

**Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC meeting held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 via ZOOM.**

Present: Councillor Gerry Walsh Chair  
Councillor Tom Fortune  
Councillor Avril Cronin  
Councillor Mary Kavanagh  
Councillor Pat Kennedy  
Mr. Michael Ryan  
Mr. Huw O'Toole  
Ms. Ruth Donnelly  
Mr. Michael Allen  
Mr. Christopher Fox

In Attendance: Ms. Lorraine Gallagher, Director of Services  
Ms. Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer  
Ms. Linda Healy, Administrative Officer  
Ms. Susan Nichols, Administrative Officer  
Ms. Deirdre Whitfield, Administrative Officer

Apologies: Councillor Irene Winters  
Mr. Michael Allen  
Mr. Killian McGreal  
Ms. Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise

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**ITEM 1**

**Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development & Enterprise Support SPC held on Monday 14th December 2020**

On the proposal of Cllr. Avril Cronin, seconded by Cllr. Pat Kennedy, the minutes of SPC meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 as circulated were agreed.

**ITEM 2**

**Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**ITEM 3**

**Update on LECP: Economic Activities**

Ms. C. Flood, Senior Executive Officer provided a report to the meeting (copy circulated) which covered the following:

## FILM STRATEGY

WCC has appointed Saffery Champness Ireland with SPI to develop a Film Strategy for County Wicklow; this project is underway at present and is expected to be completed by the end of this month

Procurement of a contractor for the Clermont Screen Enterprise Hub has been delayed slightly due to Covid 19

### Town Teams

Town Teams continue to meet virtually and to plan a range of projects and events within the limitations of the Covid restrictions.

Greystones 2020 is in the process of forming as a full Town Team with a committee structure modelled on the other teams in the County.

A new Town Team is being considered for Bray .There has been renewed interest following a recent "Placemaking Course"

The focus for the next months will be on Town Re-opening and recovery. It is proposed to reengage with the Town Teams / Re-Opening Committees in this regard.

## RRDF FUNDING

Wicklow County Council submitted 2 applications for Category 1 RRDF funding in respect of Rathdrum Community Enterprise hub, regeneration and public realm improvements

A further application in partnership with Dublin Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team was submitted in respect of the construction of a new headquarters for the team at Roundwood

## TOURISM

The key themes in the Wicklow Tourism Strategy and Marketing Plan are as follows;

**Accommodation:** Following delivery of Fáilte Ireland /Crowe Consultants Toolkit WCC has undertaken a further study with a view to developing a portfolio to attract investment in tourism accommodation of all types. The next steps for the Accommodation working group will be to develop a prospectus which will help sell Wicklow as an ideal location for investment in visitor accommodation.

**Glendalough:** The end of the initial consultation phase for the Masterplan for Glendalough and the Wicklow Mountains National Park and Visitor Orientation Recommendations for County Wicklow is approaching. The aim of the Masterplan is to improve the visitor experience in County Wicklow in a manner which respects the needs of local residents, the natural environment and the unique heritage of the area

Engagement with the consultation process has been positive, with over 170 individuals having participated in the Zoom sessions to date and a similar number of surveys have been returned. Issues raised during those sessions include congestion at key sites, security, car parking and visitor

services, including signage availability of maps showing all the trails and routes, issues with local access, rewilding, erosion and degradation of the environment.

A plenary meeting with representatives of local groups in the area has been arranged for 10<sup>th</sup> March to ensure that the views of local residents and businesses are taken in to account. The final Zoom 'drop in' session with the consultant team will run from 4pm to 8pm on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March.

The Visitor Experience and Management Masterplan for Glendalough and the Wicklow Mountains National Park has been commissioned by Fáilte Ireland, working with its strategic partners the Office of Public Works (OPW), National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Coillte along with the National Monuments Service and Wicklow County Council,

**Key Towns as Visitor Hubs:** Destination Town Project being developed for Wicklow Abbey Grounds

**A Common Narrative/Marketing** Ireland County by County, St Patrick's Festival TV, Nationwide etc

**Grow Thematic Experiences :** Tracks and Trails – Wicklow Outdoors, Wicklow Naturally – focus on developing screen induced tourism in 2021

## **FOOD AND BEVERAGE STRATEGY**

### ***Objectives***

- *Tell the Wicklow Food Story.*
- *Develop a Food Activity Calendar B2C*
- *Increase Food Stakeholder Networking B2B*
- *Get Local Food to Local Consumers B2C*
- *Provide appropriate business supports B2B*
- *Food Incubation Centre*

### ***Wicklow Naturally Actions to date***

*Website and social media presence aimed at promoting Wicklow's outstanding produce*

*Development of signature dishes*

*Establishment of October Feast*

*Feasibility Study for Food Incubation Centre*

*CLG established*

### ***Actions for 2021***

Secure funding for a co-ordinator to continue to support the members of Wicklow Naturally and promote Wicklow food and beverage.

Develop and secure funding for the establishment of a Food Incubation Hub

## MARITIME

### Maritime Strategic Review for County Wicklow

Key Recommendations:

- To maximise the Offshore Wind Opportunity
- To investigate the feasibility of a new harbour facility at Wicklow
- Aquaculture Support
- Marketing Strategy for County Wicklow as a Coastal Tourist Destination

The following points were raised following the report:

- When will work on the Abbey Grounds commence, how long will the work take and will the Abbey structure be protected?
- Who is funding the Abbey Ground project?
- Is there an update on Food Poverty and Activity Calendars?

The following responses were provided:

- The Abbey Grounds tender should be awarded by June / July 2021 and it is estimated that work will take 6 / 7 months. The Abbey ruins will not be damaged. Barriers may be erected to stop people from climbing them etc. It is intended that the grounds will be managed like any public park.
- The Abbey Grounds project is funded 75% Fáilte Ireland and 25% Wicklow County Council.
- There is a food poverty group who work closely with various charities in the County. Jonathan Birnie of JBA Food Consultants has agreed to further this group on a voluntary basis.

## ITEM 4

### Update on LECP: Community Activities

Goal 1: Develop community capacity in disadvantaged communities and engage in urban and rural regeneration

Regeneration Funding Schemes:

Rural Regeneration Development Fund 2019/2020 (RRDF)

Area	Overview of Proposal	Funding Awarded
Baltinglass	Work delayed on restoration of the Courthouse reuse as a library/Heritage and Digi-hub with outdoor event space as library service want to reapply for funding for a larger project.	€2.7mn  (total cost

	Consultants working on public Realm enhancement, parking improvement, pedestrian crossings, ramps, boardwalk and riverside fencing	€3,566,968)
Newtownmountkennedy	The tender process for consultants to be appointed for Main St. Design is nearly complete; mobility /transport plan; community facilities	€357,750

Both projects are underway but progress has been affected by COVID-19 restrictions

### **Town & Village 2020**

This funding scheme supports economic and social development projects in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000.

In 2020 there are two elements to the Scheme.

#### 1. 2020 Accelerated Measure

This measure aims to assist communities and local businesses in the delivery of projects that address the short term challenges of social and economic recovery following the COVID-19 emergency. The focus is on adapting to public health requirements, particularly social distancing.

Funding is available up to €25,000 - €40,000 in exceptional circumstances

#### 2. 2020 Town and Village Main Scheme

Round 1 Accelerated		
Dunlavin	Shop Local campaign	Funded €4,500
Roundwood	Public realm	Funded €36000
Comm Centres	Adaptations for COVID measures for 10 centres	Funded€16,200
Round 2 Accelerated – August 14 <sup>th</sup>		
Enniskerry	Car parking improvements, new footpath, new public seating, signage & shopfront improvements	Funded €39,600
Ballinaclesh	Renovations to community centre	Funded €39,600
Laragh	Improvements to pedestrian	Funded €24,300

	movements; provision of safe pedestrian spaces and public awning	
Tinahely	Tinahely Mens Shed building refurbishment after a fire	Funded €4,950
Baltinglass	Painting and planting scheme	Funded €9,000
App	App to encourage shop local – county wide	Funded €22,500
Round 3 Accelerated >10,000 – August 28 <sup>th</sup>		
Kilcoole	Age Friendly benches	Funded €18,000
BCPs	Fit out for BCP centres	Funded €40,000
Rathdrum	Age friendly benches and bus shelter	Funded €24,000
Round 3 Accelerated <10,000 – August 28 <sup>th</sup>		
Greystones 2020/MD	Footpath improvement around Burnaby Park	Funded €40,000
Arklow MD	Biodiversity project	Funded €35,550
Wicklow MD	Outdoor Shelter/awnings	Funded €40,000

Town & Village Main Scheme – September 30 <sup>th</sup>		
Stratford	Community shop/cafe/offices/living over the shop/playground	Funded €199,800
Laragh	BCP and remote working hub Brockagh	Funded €100,000
Enniskerry	Public realm enhancement	Funded €98,000
Avoca	Public realm and recreation facility works	Funded €68,455
Annamoe	Public realm enhancement	Funded €100,000

## **CLAR 2020**

Wicklow County Council has successfully secured €60,000 for two projects under the CLAR programme.

Knockananna Community Group and Asknagap secured funding for carparks

**Goal 2: Promote Active Citizenship and Public Participation to improve governance, participation and enrich decision making**

### **Age Friendly Programme**

The Age Friendly programme is focusing on the Keep Well Campaign and the Community Call. 500 winter care packs were delivered to those most isolated and vulnerable in the county and were very well received. Tablets and laptops were delivered to participating nursing homes Wicklow in order to assist residents stay connected. Training for setting up a Befriending service in Arklow has started with two sessions complete.

### **Comhairle na nÓg**

The Comhairle na nÓg, through the Coordinator, are taking part in the COVID-19 Community Response Forum, bringing the perspective of young people, and in the Keep Well campaign.

Funding has been secured from DCYA to continue to support the Comhairle na nÓg and tablets and laptops were provided to help them to keep the youth council going during the COVID-19 restrictions.

### **PPN – report attached**

**Goal 3: Strategic Direction – Develop high quality integrated services, available to all communities, in particular, disadvantaged communities and vulnerable groups**

#### **1. Healthy Wicklow Strategy**

Round 3 of Programme is underway but implementation has slowed down because of COVID-19. An extension to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 has been granted. €30,000 has been allocated to a number of groups under the Healthy Ireland Mental Health Small grants Scheme.

Under the Healthy Ireland Fund, Wicklow County Council has received €67,225 to help with the 'Keep Well' campaign. This is a national campaign, part of the government plan for 'Living with COVID-19' focused on 5 major themes:

- Keeping Active & Being Outdoors – even during winter it is important to help physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Keeping in Contact – staying connected with people and addressing isolation as person-to-person connection is important to our wellbeing

- Switching Off and Being Creative - Switching Off and Being Creative or learning something new, getting back to nature and finding ways to relax
- Eating Well – by nourishing your mind and body we can positively impact our physical and mental wellbeing.
- Minding Your Mood – relaxation, mindfulness and asking for help if needed.

## 2. Migrant Integration Strategy

The DRAFT Migrant Integration Strategy has recently been completed and was presented to the LCDC. It will go to the full Council meeting in April.

## 3. County Wicklow Food & Beverage Strategy – Wicklow Naturally

### Report under economic update

#### Goal 4: Develop a vibrant and innovative community and social enterprise sector

Social Enterprise development and operation is being supported by Bray Area Partnership in the Bray and north Wicklow areas as follows:

- Working with existing and emerging enterprises locally to build the capacity and skills required to manage effectively and sustain trading. Over the past year a programme of supports has been provided involving access to a mentor for the individual social enterprise and participation in peer group training sessions and networking on relevant business development and day to day operational issues etc. This work has been supported by a combination of programmes resourcing such as the Training & Mentoring Supports for Social Enterprises Pilot grants scheme (DRCD/Dormant Accounts Fund) and SICAP. Delivering programme supports forms part of a collaborative undertaking involving BAP and Southside Partnership.
- Providing advice and guidance to social enterprises with respect to sourcing funding for expansion and development. A number of social enterprises locally were successful in grant applications submitted under the DRCD Small Capital Grants Scheme for social enterprises. BAP is administering the funding allocated under this scheme for enterprises in the Bray and north Wicklow areas.
- Establishing new social enterprises to provide services and employment opportunities for targeted communities. The Targeted Resourced Action Supporting Nurtured Activation (TRASNA) Initiative is a social enterprise proposal being researched with respect to supplying goods and services with ex-offenders being employed in the workforce. A feasibility and market research study will determine the scope and viability for the enterprise to be established. This work is also part of a collaborative effort involving BAP and Southside Partnership.
- Directly managing and operating deficient demand social enterprises for the provision of services and employment opportunities targeting marginalised communities. Over the years BAP has developed and operated social enterprises covering early years services; transport



& care services and heating & upgrading works. The BAP Warmer Homes service is an example of such enterprises in the work carried out to retrofit insulation and reduce energy usage in welfare dependent fuel poverty households, connected to the SEAI Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme.

### **Social Enterprise – Co Wicklow Partnership**

- 11 projects have been supported in the following areas – (3) Analysis & Development Projects, (4) small services/ works projects, (4) large scale capital works projects. The value of which is **€747,280.56**
- Internal CWP Training and Mentoring Programmes have been supported under the current programme, of which the following activity has concluded or is underway -
  - Rural Youth Social Enterprise Climb Programme concluded in December 2020, with a competition for an award pot of €10,000 (funded by DRCD – Social Enterprise and SICAP). It unearthed in Wicklow 8 new social enterprises, 7 socially aware and developing social enterprises and 4 deciding their path was more in line with enterprise.
  - Rural Youth Social Enterprise Summit Social Training Videos - (in production currently) for release in autumn 2021. These will be hosted on a branded Social Enterprise Platform for Co Wicklow. This platform was funded by DRCD (€4,900) and will include a launch event also funded by DRC (€2,500).
  - Covid 19 Social Enterprise Training and Mentoring Ascend Programme is currently underway with a total of 20 participants.
  - Eco Tourism - Wicklow Forest Bathing Training Programme – 10 to 12 participants will be trained in the art of Forest Bathing, outside first aid and social enterprise entrepreneurial business thinking.

### **- Total LEADER investment in Social Enterprise in Co Wicklow - € 984,243.59**

- Grant aid for (4) Social Enterprises based in Co Wicklow was secured through the small capital grants award scheme - €36,475 from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

### **ITEM 5**

#### **Update on Blessington Greenway**

Ms. S. Nichols, Administrative Officer provided updates on the following:

In June 2019 a funding amount of €5 million was allocated to the scheme by the Department of Transport. This funding allocation was based on an estimated project cost of €8.5 million.

AECOM Consultant Engineers were appointed by Wicklow County Council to bring the project through all the stages from design to construction. Several site walkovers for the entire route were carried out by the project team in 2020.

Through the process of route identification, the scope of works for the project were changed. These elements included some route change, new bridges; engineering works to construct the greenway

may incorporate some lake shore protections work, underpass, a new bound surface type and an increased width of the path. These project changes triggered the need to review the environmental reports undertaken to date.

As the project works/scope and legislation have changed since the previous Appropriate Assessment screening, which was carried out in 2015, AECOM conducted an Appropriate Assessment screening and which examined the potential adverse effects of the proposed project on Natura 2000 sites i.e. the Poulaphouca Special Protection Area. It was concluded that the project requires a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

The NIS with the relevant planning documentation, which will include the following key documents will be submitted to An Bord Pleanála as the competent authority to make decisions on local authority developments under 177AE (relating to appropriate assessment (AA)) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. It is proposed to submit this planning submission to An Bord Pleanála in early 2021.

#### Some Key Documents

- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Appropriate Assessment Screening
- Natura Impact Statement
- Archaeological Impact Assessment
- Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Environment Impact Assessment Screening

Following the completion of all these reports, the Council are confident that the scheme is a robust scheme, with all environmental issues and planning concerns addressed, thus making it a high quality and deliverable project, which is ultimately the overall objective of Wicklow County Council.

During early 2021, the Council will further engage with the public, local community groups and all stakeholders on the progression of this project.

With the construction phase of the project taking approximately eighteen months, the proposed completion date is in quarter two of 2023.

#### **Arklow to Shillelagh Recreational Trail**

Wicklow County Council has received funding from National Transport Authority (NTA) to progress the Arklow to Shillelagh Recreational Trail project through the statutory process.

From extensive consultation, discussions and feedback from the landowners along the Arklow to Shillelagh Recreational Trail route and people in the community, Wicklow County Council and their engaged consultant have finalised the Arklow to Shillelagh Recreational Trail Route.

The proposed trail will connect each of the communities and several amenities along the route, providing a safe, attractive, and high-quality off-road trail for use by locals and visitors to the area. At this point, the design and environmental surveys have been substantially completed and the project is nearly ready to be progressed through the statutory process.

The following points were raised following the report:

- Is there a timeframe for the recreational trail and is there any update on the Wicklow to Greystones greenway?

The following responses were provided:

- Estimated timeframe is approximately 18 months once planning permission has been granted.
- Irish Rail has completed a coastal erosion study and shows no significant impact. The major impact of the Wicklow to Greystones greenway is ecological as a lot of the route covers areas of conservation.

## **ITEM 6**

### **Update on Wicklow County Campus; Content Creation Hub and Business Continuity Response to Covid 19**

Ms. Linda Healy, Administrative Officer provided updates on this item and included the following:

#### **Content Creation Hub**

- The construction tender currently on eTenders until 19<sup>th</sup> March. Had to be extended due to COVID Lockdown.
- Construction contractor to be appointed in Q1/2 2021 and following stand still period construction to commence.
- Foul drainage system to be developed for the whole campus concurrently. Topographical and CCTV surveys have to be finalised to inform the design.
- Directors invited to the board of Clermont Enterprise Hub CLG.
- Insurance cover and lease to be arranged next.
- First REDF drawdown in Q1/2 2021.
- Promotion and marketing of facilities to commence, Q2 2021
- Recruitment of Centre Manager Q3/4 2021 depending on construction progress.
- Screen Development Strategy for County Wicklow underway with online industry survey and stakeholder consultancy.

#### **Response to Covid 19**

##### **General**

- LEO Wicklow provides a critical front line service to support small business with their business continuity throughout the COVID pandemic.
- The LEO remains open for business but public reception is closed for walk ins. All engagements are by prior appointment and conducted online or by phone.
- Contingency Plan in place to ensure continued staffing, monitoring of central email and phone to ensure continued fast response and offer of business supports.

- All business advice clinics and business skills and IT skills training courses, seminars and networking events are moved to online delivery platforms (Zoom / Teams etc).

### **Business Supports:**

#### **Client engagement: Information services and signposting**

- Weekly newsletters circulated to client and enabler database
- Social media promotions of training events and new and existing supports updated 5 times a day.
- Radio interview / press releases on new and existing supports
- Dissemination of relevant information to portfolio clients
- Participation in information webinars with Network Ireland / LEO Lunch and Learn etc
- Information dissemination on other supports such as Revenue, CCRS, CBAS, Tourism supports, WCC rates deferral to clients and interested parties.

#### **Trading Online Voucher (TOV)**

- Up to €2,500 towards enhancing the business website with e-commerce.
- 548 Trading Online Voucher applications received, processes and 425 of these were approved (value of €1,022,007) by end December 2020. Our average annual number of applications is about 45.
- Interest in this scheme continues to be strong. 56 applications approved year to date.

#### **Feasibility / Priming and Business Expansion Grants**

- Evaluation and Approvals Committee meetings moved online
- 30 funding application approved in 2020, nine funding applications (mix of Feasibility Study / Priming and Business Expansion Grant) approved at the February 2021 Evaluations and Approvals Committee meeting.
- General increase in LEO grant funding enquiries from eligible and non eligible businesses looking for support and to pivot.

#### **The Client Stimulus Scheme**

- 32 portfolio clients qualified for this scheme, which includes specifically focussed consultancy support to enhance capabilities.

#### **Training / networking and seminars**

- Spring Summer training programme now commenced for 2021. Continued high demand for all courses, especially Start Your Own Business courses.
- Overall 1550 participants across all 64 training workshops, specialised clinics and events and seminars year to date compared to 832 in 2019
- Network of Entrepreneurial Women meetings now each monthly and delivered online.

#### **Lean for Micro Program**

- 9 of the 11 participants successfully participated in this programme. Two businesses had to pull out due to Covid disruption to their business. This programme will start again with a new intake in 2021. This program assists businesses to become more efficient resulting in becoming more productive and competitive.

#### **Microfinance Ireland Loan Applications:**

- COVID Loan for businesses affected by COVID and turned down for loan application by pillar banks.
- MFI loan reduced from €50k back to €25k, interest dropped to 4.5% for applications submitted through the LEO.
- Increase in interest in applying with assistance of a LEO mentor but not all resulting in an actual application as overall there's a reluctance to apply for a loan amongst our clients.
- 21 Applications for MFI loans submitted in 2020 and 14 were successful.

#### **Brexit**

'Change is coming', national campaign commenced to highlight end of transition period and UK exiting EU on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and to promote LEO Brexit Supports.

- Two dedicated Brexit Business Advisors in place.
- 7 Prepare Your Business for Customs workshops delivered in 2020.
- 42 one to one Brexit mentor clinics (customs focussed) scheduled following the workshops. Participants in the workshops are encouraged to book the clinics.
- Full suite of supports available including mentoring, MFI loans, training, funding for eligible businesses, Lean for Micro programme and Innovation programme.
- Mailshots / newsletter circulated to highlight urgency to prepare and engage with LEO supports.
- Dedicated Brexit support line available throughout Christmas period.

#### **Operational**

##### **DETE / EI Engagement**

- Portfolio client survey to gauge lockdown impact and state of business activity.
- Weekly LEO Network Regional Committee and Enterprise Ireland conference calls and Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation calls have resumed after summer break.
- Weekly reporting on number of BCV / TOV / Training / MFI to Enterprise Ireland for Dept of Enterprise in relation to parliamentary questions.

#### **Resources**

- Additional funding resources have been made available by Enterprise Ireland to cover support commitments.

- Additional HR resources approved by Enterprise Ireland till 31<sup>st</sup> June 2021. Ongoing additional HR requirement for next 6 months to process large volume of grant claims / reporting duties to Enterprise Ireland etc. Three additional members of staff in place.

#### **Events:**

- Spring Summer Training Programme has launched in January 2021 with 26 training workshops organised and ready for booking.
- National Enterprise Awards virtual ceremony took place on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021 from the Mansion House.
- Local Enterprise Week 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021, line up of digital workshops, networking events and webinars including 10 spotlight events open to all clients nationwide.
- Student Enterprise Programme has moved online and commenced Sept 2020 with 18 schools signed up and will culminate in a digital version of the Co.Wicklow Student Enterprise Awards on 23<sup>rd</sup> March.
- Breakthrough Innovation Programme moved online and piloted with 9 LEO Wicklow clients was well evaluated.
- Hi-Start Programme starts May instead of April, 2 LEO Wicklow participants.
- A regional Food Academy course commenced with 3 LEO clients.

#### **Economic Development and REDF**

- Continued engagement with Enterprise Ireland and Architect James O'Donoghue regarding the development of Clermont Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus
- Site enabling works finalised.
- Construction tender currently published on etenders with closing date of 19<sup>th</sup> March.
- Appointment of contractor and construction to commence Q1/Q2 2021.
- Executive Team continues to meet (conference call).
- Food and Tourism Development Strategy actions supported.

#### **Temporary Business COVID Supports 2020:**

##### **Business Continuity Voucher (BCV)**

- New scheme launched for up to €2,500 in third party consultancy costs for businesses with up to 50 employees and open to all sectors. Businesses can work on business continuity strategy with LEO appointed mentors (free) or own consultant (pay first and claim back).
- 297 BCV applications received by deadline in Wicklow. 283 were approved to work with mentors from the panel or use their own consultant towards a Business Continuity Strategy, value of this scheme is €377,850. The others were either withdrawn or assisted with other supports such as the Microfinance Ireland loan application.
- End December 2020: Over 100 client's drawdown claims progresses and paid.
- Nationally 15,000 received across 31 LEOs resulting in large increase in workload for LEO teams.

- This scheme is now closed.

### **Micro Enterprise Assistance Fund**

- The objective COVID-19 Micro-Enterprise Assistance Scheme is to provide a grant of a minimum of €500 to a maximum €1,000 in respect of vouched expenditure contribution towards the cost of reopening or keeping a business operational and re-connecting with employees and customers
- 18 Applications received and 7 approved. Others didn't meet eligibility criteria.
- This scheme is now closed.

### **#LookforLocal Campaign:**

Nationwide shop local campaign organised, paid for and promoted through central LEO unit in Enterprise Ireland and 31 LEO offices. Reviewed: substantial reach and awareness to support local business resulting in increased local spent over the holiday period.

In 2020, the Local Enterprise Offices network has approved over 13,000 Trading Online Vouchers for small Irish businesses, helping them to create or adapt their online trading presence.

The Local Enterprise Office Wicklow has approved 425 of the 11,000 Trading Online Vouchers, 283 of the 12,060 Business Continuity Vouchers, and has provided Covid-19 specific mentoring and training to 2000 of the 55,000 individuals.

### **Brexit:**

- The LEO offers a suite of supports to assist small business prepare for Brexit and to be Brexit ready for 1st January 2021. The supports are listed on our website and include scorecards, checklists, information guides, workshops, currency exposure calculator, financial supports, mentoring, webinars, training events, and Lean for Micro programme as well as a weekly newsletter and social media promotion.
- Two dedicated Brexit Business Advisors are available to support small businesses to get Brexit ready by signposting these to available supports through the LEO and other agencies.
- Seven Prepare your Business for Customs workshops have been held in 2020.
- 42 One to One Brexit mentoring clinics has taken place with Brexit and customs experts.
- We advise small business to register for their EORI number now!

The following points were raised following the report:

- Will the Business Continuity scheme be reopening?
- The movie that is being filmed in Enniskerry, will they be using Ardmore?

The following responses were provided:

- There are no plans to reopen the Business Continuity scheme.
- The movie production camp is based in the RDS but some day filming will take place in Enniskerry with the production company working out of Powerscourt.

## ITEM 7

### Update on Restart Grant Fund for small businesses

Ms. Susan Nichols provided a report which covered Item 7 viz:

#### Restart Grant Scheme

The Restart Grant Scheme statistics in relation to applications approved and paid out up to the end of 2020 are outlined in the table below. The Restart Grant Scheme is now closed.

RESTART GRANT SCHEME	APPLICATIONS	VALUE
APPLICATIONS APPROVED BUT NOT PAID	-	-
APPLICATIONS PAID	1,450	5,267,386
GRAND TOTAL	1,450	€5,267,386
RESTART GRANT PLUS SCHEME		
APPLICATIONS APPROVED BUT NOT PAID	-	-
APPLICATIONS PAID	1,511	10,629,897
GRAND TOTAL	1,511	€10,629,897
TOTAL APPROVED AND PAID	2,961	€15,897,283

#### Rates Waiver Scheme

##### 2020

1. WCC has received to date €8.9m in funding from the Department in respect of the initial 6 months rates waiver scheme from end March to end Sept.
2. A further payment of €4.4m will be paid in December in respect of the 3 month waiver extension from end Sept to end Dec.
3. Total Waiver Income is €13.3m.
4. The full 9 month waiver has been applied to all customer accounts.
5. 93% of ratepayers (3,519) have availed of the waiver.
6. In monetary terms, the waiver amount equates to 42% of overall rates book value of €32m.

##### 2021 – Extended to Q2 2021

The 2021 waiver is necessarily more targeted than was the case in 2020. It is aimed at supporting businesses closed or very seriously impacted by current restrictions, which ordinarily provide employment and generate economic activity.

Automatic eligibility is extended to:

- retail



- hospitality including hotels, pubs and restaurants, leisure and entertainment
- personal services such as hairdressers and barbers
- health services
- various other categories

## **ITEM 8**

### **Update on Offshore Windfarm projects for County Wicklow**

Ms. Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer gave a presentation to the committee on this item. (Presentation was circulated).

The following points were raised:

- There are concerns about the height of the turbines and the proximity to shore. Will there be a formal public consultation process and if so, when?
- Is the community fund a once off payment or will it be ongoing?
- Is Wicklow County Council handling the planning application?

The following responses were provided:

- There will be a full statutory process. The communities will all be consulted.
- The community fund will be an ongoing annual contribution based on the Kw hours produced.
- The only planning application that the local authority is involved with is the operational base and bringing cables to port from shore. The statutory process will be managed by An Bord Pleanála and the Department.

## **ITEM 9**

### **The Forestry Sector: Felling Licences**

At the SPC meeting of 14th December 2020 Mr. C. Fox raised an issue in relation to the forestry sector in Wicklow regarding;

- Serial objections are being raised to felling licences
- This is having a huge effect on all aspects of forestry – nurseries, sawmills, etc.
- None So Hardy nursery had to shred 2.5m trees as mature trees had not been removed to allow for planting
- There is now a 900 day wait for a felling licence
- Felling licences are administered at national level but some aspects are dealt with by the local authority.

It was agreed that C. Fox would get some more details.

Cllr. Avril Cronin provided the meeting with an update on this issue.

- New legislation was passed in December which included a number of changes such as changes to appeals commission and the introduction of fees for making submissions.

- There are now 16 full time ecologists so the backlog on submissions has been halted although it may take some time before it can be cleared.

The following points were raised:

- Can this SPC issue a letter to the 5 T.Ds stating disappointment and outlining Christopher Fox's concerns?

Lorraine Gallagher stated that a letter can be sent to Minister Pippa Hackett and the five Wicklow T.Ds.

Cllr. Cronin stated that she had emailed Minister Hackett's office but has not received any reply as yet. Once a reply has been received it will be forwarded to the SPC committee.

It was agreed to keep this item on the agenda.

#### **ITEM 10**

##### **Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

#### **ITEM 11**

##### **AOB**

Huw O' Toole forwarded an email from a voluntary group seeking assistance.

It was agreed to forward this issue to the CCSD SPC which is due to take place on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

**Next meeting:** It was agreed that the next meeting of the Economic Development & Enterprise Support SPC will take place on **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2021 at 10.00 a.m.**

Signed:

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**Cllr. Gerry Walsh**

**Chair**

**Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC**

Date

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