



Minutes of the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee Held on 6th September 2022 at 10.30am in Hayes Hotel, Thurles.

Members of Council in Attendance	Sectoral Interests in Attendance	Staff in Attendance:
Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro Chairperson	Seamus Hoyne, TUS	Pat Slattery, Director of Services
Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose	Mary Spillane, PPN	Anthony Fitzgerald, Head of Enterprise and Economic Development
Cllr Peggy Ryan	Clare Cashman, PPN	Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer
Cllr. Joe Hannigan	Laura Jones, Business Pillar	Elaine Cullinan, Economic Development Officer
Cllr Mairín McGrath	Tom McGrath, Business Pillar	Simon Howe, Broadband Officer
Cllr. Phyll Bugler	Pat Carroll, Farming Pillar	Tina Mulhearn, Enterprise Support Worker
Cllr. John Crosse		Paul Burke, Economic Development Worker
		Donough Leahy, Clerical Officer
Guest Speakers in Attendance: Joe Lavin, NBI; Adam Ledbridge, NBI; Amanda Glancy, SIRO, and Sean Dervan, SIRO.		

Apologies: Michelle Kavanagh, Construction Pillar; Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan; Cllr Seamus Hanafin; Cllr. John Fitzgerald; Cllr. Tony Black and Cllr. Seamus Morris

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro (Chairperson), opened the meeting by welcoming all present. She noted that Baden Powel had stood down from his role representing the Farming Pillar since the last meeting.

She advised the meeting that Pat Carroll was the new appointee for the Farming Pillar and Imelda offered a warm welcome to Pat on his first SPC meeting attendance.

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

The Minutes of the last meeting were considered. Laura Jones proposed the adoption of the minutes and Cllr. Peggy Ryan seconded this item.

Clare Cashman enquired if Paraic Rattigan, following his Mid-West Regional Enterprise presentation at the previous meeting, had provided his response in regard to the supports that can be delivered at a more localised level.

3. Lisheen/Bio-Economy Centre Agrichemway Project

Elaine Cullinan gave a presentation on the Bio-Economy and the latest developments at the Bio-Economy Campus at Lisheen and she also discussed the various Bio-economy Projects currently happening in Tipperary.

Along with providing information about the Lisheen Green Energy Plant, Elaine Cullinane outlined the County Development Plan around this, advising about a new focus on the bio-economy, de-carbonization zones, disruptive technologies, energy storage and sustainable waste management/circular economy. With the 445-hectare site, Thurles and Lisheen will be a strategic national economic and employment driver as one of six designated sites within the EU for piloting the next generation of the bio-economy. The development of the bio-economy campus at Lisheen will be plan-led and a masterplan is to be created to enable this.

Elaine Cullinan provided details of the 10-year planning application lodged by Naringtech Ltd, for development of a Bio-Products Campus and advised that planning permission has been granted for Soleirtricity Lisheen Ltd for a major solar farm on a 77-hectare site within the campus.

She advised the meeting that County Tipperary is a participant in a European Project for the next three years where Lisheen will be one of 9 Regional Hubs across 6 European Countries. The project is funded through the European Research Executive Agency and will include the Promotion of the Bioeconomy in EU rural areas.

The Chairperson Cllr Imelda Goldsboro thanked Elaine Cullinan for her excellent presentation.

Cllr Phyll Bugler asked what type of employment is envisaged for the future through these projects. Elaine Cullinan responded that the bio-economy is one area of employment where there will be strong future growth. Given the involvement of County Tipperary in this growing sector, it is expected that a large amount of jobs will be created in Tipperary over the coming years.

Clare Cashman queried if the purchase of the Lisheen Mines by an external private company would have an impact on any future Master-Plan for Lisheen. Elaine Cullinan advised that it was taken over by "AQS" who are an Irish waste management company. Elaine Cullinan was of the view that they will accelerate the development of the project.

Mary Spillane thanked Elaine Cullinan for a very well explained presentation and asked was there an educational/information piece or a national/global awareness campaign required to inform the public and make people aware of developments in this sector. Elaine agreed that there was a great need for a focus on educating people on the bio-economy sector. She gave an example of one project that the Irish Bio-economy Foundation are involved in called *Biobec*. Biobec is an educational centre where information on the bio-economy is provided to the public.

Cllr. Joe Hannigan enquired about the company who will have ownership of the 455-hectare site. Anthony Fitzgerald, Head of Enterprise and Economic Development advised the SPC that 190-hectares have been sold to AQS solutions, which has an Irish Headquarters but the majority of shareholders of AQS are based in the U.K.

Anthony Fitzgerald stated whatever company was involved in Lisheen they must be allowed to develop a business that will be viable. He stated that there is a limit on what influence could be brought to bear as to the direction taken for the future. There are currently four planning applications submitted for Lisheen and these are under consideration by Tipperary County Council.

Anthony Fitzgerald advised that AQS are currently seeking state funding to prepare a master-plan for the 455-hectare site and this master plan will be vitally important for the overall strategic development of the area. He advised that it is through the Master Plan that Tipperary County Council and other interested parties will have a mechanism to influence the type of projects that will go on the site.

Cllr. Hannigan questioned, given that the entity is owned by a U.K company, have we sold a most valuable asset to the county? He asked was it possible for a state body (such as Bord Na Mona) to invest in the site to ensure the majority of it remains in Irish ownership. Pat Slattery, Director of Services advised that a valuable asset is being created in County Tipperary which has huge potential to create jobs. No investment or funding from Europe or Enterprise Ireland has been provided to this the private company as of yet. When funding is secured to do a Master-Plan, the company will have to engage with interested parties and the council and at that stage a contract can be drawn up to how to develop the site over the next few years to meet expectations in this regard.

4. Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) Update

Tina Mulhearn Enterprise Support Worker discussed The European Vision for 2030 which is aiming is for a successful digital transformation of Europe by 2030. Tina outlined the four Dimensions of the Digital Compass – Skills; Infrastructure; Transformation of Business and Public Services.

The Chair, Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro thanked Tina Mulhearn for her presentation. Mary Spillane asked where the free public Wifi locations are in Nenagh. Paul Bourke, Tipperary County Council advised that there are currently 14 locations throughout the core area of Nenagh town, where

connection can be made including Nenagh Arts Centre, Kickham Street, Pearce Street, Mitchel Street, Kenyon Street and Silver Street.

Clare Cashman queried the amount of time given to the area of cyber security, especially around personal data and the ownership of this data. Clare Cashman also raised her concerns about a reduction in human engagement with the phenomenal growth of technology, which she has identified as having a negative impact on communities. Tina Mulhearn responded by stating that the Broadband connection points in rural villages actually brings connectivity to the community. She also advised that the roll-out of the Broad Connection Points will involve training opportunities and training will be offered on how to be secure in the current digital era and how to deal with cybersecurity and other such threats.

Cllr. Joe Hannigan noted that County Tipperary is a leader in the Online Voucher campaign from Enterprise Ireland.

Cllr. Máirín McGrath acknowledged that the BCP's were successful where they were located in the county and she queried if there has been an allocation for the roll out of more BCP's in Tipperary. Tina Mulhearn advised that there will not be any further BCP's delivered in the County, however she advised that there would be further funding for the existing ones in the region of €500,000 being made available in County Tipperary in 2022-23.

Cllr. McGrath asked for an outline of how the current BCP's were chosen. Simon Howe, Broadband Officer, advised that remote locations were generally chosen and community centres prioritised so that high speed broadband could be delivered to these rural communities.

Cllr. McGrath sought information on the estimated time period for Cahir to receive free public Wifi. Simon Howe estimated the timeframe for Cahir as in the next 12 months and this would result in the area near Cahir Castle, the Main street and the area of the Square receiving the service.

Cllr. Phyll Bugler stated that technology is racing ahead and that it is critical that we stay with the developments and progress as a County. She requested that more advertising on the BCP locations should be considered as it would be helpful to direct people who currently do not seem to be aware of their exact locations.

Tina Mulhearn advised that Social Media will be shortly introduced to all the BCP's to help them promote within their own localities. She also advised that a county-wide campaign showing the location of the BCP's will be launched shortly.

Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose enquired about the surveys that were carried out in relation to the feasibility of a digital hub in Clonmel. Tina Mulhearn informed the meeting that almost 100 responses have been received from the survey and, as the closing date was 9th September 2022, an analysis of the submissions had still to be undertaken.

Cllr Ambrose also enquired if the "Our Kids Code" initiative was just for primary schools and how many schools can avail of this. Tina Mulhearn advised that "Our Kids Code" was a BCP initiative and only available to primary schools located where a BCP's is located.

5. Latest Update - National Broadband Ireland (NBI)

Joe Lavin, Chief Commercial Officer, NBI, gave an update on the National Broadband Plan project. This included a breakdown of NBI's Network Design/Build Process and Infrastructure Upgrades.

Mr Lavin provided the SPC with an update on Fibre to the Home and included a breakdown of the numbers and projected numbers of NBP covered premises in County Tipperary. He also advised 34 Schools are in scope to connect to high-speed broadband in the county and additional school's will be served under the Department of Education School's Programme.

Chairperson Cllr Imelda Goldsboro thanked Mr Lavin for the informative presentation. Director of Services, Pat Slattery acknowledged the huge progress that has been made with very

impressive speeds and efficiency in the County. Pat Slattery DoS raised the question regarding who is responsible for repairs on the Broadband infrastructure. Mr Lavin stated that responses would depend on the location of the outage. NBI will repair their own poles. Eir would be responsible for their own poles, and if an Eir pole has a cable belonging to NBI, Eir would be responsible for fixing the pole and NBI would repair the cable.

Tom McGrath, Business Pillar, enquired about the challenges in County Tipperary in getting Broadband at private properties. He gave the example of his own property as he has been advised by the different providers that Broadband is not available in his area. He enquired as to who determines that decision to select areas to receive Broadband. Mr Lavin advised that a Mapping Exercise was completed by the Department of Communications in 2019 which looked at all the premises in the Country and identified which were capable of receiving a commercial service and those that were not. Those that could not get a commercial connection were then placed on NBI's list. He advised if a property cannot get connectivity from a provider currently then the likelihood is that the property is on the NBI list. This can be checked on the NBI website at www.nbi.ie

6. Latest Update - Siro- Phase 2

Amanda Glancy of SIRO gave a presentation on the Phase 2 roll out of SIRO. She advised that SIRO was founded in 2015 and are a fully commercial company with no public funding. SIRO are rolling out 100% fibre all over the country and as of today they have 450,000 premises, in 67 towns and cities. Similar to NBI, SIRO does not sell directly to the customer but manage/operate the network and their retail partners deal with the customers. They are built on ESB networks, therefore they run their fibre on existing ESB poles. Amanda advised that the delivery of excellent service and keeping fault numbers at a minimum are very important goals of the company.

Amanda Glancy advised that phase 2 was launched at the end of 2021 and they plan to complete another 90 towns and increase the number of premises to 770,000 over the next 5 years.

Sean Dirvan, of SIRO advised that the only thing that remains constant in the broadband industry is change. He cited the example of Thurles where 15 years ago the whole town would have been run off of 1 gigabyte. Now, single households have 1 gigabyte showing the landscape of consumption of digital has changed radically.

He advised that Covid has accelerated that change with even smaller businesses now operating online. The old copper network struggles to keep up with the demand of all this usage. What SIRO and NBI are now rolling out is fibre being delivered all the way inside the four walls of the property. Initially Siro during phase one targeted rural provincial towns with populations of about 6,000 – 11,000 such as Sligo and Drogheda and only to residential customers. Now SIRO are starting to also look at Enterprises as part of Phase 2.

The Chairperson, Cllr Imelda Goldsboro, thanked Amanda Glancy and Sean Dirvan for their excellent presentation. The Chairperson, requested that both the NBI and SIRO presentation be distributed to the SPC Members.

Cllr. Joe Hannigan enquired about the Wifi or broadband remote/black spots not being serviced in Tipperary by Siro or NBI. Sean Levin confirmed that remote/black spots are difficult to send signal into. However, he referred to the fact that the BCPs targeted many of the specific blackspots in the county so they would not be left behind.

7. Climate Change - Economic Impacts

Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer, had followed up on what was happening in the county in relation to Climate Action and the Economic Opportunities. Kathleen Prendergast advised that the County Tipperary Climate Adaption Strategy 2019-2024 is under the remit of Marian O'Neill, SEO Environment and Climate Action Section.

Kathleen advised that after speaking with Marian, she had identified that CARO (Climate Action Regional Offices) coordinate and support local government to lead transformative change and measurable climate action across our cities and counties.

A conference was hosted by CARO in October 2021 which focused on Climate Action and Economic Opportunities. The conference heard from a range of speakers how local authorities can, through their economic remit, support, encourage and nurture new and existing business and enterprise as they transition to a net-zero economy through innovation, digitalization and the adoption of more sustainable practices. The speakers highlighted emerging trends and opportunities in this era of transformation. Real world examples were provided to illustrate how the pursuit of initiatives seeking to address and respond to climate change are powerful and a source of competitive advantage that can transform business and uncover opportunities. the conference they focused in on a number of different themes as follows;

- Green Investment and Sustainable Finance
- Looking at rural working hubs
- Enabling Ireland as a Global Leader in Manufacturing
- Scaling Innovative Solutions
- Local Government Mechanism Supporting Transition
- Enterprise Ireland spoke about promoting Enterprise and creating opportunities
- The Local Enterprise Office spoke about supporting change locally
- Grant Engineering gave a presentation on their business transitioning in Climate transition
- Green Energy Transition.

Kathleen Prendergast advised that the presentations from the Conference are available on the CARO website and encouraged the Committee to view them at the following link.

<https://www.caro.ie/training-events/event-recordings/ca-economics-opportunity-oct-21>

8. Retail: Christmas Retail Supports Programme

Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer advised that the Christmas Retail Support Scheme will be available for towns and villages again this year.

Organisations who are holding events and activities which will increase or retain spending in the towns and villages throughout the County over the Christmas period are eligible to apply. Projects which are held outdoors would be encouraged and markets are supported through this as well. The scheme will be advertised in the local press and social media.

9. Correspondence

Cllr. Goldsboro noted the resignation of Noel Byrne PPN.

10. AOB.

The Chairperson Cllr Imelda Goldsboro wished Pat Slattery, Director of Services every good wish on his retirement and thanked him for his commitment and enthusiasm while serving in the Community & Enterprise Directorate. Cllr. Ambrose, Cllr. Crosse, Cllr. Hannigan and Cllr. McGrath echoed this sentiment and thanked Pat for all the great work he has done on this SPC Committee and in the Council in a variety of roles over the years.

11. Close of Business

The Chairperson Cllr Imelda Goldsboro stated the next meeting would take place on Tuesday December 6th 2022.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: Imelda Goldsboro Date: 6/12/2022 Chairperson

