

Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC meeting held on Monday 22nd June 2020 via ZOOM call.

Present: Councillor Gerry Walsh Chair
Councillor Mary Kavanagh
Councillor Tom Fortune
Mr. Michael Allen
Mr. Michael Ryan
Mr. Huw O' Toole
Ms. Ruth Donnelly
Councillor Avril Cronin
Mr. Killian McGreal
Councillor Pat Kennedy

In Attendance: Ms. Lorraine Gallagher, Acting Director of Services
Mr. Brian Gleeson, Head of Finance
Ms. Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise
Ms. Deirdre Whitfield, Administrative Officer
Mr. Derek Cullen, Acting Staff Officer

Apologies: Councillor Irene Winters

ITEM 1

Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC held on Monday 9th March 2020 (copy circulated).

On the proposal of Cllr. Tom Fortune, seconded by Cllr. Mary Kavanagh, the minutes of SPC meeting held on Monday the 9th March 2020 as circulated were agreed.

ITEM2

Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

It was agreed to take Item 11

Update: Restart Grant Fund for Small Businesses

Brian Gleeson, Head of Finance provided a report of the Restart Grant Fund for Small Businesses to the meeting.

Following the presentation the following questions and points were raised:

- When is the closing date and is there a designated team looking after it?
- There is also the Rates Waiver Scheme. Is that due to finish?
- What is the timeframe for decisions to be made on applications?

Brian Gleeson responded outlining the following:-

- The closing date is 30th August 2020. The applications are being processed in line with the Government's Covid-19 Roadmap.
- The rate collectors are the main designated team having regard to experience and knowledge. To date Wicklow County Council has received about 800 applications.
- Initially there was a rates deferral scheme set up. This was more of a declaration by businesses to say that won't be paying for 3 months. Then the rates waiver scheme was introduced, with approximately €260 million allocated by Government towards that scheme, also to cover a 3 month period but likely to be extended. To date the exact details and criteria have not been distributed by Government.
- The timeframe on decisions for applications depends on what phase the business is in. We are concentrating on businesses in phases 0, 1 and 2.
- Payments have commenced.

Councillor Avril Cronin informed the meeting that she has to leave at this point as the Baltinglass Municipal District meeting is due to take place.

ITEM2

County Wicklow Economic Think Tank (CWETT): Implementation Stage

Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer provided a report to the meeting.

FILM

The proposed development of the Hub is in response to the demand for content creation arising out of the growth of streaming and new forms of media consumption. The Hub will develop the potential of entrepreneurs, emerging and established businesses. Support growth and internationalisation of established businesses. Liaise with the various colleges and training agencies to ensure a skilled workforce.

RETAIL

Progression of the Florentine Project.

The Oakmount site was closed for 3 months due to Covid 19 crisis. The site reopened on 18th May last. The management team of the main contractor and design teams have been operating from the site. A lot of work was carried out on site during this time for Covid H&S. New staff welfare facilities have been installed in the basement of the site. During this time ESB Networks have connected to the substation on site.

It is envisaged that the site will be operating with 80 staff on site from next week. Oakmount are currently working on a revised work programme and all the sub contractors and supply chain operators are feeding into this programme. When this is finalised Oakmount will be in contact with the council.

The letting of the units are progressing. There are a number of lettings at heads of agreement. Further information will issue on the Council monthly updates.

TOWN RE-OPENING COMMITTEES

Following the success of the Bray Re-opening Committee, Wicklow County Council proposes the establishment of re-opening committees in each Municipal District – the purpose of these committees is to support businesses as they re-open and to encourage members of the community to support local business.

It is proposed to hold a plenary Zoom meeting on Tuesday next 23rd June at 8.30 a.m to hear about the Bray experience and to discuss the formation of a Re-opening Committee for each district. It is envisaged that each committee will hold 3 to 4 virtual meetings between now and 21st July to look at a range of workable solutions to ensure a safer but welcoming environment for the public and for businesses as Covid-19 restrictions begin to ease.

Topics the Re-opening Committees will consider include, but are not limited to:

- Looking at workable solutions so that businesses can re-open safely from queuing in public spaces, delivery times to waste collection times*
- Temporary changes in the town centre to make it safer and more spacious for pedestrians to encourage social distancing including looking at the feasibility of widening pavements, pedestrianised zones, putting up new signage, setting down two-metre marker dots to provide a 'visual guide', removal of some on-street parking, the introduction of a one-way systems, relocating bus stops and the removal of street furniture*
- Business and public consultation*

It is proposed that membership of the Re-Opening Committees will consist of MD Cathaoirleach (Chair), MD Manager, MD Administrator, MD Engineer, Chair of the Town Team, Representative of the Chamber of Commerce and An Garda Síochána.

The meeting will give an overview of the business supports available and will cover issues that are being dealt with on a countywide basis, and proposals for publicity and social media campaigns.

Following the report the following questions and points were raised:

- Michael Ryan stated that the County Wicklow union members would feel aggrieved that they weren't asked for any input. He asked was there a reason they were not included or were they overlooked in error.
- Is there NTA funding associated with the reopening committee's initiative?
- Is there a timeframe available for the completion of the Florentine Centre?
- Regarding the litter problem, can the Council take a blunt measure and place some industrial sized wheelie bins around urban areas as a temporary measure to alleviate some of the litter problem?
- There is real community positivity towards shopping local at the moment. When you have that level of enthusiasm within the local community a 'gentle nudge' is all is needed to keep people supporting local.

Christine Flood responded outlining the following:-

- There may be some NTA funding for more permanent works but less likely for more temporary measures. There may be some for footpath widening etc. A lot of the measures are quite small (publicity, planter realignment etc)
- There is no completion date for the Florentine Centre but we have a meeting later this week where we might be given an indication. It won't be October 2020 though, due to the COVID-19 disruptions.

Lorraine Gallagher also responded outlining the following:-

- This was a response to a crisis and was looked at how best to get the project off the ground quickly. She added that the unions play a big part; particularly in return to work but there was no 'overlooking' as such.
- Regarding the litter problem, that is something that could be raised at your respective Municipal District meeting as the engineers would be best placed to answer.

ITEM 4

Update: URDF Applications

Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer provided a report on URDF applications to the meeting.

- *There are currently three 2018 URDF projects underway; Arklow Historic Town Core, Wicklow Library and Fitzwilliam Square and the Bray Public Transport Bridge.*
- *URDF applications were also submitted in May 2020 for the Regeneration of the Arklow Quays, Bray Harbour Regeneration and the regeneration of Wicklow's Waterfront.*
- *With regard to the RRDF applications, Wicklow County Council is awaiting the results of applications submitted in February 2020 in respect of Blessington, Newtownmountkennedy, and Rathdrum.*
- *We expect an announcement on the RRDF before the end of the year.*
- *A new round of RRDF funding has been announced with a closing date 1st December 2020.*

Tourism

Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer provided an update on County Wicklow Tourism to the meeting.

The County Wicklow Tourism strategy sets out a number of challenging but achievable priorities along with a series of detailed actions to be implemented over the next 5 years

The Key Priorities are:

1. *Develop New Accommodation*
2. *Develop Key Towns as Visitor Hubs*
3. *Develop a Masterplan for Glendalough*
4. *Grow Thematic Experiences*
5. *Market our County by Developing A Common Narrative*

*A Tourism Implementation Group has been established to oversee these actions and drive all sectors towards helping Wicklow achieve the target of **€200m in tourism revenue by 2023.***

Accommodation: *Fáilte Ireland has engaged Crowe Consultants to develop a Toolkit to help attract investment in accommodation. It is estimated that Wicklow requires an additional 175 Hotel Rooms over the next five years based on 4% growth, this is assuming that the additional 50 rooms that have extant planning permission are developed.*

Destination Town Funding - *An application to Failte Ireland on behalf of Wicklow Town has been made in respect of Destination Town Funding. If successful this could result in funding of over €500k in respect of development of tourism amenities in the town.*

Glendalough Masterplan and Wicklow Visitor Orientation Study

Failte Ireland, with its strategic partners OPW, NPWS and with Wicklow County Council advertised for consultants to develop tourism Masterplan for Glendalough and a Visitor Orientation Plan for County Wicklow. Twelve expressions of interest have been received and these will be assessed by the evaluation committee on 25th June 2020.

Thematic Experiences

Tracks and Trails - *Wicklow County Council have engaged the producers of Tracks and Trails to redevelop some of the existing programmes for use on the Wicklow.ie website and social media and also to develop shorter tracks and trails clips aimed at internet viewers, airlines and traditional media. The new trails include the Bray Head to Sugarloaf Trail and the Tinahely Looped Walk. The original launch due to be held in April was cancelled. A new virtual launch date will be announced shortly.*

Wicklow Passport: Featuring stamps designed representing attractions, towns and villages when a visitor obtains 15 stamps they will qualify for a certificate as a Wicklow Ambassador

Eco Trail: The Eco Trail is the largest Trail Running Event in Ireland and takes place on 26th September 2020

Covid 19: some visitor attractions such as gardens were able to reopen on 18th May; other businesses may not be in a position to open this year. Failte Ireland, Wicklow County Council, LEO Wicklow are providing a range of supports and advice for tourism providers.

Food and Beverage Strategy: The working groups established under Wicklow Food Strategy continue to meet on Zoom and have made excellent progress under a number of themes:

- Tell the Wicklow Food Story
- Develop a Signature Dish
- Bringing Local Food to Local People Food Poverty
- Business Supports including a feasibility study for a Food Hub

Wicklow Naturally and some of the producers will be featured on Nationwide in the Autumn. It is proposed to reschedule the launch of the Wicklow Naturally Brand for September

Following the report the following questions and points were raised:

In response to a query as to the status of the various town plans Ms. Christine Flood stated that Wicklow County Council has used two architects to do draw up initial high-level artists impressions that will be used as a basis for the applications. It is hoped that if funding is awarded a larger design team can be put in place.

ITEM 5

Update: Announcement by SSE Renewables: Arklow Wind Bank Project

Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer provided a presentation on the Arklow Wind Bank Project (this report was circulated to all members of the SPC).

Following the report the following questions and points were raised:

- Regarding the €2 billion that it will cost to build the wind farm, where will this money come from?
- Who will own the operation when it is completed in 2025 / 26? Whoever owns it, they could possibly sell it on in the future?
- Fantastic opportunity for County Wicklow but we need make sure that certain controls don't fall into hands where we have no input or involvement.
- What are the benefits to the community?

Christine Flood responded outlining the following:-

- SSE, as substantial investors, is providing the investment and SSE and will, under licence, own the area of the Wind Farm.
- The owners could sell it if wished just as they purchased that operation from another developer.
- Wicklow County Councils control will be relatively limited because the main decisions will be made by An Bord Pleanála, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Eirgrid. SSE have stated that they will be doing a huge amount of community engagement and they have a team in place to commence that engagement.
- Some of the benefits to the community include the community fund, which we hope will evolve, training, education and employment, spin-off industry and the investment in rates and jobs.

ITEM 6

Update: LECP / Rural Development Funding

ITEM 7

Update: Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

ITEM 8

Update: Blessington Greenway Project

Deirdre Whitfield, Administrative Officer provided reports on Items 6, 7 and 8 together as various areas overlapped.

LECP UPDATE JUNE 2020

Goal 1: Develop community capacity in disadvantaged communities and engage in urban and rural regeneration

Regeneration Funding Schemes 2019

Rural Regeneration Development Fund 2019

Area	Overview of Proposal	Funding Awarded
Baltinglass	Restoration of the Courthouse reuse as a library/Heritage and Digi-hub with outdoor event space Public Realm enhancement, parking improvement, pedestrian crossings, ramps, boardwalk and riverside fencing	€2.7mn (total cost €3,566,968)

Underway – all affected by COVID-19 restrictions

Town & Village Scheme 2019

Area	Overview of Proposal	Funding awarded
FUNDED		
Redcross	Streetscape works	€80,000
Aughrim	Recreational amenity	€95,600
Dunlavin	Healthcheck plus public realm works	€20,973
Coolkenno	Public lights and rails	€24,000
Delgany	Community plan	€29,600

Underway – all affected by COVID-19 restrictions

CLAR 2019 - the following three projects were approved for funding by DRCD

Area	Overview of Proposal	Funding awarded
Knockananna	Footpaths	€50,000
Knockananna	Sensory Garden	€34,000
Rathcoyle	Multi-Use Games Area	€50,000

Underway – all affected by COVID-19 restrictions

Regeneration Funding Schemes 2020

RRDF 2020 CAT 2 – Closing Date Feb 27th 2020

3 projects submitted

Area	Overview
Newtownmountkennedy	Main st. Design; mobility /transport plan; community facilities
Rathdrum	Gateway sites (HSE and VEC Building), public realm and sustainable transport

Blessington	Main st. Design; mobility /transport plan; inner relief road; community facilities
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URDF – Closing Date March 27th 2020

3 projects submitted

Area	Overview
Bray	Redesign Harbour area
Wicklow	Redesign Harbour area
Arklow	Redesign Harbour area

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme, CLAR and the Outdoor Recreation Scheme are now open.

Town & Village 2020

This funding scheme supports economic and social development projects in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000.

This year there are two elements to the Scheme.

2020 Accelerated Measure

This measure aims to assist communities and local businesses in the delivery of projects that address the short term challenges of social and economic recovery following the COVID-19 emergency. The focus is on adapting to public health requirements, particularly social distancing.

Funding is available up to €25,000 - €40,000 in exceptional circumstances

The closing dates are:

3rd July 2020

14th August 2020

2020 Town and Village Main Scheme

This scheme will support the economic and social development and recovery of towns and villages, and any emerging challenges associated with COVID-19. Examples are:

- Projects involving public realm improvements
- Enhancement of town and village amenities especially where this aids the economic/social recovery of the area
- Projects that stimulate local enterprise or social enterprise

The closing date is: 28th August 2020

CLAR 2020

CLÁR provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in rural areas that have suffered significant levels of population decline. The supports provided through CLÁR have been tailored this year to help rural communities to respond to the new COVID-19 environment. This includes the addition of new funding measures.

The measures being funded under the 2020 CLÁR programme are:

Measure 1: Schools/Community Safety measures (expanded in 2020)

Measure 2: Community Recreation Areas (new in 2020)

Measure 3: Community Wellbeing Supports, comprising:

Meals on Wheels and linked services (new in 2020)

Mobility and Cancer Care Transport

Outdoor Recreation Scheme 2020

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme provides funding for the development of new and existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas. The Scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development in partnership with Fáilte Ireland. County Wicklow Partnership manage the scheme through the Outdoor Recreation Officer.

All related documents are available on www.wicklow.ie

Goal 3: Strategic Direction – Develop high quality integrated services, available to all communities, in particular, disadvantaged communities and vulnerable groups

1. Healthy Wicklow Strategy :Round 3 of Programme submitted and awaiting approval.
Recruitment of Co-ordinator underway

2. Co. Wicklow Food & Beverage Strategy.: The Branding process for County Wicklow is completed. The food poverty and resilience subgroup has been convened and is starting to work on this issue. The food poverty issue was exacerbated and highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis also.

3. County Wicklow Digital Strategy: As digital poverty presented as a significant issue of concern during COVID-19, a subgroups has formed as part of the COVID-19 Community Response Forum. Research was carried out to identify need and a pilot digital poverty funding scheme has just opened aimed at organisations working with vulnerable families, individuals and older people who have put more of their services online. The fund will enable the organisations to provide tablets, laptops and dongles for those most in need so that they can access services.

4. Migrant Integration Strategy: An interim report on the development of the strategy is due in June 2020

Goal 4: Develop a vibrant and innovative community and social enterprise sector

Bar Area Partnership has teamed with Southside partnership and was successful in securing Dormant Accounts funding for a social enterprise support project. SEED, Social Enterprise Expansion and Development, provides both mentoring and training to Social Enterprises in the North Wicklow area.

County Wicklow Partnership's social enterprise project is providing support and training to social enterprises in the rest of the county. It also provides start-up funding through the LEADER Programme.

- A Rural Youth Online Social Enterprise Entrepreneurial Training Programme
- Covid 19 Training Support Programme for new and existing Social Enterprises in Co Wicklow

Blessington Greenway

- Murphys Surveys carried out a drone survey of the entire route
- Liam Murphy appointed as a forester advisor for WCC.
- HSE building Kilbride Road, Blessington purchased to develop as a major trailhead for the Greenway.
- Trial Section from Vallemount Carpark to Ballyknockan proposed – approximately 5km
- Walkover of the trial section was on the 27th May with WCC technical staff, ESB staff and WCC's consultants, Aecom. Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer also in attendance.
- ESB have agreed to the alignment of the route of this trial section.
- Aecom are preparing the full detail design drawings of this section.
- ESB have submitted a draft works licence to WCC to review, this will give WCC permission to work on this trial section. Currently the agreement is for the design stage of the project.
- Project Board meetings held each month
- ESB and WCC technical staff meetings held bi-weekly

ITEM 9

Update: Wicklow County Campus: Content Creation Enterprise Hub Project.

ITEM 10

Update: Covid 19 – Business Continuity Response (Local Enterprise Office).

Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise, provided a joint update on items 9 and 10 for the meeting.

Lorraine Gallagher, acting Director of Services, commend the Head of Enterprise and her team in the Local Enterprise Office on the continued service they provided to businesses during the lockdown period.

Following the report the following questions and points were raised:

- In relation to the 6 month holiday on the payments by businesses, does this affect their credit ratings?
- Can the Local Enterprise Office give any advice on how to reopen a business in relation to H&S or is this covered by the HSA alone?

Vibeke Delahunt responded outlining the following:-

- The 6 month holiday on payments does not affect businesses.
- There are HSA guidelines, Return to Work Safety Protocol and undertook to send on a checklist that is a simplified version of this document. The Business Continuity Voucher also helps businesses to open and they could engage 3rd party consultancy, like a health and safety consultant, to help, although this scheme is now closed.

ITEM 12

Correspondence

Lorraine Gallagher, Acting Director of Services, informed the meeting that an email was received from Michael Ryan that is to be raised under correspondence. This email was circulated to all members of the committee.

"That this SPC propose that Wicklow County Council write to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to request that a Workers' representative be appointed immediately to the newly established Tourism Taskforce which is charged with providing a safe, quality environment in which the hospitality industry can reopen safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Comprising sectoral associations and employers the taskforce does not include an important stakeholder in this group - workers. WE believe that due to their experience and expertise that it is imperative that worker representatives are included in the discussions on how best the sector can reopen safely. Workers will be on the frontline, directly engaging with the public during this reopening and therefore are an invaluable source of knowledge and competence to ensure the sector has a safe and successful reopening."

Mr. Ryan spoke on the submission and it was agreed to forward same to the Minister on behalf of the members of the SPC conveying their support for the motion.

Next meeting: It was agreed that the next meeting of the EDES SPC will take place on Monday 14th September, 2020 at 10.00 a.m.

Due to the ongoing refurbishment work being carried out in County Buildings a venue will be decided at a later date and all members will be notified accordingly.

Signed:

Cllr. Gerry Walsh
Chair
Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date
