



ÚDARÁS RÉIGIÚNACH AN MHEAN IARTHAIR

MID-WEST REGIONAL AUTHORITY

ANNUAL REPORT 2010





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CATHAOIRLEACH'S STATEMENT

It was a great honour for me to be elected as Cathaoirleach of the Mid-West Regional Authority in 2010 and I would like to record my appreciation of my predecessor, Cllr. Leo Walsh.

The Mid-West Regional Authority commenced the review of its Regional Planning Guidelines/Regional Economic Strategy in 2009 and the *Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022* were completed and adopted by the Authority at the September 2010 monthly meeting. The new Guidelines build upon the earlier Guidelines, bringing them up to date and reflecting current and anticipated development trends in the Region. They also reflect the new planning legislation that was enacted in 2010, i.e. the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2010. I welcome the evidence-based approach to the Guidelines' preparation and commend my colleagues for their active engagement in this statutory process. The implementation of the Guidelines will proceed in 2011 and beyond, in line with the new guidance issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in December 2010 and the Authority will continue to engage with the process.



Shannon International Airport continues to play an important role in the Economic Development of the Mid-West Region and the West of Ireland in general. Mr Martin Moroney, Director Shannon Airport Authority addressed the October 2010 monthly meeting of the Authority and outlined a balanced but positive view of the continuing challenges facing the Airport. It is vitally important that Aer Lingus continues to use Shannon Airport to ensure the viability and vitality of business and tourism interests in the Mid-West region. The continued success of the Airport is dependent on the continued success of the Region in promoting itself as an excellent place to do business and to live and the Regional Authority will continue to work with the other public and private agencies in the Region to achieve this goal.



The Limerick Regeneration Project is an extremely significant social, economic and physical regeneration project in the heart of our region's Gateway City and extensive work by the Northside and Southside Regeneration Agencies continued in 2010, in conjunction with Limerick City and County Councils. In mid 2010, the Irish Government committed over €330 million over a three year period to advancing the regeneration project with a key focus on employment creation, improvement of social and recreational facilities and physical rejuvenation of the three neighbourhoods involved. The Regional Authority, through the Director, is a member of the Regeneration's Programme Delivery Group (PDG) and the Authority is committed to its continued engagement with the two Agencies to advance this important Project.

The principal activities of the Regional Authority throughout 2010 are outlined in the main body of this Annual Report. On behalf of the members of the Regional Authority and on my own behalf, I wish to acknowledge the work and dedication of the Director and staff of the Regional Authority. Also, I would like also to thank Mr. Tom Mackey, Designated Manager for his help and co-operation throughout the year.

Cllr. Ger Fahy
Cathaoirleach.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It gives me great pleasure to present the 2010 Annual Report on the activities and financial statements of the Mid-West Regional Authority. This Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Article 30 of the Local Government Act, 1991 (Regional Authorities) (Establishment) Order, 1993. It details briefly the powers, functions, duties, policies, programmes and objectives of the Authority and it reviews its principal activities during 2010.

Established in 1994, the remit of the Mid-West Regional Authority is to work in partnership with our constituent local authorities – Clare County Council, Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and North Tipperary County Council - to achieve the coordinated delivery of



high quality public services across the Mid-West Region. During 2010, the Regional Authority continued to fulfil this role in supporting regional enterprise and innovation in the face of the current challenging economic climate.

The principal areas of activity during the year feature under three headings; Public Services Co-ordination, Regional Planning and EU Projects.

Under the public services coordination work the Authority has been involved in steering the Mid-

West Area Strategic Plan (MWASP) preparation, the completed regional housing and retail strategies and, the draft regional recreational strategy. The Authority also provides the secretariat to the Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group and the Shannon Airport Marketing Strategy Committee. The enactment of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2010 Authority has provided the Authority with additional roles and responsibilities in land use planning in the region. The adoption of the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) at the September meeting has meant that a strategic planning framework has been put in place by Elected Members for the development of the region over the period 2010 – 2022. The four local authority County Development Plans and Town Plan must be consistent with the RPGs. Structures to implement the RPGs have been agreed with the Members and put in place. The RPGs Implementation



Steering Group and three Sub Groups (Zone One/Gateway area, Renewable Energy and Infrastructure) have also been agreed.

The Authority is involved in six EU Projects with a budget of just under two million euro. Each local authority in the region has involvement in at least one EU project and such participation brings a significant benefit to the delivery of public services in the region.

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Cathaoirleach and members of the Authority, to the Designated Manager, Mr. Tom Mackey, to the members of the Operational and RPGs Implementation Committees and of the various Working Groups for their assistance and co-operation during 2010. Furthermore, I would like to thank the constituent local authorities, government departments, local and public authorities in the region, the many other organisations and individuals who worked with and assisted the Regional Authority throughout the year. I also wish to acknowledge and praise the continued commitment and hard work of the Authority's staff.

Liam Conneally,
Director.



MID-WEST REGIONAL AUTHORITY

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STATUTORY BACKGROUND

The Mid-West Regional Authority, one of eight Regional Authorities in Ireland, was established with effect from 1st January 1994 under the provisions of the Local Government Act, 1991 (Regional Authorities) (Establishment) Order, 1993. This Establishment Order was made by the Minister for the Environment with the consent of the Minister for Finance under Sections 3 and 43 of the Local Government Act, 1991.

POWERS, FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES

Regional Authorities have been given a general competence to do all things necessary and expedient for the effective performance of their functions, including wide consultation with local, regional and other public authorities, engagement of consultants and advisers, participating in or promoting research, borrowing, purchase and leasing of land and property, requesting information and attendance at a meeting of representatives from any local or public authority.

The principal functions include:

- Preparation of Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines/Regional Economic Strategy (Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended)
- Ensure consistency between City/County Development plans and the RPGs (Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010)
- Promotion of co-ordination in the provision of public services in the Region
- Promotion of co-operation, joint action etc. between local authorities, public authorities and/or others, i.e. regional housing, retail and recreational strategies



- Reviewing the overall development needs of the region and the making of statements on them as appropriate, and keeping under review the provision of public services in the Region
- Reviewing the Development Plans of local authorities in the Region and in adjoining regions
- Provision of proposals, advice, recommendations or information to Government in relation to applications for E.U. assistance
- Reviewing and monitoring the implementation of measures for which E.U. assistance is made available
- Preparation of Programme of Work, Estimate of Expenditure and Receipts, Statement of Accounts and Annual Report
- Preparation of Regional Economic Strategy (Establishment Order)

REGIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Mid-West Region, of Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary, comprises approximately 10% of the national land area and population of the State. A significant portion of the Region faces the Atlantic Sea Board with considerable maritime influences; the River Shannon passes through the Mid-West forming a distinctive corridor and unifying force in the character of the area. Much of the rural areas are grown in pasturelands with uplands particularly around the fringes of the Region. The whole of the Region is covered for economic and tourism development purposes by Shannon Development whose remit also covers South Offaly and North-Kerry. Figure 1 illustrates the location and geographical area of the Mid-West Region.



Figure 1: Mid-West Region, Ireland



BRIEF PROFILE OF THE REGION

City:	Limerick
Counties:	Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary Counties
Area:	7,869.86 km ²
Area as a % of the State:	10%
Population:	371,900 (2008)
Population Density:	45.82 persons per km ²
Urban Population (2006):	45%
Rural Population (2006):	55%
No. in employment (Q4, 2010):	150,000
No. unemployed (Q4, 2010):	30,500
Employment in Enterprise Ireland supported companies (2008):	10,941
Employment in IDA assisted companies (2008):	10,242
Principal Population Centres:	Limerick City, Ennis, Shannon, Ennistymon, Kilrush, Kilkee, Newcastle West, Abbeyfeale, Adare, Nenagh, Roscrea, Thurles, Templemore.
Principal Economic Sectors:	Agriculture, Tourism, Professional Services & Manufacturing
Physical Geography:	The Region is one of considerable geographic diversity, comprising coastal and central plains, mountains, bog land, and drained by the River Shannon, Lough Derg and the Shannon Estuary. The western half of County Clare is dominated by the Atlantic coastline and includes the distinctive karst landscape of the Burren in North Clare. Much of Limerick County as well as part of North Tipperary is characterised by the rolling hills and dairy land of Ireland's 'Golden Vale'.



POPULATION OF MID-WEST REGION'S PRINCIPAL POPULATION CENTRES

Urban Centre	County	Population (2006)
Limerick City (including suburbs)	Limerick	86,736
Ennis (including environs)	Clare	24,253
Shannon	Clare	8,481
Kilrush (including environs)	Clare	2,694
Newmarket-on-Fergus	Clare	1,542
Kilkee	Clare	1,325
Sixmilebridge	Clare	1,292
Killaloe	Clare	1,035
Ennistymon	Clare	813
Newcastle West	Limerick	5,098
Abbeyfeale	Limerick	1,940
Annacotty	Limerick	1,839
Rathkeale	Limerick	1,494
Adare	Limerick	982
Nenagh (including environs)	North Tipperary	7,751
Thurles (including environs)	North Tipperary	7,682
Roscrea	North Tipperary	4,910
Templemore (including environs)	North Tipperary	2,384
Ballina	North Tipperary	1,861
Newport	North Tipperary	1,286

(Source: <http://census.cso.ie>)

MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION

There are 26 Members of the Authority representing the area of administrative counties of Clare, Limerick, North Tipperary and Limerick City Council. Authority meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) at 1.30 p.m. and the venue is rotated between the four constituent Local Authority Council Chambers.



THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE MID-WEST REGIONAL AUTHORITY IS AS FOLLOWS

Clare County Council	North Tipperary County Council
Cllr. Gerry Flynn	Cllr. Phyll Bugler
Cllr. Oliver Garry	Cllr. Ger Darcy
Cllr. Pat Keane	Cllr. Seamus Hanafin
Cllr. P. J. Kelly	Cllr. Micheál Lowry
Cllr. Brian Meaney	Cllr. Virginia O' Dowd
Cllr. Pat McMahon	Cllr. Mattie Ryan
Cllr. Sonny Scanlon	
Limerick City Council	Limerick County Council
Cllr. Ger Fahy (Cathaoirleach)	Cllr. Richard Butler
Cllr. Michael Hourigan	Cllr. Mike Donegan
Cllr. Joe Leddin	Cllr. John Egan (Leas-Cathaoirleach to June '2010)
Cllr. Kathleen Leddin	Cllr. Noel Gleeson
Cllr. Denis McCarthy	Cllr. Stephen Keary
Cllr. Diarmuid Scully] (Leas – Cathaoirleach)	Cllr. William O'Donnell
	Cllr. Leo Walsh (Cathaoirleach to June '10)

Mid-West Regional Authority Staff	
Director	Mr. Liam Conneally
EU Projects Officer	Ms. Marie Collins (on leave from October 2010)
EU Projects Officer	Ms. Deirdre Byrne (commenced September 2010)
EU Projects Officer	Ms. Linda Newport (commenced November 2010)
Staff Officer	Mr. Seamus Treacy (retired June 2010)
Staff Officer	Ms. Fiona McCormack (commenced November 2010)
Clerical Officer	Ms. Majella O'Brien



Designated County Manager

Better Local Government - A Programme for Change provided for the designation of a City/County Manager in each region to be responsible for local authority relations with the Regional Authority and to improve co-ordination and linkage with the Local Authorities.

Mr. Tom Mackey, Limerick City Manager is the designated Manager for 2009/2010.

Operational Committee:

The Operational Committee's function is to assist and advise the Authority in the discharge of its functions. Membership is drawn from senior management from Local Authorities, Public Service agencies in the Region and is chaired by the Authority's Cathaoirleach.

Composition of Operational Committee:

Name	Organisation
Cllr. Leo Walsh	Mid-West Regional Authority
Mr. Terry O'Niadh	North Tipperary County Council
Mr. Edmond Gleeson	Limerick County Council
Mr. Tom Coughlan	Clare County Council
Mr. Tom Mackey	Limerick City Council
Dr. Brian Callanan	Shannon Development
Mr. Denis McMonicle	Health Services Executive
Prof. Donal Dineen	University of Limerick
Ms. Mary Donnelly	FÁS
Mr. Eamon Cusack	Shannon Regional Fisheries Board
Mr. Adrian Gordan	An Post
Ms. Miriam Flynn	Bus Éireann
Mr. PC Lynch	ESB
Mr. Fachtna O'Driscoll	Teagasc
Mr. Gerry Murphy	Coillte
Mr. Martin Morrissey	Shannon Foynes Port Company
Mr. Colin McClean	Limerick Institute of Technology
Mr. Martin Moroney	Shannon Airport Authority
Mr. Jim Gallivan	Iarnród Éireann



Representation on Monitoring Committees:

The Cathaoirleach and the Director are Members of the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCIOP) Monitoring Committee and the National Development Plan Central Monitoring Committee.

Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly

The Authority is entitled to be represented on the Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly by six members. The Authority representation on the Assembly at 31st December 2010 was as follows:

- Cllr. Brian Meaney
- Cllr. Micheál Lowry
- Cllr. Leo Walsh
- Cllr. P. J. Kelly
- Cllr. Denis McCarthy
- Cllr. Stephen Keary

Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly Operational Committee:

The Mid-West Regional Authority is represented at official level on the Operational Committee, Economic and Social Infrastructure Sub-Committee and Monitoring Committee of the Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly.

Regional Assembly Meetings 2010	
25/03/2010	ERDF Training Seminar
20/05/2010	European Maritime Day Conference 2010
28/05/2010	Annual Conference 2010 (Kinsale)
10/12/2010	Regional Assembly Meeting Waterford
14/12/2010	Mid Term Evaluation Report Seminar

The Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) represents local and regional government in the EU policy formation and decision-making processes. The Committee is an advisory body established in 1994 to ensure that the public authorities closest to the citizen, in Ireland, the local and regional authorities, are consulted on European Union policies of direct interest to them.



Members of the CoR provide the EU with the views and experiences of the local and regional levels, as these authorities are often the implementing bodies for EU legislation. Similarly, CoR members are in a better position to inform their authorities and constituents about EU developments and the 'European process'.

The Committee is composed of 344 members representing the local and regional tiers of government of the 27 Member States. These full members are backed by an equal number of alternates (substitutes). Ireland has 9 full members and 9 alternate members.

The Committee of the Regions normally makes its views known in the form of written opinions or resolutions. The CoR receives requests for its opinion from the Commission, Council and the European Parliament on communications and proposals for legislation.

The policy areas of mandatory consultation of the CoR are Economic and Social Cohesion, Environment, Trans-European Networks Social Policy, Public Health, Employment Education, Culture and Youth, Transport, Energy and Training.

Within Brussels, the CoR maintains linkages with the other EU institutions – the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Economic & Social Committee as well as the Council and Presidency of the European Council. Commissioners, Presidency Ministers and MEP's regularly attend CoR meetings and there is a cross-fertilisation of influence between the institutions on policy issues.

Cllr. Brian Meaney is the Mid-West Regional Authority's representative on the Committee of the Regions and his principal activities with the CoR in 2010 are detailed below:

Member of the ENVE (Environment and Energy) and COTER (Territorial Cohesion) commissions

- CoR rapporteur on *Biomass Sustainability* – adopted at commission stage in December 2010
- Represented CoR at EU Presidency Conference on Biomass Sustainability
- Key speaker at ENVE seminar in Sardinia on *Innovative Energy Saving Methods* and active in exchanges with EU Commissioners
- Bureau member EA political group



- EA coordinator of COTER Commission
- Member of the CoR Working Group on the Western Balkans
- Represented CoR as election monitor in Ukraine and Azerbaijan

Irish Regions Office, Brussels

The Irish Regions Office (IRO) was established in 2000 as a Brussels-based resource for sub-national government in Ireland. The operation of the office involves a partnership between the Association of Irish Regions (AIR), the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the County and City Managers Association (CCMA).

The IRO works with and on behalf of the sub-national authorities in Ireland. The office maintains direct contact with the Directors of the Regional Authorities and Regional Assemblies and is routinely engaged in coordinating the production and promotion of policy and position papers on behalf of AIR and the Irish Delegation to the CoR. It also assists local and regional authorities in developing EU projects (including identifying and accessing EU funds and finding transnational partners) and responds to general requests for information on and from sub-national authorities in Ireland.

The IRO also maintains close contact with the various EU institutions. The work of the IRO benefits from the quality of its links, both formal and informal, with the main institutions, and more specifically with key policy and decision makers. Formal engagement with the Institutions is facilitated through representation on the CoR and through membership of European Commission consultative forums. At an informal level, the IRO has a close working relationship with individual departments of the European Commission, as well as with MEPs, the Irish Permanent Representation, other Irish representations, regional representation offices and various other Brussels-based organisations.

Association of Irish Regions

The Association of Irish Regions (AIR) is the national representative organisation of the eight Regional Authorities and two Regional Assemblies in Ireland. Its objectives are to express the collective view of its membership on matters concerning their constitution and the functions for which they have statutory responsibilities, and to offer advice to Government on matters



pertaining to economic and social development, including matters relating to balanced regional development.

AIR also aims to facilitate the exchange of information and experience between its members, including arranging meetings, conferences, seminars, and producing publications which further the objective of improving the quality of service which members can give to their authorities and to the public.

The Association is composed of the Cathaoirligh and Directors of the Regional Authorities and Regional Assemblies.

The Mid-West Regional Authority also provides the Secretariat to:

- The Minister for Transport appointed *Shannon Airport Marketing Consultative Committee*.
- Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group
- Mid-West Senior Planners Group

Mid-West Regional Authority - Number of Meetings held in 2010:

A total of 16 meetings of the Authority and its sub committees were held in 2010. In addition several meetings have been held with the various bodies throughout the Mid-West Region, such as Shannon Development, University of Limerick, LIT, S & E Regional Assembly and Chambers of Commerce. Consultations were held with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Department of Finance, Assembly of Chairpersons/Secretaries, the Minister for Transport Mr Noel Dempsey, T.D. and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Meetings of the Regional Authority are usually held in the headquarters of the constituent local authorities. On occasions the Meetings were addressed by representatives of Public and Local Authorities, the Shannon Airport Authority and the Shannon River Basin District Project.



Meetings held in 2010

Venues	Date	Average Attendance Rate
Clare County Council	04/01/2010	63%
Limerick City Council	03/02/2010	81%
North Tipperary County Council	03/03/2010	85%
Limerick County Council	07/04/2010	81%
Clare County Council	05/05/2010	85%
Limerick City Council	04/06/2010	85%
North Tipperary County Council	14/07/2010	85%
Limerick County Council	01/09/2010	81%
Clare County Council	06/10/2010	85%
Limerick City Council	03/11/2010	77%
North Tipperary County Council	01/12/2010	77%
Number of Sub-Committee Meetings – 3		
Same Venues as Monthly Meeting		



**The Mid-West Regional Authority was represented at the following
Conferences and Seminars in 2010**

Date Attended	Event	Members
4 th & 5 th February 2010	Mid-West Regional Authority Conference	8
12 th & 14 th February 2010	Councillors Training Seminar	1
25 th March 2010	Sustainable Energy Seminar	1
9 th & 10 th April 2010	LAMA 2010 Conference	1
27 th April 2010	Sustainable Innovation Forum	1
28 th April 2010	Dundalk Chamber of Commerce	1
26 th & 28 th May 2010	Annual Wetland Society of Scientists Meeting	1
3 rd & 10 th July 2010	Dr. Douglas Hyde Summer School	1
8 th & 11 th July 2010	13 th Annual Environmental Summer School	1
15 th -18 th July 2010	A Practical Guide to Media Skills	1
26 th -28 th July 2010	Health & Safety Risk Assessment & Insurance in Local Government	2
8 th – 13 th August 2010	Parnell Summer School	1
18 th – 22 nd August 2010	Cumann Merriman	1
4 th September 2010	Social Media Conference	1
23 rd September 2010	From Criminal to Social Justice	1
8 th to 9 th October 2010	LAMA Seminar	1
15 th – 17 th October 2010	Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2010	1
16 th – 18 th October 2010	Douglas Hyde Conference	1
22 nd – 24 th October 2010	Alternative Energy Seminar	3
29 th October 2010	AIR Conference	3
29 th – 31 st October 2010	Criminal Law Bill 2010	1
5 th – 7 th November 2010	Smart Marketing Seminar	1
12 th November 2010	Game Set & Match Conference	1
16 th – 17 th November 2010	Septic Tanks & Sewage Treatment Plant Seminar	1
26 th – 27 th November 2010	Clare Tourism Conference	1
16 th December 2010	Reforming the Law on Personal Debt	1



REVIEW OF PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES IN 2010

As stated above, the Mid-West Regional Authority has three main functions:

- 1. PREPARING AND IMPLEMENTING THE REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES**
- 2. PROMOTING THE COORDINATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE PROVISION IN THE MID-WEST REGION**
- 3. MONITORING THE DELIVERY OF EU STRUCTURAL FUND ASSISTANCE IN THE MID-WEST REGION**

This section of the Annual Report presents the principal activities of the Authority in 2010 in the delivery of these functions.

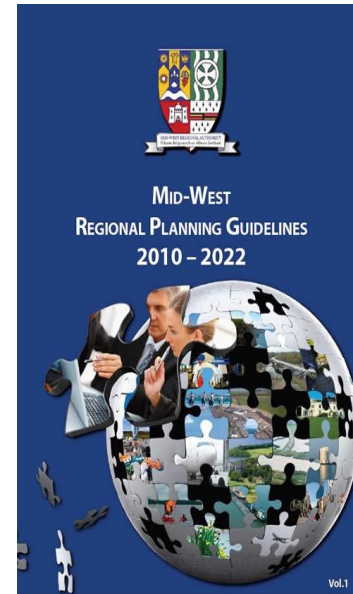


1 - REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022

The Regional Authority completed its review of the Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) and preparation of a new Regional Economic Strategy (RES) for the region for the period 2010-2022, in terms of the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the Planning and Development Regulations 2009 (Regional Authorities) and the draft provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2010, enacted by the Oireachtas in July 2010.

The *Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022* were adopted by the members of the Regional Authority at the September 2010 monthly meeting.



With regards to the implementation of the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs), the role of the Regional Authority is to ensure proper oversight of the alignment of the plans at regional and local level. Regional Authorities now have the role of ensuring that local authority development plans are consistent with the adopted RPGs 2010 – 2022 and that ‘Core Strategies’ reflective of RPG’s population targets and zoned land provision are adopted into the Local Authority Development Plans by September, 2011.

Under the new planning legislation the elected members of the Regional Authority are ultimately responsible for the signing off of submissions or observations to planning authorities on Development Plan reviews and variations.

To assist the Regional Authority in discharging its statutory duties in respect of the RPGs implementation the following sub committees/working groups will be established:

1. RPGs Implementation Steering Group and three Sub Groups (Zone One/Gateway area, Renewable Energy and Infrastructure)
2. RPGs Technical Working Group



The purpose of the RPGs Implementation Steering Group will be to give advice to the Members of the Regional Authority on the implementation of the RPGs. It will be comprised of senior officials and Elected Members that are representative of the four Local Authorities in the Region and other key agencies relevant to the implementation process (IDA, Enterprise Ireland (EI), Shannon Development, National Transport Authority (DOT), and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG)).

The RPGs Technical Working Group will be comprised of the four local authority senior planners and be chaired by the Director of the Authority and also supported by the Senior Executive Planner and Staff Officer of the Regional Authority. The role of the Working Group will be to prepare draft Regional Authority submissions/observations on all City/County Development Plans (Reviews/Variations/Material Contraventions, etc.) and Local Area Plans within the Region for the consideration of the RPG Implementation Steering Group and thereafter the Members of the Authority.

Three sub-groups were set up for the implementation of the Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2004-2016 and it is proposed to maintain this structure for the implementation of the updated RPGs. The three sub-groups are as follows:



(Source – Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group)



Sub Group 1 - Coordinated development of Zone One area



This Sub Group consists of representatives from the Regional Authority, Local Authorities, Enterprise Ireland (EI), Industrial Development Agency (IDA), Shannon Development, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Transport. The Group agreed the need for a more focused and structured approach to the development of Limerick/Shannon Gateway and Ennis 'Hub' town.

The work of Sub Group 1 is being implemented through the preparation of the following regional strategies:

- Mid-West Area Strategic Plan (M.W.A.S.P.)
- Atlantic Gateway Corridor Framework
- Mid-West Retail Strategy (for Counties Clare and Limerick and Limerick City)
- Joint Housing Strategy for Limerick City/County and Clare
- Joint Limerick-Clare Regional Recreational Strategy for the Gateway
- Innovation Fund applications (G.I.F.) preparation
- Atlantic Way Pillar Projects



Sub Group 2 - Develop a common approach to Renewable Energy

This Group consists of representatives from the Regional Authority, Local Authorities, Shannon Development, Tipperary Energy Agency, Limerick / Clare Energy Agency, University of Limerick, and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The regional Climate Change Strategy (2008) and regional Biomass Strategy and Action Plan (2009) were completed and adopted by the Authority. Both Strategies highlight that the region is very suited to biomass and other renewable energy generation and also highlights the job creation capacity that a 'Mid-West Renewable Energy Hub' has for the region. The outputs from the regional Biomass Strategy Preparation have assisted the Authority in its work programme for EU Project BioMob. The preparation of a Shannon Estuary Integrated Framework Plan is an objective of the Mid-West RPGs and it is the Authority's intention to support this process led by Clare County Council. The outputs from Sub-Group 2 have fed directly into the RPGs review process in particular in the content of chapters 4,6 and 7.

Sub Group 3 – Economic Development

This Group consists of representatives from the Regional Authority, Local Authorities, Shannon Development, Shannon Airport Authority, Industrial Development Agency (IDA), IBEC and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). The Group concluded that the Strategic Development Zone mechanism was unsuitable for the delivery of specific employment creation initiatives in the Mid- West. The Group has proceeded to examine the potential for an Iconic Project such as a Mid- West Regional Convention Centre.

The work of this group has informed the Forfás Regional Competiveness Agenda for the Mid-West document. The Group supervised the preparation of the Mid-West Regional Economic Strategy which was adopted as part of the RPGs in September 2010.

The recommendations of the three sub-groups continued to advise and influence the work programme of the Regional Authority throughout 2010 and a brief summary of the work of the Authority is presented here.



Mid-West Area Strategic Plan (MWASP)

The Mid-West region's land use and transportation strategy (M.W.A.S.P.) preparation includes the entire area of the region. It is a 20 year long term infrastructure development plan for the Mid-West Region, which will provide a framework for the integration of land use and transportation provision for the region into the future. Consultants Mott McDonald and McGill Planning Ltd. were engaged by the lead authority, Limerick City Council to prepare the Mid-West Area Strategic Plan 2010-2030. Work on the MWASP commenced in 2009 and the plan will be finalised by mid 2011. The purpose of the MWASP is to provide a strategic framework for the integration of the region's land use and transport infrastructure provision into the future. The MWASP will deliver a transportation mode for the region which will be used as evidence based marketing tool throughout the region in the assessment of development application for local authorities.

The MWASP Steering and Working Committees consist of senior managers/planners/engineers from the four local authorities, the MWRA Director and personnel from the Departments of Transport and Environment.

The MWASP, in addition to the RPGs will provide a positive planning and infrastructure policy environment for potential investment in the region.

Atlantic Gateways Corridor Frameworks

The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (NSS) envisaged the strengthening of the Atlantic Gateway cities to achieve more balanced regional development and intervening urban and rural Corridors (1.2 million population by 2020). The preparation of the Atlantic Gateways Corridor Frameworks, as non-statutory strategic development frameworks for each of the four corridors linking the Atlantic Gateway Cities, present opportunities to absorb strategic and long term planning policy thinking into regional and local policy making.

During 2010, work on the individual Atlantic Corridor Frameworks (Limerick/Shannon – Galway, Limerick/Shannon – Cork, Limerick/Shannon – Waterford and Cork – Waterford) has continued. The Mid-West Regional Authority with the assistance of the South-East and South-



West Regional Authorities and the local authorities in the region will conclude the process in 2011. The individual Gateway Corridor Framework Working Groups consist of local authority senior planners and Directors of the three regional authorities.

Regional Retail Strategy

In January 2009, Colliers CRE was commissioned by the Mid-West Regional Authority, Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and Clare County Council to carry out a study of retailing to inform an update of the Retail Strategy for the Mid-West Region.

The previous Retail Strategy was adopted in 2003 and covered the time frame of 2003-2011, while the new Strategy extends the period to 2016. The four key requirements of the study are as follows:-

- to review retail development and retailer trends within the Mid-West Region since the 2003 Strategy was published;
- to produce up to date information on the quantum and range of retail offer available in the region, and compare it against what was available in 2003;
- to quantify the need for any additional retail floor space within the region through to 2016; and
- to use the results of this assessment to update the 2003 Mid-West Retail Strategy and to set out policies and recommendations to guide the retail strategies and policy initiatives of the Councils.

The **Regional Retail Strategy** is published separately in 2011, on the MWRA website and has informed the Retail Section of the RPGs. North Tipperary County Council is due to update its county retail strategy.

Joint Housing Strategy

The Joint Clare, Limerick City and County Housing Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and covers the functional area of Limerick's Local Authorities (Limerick County Council and Limerick City Council) and Clare's Housing Authorities (Clare County Council, Ennis Town Council and Kilrush Town



Councils) for the period 2010-2017. The joint housing strategy has been completed in accordance with the Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and takes cognisance of the RPGs population targets.

This Housing Strategy is an update of the current Limerick (City and County) and Clare (Clare County and Ennis) Housing Strategies, each of which were adopted into their respective Development Plans, and combines all of these in a ‘Joint Housing Strategy’ covering the period 2010-2017. As per Section 94 (1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, this Strategy has been prepared, *‘for the purpose of ensuring that the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the development plans provides for the housing of the existing and future population of the area in the manner set out in the Strategy’*.

The Strategy is at final draft stage and when published in-mid 2011 will be incorporated into the respective City, County and Town Development Plans.

Recreational Strategy

The Mid-West Regional Authority in association with Clare County Council as lead authority is preparing a Joint Recreational Strategy for the Limerick City Council, Limerick and Clare County Councils municipal areas including the towns of Kilrush and Ennis. The proposed strategy primary objectives are to identify key recreational facilities requirements in the region, establish who the providers of such facilities are, and to develop a co-ordinated joint strategy for the future planning, provision, maintenance and operation of existing and future amenities and facilities. Such study area comprises of all water bodies and recreational lands within the plan area, and includes lakes, Shannon Estuary, Lough Derg and both passive and active recreational amenity areas.

This Study which is due to be completed during 2011, is to be developed in line with the Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines and will provide a pro-active vision for the future development of recreational facilities within the Framework of existing National, Regional and Local Guidelines.



Atlantic Way Initiative

The 'Atlantic Way 2020' is a plan that sets out specific priority areas for progress in the Atlantic Way zone for the period up to the year 2020. As part of the Regional Authority's public service co-ordination it is actively involved in the Atlantic Way Initiative. The Mid-West Regional Authority Director is the local authority manager's nominee to the Atlantic Way and facilitator to the Infrastructure and Connectivity Pillar of the Atlantic Way Initiative. The 2010 outputs of the Infrastructure Connectivity Pillar have been;

- (i) The completion of a study on the Renewable Energy potential of the region and,
- (ii) The completion of a study on the extent of the catchment area of Shannon International Airport taking into account recent road and rail infrastructure improvements. The Initiative is active in the promotion of balanced regional development and the promotion of the region for economic development. It provides the Authority with access to the regions business community in particular the Foreign Direct Investment community in the region.



2 – COORDINATING THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE REGION

Shannon Airport Marketing Consultative Committee



Shannon International Airport (Source: Shannon Airport Authority)

The Regional Authority provides the Secretariat to the Minister for Transport appointed Committee which is comprised of members from the Local Authorities and other public agencies, together with the regional tourism interests such as hoteliers, travel agents (see below). The Committee provides a coordination and advisory forum for the marketing of Shannon Airport. The Committee also provides research and expert advice on a range of areas critical to the Airport's marketing and strategic planning, i.e. transport and access, route development, tourism product development, product marketing and communications with regional stakeholders. The Committee informs the preparation of the various tourism and transportation policies and plans in the Mid-West Region. Post Open Skies, the Committee works with the Shannon Airport Authority to promote the Airport to airlines and the travelling public. In conjunction with the SAA the promotion of the Airport's US Customs and Border Protection facility is a focus of the Committee in particular the provision of CBP clearance for Cargo freight.

The Members of the Committee are:

Name	Organisation
Mr. Frank Prendergast, Chairman	Mid-West Regional Authority
Mr. Liam Conneally, Secretary	Mid-West Regional Authority
Prof. Jim Deegan	University of Limerick
Mr. Paul Ryan	Shannon Development
Mr. Tadhg Kearney	Limerick Chamber of Commerce
Cllr. Tony Mulcahy	Shannon Town Council
Mr. Tony Carroll	S.I.P.T.U.
Cllr. Peter Considine	Ennis Town Council
Mr. Michael Vaughan	Irish Hotels Federation
Mr. Tony Brazil	Irish Travel Agents Association



Lough Derg Marketing Committee



Lough Derg (Source: Lough Derg Marketing Group)

The focus of the Lough Derg Marketing Committee is to market the Lake's tourism potential in a coordinated and focused manner. The Committee comprises representatives from the Regional Authority, Limerick, Clare, North Tipperary and Galway County Councils, Limerick City Council, Shannon Development, Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. The objectives of the Committee are to bring a coherent marketing focus to the Lough Derg catchment area and to establish the '**Lough Derg Brand**' nationally and internationally.

The implementation of the Lough Derg Marketing Strategy began in 2009 and included development of a website www.discoverloughderg.ie, development of a new branding map and brochure (also translated into French and German), implementation of a signage programme for Lough Derg, product marketing initiatives (angling, cruising, walking, etc.), media campaigns : radio, press, direct marketing, e-marketing and production of the Lough Derg Sustainable Marina, Recreational & Tourism Development Study.

Mr. Joe Mac Grath, Manager of North Tipperary County Council assumed the Chair of the group in 2010 and outlined that while the primary focus of the group to date had been marketing the group now needed to reach a consensus on product development priorities. To this end, it was decided to organise a brainstorming session in February 2011 which would be facilitated by an external independent facilitator and an invitation will be extended to a broad range of representatives from the trade, business and sectoral interests in the Lough Derg area. This session will help to generate innovate ideas on product development, improving the visitor experience, and how to best market Lough Derg as a high quality destination. The group also agreed to produce a newsletter which will be published and circulated on a quarterly basis.



Water Sports on Lough Derg (Source: *Lough Derg Marketing Committee*)

Atlantic Gateways Initiative

The Atlantic Gateways initiative envisages the active collaboration of the city-regions of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, together with the Corridors which link them while forming an economic unit which has the scale and critical mass to act as an economic counterbalance to the eastern Dublin-Belfast Corridor. The Group promoting the initiative includes the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government, Shannon Development, the Regional Assemblies, and the Mid-West, West, South-East and South-West Regional Authorities. The Atlantic Gateway Corridor Development Frameworks as part of this work are described above.

The primary purpose of this initiative is to promote co-ordinated Planning and Development Strategies between Local and Regional Authorities, to promote critical mass and sustainable development within and between designated Gateways.

The Atlantic Gateway Corridor development framework focuses on the prioritisation of critical economic investment for infrastructure, including transport, water, smarter travel, and, skills/education training initiatives within the Gateways corridors identified.



Mid-West Region Economic Fact File

The Mid-West Region Economic Fact File was short-listed for an award in the Strategic Economic Development category of the Chamber's Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards in 2010. The Fact File outlines to prospective investors the key reasons to establish their operations in the Mid-West and outlines the key infrastructure and enterprise supports in place in the region. It highlights the economic and Research and Development strengths of the region, and the reasons to establish business in the Mid-West region.



Limerick Regeneration

The Government has endorsed the overall vision for a transformation of the Limerick Regeneration areas as set out in the Limerick Regeneration Programme (Masterplans) which was unveiled on the 28th October 2009.

The Director of the Mid-West Regional Authority is a member of the Regeneration's Programme Development Group (PDG) along with representatives of the Regeneration Agency, various Government Departments, Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council, An Garda Síochána and Mr. Brendan Kenny as Chief Executive. The Group has responsibility for the delivery of priority regeneration projects outlined in the Limerick Regeneration Programme Masterplans.



Shannon Development

In seeking to fulfill the role of the Regional Authority in the coordination of the provision of public services across the Region, the Director has established and maintained a good working relationship with Shannon Development, the Regional Economic Development Agency. Throughout 2010, the Director participated in quarterly meetings with the CEO of Shannon Development. These meetings identify work areas of mutual interest and ensure that the work of the Regional Authority as a tourist destination and the work carried out by Shannon Development are mutually informed in terms of promoting the Mid-West and maximizing the potential of the Region for economic development. These meetings will continue in 2011.

Shannon-Foyne Port Company

Shannon-Foyne Port Company is Ireland's second largest port operation which is strategically located on the Shannon Estuary. The Port Company provides a variety of services, from controlling navigation and marine safety, to warehousing, logistics and cargo handling. Plans to grow the Foyne's harbour, and develop same as a "Green Energy" facility for the importation of renewable energy infrastructure, together with the planned development of the Ballylongford LNG port facility, require the urgent upgrading of the existing national road network comprising the N69 and linkages to the N21, and the re commissioning of the Limerick – Foyne's rail route as identified in the draft MWASP strategy.

The Shannon River is a major resource in the region for the transportation of Imported and Exported goods and services into and out from the region. The Shannon Foyne Company Ltd is the second largest port operation in Ireland and currently operates two major ports (Limerick and Foyne) and the Shannon Airport Fuel Jetty. This company has statutory jurisdiction over all marine activities for a 500km² area on the Shannon Estuary stretching from Kerry/Loop Head to Limerick City. The company provides a variety of services including the management of navigation, marine safety and a number of services which include warehousing, logistics and cargo handling.



Vessels varying in size from 10,000 to 200,000dwt are handled within the Shannon Estuary area and tourism is promoted through the accommodation of cruise ships at Foynes Harbour. The port company is actively pursuing the objective to becoming Ireland Green Energy Port for handling of Green Energy imports to Ireland. Plans are in place for substantial growth of the Shannon Port Ltd Companies activities in the Mid-West Region.

Limerick City and County Development Board Infrastructure Committee

There is a need to strengthen communication across the role of the region as a whole, and provide better integration between the CDB's in the Mid-West Region and between the cities of Limerick, Cork and Galway. Strategically linking these cities as an integrated urban region would increase the opportunities for the cities in the respective regions to attract new development and act as a new focus for growth in the State. Limerick would be geographically central to such a zone, affording opportunities for development, growth and investment.

The City of Limerick is at the heart of the Mid-West region. The City has established itself and is recognised as the regional hub for transportation, employment, services, learning and culture. The challenge for the future is to consolidate and enhance this role and, most importantly, to develop the City as a nationally and internationally recognised centre of investment and production. To achieve this there is a clear need for the City to continue to attract new and more diverse investment such as public and private services, and to maintain and develop its role as a manufacturing and retail centre. www.limerickcitydb.ie



3 - EUROPEAN PROJECTS

The Regional Authority continues to participate in European Research and Development Projects. In 2010, the following is a list and brief description of the EU projects the Mid-West Regional Authority is a partner in.



NEA 2 – Nautisme Espace Atlantique/Watersports in the Atlantic Area. This is a follow-on initiative co-funded under the INTERREG IVB Atlantic Area Programme. The Mid-West Regional Authority are one of 23 European Partner regions working together in implementing actions that will assist in promoting and developing the watersports sector in the Atlantic Area of Europe. The Mid-West Regional Authority are also working closely with the Irish Canoe Union and Ards Borough Council in this project.



FRESH – Forwarding Regional Environmental Sustainable Hierarchies is a three year programme co-funded under INTERREG IVC Programme. The Project will examine Sustainable Value Creation concepts and Europe's Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP). The Mid-West pilot project will focus on Sustainable Urban Living in terms of land-use planning and eco-design.



BioMob – This project is financed by the European Programme, FP7 and is focusing on the Mobilisation of the Bio-Mass sector in four EU regions. BioMob will look at the challenges for biomass R&D, develop a Joint Action Plan and hold a series of information workshops. Shannon Development is the lead partner in this 24-month initiative.



Innovate – This project is financed by the Interreg IVB Atlantic Area Programme. The aim of the Innovate project is to increase the ability of Local and Regional Authorities to promote economic change and to develop a knowledge-based and innovative economy.

Mid-West Regional Authority (MWRA) is working with the North Tipperary County Council Arts Officer to deliver this project.



Parks Atlantic - The main target of this project, co-funded under the Interreg IVB Atlantic Area Programme, is to enhance the inherent value of urban parks and to boost their contribution to sustainable development.

MWRA is working in partnership with Limerick City Council to develop a Geographical Information System (GIS) to create an inventory of all parks in the city, to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to define general guidelines as to how the parks can be promoted for use in tourism, etc.



Diego – This is an IT project with the main target of improving the provision of e-Government services, accessible to all citizens and removing barriers to the use of existing IT services. The proposed work is expected to have a significant impact on increasing the use of public services by the socially disadvantaged.

Mid-West Regional Authority is working in partnership with Limerick City Council ICT Department. The DIEGO project commenced in April 2010 and will continue until April 2012.



NORTHERN PERIPHERY PROGRAMME

The Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013 aims to help peripheral and remote communities on the northern margins of Europe to develop their economic, social and environmental potential. The success of the programme will be built on joint projects creating innovative products and services for the benefit of the programme partner countries and Europe as a whole.

The diverse regions of the Northern Periphery Programme area share common features such as harsh climate conditions, sparseness of population and remoteness. Transnational cooperation provides excellent opportunities for finding new ways to address shared challenges and explore new opportunities.

The MWRA Director sits on the Regional Advisory Group to the Northern Periphery Programme.

The Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013 (NPP) is part of the European Commission's Territorial Cooperation Objective. For further information please see www.northernperiphery.eu



STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT

Statement of Account for the Financial Year as at the 31st December 2010		
<u>Expenditure</u>	2010	2009
	€	€
Salary/Wages/PRSI	280,504.03	292,096.01
Office Expenses	29,588.44	14,223.83
Postal/Telephone & Internet charges	8,233.03	8,522.40
Rent/Rates/Insurances	24,023.76	28,949.90
Annual Allowance Article 34(1)	33,735.60	40,671.52
Travel & Subsistence article 34(2)(a)	12,635.05	8,883.25
Seminars/Courses(Fees Only)	3,631.45	2,631.65
Cathaoirleach's Allowance	12,000.00	4,379.84
Annual Conference	4,024.13	5,368.80
Shannon Airport Marketing Consultative Committee	1,894.73	3,333.95
Travel/Subsistence Regional Authority Staff	11,034.25	9,927.79
Study Visits/Conferences Abroad	4,334.27	3,377.93
EU Projects	46,459.01	238,629.60
S & E Regional Assembly	2,206.51	2,958.04
Regional Economic Strategy/Regional Planning Guidelines	33,318.28	31,596.45
Miscellaneous	7,852.09	8,272.83
COR/AIR/Irish Regions Office	8,832.20	9,700.23
Lough Derg Marketing	0.00	0.00
Regional Bioenergy Strategy	0.00	34,431.28
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	524,306.83	747,955.30
<u>Receipts</u>		
Local Authority Contributions	414,715.00	445,931.00
Recoupments from S & E Regional Assembly	25,672.51	19,410.25
Annual Conference	6,768.00	20,340.00
Public Bodies Contributions	13,474.82	12,839.96
Interest on A/C	1,723.43	0.00
Shannon Airport Marketing Consultative committee	9,937.31	10,234.52
EU Projects	106,690.93	323,963.98
Miscellaneous	5,391.43	4,146.55
Lough Derg Marketing	0.00	10,000.00
Regional Economic Strategy/Regional Planning Guidelines	19,746.00	61,000.00
Regional Bioenergy Strategy	0.00	30,436.36
TOTAL RECEIPTS	604,119.43	938,302.62
Surplus (Deficit) for year	79,812.60	190,347.32
Opening Balance as at the 01/01/2010	454,046.95	263,699.63
Closing Balance at End of Year	533,859.55	454,046.95



Notes to accounts below:	
1. Recoupments outstanding as at 31-12-2010	€
(a) SAMCC	8,683.94
(b) EU Projects:	
- Fresh	35,803.00
- Innovate	13,408.00
- NEA2	39,023.00
- Parks Atlantic	14,177.00
TOTAL	111,094.94
2 (a) Contributions received towards Lough Derg Marketing Strategy	
Balance of €89,000 unspent at 31/12/2010	
(b) EU Projects - Expected outlay for 2011	
- NEA2	80,000.00
- FRESH	18,005.00
- Innovate	100,000.00
- Diego	11,866.00
- PARKSAtlantic	40,000.00
- Biomob	14,000.00
TOTAL	263,871.00



Freedom of Information Act 1997

From 1st. October, 2001 the Regional Authority became subject to the provisions of FOI Act 1997 [FOI Act 1997(Prescribed Bodies) (4) Regulations 2001, SI 475 of 2001]. The Act was introduced to allow public access to records not already available under existing legislation. Any queries in relation to the Act may be directed to the FOI Officer, Fiona McCormack.

Prompt Payment of Accounts Act 1997:

The Authority has complied in full with the provisions of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act 1997. All payments were made well within the “prescribed payment date”.

Insurance:

The Authority insurances are dealt with by the Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurance.

Legal Advisor:

The Legal Advisor for the Authority is - Brian D. Casey and Associates, Solicitors, Thomond House, High Street, Ennis, Co. Clare.



ENERGY MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

Overview of Energy Usage in 2010

In 2010, the Mid-West Regional Authority consumed approximately 24 MWh of energy, consisting entirely of electricity for power and for heat in the Authority's offices at Friar Court in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary.

The electricity to the office is supplied by ESB Electric Ireland and the table below presents an average breakdown of the fuels sources used.

Electricity Supplied Source	% (average)
Coal	14.65
Gas	63.82
Oil	2.6
Peat	6.9
RES	11.56
Other	0.47

Taking this average and applying it to the energy consumed by the MWRA in 2010:

- 21.2 MWh of fossil fuels
- 2.8 MWh of renewable fuels.

The average occupancy of the MWRA offices over the period from January to December 2010 was 4 persons so the average energy consumption per person was:

- 6.0 MWh per person/per year
- 0.5 MWh per person/per month



Actions Undertaken in 2010

In 2010 the Mid-West Regional Authority undertook a range of initiatives to improve our energy performance, including:

- The Authority has a policy for all staff members to use public transport where possible when travelling for meetings
- The Authority has a policy that office equipment is switched off at the end of the business day (including computers, monitors, photocopier, lighting, kitchen appliances etc).

Actions Planned for 2011

In 2011, the Mid-West Regional Authority intends to further improve our energy performance by undertaking the following initiatives:

- The Authority has commissioned the Tipperary Energy Agency to undertake a comprehensive energy audit of the office headquarters which will identify energy savings for the Authority
- As a result of the audit, the Authority will develop an Energy Policy and Management System for the office headquarters. This Policy will be made publicly available on our website www.mwra.ie.
- The Authority will switch to an electronic payment system, commencing in 2011, which will make savings in the energy requirements for printing and in the paper usage of the office