policies supporting environmental sustainability and energy efficiency across all sectors and communities, including funding for those that may be disadvantaged by such policies. Encouraging and promoting projects/businesses that will contribute positively and grow the circular and bioeconomy to promote sustainable rural and urban economic development as part of the overall aim of transiting to a low carbon economy.
- **Greening Sligo town through implementation of the new public realm plan,** creating more climate friendly environments, for example through the planting of more trees and pollinator friendly planting.
- **Encouraging compact urban growth** using existing urban sites where possible and enabling sequential development adjoining existing residential development through enabling infrastructure such as upgrading water and wastewater infrastructure. The objective is to reduce the need for car-based commuting by developing more homes near employment opportunities.
- **Promoting and exploring initiatives to help farms become more sustainable** such as integrated farming and cropping systems that protect natural resources such as soil and water, coupled with the use of smart technology to make farms more efficient.
- **Exploring the utilisation of smart technologies,** as set out in Goal 2, to help realise ambitions such as clean mobility and energy efficient buildings, homes, and streets.
- **Increasing the local production, supply and use of green sources of energy** subject to relevant assessments.

Key Question 6: Generally, Sligo residents enjoy relatively low commuting times, yet the majority of those travelling to work and education use a car. What can be done to reduce car use and encourage more sustainable and green methods of transport?

Key Question 7: What can be done to help business across Sligo "Go Green"?

Goal 4 – Sligo will be an inclusive, healthy, and equitable society that supports vibrant communities

Sligo County Council will continue to work to ensure an inclusive society that meets the needs of all our citizens including in areas such as health, education, employment, childcare, services for the elderly, housing, and transport. Our vibrant communities must be strengthened and enhanced making them more liveable and attractive places. While this includes all communities in the County, a particular focus will be on enabling Sligo town to realise its potential as a regional centre by upgrading the town centre environment and enabling the town centre to be a multifunctional vibrant place that can regenerate civic engagement, attract tourists and support adjoining businesses.

This could include:

- **Upgrading and enhancing Sligo town centre through targeted public realm interventions** that create attractive, vibrant, and multi-functional public spaces that are friendly and safe for the young and old by implementing Sligo's Public Realm Plan.
- **Encouraging modal shift to non-car-based transport options** through provision of an expanded network of green corridors (cycleways and walking routes) through the urban core of Sligo town and linking Sligo town to nearby villages and recreational hubs.
- **Continuing work to reduce poverty and deprivation** and ensure that all our people have access to the services and amenities they need.
- **Developing initiatives to ensure inclusive, connected, and vibrant communities** that are their own agents for change and proactively involved in the development of Sligo.
- **Promoting healthy life choices, positive mental health and building on community well-being initiatives.**
- **Ensuring inclusivity** of new communities in County Sligo and involving and celebrating the diversity of population.
- **Continuing to develop initiatives to tackle rural isolation** and exploring how technology can be utilised to assist the elderly to remain in their homes if they wish to do so.
- **Using data driven evidence** to predict and prepare for the future needs of the population of County Sligo, for example housing and health.

Key Question 8: Given Sligo's significant elderly population, coupled with an above average rate of individuals living alone, how can the Council ensure an inclusive society that prevents isolation?

Key Question 9: Sligo has seen a significant deterioration in its deprivation score. With this in mind what can be done to address poverty and promote and maintain healthy and prosperous communities?

Goal 5 – Sligo will celebrate its rich cultural heritage and realise its tourism potential

Celebrating our rich cultural heritage and recognising the actions already underway, by enhancing supports to the areas of culture, heritage, and the arts, and further developing our tourism offering.

This could include:

- **Building on the unique landscape and culture of County Sligo and reinforcing a sense of place**, for example development of an attraction of scale such as a Yeats Interpretative Centre to showcase Sligo's heritage and act as a flagship attraction, and secondary attractions based on unique aspects and strengths that county Sligo possesses including outdoor activities, including the water based resources of the County, archaeology and its history and culture and creativity.
- **Continuing to promote Sligo as one of Ireland's premier tourism destinations** on the Wild Atlantic Way based on the brand Sligo Sets Your Spirit Free, with associated best in class web presence for Sligo experiences, strong coordinated B2B and wholesale sales activities, and strong collaborative marketing campaigns that will see tourism benefiting the whole county.
- **Enhancing industry capability and capacity** through an annual skills development plan, visitor service plan, tourism awareness programs, networking, training needs analysis and strong linkages with education providers.
- **Raising awareness of the value of our culture, arts, and heritage amongst the public and encouraging public participation** across the areas of culture, heritage, and the arts, and developing initiatives to ensure access to participation regardless of background or needs.

Key Question 10: Given Sligo's unique landscape and rich cultural heritage, what can be done to not only attract more visitors, but to utilise these positive features to attract more people to live and invest?

Key Question 11: How can we encourage more of the community to become involved with initiatives related to culture, heritage, and the arts?

Goal 6 – A collaborative and innovative Sligo

Acknowledging the work that has been done by key stakeholders (including by the public and local businesses) and agencies throughout communities in County Sligo and at regional, national, and international level, the Council will commit to working under a collaborative framework.

This could include:

- **Working (on a regional and national level with the NWRA and National Government) to alleviate the infrastructural deficits** (transport, broadband, port, air access etc) for the region, so as to improve accessibility, connectivity and mobility into and out of the region as well as seeking to address the investment inequalities that has led the region to now being a Region in Transition.
- **Developing initiatives to ensure collaboration is at the heart of Sligo's development**, by identifying areas for information sharing, joint planning, strategy coordination, and training.
- **Exploring synergies between stakeholders to allow us to create innovative solutions for the benefit of the whole county**, for example by continuing to work on the development of a central portal for socio-economic research and data collection.

Key Question 12: How can collaboration be fostered between key stakeholders in Sligo to allow for a more coordinated strategic approach?

Key Question 13: How can synergies be realised to allow Sligo to develop innovative solutions?

“Acknowledging the work that has been done by key stakeholders and agencies throughout communities in County Sligo and at regional, national, and international level...”



Section Seven

Summary and Next Steps

Section Seven

Summary and Next Steps

This draft Socio-Economic Statement is a key step in the development of the Sligo 2030 plan and following the early committee considerations it will inform Stage 3 of the process – Public Consultation. All interested parties are invited to submit feedback on this document from Tuesday 15th June to Thursday 8th July. Feedback must be received in writing by email or post before 4.30pm on Thursday 8th July to sligo2030@sligococo.ie or in writing to **Sligo 2030 submissions, City Hall, Quay St, Sligo.**

Over the coming weeks a number of public consultations opportunities will be arranged and promoted, including a public webinar, community and economic surveys, focus groups and 1:1 key stakeholder interviews. Information about upcoming consultation sessions will be available on the Council website at www.sligococo.ie/2030. **It is vitally important that the public and businesses provide feedback on this document and the high-level goals to ensure the Sligo 2030 plan accurately reflects their ideas, concerns, and needs.**

Following on from this consultation process and taking into consideration the feedback received, the Council will further refine the high-level goals into specific objectives, recommendations, and actions that are timebound and measurable. The final Sligo 2030 plan will be completed towards the end of 2021 and will guide the development of the city and county over the next 8-10 years.

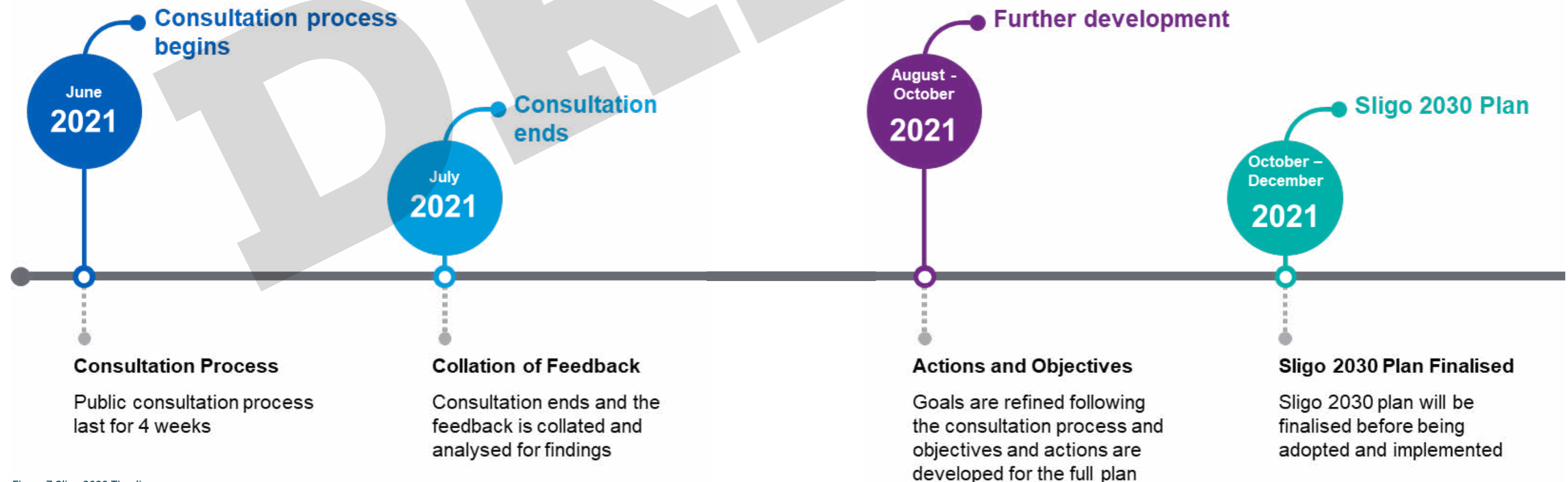
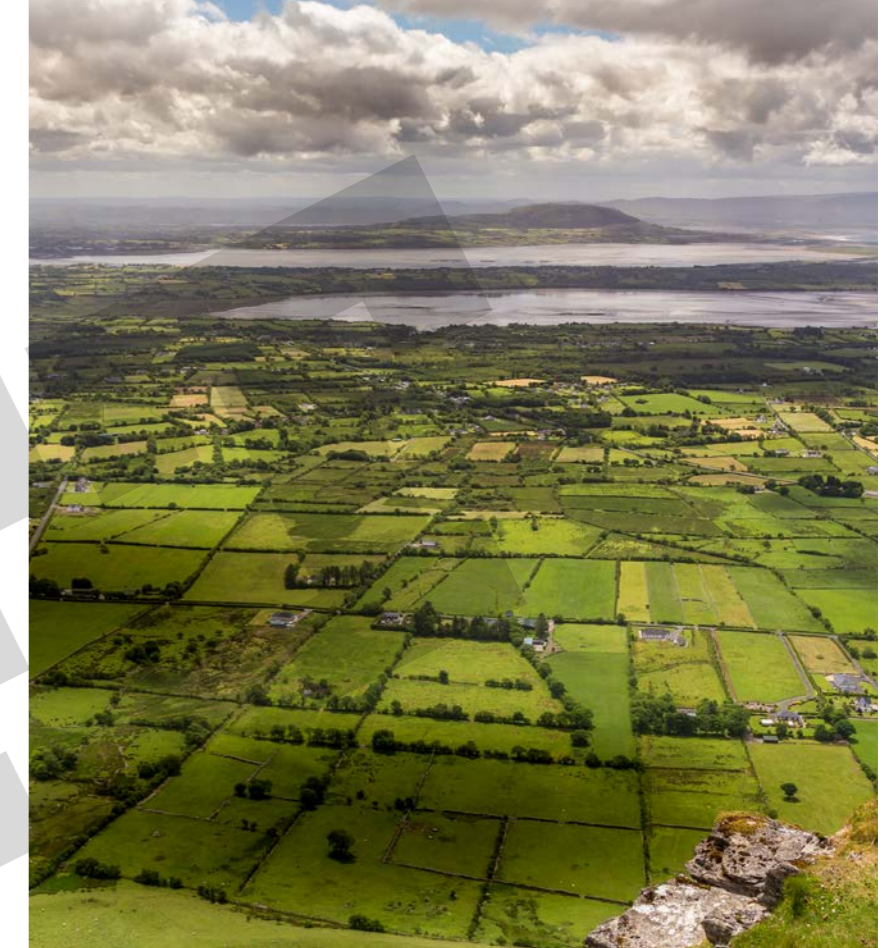


Figure 7 Sligo 2030 Timeline

Sligo.

2030 **One Voice**
One Vision

CONSULTATION PAPER DRAFT Socio-Economic Statement

Prepared by:

  **Future Analytics**