

**Minutes of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC
Meeting held on Monday 17th February, 2024 in the
The Boardroom, Clermont House, Newrath, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow at 10am**

Present: Cllr. Tom Fortune – Chair (TF)
Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy (AFK)
Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin (LFG)
Cllr. Peir Leonard (PL)
Cllr. Avril Cronin (AC)
Mr. Huw O’Toole (HOT)
Ms. Margaret Coughlan (MC)
Mr. Gerry Ginty (GG)
Mr. T.J. Foley (TJF)
Mr. Killian McGreal (KMCG)
Ms. Jean Ryan (JR)

In Attendance: Ms. Leonora Earls (LE)
Ms. Susan Nichols (SN)
Ms. Vibeke Delahunt (VD)
Mr. Fred Verdier (FV)
Ms. Caroline Cullimore (CC)
Ms. Patrice O’Toole (POT)
Ms. Sarah Fitzpatrick (SF), Fáilte Ireland – Zoom
Ms. Sinead Hennessy (SH), Fáilte Ireland - Zoom

Apologies: Mr. Chris Fox (CF)
Cllr. Ian Neary (IN)
Mr. John Powderly (JP)

Welcome and introductions

A meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC took place on Monday 17th February, 2025. Cllr. Tom Fortune (Chair) welcomed everybody, and started the meeting by extending condolences to Cllr. Fenelon Gaskin on the death of her father.

He advised that a fire drill would be taking place during the course of the meeting.

AC wanted it noted that the reason why she couldn’t attend some of the meetings was because her MD meetings may have been on the same day.

ITEM 1

Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support (EDES) SPC held on Tuesday 17th December, 2024

The minutes of the EDES SPC which took place on 17th December, 2024 were proposed by Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy and seconded by Cllr. Peir Leonard.

ITEM 2

Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

ITEM 3

Presentation from Fáilte Ireland on the Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) and the Accommodation Audit

TF welcomed Sarah Fitzpatrick (SF) and Sinead Hennessy (SH) from Fáilte Ireland, who joined by Zoom to present on the Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) and the Accommodation Audit. They provided an outline of the DEDP and addressed any questions.

SF identified Wicklow as a priority county and highlighted close collaboration with Wicklow County Council for accommodation development.

SF detailed the strategic approach and the role of the Regional Tourism Development Team at regional level. At local level, she reported that Fáilte Ireland is in the development stage of the Destination Experience Development Plan for Wicklow. This plan presents a 10-year vision with a 5-year action plan. The objective is to bring all stakeholders on board to produce one tourism plan for County Wicklow putting visitor experience, industry, community, and environment at the core of the plan.

Fáilte Ireland's presentation covered the following areas:

- **Development Phases of the DEDP:** A comprehensive overview of the development stages.
- **Tourism Accommodation Supply and Pipeline in Wicklow:** Data reveals County Wicklow ranks 10th in bed space availability across 80 properties, with most accommodations in the eastern region. Wicklow represents just 3% of available bed space nationally.
- **Future Construction:** No tourism accommodations are currently under construction, and no new supply is expected within the next three years. There is a need to manage expectations as the accommodation issue will not be resolved in the short term. One way to increase the number would be to focus on alternative accommodation such as outdoor accommodation.
- **Government Contracts:** 14% of existing tourism accommodation is currently allocated to Government contracts. Fáilte Ireland will continue to engage with the Department with a view to returning these accommodations back to tourism use.

Matters raised by the SPC included:

- The impact of current government contracts on tourism accommodation and the transition of these properties back to tourism use.
- The importance of government policy on tourism development in Wicklow.
- The importance of promoting Wicklow's natural beauty and unique attractions to encourage tourists to visit and stay longer.
- The effect of planning regulations and An Bord Pleanála on applications for expanding tourism accommodation and attractions.
- Fáilte Ireland's Environmental and Climate Change policy is available on the website and the DEDP will be considered by the Environmental team before being finalised

Actions Arising from the Presentation:

- SF acknowledged the challenges and emphasised that ongoing efforts would be made to ensure that the DEDP aligns with all plans and strategies. SF to provide a link for SPC members to submit their input to the survey.
- Arrangements to be made for the DEDP consultants to engage with the SPC.

TF thanked SF and SH for the presentation and concluded by asking that the concerns of the SPC be fed back to where it can make a difference.

LE thanked both SF and SH for the presentation and assured them of Wicklow County Council's commitment to work with Fáilte Ireland in developing the DEDP for County Wicklow.

At this point, the scheduled fire drill took place, which required all participants to evacuate the building. Following the completion of the necessary safety checks, the meeting resumed.

Before the meeting resumed, Cllr. Fortune welcomed Jean Ryan, who was attending for the first time as a representative of Social Inclusion. Jean introduced herself to the group, and in turn, all participants introduced themselves to her.

ITEM 4

To note requirement under Circular LG 2/2015 in respect of the Ethical Framework in Local Government

CC outlined the requirements under Circular LG 2/2015 for both Members and non-elected Members of the EDES SPC.

ITEM 5

To note the requirement under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 in respect of the Transparency Code

CC outlined the requirements under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 in respect of the Transparency Code

ITEM 6

Update on the County Wicklow Skills Strategy

SN gave an update on the County Wicklow Skills Strategy and advised that the focus of the Taskforce is on four sectors; tourism, food, film and renewables. She advised that all four sectors have been reviewed and the Taskforce is now at the implementation stage. All organisations represented on the Taskforce are actively working to provide training and skills. The next meeting of the Taskforce will give an update on the actions taken and the ongoing projects from each stakeholder.

When asked, the members were advised that the outcome of the Strategy will be the provision of relevant courses, and the availability of a skilled workforce to meet the sector's needs. Some of the key institutions involved include SETU, NUI Maynooth and KWETB. Challenges in recruiting workers for hospitality and construction sectors were discussed.

ITEM 7

To consider updates from each group: Economic Development, Head of Enterprise, Content Creation Hub and Wicklow County Campus, and Tourism Officer

All reports were taken as read and questions invited.

FV advised of the change in date for the Tourism Networking Event, now to take place on the 29th April at Tulfarris.

LE advised that she would reach out to IDA again to see if there is any update on the Greystones studio.

CC gave an update on the #ChooseWicklow campaign and advised that over 400,000 clicks had been made on the website with most of these from Ireland. The campaign has been extended by a further 3 months.

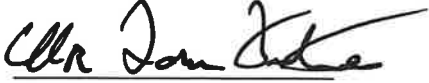
ITEM 8

Correspondence

There was no correspondence to consider.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 14th April, 2025 at 10am.

TF thanked all attendees and the meeting concluded.

Signed: 
Cllr. Tom Fortune
Chair
Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date: 14/4/2025