



**Minutes of the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee Held on 14th February 2023 at 10.30am in Thurles MD Civic Offices and by Zoom.**

<b>Members of Council in Attendance</b>	<b>Sectoral Interests in Attendance</b>	<b>Staff in Attendance:</b>
Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro <b>Chairperson</b>	Mary Spillane, PPN	Anthony Fitzgerald, Head of Enterprise and Economic Development
Cllr. Joe Hannigan	Laura Jones, Business Pillar (Zoom)	Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer
Cllr. Peggy Ryan	Pat Carroll, Farming Pillar (Zoom)	Clare Lee, Executive Planner
Cllr. Mairín McGrath	Michelle Kavanagh Development Construction Pillar (Zoom)	Elaine Cullinan, Economic Development Officer (Zoom)
Cllr. Phyll Bugler	Tom McGrath, Business Pillar (Zoom)	Caroline Rice, Tourism Marketing & Development
Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan		Donough Leahy, Clerical Officer
Cllr. John Crosse (Zoom)		
Cllr. John Fitzgerald (Zoom)		
Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose (Zoom)		
Cllr. Tony Black (Zoom)		
<b>Guest Speakers in Attendance:</b> Damien McConville, Intertrade Ireland. via Zoom.		

**Apologies:** Brian Beck (Director of Services), Seamus Hoyne (TUS), Cllr. Seamus Morris and Cllr. Seamus Hanafin

**Absent:** Clare Cashman (PPN).

## **1. Welcome**

Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro (Chairperson), opened the meeting by welcoming all present.

Cllr. Goldsboro noted that the PPN representative, Mr. Noel Byrne had recently retired from the SPC and she wished him all the best in his future endeavors.

The Chairperson also welcomed Caroline Rice, the incoming Tourism Development & Marketing Officer, for County Tipperary.

Sympathies were offered, on behalf of the SPC, to Cllr. John Crosse on the passing of his sister, Mrs. Helen Concannon.

## **2. Adoption of the minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

The Minutes of the last meeting were considered. Cllr. Phyll Bugler proposed the adoption of the minutes and Cllr. Mairín McGrath seconded this item.

Under matters arising, Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose raised the Commercial Vacancy Incentive Scheme. She stated that she felt that the cap on the grant amount of €5,000 was very limiting in the current economic climate. She asked for the scheme to be on continual review rather than waiting to review it next year in 2024.

Kathleen Prendergast responded by suggesting she would meet with Cllr. Ambrose separately to outline the scheme in full details as she had not been present at the last meeting when the full rationale for the current position was discussed and adopted by the members of the SPC. Cllr. Ambrose accepted this invitation.

Cllr. John Fitzgerald stated that the CVIS scheme is good but tweaking it slightly could make it even better. Cllr. Fitzgerald asked to be involved in the meeting outlining the scheme in full detail. Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan said she also would like to be part of that presentation and Mairín McGrath stated she would join that meeting too. Kathleen Prendergast agreed to

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issue the invitation to all the members of the SPC to attend the full briefing. If, following that meeting, it was considered necessary to proceed to review the €5,000 limit before the proposed 2024 review, it would be put to the SPC to establish a working group to do so.

Cllr. Joe Hannigan stated that the understanding of the entire scheme is important. He asked how many premises in town centres that are un-occupied would have a ratable value of over €5,000. Kathleen Prendergast advised that this can only be based on the current situation regarding rate payers - whereby 85% of current rates customers fall into the category of having a rates valuation *below* €5,000 per annum. Therefore 15% of current rates customers pay *above* the sum of €5,000 per annum. These would mainly be made up of larger businesses premises. She noted that currently the 15% of customers above €5,000 provide up to 80% of income generated by rates payments to the Council. The full details of the rationale can be seen in the presentation that was circulated after the last meeting.

Cllr. John Crosse noted that he understands the reason for the limit being in place but also the case for not limiting it to any specific sum. He stated that changes to the scheme have to be based on a prudent approach that would not have a knock-on effect for the financial projections of the Council.

**3. Settlement Strategy for the County – Synergies between the County Development Plan and the LECP**

Clare Lee, Executive Planner, gave a broad presentation on the new County Development Plan (CDP) which came in to effect in August 2022 and in particular the importance of alignment of same with the Local Economic Community Plan (LECP).

There are a number of national and regional strategies and consistency with these must be considered for the new LECP. These are as follows:

- 1.) The National Spatial Strategy
- 2.) The economic policies or objectives of the Government.
- 3.) The Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region which provides a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region.
- 4.) Project Ireland 2040 which comprises of two documents; the National Development Plan 2021 – 2030 (NDP) and the National Planning Framework (NPF) (a Spatial Plan).

Clare Lee discussed this Policy Framework for the CDP and the LECP. She highlighted the purpose of the LECP and how it has to be complementary to the County Development Plan.

In the presentation the county settlement hierarchy, showing all the service areas in the county, was explained in full. In terms of the settlement strategy, the CDP sets out a town profile for each urban town with key objectives. An outline of the time schedule for the delivery of a Local Area Plan for each of the towns in the county was also provided. Clare discussed the process of preparing a Local Area Plan and the different elements of work that goes into each individual one for the specific town. Roscrea, as an example, has 4 tiers/zones within the town itself.

Much of the considerations for the LECP will have to be in alignment with the County Development Plan and therefore an awareness of the CDP is vital to ensure this alignment as part of the process of developing the LECP.



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Cllr. Phyll Bugler advised that the presentation had provided her with a much better understanding of the process and links between both of the plans. Cllr. Bugler asked what the plans are for the development of LAP's for the towns of Ballina and Newport and what effect does the close proximity of Limerick have on these towns. She also queried how the town of Templemore, with a lower population than Ballina, has a higher status in the settlement hierarchy.

Clare advised that both Ballina and Newport were 'Service Centers' and detailed written statements, development objectives, detailed land use zoning maps and opportunity sites are identified for them in the County Development Plan. These provide specific objectives which will support appropriate development and community projects as opportunities arise, consistent with the objectives of the NPF and RSES to strengthen rural economies and communities. She advised Ballina is earmarked for growth as an urban center. Templemore is set as a district town and a LAP will be prepared for that early next year with a full process of workshops and public consultation.

Cllr Hannigan envisages serious challenges for the plans we have for our towns, especially with the current growing population. He felt that this would lead to many serious issues including lack of housing and a waste water capacity challenge. Cllr. Hannigan also noted that very few villages have shops anymore or families are able to build new dwellings in the vicinity of the villages. These factors are currently causing rural Ireland to struggle.

In response, Clare Lee stated that the plans are in place for settlement growth and infrastructure and that is the most that we can do at this time. In terms of population, Tipperary does have the capacity to grow, but she noted that it grew by only 5.1% according to the last census.

Cllr. Mairín McGrath supported Cllr. Hannigan in his discussions on rural areas. She stated that people cannot build houses in her locality as the village has no capacity in waste water. Cllr. McGrath confirmed that the LAP has just been completed in Cahir and queried why this was done before the County Development Plan was completed. She advised that Cahir has huge potential to grow, due to its strategic location with bus routes and a train station, yet the zoned land was reduced from 50/60 hectares down to 10 hectares which, in her opinion during a housing crisis, does not make sense.

Clare Lee responded by advising the Cahir LAP was prepared in 2020 and adopted in 2021 and was required to be completed as the previous LAP had expired. Clare noted that the County Plan would be subject to a two-year mid-term review in 2024, so if necessary it can be updated at that time. In terms of Area Plan preparation, it is proposed that Local Area Plans are to replace the current town plans and as the Council traditionally always had a LAP for Cahir and Roscrea, that practice will continue. In terms of settlement capacity, there is a settlement hierarchy and the growth of settlements will be in accordance with this hierarchy and it is important that our district towns, service centres and key towns are supported by relevant infrastructure investment.

Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan asked about the LAP for Tipperary Town which she understood would be completed by the end of 2023. Clare Lee advised that the next four Local Area Plans are scheduled and Tipperary Town is not included in that list. It is likely that pre-draft consultation could commence at the end of this year for Tipperary Town but will likely roll into 2024 before the full plan is in place.

Anthony Fitzgerald commended the Elected Representative for their interest in this area and recognised the constant changing factors effecting the world presently. He advised that in terms of Zoning for industrial land, it is important to have workshops and engagement to

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ensure that our full requirements are reflected in both the LECP and County Development Plan documents.

### **4. Cross Broder Trade**

Damien McConville, Programme Manager at Intertrade Ireland gave a presentation on Cross Border trade and the opportunities for embracing this in County Tipperary. Damien explained that Intertrade is the equivalent, on a smaller scale, to Enterprise Ireland and their remit is to deliver All-island Trade. The primary role of the company is creating cross border connections with academics, policy makers but the main focus is on assisting SME's to access cross border export and collaborative innovation opportunities. Over the last 22 years, Intertrade Ireland have supported over 50,000 companies which has led to €1.6 billion of value generated for those companies either in the form of profit made or savings. They have also created/protected 19,500 jobs. Damien advised that Cross-border trade continues to go from strength to strength as it is growing every year and the predictions are that this will continue to do so.

Intertrade also have an online business monitor and this has indicated that organisations who trade across the border perform better - 78% of businesses who trade across the border are more profitable compared to the 51% that do not trade across the border. Damien advised only 1 in 5 organisations trade across the border and there is massive potential to increase that figure.

Sustainability is a major challenge with a number of issues affecting businesses and SME's: 86% of businesses are discussing the rising cost of energy and 83% discussing the rising cost of other overheads. They have a number of supports which include 'Synergy' - a funding support aimed at facilitating cross-border collaboration of networks and clusters resulting in mutual economic benefit for Ireland and Northern Ireland. The main support is 'Innovation Boost', where the business can get a grant up to €67,900 and this is a collaborative partnership between the company, academia and graduates.

Damien then outlined a number of sales supports and services available which with contributing to Cross Border sales growth. These include 'Trade Accelerator Vouchers', 'Elevate', 'Acumen' and an 'Online Guide' to Cross-Boarder business. They also have supports in place to attract new funding - this is done by having a funding advisory service in place and offering 'Seedcorn' - a competition with a cash prize to the winner to invest how they see fit.

Finally, Damien McConville, discussed the tendering supports available including workshops, mentoring, advice, information and practical advice.

Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro thanked Damien McConville for the very in-dept and informative presentation and opened the floor for questioning.

Cllr. Hannigan queried if businesses in Tipperary are aware of the supports available to them regarding cross-border trade and if not, how do we get this information out to them.

Damien McConville advised that you do not need to be a client of Intertrade Ireland to avail of the supports. He confirmed that they do promote Northern Ireland as a stepping stone into the rest of the U.K. For companies with the ambition to trade internationally, the message Intertrade promote is, "*look at your closest neighbour first and build from there*". Regarding getting the word out to businesses, the Local Enterprise Office's tend to be a good method as they work very closely with Intertrade. Social Media is also another method which can inform businesses of the supports. Clusters and Networks are also massive. Damien noted that the work that the Irish Bio-Economy are doing is a fantastic cross-trade example and they are based in County Tipperary. Damien recognised that Tourism is a big sector now in Cross-



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border trade and they can see a positive integration along the Wild Atlantic Way and into North Ulster and continuing this collaboration is deemed as important.

Cllr. Phyll Bugler stated that it was an eye-opener to see that from January to November 2022 there was €9.2 billion cross-border sale of goods between the North and South of the Country. Cllr. Bugler advised that she was also interested in the supports available and she can see on the tourist side of things that there is a lot of collaboration between Northern Ireland and the Lough Derg area which she feels are very positive.

Cllr. Phyll Bugler asked Kathleen Prendergast for an update on the licensing of accommodation for short holiday lets/rental under the Airbnb site. Kathleen Prendergast advised she would get this information and revert to the SPC.

Anthony Fitzgerald confirmed that there is a collaboration through Inland Waterways which are based in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh. Inland Waterways connects all the inland waterways in the Country and he agreed to share the information on the large amount of ongoing work Waterways Ireland are involved in.

#### **5. Bio Invest' Conference Event**

Elaine Cullinan, Economic Development Officer gave a presentation on The Bio-Invest Ireland project which is being delivered with support from Inter-Trade Ireland's Synergy initiative. It aims to scale cross border collaboration among SMEs and other players such as universities, third sector organisations and government agencies using cluster and networking supports.

Companies pitch their bio-economy related business activity and 12 are then selected for attendance at the Conference Event where a winner is chosen. The judging panel comprises of European Circular Bio-economy Fund (ECBF), Halo Business Angel Network (HBAN) and Resolve Partners Inter-Trade Ireland.

Elaine then provided four examples which have been pitched - which included two from Ireland and two from Northern Ireland. She discussed the story of how these companies were formed and how they impact on the bio-economy. The companies which she discussed are Biasol, Gran Lab, Phytaphix and Carbon Technologies Group Limited.

Chairperson Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro thanked Elaine for her presentation and opened to the floor for questioning.

Anthony Fitzgerald stated that events such as the Bio-Invest Ireland Project are very important for companies and heartening to see the Irish Bio-Economy foundation leading in that area of fund development. Anthony referred to the historic link with Universities in the North and South being bolstered by a new collaboration with a University in the States. This should prove to add great value to the sector.

Cllr. Phyll Bugler asked Anthony Fitzgerald if Elected Representatives would be able to attend the Bio Invest conference in the future. Anthony confirmed it would be very beneficial for Councillors to attend these events to hear progress at first hand and gain knowledge in the sector. Cllr. Goldsboro asked if events like this could be added to the Councillors training list. It was agreed to follow up with Clare Cooney in Corporate Affairs and advise the next meeting.

Cllr. Joe Hannigan stated that there needs to be an education program developed for the agricultural sector on the many benefits from the bio-economy.

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Elaine Cullinan advised that 'Rural Bio' is a European funded programme which promotes the bio-economy in rural agricultural areas. Tipperary is in one of nine European hubs for that programme because of the Irish Bio-Economy foundation which is based in Littleton.

**6. Nomination of Councillor to Tipperary Energy Agency**

Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan nominated Cllr. Peggy Ryan to the Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA) Board. This was seconded by Mary Spillane, PPN. There were no further nominations.

Cllr. Mairín McGrath asked if there was always a Councillor on the Tipperary Energy Agency Board and what was the reason it was being dealt with at this meeting.

Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro stated that normally the Chairperson of the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee was the Council representative on the TEA.

However, unfortunately due to work commitments she, as Chairperson, was unable to hold the position on the TEA at this time. Given these circumstances, another councillor would have to be selected by the members of the EDE SPC as the representative to the TEA.

**7. Any other Business**

Chairperson, Imelda Goldsboro proposed a letter of thanks be issued to Noel Byrne for his contributions to the SPC during his time representing the PPN.

Cllr Imelda Goldsboro, Chairperson confirmed there was no other business to discuss.

**8. Close of Business – Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 30th May 2023.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: Imelda Goldsboro Date: 30/05/2023 Chairperson