

**Minutes of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting
held remotely on MS Teams on Monday, 8th June 2021 at 11.00am**

Present: Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson
Cllr Michael Begley
Cllr P.J. Ryan
Cllr P.J. Kelly
Cllr Gabriel Keating
Cllr Johnny Flynn
Mr Pat Keogh
Ms Rosaleen O'Reilly
Ms Emma Karran
Liam Conneally, Director of Service
Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise
Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner
Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer
Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Mr Pat Morris
Cllr Pat Daly
Ms Elaine D'Alton

1. Minutes of Economic Development SPC meeting 1st March 2021.

The minutes of the Economic Development SPC meeting held on 1st March 2021 were proposed by Cllr Gabriel Keating, seconded by Cllr P.J. Ryan and agreed.

2. Presentation from Ms Sarah Davoren, Southern Regional Assembly on EU Funding Opportunities

Ms Sarah Davoren, Southern Regional Assembly, gave a comprehensive presentation on the following EU Funding areas:

- Cohesion Policy/Funding State of Play
- Regional Operational Programme 2021-27
- European Territorial Cooperation Programmes
- Preparing for 2021-27 funding opportunities

Liam Conneally referred to the 'Circular Economy' and said that Clare County Council would look at these funding opportunities as another means to encourage Irish Water to provide further waste water treatment facilities in the county.

Cllr Johnny Flynn stated that according to his analysis County Clare has received a relatively small percentage of EU funding compared to other counties and is now due significant investment. He added that positive discrimination is required for SMEs on the western coast due to the huge economic impact of Covid-19 in this area.

Cllr P.J. Kelly queried what percentage of funding is spent outside of the cities of Limerick, Cork and Waterford as he feels that rural areas are very much 'outsiders' when it comes to funding.

Sarah Davoren responded that she didn't have an exact figure but agreed that Cllr Kelly's analysis is correct. She highlighted that it is up to each county to apply for this EU funding for relevant projects.

Cllr P.J. Ryan asked if there are any funding opportunities available to Shannon Airport and Sarah advised that she could discuss this matter in more detail offline. Cllr Johnny Flynn added that connectivity to an EU Hub such as Charles de Gaulle is vital for Shannon. Liam Conneally also highlighted that the West of Ireland as a remote EU region, through Shannon Airport, should have connectivity into the heart of Europe.

Cllr P.J. Ryan stated that the Minister for Transport needs to appoint a Chair to the Board of Shannon Group as a matter of urgency and that Clare County Council has communicated this requirement to the Minister.

3. Planning

- County Development Plan Review update

Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner, provided an update on the review of the County Development Plan.

Cllr Johnny Flynn voiced his concerns that the outdated 2008 retail study is still being used to inform the Retail Strategy and said there was double the amount of retail than was allowed for in the strategy. He added and this was very damaging to independent retailers. Cllr Flynn also asked that there would be a specific settlement plan for Ennis.

Cllr PJ Ryan asked if direction from the Department was required before wind energy guidelines would be published and when would submissions regarding the re-zoning of land be accepted.

Cllr P.J. Kelly asked for the number of directions received for the new plan and if objections will be published. He also asked if it is proposed to continue the restrictions to planning due to geographic location and if it is expected that the plan will be adopted without amendment.

Emma Karran asked if it is possible to outline how submissions are weighted and if a presentation could be given to the Economic Development SPC on this and how decisions are made.

Cllr Gabriel Keating commended the effort by businesses to provide outdoor facilities for customers.

Patrick Keogh asked if the Housing Needs Assessment would provide detail on specific locations in Clare and if it will tie in with the provision of infrastructure by Irish Water.

Helen Quinn responded that a new joint Retail Strategy will be produced with Limerick City and County Council for the Limerick/Shannon area and a separate one for the rest of the County.

The Ennis booklet Vol 3A will contain the settlement map and written statement for Ennis and once the new County Development Plan has been adopted the process of completing a new Local Area Plan for Ennis and Shannon will commence.

The Wind Energy Guidelines are not being changed until direction is received from the Department.

The planning department has organised workshops with elected members to update them on submissions received and regard will be taken of the National Planning Framework (NPF), Regional Spatial and Economic (RSES) and all other national objectives in considering these submissions.

Helen further advised that all submissions received are considered equally and there is no weighting system in place.

Cllr Michael Begley referred to Volume 10 – Flood Risk and asked if more detailed flood risk maps will be prepared to avoid whole townlands being deemed flood risk when the risk is actually only relevant to a small portion of that townland.

Helen Quinn responded that the flood risk analysis will be informed by the OPW, CFRAMS etc. and existing flood maps have all been reviewed.

Cllr Johnny Flynn highlighted that he is involved in the area of renewable energy and as no discussion took place regarding renewable energy there was no requirement for him to excuse himself from the meeting.

- Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP) Guidelines

Liam Conneally is a representative of the CCMA Business Committee on the national review group for the Local Economic and Community Plans Guidelines. This review is focused on the successes and failures of the previous guidelines, the introduction of an annual or bi-annual action plan and the consideration of climate action/impact in all aspects of the plan. The review is being led by the Department of Rural Affairs and it is hoped the guidelines will be at draft stage by June 2021.

Cllr Johnny Flynn asked if it would be possible for the publication of the guidelines to coincide with the release of the next census information as the 2016 census figures are now completely outdated.

Liam advised that the annual/bi-annual review is designed to give consideration to these revised figures when available as census 2022 data will not be available until 2023.

4. Climate Change and Biodiversity

Liam Conneally outlined that as a member of the CCMA Business committee he has been nominated to the intergovernmental Climate Action committee. He outlined that enterprise was responsible for 14% of carbon emissions in 2019 and in order to reduce this figure enterprise must consider switching to alternative fuels in areas such as the food making industry and the cement making industry.

Liam advised that he will update the Economic Development SPC again as soon as he has further information from the Climate Action committee.

Emma Karran stated that economic development and dealing with climate change go hand in hand and that Clare now has an opportunity to be a leader in this area with regard to the Moneypoint and Ardnacrusha electricity supply stations.

Cllr Johnny Flynn said that recent economic analysis of the impact of Covid-19 on rural counties shows that Clare is the 4th most impacted county in the country. He asked if the Council would consider carrying out a climate change vulnerability study in relation to rising sea levels.

Liam Conneally responded that Clare County Council has a close working relationship with the ESB and work is underway with that party regarding the future of the Moneypoint plant and the future use of the Moneypoint site to receive electricity generated from offshore wind.

He indicated that there is huge potential in economic development terms for Clare to benefit from offshore wind.

Liam committed to update Carmel Kirby, Director of Service with responsibility for the environment section, of the discussion on climate change as she is working with the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO). He said that there are significant job opportunities in the area of decarbonisation and that there is a national study underway focusing on the impact of climate change on each county.

5. A.O.B.:

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Liam Conneally,
Director of Economic Development.

Date: _____