

South-East Regional Authority
Údarás Réigiúnach an Oir-Dheiscirt

Minutes of the January monthly meeting of the South-East Regional Authority held at County Hall, Wexford, on Monday, 28th January 2008 at 2.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr. P. O'Callaghan, Cathaoirleach, presided.

Also Present: Cllr. L. Allen, Cllr. M. Anglim, Cllr. T. Breathnach, Cllr. J. Brennan, Cllr. P. Codd, Cllr. B. Coffey, Cllr. J. Crowe, Cllr. S. Doyle, Cllr. M. Fitzgerald, Cllr. P. Fitzpatrick, Cllr. D. Geoghegan, Cllr. T. Howlin, Cllr. D. Hurley, Cllr. P.J. Kavanagh, Cllr. T. Kinsella, Cllr. C. Long, Cllr. M. Maguire, Cllr. T. Maher, Cllr. M. Murphy, Cllr. A. McDonald, Cllr. D. MacPartlin, Cllr. S. Nyhan, Cllr. L. O'Brien, Cllr. M. O'Halloran, Cllr. L. O'Neill, Cllr. W. Paton, Cllr. C. Phelan, Cllr. M. Roche, Cllr. J. Tobin, Cllr. D. Walsh.

In Attendance: Mr. T. Byrne, Director
Mr. M. Moroney, European Officer
Ms. B. Maher, Research & Projects Executive
Ms. A. Sheehan, Office Manager
Mr. E. O'Connor, Designated County Manager.

Apologies: Cllr. D. Landy, Cllr. P. Norris, Cllr. S. Ryan.

Confirmation of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr. P. Codd, seconded by Cllr. T. Maher, the minutes of the November monthly meeting, copy of which had been circulated, were unanimously approved and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Before the meeting commenced, the Cathaoirleach welcomed the following Oireachtas members who attended the meeting:

Mr. Robert Aylward, T.D.	Mr. Séan Connick, T.D.
Mr. Michael D'Arcy, T.D.	Mr. Phil Hogan, T.D.
Mr. Paul Kehoe, T.D.	Mr. Brendan Howlin, T.D.
Dr. Martin Mansergh, T.D.	Sen. Paudie Coffey
Sen. Maurice Cummins	Sen. John Paul Phelan.

Apologies were received from the following Oireachtas members:

Mr. Brian O'Shea, T.D.	Mr. Mattie McGrath, T.D.
------------------------	--------------------------

Mr. John McGuinness, T.D.
Mr. Martin Cullen, T.D.
Sen. Liam Twomey
Sen. Jim Walsh.

Mr. Brendan Kenneally, T.D.
Mr. John Browne, T.D.
Sen. Phil Prendergast

The Cathaoirleach also acknowledged the presence of the media at the meeting and thanked them for attending, stating that it was important to the Authority to highlight issues of importance to the region.

The Cathaoirleach requested that with the permission of the members, the meeting would commence with item 2 on the agenda, with subsequent items to be deferred until later.

Presentation and discussion on the present socio-economic state and recent performance of the South-East Region

In order to bring the Authority members and Oireachtas members up to date with the current situation in the South-East Region, Mr. M. Moroney, European Officer, made a presentation on the South-East Socio-Economic Trends. In his presentation, he outlined the following:

- Demographics – population change from 2002 to 2006
- GDP Trends – Regional GDP 1999 to 2004
- Disposable Income Trends – 1999 to 2004
- Labour Force Trends – 1999 to 2007
- Education – Breakdown of qualifications by region (Census 2006)
- Agency Assisted Companies
- IDA supported companies classified by region and employment created by IDA supported companies
- SERA Activity – what the Authority has been/is doing to address deficits in the South-East Region.

Mr. Michael Dee, Enterprise Ireland (EI) then followed with a presentation entitled '*Transforming Irish Industry 2008-2010*' under the following headings, outlining the strategic targets and objectives for each heading:

- Driving growth and internationalisation
- Increasing Irish Innovation – Industry led R&D
- Increasing Irish Innovation – Innovative high potential start-ups
- Key Strategic Targets 2008 – 2010.

Mr. Dee then responded to the following comments and queries from the members, TDs and Senators:

Sen. M. Cummins: What is EI/IDA doing to progress application of WIT to university status?

- Mr. B. Howlin, T.D.:** What level of university status is being sought?
What are regional targets for innovation start up?
(Presentation only provided national figures)
All political parties need to unite and lobby for university.
- Dr. Martin Mansergh, T.D.:** Status of N24 is a serious problem. Work not included in 2008 CPOs. Essential to be included in 2009.
Income in regional development very much related to cities, i.e. Waterford, therefore a university is essential to the region. He has met Dr. J. Port and believes that report will be positive.
- Mr. M. D'Arcy, T.D.:** Majority of high potential start-ups will be in Dublin and Cork, leaving a minor number for the rest of the country including the South-East. Therefore, a university is essential for the region.
- Cllr. M. Roche:** Requested breakdown of regional targets/goals from EI for South-East.
- Cllr. D. MacPartlin:** The presentations made indicate exactly where the South-East region stands.
Insufficient support from EI/IDA for university.
Requested that Mr. Dee bring message back to EI.
- Cllr. P. Codd:** Expressed concern over fishing/farming industries and the need to re-train people in these sectors. He complimented the Authority for organising this meeting and stated that a university is necessary for employment in the region.
- Sen. P. Coffey:** Economic indicators performing below national average. All parties must be united and cohesive in approach - this procedure has started today and must be followed through.
- Sen. P. Hogan:** No doubt that all political parties are united in favour of a university. Requested that all Oireachtas members be supplied with numbers of companies funded both regionally and nationally by EI.

Concern about broadband rollout after huge national expenditure. Requested that SERA investigate situation.

Cllr. T. Maher: Only person who can deliver broadband nationally is the Minister. Requested that Oireachtas members lobby Minister for Education & Science on university issue. All statistics presented today show lack of progress for region.

Cllr. C. Phelan: Urged Oireachtas members to seek reason for delay with publication of Dr. Port's report, as funding is being lost out on, thus having a knock-on effect on industry. Requested that Waterford Regional Airport be developed and access improved.

Mr. P. Kehoe, T.D.: Requested that EI states how much expenditure has been spent in IT Carlow and WIT by Science Foundation Ireland.

Sen. J. P. Phelan: Content of letter from Minister for Education & Science not acceptable. Time for report to be published as region is suffering as a result. He also agreed that lack of broadband is a huge issue for the region.

Cllr. B. Coffey: The country needs balanced regional development and regional figures and targets must be made available to achieve this.

Mr. R. Aylward, T.D.: South-East region lagging behind for years. University essential for region. Every political party needs to unite and be more vocal in fight for a university. He will personally lobby the Minister and do his best as a member of Dáil Éireann to represent the South-East region.

Cllr. L. O'Brien: The South-East region needs an airport and a university to remain viable. MEPs should be invited to any further meetings and all public representatives should seek a deputation with the Minister in order to achieve university status in the region.

Mr. S. Connick, T.D.: A similar meeting should be held again within 6 to 12 months in order to make the Authority and the region more vocal.

The Director thanked all concerned for their participation in this very important discussion. He thanked the Oireachtas members for attending the meeting, stating that it is vital that all parties in the region unite to address key regional strategic issues of importance to the South-East.

The Oireachtas members then left the meeting.

The Authority monthly meeting continued and the Cathaoirleach requested that with the permission of the members, items 3 to 8 be adjourned to the next Authority meeting, and this was unanimously agreed.

Nomination for appointment as directors of the South-East Regional Craft Centre Ltd.

The Director informed the members that nominations had been sought for Directors of the South-East Regional Craft Centre. On the proposal of Cllr. L. Allen, seconded by Cllr. P. Codd, the following were unanimously nominated for appointment as directors:

Cllr. J. Crowe Cllr. M. Anglim Mr. Michael Moroney.

The Authority Director is also a director, *ex officio*.

Other Matters

- Cllr. T. Breathnach requested that the Authority urgently calls on the Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Employment to remove the 'cap' of 6 years on participants over 55 years of age in Community Employment Schemes so as to allow them to remain on the schemes to full retirement age in order to continue their invaluable work in their local communities. This was unanimously agreed.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Sínithe: _____ Ceadaithe: _____

Dáta: _____ Dáta: _____