



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Galway County Council

## Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Online via Microsoft Teams

Dé Céadaoin 14 Meán Fómhair 2022

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022 9.30am

### Members Present:

Cllr. Karey McHugh	Galway County Council (Chair)
Cllr. Mary Hoade	Galway County Council
Dan Dowling	Community Representative
Paul Carey	Construction/Business Representative
Marian Spellman	Trade Union Representative
Cllr. Gerry Finnerty	Galway County Council
Dave Hickey	Business Representative
Cllr Tim Broderick	Galway County Council
Cllr Declan Geraghty	Galway County Council

### Apologies:

Cllr David Collins	Galway County Council
--------------------	-----------------------

### Present:

Kieran Coyne	Galway County Council
Alan Farrell	Galway County Council
Ruth Mulhern	Galway County Council
Eimear Dolan	Galway County Council

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC held on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022.**

Cllr. Karey McHugh welcomed everyone to the meeting. Cllr McHugh passed on apologies for Cllr David Collins.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 were approved on the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hoade and seconded by Paul Carey.

### **Matters Arising:**

Kieran Coyne gave a brief update on the progress of the Local Economic & Community Plan.

Mr Coyne advised that the Local Economic & Community Plan is a 6 stage process and that they are currently at stage 1. Mr Coyne advised that an internal overview has been done and that a socio-economic analysis is currently being undertaken to determine any key indicators going forward. Mr Coyne advised that the SPC members will be updated once it had progressed further.

Mr Farrell referred to a motion at the previous SPC that a member of the IDA attend an Economic Development and Enterprise SPC, Mr Farrell advised that he has been meeting with the IDA on a number of interests and said he was confident that a representative from the IDA would attend a meeting by the end of the year if possible.

Cllr McHugh stated that it was important that the committee get the opportunity to speak with a representative of the IDA.

Cllr Declan Geraghty asked if there are any plans to liaise with the IDA to push the development of sites/business premises over 20,000 sq ft as there are currently no such sites available in the County. Cllr Geraghty stated that this matter needs to be raised with the IDA.

Mr Farrell advised that he has been liaising with the IDA in relation to site issues and that he would bear it mind moving forward. He said that the IDA lands were to facilitate Foreign Direct investment and said he agreed with the members that there needed to be sites that could facilitate domestic businesses as well as FDI, stating that while there is land zoned in areas it may not be available. Mr Farrell stated that it was important that the action plan for the airport be progressed as soon as possible.

Cllr Tim Broderick agreed with the comments made by Cllr Geraghty. Cllr Broderick stated that there is a need for the development of business premises within the County. Cllr Broderick asked if there is any prospect of the SPC liaising with the Planning Department in relation to planning applications lodged for commercial businesses. Cllr Broderick stated that joined up thinking is needed between the SPC and the Planning Department.

Mr Farrell stated that while planning policy is a matter of the Planning & Sustainable Development SPC, one of the team in ERCD could speak to the Planning Department and ask if they could attend a future meeting of the SPC.

As there were no other matters arising, Cllr McHugh introduced Ruth Mulhern to give an update on the Tourism Strategy.

## **Tourism – Tourism Strategy update – by Ruth Mulhern, Tourism Officer**

Ruth Mulhern gave an update on the progression of the Tourism Strategy.

A comprehensive consultation and engagement took place from March to June including individual consultations with key stakeholders and potential partner agencies.

Stakeholders directly engaged with CHL to share insights which resulted in the below:

- 199 Survey responses including open submissions
- 33 Individual consultations (in person and online)
- 6 SEA submissions from statutory bodies
- 3 Industry ideation workshops
- 2 Ideation workshops with elected members
- 1 Executive and Senior Management Team workshop
- Updates to SPC

The key areas of the Tourism Strategy are outlined below:

- Tourism sustainability
- Economic & community development
- Product development
- Marketing
- A clear implementation plan over the 8-year timeline for the Strategy
- Branding & marketing objectives
- Environmental assessments relevant to a statutory document

The Key themes that arose from the policy review were:

- Support for the sustainability of rural economies and communities
- A focus on sustainability, in all its forms, including environmental, social and economic
- The need for greater integration and connectivity, both physical and digital
- Support for enhanced digital infrastructure and competency across all areas and sectors
- Community engagement as a core part of all development
- Support for inter-agency/stakeholder/jurisdiction collaboration
- An emphasis on 'opening up the outdoors'
- An emphasis on green and blue infrastructure and associated amenities and experiences
- Enhanced recognition of the value of culture and the arts
- An ongoing focus on employment, enterprise, skills and innovation

The next steps in the rollout of the Tourism Strategy are:

- SPC presentation of strategic framework
- Copies of draft Strategy to be emailed to the Executive Team Management for review and feedback at a meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September (this is for public consultation)
- Present draft document to Chief Executive
- Issue draft document to Statutory Bodies
- Issue draft document to SPC and Elected Members

- Public display of the draft Tourism Strategy including an Irish version, AA and SEA
- Closing of Public Consultation
- Council meeting to endorse/adopt the Strategy

Cllr McHugh thanked Ruth for her presentation and for the significant amount of work that has been put in to developing the Tourism Strategy to date. Cllr McHugh made an observation that the presentation given today did not have much representation for the Tuam area in relation to promotion of Tourism attractions in the area, such as the Cathedral. She also referred to the cost of car hire and queried if anything could be done to address this.

Cllr McHugh invited questions/observations from the floor.

Cllr Gerry Finnerty thanked Ruth for her presentation and for her assistance with the Burren Lowlands. Cllr Finnerty stated that the Country is suffering due to the lack of affordable hotels and that it is cheaper for people to holiday abroad, giving the example of race week in Galway this year and the drop in numbers compared to previous years. Cllr Finnerty stated that increased festival funding needs to be looked at by the Council under schemes such as the Community Support Scheme as groups are now having to pay higher costs to run festivals.

Cllr Tim Broderick thanked Ruth for her presentation and the update on the Tourism Strategy. Cllr Broderick asked if any body of work has been done around Northeast Galway. Cllr Broderick stated that some areas of Galway are a success story and others such as parts of North and East Galway are not. Cllr Broderick stated that Northeast Galway is devoid of any tourism promotion at present. He also referred to the cost of accommodation and car hire as impacting tourism and raised concerns regarding the promotion of pop up businesses.

Cllr Mary Hoade thanked Ruth for her presentation. Cllr Hoade stated that there is a lot of tourism promotion in Galway around the Hidden Heartlands and the Wild Atlantic Way but very little mention of areas such as Headford, Tuam and Northeast Galway and in particular the Geopark. Cllr Hoade stated that the Tourism Strategy needs to look at County Galway as a whole and not just some areas. Cllr Hoade agreed with comments made in relation to high costs in Ireland around Hotels and Car Hire, making it difficult for families to holiday in Ireland.

Mr Farrell stated that there does need to be a focus on all areas of County Galway in the strategy, however that the strategy must be realistic in terms of the stage of development in the different parts as some areas have a strong tradition of tourism while others were not as strong. He said that strategy will cater for this.

Ms Mulhern thanked the members for their comments and acknowledged that Ireland's Hidden Heartland and Wild Atlantic Way provided a geographical boundary and destination theme for promoting the County stating that the strategy will address the County as a whole in terms of tourism development. She said that some areas are heavily dependent on tourism and have developed over many years while other areas were only at the early stages of tourism development, adding that the strategy will cater for all. Ms Mulhern stated that there is a proposal in place for a dedicated Destination Experience Plan relating to Mid Shannon Discovery Zone- (in which NE Galway is situated) in the Shannon Masterplan context; Fáilte Ireland are leading out with DEDPs across the Regional Brands (Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands relevant to Galway).

Cllr Mc Hugh thanked the Tourism Officer for the presentation.

## **Town & Village Renewal Scheme update – by Eimear Dolan, Economic Rural & Community Development Section**

Cllr McHugh introduced Eimear Dolan to give a brief update on the Town & Village Renewal Scheme.

Eimear Dolan presented an overview on the Town and Village Renewal Programme, indicating amounts granted and progress on the 2020, 2021 Programme and key policy changes and projects submitted for 2022 Programme.

Applications are approved by the Department of Community and Rural Development and a decision on the 2022 Programme submitted in July 2022, are due by end of November with typically 18 months for delivery. The programmes from 2019 are in final phase and the 2020 programme has experienced significant delays due to COVID 19 and supplier backlogs and delays. She noted that increasing costs are impacting on community lead projects who have not had the same opportunities to convene and fundraise in past two years.

Cllr McHugh thanked Eimear for the update and in particular for the success of the Streetscape Enhancement Scheme. Cllr McHugh welcomed the announcement of the Tuam Streetscape Enhancement Scheme.

Cllr Broderick thanked Ms Dolan and queried if the new Refurbishment Scheme for vacant properties that was recently announced queried how it would be rolled out. Cllr Broderick stated that the population cap mentioned in the guidelines for the Refurbishment scheme would lead to the demise of a lot of small villages. Cllr Geraghty agreed with Cllr Brodericks comments in relation to the population cap announced under the refurbishment scheme and stated that it is a pity vacant property in villages will automatically be ruled out.

A number of the members highlighted the importance of the rural schemes. In response to a question with regard to the adequacy of resources required to deliver on the schemes and maximise opportunities, Mr Farrell said there is a lot of administration required and that for the County to benefit as much as possible it was necessary to develop a further pipeline of projects with communities, but this is very difficult given the resources available.

Cllr McHugh said that the Council as a whole is currently under resourced and that this matter needs to be lobbied, expressing concerns that the Council may not benefit as much as it could if there were adequate staffing in place.

This concluded the Town & Village Renewal Scheme update.

## **Any other Business**

Cllr Broderick raised the issue of the closure of Arrabawn in Ballinasloe and the impact that will have if the property is left vacant. Cllr Broderick advised that he has been speaking to Liam Hanrahan, DoS for the Ballinasloe MD and Jim Cullen on the matter in recent days with a view to sourcing a new venture/business to take over the building.

As there was no other business to be discussed Cllr. McHugh thanked all for attending the meeting and the officials that presented. The meeting then concluded.