

**SPC 1 - Economic Development, Enterprise Support & Tourism**  
**Meeting in County Hall on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 11am**

## **Report**

(1 meeting held year to date)

**PPN Representative** - Theresa Delahunty

### **Issues Discussed:**

1. **Local Enterprise Update**
2. **Update Economic Actions of LECP**
3. **Abbey Creative Quarter**
4. **Tourism Update**

### **Other Items:**

- Presentation, South East Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) given Dec. 2016**
- Presentation on South East Economic Monitor given March 2017**

### **Update from Local Enterprise Office 2016/17**

A summary of the 34 actions 2016 under the Local Enterprise Development Plan (LEDP) was circulated and a comprehensive update given–

### **Key points:**

- 317 Business Advisory Sessions were held
- 2,500 clients received twice yearly mail-shots
- 13 Clinics & 4 Information Seminars took place to Maximise Business potential
- €490,000 in grants was approved to 25 projects with 49 full-time jobs attached
- 56 Training Courses with 569 participants was provided
- 255 Mentoring Support assignments approved
- Management Development Programme delivered to 20 small business owners
- 89 attendees at initiatives Enterprise Conference
- €50,000 funding under CEDRA (Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas) to support Artisan and Agri. food producers to develop and access markets. This will contribute to an enhanced food tourism product for County Kilkenny.

### **Activities Planned for 2017**

- Create Awareness of LEO & Local Authority Business Support Services
- Provide First Stop Enterprise & Business Support Solutions
- Provide Business Advisory Sessions
- Provide Outreach Advisory Clinics
- Deliver a comprehensive range of training and mentoring supports
- Continually update information online
- Provide selective financial assistance to start-ups and eligible businesses
- Deliver Management Development training for small business clients
- Provide Export Assistance Grants to small business clients

- Promote Trading On-line Voucher (TOV) scheme
- Undertake needs analysis of the Agri-Food sector in Co. Kilkenny
- Deliver Student Enterprise Awards in second level schools
- Engage with Design & Crafts Council to Develop a “Design Thinking” initiative
- Promote enterprise opportunities among young farmers
- Pilot a bursary scheme in conjunction with the Design & Crafts Council
- Develop a strategy to improve visitor experience in County Kilkenny
- Engage with the Economic development Unit in Kilkenny County Council to promote County Kilkenny for investment purposes.

### **Up-date on Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) Economic Elements of 2016/17 Action Plan**

- On-going work with IDA to update its marketing and promotional material for Kilkenny City and County;
- 5 applications have been received for the Occupation of vacant commercial premises scheme;
- Ongoing cooperation between LEO Kilkenny, KLP, Teagasc, Failte Ireland, Kilkenny Tourism and Board Bia to promote greater business links with tourism and food sectors;
- An audit and assessment of incubation and vacant industrial space as well as zoned lands continues with Property Lists setup;
- Developing a strategic development plan for key towns and areas in each Municipal District is ongoing. Castlecomer is first to have a plan which is currently at draft stage in conjunction with Kilkenny Leader partnership. Ferrybank and Callen will be the next towns in the development process;
- Support for the retention and maintenance of heritage premises and shop fronts was completed in 2016;
- Further advance the proposal for a European Centre of excellence for ICT in Agriculture in Kilkenny in conjunction with WITY & TSSG.
- Conference to be held later in 2017;
- Kilkenny Coco, WIT and Neighbouring local authorities are participating in the eDIGIREGION to access EU funding to develop smart specialisation clusters in the South East;
- Work ongoing with Port of Waterford to market Belview, to identify deficits, and plan action remedies.

### **Update Abbey Quarter**

Full possession and control was taken by Kilkenny County Council November 2016. The six plots have been transferred from the Council to the Partnership, however, it will take time for the Legal and ancillary administration to be completed.

Recruiting a CEO is underway. He/She will report to the Board of the Partnership.

Tenders for a Property Agent are in place with an appointment expected within the next month. Once the appointment is made, marketing of the site will actively commence.

Expressions of interest have been indicated from WIT and others

**The River-side Garden and Park** – The Garden clearance is complete and the garden is approved. Design is underway. Work is expected to commence Q. 3 provided that all other works are completed

**Brew House** – The structure is good and there are no requests for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Brew House. Full planning is in place with a Design Team working on the design.

**Mayfair** – Planning approval is in place. Some demolition works are required to the current structure.

New Design Team is being appointed.

Work is being progressed on the preparation of an Energy Strategy, Design of utility services, Urban Design Criteria, Parking etc.

Archaeological works are continuing on site.

New Bridge is expected to open End of April 2017.

### **Tourism Update**

Kilkenny County Council has developed a **Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme** for the period 2017 to 2022, which is expected to be adopted at the next Council Meeting. This strategy will underpin the support for the tourism industry in Kilkenny over the next five years. The strategy will align with national tourism policy, national initiatives, and regional objectives of the Council's Local Economic Community Plan.

Kilkenny will embrace the opportunities presented by a major marketing and branding campaign for Ireland's Ancient East which is entirely consistent with Kilkenny's history and heritage.

A dominant theme which arose during the consultation process was a perceived imbalance between the City and County, weighted in favour of the City, and the desire that the county area would share in the economic benefits from the visitor to Kilkenny. To address this issue there is a proposal for sub-county hubs or destinations, geographically clustered or themed... This approach is designed to offer local communities a forum in which they can develop their own assets and influence decisions to stay local. The ultimate aim is to develop a "One Kilkenny" strategy.

### **Presentation given by Sean McKeown, Director, South East Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) Dec. 2016**

#### Background

- Regional Profile and the challenges
- Implementation Structure
- Progress to date
- Strategic Initiatives Emerging.

The Plan is being implemented by an Implementation Committee, made up of, Action Monitoring Committee, Advisory Group, & CEO Committee. A Project Team made up of local business people and experts in the field is also in place.

Unemployment while still high in the South East region by national standards, has dipped from 12.8% in third quarter of 2015 to 10.8% in second quarter of 2016. The trend is continuing downwards.

From a low of 185,000 employed in 2011, there were almost 214,000 employed in second quarter of 2016;  
Quality of jobs being created is an issue;  
Lack of a University is seen as a barrier to employment;  
Lack of skills across key sectors is also an issue;  
Major interventions are still required to close the gap between the South East and the rest of the Country.

**Synopsis of Key points:**

- Close the gap that exists between the South East and the rest of the Country
- Create at least 25,000 new jobs in the South East over a three year to five year period and ensure employment levels in the region are within 1% of the national average.

**Presentation on South East Economic Monitor**

An independent Report from WIT School of Business presented by Dr. Cormac O’Keeffe and Dr. Ray Griffin, first published June, 2016

The report presents a selection of key economic indicators for the South East region and highlights the two trends that shape the South East’s economy - the impact of the great national economic recession and recovery and the struggle to transition to a knowledge economy, built on high-quality jobs.

The South East is experiencing improving consumer and business sentiment with a broad increase in employment, however, when compared to national economic performance and peer regions in Ireland, the data illustrates how the South East’s economy continues to be characterised by persistently high levels of unemployment, deprivation and significantly lower job quality.

The report makes two significant claims as to why the South East's economy is struggling:

- Lower educational attainment, a problem built up over a long-term by lower investment in higher education. The South East is missing 7,260 higher education places.
- Lower activity by the IDA in the region over the past 25 years; the South East is missing 6,312 IDA supported jobs.

Bright spots include the modest long-run improvements in unemployment rates, an improving property market and buoyant new car sales. (The full Report can be accessed online).

**Input and questions by PPN Representative**

- ✓ Abbey Creative Quarter
- ✓ Capital for start-ups
- ✓ Tourists staying local
- ✓ Why South East was allowed to slip so far behind the rest of the country in so far as employment and education was concerned.

Next SPC1 Meeting Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

Any Matter you wish to have raised at this meeting, please email to PPN at [ppnkilkenny@kilkennycoco.ie](mailto:ppnkilkenny@kilkennycoco.ie)

Signed  20<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Theresa Delahunty - PPN Representative  
**SPC1 Economic Development, Enterprise Support & Tourism**