

Minutes of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC
Meeting held on Monday 13th October, 2025 at 10am
in the Boardroom of Clermont House, Newrath, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow

Present:	Cllr. Tom Fortune – Chair (TF) Cllr. Peir Leonard (PL) Mr. T.J. Foley (TJF) Cllr. Avril Cronin (AC) Ms. Margaret Coughlan (MC) Mr. Huw O'Toole (HOT) Cllr. Ian Neary (IN) Mr. Killian McGreal (KMCG) Ms. Jean Ryan (JR)
Presentation:	Conor Simpson (CS), Regional Manager, IDA Ray O'Connor (ROC), Head of Regional Business Development, IDA
In Attendance:	Ms. Helena Dennehy (HD) Mr. John Powderly (JP) Ms. Susan Nichols (SN) Ms. Vibeke Delahunt (VD) Mr. Fred Verdier (FV) Ms. Michelle Curley (MC) Ms. Patrice O'Toole (POT)
Apologies:	Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin (LFG) Mr. Gerry Ginty (GG) Cllr. Ned Whelan (NW) Ms. Caroline Cullimore (CC)

TF welcomed everybody and started the meeting. HD introduced herself as the new Director of Services for Planning Economic and Rural Development at Wicklow County Council.

ITEM 1: Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support (EDES) SPC held on Monday 28th July, 2025

The minutes of the EDES SPC which took place on 28th July, 2025 were proposed by Cllr. P. Leonard and seconded by T.J. Foley.

ITEM 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

SN advised that as an action from the meeting held on 28th July, she had liaised with the IDA in relation to lands owned by IDA in County Wicklow and this will be addressed during the IDA presentation later in the meeting.

ITEM 3: Update on the County Wicklow Skills Strategy

MC provided a brief update, noting that the last meeting of the Taskforce took place in June, with the next meeting scheduled for 14th October. She reported that, following an action from the previous EDES SPC meeting, a reporting template had been developed to track actions within the Skills Strategy. Copies of the template were circulated. The template is expected to be formally approved at the upcoming Taskforce meeting on 14th October.

Members commended the Strategy as a strong and well-developed piece of work, but expressed concerns regarding clarity on ownership and accountability for its implementation.

SN responded by confirming that the Skills Strategy reporting document will serve as a robust mechanism for tracking actions, monitoring progress, and assigning responsibility.

VD updated in respect of skills and advised the following:

- That LEO and KWETB are holding focus groups, meeting with small businesses and getting feedback in respect of skills and skills gaps which will feed into the next round of management development programmes.
- LEO partnering with KWETB in respect of retail.
- An Offshore Renewable Energy Event taking place on the 18th November with the focus on skills
- The Crew Academy, based in the Screen Hub is currently rolling out green skills courses.

The discussion on the Skills Strategy and skills topic in general concluded with SN asking TF to raise the skills strategy at the next KWETB Board meeting.

ITEM 4: 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.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding tourism, during which members raised concerns in the following areas:

- Advertising Wicklow as a place to visit
- Is there a budget for promoting Wicklow as a tourist destination
- County Wicklow and whether it is missing out on its huge potential from a tourism perspective.
- The lack of accommodation and the need to have a network of hotels
- Outdoor pursuits and overnight camping. The importance of bringing tourists into the county and keeping them here as opposed to catering to day trippers.
- The balance between the focus on strategies and plans and the delivery of actions within them.

The members were advised that when the Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) has been finalised by Failte Ireland, it will provide a vision and direction for growing tourism in Wicklow, aligning with the Glendalough and Wicklow Mountains National Park Visitor Experience and Management Masterplan. The plan will then address many of the concerns raised by the members and will inform what actions will be required going forward. A draft of the plan is expected to be available in the Q4 of 2025.

FV advised that the Wicklow Trails App has launched and is mirrored on the Visit Wicklow website and social media. He further advised that there had been an increase in the numbers taking part in EcoTrail from all over the world and also from the number of Passports purchased.

The members were informed that Wicklow County Tourism is undergoing restructuring, and the rationale for the Wicklow Tourism Alliance will be addressed as part of that process.

ITEM 5: To consider drafting a Multi-Annual Work Plan for the EDES SPC

SN presented to the members the importance of the SPC adopting a Multi-Annual Work Plan (MAWP) which will link into the Council's Corporate Plan. All members of the SPC are encouraged to contribute to the preparation of the works programme. A review of the plan should be carried out by the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) in the 3rd year of the plan. Climate Action and climate impacts should form part of the work programme and the programme must align with the LECF and the Regional Enterprise Plan.

SN encouraged all members to submit their suggestions by 14th November for collating and discussion at the EDES SPC December meeting. The MAWP is to be finalised in early 2026 for submission to the CPG. The CPG can approve the plan or recommend issues for consideration.

HD concluded by emphasising the critical need for members to contribute from their respective areas of expertise as such engagement would be essential to the success of the EDES SPC work programme.

ITEM 6: Presentation by Conor Simpson, Regional Manager and Ray O'Connor, Head of Regional Business Development within the IDA

TF welcomed Conor Simpson and Ray O'Connor from the IDA. ROC started off by giving an overview of the IDA and outlined the responsibility of attracting overseas business to set up in Ireland. With over 18,000 client companies and 300,000 people employed in overseas companies centered around financial, IT and manufacturing.

Following the presentation the members raised a number of questions around the following:

Q. *What is the clear picture on the IDA site in Greystones?*

A. CS advised that there were conditions on sale in respect of the Greystones site and that he expected discussions to reach conclusion by the end of the year or early 2026.

Q. *How important is infrastructure and transport to interested companies, as well as the need for clean energy?*

A. ROC advised that when the IDA receives interest from foreign companies the first thing the IDA will do is to encourage the company to visit. The company will look at land, zoning and the utilities available such as power and water. Other characteristics that any potential company thinking of setting up in Ireland will be looking at are transport, housing, place making, technology, skillsets, grants and other financial support when making their decision.

Q. *If other sites in County Wicklow were being explored by IDA in addition to Arklow and Greystones and have the IDA underinvested in County Wicklow over the years because of its closeness to Dublin?*

A. ROC said that he felt the closeness to Dublin is not always a bad thing. He added that the IDA should serve only as a developer of last resort, emphasising that private investment is the preferred option.

Q. *What prevents investment in County Wicklow?*

A. CS advised of the necessity to lobby the government on the need for the supply of clean energy as all potential investor companies are definitely looking for it. He concluded by saying that the characteristics he mentioned earlier were just as important as the land when it comes to a company wanting to invest.

TF thanked CS and ROC for the presentation and they left the meeting.

The members asked what should be done with the information gained from the presentation and they were advised to make direct contact with the IDA going forward.

ITEM 7: Correspondence

There was no correspondence to consider.

ITEM 8: AOB

A request was made to have a presentation on solar panels/solar farms at a future meeting.

The next meeting of the EDES SPC is to take place on Monday 8th December, 2025.

Signed:

Cllr Tom Fortune

Cllr. Tom Fortune / Chair

Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date:

8th Dec 2025