



**Minutes of the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee,  
Held on 22 September 2020 at 10am in Tipperary MD Civic Offices and by Zoom.**

**In Attendance:**

<b>Members of Council</b>	<b>Sectoral Interests</b>	<b>Staff</b>
Cllr John Crosse - <b>Chairman</b>	Imelda Walsh – Farming Pillar Zoom	Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer
Cllr Seamus Hanafin, Zoom	Mary Spillane - PPN, Zoom	Elaine Cullinan, Economic Development Officer, Zoom
Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan	Noel Byrne PPN, Zoom	Marie Phelan, Tourism Development Officer, Zoom
Cllr. Mairin McGrath, Zoom	Laura Jones – Business Pillar Zoom	Pat Slattery, Director of Services
Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro, Zoom	Jim Sheehan – Developmen Construction Pillar, Zoom	Aisling Kelly, Assistant Staff Officer, Zoom
Cllr Phyll Bugler, Zoom	Seamus Hoyne – LIT, Zoom	Simon Howe, Broadband Officer
Cllr. Peter Ryan, Zoom		Anthony Fitzgerald, LEO Head of Enterprise Zoom
Cllr. Joe Hannigan, Zoom		Fiona Crotty, A/Administrative Officer, Community Zoom
Seamus Morris, Zoom		Triona O'Mahony, Munster Vales Zoom
Cllr Siobhan Ambrose, Zoom		

**Apologies:** Claire Cashman and Cllr Tony Black **Absent:** Jim Sheehan and Tom McGrath,

**1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies**

Cllr. John Crosse, Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees present in the building and attending by Zoom. He noted the apologies received for this meeting.

**2. Adoption of the minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were considered and Seamus Hanafin Proposed the adoption of the minutes and Mary Hanna Hourigan seconded this item.

**3. Digital connectivity in Co. Tipperary – Broadband (NBP, Commercial Activity) and infrastructure**

Simon Howe gave a detailed presentation highlighting the roll out of the NBP and the increased need for high speed broadband now during the Covid 19 pandemic. He noted that NBI have commenced road surveys and associated network design plans in the following locations.

1. Tipperary – Cahir – Cashel Municipal District
2. Clonmel Borough District
3. Thurles MD
4. Carrick on Suir MD.

He informed the group that the 10 BCP's will be live in County Tipperary before the end of 2020 and a further 10 BCP's have also been provisionally approved for Tipperary. He also updated the committee on development been carried out by other providers such as EIR, SIRO, ENET, CELLNEX and IMAGINE in Tipperary. Magnet Networks is continuing to deliver

the WIFI4U project in Tipperary town, Thurles, Carrick on Suir, Clonmel, Nenagh and Roscrea. The Tipperary town network launch will take place on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Cllr. John Crosse, Chairman thanked Simon Howe for the presentation and all the great work done in broadband in County Tipperary and stated he was looking forward to the launch in Tipperary Town.

Phyll Bugler enquired about the upgrade of the copper network in Ballina and if it would be updated to the outskirts of the town. Simon confirmed that it would be a fibre upgrade in the commercial zone of the town only and eircodes that were outside this zone will be covered by the NBP.

Seamus Morris noted he had been with Imagine for the last 8-9 years and that in the last 6 months it kept breaking down due to the increased demand on its service. He got in a fibre connection and said it had made a huge difference. He noted his concern about the blackspots and in particular near the lake.

Joe Hannigan made a number of enquiries about the wireless network infrastructure throughout the County, 5G, shared access infrastructure with other local authorities and the service providers, EIR T300 and also he requested an update on ducting in the Terryglass area and connectivity on Lough Derg.

Simon Howe noted that it was envisaged over the next 5 years that 42 billion devices will need to connect to new networks bringing the need for fibre backhaul into future consideration. New technology will also need the introduction of additional shared underground ducts with capabilities for all operators to compete in the market and this will reduce the cost of their services.

In relation to future wireless technology this, is planned to be made available in the County next year, will require an extensive overhaul of existing infrastructure and new build infrastructure, will result in an increased demand for customer high speed mobile broadband services. He advised that Cellnex had been carrying out surveys at the lake and are planning installing new infrastructure towards the end of the year in order to improve services in the lake area. He also noted he was aware of the issue in Terryglass and that the NBI will look at this to see how it can be progressed.

Noel Byrne noted the improvement in the service and the increased amount of providers offering service in the area. He queried if there could be collusion between different provider companies with prices as there was no difference in price despite service being at different levels throughout the County. Simon Howe indicated that there was no collusion between providers and that Comreg were there to regulate this.

#### **4. Education and training Board (Skills) update Mid West Region**

As Edmond Connolly had another meeting his item was taken on the Agenda next. Edmond Connolly gave a presentation on the role of the Education and Training Board Skills. The role of the Board includes employment, training and up-skilled numbers. Comprising of 9 regional areas in the mid west and south east, the Board meets 4 times a year. It deals with over 45,000 retail and hospitality companies, 15,000 manufacturing and engineering companies and 12,000 life science companies and 8,000 financial service companies and 15,000 construction companies and over 6,000 in the ICT sector.

Edmond provided details on some of the range of courses available from the various providers - Skillsnet, ETB, LIT, WIT and LEO. A wide range of new apprenticeship places are available currently and Digital skills training for the over 35 yr profile also are available.

Edmond outlined how Covid19 had resulted in most training now being online. He also advised that remote working and the loss of jobs from the pandemic business closures were resulting in a higher up take in the upskilling courses available.

Phyll Bugler thanked Edmond for the presentation and she noted that hospitality had been hit very hard by the pandemic. She asked if digital marketing training courses have been made available to that sector. Edmond advised that the ETB are offering digital marketing courses but these had poor take up. He suggested that closer links at a local level to promote them would be beneficial.

Joe Hannigan thanked Edmond for his presentation and the information provided. He asked if there was any work underway in regarding the creation of digital hubs to encourage young entrepreneurs to stay within the County. Edmond Connolly noted the there are some centres in the county providing these facilities for entrepreneurs such as Questum in Clonmel and LIT in Thurles.

Mary Spillane highlighted that there was a huge sector of society not able to use online facilities, not having sufficient broadband, not been able to use Zoom, nor work remotely and that they would not be able to benefit from the online training courses so this sector must also be considered in the training plans.

Laura Jones noted the importance of the Digital marketing training for the hospitality sector and the importance of Skillsnet in offering this training to small and large businesses.

Peter Ryan thanked Edmond for the presentation. He noted his concern about the level of graduates coming through and due to having no where to go, were leaving the County. He asked if we could look at setting up incubator hubs for entrepreneurs. Could there be opportunities to provide these hubs as an incentive for the entrepreneurs to stay in the County. He noted the importance in providing these centres for these people.

Cllr John Crosse, Chairman thanked Edmond for the presentation.

## **5. County Tipperary Digital Strategy**

Kathleen Prendergast gave a presentation on the Digital strategy for County Tipperary 2018 – 2023 action plan. The Strategy identified a number of areas which will require focus upon to ensure that the County is prepared to capitalise on progress in the digital sector. These are: Infrastructure; The Citizen; Enterprise and Training/Education. A full update on all the actions was provided to the meeting including:

- The shop local Facebook/Instagram incentive has had a huge impact over the last few months during Covid in terms of working with businesses across the County. It showcases the different types of business and services the county has to offer and how these businesses have expanded to the online platform due to the pandemic.
- The provision of digital hubs across the County including the repurposing of some buildings in some town and other works in towns such as Cahir, Clonmel, Carrick on Suir, Nenagh, Roscrea, Templemore, Tipperary and Cloughjordan. A full update on this will be provided at the next meeting.
- Tipperary County Council continues to increase the availability of online services to businesses, organizations and citizens with more web services been made available, new grants portal, new e-planning system and an online business service database.
- The inclusion of the elderly in digital training programmes.
- Working with the libraries in promoting the services they provide and the online training courses they offer.

- Exploring the potential for young people to provide training and mentoring for older people on digital technologies.

## **6. Munster Vales Strategic Plan**

Triona O' Mahoney gave a presentation on the Munster Vales Strategic Development Plan 2020 - 2025. She acknowledged the ongoing support from Tipperary County Council.

The plan is intended to guide development of Munster Vales as a destination and support the development of existing and new visitor experiences that align with the Munster Vales brand and encourage more visitors to stay in the area. Consultation was carried out with a number of different agencies and also a number of different case studies. Triona noted the importance of the tourism sector to the County and confirmed revenue of €260 million annually pre Covid 19 and around €61 million to the Irish exchequer and it supported over 7,000 jobs in the tourism sector.

The vision of Munster Vales is to promote, support and connect communities and rural tourism businesses offering a wealth of heritage, outdoor and visitor experiences across five mountain ranges in Tipperary, Cork, Limerick, & Waterford. There are three Strategic recommendations in the plan:

1. Stakeholder and Community Engagement.
2. Visitor Experience Development.
3. Visitor Awareness, Motivation and Engagement.

These three strategies have a number of goals attached to each priority. There is also an action plan which includes the following:

1. Covid 19 Response and Support for businesses and communities
2. Community Engagement Pilot Program and Mentoring
3. Capacity Building to enhance tourism businesses ability to adapt within a rapidly changing environment
4. Deliver a marketing program focusing on rural, outdoor experiences
5. Examine the feasibility of walking/cycling initiatives to unite the destination
6. Commission bi-annual survey to increase demonstrable socio-economic benefits
7. Increase in staff resources for Munster Vales
8. Work with Failte Ireland to create and promote online saleable experiences
9. Develop a Munster Vales Experience Tour
10. Munster Vales Board restructured to include more trade representation

The next step for Munster vales is to look at the development of a Heritage Route allowing for easier marketing and to encourage tourists to increase their stay in the area. There is a feasibility study under way for the development of the Munster Vales way also.

Cllr John Crosse, Chairman thanked Triona for the presentation.

## **7. Education and Training Board (Skills) Update South East Region**

Elaine Cullinan gave a presentation on the Education and Training Board (Skills) Update for the South East Region which highlighted the following points:

- The mid west response group was set up to research the skills shortage.
- Between April and July 1,115 people had up skilled.
- There was a July Stimulus package announced to assist upskilling people.
- The new apprenticeship action plan 2021 – 2025.
- Enterprise Irelands graduate start programme.
- A new EXPLORE programme developed in 2018 for training the over 35 years.
- The skills to advance programme.
- A new Skills mapping and talent hot spots data was been currently looked at.

Joe Hannigan thanked Elaine for the presentation. He said it was encouraging to see what was going on and queried the type of take up on the graduate programme.

Peter Ryan enquired about the opportunities for graduates in opening facilities or having to move to other areas outside of the county. These were highly skilled people having to leave the County and sometimes the country to secure places to work and noted the importance of developing facilities for these graduates. Elaine advised that the area of mapping was only in the commencement phase and that a meeting was set up with Abodoo in relation to investigating the development of mapping to benefit the County.

## **8. COVID – LEO Update**

Anthony Fitzgerald, Head of Enterprise outlined that over 600 Business Continuity Vouchers have been issued and in the region of 300 Online Trading Vouchers (TOVs) to be issued by year end, up from 40 in 2019.

## **9. Business Advice & Entrepreneurship support services**

Anthony Fitzgerald gave a presentation in which he highlighted the following:

- 34 projects submitted 30 were approved and additional funding has been received to approve 2 additional projects.
- A total investment of €3million was invested in small micro businesses.
- The last six months were extremely busy and LEO staff rose to this challenge.
- A total of 260 Trading on line vouchers applications had been received compared to 40 in the previous year with another 40 expected in before year end.
- A lot of changes had been made due to Covid 19 and this has resulted in training now been moved to an online platform.
- LEO has 2 extra staff starting to help deal with the extra work generated as a result of the increase in TOV and BCV applications.

Phyll Bugler thanked Anthony Fitzgerald and the staff in LEO for the work done in the last few months and enquired if there were start-up grants for plumbers and carpenters and if the business continuity vouchers had all been completely drawn down or if some were still outstanding. Anthony advised that there were a number of BCV's applications still in progress and he stated the BCV applications had closed in May

Mairin McGrath asked if the TOV's were still open. Anthony responded by stating that the TOV application process is still open and available and that each TOV grant was to the value of €2,500 and that the business advisors were ensuring that the businesses were receiving value for money from their mentors in this scheme. He also advised that the TOV's funding is being continually increased due to the huge volume of applications received across the country. He advised that all the grant applications were now online which has allowed for more efficiency in dealing with them. He noted that Tipperary was in the top 5 in terms of the volume of applications received and processed for grant applications.

## **10. E.U Projects Update**

Fiona Crotty gave a presentation and highlighted that some projects deadlines had been extended until the 30/3/2021 due to Covid 19:

### **Rural SMES Project**

- Promote greater awareness and knowledge of Rural SME support.
- To improve the policies at regional/local support systems for entrepreneurs to increase the creation of innovative SMEs in rural areas.

### **SUPER Project**

- To develop, improve and adapt local/regional policies that support methods for increased international commercialisation of SMEs' environmentally sustainable innovations (ESIs) and environmentally friendly products (EFPs).
- Ultimate goal is to assist environmentally friendly companies to be more successful.

## SWARE Project

- The overall objective of the project is to foster integrated management of natural and cultural heritage within inland waterway regions by improving the partner regions' related policy instruments.

## CATALYST project

- The project is focusing on micros and SMEs in two sectors, the Food & Drink and Life Science (assisted tech).
- To use sustainable development as a catalyst to drive design and innovation for Welsh and Irish life science and food & drink sector SMEs.

Cllr John Crosse, Chairman thanked Fiona for the presentation.

## 11. Phase II Ballingarrane Site/Questum

Anthony Fitzgerald gave a presentation. He informed the group that there was 250 acres of land in Ballingarrane and there were 4 areas of updates and an investment of €200,000 in these:

- A Masterplan and prospectus has been designed and developed.
- The layout for the advanced Tech buildings in the IDA owned land has been progressed.
- Water drilling tests have been carried out in 3 borehole sites in Ballingarrane and two are currently being assessed with a report due back at the end of October.
- The new entrance and architectural feature has been completed.

## 12. Urban and Regional Regeneration Schemes/Project 2040 Status

<u>Carrick-on-Suir</u>	Repurpose floor 3 of Carrick MD offices for shared work space	Funding secured, lease to be signed with COSTEDC, and fit out to commence in Q3 2020.
<u>Roscrea</u>	REACH: Conversion of 11,450 sq ft former Tesco site to Business hub	€2.6 RRDF funding secured, Quinn architects appointed by NTLC and lease agreed with <u>Tiernan</u> properties
<u>Templemore</u>	Repurposing of former town hall to cultural enterprise centre	RRDF bid for €2.6m upgrade of building for cultural and enterprise centre. Architects being appointed.
<u>Tipperary</u>	Repurposing of the Tipperary Technology Park to Tipperary Innovation Engine for co-work spaces	€627,000 REDF funding secured to repurpose building. Reassignment of Lease to be signed 17 <sup>th</sup> Sept. Tender for Architects close date of 18.9.20.
<u>Clonmel</u>	Phase 2 of Questum, Ballingarrane, Clonmel Advanced Technology Building	Consultants to be procured to prepare Feasibility Report and Planning stage in Q3 2020 –Q1 2021 – funding not yet secured.
<u>Cahir</u>	To renovate existing library, courthouse and former council offices into Business centre	Funding for design and planning secured. Designs nearly completed and Going to Part 8 in Sept 2020
<u>Nenagh</u>	Enterprise centre	Future Analytics and Healy Architects appointed to ... prepare feasibility report and building design. Funding to construct not yet received

## 13. Brexit Update

Anthony Fitzgerald provided an update on Brexit. He noting that brexit had been pushed off the agenda for a period with the arrival of the Covid 19 pandemic. However it was now back

on the agenda and that there was a 40% chance of a deal been made by the end of year with the UK. There had also been training giving on customs and post brexit training also. There was very strong support from the government in preparing for Brexit. Much work and training had already been undertaken including training on currency movement. There was an expected turbulence between the Euro and Sterling currency. Enterprise Ireland had funded €50,000 to employ mentors and consultants as Brexit Advisors. A grant for €9,000 for companies wishing to take on an additional employee for the paperwork and systems around Brexit and custom legislation has also been launched.

Joe Hannigan stated that it was good to hear measures being put in place to help combat changes in dealing with the UK. He enquired what the Government was doing to ensure that the natural resources in Ireland are benefiting Ireland. Following discussion it was agreed to keep a watching brief on this issue.

**14. Correspondence**

Cllr John Crosse Chairman confirmed that there were no correspondences.

**15. Date of Next Meeting**

17 November 2020 at 10am

**16. Close of Business**

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: John Crosse M.C.C. Date: 17/11/20

Chairperson



Present in TIPP MDO- Pat Slattery, Simon Howe, Cllr John Crosse, Cllr Mary Hanna Hourigan, Kathleen Prendergast  
Mary Spillane Joined the meeting shortly after screenshot was taken.