

SPC 1 - Economic Development, Enterprise Support & Tourism
Meeting in County Hall on 22nd March at 11.30am

Report

(1st meeting held year to date)

PPN Representative - Theresa Delahunty

Issues Discussed:

- 1. Abbey Creative Quarter**
- 2. Tourism Development Update**
- 3. Economic Action Plan Update**
- 4. Local Enterprise Update**

1. Update Abbey Quarter

This item was deferred to next meeting owing to the unavailability of Mr. Martin Prenderville. However, as there has been considerable interest shown in relation to the progress on this site, the following summary of a presentation by Mr. Kevin Mc Cormack, CEO of the Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Ltd. to the December 2017 SPC1 meeting, provides a comprehensive overview from a historical and current perspective.

- “The site was purchased for redevelopment – to provide sustainable jobs to replace those lost in the closure of the Brewery and to provide amenities for use by the local community and tourists;
- The core 4.675 hectare (11.5 acres) brewery lands were combined with existing Council owned lands resulting in a unique 8.3 hectare (20.5) acres city centre site with the Franciscan Abbey, dating from 1231 at its heart;
- An extensive urban design and consultation process resulted in a Master plan being approved by the Council in 2015 and is reflected in the current City and Environs Development Plan;
- In 2016 a Joint Venture was established between Kilkenny County Council and the NTMA (ISIF) to develop 6 plots in the core brewery site with the Council to provide the land/deliver public realm works and ISIF to finance development;
- Kilkenny Abbey Quarter Development Ltd. has been set up to manage the scheme on behalf of the Joint Venture, with Lisney's appointed as agents;
- The vision is to plan the Abbey Quarter as a seamless complement to the medieval city – an inclusive space for an inter-generational community to work, live, visit and play;
- The Mayfair and Brewhouse Buildings would be retained and renovated;
- There would be high quality realm with new street, urban square, riverside park and a 3 acre park centred on the Abbey incorporating Evans Tower, City Walls and St. Francis' well;

- There is scope for circa 52,000m² (560,000ft²) of development overall with the 28,000m² (301,000ft²) on the core brewery lands controlled by the development company;
- There would be a mix of residential, retail, hotel and commercial space with focus on creative and knowledge intensive businesses (KIBs);
- Typically 3 and 4 storey buildings anticipated with some 5 storey elements (urban design code currently at public consultation stage);
- The target sectors would be Creative and Knowledge Intensive Businesses (KIBs), global services, Fintech and IT; 2nd site location for Dublin based companies – 70 minutes from M50, good transport links and quality of life – close to 3rd level colleges at Dublin, Waterford, Carlow, Wexford and Clonmel;
- There is a good level of interest but potential tenants unlikely to commit until they see buildings under construction;
- Mayfair Building – former ballroom used by Diageo for offices and welfare facilities – prominent location on city walls at entrance to site from Parliament Street – Part VIII planning consent in place for renovation and reuse for office, educational or R&D use – gross floor area approx. 1,510m² – detailed design/tender documentation to be complete in early 2018;
- Brewhouse – old Brewhouse building fronting Horse Barrack Lane – existing Part VIII Planning consent to renovate for educational, R&D and/or general office use – some changes now sought to existing planning – detailed design currently being completed – if planning and parking issues resolved expect funding to be approved for construction to commence mid 2018;
- Logo and branding has been developed – marketing materials (video, website, brochures) being prepared for marketing campaign in 2018 – tasting room currently being refurbished as a marketing suite – hoardings/signage erected – plan to link to Invest Kilkenny website – key messages are lifestyle, heritage, connectivity, design culture and proximity of 3rd level.”

2. Tourism Update

Mr. Brian Tyrrell outlined that consultations with Coillte regarding the development of Woodstock Estate as of a tourist/amenity experience are ongoing. There are some constraints on the Coillte side vis a vis the future planning and husbandry for their 900 acres of forestry. Any future development of amenity areas will be contingent on Coillte’s approval and cooperation. Meanwhile the 50 acres controlled by the County Council continues to be further developed and enhanced. Woodstock was viewed as a wonderful amenity not just for the local area and hinterland but for the entire County and beyond as a prime tourist attraction. It was suggested that the committee visit the site to appraise themselves of the situation on the ground. Tentative plans were made for a July visit subject to confirmation.

Mr. Tyrrell stated that the new Website for Kilkenny Tourism is nearing completion and will highlight the attractiveness of Kilkenny City and County as a unique visitor experience and a great place to do business. He reiterated that engagement with the local communities is pivotal to the success of bringing the financial spin-off from tourism to all sectors of the County. Kells, Castlecomer, & Inistioge were among some of the hub areas mentioned.

3. Economic Action Plan Update (LECP)

Ms Brid Hynes provided an update and informed the meeting that in addition to the 49 actions regularly reported on, 18 new actions are prioritised in the 2018-2021 LECP Economic Implementation Plan under the following Goals:

Goal 1 - Support the Enterprise Economy

Goal 4 - Enhanced Educational Attainment and Skills Development

Goal 5 - Develop the Rural Economy

Goal 6 - Improve Access and Communications Infrastructure

Goal 8 - Natural, Cultural and Built Environment

Goal 9 - Regional Growth and International Potential

Following a general review, the Plan was proposed, seconded and adopted by the members.

There was a general discussion centring on Kilkenny's position in relation to Project Ireland 2040, under the National Planning Framework & National Development Plan. It was pointed out that as Kilkenny is not classified in the Plan as a key area of growth within the South East Region; robust structures would be required to ensure that maximum benefits were derived from the funds available.

The impact of on-line shopping on local businesses was highlighted and questions raised as to whether it would be viable for smaller businesses to set up an on-line trading presence. Reference was made to vacant shops, particularly within the Market Cross Centre. It was suggested that the provision of suitable parking, pedestrianisation of High Street and local public transport could be key drivers to improving the footfall in High Street and the City in general.

4. Update from Local Enterprise Office

Ms Fiona Deegan, Head of Enterprise, outlined key outcomes for 2017 as follows:

- 26 Businesses received €503,648 grant aid, creating 40 jobs during 2017 and a total of 95 within a 3 year period
- 594 People participated in 49 LEO training courses
- 381 Entrepreneurs received one-to-one mentoring support
- 539 Students from 12 secondary schools participated in Student Enterprise Programme
- 28 Trading Online Vouchers were awarded totalling €59,940
- 31 Young Entrepreneurs under the age of 35 entered Irelands Best Young Enterprise Competition
- 12 Applications were approved Technical Assistance
- 14 Businesses were assisted with applications under St. Canice's Credit Union Smart Options Loan Scheme
- 8 Businesses were assisted with applications under Micro Finance Ireland Loan Scheme
- 411 People availed of Business Advisory Clinics

Overall a total of 103 jobs were created in LEO assisted businesses at year end 2017.

(Full Review on-line or hard copies from the Local Enterprise Office)

Ms Deegan circulated a copy of the Local Enterprise Development 2018 Key Performance Metrics. There is little or no change in the 2018 year Plan, with budget remaining more or less the same. The target is for 75 new jobs in the current year. She said the challenge for retail businesses was the on-line buying from outside the Country.

LEO Spring Training Schedule is now available and courses can be booked on-line.

Input and questions by PPN Representative

Drew attention to the number of vacant premises in Market Cross Centre.

Suggested pedestrianisation of High Street as a means of gaining more footfall, thus, contributing to business in general.

Kilkenny's position in relation to the Project Ireland 2040 Plan.

Next SPC1 Meeting Friday 15th June 2018.

Any Matter you wish to have raised at this meeting, please email to PPN at ppnkilkenny@kilkennycoco.ie

Signed 
22nd March 2018

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