



Minutes of the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee

Held on 01 February 2022 at 10.30am in Tipperary MD Civic Offices and by Zoom.

Members of Council	Sectoral Interests	Staff in Attendance:
Cllr. John Crosse - Chairman	Imelda Walsh – Farming Pillar, Zoom	Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer
Cllr. Seamus Hanafin, Zoom	Mary Spillane - PPN, Zoom	Pat Slattery, Director of Services Zoom
Cllr. John Fitzgerald, Zoom	Tom McGrath - Business Pillar, Zoom	Anthony Fitzgerald, Head of Enterprise, Zoom
Cllr. Joe Hannigan, Zoom	Seamus Hoyne, TUS, Zoom	Marie Cox, Staff Officer, Zoom
Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose, Zoom	Laura Jones, Business Pillar, Zoom	Celine Kinnane, Clerical Officer, Zoom
Cllr Seamus Morris, Zoom		Guest Speaker Paraic Rattigan, Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan Prog. Manager
Cllr Peggy Ryan, Zoom		
Cllr Mairín McGrath, Zoom		
Cllr Imelda Goldsboro, Zoom		
Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan, Zoom		

Apologies: Claire Cashman, Cllr. Phyll Bulger

Absent: Cllr Tony Black; Jim Sheehan, Development Construction Pillar and Noel Byrne, PPN.

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Cllr. John Crosse, Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed all to the first meeting of 2022. He also welcomed Cllr Peggy Ryan to the SPC as the nominee to replace Cllr Peter Ryan. He noted the apologies received for this meeting.

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

The minutes of the last meeting were considered. Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose proposed the adoption of the minutes and Cllr. Seamus Hanafin seconded this item.

Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose enquired if a meeting of the Commercial Vacancy Incentive Scheme Sub-Group had been convened to consider the limit of €5,000 per annum on the grant and if so what was the outcome.

Kathleen Prendergast advised that a meeting had not yet been convened.

3. Atlantic Green Digital Basin Strategy

Paraic Rattigan, Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan Prog. Manager gave a presentation on the Draft Atlantic Green Digital Basin Strategy Study. The study, which was commissioned by the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan and its key stakeholders, is aimed at capitalising on the unique assets and opportunities of the Mid-West Region to create the world's first clean powered digital region.

There are vast untapped renewable energy-generation resources off the Atlantic coastline with generation capacity of up to 70GW (several multiples of Irelands current and foreseeable demand) through Floating Offshore Wind, Wave and Tidal opportunities.

When this is considered against the geographic and political location of Ireland, our established base of global digital industry leaders, the availability of additional, appropriate land with development potential and the talent and academic prowess of our population there is a potential for Ireland to become a centre of digitalisation and data-centric activity for itself, Europe and the World.

To unlock the supply of renewable energy that exists on the Atlantic seaboard, a demand for that energy must be created. Economically sustainability must be countered in and the use of digitalisation to drive consumption could be the key. The outcome will be the creation of new industry and jobs. The Mid-West is ideal for an Ecosystem – we have the energy, workforce, good fibre connectivity, plenty of land and the location and climate are very valuable.

Key points included:

- The unique critical potential for direct & indirect economic opportunities for the Mid-west region of Clare, Limerick and Tipperary extending to include North Kerry (the entirety of the Shannon Estuary)
- Onshore/Offshore wind - the focus has been on Onshore wind, Ireland has huge un-tapped potential for Offshore wind resources.
- There is very little renewable energy being generated on the West Coast.
- The West Coast is where the merging energy is. It is seen as strategic as we already have Money-point & Tarbert on the West Coast which can be re-used.
- Data centre development - most data centres are in Dublin.
- 4 projects have started in the West Coast in the last 12 months including Green Atlantic and Clarus - the offshore wind being the natural attraction.
- The Mid-West Region is attracting companies interested in renewable energy.

The Chair Cllr John Crosse thanked Paraic for the presentation and opened the floor to questions.

Cllr. Seamus Hanafin stated that the difference in the population between the west coast and the east coast is minimal yet the resource variances available between the two coastal areas are immense. He welcomed the opportunity for a stronger focus on the development of green energy on the West Coast.

Seamus shared the view that the current energy grant system for houses to be retrofitted was difficult to navigate and the timeframe was not supportive of a high uptake. He would like to see the grant system to be updated.

Cllr Hanafin referred to Electric Ireland Superhomes recently opened in The Technology University Shannon, Midlands, Midwest (TUS) in Thurles and the positivity this has provided in regard to the jobs created and the service of a one stop shop for home energy retrofit which will be of great benefit.

Cllr. Seamus Morris said that he understood that the Data Centres in Dublin are going to use 50% of our electricity by 2030. This draw on electricity will make it a challenge to service the rest of the country. Cllr Morris shared the view that Data Centres should be located near good water sources – thus spread around the coast.

Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose noted that there was great pressure on the existing electricity supply and that there needs to be joined up thinking so that the Mid-West region can benefit from any opportunities to address this pressure.

Seamus Hoyne added that the opportunities in Tipperary are significant for employment. TUS are currently providing upskilling programmes for the construction sector as well as newly developed curriculum, focused on the circular economy, with around 20 programs having a sustainability basis.

Cllr. Joe Hannigan noted that the presentation by Paraic Rattigan was very clear on the challenges ahead and the opportunities for our region. He pointed out the importance of retaining the benefits for our county and to ensure that we retain a national interest in these assets and not to hand them over to international investors. He also noted that it is wonderful to see Tipperary ahead of the curve by its involvement in this project which may be of serious benefit to our county in the future.

The Chairman, Cllr. John Crosse, asked if there are any incentives for farmers to diversify or engage in solar energy production. Paraic Rattigan noted that there is a commitment to allow micro-generation, so it is coming, albeit at a slow pace. There is also an emerging understanding that we need more solar production as part of the solution.

Imelda Walsh, Farming Pillar, held the view that Eirgrid had a main focus on getting energy from the West coast to the East coast at a speedy pace. The Agriculture sector want to be involved in renewable energy and that farmers can become part of the solution but there are many challenges currently to make this happen.

Paraic Rattigan responded by pointing out that there is high activity on the South Coast for energy production but that an all-Ireland perspective is required and that is where the challenge lies. At this point of time Dublin is the

location of choice for Data Centres because existing companies want to have their new data centres close to their current ones for logistical reasons. However, one energy company has already stated that they will now allow any new development on the East Coast for the forthcoming period.

Currently all investment is going to the grid in the East Coast so that grid will obviously be stronger and thus attract more industry. This will have to be addressed into the future. The potential to export supply is also there and while the Atlantic Green Digital Basin project wants to support sustainable growth, private sector investment will be also be needed to achieve this.

4. The economic importance of Farming and Agriculture in County Tipperary

Imelda Walsh, Farming Pillar, gave a presentation on the economic importance of Farming and Agriculture in County Tipperary. The Key points included:

- Beef Stock reduced from 70,000 to 53,232
- Tillage – farmers are coming under pressure to hold onto tillage land.
- Forestry – only 11% of land is under forestry
- Farm Income - €194m, every €1 generates €4 in the local economy
- Exports - continues to grow with €1bn exported from Tipperary last year
- Jobs – 4,407 jobs supported by agri output
- Tipperary Food Producers – are very important to the sector
- Climate Action – farmers are meeting challenges around Climate Action
- CAP 2023 – moving from food production to environment
- Brexit - Beef Imports, we need to ensure that the UK market stays open to us
- Energy – Agriculture can be part of the solution
- Input Costs – rise in fertilizer, feed, labour, energy costs, resulting in higher food costs.
- Government – with engagement from Government Agriculture can be part of the solution

The Chair Cllr. John Crosse thanked Imelda for an excellent and informative presentation. He noted that Tipperary is steeped in agricultural enterprises and that there are huge opportunities, along with big challenges, at this juncture for their future sustainability.

Cllr. Joe Hannigan was fearful that the link between sustainable farming and food production is not recognised enough.

Imelda Walsh, stated that Ireland must continue to produce food, noting that Ireland is one of the best countries in the world to grow food. It would be a

huge concern if food was not produced in Ireland as we lead the way in producing it in a green and sustainable way with a very low carbon footprint. Our Government supports this productivity. However, Imelda felt some Government initiatives, such as the 'Re-Wilding Project', would have negative impact on the cost of food production.

The family farm model in this country is strong. There is an optimism amongst Tipperary farmers for the continued future of farming, but the provision of support, incentives and, importantly, recognition, must be more evident for this valuable economic sector to thrive.

5. Broadband and Connection Points

Marie Cox, TCC, gave a presentation on Broadband Connection Points (BCP) and the development of the BCP facilities to provide opportunities for delivering of Training, Education, Arts and Culture. Key points included:

- 21 broadband connection points in County Tipperary.
- Connected Hubs Community Fund 2021 provided for equipment and capital works across the 21 BCP's.
- A BCP Thematic Programme is underdevelopment which will allow communities to participate in arts, education, culture and other areas of interest and community development.
- It is envisaged that Minister Heather Humphreys will visit some of the BCP's in Tipperary during 2022.
- Remote Working opportunities will be available at a number of the BCP's.
- DRCD Hub fund – there will be a new DRCD connected hubs fund this year.

6. Nominations for a working group to develop a Remote Working Strategy for Business

Arising from the review of the Digital Strategy, an action to develop a Remote Working Strategy for Business was identified. A working group will be established under the Program Working Group of the Digital Strategy to develop this. Tipperary is an ideal location strategically, with very good connectivity, a number of digital hubs, and a skilled workforce. There are many benefits to remote working including sustainability, increased productivity, lower cost of living and quality of life. As a county we should seek ways to capitalize on this. The inclusion of members of the SPC in this working group would be very valuable if there was an interest from members.

It was agreed to nominate 4 members and the following were agreed for the Remote Working Strategy for Business sub-committee:

1. Cllr. John Crosse - Proposed: S. Ambrose; Seconded L. Jones
2. Imelda Walsh - Proposed: S. Ambrose; Seconded: J. Crosse
3. Laura Jones - Proposed: J. Crosse; Seconded: S. Ambrose
4. Cllr. Joe Hannigan - Proposed: S. Ambrose; Seconded: L. Jones.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 8th March 2022 at 10.30am. Cllr John Crosse requested that one of the upcoming meetings be held at Lisheen Mine.

NOTE: Subsequently this meeting was cancelled and the next meeting will now take place on June 7th 2022

8. Correspondences

Cllr John Crosse, the Chairman, confirmed there was no correspondence received prior to the meeting.

9. Close of Business

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: John Crosse Date: 07/06/22
Chairperson.