

2. CONTEXT AND ISSUES

The Dublin area has particular significance in the national context, as the capital of the country, as a major point of entry and exit and in serving the country as a whole in a variety of ways. It is also in competition with other cities in Europe.

In 1996, the Greater Dublin Area contained 1.4 million people, accommodated in almost 450,000 households.

The further development of the Greater Dublin Area is constrained by topography, notably the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, by amenity and heritage designations, including those along the coast, and by the need to protect areas of high quality agricultural land and other areas with special significance.

In recent years, the economy of the area has grown at an unprecedented level, and economic prospects for the area remain good.

The settlement pattern is overwhelmingly dominated by the built-up area of Dublin, with only two other towns having a population in excess of 20,000.

The existing transportation system is under considerable pressure, with growth in travel well in excess of levels predicted only a few years ago.

Within the Greater Dublin Area it is possible to identify a Metropolitan Area, comprising the existing built-up area and its immediate environs, and a Hinterland Area comprising the remainder and containing a range of towns of various sizes.

PHYSICAL CONTEXT

The Greater Dublin Area covers an area of approximately 700,000 hectares and comprises 10% of the area of the State. The area is dominated by the built-up area of Dublin which includes Dublin city centre and its suburbs and which extends beyond Dun Laoghaire to the south, to the Airport and Swords in the north and as far as Leixlip in the west.

Major expansion of the built-up area of Dublin is affected by a number of factors (see Map 3 - Physical Constraints). Future development to the south is constrained by topography and high amenity designations. Whilst it is physically possible to build in such areas, the additional costs together with the amenity value of the land, render the area unsuitable for large-scale development.

Further development along the coastline is physically and technically feasible. However this area has significance for recreation, and in some places for nature conservation. Much of the coastline is also potentially liable to erosion and/or may be affected by climate change and possible changes in sea level.

However, much of the coastal area is already well developed and has an endowment of transportation and other infrastructure that represents an important resource. The future development of the coastal area must, therefore, be carefully balanced against the other demands on the area, especially those arising from amenity and conservation, as well as the long-term sustainability of development in such a changeable environment.



The Greater Dublin Area also contains other lands that are designated as being of high amenity value and similar considerations apply to these.

The Greater Dublin Area contains significant areas of good agricultural land, especially in Meath, Fingal and Kildare. Whilst over-production in the agricultural sector has reduced the strategic value of this land for production in the short-term, it nevertheless represents an important long-term resource. Consequently, use of this land for built development must be balanced against the long-term value of the land for agricultural production.

In addition, the bloodstock industry of Co. Kildare located in an area of suitable soils, represents a considerable investment and warrants protection.

The upland parts of the Greater Dublin Area, together with some western areas, especially in Co. Kildare, contain significant areas of peatland that render them unsuitable for large scale development. The importance of peatlands in ecological, archaeological, amenity and recreational terms has been recognised by the European Union, which has listed all active raised and blanket bogs in Ireland for conservation under the EU Habitats Directive.

The Greater Dublin Area is rich in aggregate deposits which are especially prevalent in counties Kildare, Wicklow and Meath. The historic deposits are increasingly becoming worked-out and proposals for the development of new deposits are coming into conflict with tourism, recreation and amenity interests. Moreover, significant areas with suitable stone or aggregate resources are located in areas of high amenity value, further increasing the difficulties of realising them for development.

Existing 'green belt' areas are generally limited in extent and serve to provide a break between specific settlements. The larger-scale separation of development areas depends on agricultural land not specifically designated for its amenity value and/or on areas of mountainous land.

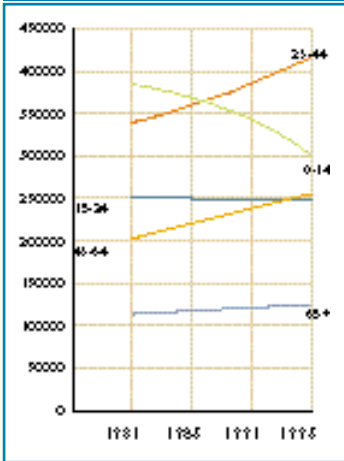
Parts of the Greater Dublin Area, especially in the Dublin Region, are well endowed with large-scale public open space provision in the form of regional and country parks. As more intensive development extends to other parts of the Greater Dublin Area, it will be necessary to extend this provision, providing for both intensive and extensive recreational activity. Suitable potential resources for future regional open space provision, including major estates and parklands, river valleys, woodlands and forests, and interesting topography, should, therefore, be preserved free of alternative development.

SOCIO - ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Population and Households

The population of the Greater Dublin Area in 1996 was 1.4 million, accommodated in almost 450,000 households. The distribution of the population, together with growth since 1986, is shown on Table 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Age Cohorts in the GDA 1981-1996



Apart from Dublin County Borough, all local authority areas have recorded continuous increases in population since 1981.

The age structure of the population in the Greater Dublin Area has undergone significant changes over the past two decades, as shown in Fig. 2.1. In keeping with national trends the population of the Greater Dublin Area is ageing. The number of children is declining, whilst the number of those in the 25-44 age group has increased substantially. This is one reason for the growth in household formation and the extent of this highly active age group is also a factor in explaining the rapid level of economic growth.

Table 2.1 Population of each Local Authority Area

Local Authority Area	1986	1991	1996
Dublin County Borough	502,749	478,389	481,854
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	180,675	185,410	189,999
Fingal	138,479	152,766	167,683
Kildare	116,247	122,656	134,992
Meath	103,881	105,370	109,732
South Dublin	199,546	208,739	218,728
Wicklow	94,542	97,265	102,683
Total	1,336,119	1,350,595	1,405,671

Since 1986 the State as a whole has experienced positive net in-migration. As shown in Table 3.2, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) has estimated that net migration into the country was 22,800 in the period 1997-1998, up from 15,000 in the 1996-97 period. It is worth noting that on average immigrants were older than emigrants and this has been a major factor in driving demand for houses.

Table 2.2 National net migration estimates 1993-1998 ('000)

Movement	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Emigrants	35.1	34.8	33.1	31.1	29	21.2
Immigrants	34.7	30.1	31.2	39.2	44	44.0
Net Migration	-0.4	-4.7	-1.9	8	15	22.8

Based on the fact that the Greater Dublin Area accounts for 39% of the national population it is not unrealistic to assume that at least a similar proportion of immigrants, approximately 8,800, entered the Greater Dublin Area in the years 1997 and 1998. Indeed this figure is likely to be conservative as it does not take into account internal migration from the outer regions into the Greater Dublin Area.

Households

In 1996, there were 446,251 households in the Greater Dublin Area with an average household size of 3.1. The distribution of these was broadly similar to that of the population, as is shown on Table 2.3.

Average household size has fallen steadily over the years, but only in Dublin County Borough has it fallen below 3 persons per household.



Table 2.3 Number of Households in each Local Authority Area

Local Authority	1986	1991	1996
Dublin County Borough	154,754	159,775	173,085
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	51,018	56,531	61,469
Fingal	35,556	40,777	47,721
Kildare	29,813	33,067	39,041
Meath	27,015	28,868	31,863
South Dublin	49,974	54,875	61,809
Wicklow	26,114	28,187	31,263
Total	374,244	402,080	446,251

Table 2.4 Average Household Size

Local Authority	1986	1991	1996
Dublin County Borough	3.1	2.9	2.7
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	3.5	3.2	3.0
Fingal	3.8	3.7	3.5
Kildare	4.0	3.8	3.5
Meath	3.9	3.6	3.4
South Dublin	3.8	3.6	3.4
Wicklow	3.6	3.4	3.2

Economy and Employment

In recent years Irish economic growth has been quite exceptional and economic prospects for the Greater Dublin Area remain good.

The Greater Dublin Area accounts for almost half of the national Gross Value Added (GVA). Between 1991 and 1996, GVA in the Mid-East Region increased by 98%, while in the Dublin Region growth was very close to the national rate (57%).

Table 2.5 Regional Output 1991-1996, Gross Value Added (€mn)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Dublin	9,790	10,591	11,445	12,593	13,948	15,442
Mid East	1,596	1,709	1,767	2,213	3,065	3,160
Greater Dublin Area	11,386	12,300	13,212	14,806	17,012	18,602
State	25,275	27,374	29,521	32,093	36,395	39,713
GDA as % of State	45.0	44.9	44.8	46.1	46.7	46.8

Over the period 1991-1997, total employment in the State increased by 360,000 persons. The Greater Dublin Area accounted for 186,500, or 52% of this increase. Within the Greater Dublin Area the Dublin Region accounted for 132,600 jobs or 71% of the Greater Dublin Area total increase, while the Mid-East Region accounted for 28.9% (53,900 jobs).

In terms of the pace of employment growth, it can be seen that total employment in the State increased by 32% over the period 1991-1998. In the Dublin Region the rate was slightly higher at 38%, while in the Mid-East the pace was significantly greater at 53%. So, while the Greater Dublin Area increased its share of national employment from just under to just over 40% it is clear that it is the Mid-East where the rate of employment growth is fastest.



Table 2.6 Regional Employment 1991-1997 ('000)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Dublin	350.0	359.5	357.6	367.6	378.3	415.1	430.8	428.6
Mid East	102.3	105.7	103.2	116.7	122.1	133.6	142.7	156.2
GDA	452.3	465.2	460.8	484.3	500.4	548.7	573.5	638.8
State	1,134	1,145	1,152	1,188	1,248	1,328	1,380	1,495
GDA as % of State	39.9	40.6	40.0	40.8	40.1	41.3	41.6	42.7

Note. 1998 refers to period Mar-May, based on new Quarterly National Household Survey. Other years refer to April.

After increases in the early years of the 1990's, unemployment rates in the Greater Dublin Area, as in the State as a whole, peaked in 1993 at 17.4% and 16.7% respectively. Within the Greater Dublin Area, the annual rates in the Mid East were very slightly lower than in the Dublin Region, although the differences were rarely significant.

HOUSING

Only a small proportion of the housing stock in the Greater Dublin Area is more than 30 years old, and that is primarily located within Dublin County Borough. Much of the older stock is suitable for modernisation and renovation. There are, therefore, no extensive areas of obsolete housing suitable for large-scale clearance and subsequent re-development (apart from Ballymun, where the re-development is occurring for reasons different from age of the housing stock). There are, however, areas of existing or former public sector housing that have a relatively degraded environment and which lend themselves to housing renovation, possible infill and environmental improvements.

In the built-up area of Dublin, and to a lesser extent in the other settlements of the Greater Dublin Area, there are extensive areas of detached and semi-detached housing, built at relatively low densities over the past 40 to 50 years. These housing areas were developed on the basis of high levels of car ownership and do not facilitate the



provision of good levels of public transport. In many of these areas, the population is ageing and average household size is falling as younger family members leave. Unlike some older housing, much of this housing stock cannot be easily converted for multiple occupation or alternative uses. The future of these areas is an important strategic issue.

In 1997, total housing completions in the Greater Dublin Area had increased by 29% on the 1994 figures (Table 2.7). This growth has not been evenly distributed throughout all local authority areas. House completions in Fingal rose by 79% on 1994 figures while Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown experienced a decrease of 43% over the same period, reflecting a spatial change in the location of new housing development. Figures for the third quarter of 1998 show that 10,166 units have been built between January and September 1998.

Table 2.7 Total House Completions in the Greater Dublin Area*

Local Authority	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998 (1st 3Qs')
Dublin County Borough	3,713	4,285	4,125	3,427	2,753
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	1,240	903	1,053	712	323
Fingal	1,510	1,936	2,024	2,707	1,791
Kildare	1,419	1,635	1,900	2,095	1,811
Meath	670	923	1,154	1,318	980
South Dublin	1,428	1,699	2,244	2,479	1,437
Wicklow	781	1,030	1,168	1,147	1,071
Total	10,761	12,411	13,668	13,885	10,166

* Based on figures supplied by Department of the Environment and Local Government that are, in turn, based on ESB connections.

In 1997, the semi-detached house and apartment dominated the completions in the Greater Dublin Area (47.8% and 25.2% respectively). For the first three quarters of 1998 apartment construction continued to increase its share of total house completions at the expense of the more traditional house types.

It is likely that the trend towards apartment building, particularly in town and city centres, will continue. Whilst the majority of new apartments continue to be provided within the inner city, apartment living now extends beyond that area. However, there is little evidence, to date, of significant levels of family occupation of private apartments.

The social housing policies of authorities in the Greater Dublin Area, in line with national policy, has been moving away from large estate developments, towards infill and mixed developments. This policy has a number of social advantages, but requires significant resourcing if it is to be continued into the future.

LAND USE AND SETTLEMENT

The existing settlement structure is overwhelmingly dominated by the built-up area of Dublin, centered on Dublin County Borough but extending to incorporate Tallaght, Lucan-Clondalkin and Blanchardstown (the three major settlements resulting from adoption of the Myles Wright plan in the 1960's) and other settlements in the immediate environs of the city.



Within the built-up area, there are a number of identifiable nodes, many of them former villages (Finglas, Coolock, Crumlin, Rathfarnham, Stillorgan, etc.), but few of these, apart from Dun Laoghaire and Blackrock and the emerging three western towns, have a comprehensive and extensive range of employment activities and services.

Outside of the built-up area, there are only two towns with populations in excess of 20,000 (Bray and Swords; Drogheda, which is immediately outside of the Greater Dublin Area, also has more than 20,000 inhabitants). There are seven towns with populations of between 10,000 and 20,000, and eight further towns with populations in excess of 5,000. This further underlines the dominant position of the built-up area of Dublin (see Map 4 - Transport and Towns).

The Planning Authorities control urban-generated rural housing, but pressure for it continues and the existing legacy of such housing has impacts on landscape, gives rise to potential impacts with other rural land uses and demand for the provision of public services.

Manufacturing and distribution have gradually moved outwards from the inner city to locations in the suburbs and at the edge of the built-up area. This provides an opportunity to locate residential areas in relative proximity to places of employment.

Certain types of service employment, such as the financial sector, continue to locate within the city centre area. This type of employment is set to expand significantly and therefore significant employment growth in the city centre is likely to continue.

Other service employment, especially personal services, tends to be more dispersed throughout the Greater Dublin Area and, as much of this is associated with residential areas, will continue to be dispersed. There is, however, some concentration of service employment at a limited number of locations, such as Naas.



Many national and regional services, such as major and specialist hospitals and third-level educational facilities, are concentrated within the built-up area of Dublin. This has effectively restricted the development of such services in other settlements within the Greater Dublin Area.

Dublin city centre remains the single most important retail location within the Greater Dublin Area. However, a number of major shopping centres have been developed throughout the Greater Dublin Area, and pressure for further development will continue. These shopping centres have sought to locate at sites that offer easy access by car. Some, but by no means all, also have reasonable levels of public transport access.

The further development of large, regional-scale shopping centres at key nodes on the national road system raises important concerns about the aggregate impact of such centres on shopping provision in the city centre and other traditional town centres and about the use of major roads for local shopping trips.

TRANSPORTATION

The national primary routes radiate from Dublin to the other major towns in the country and are supplemented by national secondary routes. Some sections of the primary network have been constructed to motorway standard, most notably on the M50 C-Ring and on short sections on the national primaries.

There is evidence that people who work in Dublin are living further from the city and commuting on the improved road system. It can also be observed that development is spreading along these major routes with significant growth in all of the settlements served by the routes.

The Greater Dublin Area rail network consists essentially of four lines:

- Coastal north via Drogheda towards Belfast;
- Coastal south via Wicklow towards Wexford and Rosslare;
- Inland west via Maynooth towards Sligo and Galway; and
- Inland west via Kildare towards Cork, with a branch via Athy to Waterford.

All the rail services in the Greater Dublin Area, except the Kildare route, pass through Connolly station and the capacity of the section of track immediately to the north of that station effectively constrains the whole system. In terms of the number of trains that can be accommodated, the capacity of the DART north and the Dundalk services is fully utilised while that of the Maynooth line, up to the junction north of Connolly, is only about two-thirds utilised.

The bus network in Dublin is largely radial with nearly all areas having a through service to the centre. Most services terminate in the centre, which leads to some loss of efficiency with buses waiting in the city centre rather than continuing on to the opposite side.

The bus network is partially integrated with the DART, and there are a number of local feeder routes to the DART/rail stations. These can be found in Blackrock, Dun Laoghaire and Malahide for example.

Suburban orbital routes are few and operate at a low frequency. Orbital demand is generally lower and high frequency services might not be viable.

Outside of the built-up area of Dublin, the key scheduled bus services form part of the national route network, with some additional feeder and local services. There may be potential to develop community and neighbourhood bus services in these areas.

Dublin Port handles approximately 18-20 million tonnes of cargo per annum. Some 80% of the catchment of the port traffic originates within the Dublin Region and the majority of the remaining 20% have trip origins or destinations within an additional 30 mile radius.

In 1998, the existing terminal at Dublin Airport handled approximately 11.6 million passengers. Once all planned air-side, land-side and terminal improvements are in place, it is expected that the airport will be able to cope with 18-20 million passengers annually. The principal problem at Dublin Airport is public transport access.

Weston airfield, in north-east Kildare, serves executive aircraft, whilst there have been proposals to utilise the military airfield at Baldonnell for commercial flights.

Dublin Port and Dublin Airport both experience land-side access problems. In the case of the port, these will be alleviated in some measure (on the north side) by the port access tunnel. Construction of the tunnel, which will run from Santry to East Wall, is expected to start in 2000 with opening due in December 2003.

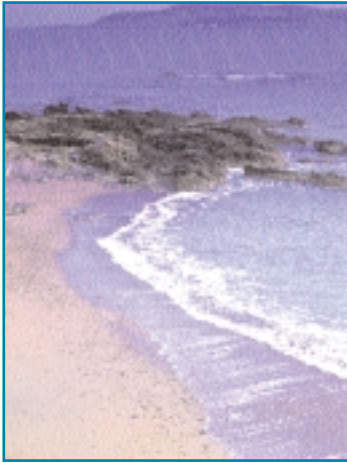
The development of the port access tunnel, providing easy access to the port, will further strengthen the attractiveness of the Fingal area for internationally-traded manufacturing industry.

A distinction can be made between transportation issues within the existing built-up area of Dublin and transportation issues in the remainder of the Greater Dublin Area.

The built-up area of Dublin is experiencing problems that are more severe than were envisaged by the DTI but without many of the DTI remedial measures. This has been addressed in the DTI Transportation Review and Short Term Action Plan.

There is now a realisation that the future economic prosperity of Dublin and the attractiveness of the city as a place to live, work and recreate are wholly dependent on the successful implementation of transportation measures, including a considerably enhanced public transport system. Failure to achieve a balanced set of measures will result in a rapid degradation of the urban environment.

Traffic management measures now in hand include control of city centre on-street parking, provision of park and ride, quality bus corridors and consideration of tolling. These measures will be enhanced by the development of the LUAS system. However, the proposed LUAS corridors have limited scope for significant additional development, because much of the land on either side of the route is already developed.



SANITARY SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE

Water Supply Sources

The River Liffey has two extraction points for water treatment, at Ballymore Eustace and Leixlip. Water sourced from the Liffey, in conjunction with water sourced from the River Vartry and River Dodder, serves Dublin County Borough, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, South Dublin, North Wicklow, South Meath and parts of Kildare.

The rest of the Greater Dublin Area is served by minor sources or groundwater with the exception of parts of Meath, which is served from water sourced from the River Boyne. The design volume from the major water supply sources is 448 megalitres per day (ML/d), whereas the current demand is 453.40 ML/d.

Wastewater

To meet EU Wastewater regulations, extensive work is in progress, or is planned to be carried out, on the wastewater infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area. Currently the Ringsend Wastewater treatment plant services the majority of the built-up area of Dublin. Other wastewater treatment works in the built-up area of Dublin include Shanganagh, Swords, Malahide and Bray.

Parts of Kildare are serviced by treatment plants in Leixlip and Osberstown and both plants are currently undergoing expansion. The remainder of the county is served by smaller treatment works or small package units.

Wicklow County Council is serviced by wastewater treatment works at Bray, Greystones, Blessington, Kilcoole and Wicklow Town, whilst smaller treatment works and small package units serve the rest of the county.

Meath County Council operates a large wastewater treatment works in Navan, and smaller plants at Enfield, Trim, Kildalkey and Kells. The remainder of the county is serviced by Ringsend and Drogheda wastewater treatment plants and by small units.

The principal large trunk mains are located in the built-up area of Dublin and the majority connect, or will be connected, to the Ringsend wastewater treatment plant. Two trunk mains - 9B (Grand Canal) and the Dodder Valley sewer - serve South Dublin. Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown has two trunk mains that are connected to Ringsend - the Dodder Valley Interceptor and the Eastern Interceptor. A further new trunk main - the Stepside Trunk Main - is being provided to facilitate the servicing of lands in the Ballyogan, Kilternan and Stepside areas and is linked into the existing sea outfall at Shanganagh.

The Blanchardstown/Northern Interceptor requires duplication especially as it is planned that the Ashbourne and Rathoath areas will be connected into this sewer in the future. The proposed North Fringe Sewer will serve the area from Baldoyle to Portmarnock, inland to Dublin Airport, the southern part of Swords, Finglas and beyond and will incorporate Howth. It will lead to Sutton Pumping Station, where it will be pumped across the bay to Ringsend. Swords sewerage network drains to the Swords wastewater treatment works and requires upgrading to meet the future zoning requirements for this area. Similarly, Balbriggan sewerage network drains to the Balbriggan wastewater treatment works and also requires upgrading.

Storm Drainage

In general there is an increase in stormwater run-off in the Greater Dublin Area due to increased development in the area. This is mainly due to a reduction in soft landscape and an increase in impermeable surfaces such as car parking, roads and roofs.

Consequently, the heads of many rivers passing through the built-up area require attenuation measures. Among the areas affected are south Fingal, in the vicinity of Dublin Airport, and the Dodder and Liffey Valleys.

Solid Waste

Solid waste management is an issue throughout the Greater Dublin Area. Dublin Corporation, South Dublin, Fingal and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils commissioned an integrated waste management strategy and adopted it in 1998. The combined void space in currently approved landfills in the Dublin Region is equal to approximately 2.5 years at the current waste depositing rates.

The remainder of the local authorities within the Greater Dublin Area have their own waste strategies and have a similar difficulty with lack of space remaining in their approved landfills.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Education

Of the 13 Third Level Institutions in the Greater Dublin Area only one is located outside the Dublin region - the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. At present, there is one Institute of Technology in the Greater Dublin Area at Tallaght. The Blanchardstown Institute of Technology is due to open in Autumn 1999.

Health

The Greater Dublin Area falls within the functional boundaries of two health boards. The Eastern Health Board covers the Dublin counties, Kildare and Wicklow, while County Meath is located in the North Eastern Health Board area.

Of the 40 public hospitals in the Greater Dublin Area, only 5 are located outside the Dublin Region. There are two district hospitals in County Wicklow (Baltinglass and Wicklow Town). County Kildare is served by a General Hospital (Naas) and St. Vincent's Hospital, Athy. The General Hospital, Navan, serves County Meath.

Electricity

Electricity supply in the Greater Dublin Area is taken from the national grid. There has been a significant growth in demand for electricity in recent years, reflecting the growth of the economy. Additional capacity is now required to meet the increase in demand associated with the economic boom, older plant reaching the end of its life span and the obligation to develop a proportion of generation in non-fossil fuel.

Natural Gas

The Bord Gais network is currently supplied with natural gas from two sources - a gas field south of Cork and via a pipeline from Scotland. The gas transmission network



consists, primarily, of a 70 bar pipeline running from Cork northeast to Dublin and on to Louth. At various strategic points there are spurs off to supply large industry and large domestic loads. It is proposed to install a new gas link, along an orbital route from Brownsbarn through Blanchardstown to the east, in 1999.

Information Technology

It is recognised that in the future the provision of an adequate Information Technology infrastructure will be instrumental in keeping the country's industry and commerce competitive. The Greater Dublin Area has been successful to date at keeping abreast of such demands and has managed to attract call centres for major international companies. The availability of more affordable and powerful computers, the expansion of fibre optics to the domestic level and the advent of services (Internet, E-mail, teleshopping etc.) has led the main providers to anticipate enormous growth in this area over the next decade and the development of an 'Information Society'.

AMENITY, HERITAGE AND RECREATION

Within the Greater Dublin Area there are a number of important natural resources that cater for the leisure requirements of the population. These include:

- The Dublin and Wicklow Mountains. The use of this area as a recreation resource, with its large scale, relatively unhindered access and proximity to the population has increased greatly. Within the area lies the Wicklow Mountains National Park.
- The Coastline of Meath, Dublin and Wicklow. The coast has always been a popular leisure and tourism destination for the region. Despite increased levels of development along the coastal fringe, it remains an important and heavily used resource. It is highly accessible, with all sections being served by public transport.
- Regional Parks. These include the Phoenix Park, Marley Park, Tymon Park, Corkagh Park, Malahide Demesne, Newbridge House and Ardgillan Demesne. These parks provide large scale intensive areas of public recreation. They are an important resource for active leisure within the region and are maintained to a high standard.

Within the Greater Dublin Area, there are a significant number of areas designated as of nature conservation value (SPA, SAC, NHA, SAAO) together with many archaeological and historical features of heritage value, some of international importance. There are a number of significant historic demesnes in the Greater Dublin Area, some of which have been acquired by the local authorities as major amenities. Many of the historic and amenity features are also important tourist attractions. As part of the national heritage, these areas and features must be protected and preserved.

Tourism

The Greater Dublin Area has benefited significantly from the recent growth in the tourism industry. Expenditure on tourism in the area amounted to £733 million in 1996, an increase of over £180 million on 1991 figures. The Dublin Region accounted for £529.1 million while the Mid-East amounted to £204.3 million.

Despite the fact that tourist attractions are evenly distributed throughout the State, the most visited attractions are located in the Greater Dublin Area. The top three most

visited attractions in the State are located in the Dublin region (National Gallery of Ireland, Book of Kells, Dublin Zoo). Powerscourt Gardens and Newgrange are the most visited attractions in the Mid East.

The number of tourists, especially in the Dublin area, adds considerably to the loading on infrastructure, including water supply, drainage and wastewater treatment, energy supply and transportation.

NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GREATER DUBLIN AREA

The Greater Dublin Area is the most populous and economically most developed part of Ireland accounting for over 39% of the total population of the State and almost half of the national Gross Value Added. It is home to the Houses of the Oireachtas and contains major government departments and can, therefore, be considered the principal decision-making centre in Ireland.

Dublin is also the location of many national institutions and services, including third-level education and healthcare. It, therefore, functionally serves the whole country in a variety of ways, including high level retailing and personal services.

The Greater Dublin Area contains key elements of the national infrastructure, notably Dublin Port and Dublin Airport, making it a key 'gateway' city and one of the links between the European Union and the rest of the world. Maintaining good access to these facilities is of national importance, as well as being of critical importance to the future of the Greater Dublin Area.

Dublin competes with other cities in Europe and must maintain its economic efficiency and its competitive position. It is important, therefore, that the pattern of future development and transportation does not inhibit or impede the international and national roles of Dublin, but seeks to enhance these, as well as maintaining a high level of environmental quality.

METROPOLITAN AND HINTERLAND AREAS

Within the Greater Dublin Area it is possible to distinguish between a:

- Metropolitan Area comprising of the existing built-up area of Dublin and its immediate environs; and a
- Hinterland Area comprising of the remainder of the Greater Dublin Area and containing a range of towns of various sizes together with extensive areas of countryside (see Appendix 2).

There are significant contrasts between these areas. The principal issues in the Metropolitan Area relate to pressure arising from rapid and intensive development, such as severe traffic congestion. It is also the area within which the principal measures to address these pressures are planned or proposed, including major road schemes such as the Port Access Tunnel and public transportation schemes such as LUAS.



The Hinterland Area has become the focus of increasing development interest, much of it related to the proximity of the Metropolitan Area. Development pressures are generally more localised and significant parts of the Hinterland Area are likely to remain primarily rural in character for some time to come.

