

# VIEW OF THE FUTURE: WEST CORK IN 2030

Report of Regional Scenario Workshop  
Inchydoney Island, 20th–21st May 2010

This project is supported by the West Cork Development Partnership under the  
Rural Development Programme 2007-2013



*An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe  
agus Gaeltachta*  
*Department of Community, Rural  
and Gaeltacht Affairs*

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Innovative Leadership is a global consultancy company that specialises in assisting communities, regions and organisations to plan and prepare for their future. With staff in Australia and USA, the company aims to develop the tools and approaches to allow regional communities to think about their future in a new way and to respond to a rapidly changing world. Innovative Leadership is a market leader in the field of regional scenario planning and undertakes projects across Australia, USA, Canada and now Ireland. For more information, visit our website [www.ila.net.au](http://www.ila.net.au)



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# Introduction

## Purpose

The West Cork Development Partnership (WCDP) conducts a range of projects under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. Each of these projects stands alone, but they also combine to build a bigger picture as part of a larger process. The regional scenario planning workshop reported here is part of this larger process. The scenarios developed in the workshop and this report are important to provide a 'vehicle' to be used in the process of building a vision for the future of the region, in identifying key actions for the region and to assist in identifying how WCDP might best contribute to the future development of the region—in part by identifying possibilities for collaboration in the context of the WCDP development strategy.

A shared vision for the region is fundamental to this. Responses by the participants at this workshop, in questionnaires completed before and after the workshop (Appendix I, pp. 33–35), indicated that they thought that a shared vision for West Cork was very important, giving it an average 9.1 on a scale from 1 (not important) to 10 (highly important) This result is hardly surprising given that it was from a group of people who had come to a workshop about scenarios for the future of the region, but it indicates the importance that they placed on developing a vision for the future of the region.

This regional scenario planning workshop was one step in the process of the formation of such a vision and in identifying key actions and activities to shape the region's future. This report and the associated workshop summary serve as a record for the participants and to assist in communicating the scenarios as an important step to developing a shared vision for the region.

This report presents the background, results and recommendations from the workshop. People from across the region came to a two-day regional scenario planning workshop that was held at Inchydoney Island, West Cork on 20th and 21st May 2010. The workshop participants discussed the region's future and developed plausible scenarios for West Cork in 2030. This workshop followed earlier workshops conducted by Innovative Leadership that featured *The Future Game* and were conducted at several locations throughout the region in December 2009.

The objectives of this workshop were:

- to deepen an understanding of how global events and conditions shape local decision-making;
- to identify and understand the key influences, trends and dynamics that will shape West Cork over the next 20 years;
- to create and describe four plausible long term scenario's for the West Cork region; and
- to seek to develop a shared vision for the region.

This report presents a description of the scenario process and a detailed narrative of each of the four scenarios that were developed by the participants. Each scenario description consists of a

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The workshop was considered to be one step in the process of the formation of a regional vision and in identifying key actions and activities to shape the region's future.

summary, description of the 'scenario space', a 'future history' describing how the scenario developed, interpretations of how the scenario could occur and the implications of the scenario for the region.

A brief analysis of the scenarios, particularly examining similarities and differences, is included. The feedback from the participants about the future of the region, the importance of a shared vision and their comments regarding the scenarios are an important component of the analysis.

## The Workshop

The workshop involved participants from across the West Cork region. The participants were guided through a modified scenario planning process to develop four plausible scenarios for the future of West Cork. Our modified scenario planning process has been applied successfully in regional scenario planning workshops in the US, Canada and Australia. This process, which is described in detail below, involves exploration and discussion of global, domestic and local trends and forces, identification and ranking of drivers and influences that will likely shape the future of the region, development of a scenario matrix defining four plausible scenarios of the future and the development of descriptive narratives of each scenario. The workshop concluded with discussion of the scenarios, the resilience of each and their desirability in contributing to a regional vision of the future. An important part of this process is that it aims not merely to develop plausible scenarios for the future, but to identify how they may be turned into tangible actions in the region.

Scenario planning is a method that is used to develop plausible scenarios for the future. Scenarios are not predictions, but are a way of exploring plausible futures and of learning from them.

### Why Scenario Planning?

Scenario planning is a method that is used to develop plausible scenarios for the future. Scenarios are not predictions, but are a way of exploring plausible futures and of learning from them. The method differs from traditional strategic planning as it allows the exploration of many factors, or drivers of the future, *concurrently*. It does so by using knowledge and expectations about the drivers to produce a framework that defines and explores a range of plausible futures. In this manner the approach enables people to explore the impacts and consequences of a range of different future pathways.

We have utilised a condensed form of scenario planning in which each scenario session is completed in a two-day workshop. This design is intended to allow otherwise busy and committed people to contribute and to participate in a future planning process in an effective and efficient manner. The participation of people from a range of sectors, industries and geographic locations in the community results in a breadth of input into the formation and descriptions of the scenarios and any resulting shared vision.

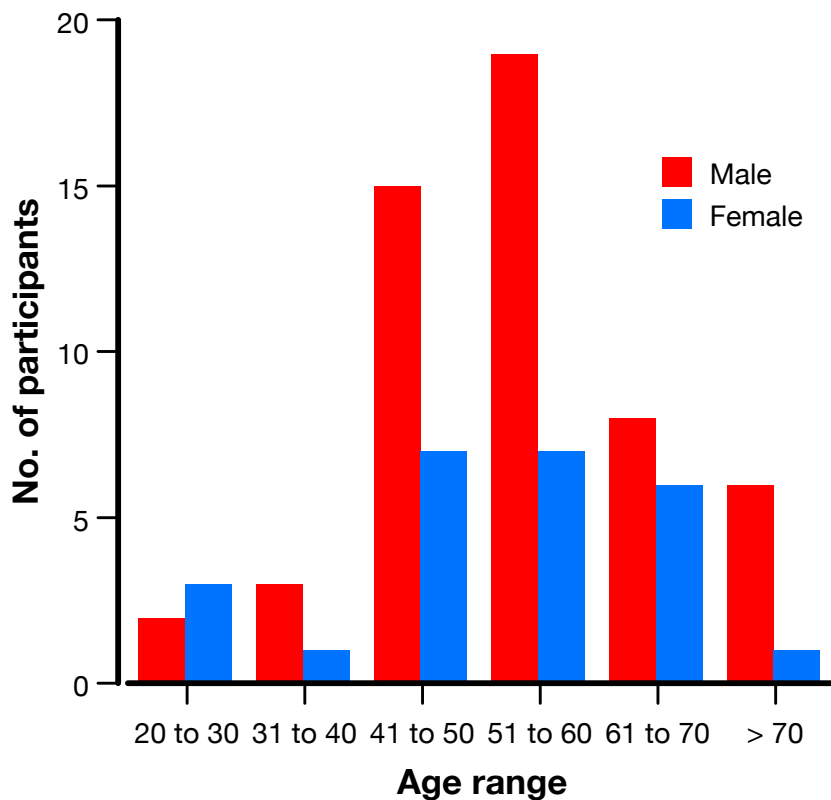
The workshop was attended by a total of 78 participants... The participants were aged from 20 to over 70 years of age and came from locations throughout West Cork

### Participants

The workshop was attended by a total of 78 participants (53 male and 25 female) over the two days. Fifty-five people were present on the first day and 57 on the second. Thirty-four people (24 male and 10 female) attended both days of the workshop.

Participants were aged from 20 to over 70 years of age and came from locations throughout West Cork (Figure 1, p. 7). Most of the participants were aged between 41 and 60 years (79%). The greatest number of participants from any one location were from Bantry (14%), with 11% from Skibbereen, 6% each from Clonakilty, Macroom and Kinsale and 5% from Bandon. Five percent of the participants stated that they lived in 'West Cork' and 5% declined to answer the question. Thirty-six percent of the participants had previously been involved in a scenario planning exercise.

**Figure 1. The age profile of the 78 participants at the regional scenario planning workshop**



## Workshop Process

### Day one—regional futures: background and drivers

The workshop was run over two days and began with the participants playing the Pacific Northwest version of *The Future Game*. This is a game in which participants, in groups, make decisions that impact on the future of a hypothetical region. Details of the game and the comments from the participants are provided elsewhere in this report (Appendix II, p. 39–40). The game was used in this workshop to introduce scenario planning and the idea of a range of plausible futures.

The next part of the workshop was a discussion of global, national and regional forces that could impact the region. The facilitator presented an overview of trends in aspects such as global power and wealth, growth in Asia, energy, climate change, water and food security. Participants reviewed and discussed these, considering how they could impact on the future direction of West Cork.

The participants also examined the capacity of the region's communities to respond to a changing world. Ten attributes of successful communities were considered (Appendix III, pp. 41–42). Participants identified the attributes in which they considered that the West Cork region is currently strong and those in which it is currently weak. 'Evidence of strong community pride and inclusive culture' (17% of 'votes') and 'strong presence of traditional institutions that are integral to community life' (20% of 'votes') are attributes in which the participants considered that West Cork is

Global, national and regional forces were reviewed and discussed and the participants considered how they relate to the region and community of West Cork

strong (Appendix III, Figure 6, p. 42). Conversely, the ‘deliberate transition of power to new leaders’ (21% of ‘votes’) and ‘invest in the future -- built to last!’ (18% of ‘votes’) are two attributes in which the participants considered the region is particularly weak.

The participants identified drivers that they considered most likely to shape the future of the West Cork region. These were then discussed... the scope of each driver was clarified, any similar drivers were grouped and new drivers added, until a list of twenty unique, key drivers was developed.

With the background of the global forces, how they relate to the West Cork region and the attributes of the community of West Cork in mind, the participants, working in groups, identified drivers that they considered most likely to shape the future of the West Cork region. These were then discussed by all of the participants. The scope of each driver was clarified, any similar drivers were grouped and new drivers added, until a list of twenty unique, key drivers was developed (Table 1, p. 10). Each of these twenty key drivers was rated by each participant for its ‘importance’ and ‘uncertainty’. The ratings of each of the participants were used to calculate the average importance and uncertainty for each of the twenty drivers.

### **Day two—developing the scenarios**

The second day of the workshop focussed on the development of four plausible scenarios for West Cork in 2030 and discussion of the implications of each. The activities of the first day were reviewed, concluding with the definition and rating of the drivers. A graph of uncertainty against importance showed the distribution of the drivers based on their average rating. This allowed the identification of the ‘scenario shaping clusters of drivers’ and the resulting scenario ‘spaces’. For the West Cork region, the scenario shaping clusters of drivers that defined the scenario space (axes) were the ability to optimise economic opportunities and engagement in creating a regional future (Figure 3, p. 11).

Working in groups the considered one scenario for West Cork in 2030. They described how the social, economic and environmental aspects of the region would look like in 2030 under the conditions of their scenario

Working in groups, in which representatives of each sector that was present amongst the participants (private business, community organisation, public service, or private citizen) were distributed evenly, the participants considered one scenario for West Cork in 2030, based on one of four quadrants. The participants were asked to describe what the social, economic and environmental aspects of the region would look like in 2030 under the conditions of their scenario and to devise a ‘future history’ or chronology of how the scenario occurred using the years 2015, 2020 and 2030.

Once the scenarios had been developed, each group reported back, describing their scenario to the remainder of the participants. This allowed for clarification, questions, and an assessment of the plausibility of each scenario. The descriptions of the scenarios were then used to explore the implications of the scenarios, which scenario was preferred by the participants and how they could be used in the development of a shared vision for the future of West Cork.



# Four Plausible Scenarios Of The Future of West Cork

## Drivers

The participants at the workshop identified the critical drivers for the future of West Cork in 2030 (Table 1, p. 10). Each of these twenty key drivers was rated by each participant for its 'importance' and 'uncertainty'. 'Importance' referred to how important the participant considered the driver would be in shaping the future of the region. 'Uncertainty' referred to the degree of uncertainty associated with the driver in terms of either its future level, impact, or both. The ratings of each of the participants were used to calculate the average importance and uncertainty for each of the twenty drivers. The average ratings for the drivers were plotted on a graph of uncertainty against importance.

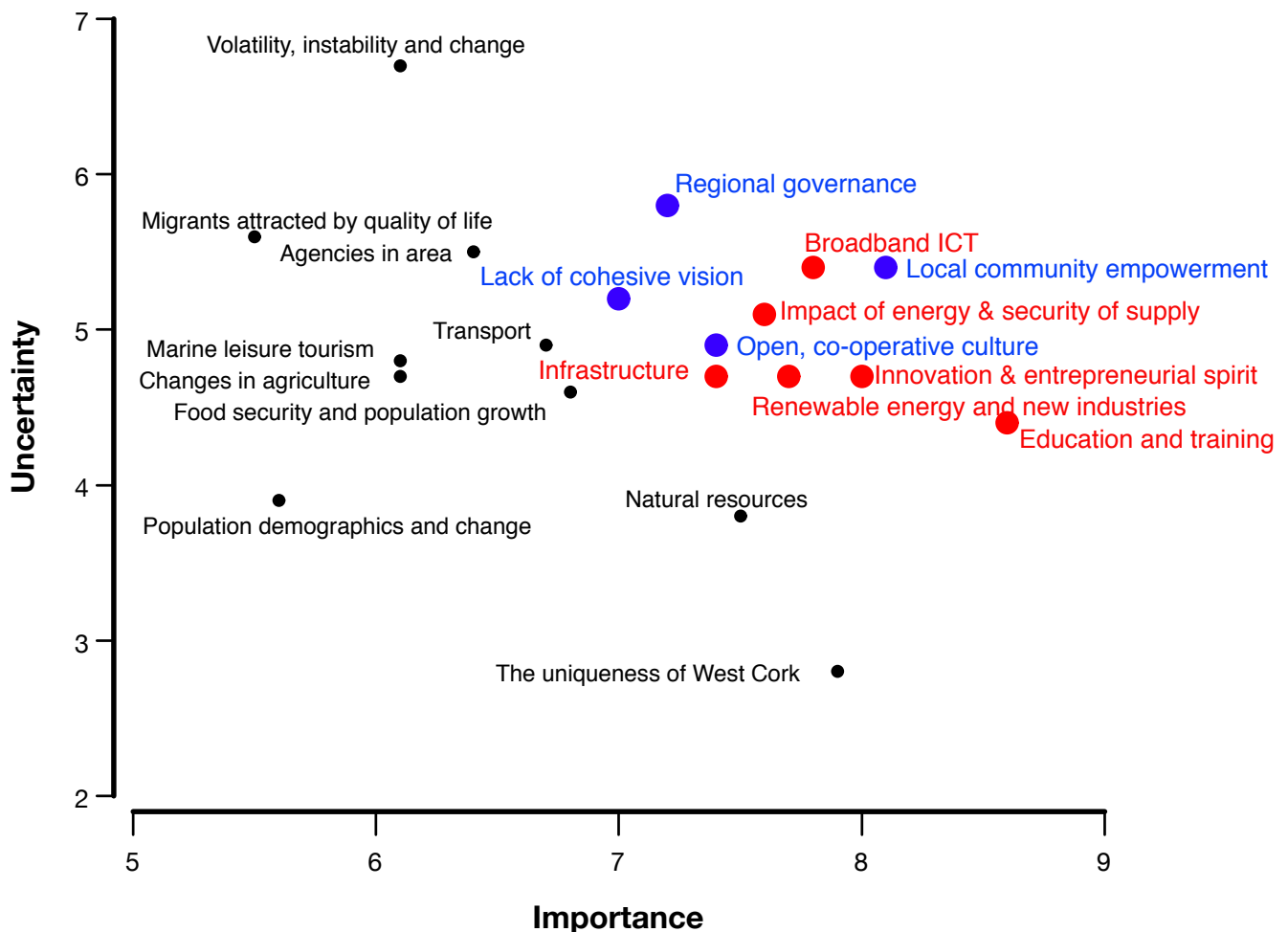
This graph highlighted several pertinent aspects. In the top left-hand of the graph is volatility, instability and change (Figure 2, p. 10). This is a highly uncertain driver, but has only moderate importance *in shaping the future of the region* as it relates largely to external forces. This is the sort of driver that could form part of a scenario 'shock' (see 'Discussion of scenarios', p. 25). In the bottom right of the graph are natural resources and the uniqueness of West Cork. These are extremely important drivers with a high degree of certainty. These will be an important part of all of the scenarios. In the left and centre of the graph are drivers of intermediate importance and uncertainty. These are not considered to be scenario-shaping drivers, but will be important in each of the scenarios. The group of drivers towards the top right of the graph are both important and uncertain and are the scenario-shaping drivers.

The participants identified drivers that they considered likely to shape the future of the West Cork region. These were then discussed... the scope of each driver was clarified, any similar drivers were grouped and new drivers added, until a list of twenty unique, key drivers was developed.

**Table 1. Key drivers shaping the future of West Cork in 2030 as identified by participants at the regional scenario planning workshop**

- Open, cooperative culture (of the people) and social inclusion
- Education and training leading to retention of youth
- Impact of energy and security of supply
- The uniqueness of West Cork (branding)
- Transport
- Infrastructure (cost, need for investment for diverse population)
- Agencies in the area (variable definitions of the West Cork region)
- Lack of cohesive vision for the region
- Volatility, instability and change
- The natural resources West Cork (attributes of the location)
- Migrants attracted by quality of life
- Development of renewable energy and other new 'industry' opportunities (availability of finance)
- Food security and population growth (opportunities presented)
- Local community empowerment, leadership, civic engagement
- Changes in agriculture (e.g. cap payments, diversification, international investment)
- Innovation and entrepreneurial spirit
- Marine leisure industries, tourism
- Development of broadband infrastructure (and ICT, media)
- Enabling regional governance and regulation
- Population (demographics, ageing population, baby boom)

**Figure 2. Plot of uncertainty against importance showing the average ratings of drivers of the future West Cork. Those shown in red and blue are the scenario-shaping clusters of drivers**



**Table 2. The drivers forming the scenario-shaping clusters of drivers**

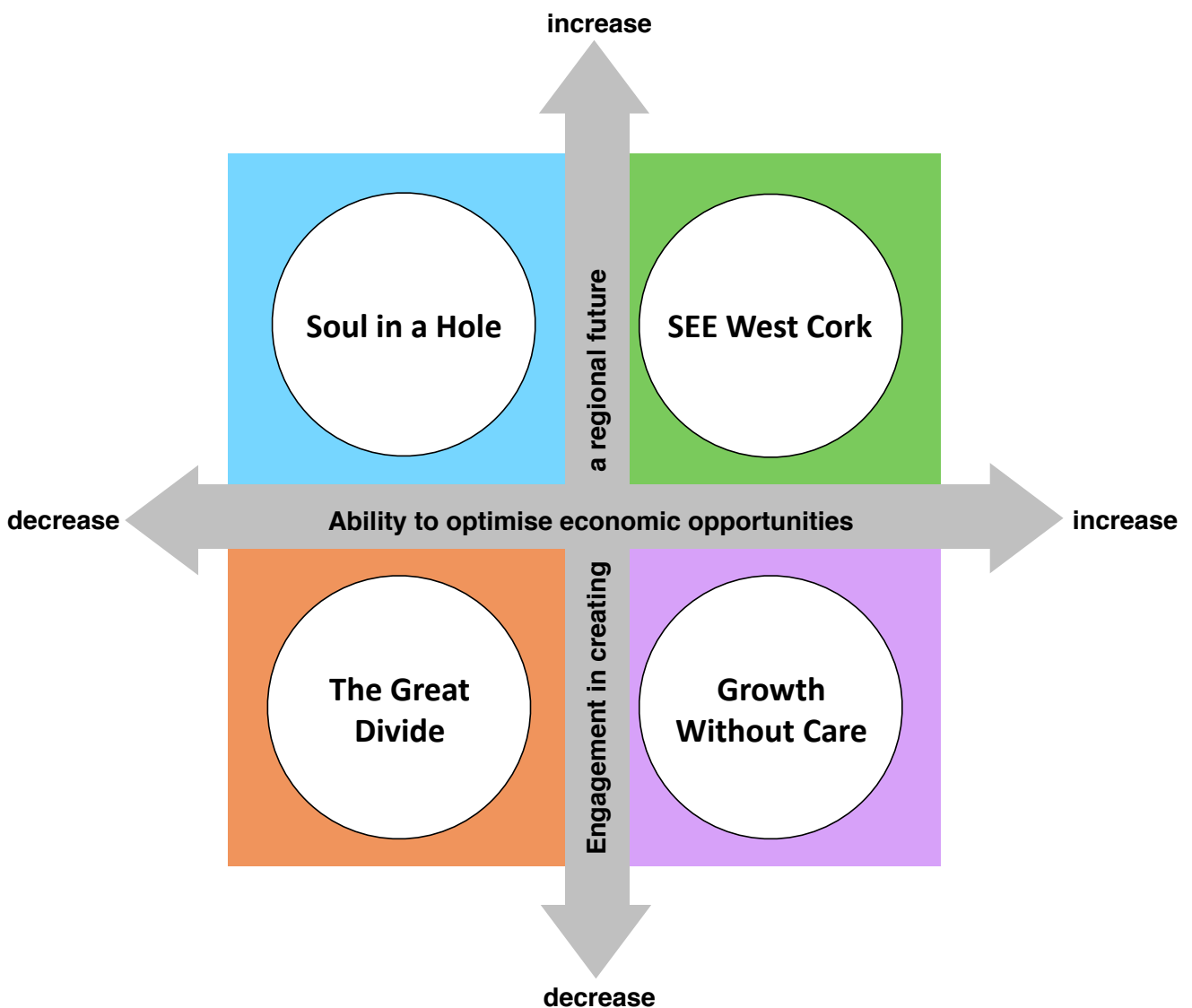
**Ability to optimise economic opportunities**

- Innovation & entrepreneurial spirit
- Education and training (leading to retention of youth)
- Development of broadband infrastructure (and ICT, media)
- Impact of energy and security of supply
- Development of renewable energy and other new 'industry' opportunities (availability of finance)
- Infrastructure (cost, need for investment for diverse population)

**Engagement in creating regional future**

- Enabling regional governance and regulation
- Local community empowerment, leadership, civic engagement
- Lack of cohesive vision for the region
- Open, cooperative culture (of the people) and social inclusion

**Figure 3. The scenario quadrants defined by the scenario-shaping clusters of drivers showing the names of the scenarios created by the participants**



## Scenario-shaping clusters of drivers

Close examination of the scenario-shaping clusters of drivers (Table 2, p. 11) showed that they fell into two logical thematic groups. One group related to the region's industries (traditional and new), capacity in terms of education, training, infrastructure and energy and the level of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. This group was given the thematic title of 'Ability to optimise economic opportunities'. The second thematic group related to the region's governance and regulation, leadership, culture and vision for the future. This group was given the thematic title of 'Engagement in creating regional future'. These thematic groups, or scenario-shaping clusters of drivers, were used to construct the scenario 'spaces' (Figure 3, p. 11).

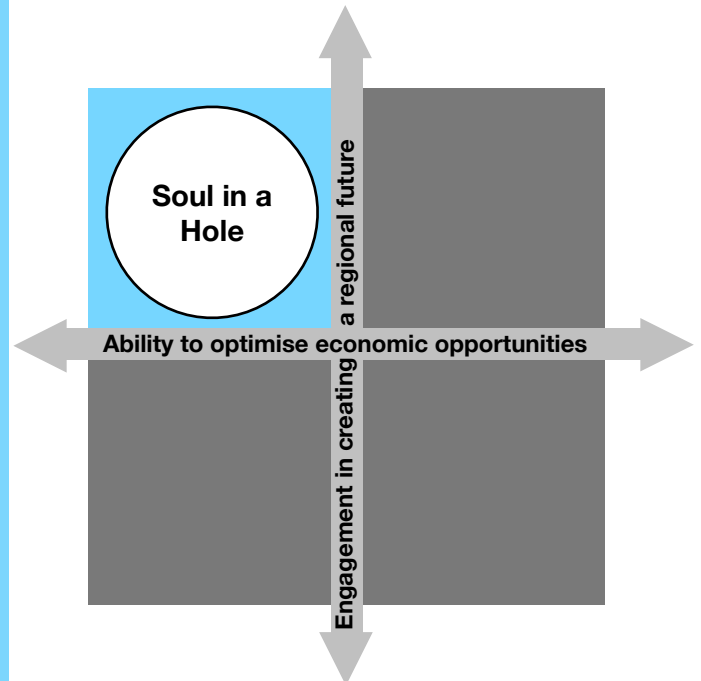
The four quadrants (scenario 'spaces'), based on positive and negative directions of the two scenario-shaping clusters of drivers, were reviewed and discussed with the participants. This discussion explored the drivers included in each scenario-shaping cluster, the scope of each cluster and how they formed the axes that defined the four scenario spaces (Figure 3, p. 11). The participants were asked to consider the main attributes of each of the quadrants and to begin to speculate about how the West Cork region would look in a future based on each of the quadrants.

The participants were then divided into the four groups, as described previously, and asked to formulate a scenario for their respective quadrant. Each group was directed to describe the West Cork region in 2030 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given in terms of the triple-bottom line of social, economic and environmental characteristics. They also produced a 'future history' for the scenario in 2015, 2020 and 2030 and gave their scenario a descriptive title. Each group's notes for their scenario and the description of it when it was presented to the other participants were used by the authors to produce the detailed narrative for each scenario that is presented in the next section of this report.

## Soul in a Hole

The spirit is strong, but development is weak. The region has never really recovered from the debilitating “global financial crisis” of the early 2000s. For the last three decades growth across the region has been patchy resulting in a two-level economy. There is well-developed eco-tourism which has driven development around the coast. It is a different story in the interior, with high unemployment and vacant towns. There are fewer commercial farmers and a lack of strong indigenous industry. This has contributed to the large socio-economic divide across the region. In 2028, the “State of West Cork” report helped to galvanise the community to action. This report highlighted the two-level economy, mental health issues and potential pressure on the environment from coastal development.

Now, the soul of West Cork seems to be shining through. Local community groups have organised themselves and started planning for a revitalised region. There is a strong community spirit to make major changes to manage the environment and to develop the economy. The region is in a hole, but has the spirit to get out of it.



The scenario ‘space’ for *Soul in a Hole* sees West Cork as a region that has a declining ability to optimise economic opportunities, but where engagement in creating a regional future is increasing. The participants who developed this scenario pictured a region with positives and negatives that is activating itself to shape a better future.

Aspect	Description
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of place, strong culture, heritage</li> <li>• Politically engaged, strong governance</li> <li>• High poverty, mental health issues, high emigration (especially young and skilled), two-tier society</li> <li>• Declining, ageing population, fewer schools, rural isolation</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High unemployment, little entrepreneurship, variable industry development</li> <li>• Two level economy: coast versus interior</li> <li>• Well-developed eco-tourism</li> </ul>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally clean environment</li> <li>• Over-burden on infrastructure in summer from tourists</li> <li>• Strong environmental directives</li> <li>• Villages and towns engaged with environmental needs</li> </ul>

## **Future History of Soul in a Hole**

### ***Fifteen years ago: 2015***

The region was far from united. A lack of finance and funding produced an insular mentality in which communities were pursuing self-interest rather than working together. There was a lack of leadership, no strategic planning and precious little vision. The population increase that had been projected at the turn of the first decade of the century did not occur with the region experiencing net emigration instead. This was particularly evident amongst the young and skilled who moved to urban areas or overseas. There was a decline in the number of farmers with those remaining focussing on more intensive production from the better, more productive land.

The approach to the environment was a shining light amidst all of this struggle and general negativity. There was wide-spread awareness of the special, valuable environment of West Cork and of the need for concerted action to ensure that it was not lost to opportunism. In 2014, a rare example of co-operation saw the region draft and agree to a detailed plan for eco-tourism. To some this indicated strength in community organisation.

### ***Ten years ago: 2020***

There was community pride and recognition internationally of the sustainable tourism industry that had been achieved through enforcement of strong environmental policies and regulation. This positive had its own downsides. The seasonal nature of the industry saw an increasingly transient population and seasonal pressure on infrastructure. This, combined with low economic development, a general lack of investment and the continued retraction of services outside tourist locations produced rising unemployment and continued emigration from West Cork. In response, the community had become generally insular, conservative and resistant to change, although there was a ground-swell of people for whom community co-operation was the catch-cry; pointing to the example of the success of 2014 eco-tourism plan. As a positive, this led to strong interest and investment in small-scale renewable energy production and a move towards self-sufficiency in food production.

### ***Today: 2030***

The impact of the developments of the last twenty years is clearly evident in the West Cork of today. The region is a two-tiered society with imbalanced development between the relatively well-serviced coastal areas and the poor infrastructure, land abandonment and environmental pressures of the interior. Many of the people servicing the successful tourism industry are transient workers from elsewhere in Ireland and the EU. The region is dotted with struggling towns and villages and there are now twenty percent fewer farms and farmers than in 2010. This is part of a general decline in the traditional, indigenous artisan, agricultural and fishery industries. This has contributed to the high unemployment across the region and associated mental health issues and social problems (such as crime, drugs and alcohol). Yet, it is always darkest just before the dawn and the spirit of community is coming to the fore through adversity and frustration.

People in villages and towns across the region are engaged to make a difference, building upon the strong culture and sense of place. Action had galvanised around the 2028 “State of West Cork” report which highlighted the two-level economy, mental health issues and potential pressure on the environment from coastal development. There are successes to build upon. The internationally renowned eco-tourism industry, currently clean environment and now self-sufficiency in food and energy are important examples. Groups in the community have successfully lobbied the Irish and EU government to get funds to build up wind and biomass energy to the extent that the region is becoming a centre for excellence for renewable energy. There is a long way

to go, but the strong community spirit of West Cork has been activated realising that the community needs to take control of the future.

### **How could such a scenario occur?**

Such a scenario is plausible and is one possible, logical extension of current trends in employment, infrastructure and economic development, combined with an initial lack of vision and co-ordination across the region. There is competition for investment among the many, similar regions across Europe, and the world and in a time of shrinking access to finance globally and increased mobility of people and industry, it is possible that they can leave almost as quickly as they arrived. This scenario ends with optimism for the region driven by an engaged, organised and innovative community. This is all the more plausible as the community engagement comes from the drive for a better region coupled with frustration at the impacts of a general lack of vision and cohesion previously. The 'panacea' of community action at the end of the scenario could be construed as a fairytale approach, but it is well-grounded in examples from around the world of communities that have turned themselves around.

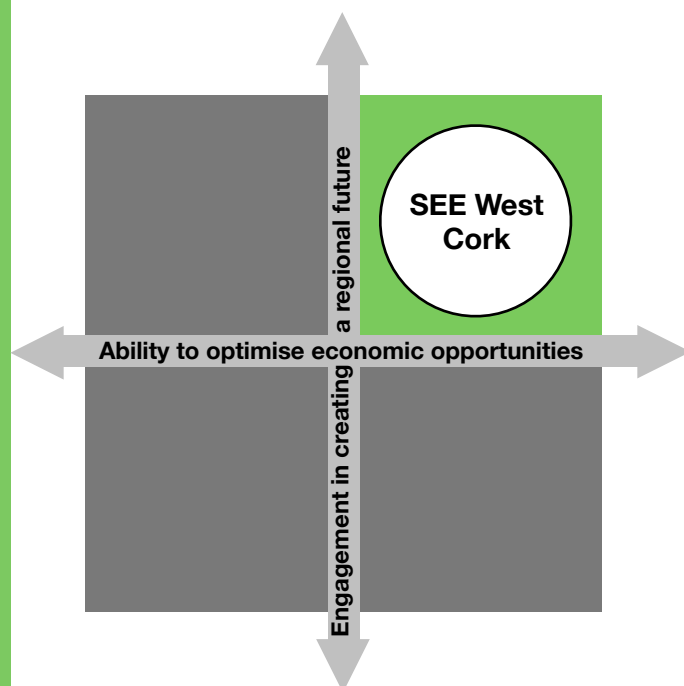
### **Implications**

This scenario is predicated on the region failing to develop an economic base beyond eco-tourism that, combined with an initial lack of co-ordination across the region, decreases the attractiveness of the region for people, particularly the more mobile; the young and skilled. It serves to suggest that a desirable outcome may be achieved even if opportunities are either not forthcoming or not grasped. There are many challenges along the way, but a hopeful future may result.

## SEE West Cork

*SEE West Cork* (Social, Economic and Environmental West Cork); not only a great region in which to live, but an internationally recognised 'brand' promoting all that the region has to offer. This includes a vibrant, self-sufficient economy, well managed environment, excellent infrastructure and strong social capital. The region's economy is based on a diverse mix of agriculture, sustainable forestry, eco-tourism and green energy and now boasts its greatest population growth in recent history. The community is inclusive of all of its diverse groups, with a voice for all. Many of the region's youth choose to remain in the area to benefit from economic and social opportunities while living in a beautiful environment.

The year 2030 *SEEs* West Cork as an inspiring example worldwide. This has occurred over the past twenty years thanks to a cohesive vision, community action, investment in infrastructure and education, co-operation across all sectors of the community, a lot of hard work and probably just a little luck.



In the scenario 'space' for *SEE West Cork*, the region has an increasing ability to optimise economic opportunities and increasing engagement in creating a regional future. The participants who developed the scenario for this quadrant pictured a prosperous, positive region without being a fairytale land.

Aspect	Description
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower density housing with services as desirable living environment</li> <li>• Retention of youth, in-migration and immigration sees population of West Cork reach historic high of 130 000</li> <li>• Consolidation of services and improved infrastructure</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-sustaining, vibrant economy with a good quality of life</li> <li>• Infrastructure for eco-tourism in place; third-level education centre for West Cork <i>in</i> West Cork.</li> <li>• Innovation in West Cork promoted across Europe and globally under a <i>West Cork</i> 'brand'</li> </ul>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eco-recreation nature reserves</li> <li>• Environmental policy specific to the region</li> <li>• Model farms, allotments and permaculture</li> <li>• Sophisticated recycling and green energy established</li> </ul>



## **Future History of SEE West Cork**

### ***Fifteen years ago: 2015***

By 2013 the West Cork region was addressing land-use planning on a regional basis with effective local area plans, based on a shared, community vision. These plans identified targets for eco-tourism, the development of sustainable, renewable energy, sustainable agricultural practices and the requirements for key, enabling infrastructure. One such local area plan resulted from co-operation between local businesses and the local community. This specified transport links, management plan for marine services and marketing of marine tourism and lead to an increase in tourism. Non-political regional representation achieved some important breakthroughs and successfully leveraged funding from the EU and the exchequer.

In 2014, third-level courses were available in West Cork for the first time. Infrastructure for high-speed IT and communications was in place by the end of that year. The West Cork 'brand' was released in the spring of 2015.

### ***Ten years ago: 2020***

By 2020, the transformation of the region was well underway. The region had become recognised for its quality and competitiveness in terms of eco-tourism and sustainable agriculture. Model farms and examples of protected environments were dotted across the region. These were used for training and display of one of the region's specialties. Renewable energy was beginning to produce more of the base-load power thanks to wind and biomass energy. These were developed to fit with the other environmental, commercial and community land-uses.

Infrastructure was also developed to support the goals of the community vision. This included better, energy efficient housing. Housing for the ageing population was a particular focus, combined with more services for the elderly. There was also increased retention of youth in the region.

The third-level courses which commenced in 2014 had been developed specifically for West Cork. The availability of these educational and training opportunities saw an increase in the proportion of the region's youth remaining in the region.

### ***Today: 2030***

Today West Cork is a self-sustaining, vibrant economy with a good quality of life for all its citizens. The West Cork 'brand' is well-established internationally as a single brand for the entire region; largely following the vision devised in 2013. The transformation of the region is a global model for environmental management combined with socially and environmentally responsible development (tourism, agriculture, fisheries, sustainable energy, traditional industries). The level of community cohesion and co-operation, such as local produce featured in local restaurants using local products, is a fine example for similar regions worldwide.

Now, as the population has reached 130 000, the region faces new challenges. There is now increased pressure on hospitals and aged-care services. Extra childcare facilities and facilities and services for youth are needed urgently to address increasing anti-social behaviour. These social challenges are coupled with development of the next stage of eco-recreation nature reserves, model farms based on permaculture and sophisticated recycling.

## **How could such a scenario occur?**

This scenario is plausible. It requires a high level of community co-operation and alignment of the resulting vision with economic development opportunities across the

triple-bottom line. The development of the region according to such a desirable scenario is dependent to a large extent on the actions of people in the region. A combination of community action, regulation and leadership is required to create the environment and opportunities for sustainable development to occur. The challenge at the conclusion of this scenario is to manage the boom and to ensure that adequate infrastructure, facilities and services are available for a growing, demanding population.

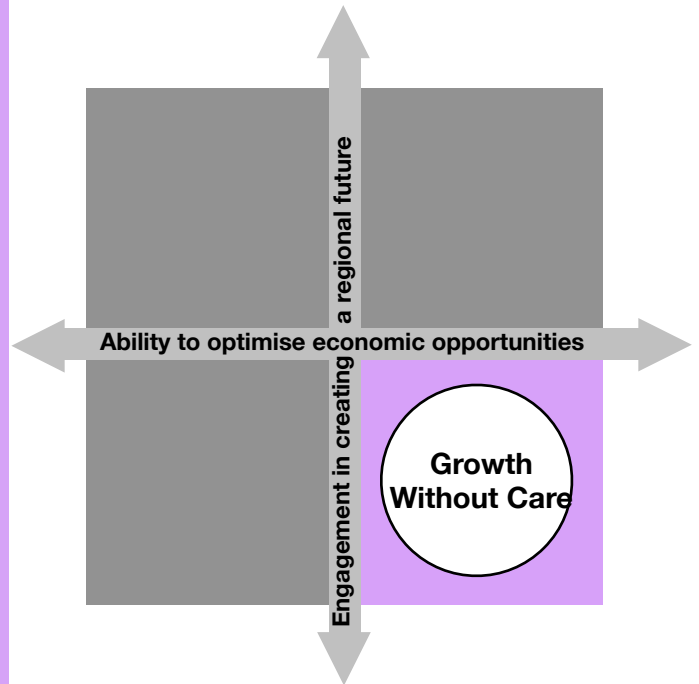
### **Implications**

At first glance, this scenario may be conceived as 'too good to be true'. Closer examination, however, reveals that this desirable outcome is not without its challenges, in both the early and latter stages of the period of the scenario. The need for active community engagement to the point of providing a clear, unified vision and strong, lasting requirements for sustainable development is a huge challenge. Identification of a clear, well-supported future vision would seem to be an important step on this path. Importantly, the challenges do not end once the future is unfolding as prosperity and growth bring their own, arguably greater challenges.

## Growth Without Care

West Cork is booming. A range of industries are being developed in the region including tourism, renewable energy, health and care, ICT, food and building. Most of these are owned by multinational companies that were encouraged to invest in Ireland. Sustainable energy, operated by the Emirates-based EcoEn, is now a reality. The region boasts full employment, although two-thirds of all jobs are in low wage, service positions. There is high immigration, especially people from eastern Europe, encouraged by prospects for work. The region is struggling socially amidst the economic prosperity. There is a large poverty gap, less time for social engagement, marginalised groups and little local engagement in planning.

In 2030 West Cork has a two-level society. Some people are in high paying work, working long hours, while the majority are in lower paid, “Mac jobs”. The ‘Costa del West Cork’, means a coastal focus to most development while much of the interior is missing the boom times. Everywhere one looks there are positives and negatives.



The scenario ‘space’ for *Growth Without Care* sees West Cork as a region with an increasing ability to optimise economic opportunities, but where engagement in creating a regional future is decreasing. The participants who developed the scenario for this quadrant pictured a mixed region with economic development but a lack of social engagement.

Aspect	Description
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full employment, but two-thirds in low wage work</li> <li>• Few local shops or pubs in villages</li> <li>• Lack of time for social engagement; minority and vulnerable groups discriminated against</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure for key industries and third-level college in West Cork</li> <li>• Diverse economy including tourism, ICT, renewable energy, value adding food businesses, nursing and care industries</li> <li>• Most industries under multinational ownership</li> </ul>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of consultation with local communities</li> <li>• Transport: larger, faster roads for tourism and coaches</li> <li>• Agriculture: larger fields and more forestry</li> <li>• Marine: focus on tourist facilities, development of deep berth marinas and fish farming</li> </ul>

## **Future History of *Growth Without Care***

### ***Fifteen years ago: 2015***

Unemployment continued to increase over the second decade of the century, leading to a depressed outlook for the country and the region, widespread protests and even incidents of social unrest. The Houses of the Oireachtas acted to implement a series of measures aimed at stimulating foreign investment and economic activity. These included the removal of agricultural subsidies, research into areas to enable new industries to develop and changes in energy costs to facilitate alternatives.

### ***Ten years ago: 2020***

Continued unrest and widespread rioting in 2018 caused the government to take further, more urgent action to bring in investment to stimulate development. This resulted in widespread deregulation of the economy and incentives for foreign investment. One of the first to take advantage of this were multinational energy companies that leased large tracts of land for renewable energy production, most of which was sited in West Cork. Within two years, decreased unemployment, increased consumer buying power, and an improved standard of living had reduced the protests to a small minority of citizens.

The new-found wealth was also used to complete key infrastructure projects, particularly roads and rail connections that were necessary to support the growing industry sectors (tourism, renewable energy, international agribusiness companies). This occurred despite calls to maintain the heritage of West Cork. Privatisation of the Health Service Executive resulted in the entry of large, international health and care companies, many of which located operations in West Cork in association with tourist locations. This attracted “third age” retirees to move to coastal areas in West Cork.

### ***Today: 2030***

Today West Cork boasts successful industries in tourism, agriculture and specialist food, health and care, building and information technology, communications and media all of which are under complete or majority multinational ownership. This has brought development and wealth into the area, but most of the profits are sent to the parent companies. Thus, while the local economy is now stronger than it was back in 2010, it is not as good as it might have been had local investment occurred or had the international companies not been given such generous concessions.

The region now has full employment, mainly driven by low-wage, service jobs. There are large inequalities in wealth between the approximately two-thirds of the population employed in such jobs and those who are employed in high pay, high input, family and community unfriendly roles. There is generally less social engagement in the community, the minority and vulnerable groups are discriminated against and there is absolutely no sense of a regional focus. On the positive side, a third-level college for West Cork was finally completed in 2023. Situated in Bantry, this has led to education, skilling and retention of more of the region’s youth.

The coastal areas of West Cork (‘Costa del West Cork’) are blossoming thanks to wealth and facilities generated by and for the tourism, health and care, renewable energy and building industries. The population has increased due to in-migration and immigration to fill the large number of jobs, resulting in a more multicultural feel. Community facilities have been enhanced to cope with the increased population and services for youth.

Meanwhile, the situation in the interior is very different. Agricultural and food development has increased, there is best practice in waste management and bio-mass energy, but these are restricted to larger, corporate operations located around

the larger population centres. Most of the towns and villages are declining with few local shops or pubs in villages. Tourist and industry traffic by-passes the towns and villages, instead moving along the bigger roads and by-passes that afford easy, rapid travel to, from and between the main destinations. Much of the population has moved to the bigger towns or coastal locations in pursuit of work and better facilities, such as schools and hospitals that were moved there in the great rationalisation of 2024 as part of the deal that delivered the third-level college. Those who are left behind are struggling to make ends meet in the current building boom.

The lack of an inclusive, cohesive planning process has extended to the environmental domain. Development of wind farms, biomass energy, forestry, deep-berth marinas and consolidation of farms has been achieved to suit the companies, with due attention to regulations, but a complete lack of consultation. The country roads and lane-ways of West Cork have given way to large roads and by-passes. There has been little concern voiced over these developments as the 'lot' of the majority of people has improved over the past twenty years.

### **How could such a scenario occur?**

Such a scenario is plausible. The scenario is a logical extension of current trends combined with a lack of any vision or co-ordination across the region. In fact, the participants who devised this scenario drew on experience from the last few years. The development of the region in this scenario occurs by a combination of government policy, the response of industry and acceptance, or lack of resistance, of the local community. The lack of community action, regulation and leadership results in a region where the future is determined largely by external forces and players.

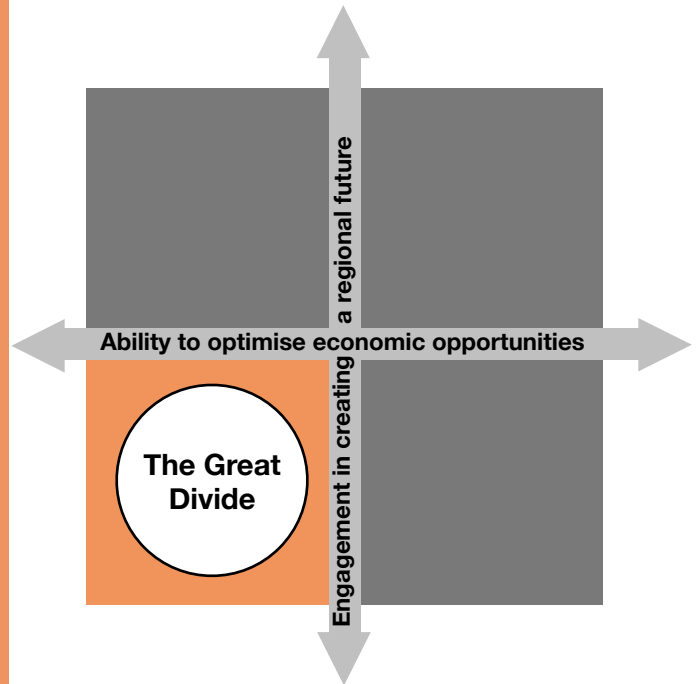
### **Implications**

The initial drive for this scenario comes from a worsening of the current recession and the hypothetical response to this. Hard times, coupled with widespread disquiet and even some unrest leads to a development-at-all-costs mentality. The return to good times on the back of the resulting influx of, mainly, foreign business investment softens any opposition to the loss of sovereignty and identity. However, the economic development leads to a loss of character and overall prosperity actually declines from unbridled economic growth. There is an implication that without active engagement in the future, the fruits of a new 'boom' may not to be distributed evenly.

## The Great Divide

The economy of West Cork is based on agriculture, food and energy. The region is largely a service area providing food and energy to Cork city with milk and dairy products exported further afield. Development in the region has been on a 'nodal' basis around previously existing infrastructure. Tourism has declined due to ageing infrastructure and the threat of inundation and flooding. Most tourism is now limited to isolated, remote retreats for wealthy visitors. The majority of the population is located in towns, while the more wealthy have moved to the countryside for a comfortable life away from troubled urban areas. The young move to urban areas for employment, while the old move to other locations with a lower cost of living.

In 2030 West Cork is a region in a state of flux, in all senses of the word. The landscape is changing due to flooding and inundation, the social landscape is reshaping around towns and rural holdings with 'ghost villages' largely unoccupied and, lastly, the economy is establishing itself around food and energy parks.



The scenario 'space' for *Growth Without Care* sees West Cork as a region with a decreasing ability to optimise economic opportunities, and where there is decreasing engagement in creating a regional future. The scenario for this quadrant has winners and losers; a few of the former and many of the latter.

Aspect	Description
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in mental health and social problems</li> <li>• Population fluctuations with net emigration</li> <li>• 'Ghost' villages (no activity) and urbanisation</li> <li>• Wealthy in-migration to rural dwellings</li> <li>• Self-sufficient, resilient, but largely insular region</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food and energy parks serving Cork city</li> <li>• Centralised, nodal development around infrastructure</li> <li>• Tourism limited to isolated, remote retreats due to flooding and inundation and a decrease in transport</li> </ul>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular flooding impacts on town centres</li> <li>• Environmental degradation because no investment in infrastructure</li> <li>• Environment restricts development opportunities especially coastal and low-lying land</li> </ul>

## **Future History of *The Great Divide***

### ***Fifteen years ago: 2015***

The period from 2010 to 2015 was one of slow, steady decline as a staggering regional economy began to have its effects. Tight government budgets resulted in reduced funding of public sector positions and services and low levels of public input into regional life. Support for farms was removed. There was a loss of leaders in agencies and communities and a loss of regional co-operation. This resulted in uncertainty and an unwillingness to take risks.

As the economy of the region declined, there was a decline in the quality of infrastructure and little replacement or repair of ageing infrastructure. The contamination of water with waste and other contaminants increased, resulting in an increase in the cost of water. There was unmet demand for health services, particularly for the elderly and mental health patients. The numbers of the latter had increased as more people lost their jobs. The number of shop-keepers declined, but jobs in environmental defence services were on the increase.

### ***Ten years ago: 2020***

The continued economic problems impacted regional industries dramatically. A prime example of this was the purchase of Carbery by Fontera in 2018 at a 'fire sale' price. They also bought some of the best grazing land in the region and re-fenced it as large-scale pasture areas for milk production. Whole and manufactured dairy products from their plant began to be sold in Cork city and exported throughout the world.

Tourism operations in the region were also under pressure. Seasonal water shortages severely affected beach tourism in Clonakilty. Poor infrastructure, especially roads, and declining population led to a reduction in tours to the interior. Meanwhile, energy costs increased across the region, affecting businesses and households alike.

The population of West Cork was on the move. This was most pronounced in the smaller villages and some towns of the interior of the region. The elderly moved to towns to escape isolation and diminished social services. Schools closures became common place as families moved to towns or out of the region altogether in search of work and better facilities. These movements meant that the population was not available to support tourism and social services and so the deadly spiral continued. Inland villages became black spots of unemployment.

### ***Today: 2030***

Today, the economy is beginning to stabilise thanks mainly to food and energy parks that are serving Cork city in conjunction with smaller industries such as tourism, IT and services. There is 'nodal' development occurring around existing infrastructure. Shop-keepers have been replaced by shopping centres outside the town.

Flooding of low-lying town centres is still a concern. Towns at risk include Bandon, Clonakilty and Bantry. As yet there is no provision for flood defence and no investment in infrastructure, but this is planned within the next five years. Environmental degradation has occurred due to the lack of investment in infrastructure. Environmental limitations now restrict the development of opportunities, especially tourism, which is limited to isolated, remote retreats for the wealthy.

Socially there is still an increase in the occurrence of mental health and social problems. Net emigration is still occurring, but the population of the region fluctuates wildly, especially amongst the younger and older cohorts. There has been a dramatic increase in urbanisation over the past twenty years and 'ghost' villages, in reality or very nearly, abound, despite a small amount of in-migration of wealthy citizens and

immigrants to rural dwellings. The spread of Grow It Yourself (GIY) and bartering has led to a self-sufficient, resilient, but largely insular region.

### **How could such a scenario occur?**

Such a salutary scenario is plausible. The rapid decline that occurs under this scenario is largely due to a lack of buffering in the region coupled with the inability or unwillingness to initiate a co-ordinated response. The region is prey to foreign investment as an opportunity to purchase cheap businesses, land and infrastructure, rather than due to its attractiveness. This investment helps to stabilise the economy, but does not move it to growth.

### **Implications**

This scenario is predicated on the existing recession continuing with a lack of co-ordinated effort or regional cohesion. Of the four scenarios it is probably the one that sees the most fundamental changes to the landscape, people and culture of West Cork. While by no means a desirable scenario, the resilience of the people of West Cork shines in this rather bleak future. The reader is left with the distinct impression that there will be a very different future in the twenty or perhaps even fifty years beyond the great divide.



## Discussion of scenarios

### Resilience and vulnerability

When examining the scenarios it is helpful to consider how each would perform under scenario changing “shocks”. Shocks are sudden, unpredictable or sustained events, decisions, contingencies or settings that can alter the future of the region. The Global Financial Crisis is a good example of a shock. When used in this context, shocks may be positive, negative or mixed in their impact; in fact, shocks may have differing impacts across the four scenarios.

Shocks are sudden, unpredictable or sustained events, decisions, contingencies or settings that can alter the future of the region.

### How would the scenarios fare under a shock of high fuel prices?

At the workshop the participants examined the concept of shocks by considering the impact of €5/L petrol prices on each of the scenarios. What would be the response to this shock? How vulnerable or resilient are each of the scenarios?

*Soul in a Hole* was seen as fairly resilient as the community has become engaged, organised and innovative. This would enable lobbying of government to get funds to build up renewable energy, such as wind energy. In this way the region could become a centre for excellence in renewable energy. The region is buffered as it is self-sufficient in food. Businesses in the region would rely more on IT, working from home and pooling of resources for transportation (which is facilitated by the strong community spirit). A side benefit would be that people would exercise more!

*Soul in a Hole* was seen as fairly resilient as the community has become engaged, organised and innovative. *SEE West Cork* and *Growth Without Care* were also considered to be fairly resistant to such a shock, being impacted negatively in the short-term, but able to recover in the long-term. *The Great Divide* is the big loser under this shock as there is not much activity and little ‘fat’ in the system.

*SEE West Cork* was also considered to be fairly resistant to such a shock. Eco-tourism would likely be challenged in the short-term, but it was considered that this would be ironed out in the long-term as alternative fuel sources became more readily available and widely used. Therefore economic development of the region would be challenged in short-term, but would improve in the long-term (although perhaps not to the extent in the existing scenario), and the environment would be better!

*Growth Without Care* was also considered to be impacted negatively in the short-term, but would recover in the long-term through the development of alternative, renewable fuels, which is a key element in the scenario.

*The Great Divide* is the big loser under this shock as there is not much activity and little ‘fat’ in the system. The foreign investment that is a key part of the scenario may change as the region is less attractive and industries are less viable. Such a shock would accelerate the move to mass retail and away from small shops and the development of the electronic community and erosion of social capital. Bandon could benefit from the need to be local, as could Clonakilty. This would accentuate the need to produce food locally.

### Other possible shocks

Examples of other shocks that could alter the future of West Cork are:

i) the development of an all of island economy which could impact West Cork in a

- number of ways due to its distance from the Belfast-Dublin ‘corridor’;
- ii) agreement under the Doha Development Agenda for the removal of agricultural subsidies in the European Union which would completely change the settings for agriculture in West Cork—this features in *Growth Without Care*;
- iii) widespread crop failure in North and South America, which would likely alter the world’s food stocks and hence the prices and availability of human food and animal feed; and
- iv) prolonged economic instability and social unrest on continental Europe, which could increase the attractiveness of a safe, secure and friendly Ireland as a tourist destination.

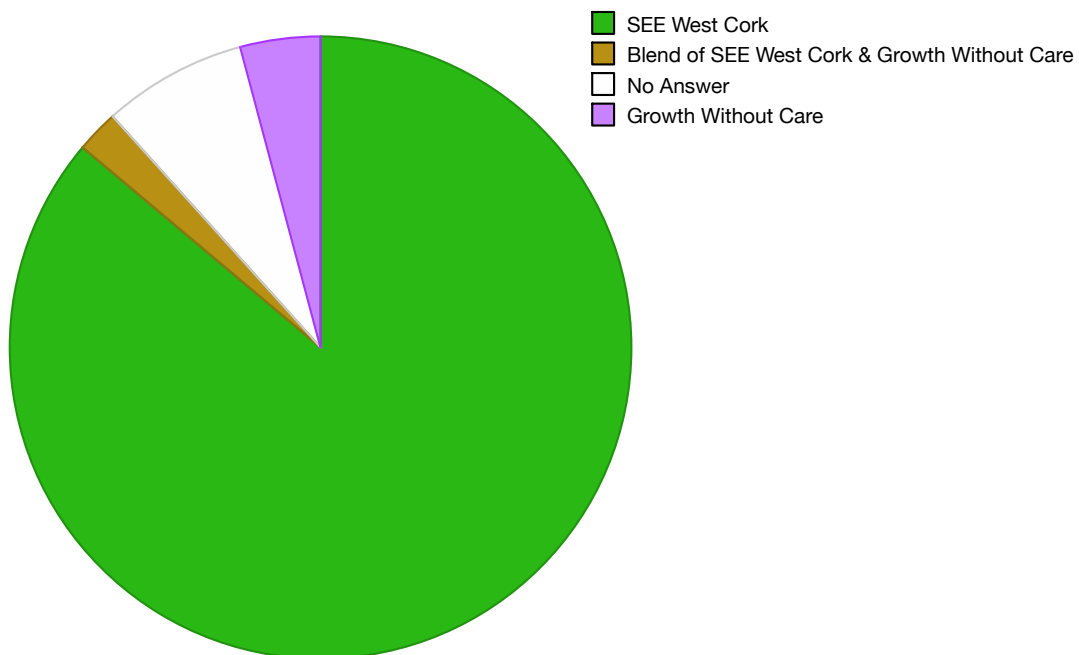
This is not intended to be a definitive list, but rather to serve to provide examples of the types of shocks that could be considered. Exploring the potential impacts of shocks is a powerful way in which scenarios may be used and is a useful way to examine and to compare the resilience and vulnerability of the various scenarios to different challenges.

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### Preferred scenario

The participants indicated unanimously, by a show of hands, that *SEE West Cork* is the preferred scenario. They were also asked to indicate their preferred scenario in the post-workshop questionnaire. The response here was not as strong as the show of hands, but was still strongly aligned around *SEE West Cork* (Figure 4). The participants’ comments regarding their preferred scenario reinforced the numeric responses and indicated an interest and commitment in developing a shared regional vision (Appendix III). It is unusual to have such a strong alignment with a single scenario, and if this were repeated in the wider community, it would assist with creating a cohesive vision for the region.

**Figure 4. The preferred scenario nominated by participants in the post-workshop questionnaire**



## Similarities and differences

The scenarios represent four plausible versions of the future for the West Cork region in 2030. These futures are distinctly different at the broad level of the society of West Cork, its economy and the impact on the environment, but there are also similarities in many aspects of the four.

The scenarios represent four plausible versions of the future for the West Cork region in 2030.

The similarities are based around the key drivers, in keeping with the process of scenario development.

Naturally, the uniqueness of West Cork and its natural environment feature in all of the scenarios. This is a key aspect (and asset) of West Cork, the preservation, development or exploitation of which is a distinguishing feature of the scenarios. The preservation of the uniqueness of West Cork, including development that includes this, is central to the *SEE West Cork* scenario. It is also crucial to *Soul in a Hole*, although it is not achieved to the same degree. By contrast, the uniqueness of West Cork is lost irrevocably in *Growth Without Care* and *The Great Divide*.

Like it or not, the development of economic opportunities is an essential part of the future prospects of any region.

The development of industries is central to all of these scenarios as it was one driver in the scenario-shaping cluster 'ability to optimise economic opportunities'. The industries that are developed, the mix of 'new' and 'traditional' industries

The industries that are developed, the mix of 'new' and 'traditional' industries and whether such development is in keeping with the environment and culture of West Cork is a major point of distinction between the scenarios.

and whether such development is in keeping with the environment and culture of West Cork is a major point of distinction between the scenarios.

Of the four scenarios, *SEE West Cork* has the best balance of these factors with "a vibrant, self-sufficient economy" that is based on agriculture, sustainable forestry, eco-tourism and green energy and a "well managed environment". The same is not the case for *Soul in a Hole* or *Growth Without Care*. Both of these scenarios feature the development of a similar mix of industries to *SEE West Cork*, but this development is not as well linked-in to the community nor the environment. This is somewhat of an over-simplification though, as the coastal areas are faring better in *Growth Without Care*, unlike the interior, and *Soul in a Hole* concludes with the community activated to try to turn the situation around before it is too late. *The Great Divide* is another matter altogether. This scenario sees the development of agriculture, food and energy industries, but it is done from the perspective of a region struggling for survival and is achieved with almost total disregard for the environment and culture of West Cork, which is changed forever.

An aspect that is common to several of the scenarios is the development of a two-tiered society. The separation into tiers occurs in different ways in the scenarios, with some of them having more than one form. Separation around cultural differences and a lack of social inclusion is a feature of *Growth Without Care*. Social separation based

An aspect that is common to several of the scenarios is the development of a two-tiered society.

on job opportunities and income is present in *The Great Divide* and *Growth Without Care*. Differing opportunities for the coastal and interior areas is a feature of *Soul in a Hole* and *Growth Without Care*, while disappearance of the villages in favour of towns and outward migration is a feature of *The Great Divide*. *SEE West Cork* is unique in that there is no form of divide, although the challenge is there in 2030 to manage the growth so as to prevent any occurring.

Transport is a key factor in any regional area and West Cork is no different. Important aspects relating to transport are the road network (which is also part of the uniqueness of West Cork), the re-development of a rail network and the ferry to Britain. Transport features in all of the scenarios, with improvements in *SEE West Cork* and *Growth Without Care* (although at the cost of country roads and lane-ways in the latter case), over-burdened transport infrastructure in *Soul in a Hole* and a decline in the quality and quantity of transport infrastructure in the case of *The Great Divide*.

The provision of third-level courses, either with or without the physical presence of a college, is a feature of *SEE West Cork* and *Growth Without Care*, but does not feature in the other two scenarios. This is indicative of the importance that people in the region place on the provision of locally available post-secondary education for the development of economic opportunities and the retention of youth in the region.

These observations suggest the need for a clear, cohesive regional vision incorporating guidelines for economic investment that enhances the uniqueness of West Cork, is inclusive of all groups (social, geographic and economic) in the society, builds important transport infrastructure and incorporates provision of third-level courses.

These observations suggest the need for a clear, cohesive regional vision incorporating guidelines for economic investment that enhances the uniqueness of West Cork, is inclusive of all groups (social, geographic and economic) in the society, builds important transport infrastructure and incorporates provision of third-level courses. In the absence of this, development may occur on an *ad hoc* basis and in a manner that is contrary to the wishes of the wider community. This may appear to be an obvious statement, but it is amazing how many examples of unplanned development that can be found in communities around the world.

## Impact of the workshop

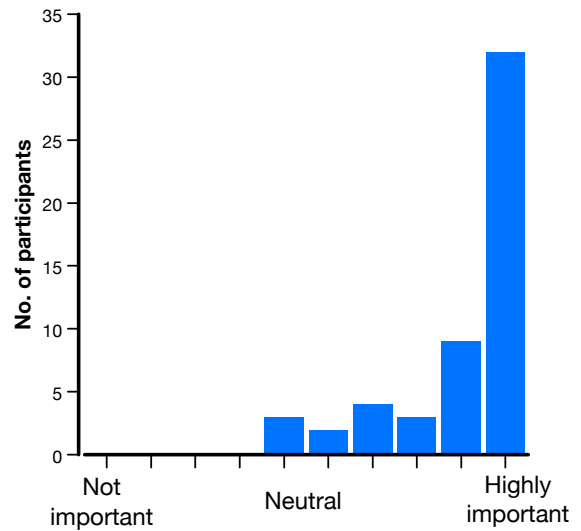
The participants at the workshop indicated that they thought that a shared vision for West Cork was very important (Figure 5). They also indicated that a shared vision was very important when making decisions about their local region. Furthermore the participants indicated a strong willingness to contribute to making a shared vision a reality for the West Cork region. These responses were supported by the participants' comments regarding these aspects (Appendix II, pp. 36–39). This represents a fabulous strength for West Cork into the future.

In the post-workshop questionnaire, sixty-four percent of the participants indicated that the workshop had altered their perception of the future for the West Cork region. In addition, the preliminary and post-workshop questionnaires (Appendix I, pp. 33–35) invited each of the participants to indicate his/her feelings about the prospects for West Cork in the future on a series of mood scales and regarding whether he/she expected key aspects of the region to be higher, the same or lower in the future. The results from these questionnaires indicate that the participants have generally positive and optimistic expectations of the future for the region and key aspects of the region. This increased slightly after participation in the workshop.

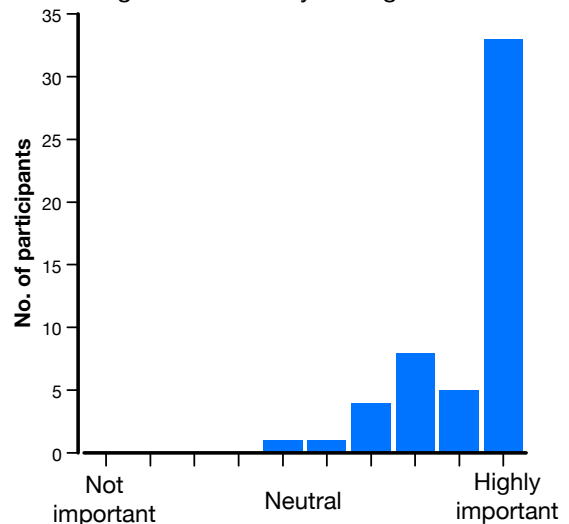
Each participant was asked whether he/she expected key aspects of the region (population, infrastructure, employment opportunities, sustainable land use, social capital and civic engagement, traditional industries and new industries) to be higher, the same or lower in the future. Prior to the workshop, 37–54% of the participants expected these aspects to be higher in the future (Figure 6, p. 30). These proportions were the same or slightly higher after the workshop; significantly higher in the case of sustainable land use. Interestingly, prior to the workshop, the female participants had

**Figure 5. Responses of participants regarding importance of a shared vision for West Cork**

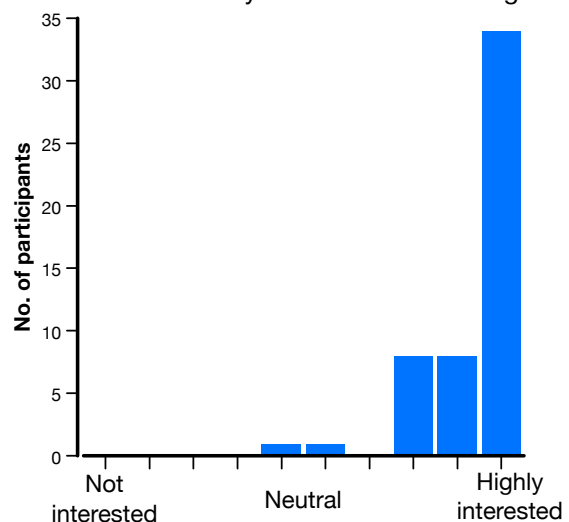
How important do you think it is to have a shared vision for West Cork?



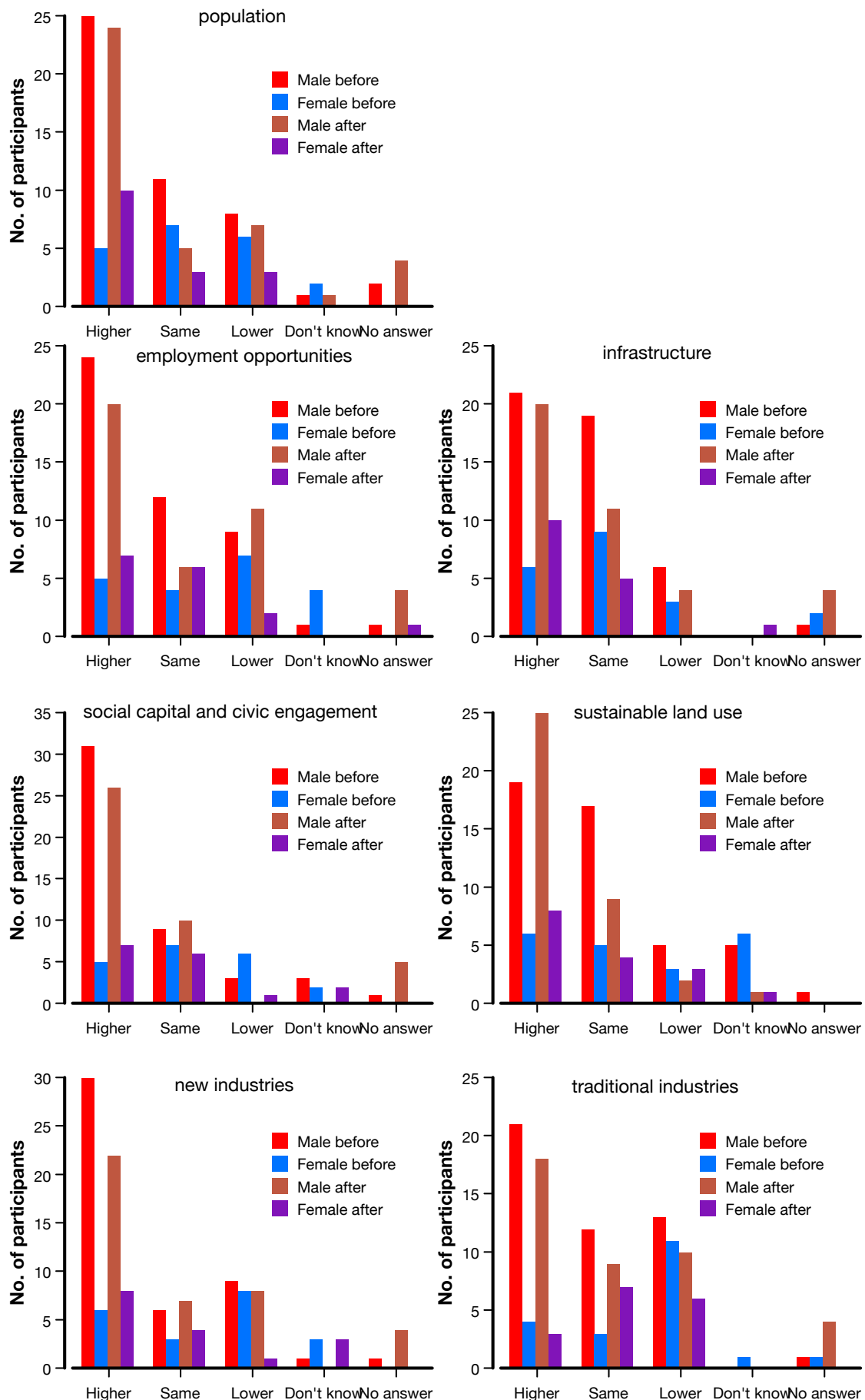
How important is consideration of a shared vision when making decisions for your region?



How interested are you in helping to make a preferred vision a reality for the West Cork region?



**Figure 6. The assessment by the participants before and after the workshop of their expectations of key aspects of the West Cork region in the future**



lower expectations than the males for employment opportunities, social capital and civic engagement, traditional industries and new industries, but there was no gender difference after the workshop.

Prior to the workshop the participants were moderately positive regarding the prospects for West Cork. The average results from responses to four scales (pessimistic<>optimistic, gloomy<>cheerful, negative<>positive and depressed<>elated) on a scale from one to nine were 6.9, 6.8, 7.0 and 6.2 respectively. After the workshop these values increased to 7.3, 7.3, 7.7 and 6.3 respectively. This increase was significant statistically in the case of the gloomy<>cheerful, negative<>positive and sum of the four scales, indicating a moderate increase in these after participation in the workshop.

## Next Steps

The scenarios presented in this report represent four plausible futures for West Cork in 2030. Exploration of these scenarios is a thought-provoking way to consider the future of the region which serves to activate futures-thinking and to identify key actions to drive the region towards the shared vision of the future.

These scenarios are an important step in the development of a strategy for the future of West Cork. The discussion at this workshop combined with the anonymous feedback of the participants in the questionnaires highlighted the strong commitment to a shared regional vision, extremely high level of agreement around what this is and a strong willingness on the part of participants to be involved in working towards making it a reality. Region-building is not for faint-hearted, but if a region was ever geared up for the task it is West Cork in 2010!

We recommend five key steps to follow-on from this workshop.

1. *Spreading the word*: the participants developed four clear, plausible and evocative scenarios for West Cork in 2030. It is important that these scenarios are taken beyond the workshop to the wider community of West Cork.
2. *Story time*: by their very nature, the narrative form of scenarios makes them ideal for discussing the future of the region in a rich and descriptive manner. This feature may be used to enable the spreading of the word mentioned above and can occur in a multitude of ways. This report and associated summary may be used to publicise the scenarios, they may be presented, described and discussed at public meetings, they could be turned into a game format and used in workshops, or on-line formats could be used to allow presentation, feedback and voting on the scenarios.
3. *Local interpretations*: the scenarios lend themselves to local adaptation so that people in a specific area may examine how each scenario could impact at the level they know best; their home town/area. The benefit of this approach is that the overall scenarios are consistent, which is particularly important if they are being used as part of a cohesive, shared regional vision.
4. *Key actions*: the development of a shared regional vision for the future of West Cork will lead naturally to the identification of actions that need to be undertaken to drive towards it. The scenarios developed in this workshop can contribute to this in three ways. Firstly by informing the development of the shared vision (which will likely be built around *SEE West Cork*). Secondly to use as a 'testing ground' against which to test proposed actions; will the actions come unstuck or possibly lead to alternative results under each of the four scenarios? Lastly, to monitor how the future is actually unfolding. How does the direction of the region with respect to the twenty key drivers indicate that the region is actually heading? Does this alter the shared vision and/or actions?
5. *Action time*: it is important that key actions identified as part of this process are promptly put into action. This builds on the desire for action and willingness to contribute that has been so clearly articulated by the participants at this workshop and will help to prevent disenchantment or cynicism that could develop from inaction or prolonged delays.



# APPENDICES

## Appendix I: Pre- and post-workshop questionnaires

### West Cork 2020 Preliminary Questionnaire

1. Have you previously been involved in a scenario planning exercise?

YES  NO

2. How important do you think it is to have a shared vision for West Cork in 2020?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Not important Neutral Highly important

3. How important is consideration of a shared vision when making decisions for your region?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Not important Neutral Highly important

4. How do you feel about the prospects for the West Cork in 2020? Circle a dot on each scale.

Pessimistic ● ← ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● → ● Optimistic  
 Gloomy ● ← ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● → ● Cheerful  
 Negative ● ← ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● → ● Positive  
 Depressed ● ← ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● → ● Elated

5. How do you expect the following aspects in West Cork to be in 2020 compared with today? Circle one option on each line below.

Population	Higher	Same	Lower	Don't know
Infrastructure	Higher	Same	Lower	Don't know
Employment opportunities	Higher	Same	Lower	Don't know
Sustainable land use	Higher	Same	Lower	Don't know
Social capital and civic engagement	Higher	Same	Lower	Don't know
Traditional industries	Higher	Same	Lower	Don't know
New industries	Higher	Same	Lower	Don't know

6. Please tell us about yourself.

What is your gender?  Female  Male      Where do you live? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What is your age group?  < 20  20 to 30  31 to 40  41 to 50  51 to 60  61 to 70  >70





## Appendix II: Comments from participants

All of the comments that participants made on the post-workshop questionnaire are list here. Comments are given with reference to an arbitrary, anonymous participant number to enable cross-referencing. Not all participants commented on every question, hence the missing participant numbers.

### a. Comments regarding the question ‘how interested are you in helping to make a preferred vision a reality for the West Cork region?’

#### No. Comment

- 1 More employment and less emigration for our region
- 3 My background is community development and I am conscious that we have to work together to move forward and progress. I feel I can make a difference.
- 4 I have used up a good deal if not all of my goodwill towards the community because I don't want the begrudgingly and being left to do everything if you volunteer to do one thing.
- 5 Plenty. I am founding director of a not-for-profit climate change and low carbon emission organisation.
- 6 My interest is altruistic. I want to help to make West Cork a place where quality of life factors are the key measures and drivers of success for all elements of the region.
- 7 Encourage farm allotments, improve recycling services, cut down on fuel bills, better insulated homes.
- 9 Would like to be involved and feel I can contribute in spreading the message.
- 10 I feel my work is very relevant to assisting West Cork's development. It is, I feel, the best use of my time. I have very little free time.
- 11 Don't complain if you're not pro-active.
- 12 My priority is to safeguard to interests of the marginalised areas. Shift emphasis from urban areas to the advancement of rural regions.
- 13 I am starting an online business to promote local civic engagement and action; to solve social issues.
- 14 Developing renewable energy and food industries in West Cork.
- 15 Want to learn more about mechanisms for engagement, education and training, involvement of youth & elderly, preparing for climate change and innovation. Feel more empowered to make a contribution.
- 16 Increase my engagement with local and regional level. Activate concepts developed at this seminar.
- 17 I would hope West Cork would develop sustainably over the coming year.
- 18 To bring a third level just to Skibbereen and develop the West Cork Arts Centre as one of excellence.
- 21 Using previously gained experiences are necessary to achieve the goals and aims of desirability within local communities.
- 22 So that future generations will have a future in West Cork.
- 24 Am working towards sustainable, resilient communities already using the transition towns model.
- 25 Larger community forum with more specific goals increased funding and support.
- 26 Very interested but the scenario process needs to be clarified better for the general population.
- 28 Essential everyone takes part to create a sustained, optimistic future for the region.
- 31 Build a centre of excellence to leverage on top of industry & university/third level collaboration. Incubation hub to build on traditional industries and develop new ones.
- 32 Place where one lives in and make a contribution to.

- 33 Need to identify drivers we can control and those we cannot so focus on drivers we can control.
- 35 Provide stronger community—assistance to assist vision “B”.
- 36 We need a positive—achievable to work towards.
- 37 More scenario planning events that focus more on the networking aspect...
- 38 Unite communities.
- 40 Educate local people of advantages/disadvantages. Make people more aware of future development.
- 43 More frequent meetings desirable. Reachable targets need to be set.
- 44 Happy to work on a shared vision, sustainable economy. Special interest in telework.
- 45 Might try such planning in Co. Waterford.
- 46 I will work to empower local communities
- 48 Giving the choice of those four is limited. Much more thinking of ethical not economic factors—economy is only one factor.
- 50 Increase the social, environmental and economic aspects of forestry in the region.
- 51 Interested in the engagement of all sectors of the community, not just those who are the current ‘movers and shakers’. Include the unemployed and marginal.
- 53 Available at any time or place to help to make West Cork a better place for all into the future.

**b. Comments regarding the question ‘which scenario would you choose as the preferred vision for the West Cork region?’**

- 3 We have a long way to go to reach that stage of our development but I'm hopeful we have the skills to achieve a common goal.
- 4 I think it will take strong leadership and much perseverance.
- 5 We need action now, not in 3-5 years time.
- 6 Yes, I'd like to spread the message and help (probably by using the scenario technique).
- 8 I would like to think people in West Cork can live and work in the area they inhabit.
- 9 Growth with care! Care really exists in Ballydehob but there are very few opportunities for growth.
- 10 Extreme ones dangerous; balance is resilience.
- 11 I feel the majority of West Cork people would agree.
- 12 It is more balanced between economic and social requirements.
- 13 I do not see widespread actual planning to enable scenario B
- 14 Would not like too much industrialisation.
- 15 Of the four, the paths to B seemed most sketchy to me and least plausible.
- 16 It is based on social illusion, empowerment and sound environmental principle. Growth is organic and not promoted as a goal in itself.
- 17 The development of sustainable jobs in the community of West Cork.
- 18 To make sure that the countryside remains unique as it is at the moment and hand something to ones children that we will be proud of.
- 19 It is important to maintain the focus on civic engagement and social inclusion whilst developing economically.
- 21 The possible outcomes are doable if only we do come together as a shared voice, not driven from governmental policies.
- 23 Social interest combined with growth better than “growth without care”
- 24 Not clear cut would like a little of other scenarios.
- 25 Probably unrealistic; but utopian vision.

- 26 If it happens as described then yippee.
- 27 West Cork has a high potential. We just have to see it.
- 28 That all communities take part and share in the region's prosperity.
- 30 Very realistic, perhaps achievable in a shorter time.
- 31 The core is to have non-political driven processes here. Action driven with clear defined project plans are vital here. Tracks need to be developed for core actions.
- 32 Everywhere in the EU would like to do the same.
- 33 If only the world was so easy!
- 36 Best all round, maybe some specifics in scenario need to be customised to suit specific needs of an area (my area).
- 37 With caveats on the threats for environmental issues. Vision is needed not just 20 years ahead; seven generations!
- 38 Quality of life, vibrant communities, community interaction.
- 43 Tourism potential not been tapped or properly organised. Third level education facilities urgently required.
- 44 Seems the only logical preference though not necessarily the most likely.
- 45 It is dependent on civic responsibility and rigorous levels of governance.
- 46 Vital that real local democracy takes place—it does not do so at present.
- 48 Society is more complex than how much money is produced—quality of life issues
- 50 What is meant by 'optimise economic opportunities'? At all costs?
- 51 It appears to be inclusive and of benefit to all.
- 52 Greater social engagement/involvement to ensure voices heard is a positive outcome. Important to ensure support would be available to enable the process and not just tokenism.
- 54 None
- 56 It would be the ideal scenario.

**c. Comments regarding the question 'I would work toward the common vision my community chooses (even if it were different from the one I choose)'**

- 1 Majority rules
- 3 I believe there is give and take in the process so am willing to think collectively.
- 4 It'd be more fun to do something than nothing. All the scenarios are malleable to some degree and they can be made "good".
- 5 I am an environmental scientist so I can only support a scenario that offers sustainable development for the greater good.
- 6 There may be aspects of a common vision that I'd support, but I could not support initiatives that do not benefit the community.
- 8 No
- 9 There must be consensus; there will always have to be compromise.
- 11 Should support majority view.
- 13 I'll start an initiative that will (hopefully) be a global model.
- 14 Only like doing what I believe in.
- 15 I believe in the power of working together, but sorry about an over emphasis on consensus.
- 16 Would go against all my aspirations and standards to lend support to a system in which I have no belief or trust.
- 17 I would love to see development for sustainable West Cork.
- 20 Some aspects of the common vision would be of interest to me.

- 21 If you can't make the effort to change you can't expect to engage the future as it unfolds.
- 22 The common good should come first.
- 23 We still will need LEADERS directing the common vision in the correct direction.
- 24 Have to be sustainable
- 25 Common visions can also be unsustainable/destructive etc.
- 26 I believe in consensus as the way forward.
- 28 Don't stop progress.
- 30 The vision must seek participation from people not typically included in decision-making processes (e.g. elections).
- 31 I am interested in the economic development of knowledge-based service business originating out of West Cork. This is a "personally" driven business, but also something I can bring to the vision/strategy for all.
- 32 One could influence aspects for the better while stirring for best possible outcome.
- 33 Human nature
- 35 Would assist for the common good.
- 36 Strength in numbers—we need to work together!
- 43 People need to stick together and to have a spirit of neighbourliness with each other.
- 44 It depends on how different it was. I could happily work for anything logical.
- 45 This shows my commitment to civic spirit and civic society.
- 46 I work best where I am fully committed. I would love to share the common vision.
- 48 I believe it is important to work together even if I disagree with the direction. Duty to helping society is crucial.
- 49 Communities that have a common vision and interest in developing are the communities that advance and prosper in the social sense. These are the places that have a "feel good" to live in, good facilities for children to grow up with and make good citizens
- 50 If the development conflicts with something that I know about and understand while others might not.
- 51 Would find it hard to contribute to a vision that did not care about the environment.
- 52 Community development is about working to build capacity/strengthening the choices people have in decisions that affect them so it would be important to support this and to work with people from their starting point.
- 55 Would find it difficult to work towards/contribute to something I don't believe in.
- 56 It would be democratic to do so.

#### **d. Overview of *The Future Game* and comments from participants**

As outlined briefly in the summary of the workshop process, the participants played the Pacific Northwest version of *The Future Game* one the first day of the workshop. In the game participants, in groups, act as decision-makers for a hypothetical region that is based on an area for which regional scenarios have been developed. The groups start with a map representing the region today and then have four game steps to change the region. At each game step, each group makes a decision based on a proposal and two options. Based on their decision, they receive a revised map that represents the changes to the region at the next time step. This process continues until the final map is reached. Versions of the game have been used with communities in Australia, the US and Canada with great success and acclaim. The game was used in this workshop to introduce scenario planning and the idea of a range of plausible futures.

The participants played the game in ten groups of five to seven each. At the end of the game all groups had reached one or the other of two endpoints from a possible five.

The decisions in the game were made with unanimous or strong (60–80%) agreement amongst the participants in each group. This suggests a similarity of thinking amongst the participants, at least when faced with similar problems and two options. This is an unusual result for this game.

The participants gleaned several things from the game. It encouraged listening to other people's perspectives and views, thus gaining an overall or expanded individual view and a wider perspective. It was thought that this helps when developing a common vision. Additionally it seemed that the most desirable scenario (in the game) enabled local resilience to possibly deal with external shocks. It was noted that real world decisions are often more difficult than the either/or presented in the game. The majority of the participants indicated (by a show of hands) that they considered that the game was a fun, yet challenging experience.



## Appendix III: Capacity of the region's communities to respond to a changing world

The participants examined the capacity of the region's communities to respond to a changing world, as mentioned briefly in the overview of the workshop. Ten attributes of successful communities were considered (Table 4). The participants were asked to identify the attributes in which they considered that the West Cork region is currently strong and those in which it is weak. Each participant was given four blue adhesive dots (to indicate the 'strong' attributes) and four red adhesive dots (to indicate 'weak' attributes). Each person was able to allocate his/her 'votes' in any manner he/she chose, i.e. spread across four attributes, concentrated over one or a few attributes or not used at all. The participants used 219 of a possible 232 strong 'votes' and 229 of a possible 232 weak 'votes'.

**Table 4. The ten attributes of successful communities**

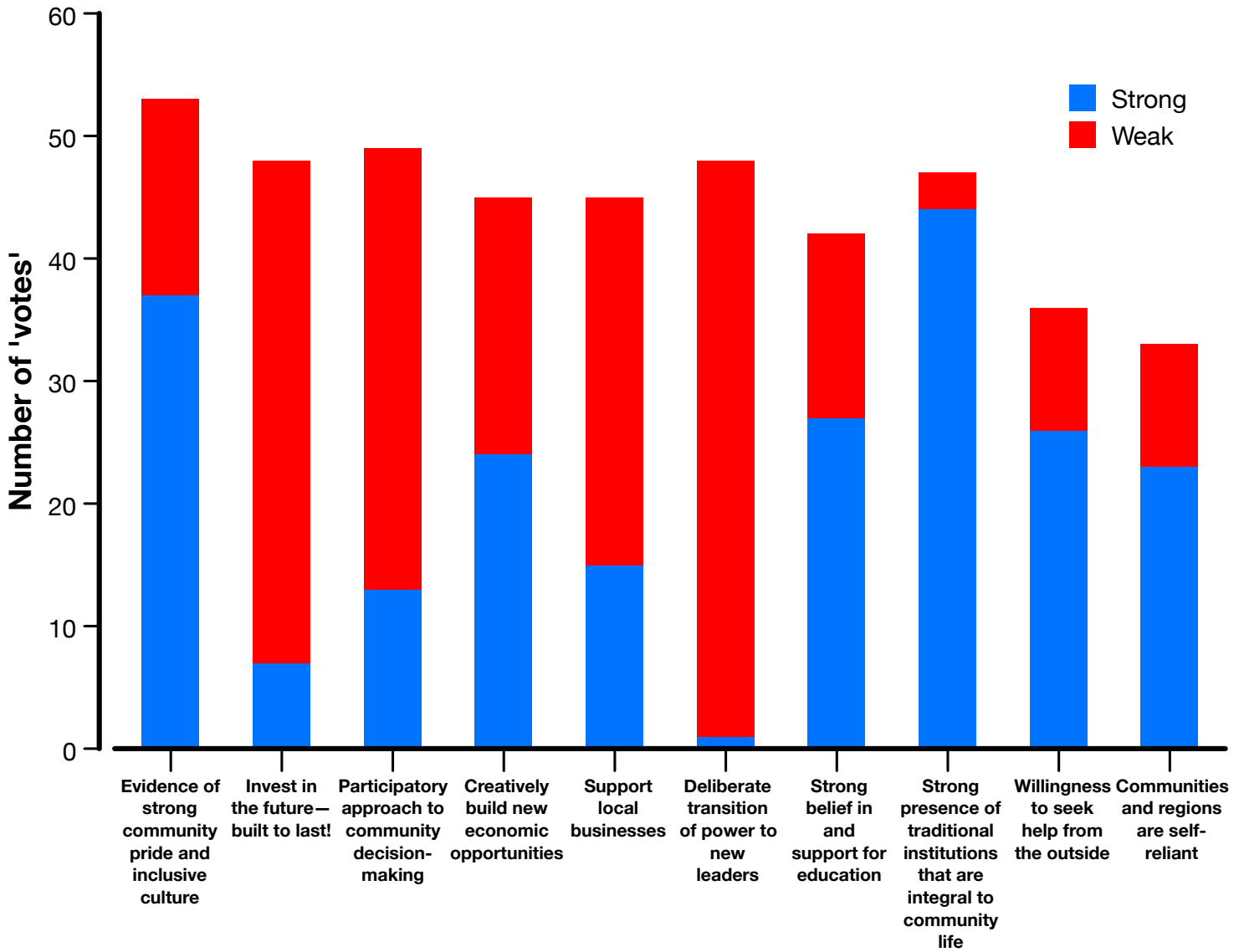
- evidence of strong community pride and inclusive culture
- invest in the future—built to last!
- participatory approach to community decision-making
- creatively build new economic opportunities
- support local businesses
- deliberate transition of power to new leaders
- strong belief in and support for education
- strong presence of traditional institutions that are integral to community life
- willingness to seek help from the outside
- communities and regions are self-reliant

The participants considered that 'evidence of strong community pride and inclusive culture' (17% of 'votes') and 'strong presence of traditional institutions that are integral to community life' (20% of 'votes') were aspects in which the region is particularly strong (Figure 6). The 'deliberate transition of power to new leaders' (21% of 'votes') and 'invest in the future -- built to last!' (18% of 'votes') were the two attributes in which the participants considered the region is particularly weak. The region was also considered by the participants to be relatively weak at 'participatory approach to community decision-making' and 'support local businesses'. Other attributes that the region is considered to be fairly strong at are 'strong belief in and support for education', 'willingness to seek help from the outside' and 'communities and regions are self-reliant'.

It is useful to consider this assessment with reference to the scenarios. The pride in the community, inclusive culture and traditional institutions are aspects of the uniqueness of West Cork, a driver that is central to all of the scenarios (see 'Similarities and differences' earlier in this report). The participants' perception that the transition of leadership and investment in the future are attributes that the region is particularly weak at is a telling result. Further discussion of this at the workshop pointed to a lack of leadership in the region at present. This is a possible limitation to the development of a shared regional vision for the future. In addition, the lack of investment in the future points to the challenge that may exist in convincing decision-makers to invest in a shared regional vision for the future.

**Figure 6. The rating of ten community attributes for the West Cork region by participants at the regional scenario planning workshop.**

The figures are the number of 'votes' for each attribute for which participants considered the region is 'strong' or 'weak'. Each participant had a maximum of four 'votes' for strong and four for weak.





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