



**Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe**  
**Galway County Council**

**Cruinniú / Meeting**

**Coiste Polasaí Straitéiseach Gnóthaí Forbairt Eacnamaíochta & Fiontraíochta**

Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Via Microsoft Teams

**Dé Céadaoin 30 Meitheamh 2021**

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 10:00 am**

**Members in attendance:**

Cllr Karey McHugh (Chair)	Galway County Council
Cllr David Collins	Galway County Council
Cllr Declan Geraghty	Galway County Council
Cllr Thomas Welby	Galway County Council
Cllr Mary Hoade	Galway County Council
Dave Hickey	Business Representative
Dan Dowling	Community Representative
Paul Carey	Construction/Business Representative

**Present:**

Alan Farrell	Galway County Council
Kieran Coyne	Galway County Council
Diane Gallagher	Galway County Council
Breda Fox	Galway County Council
Michael Hegarty	JCWL (Joyce County & Western Lakes Geopark)
Siobhan Power	JCWL
Benjamin Thebaudeau	JCWL

Armine DuboisGafar JCWL

Dominic Ó Móráin JCWL

**Apologies:**

Marian Spellman Trade Union Representative

Cllr Gerry Finnerty Galway County Council

**Minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021.**

Cllr Karey McHugh welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 were approved on the proposal of Cllr Thomas Welby and seconded by Cllr David Collins.

There were no matters arising.

**Local Enterprise Office Update.**

Cllr Karey McHugh introduced the first of today's speakers Breda Fox, Head of Enterprise Galway County Council who gave an update on the work of the Local Enterprise Office in 2020 and to date in 2021 (presentation attached).

Cllr McHugh thanked Ms. Fox for her presentation and invited questions/observations from the floor.

Dave Hickey thanked Breda and her team for all the work done during the pandemic to help businesses and asked if there was anything that the SPC can do to ensure that the Local Enterprise Office have sufficient staff resources going forward.

Ms. Fox stated that she was hopeful of getting the required funding to get additional staff in the near future.

Cllr Declan Geraghty thanked Breda for her presentation and the work of the Local Enterprise Office. Cllr Geraghty outlined his concerns for businesses in particular those in the construction sector over rising costs and lack of staff resources and asked if there was anything that could be done to set up some form of an employment hub.

Breda Fox stated that some of the LEO clients were struggling to get staff and noted that this is an issue for businesses. Ms. Fox stated that the Department of Social Protection are doing a lot of work trying to get people back to work. In relation to increasing costs for businesses Ms Fox stated that this is linked to global supply issues and that it is having a huge impact on businesses particularly in the construction sector.

Cllr Mary Hoade thanked Breda for her presentation and queried the breakdown of Trading Online Vouchers across both the City and the County.

Ms. Fox advised that she did not have the exact figures to hand and would get them sent to the members but that the breakdown was typically 2/3 City to 1/3 County. Ms. Fox stated that a lot of work has been done with small businesses converting them online.

Paul Carey thanked Breda for her presentation and reiterated the comments of Cllr Declan Geraghty in relation to rising costs and staffing issues for businesses. Mr. Carey stated that labour is in short supply and a lot of workers have gone to the UK during the pandemic for work, particularly in the construction industry and also a lot of hospitality staff have moved to the manufacturing sector for job security.

Cllr Thomas Welby and Dan Dowling thanked Breda for her presentation and work and agreed with the sentiments of the other members in relation to rising costs and staff resource issues for businesses.

Cllr David Collins thanked Breda for her presentation and acknowledged the hard work of the Local Enterprise Office during the pandemic. Cllr Collins enquired if the LEO budget had increased in 2021.

Breda Fox advised that the core budget remained unchanged in 2021 but that additional funding has been made available for schemes such as the Trading Online Voucher, mentoring and LEAN supports.

Cllr Declan Geraghty asked if there are any possibilities of overseas recruitment coming on board.

Breda Fox stated that she is not aware of any such initiative but that any sort of overseas recruitment would take place at national level. Ms Fox stated that upskilling should be our first priority as there has to be a cohort of unemployed people in the County that can be brought back in to the workforce.

Alan Farrell agreed with Breda Fox that the recruitment of overseas workers is a national issue and that a national campaign would be needed to attract people back to work in Ireland. Mr Farrell advised that at local level elements that have been raised can be considered in terms of the Regional Enterprise Plans and the Local Economic and Community Plan.

Cllr Karey McHugh stated that there is an abundance of people around the County that need to be upskilled. Cllr McHugh stated that some highly skilled people may be reluctant to change sectors and that this is an area that could be looked in to.

Breda Fox thanked the committee.

Cllr McHugh thanked Breda Fox for her presentation, this concluded the Local Enterprise Office presentation.

## **Joyce Country & Western Lakes Geopark**

Cllr McHugh introduced Michael Hegarty and Siobhan Power from the Joyce Country & Western Lakes Geopark.

Ms Power introduced herself and gave a brief background to the project and to geology in County Galway.

Michael Hegarty introduced himself to the committee and gave a presentation on the work of the Joyce Country & Western Lakes Geopark along with his colleagues Benjamin Thebaudeau, Armine DuboisGafar, Dominic Ó Móráin and Siobhan Power (presentation attached).

Cllr McHugh thanked the speakers for their presentation and acknowledged that UNESCO sites are a huge draw for tourists. Cllr McHugh opened the floor to questions.

Cllr Thomas Welby thanked the speakers for the presentation and stated that he fully supported the project. Cllr Welby asked what the Local Authorities need to do to progress the project.

Siobhan Power advised that the Local Authorities need to look at the different models in Ireland such as the Cliffs of Moher and how that is funded by Clare County Council. Ms Power stated that the projects should be part of the Local Authority and could be run jointly by Galway County Council and Mayo County Council. Ms Power stated that the project is fortunate to also be in the area that falls under Údaras.

Cllr Mary Hoade thanked the speakers for an excellent presentation and asked what level of engagement the group have had with local communities.

Michael Hegarty advised that they had had a lot of engagement on the ground pre COVID and online during lockdown. Mr Hegarty advised that they had run online training and advisory courses during lockdown. Mr Hegarty advised that leaflets had been dropped off to homes and businesses in relation to the project and the benefits to both businesses and communities.

Alan Farrell thanked the speakers and acknowledged that the project has been growing over a number of years. Mr Farrell stated that Rural Regeneration Development Funding was important going forward. Mr Farrell stated that he is hopeful the project will benefit communities financially, culturally and socially. Mr Farrell advised that Galway County Council are tight on resources but that the Council see this as a opportunity and want to help the project continue to grow.

Cllr Declan Geraghty thanked the speakers for the presentation. Cllr Geraghty stated that he has a slight reservation in relation to farmers and the project not obstructing them in the future.

Michael Hegarty advised that the group have liaised with the Irish Hill Farmers Association, The Irish Farmers Association and local communities and that flyers had been sent out to address any concerns that the farming community may have.

Dominic Ó Móráin stated that this project is a huge opportunity for the Agri tourism sector.

Paul Carey thanked the presenters and stated that it is good to get an understanding of the Geopark and what it is all about. Mr Carey agreed that it is important to have engagement with the landowners. Mr Carey stated that the project is great and gives us all more awareness of places to go and visit. Mr Carey stated that it is good from a funding point of view that there are a few agencies involved.

Benjamin Thebaudeau stated that the idea of the project is to help farmers make their farming life more sustainable.

Cllr Declan Geraghty stated that he was happy to hear that farmers have been involved in the process. Cllr Geraghty asked if there could be an insertion in the new County Development Plan to allow for mobile/pop up coffee shops in the project locations.

Alan Farrell stated that from a tourism perspective Galway County Council are very supportive of the project but that they also need to consider planning and licensing regulations surrounding mobile coffee shops etc. Mr Farrell stated that the Local Economic Community Plan would need to look at specific actions in relation to the Geopark. Mr Farrell advised that the economic return will help influence the money needed to sustain the project going forward.

Cllr Thomas Welby noted that the Geopark is a vast area and that we need to try to drive business into existing businesses before going down the road of getting planning for mobile coffee shops.

Alan Farrell agreed with Cllr Welbys suggestion regarding promoting existing businesses in the areas and to stimulate economic activity in these areas of the County.

Dominic Ó Móráin advised that the key to this project is sustaining existing businesses.

Cllr Karey McHugh stated that she was happy to hear the point on sustainability and that a cost benefit analysis would be hugely beneficial from Galway County Councils view as a stakeholder and wished the group the best of luck with the project.

Siobhan Power advised that the group are doing a cost benefit analysis at the minute.

This concluded the Joyce Country & Western Lakes Geopark presentation.

## **Economic Rural & Community Development Schemes Update**

Cllr McHugh introduced Kieran Coyne ERCD who gave a brief update on the current funding schemes (presentation attached).

Cllr McHugh thanked Mr Coyne for his presentation and invited questions from the floor.

Cllr McHugh thanked the ERCD team for their work in getting the schemes launched. Cllr McHugh stated that it is important for groups to have plans and shovel ready ideas when applying for funding schemes. Cllr McHugh stated that an outdoor dining legacy is being created on foot of the COVID lockdown.

Alan Farrell stated that some aspects of the larger outdoor schemes pose problems from a planning/licensing and environmental perspective. Mr Farrell stated that town regeneration and rejuvenation is a priority of Galway County Council.

This concluded the Economic Rural & Community Development schemes update.

## **AOB**

Dave Hickey queried if there had been any update since the last meeting on the development of a film centre at Galway airport.

Alan Farrell advised that there has been follow up to the full Council in relation to the Film Centre. Mr Farrell stated that the Council are in the final stages of a procurement process for the use of the hangars at the airport and that a report would be made to the full council once this was completed. Alan Farrell stated that sub groups had now been set up for the Regional Enterprise Plan and that submissions can now be made.

Cllr Geraghty asked if the committee could help in anyway with the Apple planning extension application.

Cllr McHugh stated that the apple investment would be very important and carries great investment potential for the County.

Alan Farrell advised that the planning application is not an issue for the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC and that the application needs to go through the full planning process.

As there was no other business to be discussed Cllr McHugh thanked all for attending the meeting.

The meeting then concluded.

