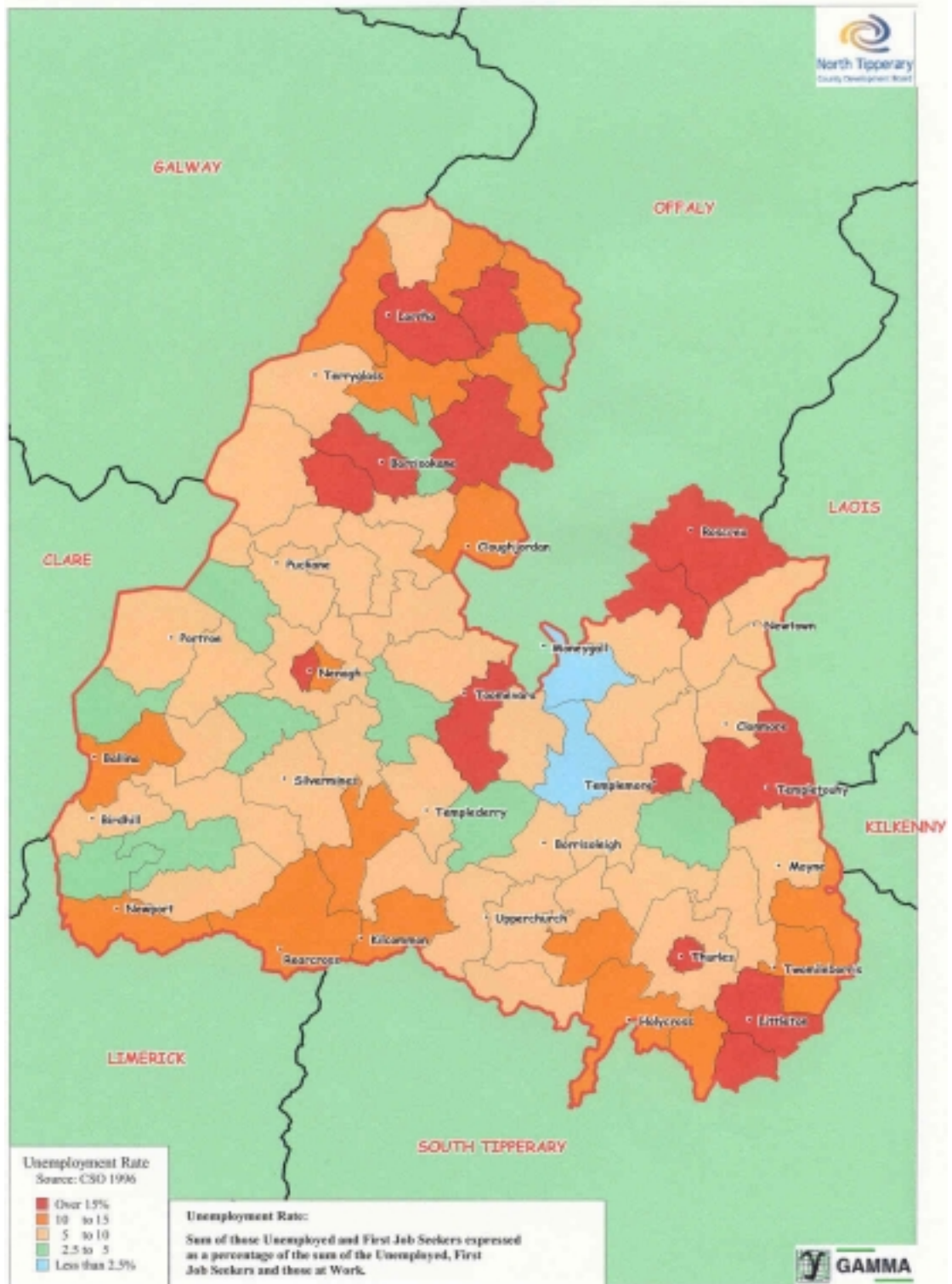


MAP 1.4 NORTH TIPPERARY UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY DED - 1996



The City/County Strategy groups preceded the City and County Development Boards and in some counties played an important role in developing and testing effective methods of co-operative action with regard to local development initiatives. They were also a foundation on which the City and County Development Boards could build their work.

The integration of local government and local development systems is one of the key reasons for the establishment of City and County Development Boards in this country. The recommendation to establish the boards was first put forward in August 1998 by the Government's Interdepartmental Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems. The Task Force issued two further reports, namely "Preparing the Ground: Guidelines for the Progress from Strategy Groups to County/City Development Boards (1999) and "A Shared Vision for County/City Development Boards: Guidelines on the CDB Strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Development (published in May 2000). This latter report outlined a suggested approach for the preparation of county and city strategies.

One of the primary purposes of the Boards is to prepare and oversee the implementation of City and County Strategies for Economic, Social & Cultural development. These strategies will span a 10 year period (2002 – 2012) and are intended to have clearly identified and achievable 2-3 year targets. The National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 endorses the need for City and County Development Boards and stresses the importance of all NDP programmes and projects adhering to the guiding principles and frameworks of these Boards.

2.2 North Tipperary County Development Board

North Tipperary County Development Board held its inaugural meeting in April 2000. The Board comprises 25 people representing four sectors, namely local government, local development, state agencies and social partners (See Appendix 1). It is an autonomous body operating under the aegis of North Tipperary County Council in accordance with the Local Government Act 2001. The executive support to the Board is drawn from the Community & Enterprise Department of North Tipperary County Council.

2.3 The Process in North Tipperary

The Economic, Social and Cultural strategy in North Tipperary was developed over a period of 18 months and has resulted in the identification of visions, strategic objectives and actions over 13 key areas across the economic, social and cultural sectors.

Since the aim of the County Development Boards is to develop co-ordination between organisations across a wide range of sectors and topics, the process undertaken in the production of the strategy had to be participatory and inclusive in its approach. In order to ensure this, a wide range of organisations and individuals was engaged in all parts of the process and the needs of the marginalised and disadvantaged were kept in focus by those participating in the process at all times. It is acknowledged that the process could be improved in this regard and it is intended that future work on the strategy will ensure greater participation directly by those who are marginalised and disadvantaged. However, in the light of the constraints on time and resources and the scale and complexity of the process, it is considered that the issues of participation and inclusiveness were reasonably well addressed.

The Board established four working groups comprised mainly of Board members and with the opportunity for the co-option of external members where considered necessary by any group. The role of each group was to monitor progress and to provide direction on particular areas of the strategy. Each working group developed initial terms of reference and draft work programmes. The four groups were:

- ◆ Economic Working Group
- ◆ Social Working Group
- ◆ Culture Working Group
- ◆ Infrastructure Working Group

Economic & Social

The Economic and Social working groups established relevant task groups to assist in the development of specific areas of the strategy. This was considered necessary due to the range of issues involved and the complexity of their inter-relationships. A lead agency/organisation was appointed to each task group with responsibility for directing the work of their particular group.

The Economic Working Group established four task groups, namely:

- ◆ Agriculture, Forestry & Rural Development
- ◆ Foreign Direct Investment/Indigenous Industry
- ◆ Small & Medium-sized Enterprises

- ◆ Tourism

The Social Working Group identified the following areas as requiring investigation.

- ◆ Education & Training
- ◆ Poverty & Families with Inadequate Income
- ◆ Isolation/Safe & Supportive Communities
- ◆ Youth At Risk
- ◆ Ethnic Groups
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Health

The aforementioned task groups focused on their own sectors. Membership of all task groups was drawn from agencies, voluntary organisations, community representatives, local government and local development. The average membership of each group was 15 and each met on average four times over the period October 2000 to June 2001 and were facilitated by the executive of the County Development Board.

The initial meeting of each segment group focused on an explanation of the process involved in the preparation of the strategy, data requirements, group representation, the audit of service provision and the definition and scope of the particular topic under review. The second and in some cases the third meetings focused on identifying the main issues/weaknesses and formulating visions or goals. Subsequent meetings saw each group analyse draft visions and strategic objectives, which led to the identification of strategic actions.

Culture & Infrastructure

The Culture and Infrastructure Working groups addressed their own specific issues. Task groups were not established in these areas as they were considered sufficiently integrated and homogenous to be dealt with by a single group.

The Culture Working group expanded its membership and addressed the task of developing visions, strategic objectives and actions around culture.

Likewise the Infrastructure Working group brainstormed issues, strengths and weaknesses of the various elements that make up infrastructure which was broadly defined for this purpose. The actions that emerged from the Infrastructure Working Group also applied to the relevant task groups under the economic and social areas and were incorporated into the visions, objectives and actions of those groups.

A sub-group to the Board (Tipperary Business Advisors Network) had responsibility for preparing the Information Communications Technology section of the strategy, which also resulted in the issues being identified, and visions, strategic objectives and actions with regard to this sector being developed. The area of ICT was considered in respect of North and South Tipperary together and a joint approach was developed though it is reflected differently in each strategy.

2.4 Shaping the Strategy

The process was based on developing a multiplicity of visions, strategic objectives and actions across the 13 areas as outlined above.

The layers created by the Board (working groups and task groups) ensured that the information and output from each group was analysed and considered in a very in-depth way. Once the draft visions, strategic objectives and actions were finalised by the task groups they were then considered and further analysed by the relevant working groups and finally endorsed by the Board.

The Board reviewed and approved all draft visions, strategic objectives and actions at a day-long workshop held on 29 June 2001. It was agreed that the next step was the identification of the main agencies/organisations who had resources and who would be capable of implementing actions.

A total of 27 organisations (Appendix) were identified and a template of actions was forwarded to each. They were requested to indicate a level of commitment to the actions contained in the template and to identify other actions that they felt were relevant to them. Indication of commitment was on one of three levels:

- ◆ 'willing to commit'
- ◆ 'willing to commit, if resources were available'
- ◆ 'unwilling to commit within the next 2-3 years'

All 27 organisations responded with varying levels of commitment, which resulted in the production of an **implementation schedule** and the identification of timescales for the delivery of actions. Each action was considered in the context of the level of commitment and was categorised for implementation as:

- ◆ **Short-term:** i.e. commitment to carry out actions within the next 2-3 years
- ◆ **Medium/long-term:** i.e. commitment to carry out actions subject to the availability of resources
- ◆ **No commitment:** i.e. actions not supported by any organisation

This **implementation schedule** was circulated to the Board and approved at the November Board meeting. It was agreed that the initial focus would be placed on the implementation of short-term actions.

Regional issues were developed jointly on behalf of the City and County Development Boards in the Mid-West Region. Regional actions were identified around the areas of public transport, roads infrastructure, information technology, energy/power, the Shannon Estuary, Lough Derg, tourism, third level education and health service provision and were endorsed by the Board.

At its December 2001 meeting the Board approved the final strategy including visions, strategic objectives, actions and implementation timescales. The Board also endorsed the work of the County Childcare committee in the development of visions, objectives and actions in respect of the North Tipperary Childcare Strategy.

North Tipperary County Council endorsed the North Tipperary Economic, Social & Cultural Strategy at its December meeting. Between December 2001 and January 2002, meetings were held with the Social Partners with a view to further informing them of the stage in the strategy process.

2.5 County Dimension

Tipperary is the only county where because it has two administrative authorities, is producing two strategies, one for North Tipperary and one for South Tipperary. During the course of preparing the respective strategies certain areas were identified which will lend themselves to a joint approach. These areas include Tourism and Information Communications Technology. Other areas may be identified in the course of implementation and North Tipperary County Development Board is committed to a joint approach where there is a collective benefit to the county.

3. Strategic Themes

3.1 Agriculture/Forestry/Rural Development