

**DRAFT**

**Meeting Report from the Economic Programme Management Group (EPMG)  
Tuesday 26 September 2006**

Chair: Ned O'Connor

Attended: Moya Breen, Isabel Cambie, Sinéad Carr, Oliver Clancy, Tommy Cooke, Michael Dee, Eileen Horgan, Céline McHugh and Donal Mullane

Apologies: Claire Cashman, John Condon, John Doyle, Toss Hayes, Walter Heneghan, Bernard Lennon, Pat McCormack, Phil Shanahan and Billy Shoer.

**Meeting**

**Agenda Item 1:** There were no matters arising from the last meeting report.

**Agenda Item 2: Annual Review of Competitiveness**

Ned O'Connor gave an overview of the key economic issues affecting South Tipperary's competitiveness.

- One indicator selected by the CDB to measure economic progress is the Average per Capita Disposable Income. The baseline was set in 1999 and it was 85% of the national average at that time. The recently released 2003 data gives the average at 90.8%. There has been a consistent rise and the target of 92% by 2006 is still possible. (Data set is 3 years behind). Within the South East, South Tipperary has had a consistent rise in the index since the baseline of 1999. South Tipperary comes second to Waterford. The comparative trend is more positive with South Tipperary gaining 5.8 points on the index relative to Waterford (-0.8), Carlow (-0.3), Kilkenny (1.7) and Wexford (1.7).
- In terms of job creation, the county has had a number of spectacular successes recently, with jobs being created in Abbott, Boston Scientific and Johnson and Johnson. The quality of the workforce contributed to the decisions to locate new business in the county. The CDB works through its members to make the county attractive through the provision of infrastructure, facilities and workforce. We need to develop an even spread of employment in terms of skills and the recent hotel developments are providing much needed jobs.
- The second indicator is the level of investment in key infrastructure in the County.
  - Hotels. The CDB concentrated on this and there has been some progress to date. The Poppy Fields, Clonmel and the Ramada in Tipperary town are operational. Cashel, Marlfield and Blarney Woollen Mills are making good progress in planning, finding developers and operators. Ballingarrane had a disappointment with the developers not progressing in good time, and the County Council is now considering the next step. Cahir had its planning permission overturned by an Bord Pleanala. There is still a need for more hotels in the county but progress over the past few years must be considered as good.
  - Business parks: Ballingarrane is progressing well with buy in from Tipperary Institute which expects to begin construction by the end of next year. The IDA has bought 50 acres and the hope is that a significant push will begin to market both the IDA land and the rest of the land owned by the Council. As mentioned earlier the hotel is on hold for the moment, but it will be followed up later.

- As part of the negotiations with the IDA, the council purchased small parcels of IDA land in Carrick –on-Suir, Cashel, Cahir and Fethard. These lands have since been sold locally to businesses and companies.
- Roads. There is good progress on the Dublin/Cork road. The NRA were persuaded to include the N24 Limerick/Waterford bypass of Cahir as part of the Dublin/Cork route. This is expected to be completed in early 2009. This is a great boost to the economy of the county. Negotiations have been taking place to bring forward the N24 bypass of Tipperary and Carrick-on-Suir. These are badly needed. The process has been agreed for compulsory purchase and design but to date there is no other indication of progress. It this can be made happen it would be good.
- To date over €6.7m has been invested in childcare facilities in the county.

Priority action area include:

- Limerick Junction has great potential, but there is still significant work to be done in negotiating and lobbying to get Iarnród Éireann to buy into the project. This is ongoing.
- The areas not progressing too well are alternative energy and broadband roll out. These will be prioritised and progressed in 2007.

### **Opportunities/Threats**

- Gateway – South Tipperary supports the gateway at Waterford, but it must be developed if the county is to benefit. Waterford Port and Waterford Airport need to be developed and expanded and the N9 road linkage to Clonmel must be prioritised. The Local Authority is working to promote this work at regional level.
- Alternative Energy sources need to be developed. Tipperary Energy Agency needs resources to drive meaningful action in developing and promoting alternative energy solutions. The anti-wind lobby is very organised. Clear county policies are needed. If there are objections to every development, the county will make no progress in developing any of its own energy sources.
- The County Council has made a significant investment in **Ballingarrane**. Tipperary Institute has likewise stretched itself. IDA and EI are requested to follow up the investment through marketing the Park at all possible opportunities.

### **Agenda Item 3: Priorities**

#### **Result Area 1. Increase the competitiveness of South Tipperary for investment and for income generation.**

Ballingarrane

N24 bypass of Tipperary Town and Carrick on Suir

Broadband

Limerick Junction

**Result Area 2. To ensure that South Tipperary can provide the skilled labour supply to meet the changing requirements of employers in the county and surrounding catchment areas.** Oliver Clancy will be handing over the FÁS lead role in this action to Margaret Lovatt. Identifying linkages with employers and collation of data on skill requirements and training will be the key actions. The group will meet in October to

identify the 2007 priority collaborative actions. The outcome will form part of the EPMG report on Priorities for 2007 to the CDB at the November meeting.

**Result Area 3. To increase the economic performance of targeted sectors (tourism, food and equine) and to grow entrepreneurship.** Following a discussion on potential actions on food, tourism and developing alternative employment opportunities for farmers it was agreed that Isabel, Tommy, Donal (or Terry), Eileen and Toss would arrange to meet to identify a small number of collaborative priority actions in rural development. The outcome will form part of the EPMG report on Priorities for 2007 to the CDB at the November meeting.

**Agenda Item 4: Review of role of EPMG**

The meeting agreed to maintain the current role and functioning of the group. This is set out on page 18 of the South Tipperary County Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development with the addition made in January 2003 that the working groups could go directly to the CDB if they required decisions to enable the group to progress work. Reports would then go back to the next meeting of the EPMG.

**Agenda Item 5: Report of the Small Business Forum**

Michael Dee outlined the context and recommendations contained in this report. It is unclear at this stage what the response to the report will be and whether any of the recommendations will be acted on. Michael indicated one area that was not addressed in the report - some businesses cannot get support from any agency. John Quinn, Moya Breen, Toss Hayes and Eileen Horgan met with the Forum in Dublin last year to put forward the case to retain and increase the supports for entrepreneurs in the County. The report can be downloaded from the Department of Trade, Enterprise & Employment website at [http://www.entemp.ie/publications/enterprise/2006/smallbusinessforum.pdf#search='report %20of%20the%20small%20business%20forum'](http://www.entemp.ie/publications/enterprise/2006/smallbusinessforum.pdf#search='report%20of%20the%20small%20business%20forum')

**Agenda Item 6: Specific Action Updates**

These were circulated with the agenda.

**Agenda Item 7: Any Other Business**

1. Michael Dee briefly described and circulated information on a new EI/FÁS start your own business programme 'Enterprise START Programme'
2. Bernard Lennon sent in an item on the development of mountain bike trails in Clonmel. Any member of the EPMG who is interested in hearing more is asked to contact Bernard.

Next meeting: Tuesday 13 February 2007 @ 2.15 pm in the Museum, Clonmel.