

**Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee (Economic Development & Enterprise Support) meeting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019 in The Boardroom Room, MTEK:!**

**In attendance:**

|                           |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Cllr. Pat Treanor (Chair) | Monaghan County Council            |
| Cllr. Aiden Campbell      | Monaghan County Council            |
| Cllr. Seamus Coyle        | Monaghan County Council            |
| Cllr. Sean Conlon         | Monaghan County Council            |
| Pete McMahon              | Castleblayney Chamber of Commerce  |
| Jim Hand                  | Carrickmacross Chamber of Commerce |
| Michael Connolly          | Environment Pillar                 |
| Paul Clifford             | Monaghan County Council            |
| Briege Quinn              | Monaghan County Council            |
| Adrian Hughes             | Monaghan County Council            |
| Toirleach Gourley         | Monaghan County Council            |
| Joan Ryan                 | Monaghan County Council            |

**Apologies received:**

|               |                         |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Paul Bond     | Monaghan HASIT          |
| Dympna Condra | Monaghan County Council |
| John McArdle  | Monaghan County Council |

**1. Minutes**

Cllr. S Conlon requested that the Minutes reflect that through a clerical error he had not been informed of the November meeting and therefore was not in attendance. It was agreed to note this. Minutes were proposed by Cllr. A Campbell and seconded by Mr. P McMahon.

**2. Matters arising**

Mr. P Clifford informed the meeting that funding of close to €5 million had been received for the Bioconnect project. The IDA is appointing a design team for an advance factory, grant has been awarded for The Enterprise Centre in Castleblayney and North East Engineering project has also won approval.

Cllr P Treanor queried where the site would be for the Bioconnect project. Mr P Clifford responded that it is a big commitment taken in conjunction with Monaghan Mushrooms who will be provide the site. The grant provides for employment of four specialists in the science field who will carryout investigations in waste streams from the industry. The project is designed to attract European interest. Cllr. P Treanor queried if it would cover agri-waste. Mr P Clifford stated that project will undertake a scientific examination of waste recycling. He informed the group that another project in partnership with UCD will examine potential uses for such waste products. An example of this type of business already operates in Clones, offal is rendered down, the resulting product is sold for use in the cosmetics industry. Cllr. S Conlon commented that he endorsed the Bioconnect project, to which €370,000 had been committed but had concerns should the project not succeed that there are no contractual safeguards in place. Mr. P Clifford responded that the Council is not seeking a return on its investment and in the event of it not working out the assets will be divided up. Cllr. S Conlon stated in this case he fully supports the enterprise. Cllr. A Campbell added that with such investment all efforts should be made to ensure it works, as it is exactly the type of business required to attract the graduate posts spoken about at the last meeting. Cllr. S Coyle

complimented all involved in the projects, saying graduate retention has always been a problem locally and he hopes that we will see more of such investment in the future.

### 3. LECP

Mr. P Clifford advised that the LECP actions must be reviewed, it was agreed to keep it as an agenda item.

### 4. Brexit/ LEO

Cllr. P Treanor stated that Brexit remains a changing story but is drawing to its conclusion. He stated that legislation is now going before the Oireachtais in preparation for the 29<sup>th</sup> March deadline. He also stated that there is still considerable European media interest in the border area and that there was even an article published in the China Daily News, he advised that the group should keep the media informed. Ms B Quinn from LEO stated that Brexit supports have been prepared and are included in the presentation she has prepared. It was agreed to move to agenda item 6 at this point and combine both items.

Ms Quinn outlined the role of LEO to stimulate economic activity at county/city level and to develop indigenous enterprise potential in their areas. It provides business information and advisory services including mentoring and training to businesses. With regard to Brexit several specific streams have been developed examples include:

- The Brexit SME Scorecard - is a starting point to help businesses to begin preparing a strategy and ready their teams in terms of planning and shining a spotlight on some of the key operational areas that may be exposed.
- Brexit Loan Scheme - The scheme, which will be delivered by the SBCI through commercial lenders will make €300 million available to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees at an interest rate of 4% or less.
- Start to Plan Voucher Scheme - Delivered through Intertrade Ireland. The vouchers offer 100% financial supports of up to £2,000/€2,2500 (inclusive of VAT), towards professional advice in relation to Brexit matters.

Ms Quinn also described the Co-innovate project. It has attracted 60 Co. Monaghan companies across Manufacturing, Traded Services and ICT sector. It is a tiered programme with a suite of Innovation supports at each of 5 Strands. LEO's objectives for 2019 were also outlined. Cllr. P Treanor thanked Ms Quinn for the very informative update. Cllr. S Conlon queried whether there was any point to point relationship with the local Revenue Office with regard to The Brexit Scorecard, he also queried if there is any provision for additional staff as the workload increases. Ms Quinn responded that LEO has access and that Revenue had recently held a seminar for businesses as customs is tricky and will be exasperated by Brexit, with regard to staffing Enterprise Ireland offers financial supports. Cllr S Coyle queried if we would be ready for a no deal Brexit. Ms Quinn responded that colleagues in the Brexit Unit were doing the best they can and services are in place. Mr. J Hand commented that he had attended many seminars and that issues arise around certificates for the origin of products e.g. gin, meat products for instance, services to not seem to be provided to them. Ms Quinn agreed to look into this. Cllr P Treanor closed the topic stating it was clear from the conversation that the best that can be done is prepare and answer queries as they arise, there is an opportunity for businesses to look inward and see how they can grow. He advised that people should be directed to LEO for assistance and requested that the presentation be circulated to the group. Cllr. S Conlon asked about the uptake for the food academy. Ms Quinn responded that at the outset it had been successful, and that LEO is now working with new businesses which are not yet ready to move to this level.

She advised that Enterprise Week begins on 4<sup>th</sup> March which will offer opportunities for businesses to connect with LEO

#### **5. Broadband**

A report was submitted by the Broadband Officer which updated the current situation.

Work on the digital strategy is ongoing and work continues with various groups. Engagement in the process is critical to development of the overall County plan. There was no success in the first call for Wifi4U, now awaiting notification for the 2<sup>nd</sup> call. Mr P Clifford stated that we are doing well in this aspect as it is available in most of the towns and awaiting rollout to the villages.

Final procurement bid for the National Broadband is still under examination. The procurement plans are being advanced to get 2 community hubs/broadband connection points online. Testing on the Monaghan Tourism app is completed, this initiative is part funded under Dept. Rural and Community Development(DRCD) digital innovation programme.

#### **6. County Development Plan Update**

Mr A Hughes updated the group on the progress of the County Development Plan. He stated that work began on the plan in 2015 and is now nearing completion. Following the last phase of public consultation, 13 submissions were received 3 of which were invalid. The lack of public interaction was noted, Mr Hughes stated that this tends to be the case until the plan impacts on the public. It is intended that the Plan will be brought to the March Council meeting and if accepted the new policies will take effect from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. A critical review will be undertaken in two years, which will include active land management. In effect this will look at zoned lands which have not been activated.

#### **7. Statement of Common Ground between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Planning Authorities**

A presentation on the draft document was made by Mr. T Gourley. He stated that the accord is a statement of common ground and the objective is to achieve seamless planning between communities. The border forum consists of Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council and Monaghan County Council. Mr T Gourley outlined the strategic issues which were discussed and the areas of common ground agreed by the forum are:

1. Provide appropriate policies to facilitate improvements to the transport infrastructure to enable faster and safer travel across the central border region;
2. Encourage the delivery of enhanced cross border connectivity to include cycling and walking routes, as well as blueways and greenways.
3. Promote the growth of the region's main towns as the key hubs for housing, services and employment complemented by a network of small towns and villages;
4. Provide appropriate policies to resist major retail development outside of the towns;
5. Support the delivery of a stable power network through a 'North-South Interconnector' scheme and also the accompanying distribution and transmission networks to enhance the security of electricity supply in the region;
6. Support the delivery of stable and secure digital communications infrastructure, including fibre optic technology, to improve broadband

provision across the region;

7. Provide appropriate policies to encourage renewable energy schemes, in order to support a reduced carbon footprint for the central border region;
8. Provide appropriate policies and/or designations to protect our most sensitive landscapes from inappropriate development;
9. Provide appropriate policies to protect our most sensitive areas from mineral development;
10. Provide appropriate policies to afford protection to our existing peat resources from commercial extraction.

He stated that the next step will be review of the methodology and that the draft document would be presented to the full Council. Cllr. P Treanor offered thanks and commended the work of the group. Mr M Connolly remarked that renewable energy is not replacing fossil fuel but merely complimenting it. He queried if licencing of the extractive industry would continue. Mr T Gourley replied that we must work towards replacing fossil fuel and that extraction licences issue at Central Government level. Mr J Hand noted that the Newry Mourne Down and East regions are not included. Mr T Gourley responded that only the central border area was looked at this stage. Cllr P. Treanor stated that it would be good to encourage a similar project in other border areas using this as a pilot project. He proposed that the draft document be put before the Council. Cllr. S Coyle queried if there is any Councillor representation involved. Mr T Gourley responded that Cllrs P Treanor, B McKenna and S Treanor are representatives.

#### **8. Date for next meeting**

The date for the next meeting was agreed as 16<sup>th</sup> April at 10a.m. and that the focus would be on the LECP actions. The meeting concluded.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairman, Cllr. Pat Treanor**

**Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee (Economic Development & Enterprise Support) meeting held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019 in The Boardroom Room, MTEK:l**

**In attendance:**

|                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Cllr. Pat Treanor (Chair) | Monaghan County Council |
| Cllr. Aiden Campbell      | Monaghan County Council |
| Cllr. Seamus Coyle        | Monaghan County Council |
| Cllr. Sean Conlon         | Monaghan County Council |
| Michael Connolly          | Environment Pillar      |
| Paul Clifford             | Monaghan County Council |
| John McArdle              | Monaghan County Council |
| Toirleach Gourley         | Monaghan County Council |
| Joan Ryan                 | Monaghan County Council |

**Apologies received:**

|               |                         |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Paul Bond     | Monaghan HASIT          |
| Dympna Condra | Monaghan County Council |
| Adrian Hughes | Monaghan County Council |

**1. Minutes**

Minutes were proposed by Cllr. S Conlon and seconded by Mr. Connolly. Cllr P Treanor welcomed all sating that this may be the SPC's final meeting and expressed the hope that groups will re-nominate following the elections.

**2. Matters arising**

Cllr. A Campbell requested an update on the proposed enterprise Unit in Castleblayney. P Clifford responded that verification of the letter of offer is being processed, next step is to sign contract with the local partner. He added that the Bioconnect project is moving to purchase of the site and appointment of a project manager. It will be approximately one year following EU procurement protocols before work begins. Facilities in Glasgow have been viewed but Monaghan County Council's intention is that their project will be more commercially than the Glasgow one, which leans more towards education. Cllr P Treanor added that there are strong links with UCD and Queens universities.

**3. Regional Enterprise Plan**

The Key actions are:

- a. leverage of the full extent of talent resident in the North East. To achieve this a study of commuting patterns in the region and an assessment of available and potential sites must be completed. Consideration must be given to better positioning and promotion of the region.
- b. Develop skills, knowledge and competencies of worker. This is to be achieved by doubling the number of participants on the Explore programme, promote Springboard+2019 programme, RSF must identify skills and link with training providers and communicate opportunities to employers.
- c. Strengthen SME resilience in the North East. Develop a new PLATO programme, EI and LEO's will encourage participation in trade shows. Work towards increasing the number of agrifood companies supported by Lean Sigma 6 programme. Develop a volunteer mentor programme.
- d. Build on niche strengths and foster Clustering. Establish a focussed engineering network and the Bioconnect innovation Centre, develop a business plan for the

network in financial services, payments and agrifood. Develop more opportunities between LEO, EI & IDA clients with E\IDA global sourcing events.

- e. Strengthen the attractiveness of the North East as a tourism destination by supporting the visitor experience action plan, develop the ancient visitor experience to lengthen the tourism season and increase employment. Identify and activate the "Destination Town" concept, support development of a major international festival and tourism infrastructure projects.

It was reported that 40 local businesses are involved in the Lean Sigma 6 project where small businesses are mentored by larger companies to assist in their development. The objective is to build on niche markets. A co-ordinator is to be appointed to look at developing supply chains and already some local companies have found link-ups. Cllr. P Treanor queried how the project will be monitored. PC responded through this SPC. Cllr S Conlon stated that it will attract industry to the area, employing up to 1,000 and suggested that creche facilities be sought to cater for workers families. He proposed corresponding with Enterprising Ireland and Enterprising Monaghan in this regard. A response has already been received from IDA who are happy to meet to discuss the venture. It is important that quality of life issues are included which could be led by the SPC.

#### **4. Broadband**

The Broadband Officer stated that the anticipated announcement on the National Broadband Plan had been delayed and that the final procurement bid is still under examination. With regard to the E1300k fibre rollout project it will be concentrated on 4 Monaghan towns, the DCCAE map has been updated. The Digital strategy is beginning the procurement process for consultants. It is planned to engage with PPN, LCDC and IT Forum in the coming months to identify needs. WIFI4U applications were submitted in the second call last week and discussions are ongoing regarding procurement. A launch date for The Monaghan Tourism App will be agreed in the coming weeks, this is part funded under the Dept. Rural & Community Development(DRCD) Digital Innovation Programme. Cllr P Treanor stated that EIR was due to provide an update on the number of houses to be passed. J McArdle responded that they are to give quarterly reports on the rollout, statistics to end of 2018 reflected that 70,000 still are to be completed by Q2. It promises that it will reach 1,000 meg b/band in urban areas this still leaves a gap in intervention areas. Cllr P Treanor commented as Eir had not adhered to their commitment if Broadband Officers could intercede on behalf of users. J McArdle responded that if there is a specific issue he can raise it with if given details. Cllr P Treanor thanked J McArdle for his hard work and reporting to the group.

#### **5. Review Development Contributions**

T Gourley advised the meeting that as the County Development Plan 2019-2025 is now in place a review of the development contributions needs to be carried out. The difficulty arises as Monaghan County Council wishes to remain pro-active in investment in the County but to achieve this it must levy funding. Following issue of a government circular in July 2018 provision of telecommunications masts is no longer subject to contributions, as an incentive to provide coverage in rural areas, this results in a loss of income. It should be noted that this area is one of the poorest providers of Broadband in the State. P Clifford added that money had been made over the years but that applications made now are additional antennae. J McArdle reflected on the previous Broadband discussion stating that if barriers continue to be created it does not encourage service providers to improve their

product. T Gourley proposed a more pro-active approach be taken and recommended a waiver on contributions for such development to encourage investment locally. There is a strong commitment to provide roads, footpaths etc. To meet these demands at least €5,000,000 needs to be raised. Recent years have seen no increase in applications and an increase in units is not anticipated. It is hard to establish if there will be an increase in commercial applications, a small but insignificant rise in agricultural development is noted. Cllr. A Campbell queried what is likely to be raised and could more be borrowed. P Clifford responded €600,000 per annum. Some projects are allocated extra monies from parking fines for example the Peace Link project. With regard to borrowing he responded that there is a limit to what can be afforded in repayments and that they will pass on to the rate payers. Cllr. S Coyle queried the projected figures. T Gourley responded that there is a finite number of developments on which levies can be raised and exemptions on social housing also have an impact. The majority will be small scale developments and we must be cautious of the potential for another downturn in the economy. If we are to provide for infrastructure we need to decide on the rates to be levied. There is a need to increase contributions on footpaths etc. but this is a political and commercial decision on which Planning Section requires guidance as to how to approach this recommendation. Cllr P Treanor stated that he would prefer to hear the opinion of the business representatives and compare with other local authorities before coming to a decision.

**6. LCDC**

P Clifford stated that the committee bore the responsibility to monitor the LCDC actions. The traffic light system had been used and many actions have been progressed others may need to be refined. However, in some cases outside bodies had not delivered and others were outside the control of the Council.

**7. Brexit**

There is nothing new to report. The LEO is in contact with businesses in the County and keeping them updated and the companies are reasonably happy with the advice made available to them. It may be an opportune time to gain investment for the County.

**8. Date for next meeting**

It was agreed that as the local elections are imminent that no further meetings would be arranged. The Chairman thanked all the committee members and relevant County Council staff for their input during the life of the committee. Mr Connolly stated that it was unlikely he that he would seek nomination to the new SPC.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman, Cllr. Pat Treanor