

REPORTS ON THE ECONOMIC WORKING GROUP

TIPPERARY (SOUTH RIDING) COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Meeting report - **Economic Working Group** - September 20, 2000

Present: Len Bell, Cllr Niall Dennehy, John Higgins, Toss Hayes, Tim Shanahan,

Michael Hanly, Donal Mullane, Eileen Horgan

Apologies: Robert Grealis, Phil Shanahan

Summary:

- Toss Hayes, Chief Executive of the Co Enterprise Board, took the Chair.
- The process of collecting baseline data is still ongoing. A number of gaps – tourism providers and differences between the Kompass and NGM business databases - were identified. Steps to attempt to fill these gaps were agreed.
- Decided to initiate an exercise to link existing strategies through common topics or issues. Most strategies, particularly of agencies who are project led do not contain data that identifies the financial and human resources that will be allocated to South Tipperary.
- Toss Hayes made a presentation of the County Enterprise Board's SWOT analysis carried out in 1996. He updated some of the statistics to illustrate some of the changes that have taken place since the original exercise was carried out.
- A two-tier approach to the consultation process was agreed. 1. Small informal focussed meetings with the key players in each economic strand, to include Ministers, MEPs, key experts in business, tourism, education and agriculture. 2. Consultation with rank and file members of each sector. This consultation will take place during the week of 15 – 19 January 2001.
- Issues discussed included:
 - The need to ensure that Clonmel is included in the Government's Spatial Strategy as a 'Gateway'.
 - The useful role of the CEB SWOT analysis as a basis for the County Development Board's SWOT analysis.
 - The changes that have taken place since the original groundwork done for the SWOT analysis in 1996 including; population distribution, the effect of company closures, new company openings, the potential of IT initiatives, the potential role of the educated youth of the county who have historically moved elsewhere for work.

1. Draft Agenda was approved.

Action Items:

- List with Economic Working Group member names and the organisations they represent to be circulated with next agenda.

2. Baseline Data from agencies

- Len circulated a Profile of Medium and Large Indigenous Industry in County Tipperary SR (Enterprise Ireland Clients)
- Farming statistics received from Teagasc
- List of members of South East Tourism received
- IDA to forward list of assisted companies
- NGM database of businesses to be made available by Toss Hayes

Action Items:

- Need to identify tourism businesses not registered with South East Tourism. Consultation with local community groups may give a fuller picture.
- Request the Co Tourism Committee to nominate a member onto the Economic Working Group.
- Identify a person to represent the Education sector on the Economic Working Group

3. Kompass geoDirectory – business directory database

A document summarising the Employment by Sector in Tipperary South extracted from the Kompass geoDirectory was circulated.

Kompass is the database now being used by Tipperary South County Council for mapping purposes. It is anticipated that it will be updated on at least an annual basis.

Discussion:

- Kompass identifies 1402 companies, which is about 800 less than the NGM database. This figure was considered too big to ignore. Need to check if NACE codes were used in both databases.
- The Kompass data breakdown could be very useful in a SWOT analysis situation, but really needs similar data from other areas for comparison before it is of any real use.
- Discussion clarified the objectives in the collection of this data. This included the need to know what the county has in terms of businesses and employment. Also the breakdown of companies by Grant Aided Industries.
- Need to add Tourism and Agriculture/Forestry to the sectors already agreed. These were -
 - Food and Consumer Products
 - Industrial Products
 - Domestic Traded Services
 - Internationally Traded Services
- Some sectors in Kompass identify no employees e.g. Forestry, Electricity. Gas and Water. These omissions would have to be remedied.

- The identification of NACE codes may assist in more accurate division of companies into sectors.
- Discussion on the mapping of geographical spread of economic activity in the county. Agreed that the map being used for the Social Inclusion group – based on the DED template - would be the best one to use. It was critical that we would get a holistic view of activity when the three strands of Economic, Cultural and Social Inclusion were superimposed on each other.

Action Items:

- Access the NGM database and see what comparison can be made between the two databases.
- Identify what data the IBIS consultants are collecting – are we duplicating effort or will data being collected here be incorporated into the IBIS data.
- Liase with County Council to identify what progress has been made in mapping businesses in the county.

4. Audit of Strategies

At the last meeting it was agreed to get a summary of strategies, under the headings: Key activities/actions and who is responsible: Targets: Resources available: Time scale

Eileen summarised the attempt:

List of available strategies was presented for additions to be made. Spatial Strategy needs to be added.

- The only current strategy that fulfils all the criteria on a countywide basis is the County Enterprise Board Plan.
- LEADER and ADM plans and other Operational Plans may also fit the headings when the funding levels are announced.
- Most agency and national Strategies do not identify the resources they intend to allocate at a county level.
- Other strategies, such as the Regional Tourism Plan identify funding required, but do not indicate where the funding will sources.

Suggested a number of options

- Look at topic/issue approach? Identify the strategies that have common issues.
- Look at each plan and look at the Strengths and Weaknesses of the plan?
- Do a summary of each plan.

Agreed that it would be useful to link Strategies through common topics or issues.

Discussion

- Agencies who are project oriented would not identify funding and resources on a countywide basis in the strategic planning. If a good project arose in an area the required funds would be forthcoming. If no project arose there would be no funding in an area. Suggested that one way would be to look at past trends/figures. This approach should be included in the IRIS consultants data

collection exercise where the same exercise can be carried out for all CDB's rather than each working group seeking the information separately.

- The Economic Working group should bring the issue of the necessity of the promotion of Clonmel as a Gateway in the National Spatial Strategy. The discussion arose in relation to current IFA documents and current media discussion on the identification of a number of 'Gateways' in the National Spatial Strategy. All agencies represented on the working group and the CDB and the CDB itself need to become totally involved in ensuring that Clonmel is designated as a gateway. Other towns, Carrick-on-Suir, Tipperary and Cashel are also under severe pressure to get industry. Unlikely however that there will be multiple gateways in a County) This is an economic strategy that must be pursued even before the economic strategy is completed.

Actions

- Bring the issues of the necessity of Clonmel's promotion as a Gateway to the County Development Board.
- Ensure that the question of breakdown of global resources to a county level is included in the questionnaire being prepared by IRIS for the agencies. This is to include financial, human and other resources.
- Begin work of linking strategies through common topics.

5. Swot Analysis

Toss Hayes made a presentation on the County Enterprise Board's SWOT analysis carried out in 1996.

In addition to working through the document he identified a number of trends that existed at the time the analysis was carried out.

South Tipperary was not such a healthy county:

Dependence on Agriculture was high

Unemployment was high 19% at the time. It is still relatively high 6-7% as opposed to 4% nationally. Need a profile of current unemployment.

Toss identified key elements of an initiative in Tipperary town aimed at bringing women back into the workplace through giving training in IT and then identifying jobs that the trainees can move into. A survey of 223 companies in the southeast identified 29 who would consider IT work that can be farmed out. This holistic approach to training and matching with relevant jobs looks to have real potential.

Discussion

- The County Enterprise Board's SWOT analysis would provide a good basis to begin the work for the County Development Board's SWOT analysis.
- Toss identified some significant changes that would have to be considered with the new SWOT and subsequent strategy development. This included the projected increase in Clonmel population; the setting up of TRBDI; Change in unemployment levels; the identification of other sectors of the population that can be freed up for employment; Need for IT infrastructure – IT nodes in Thurles and Clonmel and the need to know more about this area; the highly

skilled workforce – of the 1260 places offered to leaving cert students in South Tipperary, only 790 took up places; - where did the others go? Did they leave the county or take up jobs in the trades – could this information be found?

- Toss identified the success of counties that were considered a Centre for Excellence in some arena and proposed the South Tipperary could look at developing the Equine industry.
- There are new market opportunities: Access is a problem and there is a need to convince existing businesses to look beyond their current boundaries. Need a large hotel to really cash in on the tourism assets of the county.
- The working group did not feel that they were in a position to undertake a SWOT analysis at this stage. The SWOT analysis and the subsequent strategy were too important to undertake the work without first consulting with experts and key figures in each area. The strategy is long term and it essential that thorough groundwork is undertaken before it is finalised

6. Consultation with client groups

A proposal to have a consultation week from Monday 15 January 2001 to Friday 19 January 2001 was discussed. The key outcomes were:

- Economic Working group will adopt a two-tier approach to the SWOT analysis.
 1. Each sector will consult with the key people in their sector to include Ministers, MEPs, key business people, prominent agricultural experts.
 2. Consultation / SWOT analysis with rank and file members.
- Agreed that the consultation should be on a countywide basis, not a segmented approach. Felt that the approach suggested would be divisive.

Actions

- Eileen to contact each group member for a list of those who should be consulted.
- Initiate meetings with key people. These meetings will most likely be dictated by the availability of people rather than the CDB. Informal type meeting proposed.

7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held in the Conference Room, County Council Buildings, Clonmel, at 3.30 pm on Monday, February 5, 2001.