



**Minutes of the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee
Held on 3rd of February at 10.30am in The Thurles MD Chamber,
Civic Office, Thurles**

Members of Council in Attendance	Sectoral Interests in Attendance	Guests
Cllr. Declan Burgess (Meeting Chairperson)	Mary Spillane, PPN	Dr Peter Horgan - GAA
Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose (Zoom)	Sean O Farrell, Environment North Tipp Association (Zoom)	Paul Carroll - GAA
Cllr. Annemarie Ryan (Zoom)	Michelle Aylward, Business Pillar (Zoom)	Cian Murphy - GAA
Cllr Kay Cahill Skehan	Thomas Cooke, Development Construction Pillar	Shane Cassells – GAA
Cllr. Tom Acheson	Adriaan Bartels Business Commercial & Tourism Pillar (Zoom)	William Maher - GAA
Cllr. Joe Hannigan (Zoom)	Pat Carroll PPN (Zoom)	Murtagh Brennan - GAA
Cllr. Liam Browne (Zoom)		Jim O’Hagan -Smart Factory Getaway Manager
Cllr. Roger Kennedy		Cllr Micheál Lowry Zoom
Cllr. Louise Morgan Walsh (Zoom)	Apologies	Cllr Jim Ryan (Zoom)
Cllr. Eddie Moran (Zoom)	Cllr. Marie Murphy Chairperson	Cllr William Kennedy
	Sean O’Farrell PPN	Staff in Attendance:
Absent	Seamus Hoyne TUS	Daniel Ginty Director of Services
Cllr. John Carroll		Anthony Fitzgerald Head of Local Enterprise Office
Sean Reidy PPN		Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer
		Marlena Pettigrew CO

1. Welcome

At the request of the Chairperson Cllr Marie Murphy, who was absent, Cllr. Declan Burgess, chaired the meeting. In opening the meeting, he welcomed everyone present in the venue along with those that had joined on Teams. There was no declaration of a conflict of interest.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were considered and Mary Spillane (PPN) made the request to amend them as the proposal for Subgroup membership incorrectly stated Pat Carroll but should have stated Thomas Cook. This was agreed and the adoption of same was proposed by Cllr. Roger Kennedy and seconded by Cllr. Tom Acheson. There were no matters arising.

3. Digitalisation and AI

Jim O’Hagan -Smart Factory Getaway Manager, TUS, Limerick gave a presentation on Digitalisation supports in the region and on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential application in the business and manufacturing sectors.

Cllr Declan Burgess thanked Jim for his insightful presentation on the opportunities for the county to link up with the cutting-edge technology and expertise available from Smart Factory.

Mary Spillane opened the questions by seeking information on the various companies using the facilities at this time and some background on shared intellectual ownership if one availed of the services in Smart Factory.

In response Jim O'Hagan stated that companies ranged across a number of areas, but they were mostly set in the manufacturing or engineering sector currently. In regard to the intellectual ownership, depending on the level of funding, companies shared the benefits from the research generated by Smart Factory Gateway.

Cllr Liam Brown queried if Local Authorities could avail of the services and in his positive response Jim advised it was open to Local Authorities at a no cost basis. Limerick County Council were currently using the Smart Factory to resolve a real-time issue along with Clare County Council who were very active with client companies.

Cllr Burgess felt that we must promote the service in the county. Anthony Fitzgerald agreed and stated that in the first instance any clients or companies that are looking to improve or increase manufacturing are advised of the service and support in Smart Factory. He also advised that Tipperary County Council are looking at hosting an event for manufacturers in the county in Q4.

In response to Cllr Joe Hanigan's enquiry about how many organisations from the county that engage with the Smart Factory already, Anthony Fitzgerald stated that the information is available if it is sought but in general businesses/ companies prefer if their competitors do not know about funding received. However, Jim O'Hagan stated that there are regular promotions and contact with the IDA, Chamber organisations, LEO's etc. in order to promote the work and the opportunity that Smart Factory, and the other technology gateways in Ireland offer.

Thomas Cook enquired, in relation to the International League, how much sharing of information, including both indigenous and international companies based in Ireland, undertake as part of the engagement with Smart Factory. Jim O'Hagan stated that they work with technology companies such as Siemens, Microsoft, Amazon, they will give access to their technologies in order for Smart Factory to engage in the provision of support and to research. That is the extent of sharing. The aim of Smart Factory is to assist companies to be better in manufacturing.

Jim stated that Ireland is at the lower end of the 27 European countries in terms of research according to studies done by the EU. Awareness of the service helps unlocks the opportunity for companies and once they are in the loop of using the technology gateway and all the supports and capabilities available, they find it to be very beneficial and return again and again.

In closing Cllr Declan Burgess asked what was likely to be the main areas of growth for the next few years so we can ensure our forthcoming SPC Digital Strategy can be focused on. Jim O'Hagan advised that training and promoting the uptake of AI by employees in the manufacturing sector will be the areas to focus upon.

4. Plan for 2026 Topics

Kathleen Prendergast presented the outcome of the survey of the Topics for the SPC for 2026. The choice of priority topics in order of merit are outlined over:

Members Choice of Priority Topics for 2026



- Bi Annual LECP/LEO updates will be included on the Agenda.
- Any other Additional topics will be included on the Agenda on the direction of the Chairperson.

Cllr Jim Ryan requested the inclusion of the economic benefits of festivals in Tipperary and also consideration of the future of festivals in the county. In his view national funding falls short in support and we need to understand the economic benefits in order to consider further support. Cllr Declan Burgess agreed and requested that the Arts Officer be invited to the SPC for a discussion on this.

Thomas Cook requested that we examine transportation in the county with a particular focus on services to and from rural areas at times when people need to get to work. The desire to shop or meet socially are of importance too, but without an understanding of the gaps and depending on hearsay, we cannot address the issues.

The inclusion of these two items was proposed by Tom Acheson and seconded by Kay Cahill Skehan.

5. Social and Economic Impact of Gaelic Games in County Tipperary

The Chairperson Cllr Declan Burgess welcomed Dr Peter Horgan, the Strategy Insights and Innovation Manager with the GAA along with his colleagues Paul Carroll – GAA, Cian Murphy – GAA, Shane Cassells – GAA, William Maher – GAA, and Murtagh Brennan – GAA.

In his presentation Dr Peter Horgan provided the outcome of research on the Social Value and Social Return and an Investment analysis of Gaelic Games. Along with this an economic impact evaluation of the Munster Final in Thurles was undertaken to evaluate the value of the event for Thurles and for County Tipperary. In this regard 45,148 spectators generated €3.2m for Thurles and €4.5m for County Tipperary.

The interesting and comprehensive research on the Gaelic Games demonstrated the very positive economics of overall Gaelic Games and the economic impact of major events along with demonstrating a social value and social return on investment of Gaelic Games.

Measure	Gaelic Games
Consumer spend	€377m
Gross Value Added	€710m
Employment FTE	10,600
Turnover	€1,619m
Tax paid	€192.6m
Inputs	€1.244b
Health	€31.06m
SWB	€556.48m
Social Capital	€1.224b
Volunteering	€1.056b
Outcomes	€2.868b
SROI	2.30:1



	Thurles	Co. Tipperary
Event-specific visitors	44,206	43,489
Average trip duration	1.00	1.02
Day visits / bed nights	44,206	44,458
Non-accommodation spend / day	€62.82	€70.57
Non-accommodation spend	€2,777,226	€3,137,492

Dr O'Hagan concluded his presentation by stating that the 140th anniversary of the first GAA match ever played (which was between North Tipperary and South Tipperary) is upcoming. He reiterated the importance of the GAA and in particular of Semple Stadium in the history of the organisation. In recognition of the economic value, he wished to forge a partnership approach to the future of the GAA in County Tipperary and to work with Tipperary County Council to preserve the history.

Cllr Declan Burgess thanked Dr Hagan for the superb presentation and to acknowledge the high numbers of volunteers in GAA. In response Dr O'Hagan stated that the research was carried out by a UK based who later referred to the volunteer element in the GAA of which he has never experienced before. The enormous commitment and involvement of GAA is unrivalled.

Mary Spillane sought any recommendations that had been identified in the research. Dr O'Hagan stated the following outcomes were clearly identified:

"GAA is good for economy and society" and Government, Agencies and others need to be aware of that.

People involved (especially the volunteers) often are unaware of the impact this movement has and they should be made aware of that.

Need of additional spending if the resulting outcomes of the social value and social return are to be capitalised upon.

Cllr Kay Cahill stated that It is extremely important to that Semple Stadium is maintained, improved and modernised – this especially as industry business is limited Thurles

Cllr Jim Ryan held the opinion that the Munster final should be held in Thurles every year as in the Home of Hurling Games there is a bond, connection and historical ties to the

GAA. He would like to see signage relating to the GAA on a year-round basis, not only on the day of match.

Cllr Siobhan Ambrose acknowledge the importance of the Stadium in Thurles and also the obligations and massive money invested. She also stated the importance of the GAA, and sport, on young people's wellbeing.

Murtagh Brennan outlined the real cost of generating this big crowds and interest. There are over 60 county teams, Physiotherapists, Doctors, Meal costs pre and post match, medical treatment of players, gym membership, and football kit/boots, etc. As the consequence GAA must generate money to meet these costs. The stadium needs massive refurbishment and a new centre of excellence in the County for our children and future generations. Support received from the Government is crucial to operations along with partnering with sponsors and fund-raising activities. The GAA is a huge asset for Thurles and a commitment to develop Semple Stadium is the next step but at circa 15million it will require collaboration and partnership at a very high level.

Cllr Liam Browne spoke about the engagement of non- Irish kids and integration into the organisation. He also noted that the last meeting considered tourism plans in the county and 'Sport Tourism' was not part of any initiative. Murtagh Brennan responded by stating that 3,500 primary schools provide GAA coaching and this is on a broad integrated basis.

Pat Carroll acknowledge the level of information in the report and he stated that we should use this data for the future development in rural areas.

Cllr Michaél Lowry felt that if the Stadium needs funding it should be explored as it is a huge benefit to the county. Murtagh Brennan stated that while the GAA may not have been very effective at engaging officially with government at local or national level, they have intentions now to be more involved and seek interaction.

The Chairman reflected on the value of such a large organisation being a representative on one of strategic policy committees. Briefly, Kathleen Prendergast advised the GAA that as members of the Public Participation Network they would have opportunity to sit on the SPC's. She recommended they should have members nominated when the process is open.

Damian Ginty, Director of Services, stated that as a county we must maximise the potential of the GAA.

Chairperson thanked everyone for their participation in the discussion

6. AOB & Date of next Meeting

Kathleen Prendergast acknowledged the assistance of Michelle Alyward, Tipperary County Chamber in relation to The Retail Edge Symposium which will be hosted on the 5th of Feb in the Cashel Palace Hotel. She invited members and asked them to promote the event where possible.

Chairperson Cllr. Declen Burgess confirmed there was no other business to discuss. He noted that next meeting would take place on May the 5th 2026 in Thurles MD Officer. Cllr. Declen Burgess thanked everybody for their attendance.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____

Date: _____