



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Teagasc Building, Liam Mellows Campus, Athenry

Dé Máirt 5ú Aibreán 2022 @ 9:30 am

Tuesday 5th April 2022 @ 9:30 am

Member in attendance:

Cllr. Mary Hoade	Galway County Council
Dan Dowling	Community Representative
Paul Carey	Construction/Business Representative
Marian Spellman	Trade Union Representative
Cllr David Collins	Galway County Council (Acting Chair)

Present:

Liam Hanrahan	Galway County Council
Alan Farrell	Galway County Council
Ruth Mulhern	Galway County Council
Elaine Donohue	Bia Innovator Campus

Apologies:

Cllr. Karey McHugh	Galway County Council
Cllr. Gerry Finnerty	Galway County Council
Dave Hickey	Business Representative
Cllr Tim Broderick	Galway County Council
Cllr Declan Geraghty	Galway County Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC held on 2nd December 2021

Cllr. David Collins welcomed everyone to the meeting. Cllr Collins passed on apologies for Cllr Karey McHugh and advised that he would be chairing the meeting in her absence. Cllr Collins invited all attendees at today's meeting to introduce themselves.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd December 2021 were approved on the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hoade and seconded by Paul Carey.

Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

Cllr Collins introduced Cllr Peter Feeney to say a few words in relation to the Bia Innovator Campus.

Cllr Feeney gave a short overview of the Bia Innovator Campus and its history. Cllr Feeney stated that the Bia Innovator Campus was an idea that came about under the European Region of Gastronomy. Teagasc came on board as investors and to provide a site. Galway County Council drove the initiative and provided substantial investment. The board of the campus was then formed and remains in place. The Bia Innovator Campus is an exciting project and is now close to opening. What started as a concept is now an 8-million-euro project which will provide support to businesses just starting out up to business growth and exporting, along with an educational element in conjunction with GRET. The Bia project is hugely fulfilling and should create up to 360 jobs in its first 3 years.

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

Cllr. Collins introduced the first of the meetings speakers, Ruth Mulhern, Tourism Officer, Galway County Council who gave a presentation/update on the ongoing work on the Tourism Strategy (presentation attached). Ms Mulhern advised that it is hoped to have the Tourism strategy delivered by September/October. The Strategy will be a Tourism and Marketing Strategy that will incorporate sustainability, economic and community development, product development, branding and marketing objectives. Ms Mulhern advised that dealing with environmental assessments will be one of the issues that may hold up the delivery of the strategy.

Ms Mulhern advised that CHL were appointed in December 2021 after a tender process, to roll out the Tourism Strategy. Ms Mulhern advised that there will be a workshop for all elected members at the end of April to give them the opportunity to engage with the team on the strategy. Ms Mulhern also advised that the tourism industry survey is open until the 18th April.

This concluded the Tourism presentation.

Cllr Collins thanked Ms Mulhern for her informative presentation and opened the floor to questions/observations.

Liam Hanrahan outlined that the appointed consultants CHL are aware of the Councils anticipated completion date of September/October 2022 but reiterated Ms Mulherns statement that environmental issues may hinder the finalisation date. Mr. Hanrahan stated that it is crucial that the strategy is in place by next season.

Cllr Mary Hoade thanked Ms Mulhern for her presentation. Cllr Hoade stated that elected members and members of the public are suffering from consultation fatigue as a result of most consultations now taking place online. Cllr Hoade requested that link to the survey be recirculated to the SPC members and also elected members.

Ms Mulhern agreed to recirculate the survey to the members and elected members.

Cllr Hoade outlined that in North Galway a lot of people are just passing through the towns on the way to other destinations, e.g passing through Headford to go to Westport. Cllr Hoade stated that it is important to promote all towns in Galway as destinations to visit and not just pass through them.

Alan Farrell stated that a lot of information received during the County Development Plan process has been fed in for input into the Tourism Strategy process.

Paul Carey thanked Ms Mulhern for her presentation. Mr. Carey concurred with Ruth Mulhern on the elements in her presentation and gave an example of an investor wanting to invest in Marconi House but Planning issues are standing in the way of the investment opportunity. Mr. Carey concurred with Ms Mulhern in relation to the positive impact of boats and camper vans in towns such as Portumna. Mr. Carey stated that the people staying on these boats and campervans are putting a lot of money into communities and that it is easy money to get into the system if it can be facilitated. Mr. Carey stated that canals in Galway are an under used resource and that with the right investment they have a lot to offer. Mr. Carey advised that Galway County Council need to put investment into the marketing of tourism in County Galway at the same level as other Local Authorities.

Cllr David Collins made an observation that Galway County Council need to promote history in Galway towns and that this would encourage more visitors who are not necessarily looking for activities but would be interested in historical tours. Cllr Collins asked if this aspect would be promoted under the Tourism Strategy.

Ms Mulhern stated that yes this would be an element of the Tourism Strategy and that there would be a focus on FIT (fully independent travellers) as well as promotions aimed at larger bus tours. Ms Mulhern advised that bus tours do not bring in a large amount of revenue to businesses and that independent travellers are likely to spend more money.

Paul Carey suggested that a pilot programme be carried out with a 25 seater bus, travelling to a different town every day over the period of a week to make people more aware of the towns in Galway and what they have to offer, this would also give a greater social media presence as to what is on offer in our towns.

This concluded the Q&A for Tourism.

Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) Overview

Cllr Collins introduced Alan Farrell to give an update on the Local Economic & Community Plan (presentation attached).

Mr. Farrell advised that the Local Economic & Community Plan is a blueprint for the next 6 years. Mr. Farrell stated that an Advisory Steering Group would be in place to bring all elements of the plan together, the committee are currently working with various focus groups, and it may be 2023 before the plan is finalised.

Cllr Collins thanked Mr. Farrell for his presentation and invited the members to ask questions. As there were no questions, this concluded the Local Economic & Community Plan overview.

Cllr Mary Hoade proposed that Dave Hickey would represent the Economic Development and Enterprise SPC on the Advisory Steering Group, this motion was seconded by Marian Spellman.

Bia Innovator Campus - Overview and opportunities

Cllr Collins introduced Elaine Donohue to give an update/overview on the Bia Innovator Campus.

Ms Donohue welcomed the committee members to the Bia Innovator Campus and gave an update on the progress of the campus to date.

Ms Donohue advised that there has been a €8.2m capital investment in the campus to date, as well as cross Departmental support for this campus. Ms Donohue stated that the West of Ireland is particularly underserved by food production facilities and this new campus will be a national centre of excellence comprising of the following facilities:

- Co-working Kitchens
- Starter units
- Growth units
- Auditorium and Business Centre
- Showcase room

The campus will consist of three buildings of food specific resources to support over 40+ food related businesses onsite and hundreds of others remotely. Building works are continuing on site and it is anticipated that they are completed by early 2023.

Ms Donohue advised that there are currently four members of staff working for the campus including two dedicated Food Technologists and that they are already working with a few local food businesses.

The Campus falls under some of the strategic objectives outlined in the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 and that the campus will be a centre of learning for both local and Erasmus students.

With the help of Enterprise Ireland, the campus is currently launching the Bread & Jam Ireland campaign to kickstart the Community building. This involves various online seminars that people can attend in the areas of food exportation, branding/marketing, business growth and financials.

This concluded the Bia Innovator Campus presentation.

Cllr Collins thanked Elaine for a very informative presentation and opened the floor to questions/observations.

Dan Dowling asked Ms. Donohue if there was anything on offer for people coming off a CE scheme and would they take on people looking for a QQI qualification.

Ms. Donohue advised that there are currently 2 participants of a CE scheme working on the campus and that going forward there would be more opportunities through GRETB.

Alan Farrell concurred with Ms Donohue and stated that Bia Innovator Campus would work closely with GRETB to develop courses.

Cllr Peter Feeney advised that the campus is already tied in with CE schemes and that this would continue going forward.

Cllr Mary Hoade congratulated Elaine Donohue and Peter Feeney as well as all the board members for the work that has been carried out and to wish them well going forward.

Dan Dowling and Marian Spellman concurred with Cllr Hoades sentiment.

Cllr Feeney stated that the board for the Bia Innovator Campus are all voluntary members and that between them they have a great wealth of experience. Cllr Feeney stated that the Bia Innovator Campus is already a great success story.

Paul Carey stated that a lot of people have a business idea but that they have no idea how to bring it to life, the Bia Innovator Campus gives people an opportunity to carry out their vision. Mr. Carey stated that the campus is a fantastic facility and that the location just off the motorway and beside Teagasc is very beneficial. Mr. Carey stated that there is also huge opportunity for further development in Athenry at the IDA Business Park if issues such as wastewater could be rectified.

Cllr Peter Feeney advised that a plan needs to be looked at for the Galway East main drainage scheme. Cllr Feeney advised that a submission was made to the County Development Plan to look at the scheme but that it wasn't accepted. Cllr Feeney stated that an upgraded wastewater facility needs to be in place in Athenry to enable future development.

This concluded the Bia Innovator Campus presentation/overview.

Any other Business

Dan Dowling asked that the committee look into the issue of Derrybrien Windfarm and look at ways of trying to keep it open.

Liam Hanrahan suggested that Ricky Conneely from the IDA be present at a future Economic Development and Enterprise SPC.

As there was no other business to be discussed Cllr. David Collins thanked all for attending the meeting and the officials that presented.

The meeting then concluded.

Attendees were then invited to participate in a walk about of the Bia Innovator Campus.