

**Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020 via ZOOM call.**

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

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

Apologies: Councillor Irene Winters  
Mr. Michael Allen

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**ITEM 1**

**Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support (EDES) SPC held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2020 (copy attached).**

On the proposal of Mr. M. Ryan, seconded by Cllr. Pat Kennedy, the minutes of SPC meeting held on Monday the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 as circulated were agreed.

**ITEM 2**

**Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**ITEM 3**

**Update LECP/County Wicklow Economic Think Tank (CWETT) Implementation stage**

Ms. Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer provided a report to the meeting which was circulated.

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## **FILM**

### ***Film Strategy***

WCC has appointed Saffery Champness Ireland with SPI to develop a Film Strategy for County Wicklow; this project is underway at present and is expected to be complete in Q1 2021

### ***Clermont Enterprise Hub***

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. It will support growth and the internationalisation of established businesses. Liaise with the various colleges and training agencies to ensure a skilled workforce.

Site clearance works are currently in progress and tender documents for construction are being prepared. Vibeke will give update

## **RETAIL**

### ***Progression of the Florentine Project.***

The Oakmount site was closed for 3 months due to Covid 19 crisis.

Roof weathering works are progressing on the roofs of block 2 & 3. The roof structure for block one has been formed and the slating and weathering works have also commenced.

Lift installation is almost complete and the installation of the travelators and escalators is underway. Mechanical & electrical works are progressing throughout blocks 2 & 3 and both levels of the car park. All M&E works are ready to be installed in the stairwells. ESB and Gas Network Ireland have completed install and connection to the site.

The revised practical completion date is November 2020.

The letting of the units are progressing and there are a number of lettings at heads of agreement stage.

## **TOWN TEAMS**

Arklow Town Team has been granted funding by LEADER for the following projects:-

- 1. SEAnanagins Seafood Festival*** which is proposed to take place in conjunction with the World Shore Angling Championships in 2021. Events will include cookery demonstrations with local seafood, seaside themed workshops, beach activities and live entertainment. The festival will promote and attract visitors to the town.
- 2. Visit Arklow*** –To design and develop a new website specifically to promote Arklow Town and its environs.

Arklow Town Team, Arklow Chamber of Commerce and Wicklow County Council are fully committed to supporting the local business community in getting back up and running.

### ***Blessington Town Team***

The COVID 19 committee response group volunteers continue to provide support and assistance to potentially vulnerable neighbours. The business of ensuring that the community was able to respond to the crisis in an informed and coordinated manner was arranged mainly through Zoom meetings and WhatsApp Groups.

Town Team Facebook page set up and first posting reached 8,558 people

### **Hello Neighbour Campaign**

\*Posters and leaflets designed and distributed. Comprehensive list of potentially vulnerable persons developed in conjunction with Garda Community Unit.

Team of over 30 Garda Vetted Volunteers established to look after vulnerable persons. These 'foot soldiers' greatly appreciated by one and all and still operating.

"HiVis" vests and PPE provided to volunteers and insurance arranged. Activities are co-ordinated with the Wicklow Community Response Centre and Volunteering Ireland and Volunteering Wicklow Groupings.

### **Town Re-Opening Committee**

Initial meetings have been held and have now been expanded into the Wonderful West Wicklow campaign to support local businesses and service providers. The Forum has updated the Blessington.ie website to cater for local business information.

### ***Bray Town Team***

The Bray Reopening Committee is a joint initiative with local stakeholders across the community, including members of Bray Chamber of Commerce, the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána to plan for a considered, responsible return to civic life which is vital to help to restart the local economy in the town. This is in line with the Government's phased roadmap for reopening the country socially and economically.

The Committee focused on understanding best practices, planning for protections and protocols that businesses and the community will need in place in order to feel confident about resuming activities, once the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, while emphasising a message that as a society, we all have a collective responsibility to ensure that reopening proceeds smoothly and safely.

Topics the Reopening Committee considered included:

- Looking at workable solutions so that businesses can reopen 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 one-way systems, relocating bus stops and the removal of street furniture
- Business and public consultation
- A comprehensive communication strategy
- 'Shop Local First' marketing campaign
- Robust cleaning and maintenance regime
- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing

### **Greystones 2020**

The Think Local Buy Local campaign launched by Greystones 2020 has been a huge success. Over 350 businesses have now been listed on the Greystones.ie website. The WhatsApp group has seen a wide range of support and information been shared together.

The statistics for interactions since the **#ThinkLocalBuyLocal** campaign launched on June 24th to July 23rd are as follows:

- *Twitter - 50k*
- *Facebook - 46.3k*
- *Instagram - 22.7k*
- *Video content - 597*
- *Website - Visits: 3.6k / Page views: 8k*
- **Overall combined total = 131.2k**

Since the **#ThinkLocalBuyLocal** campaign was launched back on June 24th, the first 30 days have achieved 39.96% of the total reach to date. We will continue with our increased social engagement and will include:

1. *Sharing important HSE and Government - #StaySafe guidelines.*
2. *Highlight what Greystones 2020 are doing to help stabilise the local economy.*
3. *Highlight all relevant supports available in the Business Hub on the website*
4. *Help promote and support all types of enterprise by showcasing local businesses*

#### Christmas Lights:

Due to the burden already placed on business' over the past months, Greystones 2020 are exploring alternative ways to ensure that the funding is available for Christmas Lights in the town and are already working on a plan to ensure the town will be lit up as normal for the switching on ceremony on Saturday 21st November.

#### **Wicklow Town Team**

Wicklow Town Team held their meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and a number of issues were discussed which included the Greenway, Parking in Wicklow Town, Heritage Trail, Illumination of Historical Sites and Leader funding applications. The Team are working on advancing these projects to completion. The AGM of Wicklow Town Team is due to be held on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020.

#### **RRDF FUNDING**

Wicklow County Council was awarded Cat 2 funding of €357,750 in respect of Newtownmountkennedy for the design and plans for upgrades to the public realm, street landscaping, traffic management, public spaces and community facilities. The funding will be matched by a 25% contribution from the Council's resources bringing the investment to over €500,000. This funding builds on the €150,000 that Newtownmountkennedy received in 2018 from the Town and Village Enhancement Scheme, which funded streetscape improvements in the town. The closing date for the latest round of RRDF funding is 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 an application in respect of Rathdrum will be submitted.

## **TOURISM**

The tourism following working groups are re-engaging and will each have met in advance of the July meeting of Wicklow Tourism Alliance

- Accommodation
- Towns as Visitor Hubs
- Thematic Experiences
- Marketing /Developing a common narrative
- Glendalough

### Accommodation

A consultant has been appointed to assist the Accommodation Working Group to carry out a dedicated study building on Failte Ireland's Accommodation Toolkit and to contribute in terms of information and advice to the preparation of the related prospectus aimed at attracting the development of tourism accommodation in the County.

### Towns as Visitor Hubs

A Town Team / Tourism recovery meeting was held in July 2020 with a number of ideas provided including promoting the 'Wicklow Passport' to drive tourism in the County.

### Glendalough Masterplan and Wicklow Visitor Orientation Study

Failte Ireland, with its strategic partners OPW, NPWS and with Wicklow County Council is engaging with Consarc Consultants to develop a tourism master-plan for Glendalough and the Wicklow Mountains National Park and a Visitor Orientation Plan for County Wicklow. Consarc lead a multi disciplinary team consisting of tourism, environmental, heritage, public realm, and traffic and parking consultants to develop the suite of plans. Stakeholder engagement is due to commence shortly.

### Destination Town Funding

Destination town funding has been awarded to develop visitor amenities in Wicklow Town.

## **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
- A draft strategy for the development of a Food Hub has been prepared this is due to be followed up by a survey of food producers
- The launch of Wicklow Naturally will be held in October, (subject to Covid 19 restrictions)
- A range of promotional events, tastings etc has been planned for October under the banner Wicklow Naturally October Feast.

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Following the report the following questions and points were raised:

- In relation to the Bray Town Team – it would be anticipated that post Covid 19 the work of the re-opening committee will wind down and continue as the Town Team again. The Bray Chamber of Commerce had a meeting recently and the issue of Christmas lights was mentioned. We are planning to use the funding provided from Bray Municipal District to provide Christmas lights and plans are being made to have a virtual switch on and also to have a virtual Santa Claus.
- Bray Town Team have also reached out to the business community in Bray to ask for feedback and ideas.
- Bray has had great success with reopening. The retailers have been very supportive and very good feedback has been received.
- A feasibility study that is being funded by the LEADER 2020 programme includes an important questionnaire and participation is greatly appreciated. If people can promote and get word out to complete the survey it would be appreciated.
- The Wicklow Passport is proving to be very popular that other counties are planning to do similar. The next step is to move to do a county to county passport.
- Is the Glendalough Masterplan fully funded by Failte Ireland?

Ms. Christine Flood responded outlining the following:-

- The Glendalough Masterplan is fully funded by Failte Ireland. This is very important because they have a strategic partnership with NPWS and the OPW which means that they can directly fund any capital projects coming out of that. It is expected that the Consultations will make a presentation to the Council meeting towards the end of the Year

Ms. Lorraine Gallagher acknowledged and paid tribute to the work of the Town Teams and the Town re-opening committees and acknowledged everyone's contributions, particularly the business community.

#### **ITEM 4**

##### **Update: Local Community Development Committee (Funding applications)**

Ms. Deirdre Whitfield, Administrative Officer provided this report to the meeting which was circulated.

<b>Goal 1: Develop community capacity in disadvantaged communities and engage in urban and rural regeneration</b>
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## Rural Regeneration Development Fund 2019/2020

Area	Overview of Proposal	Project Cost
Baltinglass 2019	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	€3,566,968
Newtownmountkennedy 2020	<b>Cat 2 funding</b> - therefore is for the design and plans for upgrades to the public realm, street landscaping, traffic management, public spaces and community facilities. This funding builds on the €150,000 that Newtownmountkennedy received in 2018 from the Town and Village Enhancement Scheme, which funded streetscape improvements in the town.	€357,750

## Town & Village 2019

Area	Overview of Proposal	Funding Sought
<b>FUNDED</b>		
Redcross	Streetscape works	€80,000
Aughrim	Recreational amenity	€95,600
Dunlavin	Health check plus public realm works	€20,973
Coolkenno	Public lights and rails	€24,000

Delgany	Community plan	€29,600
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**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

**Outdoor Recreation 2019**

Area	Overview	Funding Sought
Measure 1		
Funded		
Co. Wicklow	Long distance Walks Video	€14,720
Donard	Donard Glens Walking Trail	€7,200
Co. Wicklow	Wicklow Way Infrastructure Upgrade	€20,000
Knockananna	Knockananna Walking Loop	€7,840
Baltinglass	Baltinglass Cycling Trails	€8,800
Measure 2		
North Wicklow	North Wicklow Trails Network Development	€190,700

**Town and Village 2020**

Round 1 Accelerated – Submitted – July 3rd
Dunlavin



Roundwood
Comm Centres
Shop Local App
Sugar Loaf
Round 2 Accelerated – August 14 <sup>th</sup>
Enniskerry
Ballinaclash
Laragh
Tinahely
Baltinglass
Shop Local App
Round 3 Accelerated >10,000 – August 28 <sup>th</sup>
Glenealy
Glendalough
Rathdrum
Ashford
Round 3 Accelerated <10,000 – August 28 <sup>th</sup>
Bray
Greystones
Arklow
Wicklow
Main Scheme – September 30 <sup>th</sup>
A further 10 applications will be made for the Town & Village Main Scheme by September 30 <sup>th</sup> 2020

**Goal 2: Promote Active Citizenship and Public Participation to improve governance, participation and enrich decision making**

**Comhairle na nOg:** Ongoing work on LGBT and Drug Use issues, though work has been interrupted due to COVID-19

**Age Friendly:** The age friendly work programme was taken over by COVID-19 response to vulnerable people through the Community Call Helpline and the Community Response Forum.

**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 has been approved. A co-ordinator has been recruited so the work can now begin in earnest.
2. Food Strategy – Implementation ongoing
3. Digital Strategy – Digital Poverty funding scheme implemented by Wicklow County Council under the COVID-19 Community Response Forum. €45,000 in funding distributed to 28 groups/organisations
4. The Migrant Integration Strategy is well underway but work has been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, making consultation difficult. An interim report has been finalised.

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

Leader support projects relating directly to Social Enterprise – (11) €756,059.75 with one de-commitment due to Covid-19

- DRCD – Dormant Accounts supported projects ( 4) - €36,494.99
- Total Funding ( 15 projects ) - €792,554

County Wicklow Partnership are also working on two internal supports / training projects

- Rural Youth Social Enterprise Entrepreneurial Training Programme for 40 participants (online – 16 weeks) and backed by 12 online commissioned training videos to be available for future promotion of SE. The project will be carried out by The Entrepreneurs Academy (Ireland) and Ice Cream Architecture (Glasgow) for the video production.
- Covid 19 – Training and mentoring supports programme for new and existing Social Enterprises to combat the impact and become more resilient to Covid 19 and other crisis.

Bray Area Partnership has partnered with the Southside Partnership and have been funded for a Social Enterprise support project and development worker.

BAP are working on the feasibility and need for a Community Services and Enterprise Hub in Bray.

**Newtownmountkennedy RRDF Funding**

To initiate the design phase of a Placemaking model for Newtownmountkennedy town centre and Newtownmountkennedy as a sustainable community, specifically a suite of key projects that include:

- To rejuvenate the dormitory town of Newtownmountkennedy, currently prioritised as an area for attention by Wicklow County Council.
- Develop design solutions for the regeneration of Newtownmountkennedy Town Core, which will act as a catalyst for redevelopment and enhancement in the town and address the lack of public infrastructure development which has not kept pace with the private sector housing developments in the area.
- To optimise the benefits of previous private investment in the town by continuously improving the public realm and the town aesthetics
- To develop a large derelict open site into a park and serve as a catalyst to increase commercial and household investment in other derelict and vacant properties
- As a consequence of the improvements, to attract more people to live, visit and work in Newtownmountkennedy
- To advance the improvements made from the 2018 Town and Village project on to expansionary public realm projects such as a community centre, sports facilities and parks
- Create a driver of increased business and footfall into the town centre to regenerate businesses and to encourage and give confidence to private sector property owners to invest in the town.
- To transform the town core and Main Street by making it a more permeable, walkable and cycle friendly town thus improving accessibility and offering a greatly enhanced public realm for residents and visitors.

The improvement of access to and around the town and public realm works together with the measures to better manage access and vehicle congestion in the town shall make the town a much more pleasant place to live and improve quality of life for all. The sustainability of the investments will be realised through the follow up private sector investments that will be made town and these will be felt for many years to come in the town. It will provide the essential catalyst and building blocks for managed and sustainable development in the town. It also can act as an enabler that will not only unlock the untapped potential of the town's existing back lands and buildings in and adjacent to the town Main street/core but also encourage investment from outside of the town through renewed confidence in a town whose location is of critical importance to the region nestled in the Wicklow Mountains.

The town urgently needs investment in community facilities for its rapidly growing population.

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Following the report some points and questions were raised:

- Is there match funding associated with each of these projects?
- Is there any mention of the Newtownmountkennedy RRDF – how will that be rolled out?

Deirdre Whitfield responded with the following:

- There is match funding. 10% match funding with 90% provided. A lot of the schemes compliment the NTA funding.
- The Newtownmountkennedy RRDF was classed as category 2 and was about putting the plans in place so that projects are shovel ready for category 1.

#### **ITEM 5.**

**Update: Blessington Greenway Project:** Ms. Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer circulated this report to the meeting.

Wicklow County Council are currently working on three main greenways (Blessington lakes with links to Blessington, Greystones to Wicklow, Arklow to Shillelagh and) which have the potential for modal shift in terms of cycle options and connections to commuter train/dart /bus.

As part of the investment and rejuvenation initiatives into Blessington and its environs, Wicklow County Council (WCC) will construct a 42.4 km greenway around the lakes of Blessington. The main route is a loop of 28.7 km around the Blessington lakes and the remaining 13.7 km will include links to nearby villages Valleymount, Ballyknockan & Lacken and spurs to Russborough House and Tulfarris Hotel & Golf Resort. This project will consist of walking and cycling trails, mostly through forest and woodlands adjacent to the shoreline of Poulaphouca Reservoir – more commonly referred to as the Blessington Lakes.

The greenway will link into the existing 6.5km trail to the south of Blessington Town which links the town with the Palladian Mansion at Russborough House. The lands on which the Greenway will be constructed are in the ownership of the ESB. A licence agreement between WCC and the ESB will be put in place to construct and operate the Greenway on these lands.

It is envisaged that the overall cost of this project will be in the region of €10 million, with funding of the sum of €5 million from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and WCC contributing the remaining balance. The project will see significant job creation in the area as it is estimated that for every €1m of tourism revenue supports 27 jobs in the locality. In addition, it will cater for the growing tourist market for outdoor activities for both local residents and tourists alike. The Greenway development is an exciting and distinctive project for County Wicklow and the region and will become Ireland's first "E" destination.

## **Status**

In October 2019, WCC appointed consultants, Aecom Ireland Ltd to progress the scheme to detail design stage. Over the last few months, site walkovers have been carried out by WCC and ESB personnel for most of the proposed 42.4 km route. An indicative route map of the greenway is attached.

It was originally proposed that the surface type of the greenway would consist of crushed stone. The proposal is to upgrade the surface type to tar macadam, making for a more durable and smoother surface for cycling. With this change and other additional works required, it will be necessary to carry out further surveys and reports including an appropriate assessment screening report, an environmental report and an Ecological Report for a new planning submission. During the preparation of these reports and planning submission WCC will proceed with a 5km pilot section between Valleymount and Ballyknockan villages. This 5km pilot phase will check how construction is managed and its impacts on the locality.

## **Next Steps to progress the project**

- The completion of the site walkovers with WCC and ESB personnel, which are scheduled for the end of August 2020.
- A tree felling licence application to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Construction of the Pilot Section (Valleymount to Ballyknockan length 5km). It is hoped that construction works could start in November / December 2020.
- The consultants Aecom will continue with the detail design of the following elements of the scheme:
  - *The remainder of the route (23km)*
  - *New Bridges*
  - *5 existing car parks to be extended (including new macadam surface, lighting, toilets, electric charging points)*
  - *Phase 1 (Pilot) Valleymount to Ballyknockan - macadam surface.*
  - *Existing trail; Blessington to Burgage, to be up upgraded and widened with macadam surface.*
  - *Existing but unused Tunnel connection to Russborough to be upgraded*
  - *Links to nearby villages Valleymount, Ballyknockan & Lacken, Tulfarris Hotel and Russborough House*
  - *Further surveys and reports including an appropriate assessment screening report, an environmental report and an Ecological Report for a new planning submission. These reports will include further assessment of the archaeology, biodiversity, ecology, water, landscape, visual, hydrology, and cultural heritage of this project.*
  - *Public consultation with local landowners and community.*

### **Wicklow to Greystones Greenway**

This coastal route could form part of a longer regional or national greenway and trail network. The greenway strategy defines a national greenway as at least 100km in length and a regional greenway as at least 20km in length. The coastal route is approximately 20km in length, extending between the southern end of the Bray to Greystones cliff walk at Greystones harbour to the Murrough Car Park at Wicklow.

The potential for modal shift to cycling is high as connection to Greystones Dart Station and Wicklow Train Station for commuters.

### **Update**

The Feasibility Study is complete with an emerging preferred route. In Summary, it is considered that it is potentially feasible to develop a coastal route through the designated conservation area of the Murrough Wetlands SAC / SPA without impacting on the qualifying interests of the SAC if the route is developed so as to ensure there is no disturbance to birds species nor impact on the sites qualifying interests (i.e. habitats) and features of interest (i.e. species) of the sites. It is considered likely that there will be significant impacts, which have the potential to be mitigated for, on the Annex I (non-qualifying interest) Fixed Dune system which runs alongside the railway line.

Alongside this a Coastal Protection Study is being undertaken between Merrion Gates and the County boundary between Wicklow and Wexford. The outcome of this study will be fundamental to the ultimate determination of the feasibility of the coastal trail. In this context the proposed solution analysis and determination of the recommended measures to address the critical erosion locations is expected in the near future.

In order to advance and complete this Coastal Trail Feasibility Study, the preferred route has been recommended that is neutral of any potential Coastal Protection Study recommendation.

### **Cost Estimate**

Construction estimate is €6M (not including land costs)

### **Predicted delivery date**

Based on the Feasibility Study that has been completed further reports and studies will be required to be submitted as the planning application to An Bord Pleanála. It is planned to progress this later this year, subject to funding and review of the Coastal Protection Study.

### **Arklow to Shillelagh Greenway**

The proposed Greenway will be approximately 33km in length and will commence at Shillelagh village south of County Wicklow. The proposed route will follow the disused Woodenbridge to Shillelagh Railway Line which lies adjacent to the banks of the Derry River, Aughrim River and Avoca River. It will run through villages Tinahely, Aughrim, Woodenbridge eventually connecting to Arklow Town.

The potential for modal shift to cycling is high as connection to Arklow Train Station for commuters.

### **Update**

Route has been identified. The consultants appointed for the scheme are completing the bridge design, flood risk assessment and planning report to accompany the Nature Impact Statement planning submission which is planned be lodged to An Bord Pleanala by the end of October 2020. Land Access procedure (creation of public right of way or Compulsory Purchase Order) will be confirmed once planning documents reviewed by Law Dept. This process will take place at the same time as the planning process.

#### Predicted delivery date

It is planned that planning and land access would be in place by mid 2021. Any amendments or modifications would then be incorporated and detailed design complete. Plan to start construction in early 2022 and duration is considered at this stage to be 18-24 months bringing the completion date late 2023, subject to funding etc. Cost Estimate is €17.5M

Following the report Christine Flood updated the members on recent developments regarding the Wicklow to Greystones and Arklow to Shillelagh greenways. She stated that Wicklow County Council was unsuccessful in their applications for funding but the department is reviewing the applications again.

The report as circulated was noted.

#### **ITEM 6**

##### **Update: Wicklow County Campus: Content Creation Enterprise Hub Project**

Ms. Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise provided the following report.

#### **Economic Development and REDF**

- Continued engagement with Enterprise Ireland and Architect James O'Donoghue regarding the development of Clermont Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus
- Site enabling works tender delayed due to COVID lockdown restriction on site visits. Tender closed Wed 10th June.
- Site contractor commenced on 16th Sept with site clearance
- Letter of Offer re REDF funding signed and Operational Programme, including KPIs, agreed with Enterprise Ireland reps. Six month delay to construction works.
- Executive Team continues to meet (conference call).
- Food Development Strategy actions supported.

#### **ITEM 7**

**Update: Covid 19 – Business Continuity Response (Local Enterprise office)** Ms. Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise provided the following report.

- LEO Wicklow is considered a critical service per the LGMA listing.
- The LEO remains open for business but public reception is closed for walk ins.

- **Remit of the LEO is extended from businesses less than 10 employees to up to 50 employees and supports such as BCV / mentoring now open to all sectors resulting in sharp increase in demand for supports.**
- Remote access has been provided to key staff. All staff offices are made COVID safe for staff needing to work from office. Remote working is in place for staff with child care issues / staff needing to self isolate while awaiting test and result.
- Contingency Plan in place to ensure continued staffing, monitoring of central email and phone to ensure continued fast response and offer of business supports.
- All business advice clinics and business skills and IT skills training courses, seminars and networking events are moved to online delivery platforms (Zoom / Teams etc).
- Circular 1/2/3\_2020 from Enterprise Ireland provide for more discretion on local decision making, granting of refundable aid deferral for grant clients, granting of time extensions for grant clients and remove refundable aid element of the Business Expansion Grant.
- From moment of lockdown, large increase in volume of calls and emails received from all sectors and sizes of local businesses seeking information on supports and information on wage subsidy scheme, Business Continuity Grant, Trading Online Voucher, moving business online, remote working, finance options, business advice clinics and mentoring etc. For example 868 new clients have been recorded year to date, compared to 546 new clients for 2019.

#### **DBEI / LA Engagement**

- Portfolio client survey to gauge lockdown impact and state of business activity.
- Weekly LEO Network Regional Committee and Enterprise Ireland conference calls and Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation calls have resumed after summer break.
- Weekly reporting on number of BCV / TOV / Training / MFI to Enterprise Ireland for Dept of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in relation to parliamentary questions.

#### **Business Supports:**

##### **Client engagement: Information services and signposting**

- Weekly newsletters circulated to client and enabler database
- Social media promotions of training events and new and existing supports updated 5 times a day.
- Radio interview / press releases on new and existing supports
- Dissemination of relevant information to portfolio clients
- Participation in information webinars with Network Ireland / LEO Lunch and Learn etc



- Information dissemination on ReStart Grant and rates deferral to clients and interested parties.

### **Business Continuity Voucher (BCV)**

- New scheme launched for up to €2,500 in third party consultancy costs for businesses with up to 50 employees and open to all sectors. Businesses can work on business continuity strategy with LEO appointed mentors (free) or own consultant (pay first and claim back).
- 299 BCV applications received by deadline 15<sup>th</sup> May in Wicklow.
- Each application takes up to 3 hours to process from beginning to end. Aim to finish up admin drawdown element of this scheme by October 2020.
- Nationally 15,000 received across 31 LEOs resulting in large increase in workload for LEO teams.

### **Trading Online Voucher (TOV)**

- 217 Voucher applications approved (value of €400,000) by mid Sept 2020. Our average annual number of applications is about 45.
- Following negotiations with Department of Communications, Trading Online Voucher Scheme is improved from 50% matched funding to 90% and businesses can now apply for a second voucher.
- Extreme increase in business enquiring about the scheme, looking for clarification on changes, booking onto Trading Online Seminar (a requirement before a business can apply)
- Additional Wicklow seminars organised to meet demand.
- The allocation is now open with a limit of 100 approvals per LEO per week and overall €14m budget nationwide.
- Each application takes about 5 hours to process from beginning till drawdown payment and reporting on GMIS. Large volume of drawdowns before end 2020 as applicants have 4 months to get works done.

### **Feasibility / Priming and Business Expansion Grants**

- Evaluation and Approvals Committee meetings moved online
- 27 funding application approved year to date, 6 in pipeline for November meeting and general increase in LEO grant funding enquiries from eligible and non eligible businesses.

### **Training / networking and seminars**

- AW training programme now launched online. High demand for all courses, especially Start Your Own Business courses. Overall 926 participants across all training and seminars year to date compared to 832 in 2019
- All participants details added to our Grant Management Information System to fulfil reporting requirement to Enterprise Ireland / DBEI on weekly basis.
- Network of Entrepreneurial Women meetings now each monthly and delivered online.

#### **Microfinance Ireland Loan Applications:**

- COVID Loan for businesses affected by COVID.
- MFI loan reduced from €50k back to €25k, interested dropped to 4.5% for applications submitted through the LEO.
- Increase in interest in applying with assistance of a LEO mentor but not all resulting in an actual application as overall there's a reluctance to apply for a loan amongst our clients.

#### **Brexit**

'Change is coming', national campaign commenced to highlight end of transition period and UK exiting EU on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and to promote LEO Brexit Supports.

- 3 Prepare Your Business for Customs workshops scheduled this AW. First course booked out with 25 participants.
- 12 one to one Brexit mentor clinics scheduled following the workshops. Participants in the workshops are encouraged to book the clinics. Half now nearly booked out.
- Full suite of supports available including mentoring, MFI loans, training, funding for eligible businesses, Lean for Micro programme and Innovation programme.
- Mailshots / newsletter circulated to highlight urgency to prepare and engage with LEO supports.

#### **Operational**

##### **Budget**

- Monitoring of budgets and FMS. Regular reporting to EI due to additional supports and training putting pressure on budgets.
- Requirement for additional funding to cover additional soft supports programme, i.e. training and mentoring.
- Increase in portfolio client looking to drawdown outstanding funding quickly.

#### **Resources**

- Additional HR resources approved by Enterprise Ireland till 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. Ongoing additional HR requirement for next 6 months to process large volume of grant claims / reporting duties to Enterprise Ireland etc.

#### **Events:**

- National Enterprise Awards postponed and moving virtual
- National Women's Enterprise Day: National Virtual event 14<sup>th</sup> October
- Student Enterprise Programme has moved online and commenced Sept 2020 with 15 schools signed up.
- Breakthrough Innovation Programme moved online and pilot with 4 LEO Wicklow clients was well evaluated.
- Hi-Start Programme starts May instead of April, 3 LEO Wicklow participants.
- A regional Food Academy course commenced with 3 LEO clients.

#### **ITEM 8**

##### ***Update: Restart Grant Fund for Small business (Round 2)***

Ms. Lorraine Gallagher, Director of Services provided an update on the Restart Grant for Small Business, round 2.

Wicklow County Council has been charged with administering the Restart Grant Plus on behalf of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Restart Grant Plus is a key part of the government's July Stimulus package, a €7.4bn package of measures designed to stimulate a jobs-led recovery and build economic confidence while continuing to manage the impact of Covid-19.

##### **Key changes to the Restart Grant Plus Scheme are as follows:**

- €300m additional funding in addition to €250m previously committed
- Grant amount has increased substantially. Minimum grant is now €4,000 and maximum is €25,000. Previous grant amounts were €2,000 and €10,000 respectively
- Medium sized companies now eligible Companies with up to 250 employees can now apply (previously the grant was for companies with less than 50 employees)
- Increased eligibility Non-rateable B&Bs, sports clubs with commercial activities and trading charity shops are now eligible

##### **To qualify for the Restart Grant Plus, the important criteria are:**

- A business must be commercial and in the local authority rates system (apart from non-rateable B&Bs who can apply to Fáilte Ireland);
- It must have suffered a 25% loss of expected turnover between 1 April and 30 June 2020;

- It must have less than 250 employees and turnover less than €25m; It must declare its intention to re-employ staff in receipt of the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme
- Businesses that have been approved for a grant under the Original Restart Scheme can apply again for a 2nd grant by submitting a separate Declaration Form which will be made available shortly by Wicklow County Council. **These businesses should not submit a new on-line application here.**

## ITEM 9

### **Correspondence**

Ms. Lorraine Gallagher, Acting Director of Services, informed the meeting that a response was received to Michael Ryan's previous motion (below).

*"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. M. Ryan thanked the committee for sending the motion to the Minister and stated that he received a reply to the Bray Trades Council acknowledging that the EDES SPC had put forward the motion.

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

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Cllr. Gerry Walsh  
 Chair  
 Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date

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