

Minutes of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC
Meeting held on Monday 22nd June 2026 at 11am
in the Wurzburg Room, County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town

Present:	Cllr. Tom Fortune – Chair (TF) Cllr. Peir Leonard (PL) Cllr. Ned Whelan (NW) Cllr. Ian Neary (IN) Mr. T.J. Foley (TJF) Mr. Huw O'Toole (HOT)
In Attendance:	Ms. Susan Nichols (SN) Ms. Vibeke Delahunt (VD) Mr. John Powderly (JP) Ms. Caroline Cullimore (CC) Mr. Fred Verdier (FV) Ms. Richella Wood (RW) – TRO with Wicklow County Council Ms. Michelle Curley (MC) Ms. Patriece O'Toole (PO'T)
Presentation	Mr. Brian Flynn, Fáilte Ireland – On-line
Apologies:	Ms. Margaret Coughlan (MC) Cllr. Avril Cronin (AC) Mr. Killian McGreal (KMcG) Mr. Jonathan Donnelly (JD) Ms. Helena Dennehy (HD) Mr. Chris Fox (CF) Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin (LFG)

TF welcomed everyone and before starting the meeting thanked CC and JP for their contributions to the EDES SPC over the years and wished them well in their new appointments.

ITEM 1: Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support (EDES) SPC held on Monday 20th April 2026

The minutes of the EDES SPC which took place on Monday 20th April 2026 were proposed by Cllr. P. Leonard and seconded by Cllr. N. Whelan

ITEM 2: Matters arising from the Minutes.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

ITEM 3: Presentation of the final draft County Wicklow Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) by Fáilte Ireland

The Wicklow DEDP outlines a strategic five-year action plan co-created by Fáilte Ireland and local stakeholders to establish County Wicklow as a leading, year-round, all season outdoor destination. The strategy focuses on transitioning Wicklow from a primary day-trip market into an overnight destination, expanding regional visitor dispersion, and capitalising on its proximity to Dublin

Vision: A four seasons destination, internationally recognised as the Garden of Ireland

The benefits of tourism are distributed across Wicklow through a collective approach to growing awareness of Wicklow as the Garden of Ireland. Inspiring mountain, rural and seascapes, explored by trails, has developed Wicklow into one of the country's leading year-round outdoor activity destinations. Vibrant coastal, rural and urban hubs have become the base for visitors to explore the county.

Iconic Wicklow visitor experiences such as Wicklow Mountains National Park and Glendalough play a key role in dispersing visitors across the county, transforming Wicklow from a day trip visit to an overnight destination.

A well networked tourism industry has grown the appeal of Wicklow as the Garden of Ireland and the destination brand inspires new approaches to experience development and destination marketing. The range of outdoor experiences, growth in business and golf tourism and new food experiences have extended the tourism season and strengthened regional product linkages.

National & Local Context

National Irish Tourism Targets (2031): Grow overseas revenue to **€9 billion**, boost domestic revenue to **€5.8 billion**, increase off-peak travel, cut tourism emissions by **45%** (by 2030), and grow workforce employment to **250,000**.

Wicklow Baseline Statistics (2024): **725,000 annual visitors** generating **€222 million** in total tourism revenue (70% domestic, 30% international) and supporting **4,400 local jobs**.

Wicklow Strengths: Exceptionally high visitor satisfaction, extensive outdoor/hiking assets, and budget-friendly free experiences.

Identified Infrastructure Gaps: Lack of visitor overnight retention, limited dining options, insufficient public transport access, and varying accommodation quality across the county.

Progress to date:

- Glendalough Masterplan – traffic management, review of sites for new car park, Conservation Management Plan underway by OPW
- Business Tourism – MICE
- Film Tourism – audit complete
- Wicklow County Tourism – facilitated workshop held
- Wicklow Champions Programme
- Meitheal Trade Fair

How DEDP will be delivered:

- Delivery led through partnership with Wicklow County Council, Fáilte Ireland, stakeholders, industry and communities.
- DEDP Implementation Group formed with representatives from each stakeholder.
- Co-chairs will be appointed and 3-4 meetings per year to discuss progress to date.
- Draft DEDP with implementation group for review
- SEA process once final draft completed

Next Steps: The Implementation Group will meet in September, and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process will commence.

Following the presentation TF thanked BF and opened the floor up to questions. Several key questions were raised regarding governance, delivery, and communication. The members sought clarity on who will be responsible for driving the proposed actions and how progress against goals will be communicated at County level. There was a strong call for regular updates to ensure visibility of achievements. Concerns were also expressed about the limited development of the night-time economy.

In response, BF advised that 47 actions will be progressed by the Implementation Group. Each action will have a designated owner who will be accountable for delivery and will report on progress on an annual basis. He also confirmed his willingness to meet with the members at any stage to provide updates.

He advised that success will be measured through both the completion of actions and revenue growth. A commitment was also given that Fáilte Ireland will work collaboratively with all businesses that are willing to engage with and support the brand.

BF further noted that the development of the night-time economy remains a nationwide challenge, driven by changing cultural behaviours and practical constraints, particularly where accommodation is not located within walking distance of key attractions.

Item 4: Updates from the working groups in respect of the multi-annual work plan.

Update from the Food/Craft Working Group:

PL advised that the group would review policy with the plan to amalgamate the Wicklow Naturally and the Made in Wicklow brands. The next step is to organise a workshop to take to the next stage of the work programme. Representatives from Wicklow Naturally, Made in Wicklow, Wicklow Partnership, and other groups will be invited in the coming weeks to discuss a SCOT analysis of the sectors and how the sectors can be best supported by policy. The workshop will be led by the SPC sub-group members.

Update from the Tourism Working Group:

HO'T advised that the group were looking at micro accommodation for small farms in the uplands. They sought a meeting with a planner or engineer to discuss issues around small farm usage for accommodation. In the meantime, the group have written an information document based on what they will be looking for with the purpose of bringing back to the SPC following the meeting. A review was taken of all the various plans, and information relevant to accommodation was extracted with a view to updating or amending the wording where necessary.

Update from the Enterprise Working Group

T.J.F. advised that the group are focussing on both private and public owned land in Wicklow available for enterprise use. He referred to an exercise carried out by the Council several years back relating to public owned land. TF reminded the group that the exercise was to include private owned land also.

VD updated on any proposed submissions to be made to the next County Development Plan and the Regional Enterprise Plan. She reported that the CDP has been extended for a number of years and currently waiting for an announcement from the Department in respect of the Regional Enterprise Plan.

In respect of considering a policy on AI, the LEO is continuing to offer AI related workshops and also promoting a new initiative launched by the Department of Enterprise called AI Read, this is a training platform for anybody including business owners to familiarise themselves with AI uses and to apply it to their business.

The action to improve the linkage between the Town Regeneration Office and the SPC was achieved by the presence of the TRO at the meeting. The TRO has agreed to give an update at a later SPC.

ITEM 5: To note the submission of a quarterly progress report on the multi annual work plan to the CPG

TF reminded all members of the need for working groups to keep moving forward and of the need to report to the CPG on all progress made. He asked if everyone was happy with the progress report on the multi annual work plan which circulated, he will present it to the CPG at their meeting on 6th July.

ITEM 6: Update on the County Wicklow Skills Strategy

CC advised on a recent meeting. The internal group are looking at updating the terms of reference considering where they are currently at and the actions in the Skills Strategy as things have moved on since written. It is proposed to set up subgroups for various areas and one of them will be crafts and food which will line up with what the SPC working groups are doing. The group are also planning some presentations for later in the year including one from SOLAS and one from Capt. Phil Murphy.

ITEM 7: Questions arising from updates circulated from the Economic Development Team, Head of Enterprise, Content Creation Hub and Wicklow County Campus and the Tourism Officer

The reports issued were taken as read and TF invited any comments arising from them.

ITEM 8: Correspondence

None

ITEM 9: AOB

The next meeting will take place on 21st September, 2026 at 9.30am in the Wurzburg Room, County Buildings.

Signed:

Cllr. Tom Fortune / Chair
Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date:
