



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Online via Microsoft Teams

Dé Máirt 21 Samhain @ 9:30 am via Microsoft Teams

Tuesday 21st 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
Dan Dowling	Community Representative
Marian Spellman	Trade Union Representative
Paul Carey	Construction/Business Representative

Apologies:

Dave Hickey	Business Representative
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Present:

Liam Hanrahan	Galway County Council
Alan Farrell	Galway County Council
Kieran Coyne	Galway County Council
John Neary	Galway County Council
Ruth Minogue	Minogue & Associates Environmental Consultants

Cllr Stephen McHugh welcomed everyone to the meeting and welcomed John Neary the newly appointed Tourism Officer to Galway County Council.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 8th November were proposed by Cllr David Collins and seconded by Cllr Gerry Finnerty.

There were no matters arising.

Tourism Strategy

Cllr McHugh introduced Alan Farrell to give an update on the Tourism Strategy.

Alan Farrell welcomed the members and gave a brief outline of the current status of the Draft Tourism Strategy. Mr Farrell stated that the process of preparing the Tourism Strategy over the last year and a half had been an engaging process. Mr Farrell advised that the strategy had been prepared in line with the regional plans and that the strategy was now completed and had been fully proofed at all levels. The Strategy was prepared by CHL Consultants in conjunction with Galway County Council and Minogue & Associates Environmental Consultants. Mr Farrell asked that the members approve the Strategy as it was now ready to go before the full Council at a meeting next Monday.

Cllr McHugh introduced Ruth Minogue to give a brief overview on the Environmental Consultancy process involved in preparing the Tourism Strategy.

Ms Minogue thanked the members for giving her the opportunity to present at the SPC and gave an overview of the process involved in preparing the Tourism Strategy from an environmental viewpoint.

Cllr McHugh opened the floor to members for questions/observations.

Cllr Geraghty asked Ms Minogue if she had come across any roadblocks to rural planning and rural agriculture when preparing the Strategy.

Ms Minogue stated that she did not foresee any issues and that when preparing the Tourism Strategy had not picked up on an issues directly related to rural planning/agriculture. Ms Minogue advised that the Tourism Strategy aligned very closely with the Galway County Development Plan.

Mr Farrell advised that the County Development Plan is the over arching document in relation to all planning aspects in the Tourism Strategy and that Planning is guided by the legislation in the County Development Plan.

Mr Hanrahan advised that everything in the Tourism Strategy must align with the County Development Plan and that it is a plan aimed directly at tourism.

Cllr Finnerty thanked Ms Minogue for her presentation and stated that he thought Agri Tourism is at risk of being destroyed due the likes of coastal erosion and the building of windfarms. Cllr Finnerty stated that windfarms are having a huge effect on the way our land looks and is taking away from the green look that most tourists associate with Ireland when coming here. Cllr Finnerty stated that we must ensure not to destroy our green Ireland look.

Cllr Geraghty stated that he had recently visited the Burren in Co Clare and stated that they are a good example of a rural area that is being promoted in the right way. Cllr Geraghty stated that it is positive to see rural areas being highlighted in a positive way to tourists.

Alan Farrell advised that the hierarchy of plans are listed in the Tourism Strategy. Mr Farrell stated that the Tourism Strategy is there to promote Tourism in County Galway. Mr Farrell welcomed the fact that the new Tourism Office John Neary is now in place and advised that he is looking to expand the Tourism team in 2024. Mr Farrell asked the members for their approval and adoption of the Draft Tourism Strategy before it goes to full Council on Monday.

Cllr David Collins proposed the adoption of the Tourism Strategy, and this was seconded by Cllr Gerry Finnerty.

Mr Farrell thanked CHL Consultants, Ruth Minogue and Ruth Mulhern the former Tourism Officer for all their work in preparing the Tourism Strategy. Mr Farrell also thanked Loretta Raftery for all her work and welcomed John Neary to the team. Mr Farrell thanked the current and past members of the SPC as the Tourism Strategy was strengthened by their input.

Cllr McHugh congratulated all involved in the preparation of the Tourism Strategy.

Cllr Geraghty queried the issue of coffee trucks that are appearing more and more in all areas of the County and whether they required planning permission.

Liam Hanrahan advised that these businesses must have a casual traders license for temporary use, e.g. over weekend and parked on private property. Mr Hanrahan stated that the issue of long-term coffee trucks/kiosks would need to be tackled from a planning perspective.

Cllr Finnerty concurred with Cllr Geraghty in relation to coffee trucks/kiosks and stated that they are a huge issue in some areas as they are taking away a large amount of business from established coffee shops and delis. Cllr Finnerty stated that these trucks don't pay rates and that many of them may not even have adequate insurance cover.

This concluded the Tourism Strategy overview.

AOB

Cllr McHugh asked if there were any items to be discussed under AOB.

Kieran Coyne asked the members if a date for a meeting regarding the Local Economic Community Plan (LECP) could be identified for December. Mr Coyne advised that he was proposing to pick up on the piece around the LECP as discussed at the last meeting. Mr Coyne advised that he would be bringing the deliberations of the Advisory Steering Group before the members in December for sign off.

The date of Wednesday 13th December at 9:30 was agreed upon.

Alan Farrell advised that the Bia Innovator Campus in Athenry was now in the final stages and was nearing completion and that the 1st tenant is now in situ. Mr Farrell showed the members some images of the campus as it currently stands and advised that he would be giving them a formal presentation and site visit at a later date. Mr Farrell stated that the campus is due to officially open on the 12th January 2024.

Cllr Broderick asked Mr Farrell if the campus has adequate electric/power availability to suit all food businesses or if it precludes certain businesses from using the campus.

Mr Farrell advised that the units were designed by an advisory board and that the fit outs are substantial for most businesses. Mr Farrell stated that certain businesses may require a higher electric spec/fit out and that this can be looked at on a case-by-case basis. Mr Farrell stated that units can be upgraded at a cost to businesses if they require same.

Cllr Broderick stated that as the Bia Innovator Campus is geared towards food businesses then the specs should be able to cater for all food businesses and asked if it was common that a project of this magnitude could be compromised.

Mr Farrell stated that the campus does meet the needs of most businesses looking to use it and that as previously advised any additional requirement that some businesses may have will be looked at.

Liam Hanrahan stated that the Bia Innovator Campus is a world leader and that it has been designed with a spec from An Taisce and that it has been designed and fitted out to a high standard. Mr Hanrahan stated that there are some businesses that will have additional requirements and this can be looked at with individual businesses. Mr Hanrahan advised that there will be an opportunity for businesses that require additional machinery to discuss this with the Local Enterprise Office as they are there to help existing food businesses.

Cllr Curley stated that the Bia Innovator Campus was helping to future proof the small farming model and he congratulated all involved in getting the Campus to this stage.

Cllr Broderick asked if there was any update on the proposed music events to be held at Galway Airport next summer. Mr Broderick queried whether the members would be given an opportunity to engage in the agreement process with the promoters in relation to the financial aspect of the events and stated that this is a huge opportunity for the Council to create a sustainable income from the airport.

Kieran Coyne advised that the proposed events to take place at the airport next summer are a test case and that it will only be for one year. Mr Coyne stated that his first priority is to iron out the Health and Safety aspects of the events in the new year.

Liam Hanrahan stated that the proposed events to take place in the airport next summer are still in negotiations and that no decision has been made yet. Mr Hanrahan stated that the Council will be getting a return but that no financial matters have been negotiated yet. Mr Hanrahan advised that the promoters MCD are to come back to the Council in January 2024 with a project proposal and pricing would be discussed at that stage.

Cllr Geraghty stated that he would like to mention and congratulate 3 community groups on their recent achievements.

- Gort Riverwalk Group who were recently nominated for a Pride of Place Award.
- Creggs Rural development for their recent award at the Pride of Place Awards.
- Williamstown Heritage who were recently given a national award.

Cllr Geraghty thanked Alan Farrell, Kieran Coyne, Liam Hanrahan and all staff involved in helping community groups.

Alan Farrell acknowledged the efforts of community groups in the County and thanked them for all the work they do. Mr Farrell stated that it is a partnership approach across all Departments of the Council in helping these groups.

This concluded the meeting.

