



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Online via Microsoft Teams

Dé Céadaoin 8 Samhain @ 9:30 am via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday 8th November @ 9:30 am via Microsoft Teams

Members Present:

Cllr. Stephen McHugh	Galway County Council (Chair)
Cllr. Gerry Finnerty	Galway County Council
Cllr Tim Broderick	Galway County Council
Cllr Declan Geraghty	Galway County Council
Cllr David Collins	Galway County Council
Cllr. Shane Curley	Galway County Council
Paul Carey	Construction/Business Representative
Dave Hickey	Business Representative

Apologies:

Dan Dowling	Community Representative
Marian Spellman	Trade Union Representative

Present:

Liam Hanrahan	Galway County Council
Alan Farrell	Galway County Council
Kieran Coyne	Galway County Council
Bernie Donnellan	Galway County Council
Valerie Kelly	Galway County Council

Cllr Stephen McHugh welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Alan Farrell to speak.

Mr Farrell thanked Karey McHugh and Cllr Mary Hoade for their participation in the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC over the last couple of years and wished them both well. Mr Farrell welcome Cllr Stephen McHugh and Cllr Shane Curley to the committee. Mr Farrell advised the members that the next meeting of the SPC would take place on the 21st November.

Cllr McHugh thanked Mr Farrell and stated that he looked forward to working with the committee. The minutes of the meeting held on the 19th of July 2023 were approved on the proposal of Cllr Gerry Finnerty and seconded by Cllr Tim Broderick.

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There were no matters arising.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme Overview

Cllr McHugh introduced Bernie Donnellan to give an update on the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.

Ms Donnellan introduced herself to the committee and gave an overview of the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and also outlined the M2 and M3 projects that have recently been submitted to the Department for 2023.

- The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme was launched – April 2017 to provide funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure or the necessary repair, maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in Ireland.
10% Match Funding required.
- Project applications are accepted from Local Authorities (All Measures), Local Development Companies (Measure 1) and/or State Bodies (Measure 3/Project Development Measure) under the scheme:
- Measure 1 for small scale projects requiring funding of up to €30,000 - Increased from €20,000 in 2022.
- 7 Projects can be submitted per Local Authority.
- Measure 2 for medium scale projects with funding of up to €200,000 - 3 Projects per Local Authority.
- Measure 3 for large scale projects seeking funding of up to €500,000, 1 Project per Local Authority.
- Project Development Measure funding of up to €50,000 for development costs for strategic large-scale projects. Introduced on trial basis in 2021 – 3 Projects from Local Authority. – this has been increased from 2 to 3 in 2023 to allow for 1 Islands project to be submitted.
- The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme is a key initiative under the Government’s Action Plan for Rural Development and is part of the Government’s Project Ireland 2040 Programme.
- Galway County Council have received €4,648,541.00 in ORIS Funding from 2017-2022, 43 projects have been approved to date.

Ms Donnellan advised that 7 M1 and 3 Project Development applications have been submitted to the Department for 2023 and gave an overview of the M2 and M3 projects that have been submitted to the Department for 2023.

M2 Castlegrove Woods Tales & Trails Group	Castlegrove Woods Tales & Trails	Castlegrove Woods Tales & Trails aims to develop both Castlegrove Woods and Barracks as Nature Trails, Historic Trails and Heritage Display centre. Accessibility is at the heart of the development.
M2 Glinsk Community Development Society	Glinsk Heritage Park	Glinsk Heritage Park Repair and Upgrade of 2km of Existing Trails to improve accessibility
M2 Coiste Forbartha an Mháma	Ionad Pobail an Mháma - Car Park	The construction of a car park which will facilitate cars and buses for those who enjoy walking the western way. The car park will also provide proper and secure parking for a range of community and commercial outdoor recreation events which are organised every year by various groups.
M3 Oranmore Maree GAA	Rinville Park Walkway	Rinville Park is an outstanding amenity with existing unlit walkways. This project adds 2.5km of lit walkways incorporating key new features, namely a sensory garden and interpretative signage for the ringfort.

This concluded the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme overview.

Cllr McHugh thanked Ms Donnellan for her presentation and opened the floor to questions/observations.

Cllr Tim Broderick thanked Ms Donnellan for her presentation and queried if there was any scope under the ORIS to fund the greenway between Galway and Athlone.

Ms Donnellan advised that Greenways cannot be funded under this scheme and that they were funded under TII (Transport Infrastructure Ireland).

Cllr David Collins queried the timeframe for the Department to make a decision on the projects that have been submitted for this year.

Ms Donnellan advised that it would likely be Q1 2024 before any announcement is made on this years submissions.

Alan Farrell thanked Ms Donnellan for her presentation and acknowledged the work that has been done by Ms Donnellan on ORIS. Mr Farrell stated that it is becoming increasingly difficulty to get these types of projects approved and completed due to environmental aspects. Mr Farrell advised that he is looking to get technical support for the Department to help with these projects and to advise on such issues.

Cllr McHugh stated that he was happy to see an application has been submitted for Castlegrove Woods as he knows the area well and knows what a positive impact this project will have on the community.

This concluded the Q&A for the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.

Local Enterprise Office Overview/Update

Cllr McHugh introduced Valerie Kelly, A/Head of Enterprise to give an overview/update on the work of the Local Enterprise Office.

Ms Kelly gave an overview of the current members of staff in the Local Enterprise Office. Ms Kelly outlined that the Local Enterprise Office is a local first-stop shop for seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland. Whether you are a new entrepreneur or an existing small business owner.

The Local Enterprise Office provides advice, information and support in starting up or growing a business. The Local Enterprise Office offers a wide range of experience, skills and services.

Ms Kelly gave an overview of the financial supports on offer through LEO:

- Feasibility Grant
- Priming & Business Expansion Grant
- Agile Innovation Grant
- Trading Online Voucher
- Micro Exporter Grant
- Energy Efficiency Grant

Ms Kelly advised that LEO Galway have reached all their targets for 2023 and outlined their priorities and focus for 2024.

Focus for 2024:

- Support Internationalisation and increase export capability.
- Drive competitiveness and digitalisation in SMEs.
- Encourage and enable SMEs to introduce sustainability.
- Increase leadership capability of small business owners.
- Support Innovation and R&D opportunities.
- Develop local sectoral networks and clusters.

Priorities for 2024:

- Showcase – Takes place in the RDS in January 2024.
- Local Enterprise Week – takes place from 4-8 March 2024.
- Food Producer Event – To take place in BIA Innovator Campus Athenry in Q1 2024.
- Entrepreneur competition to take place in conjunction with Action Tuam in Q1 2024.
- Outreach events to take place in Galway County towns.
- AgTech Innovation Programme.
- Developing sectoral networks – F&D/BIA, CREW, Ardan, DCCOI, HIH.

Ms Kelly gave an example of a successful LEO client story in the form of one of their clients GH AGRI in Tuam. Ms Kelly outlined the different services/grants that this company have benefitted from since reaching out to the Local Enterprise Office in 2020:

- 2020 Trading Online Voucher
- 2021 Business Expansion Grant
- 2022 Agile Innovation Grant
- 2022 Micro Exporter Grant

Results:

- Winner of Galway Enterprise Week
- Finalist National Enterprise Awards
- Increased Turnover
- Increased Export Sales
- Job creation

This concluded the Local Enterprise update.

Cllr McHugh thanked Ms Kelly for her presentation and for the valuable work that the Local Enterprise Office do. Cllr McHugh stated that his own family business GH AGRI (as mentioned above) has benefitted greatly from LEO and thanked Ms Kelly for all the help that he and his family have received over the last few years in developing their business.

Cllr McHugh opened the floor to questions/observations.

Cllr Geraghty queried if it is only businesses with up to 10 employees that can be supported financially by the Local Enterprise Office.

Ms Kelly advised that in the most part the Local Enterprise Office can only offer financial support to business with less than 10 employees and that businesses with over 10 employees have to apply to Enterprise Ireland, however there is scope for some export businesses to get financial support through the Local Enterprise Office. These businesses have to do an internalisation plan with the Local Enterprise Office consultant and they have to be the type of client that will progress to EI so it would not be an option for most small businesses.

Cllr Geraghty stated that it is important for networking events to take place in all sectors to get people from various industries/backgrounds together.

Cllr Geraghty asked if there has been any progress on his suggestion at a previous SPC to start an online business directory of all businesses in County Galway. Cllr Geraghty stated that he thought this would be a very useful online tool and that there would be scope for it to be expanded upon.

Ms Kelly stated that in terms of an online business directory it would be very difficult to keep an accurate and up to date list of current businesses in the County as the Local Enterprise Office don't have an overview of every business in the County.

Cllr David Collins thanked Ms Kelly for her presentation and complimented the Local Enterprise Office team on reaching all their targets for the year. Cllr Collins queried if the Trading Online Voucher is open to all businesses or if it is restricted.

Ms Kelly outlined the criteria for eligible businesses:

- Limited Online Trading presence
- Less than 10 employees
- Turnover less than €2m
- Applicant business must be trading for at least 6 months
- Business must be located in the catchment area of a LEO that is participating in this scheme

Ms Kelly stated that there is a list of ineligible businesses available on their website.

Kieran Coyne stated that a business directory for the County could be beneficial, such as the Red Book Business Shopping Guide that used to be on offer but that he concurred with Ms Kelly about it being difficult to this information accurate and up to date.

Paul Carey thanked Ms Kelly for her presentation and the work of the Local Enterprise Office. Mr Carey stated that he concurred with previous speakers about the importance of networking for businesses in each sector.

Ms Kelly stated that the Local Enterprise do currently bring food, Med tech and Agri tech businesses together at various events but that turnout is not always great at these events. Ms Kelly advised that the Local Enterprise Office will continue to engage with businesses with a view to arranging future networking events.

This concluded the questions/observations in relation to the Local Enterprise Office

LECP (Local Economic Community Plan) Update

Cllr McHugh introduced Kieran Coyne to give an update on the LECP (Local Economic Community Plan) Mr Coyne stated that the primary aim of the LECP is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by the Local Authority directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. The LECP is an important way to set out how Government and other stakeholders can work together to ensure that their initiatives, programmes and projects support an improvement quality of life for people living and working in the county. This is a statutory piece of work and the Council are in the process of agreeing a pathway forward to complete the LECP process.

To date a number of pieces of work have already being carried out. As part of the preparatory phase, an in house desk top review of the current LECP 2015 – 2021 took place to inform development of the new LECP. Moreover a small piece of work was contracted out to the University of Galway looking at the provision of a socio economic analysis as part of stage 1 preparation of the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2023 -2028. These pieces of work informed the objectives/actions which need to be carried forward from the current LECP to the new LECP and which of these objectives/actions

should be prioritised, having regard to previous learnings/outcomes. From the above a draft Socio Economic Statements and High Level Goals have been drafted. These will be presented to the LECP Advisory Steering Group for consideration and review for sign off by this SPC and the LCDC.

It would have been preferable to be further down the road in terms of the process but staff have been working on other equally pressing priority initiatives such as the rural schemes and community interventions. With recent changes in the Directorates some of the LECP function may lie with the Planning and Economic Development Directorate going forward and both this Directorate and the Community & Rural Development section will be finalising the next phases of the process.

Cllr McHugh opened the floor to questions/observations

Cllr David Collins queried whether a member of the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC would be on the Steering Group.

Kieran Coyne advised that a member of this SPC would be part of the Steering Group and that he would be in touch with the Committee in the new year in relation to same.

Cllr Tim Broderick queried why the chair of the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC has not been part of the LECP process to date.

Liam Hanrahan stated that the LECP is predominantly supported by the LCDC Committee and that the makeup of the steering group had been approved by the full Council.

This concluded the LECP update.

AOB

Cllr McHugh asked if there was any other business to discuss.

Cllr Broderick queried what the update was on Galway Airport potentially being used for outdoor concerts in August 2024 as has been circulated in the media.

Liam Hanrahan advised that the airport site has been proposed as a potential site to hold concerts in August 2024. Mr Hanrahan advised that the Council have been approached by MCD regarding these summer concerts but that negotiations were in the early stages and were ongoing. Mr Hanrahan advised that there were a number of Health & Safety factors to be negotiated between the promoter, the HSE and the Gardai as well as with Galway County and City Councils.

Cllr Broderick stated that the money from these concerts could be a good source of income for the Council and that the Council should be looking to make a substantial income from any external use of the Galway Airport facility. Cllr Broderick stated that he would encourage the Council to look at holding similar events in the fairgreen area of Ballinasloe Town as it is an underused facility, and it is under the ownership of Galway County Council.

Cllr Geraghty concurred with Cllr Broderick in relation to the under use of the fairgreen in Ballinasloe for events.

Cllr Collins stated that he gives his full support for use of Galway Airport for the summer concert series as it will be of benefit to the area and to local businesses.

Mr Carey stated that he is in full support of the summer series taking place at Galway Airport as it will be a good template going forward when the Council are preparing the Galway Airport Masterplan. Mr Carey stated that the airport is a great location for such events with the motorway access.

Mr Hanrahan stated that the negotiations with MCD would be a good learning curve as the Council have not previously been involved in an event of this capacity. Mr Hanrahan stated that income/finances in relation to the event have not been finalised and were still under negotiation.

Mr Hanrahan advised the members that the Council have engaged an Events Manager to look into the use of the green area in Ballinasloe for future events.

Cllr Geraghty stated that he was happy to know that use of the green in Ballinasloe was being looked at by the Council for future events.

Cllr Broderick concurred with Cllr Geraghty in relation to the use of the green in Ballinasloe for possible events in the future.

The meeting then concluded.

