

Minutes of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC
Meeting held on Monday 28th July, 2025 at 10am in the
GRID (Greystones Regional Innovation District), Charlesland, Greystones, Co. Wicklow

Present:	Cllr. Tom Fortune – Chair (TF) Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin (LFG) Cllr. Ned Whelan (NW) Cllr. Peir Leonard (PL) Mr. T.J. Foley (TJF) Mr. Gerry Ginty (GG)
Presentation:	Ms. Evelyn Murray (EM), County Wicklow Partnership Ms. Liz Wall (LW), Chair, County Wicklow Partnership Mr. Enda McDonnell (EMcD), Enterprise Ireland Ms. Cathy Holahan (CH), Enterprise Ireland
In Attendance:	Ms. Leonora Earls (LE) Mr. John Powderly (JP) Ms. Susan Nichols (SN) Ms. Patrice O'Toole (POT)
Apologies:	Cllr. Avril Cronin (AC) Cllr. Ian Neary (IN) Ms. Margaret Coughlan (MC) Mr. Killian McGreal (KMCG) Ms. Jean Ryan (JR) Mr. Huw O'Toole (HOT) Mr. Fred Verdier (FV) Ms. Caroline Cullimore (CC) Ms. Michelle Curley (MC) Ms. Vibeke Delahunt (VD)

TF welcomed everybody and started the meeting

ITEM 1: Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support (EDES) SPC held on Monday 9th June, 2025

The minutes of the EDES SPC which took place on 9th June, 2025 were proposed by Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin and seconded by Cllr. Ned Whelan.

ITEM 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

TF advised that any matters arising from the minutes could be dealt with in the course of the meeting.

ITEM 3: Presentation by County Wicklow Partnership on Made in Wicklow

TF welcomed Evelyn Murray and Liz Wall who gave a presentation on Made in Wicklow

EM gave a background to the Made in Wicklow project and its vision going forward.

To bring cohesion to the fragmented craft sector in County Wicklow, a county-wide Strategy was developed in 2023, identifying key objectives including the establishment of a Craft Network, the development of a Craft Trail, the implementation of cohesive branding, the appointment of a dedicated liaison officer, and an emphasis on educational initiatives.

The official launch took place in February 2024 at Powerscourt House. The event featured a selection of work from 46 craft practitioners and ran for five days, offering a diverse display of handcrafted pieces. The event included the screening of 19 craft-focused videos. The videos didn't just highlight the artists but presented a remarkable image of the whole County. Complementary workshops were held in libraries, and a special community project explored the heritage of Arklow pottery.

In February 2025, the project returned to Powerscourt with 'For the Love of Craft', a month-long event which started with a 10 day exhibition of pure craft followed with *The Cinematic Thread*, a showcase of 17 film costumes from movies shot at Powerscourt, presented in partnership with the Irish Costume Archive. It attracted over 18,000 visitors and widespread media attention which included an eight minute slot on television and a shout out on the Late Late Show. With two years into the strategy and commitments on delivering promises under LEADER, LECAP and SICAP, focus is now on strengthening the Made in Wicklow brand. To date, approximately €211,000 has been secured through funding from the Leader programme, Wicklow County Council, and County Wicklow Partnership.

Looking ahead to 2026 and beyond, the team has outlined a clear vision. They plan to return to Powerscourt, with a goal of increasing footfall and placing greater emphasis on the economic benefits of craft. EM presented the proposed budget with proposals for making the event more sustainable going forward by introducing an open call to artists based on a fee per submission and a suggestion of commissions from pieces sold at the event.

A retail event is already in development, set to take place at Wicklow Gaol, with confirmed Leader funding. This event will exclusively showcase works from the Made in Wicklow and Wicklow Naturally brands. Community engagement will continue, with two annual projects planned and training to support emerging craft practitioners.

The members complemented EM on her creativity and capability combined with the support of the County Wicklow Partnership Board and stressed the need for incentives from government in the areas of circular economy and innovation and the need for training in the area of manual skills.

TF thanked EM for her excellent presentation and remarked on the benefits of the very close relationship which she has developed with Powerscourt. He invited her back at a later time to develop on her presentation.

ITEM 4: Presentation by Enda McDonnell and Cathy Holahan from Enterprise Ireland

EMCD and CH introduced themselves and their roles within Enterprise Ireland (EI), the government agency supporting Irish businesses in global markets through legislation, policy, and state aid rules. EI operates 42 offices worldwide to assist export-ready companies.

Enterprise Ireland's core mission is job creation and enhancement, focusing on quality employment and helping companies add value. In the mid-east region, EI-supported businesses saw a 4% growth last year, with 234,000 people in their client base. Unlike the IDA, which attracts foreign investment, EI aims to scale Irish-owned firms into future multinationals.

EMCD acknowledged the challenges of exporting over the past 15 years—recession, Brexit, Covid, the Ukraine crisis, and tariff uncertainties. He emphasized EI's financial impact, noting €25 million in approved support for Wicklow companies (2020–2024), employing around 3,875 people locally.

Due to EU State Aid rules, EI cannot fully fund companies but supports those with sustainable export ambitions. Notably, exports to Europe have surpassed those to the UK for the first time. EMcD warned against overreliance on the US market, citing proposed 15% tariffs that could significantly affect Irish exporters.

At the end of the presentation, TF thanked EMcD for outlining Enterprise Ireland's (EI) operations and distinguishing them from the IDA. Noting that the Greystones Media Campus falls under IDA's remit TF asked whether EMcD might be aware of the current status of the project.

Wicklow's potential in maritime activity and marine restoration was discussed. It was cited limited support and space constraints as major challenges. It was asked if EI could assist with funding and also about their engagement with the circular economy, marine restoration, and innovation. EMcD was asked to share his perspective on Wicklow's potential and to outline the key challenges that may hinder its development.

EMcD responded that EI typically doesn't support infrastructure directly but mentioned SMART Region Schemes that touch on it. EI is aware of sectoral developments in Wicklow and sees opportunities in film, manufacturing, and marine industries. He highlighted the national focus on Smart Specialisation and noted Wicklow's strong position in the blue economy. He also spoke about an upcoming government support through a new Cluster Programme.

Finally, EMcD pointed to EI's support for SMEs via innovative services, especially through CLGs, to fill gaps in areas like marine enterprise and AI deployment.

ITEM 5: Update on the County Wicklow Skills Strategy

SN delivered an update on the Skills Strategy

The Skills taskforce continues to meet and focus on areas that can be implemented within the Strategy. Each agency represented will work on their own actions and feed into the overall strategy. The next meeting is in September.

Working collaboratively to bring the cross section of areas along together is one of the main benefits to come out of the strategy.

TF suggested that at the next meeting a progress report be prepared to give an understanding of how the strategy is progressing, who is responsible for the goals under the strategy, what progress is getting made and what are the timelines and targets on each goal.

A question was raised in relation to the circular economy and the gaps in skills. It was suggested that incentives could be offered for repairing instead of sending to landfill.

SN advised that County Wicklow Partnership are trying to establish a programme 'care and repair' to look at skills needed to fix appliances etc. While the Skill Strategy is looking at the bigger items that is not to say that it won't filter down. She also advised that conversations are taking place between KWETB and Evelyn around craft skills and passing them on in a very tangible way, with the possibility of developing a level 2 or 3 qualification.

ITEM 6: To consider updates from each group: Economic Development, Head of Enterprise, Content Creation Hub and Wicklow County Campus, and Tourism Officer

TF invited any questions arising from the reports which issued in respect of each of the above areas.

The conversation continued around the Greystones Media Campus. JP advised that it was his understanding from a recent meeting he attended that a number of film studios who has permission have not yet been built. It would seem that there is definitely an under supply of

studio space in Ireland but globally there is an oversupply, LFG reported that it is expected that Hackman will make an announcement on the Media Campus in the next few months but it is expected that the development will be scaled down. With the support of RTE, she is waiting on a response from the Government where she has requested that Hackman and the IDA come together with the business network to discuss the Greystones Campus.

ITEM 7: Correspondence

There was no correspondence to consider.

ITEM 8: AOB

TF thanked Leonora for her contribution to the SPC and wished her well in HR.

Preparation for the presentation to be given by the IDA at the next EDES SPC meeting was discussed. It was asked what are the requirements of the IDA in respect of industry development regarding sites, number of units, space etc. and if Wicklow is meeting its requirements in respect of infrastructure, sites, water, and service land? It was noted that little investment has been received from the IDA in the past twenty year.

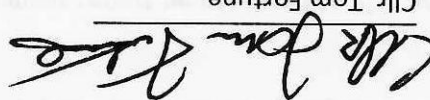
TF thanked all attendees and the meeting concluded.

The next meeting will take place on Monday 13th October, 2024 in the Boardroom of Clermont House.

Actions:

- In preparation for the IDA presentation to be given at the next EDES SPC meeting it was decided that a strategic approach be taken to agree the key focussed points to be raised at the meeting.
- A template for reporting on the Skills Strategy to the EDES SPC to be prepared.
- Susan to follow up on a map of all IDA lands in County Wicklow.

Signed:



Cllr. Tom Fortune
Chair

Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date:

13/10/2025