

**Minutes of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC**  
**Meeting held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 in the**  
**Seminole Room, County Buildings at 9.30am**

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Cllr. Tom Fortune – Chair (TF)</b> <b>Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin (LFG)</b> <b>Cllr. Avril Cronin (AC)</b> <b>Cllr. Ned Whelan (NW)</b> <b>Mr. T.J. Foley (TJF)</b>
<b>Presentation:</b>	<b>Ms. Sarah Fitzpatrick (SF), Fáilte Ireland – Zoom</b> <b>Ms. Caroline Henry (CH), Fáilte Ireland – Zoom</b> <b>Ms. Carol Coad (CCD), Wicklow Partnership - Zoom</b>
<b>In Attendance:</b>	<b>Mr. Fergal Keogh (FK)</b> <b>Ms. Vibeke Delahunt (VD)</b> <b>Mr. Fred Verdier (FV)</b> <b>Ms. Susan Nichols (SN)</b> <b>Ms. Caroline Cullimore (CC)</b> <b>Ms. Michelle Curley (MC)</b> <b>Ms. Patriece O'Toole (POT)</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<b>Cllr. Peir Leonard (PL)</b> <b>Cllr. Ian Neary (IN)</b> <b>Ms. Margaret Coughlan (MC)</b> <b>Mr. Killian McGreal (KMCG)</b> <b>Ms. Jean Ryan (JR)</b> <b>Ms. Leonora Earls (LE)</b> <b>Mr. John Powderly (JP)</b> <b>Mr. Huw O'Toole (HOT)</b> <b>Mr. Gerry Ginty (GG)</b> <b>Mr. Chris Fox (CF)</b>

---

TF welcomed Cllr. Ned Whelan who was co-opted onto the Council representing Bray North East and Michelle Curley, Senior Staff Officer who joined the Economic Development team.

**ITEM 1: Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support (EDES) SPC held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2025**

Before approving the minutes, the Chair addressed Cllr. Pier Leonard's concern that the record of the meeting omitted her being informed of the Council's inability to produce a baseline list of all County businesses for evaluating economic vulnerability due to international conditions.

In response to Cllr. Leonard's query, it was advised that Wicklow County Council, through the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), offers business supports including training in areas such as LEAN, Digital, and Green initiatives. Additionally, dates were scheduled for one-to-one advisory sessions with global trade expert Brian Murphy, focusing on the topic 'Tariffs, Trade and Tactics: What Every Business Needs to Know About Mitigating Risk.'

The minutes of the EDES SPC which took place on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2025 were proposed by Cllr. Fenelon Gaskin and seconded by Vibeke Delahunt.

## **ITEM 2: Matters arising from the Minutes**

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

## **ITEM 3: Presentation by Fáilte Ireland on the Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) for County Wicklow**

TF welcomed Sarah Fitzpatrick and Caroline Henry from Fáilte Ireland who gave a presentation by Zoom on the DEDP.

SN gave an introduction to the DEDP advising that it is a 10 year vision with a 5 year action plan. It was explained that the DEDP is an extensive strategic document, detailing the measures to develop tourism across the County. SN acknowledged the support of SF, Regional Tourism Manager, who is responsible for promoting tourism in County Wicklow, alongside CH and the team at Fáilte Ireland.

SF's presentation highlighted where the plan is currently at, stakeholder feedback, challenges and the next steps. She invited the board to share any feedback to SN.

The plan is developed with visitor, industry, community and environment in mind. The aim is to motivate visitors to visit, stay longer and spend more. This can be achieved by extending the tourism season to 'year round' and encouraging attractions to disperse visitors across the county, contributing to greater economic return.

SF shared findings from a visitor research survey conducted in 2023 across a range of stakeholders including tourism businesses, industry, visitors and community. The findings noted that the county's scenic beauty, outdoor activities, and trails were highly rated, while areas such as food offerings, transportation, accommodation and marketing of the product emerged as key opportunities for development.

SF concluded with the destination focus, next steps, and responded to observations raised by the members.

The members reiterated the challenges due to the lack of transport (local links, national bus lines, and no light rail), accommodation and low product awareness. The following questions were posed:

Q. TF: Numerous plans have been developed over the years, how will the DEDP be different?

A. SF: The aim is to consolidate all previous plans into a single, cohesive action plan. Fáilte Ireland is making a long term commitment to implementing the plan. A strong DEDP will support applications under the Shared Island Fund.

Q. TF: When will a draft plan be made available and will the SPC be given an opportunity to feed into the plan?

A. SF: The Draft Plan will be available in the Q3/Q4 of 2025 and will be shared with the SPC for feedback before going to the SEA process.

A. SN noted that all members of the SPC were invited to a consultation meeting in the Parkview back in November. This was followed by a feedback survey that was circulated, and that today is the third opportunity for input into the DEDP.

- Q. AC: The lack of food and beverage options in key locations, limiting opportunities for spending is concerning as Wicklow Naturally is promoted so much in the county – Wicklow and its product offerings should be promoted internationally.
- A. SF: Research would show that the message is not getting out there – the product may well be there but visitors are not aware of it, the challenge is to get the message out.

VB commented how the challenges are the same when compared to 20 years ago. Perceptions have changed and transport has improved. The infrastructure and product is present and there are lots of festivals happening. We need to consider 'Who' are we targeting and 'How' best to promote.

FK thanked SF for the presentation and advised on the importance of adopting a coordinated approach to developing tourism products and accommodation in a sustainable manner by avoiding haphazard development. From a planning perspective, WCC strongly supports the development of accommodation stock across the county.

TF thanked SF and CH for the presentation and continued with the rest of the Items on the Agenda.

#### **ITEM 4: Presentation by Carol Coad on the Draft Outdoor Recreation Plan**

TF welcomed Carol Coad, Rural Recreation Officer with County Wicklow Partnership who gave a presentation by Zoom on the Draft Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Plan.

CCD provided background context since the establishment of Wicklow Outdoor Recreation in 2008 to the current Draft Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030. Funding of €30k was awarded to County Wicklow by the Department of Rural and Community Development and supplemented by Wicklow Local Sport Recreation Partnership and Enterprise & Corporate Services. This allowed for extensive public consultation in the form of public meetings, online survey's and 1 to 1 interviews with all forms of stakeholders.

The priority of the plan is to manage and maintain existing amenities and enhance access and opportunities while increasing awareness of the lifelong benefits for all and at the same time protect the natural beauty and habitats of the environment. CCD outlined the actions needed to achieve this and provided a number of examples, such as the creation of a Parks Department in Wicklow County Council.

CCD advised that the public consultation closes on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2025 and welcomed feedback from the SPC. The final sign off for the Plan is the end of June with publication in early July.

FK noted that Wicklow County Council in line with the County Development Plan supported and welcomed tourism accommodation and development in the County as long as it is carried out in a co-ordinated approach.

The members asked that the creation of a Parks Department in Wicklow County Council be brought forward from the SPC. AC to follow up with the CE regarding the resources that are needed to support this initiative.

TF thanked Carol for the presentation and continued with the rest of the Agenda.

#### **ITEM 5: Update on the County Wicklow Skills Strategy**

CC reported that a meeting of the Skills Taskforce will take place on the 19<sup>th</sup> June and discussions will be had to plan an event focusing on the skills required in the offshore renewable energy sector.

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

SN invited questions on the reports which issued in respect of each of the above areas. The members were advised that discussions were taking place with the land owner in respect of the closure of the Piperstown access route. NW raised the concern of public liability cover for landowners. AC to follow up on this with Deirdre Burns.

VD reported on the Tariffs, Trade and Tactics and the Strategic Retail Masterclass events. Feedback following the event suggested to develop an umbrella brand and to roll the event out across other towns in Wicklow.

#### **ITEM 7: Correspondence**

There was no correspondence to consider.

#### **ITEM 8: AOB**

LFK asked for follow up on the Greystones Media Park.

NW raised the issue of support for traders in Bray and Greystones due to the closure of the cliff walk.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2025 and will be held at the GRID in Greystones.

TF thanked all attendees and the meeting concluded.

Signed:



Cllr. Tom Fortune

Chair

Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date:

