

**Minutes of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC**  
**Meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2024 in the**  
**The Boardroom, Clermont House, Newrath, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow at 10am**

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| <b>Present:</b>       | <b>Cllr. Tom Fortune – Chair (TF)</b><br><b>Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin (LFG)</b><br><b>Cllr. Peir Leonard (PL)</b><br><b>Cllr. Avril Cronin (AC)</b><br><b>Ms. Margaret Coughlan (MC)</b><br><b>Mr. T.J. Foley (TJF)</b><br><b>Mr. Killian McGreal (KMCG)</b><br><b>Ms. Jean Ryan (JR)</b> |
| <b>Presentation:</b>  | <b>Ms. Michelle Goodwin, Regional Enterprise Programme Manager (MG)</b>   |
| <b>In Attendance:</b> | <b>Ms. Leonora Earls (LE)</b><br><b>Ms. Vibeke Delahunt (VD)</b><br><b>Mr. Fred Verdier (FV)</b><br><b>Ms. Caroline Cullimore (CC)</b><br><b>Ms. Patriece O'Toole (POT)</b>   |
| <b>Apologies:</b>     | <b>Cllr. Ian Neary (IN)</b><br><b>Mr. John Powderly (JP)</b><br><b>Mr. Huw O'Toole (HOT)</b><br><b>Mr. Gerry Ginty (GG)</b><br><b>Ms. Susan Nichols (SN)</b><br><b>Ms. Michelle Curley (MC)</b><br><b>Mr. Chris Fox (CF)</b>  |

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Cllr Fortune welcomed Michelle Goodwin who was in attendance to give a presentation on the Mid East Regional Enterprise Plan.

**ITEM 1**

**Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support (EDES) SPC held on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2025**

The minutes of the EDES SPC which took place on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 were proposed by Cllr. Fenelon Gaskin and seconded by Cllr. Leonard.

**ITEM 2**

**Matters arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

**ITEM 3**

**Presentation on the Mid East Regional Enterprise Plan by Michelle Goodwin, Regional Enterprise Programme Manager**

MG introduced herself and provided an overview of the region, which encompasses Meath, Wicklow, and Kildare. She briefly discussed the previous plan, which was originally launched by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in March 2022, and noted that it has been extended until the end of 2025.

The overarching goal of the new plan is to achieve balanced regional development, which can be achieved through effective regional collaboration while feeding into plans such as the LECP's.

### **Key Areas Covered in MG's Presentation as follows:**

1. **Economic Growth & Job Security**
  - The primary goal is to drive economic growth, ensure existing jobs remain secure, and create new opportunities.
  - Identifying key sectors within the county to determine where efforts should be focused.
2. **Regional Planning Approach**
  - There are nine regional plans; each designed to support different areas.
  - MG emphasised that these plans cannot cover everything for everyone, as that would be unrealistic.
  - Instead, the focus should remain on high-impact areas that will drive success across the three counties.
3. **Strategic Objectives & Lessons from Previous Plans**
  - The plan includes 17 actions aligned with the Strategic Objectives.
  - MG stressed the importance of learning from the previous Plan and incorporating flexibility into the new one.
4. **Frameworks & Project Planning**
  - The need to develop strong, effective frameworks for better implementation.
  - A shift away from large capital projects in favour of more adaptable solutions.

### **Mid-East Regional Profile – Looking Forward**

#### **Key Insights**

- The three counties have the fastest-growing population, reaching 622,758 in 2022.
- A need to differentiate the region strategically.
- The high commuter belt presents both challenges and opportunities.
- Emphasising the importance of keeping people in the region and ensuring local job creation.

#### **Next Steps**

1. **Targeted Sectorial Approach**
  - Identify two focus areas in each county for sector-specific development.
2. **Quality & Asset Development**
  - Deliver high-quality content to strengthen regional strategies.
  - Build on and expand existing assets to drive economic growth.
3. **Collaboration & Leadership**
  - Establish working groups to support key initiatives.
  - Define priorities and develop solutions to effectively implement actions.
  - Ensure the right people are positioned within Steering Groups and Working Groups—those who will take responsibility and drive actions.

### **The Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) discussed several important issues, including:**

1. **Infrastructure & Economic Development**
  - Concerns about the existing road network.
  - The absence of large-scale industry in County Wicklow.
2. **Action Delivery & Accountability**
  - Identifying responsible parties for implementing actions.
  - Understanding the necessary steps to achieve objectives.
3. **Support for Small Businesses**
  - Exploring ways to empower small enterprises.
  - Considering the establishment of a Taskforce to guide smaller businesses.
4. **Workforce & Demographic Challenges**
  - Addressing the shortage of skilled workers.
  - Managing population growth and its impact on essential services.
5. **Public Services & Facilities**
  - The strain on childcare, schools, and crèches due to increased demand.
  - Lessons from previous plans—ensuring past shortcomings are considered.

## 6. Stakeholder Engagement

- Evaluating the role and influence of listed agencies in the Plan.
- Proposing the formation of a Focus Group for broader collaboration

LE acknowledged that the current plan was very County Specific, whereas the new Plan will promote regional consultation and ensure a more balanced approach across both counties and regions. She thanked MG for the presentation.

Cllr. Fortune also thanked MG for her presentation and continued with the rest of the Items on the Agenda.

### ITEM 4

#### **Update on the County Wicklow Skills Strategy**

CC provided an update on the County Wicklow Skills Strategy, emphasising four key sectors: tourism, food, film, and renewables. As the Taskforce had not convened since the last EDES SPC Meeting, there were no additional updates at this time. However, CC noted that the Taskforce is scheduled to meet on 15<sup>th</sup> May, with a detailed report to follow at the June EDES SPC.

### ITEM 5

#### **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.

LE provided a brief overview of the funding opportunities available under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) and the Town & Village scheme. She noted that multiple applications can be submitted under each category and highlighted that submission deadlines fall between May and July.

The media park in Greystones was discussed and LE said she would follow up with the IDA for any updates.

FV announced that the Tourism Networking Day will take place at Tulfarris Hotel on Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> April. The morning will feature updates, guest speakers, networking sessions, and workshops, followed by lunch. In the afternoon, attendees can enjoy a tour of Russborough House.

He also highlighted the growth of golf tourism, noting that content and short videos are being shared with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, thus promoting the sector even further.

VD advised on 2 additional events as follows:

1. **Retailers Working Group** – scheduled to take place on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2025 focussing on Wicklow Town. Trainer Aisling Hurley. If the uptake is good this may be offered out to all Towns and all retailers.
2. **Tariffs, Trade & Tactics** – scheduled to take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2025. Guest speaker Brian Murphy, Global Trade Ltd.

VD also emphasised the advantages of LEAN, DIGITAL, and GREEN supports available for small businesses, highlighting their potential to drive efficiency and sustainability

### ITEM 6

#### **Correspondence**

There was no correspondence to consider.

**AOB**

**A Presentation on Section 15 of the Scheme for the Waiver of Rates**

Denise Kinsella, Financial Accountant, Wicklow County Council provided an overview of Section 15 of the Waiver of Rates Scheme, highlighting key considerations:

- Only one waiver scheme can be introduced per year.
- Proposals must be submitted before the end of June.
- The final decision is made at the Annual Council Budget meeting.

She also addressed questions related to both the Waiver Scheme and general rates matters.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2025.

TF thanked all attendees and the meeting concluded.

Signed:



Cllr. Tom Fortune

Chair

Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date:

