



**Minutes of the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee Held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 10.30am in Brú Ború Centre, Cashel, Co. Tipperary.**

<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. Mary Hanna Hourigan	Laura Jones, Business Pillar	Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer
Cllr. Peggy Ryan	Pat Carroll, Farming Pillar	Margo Hayes, Administrative Officer
Cllr. Mairín McGrath	Theresia Gruschlbaur, PPN	Ruth Maher, IS Project Leader
Cllr. John Crosse		Caroline Rice, Tourism Marketing & Development
Cllr Seamus Hanafin		Sinead Cahalan, Destination Lough Derg
Cllr. John Fitzgerald		Triona O Mahony, Munster Vales
		Donough Leahy, Clerical Officer

**Apologies:** Brian Beck (Director of Services), Cllr. Seamus Morris, Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose, Councillor Joe Hannigan, Councillor Tony Black, and Tom McGrath (Business Pillar)

**Absent:** Councillor Phyll Bugler, Seamus Hoyne (TUS).

**1. Welcome**

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

**2. Adoption of the Minutes of Previous Meeting September**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on September 5<sup>th</sup> 2023 were considered. Councillor John Crosse proposed the adoption of the minutes and Councillor Mary Hanna Hourigan seconded this item. There were no matters arising.

**3. Adoption of Minutes – Special Meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup> 2023**

The Minutes of the special meeting held of October 12<sup>th</sup> 2023 were considered. Councillor Mairín McGrath proposed the adoption of these minutes and Laura Jones seconded this item. There were no matters arising.

**4. Local Economic Community Plan (LEPC) 2022-2027 – Stage 2 Objectives and Action SPC Sign-off**

Margo Hayes, Administrative Officer, joined the meeting and she asked the SPC for Sign-off on the Local Economic Community Plan (LEPC) 2022-2027 – Stage 2 - Objectives and Actions. Margo advised that the stage 2 plan will be before the full Council for adoption on December 11<sup>th</sup> and that the Community, Library & Culture SPC, the LCDC, the Regional Assembly and each of the 5 Municipal Districts had now adopted the plan.

She informed the meeting that the LEPC is a statutory document under the Local Government Act 2014. The Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee plays a key role in the process of developing the plan and then the monitoring of the economic aspects of the plan, therefore it is a requirement that it would go before this SPC for sign off at each stage.

When Bill Thorne from Exodea attended the last SPC meeting he had gone through each Economic action. As no changes have been made since the last meeting it was now ready for adoption.

Margo then provided an overview report on the LECP by outlining the purpose of the LECP, which is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant Local Authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. She explained there are two type of actions 1). Those that are to implement other plans and strategies and 2). Those that are collaborative actions. The importance of multiple agencies working together to tackle the issues was a critical part of the LECP.

During the development of the County Tipperary LECP other strategies were examined such as national, regional, and local policy and this included the County Development Plan, the Regional Economic Plan and the TCC Climate Action Plan. 5 high level goals for the County and under-pinning objectives, which will guide the LECP for the duration of the plan, were developed. Under the high-level goals, 33 strategic objectives [16 are on Economic based objectives and 17 on Community based objectives] were formed.

Margo then went through the extensive consultation process carried out across all 5 Municipal Districts which was in collaboration with the two county Local Development Companies (STDC and NTDC) as part of their community consultation for their local development strategies. Following this, the consultation outcomes, the Socio-Economic profiling results, experience from the 2015-2020 LECP and the current relevant policies and strategies were all considered, culminating in 5, high level goals for the areas of Community; Enterprise; Climate Action; Education and Skills; and Heritage and Culture.

Chairperson Councillor Imelda Goldsboro thanked Margo for her presentation and the work that has been put into the Plan. Councillor Goldsboro recognised the status for this SPC in the role of monitoring the economic actions of the plan going forward. She then opened this item to the floor for questioning.

Councillor John Crosse stated that it would be important to get the information from this document out to the public, so that they are aware of the actions within it.

Councillor Peggy Ryan advised she would be very interested in the next part of the process, highlighting the importance of the collaborative approach. She pointed out that she has spoken with people within other agencies and they have emphasized that they are already over-stretched, so to fulfill any of these actions will be difficult for them, without having any real identifiable guaranteed funds.

Councillor Imelda Goldsboro advised that there is a funding stream of €779,000 about to open up as the Climate Action Fund for Tipperary. Margo confirmed this and noted that the Climate Action Fund is aligned with actions in the LECP. She also advised that Just Transition funding has been announced recently and this similarly will be aligned with the actions in the LECP

The adoption of the Local Economic Community Plan (LEPC) 2022-2027 – Stage 2 Objectives and Action was then proposed by Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan and seconded by Cllr. John Crosse.

## **5. Tourism Update** **County Tipperary Tourism**

Caroline Rice, Tourism Development Officer provided an update on Tipperary Tourism. She highlighted the challenging environment that tourism businesses are currently operating under, which included energy costs; international uncertainty; inflation; increase in outbound travel; lack of suitable tourist accommodation; high car rental costs and the change in the behaviour of tourists.

Caroline advised that in terms of product development, the 'Tipperary Transforming' Strategy outlines all the major developments planned for the County. In this regard, the recent 'Just Transition' Funds provide an opportunity to Thurles and Carrick-on-Suir Municipal Districts as there are grants available for Community based businesses and SME's.

Caroline discussed the Littleton Labyrinth project, which was developed in collaboration between Tipperary County Council, Bord na Mona and a wider steering group including South Tipperary Development Company, Coillte and Failte Ireland. The project is currently developing a network of peat walkways and this is a very unique project. A brand is under development and it is envisaged that one section of the project, in the Horse and Jockey area, will be ready to launch in 2024.

Funding streams including ORIS and Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2023 have been applied for to enable a range of tourism projects and we await the outcome of these. The LEADER funding program will become available in Spring 2024 and will be targeted for various projects and initiatives on Tourism Marketing of County Tipperary. A conference in February 2024 in the Cashel Palace Hotel will focus on how Tipperary Tourism providers can work together within the sector; and TG4 have a program in Irish next year called 'Cois Siúire' which will be based on the river Suir.

Caroline shared the view that there is a strong desire from businesses in the tourism sector to network and connect with each other and Tipperary Tourism have held a number of successful networking events throughout the year to support this including a promotional stand at 'Gifted' Exhibition in the RDS. A number of different research projects were carried out over the last few months to gain insight on how businesses have been performing this year compared to last year. A training survey was also sent out to determine what training courses to put on next year and it was highlighted that digital training was still a strong training need for the sector.

Caroline discussed the brand 'Thoroughbred Country' which is backed by both Tipperary & Kildare County Councils. It relates to the equine industry and access to the inside equine circuit in both counties.

The funding received from ORIS in 2022 for Outdoor Recreation activities projects will commence in January 2024. The RTE programme "Tracks and Trails" came last month and filmed and this is due to air in Spring next year. It will cover the route from Cahir Castle to the Swiss Cottage, and from Ardfinnan to the Liam Lynch Memorial, so this will provide great promotion for the County.

Councillor Seamus Hanafin thanked Caroline for her very comprehensive report on the Tourism offering in Tipperary, was he felt was very useful. He observed that showcasing what County Tipperary Tourism has to offer, similar to a visit to Washington in the recent past, was a good way to encourage tourism.

### **Lough Derg Tourism**

Sinead Cahalan, spoke about 'Destination Lough Derg'. The Board of Lough Derg consists of representatives from Failte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Tipperary, Clare and Galway County Councils, Coillte, and Inland Fisheries. €20 million has been brought into the region of Lough Derg over the last 4 years. This year alone, 35 new videos and 30 Instagram reels have been created and efforts to update the website are ongoing. A Lough Derg Visitor Experience Development Plan was launched in April 2021. The plan was divided into four separate areas; Destination Management, Destination Innovation, The Visitor Experience and Destination Marketing.

Sinead spoke about the capital funding of €50,000 for the upgrading of the harbour in Garrykennedy and stated that there are four more applications in for ORIS funding for small projects around the lake. In addition, €115,000 of additional marketing funding was secured. The Blueway in Lough Derg has 21 water trails all of which have been accredited. There are a number of Blueway videos which can be viewed on the website and YouTube. The 2 “discovery points” along the lake are the Lookout and Castle Lough.

A calendar of events to promote awareness of the lake will include Quest Lough Derg 2024, Gaelforce, Resonance, Field Exchange and some other events that are under development. In terms of destination innovation, the key areas to be explored are; Facilitating slow travel; Greening to the Cruising Sector; Camping and RV sites for the area; Provision of a great visitor welcome; Information via the Adventure Lough Derg App and to offer great food for a legendary food trail.

### **Munster Vales**

Triona O Mahony, stated that the strategic development plan for the Munster Vales was launched in 2020 and a number of the high-level goals have been achieved to date and others are still on-going. One of the goals was to develop a Munster Vales hubs and ORIS funding has unlocked this opportunity with two visitor information Kiosk’s (in the Talbot Hotel Clonmel and the Park Hotel in Dungarvan) being delivered. One Kiosk was launched in June 2023 and had over 13,500 page views to date indicating great engagement and traction.

Since being set up over 6 years ago, over 400 people in the Munster Vale catchment area have been trained using funding from the Local Enterprise Offices and €13 million worth of media coverage, both a national and International has been developed.

Maps of the Munster Vales have been very popular, especially in hotels so it is planned to update them if a funding application is successful under ORIS. On the website, there are interactive walking maps with over 80 way-marked walks/trails available along with great practical information for visitors in relation to parking, cafes, items to bring on walks etc. There are 20 different Itinerates available on the Munster Vale website, ranging from ‘one-day’ trips to ‘five-day’ trips.

To-date they have had almost 70 press trips, from both Ireland and abroad and over 120 businesses have been featured, giving them great exposure. They continue to focus on slow tourism in line with sustainability such as walking, hiking and horse riding. Several travel bloggers and content creators have been used in the area to created content.

Three new projects are planned and depend on funding from LEADER to unlock their potential:

1. The Munster Vales Way which will showcase the regions natural beauty, while contributing to the growth of the local economy and the well-being of the rural communities.
2. Marketing via Google ads, SEO website updates, radio advertising and public relations.
3. Motor-biking tourism

Chairperson, Councillor Imelda Goldsboro thanked Caroline, Sinead and Triona for the three comprehensive presentations given and acknowledged the great potential we have in the County of Tipperary. She then opened it up to the floor for questions.



Laura Jones thanked the tourism team for the massive work they are doing and asked Sinead, what the is the value of Gaelforce and Quest in terms of what it brings to the Lough Derg Region.

Sinead advised that the associated value of Quest is €1.5 million and they bring 1.6 persons with them per competitor. Gaelforce was a smaller event and it was huge benefit to the region, with accommodation fully booked up in the area.

Laura then asked Caroline, what was the feedback from the tour operators in relation to Meitheal? Caroline advised that it was the first time the local authority tourism officers were invited to this event and while it was successful, it would be preferable in the future if the destination could have its own stand where it could promote suggested itineraries for Tipperary.

Councillor Mairín McGrath asked Sinead if the ORIS application for Lough Derg were cross-council applications. Sinead advised that Tipperary has applied for eight quays, both the North and South of the County and Clare and Galway County Council would have been involved with supporting these applications. Mairín stated that she supported the ORIS funding that Saint Declan's Way had applied for to strengthen the Cashel to Cahir section of the St. Declan's Way path. She also noted the importance of Knockmealdown Active, who run their own adventure race on the Knockmealdowns which brings over 600 visitors to a small village like Newcastle annually.

Councillor Mary Hana Hourigan noted her concern that we are not bringing enough itinerates to Tipperary. She noted that 'Go-Ahead Tours', who are an American company, bring tourists to Ireland 12 months of the year but do not include County Tipperary in these.

Councillor John Crosse agreed with Councillor Hanna Hourigan. He stated that tourists might stop in Cashel for an hour to see the Rock of Cashel but then they move on again. He suggested that we need to keep them in the County for longer and to do this we must make them aware of the hidden gems that are in County Tipperary. Councillor Fitzgerald agreed and stated we should highlight the great retail choices available in Tipperary also.

Pat Carroll stated that while we have a lot to offer, there must be a limiting factor. He suggested that this may be accommodation. With the best packages in the world, without somewhere to stay, the tourists will be forced to go elsewhere. He asked the Tourism Team to review this and see what could be done to increase accommodation providers to keep visitors in the County.

## **6. Demonstration of Workwise Website**

Ruth Maher, IS Project Leader gave a demonstration of Workwise's Digital presence. Rather than developing a new website for the Workwise initiative for remote working in the County it was developed under the economic focused website of [www.tipperary.ie](http://www.tipperary.ie)

The [www.tipperary.ie](http://www.tipperary.ie) site already has a track record and by adding Workwise to this, it completes the whole picture of the county as an attractive proposition where the opportunity exists to live, play and work regardless of whom the employer or where the jobs head office might be.

The workwise part of the website features a full list of all the remote working hubs, with searchable locations to the nearest town. Each hub is categorised to represent the different facilities that they have. Every hub is mapped on the website and they all have

different classifications which you can search. The workwise brand is very identifiable and represents all the hubs that are active across the County.

An additional benefit from the site development was that when Workwise was being added to Tipperary.ie it was recognised that the whole [www.tipperary.ie](http://www.tipperary.ie) website needed an upgrade and it made sense to do this all together. Some of the features you can search for when you are on the website are: available days, features of the building, catering options, facility options and health and safety standards. Ruth gave a live demonstration of the website and some examples of hubs that are there, including private providers Flexi Desk in Nenagh and the Republic of Work in Clonmel.

Chairperson, Councillor Imelda Goldsboro thanked Ruth for her presentation and opened up to the floor for questioning.

Laura Jones enquired what the average length of time people used the hubs for and what the demographic of the average user was – for example were they people already in the County or are they people who are visiting doing business in the County?

Kathleen Prendergast advised that each hub works independently and we would not have access to the traffic that go through them. This is the same for the Broadband Connection Points (BCP) as the department will not share that information.

Kathleen acknowledged that it is a challenging environment and a digital hub individually may not be a sustainable business if it was to only offer a desk to people without some commitment or guaranteed income. However, Kathleen advised from her experience, initially people did want to have a space where they could hire a desk in the area where they lived in order to enable them to leave home to do their job but without having to travel long distances. Over time, it has evolved to people either work from home utilising the good broadband in the county or they travel into the small hubs and book them to use as their offices for a number of days in the week. Different solutions are emerging including using the hub as a small pod in a community/town with a number of staff in the same business working from it. But, the big opportunity is that by having the options there, we can market County Tipperary as a place that has it all. That is the message we will be spreading through the remaining elements of the Workwise campaign.

Councillor Mairín McGrath said it is really good to see that the opportunity is there for people who want to live and work in Tipperary in these locations. She said there is a business and training centre in Cahir which is run by Cahir Development Association and it has spaces available and wondered if there was an opportunity to put this on the website also. Kathleen Prendergast advised that once the marketing commences additional hubs can register and become part of the overall theme. She also noted that the Broadband connection points which are available in rural communities would be on the Workwise website.

## **7. Review of 2023 SPC Program and Plan for 2024**

Kathleen Prendergast, outlined her review of the workings of the SPC for 2023. She presented the details of the attendance at SPC meetings in 2023 and the new members who joined during year.

- Pat Carroll Farming joined in May 2023 replacing Baden Powell
- Clare Cashman stood down in May 2023 and was replaced by Theresia Gruschlbauer.
- Michelle Kavanagh stood down in May 2023 and her replacement will Conor Mulcahy is expected to join the SPC at next meeting in Feb 2024

Kathleen highlighted the varied topics that were discussed in the meetings throughout the year. These were as follows:

- Review of 2023 and Agenda Topics Schedule 2024
- Lisheen Bio Economy Centre Agrichemway Project
- County Tipperary Climate Action Plan
- Brexit - Impact on County Tipperary's Enterprise and Economy
- Local Economic Community Plan 2022-2027 Process and Final Plan
- Local Enterprise Office Mid-Year Reports and Update
- Retail Supports in County Tipperary/Commercial Vacancy Incentive Scheme clarifications
- 2022 - 2027 County Development Plan
- Digital Strategy - County Tipperary Remote Working Strategy 'Workwise' Demonstration
- New Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 - Focus on Tipperary/South West/South East (LEO)
- Our Rural Futures - National Development Policy 2021 - 2025 (Town Centre First)
- Tipperary Tourism Destination Marketing
- Tipperary Tourism - Lough Derg
- Tipperary Tourism - Thoroughbred Country
- Tipperary Tourism - Munster Vales

A number of topics that were not covered in the 2023 period will be considered for inclusion in 2024 along with continuing to update on the policy areas that were covered in 2023. These additional areas included:

- Broadband in County Tipperary
- The NBP-Broadband Connection Points - Development and Opportunities
- Farming and Agriculture in County Tipperary.
- Tipperary - The Place The Time Marketing Campaign
- Social Enterprises & Co-operatives
- Food producers
- Power Generation (Community Power)
- Clusters in Enterprise and Economic Development
- Supports to the Retail Sector
- Atlantic Green Digital Basin
- Digitalisation and A.I.
- Just Transition and other funding streams.

Kathleen suggested that any member who wished to have a specific topic on the Agenda to contact her or the Chairperson and if possible, it would be arranged.

Kathleen noted that the focus of the SPC model is solely on policy areas relevant to the economic and enterprise development of the County. She noted that the current SPC Scheme will end at the time of the local elections and it is expected that following the elections a new SPC will be established for the period of 2024 to 2029.

The dates for the SPC meetings in 2024 were proposed as 6<sup>th</sup> February, 7<sup>th</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup> September and 3<sup>rd</sup> December and these were agreed.

#### **8. Any other business**

Councillor Imelda Goldsboro advised that Councillor Peggy Ryan has offered her resigned from Tipperary Energy Agency. A new Councillor nomination was required to replace her. Councillor Mary Hanna Hourigan proposed Councillor Mairín McGrath and this was seconded by Councillor John Fitzgerald.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: Imelda Goldsboro Date: 06/02/2024 Chairperson

