

BRIEFING ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GARDEN COUNTY!

Wicklow's County Development Plan for 2021-2027 will set out future projects across areas such as economic development, settlement strategy, tourism and retail strategy, climate change, green infrastructure, sustainable transport and town planning. Latest updates were announced at a recent Wicklow County Council Business Briefing for 2020.



Powerscourt Gardens with the Sugar Loaf Mountain in the background in County Wicklow.

A state-of-the-art Customer Care Innovation Hub is to be developed at County Buildings in Wicklow Town to improve communications with Wicklow County Council's service users and to provide greater facilities for visitors to Ireland's Garden County.

Details of the new hub were outlined by the Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Frank Curran, during his address to the Council's 2020 Business Breakfast Briefing in Druids Glen Hotel & Golf Resort, Newtownmountkenny, Co. Wicklow

As part of its ongoing commitment to economic development, Wicklow County Council hosted the 2020 Breakfast Briefing, which was attended by leading local and national businesspeople.

'Endless Opportunities for Living, Leisure and Business in County Wicklow' was the theme of this year's briefing, which featured guest speaker Mike Seaton, Director of Development for SSE Renewables.

Wicklow County Council's Chief Executive said that one of the developments and projects completed by the council over the past year was the creation of a state-of-the-art Customer Care Innovation Hub at County HQ. According to Frank Curran, "this would lead the process of major organisational change and improvement in how the council delivers its services to the people of Wicklow."

Supported by a Customer Relations Management (CRM) system and a customer care team, he said the Hub would help to ensure clear, consistent and appropriate communications



Wicklow County Council's Chief Executive Frank Curran, Cathaoirleach Cllr Irene Winters and Mike Seaton, SSE Renewables Director of Development, at the Business Briefing in Druids Glen Hotel.

and service delivery between Wicklow County Council, the citizens of Wicklow and other stakeholders.

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Meanwhile, Wicklow's new County Development Plan 2021-2027, currently at the initial draft stages, will set out future development across areas such as economic development, settlement strategy, tourism and retail strategy, climate change, green infrastructure, sustainable transport and town planning.

Frank Curran noted that Wicklow had the potential to play an important role in the renewable energy market, particularly in the area of offshore wind energy. Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Irene Winters, said the Council used the occasion to update the business community on the various activities carried out by the Council, with particular emphasis on enterprise and economic development.

The input of the business community was invaluable she



Patrick Keogh, Tom Murphy and Barry Doyle pictured at Wicklow County Council's Business Breakfast Briefing in Druids Glen Hotel.

told delegates, adding: "Over the years many of you have participated on committees of Wicklow County Council including the County Wicklow Economic Think Tank, Local Community Development Committee or Strategic Policy Committees, or indeed the Business Advisory Council.

"These groups are essential to Wicklow County Council and help to identify actions and priorities aimed at driving economic activity and increasing employment in Wicklow."

As regards the County Development Plan 2021-2027, Cllr Winters said that the Forward Planning Team was currently assessing the submissions received in response to the Issues Paper, to assist the chief executive in the preparation of his report to the elected members.

This is due in the coming months while the Draft County Development Plan will be published later this year when a further round of public consultation will be announced.

OFFSHORE WIND RESOURCES

Guest speaker Mike Seaton from SSE Renewables said that Ireland's offshore wind resource was vast and significantly under-developed, pointing out that this country has just one offshore wind farm, located 13km from Arklow.

"SSE has long held plans to develop the second phase of the Arklow Wind Park and is close to delivering on those," noted the Director of Development for SSE Renewables. "This project holds significant socio-economic benefits for the county of Wicklow and the east coast. Depending on the final design of the wind farm, we expect to invest between €1 billion and €2 billion developing the next stage of the Arklow Bank," he noted.

SUPPORT FROM LOCAL FIRMS

While they had yet to announce the location of the O&M base for the Arklow Wind Park, he said this had taken longer than first envisaged due to land, property and legal agreements.

Seaton also commented that offshore wind energy could be an enabler to unlock new infrastructure investment in Ireland's ports and maritime businesses and create local sustainable jobs. "We have seen this at firsthand in Wicklow. Already we rely on the existing local supply chain in the county."

A number of local companies with considerable offshore wind expertise have already been retained to support the operation, he said, including two Wicklow firms, Gavin & Doherty Geosolutions and AlphaMarine Services.

In conclusion, Seaton noted that SSE Renewables intends to rely further on the support of local firms, "and they will be critical in the years ahead as we progress the project".



Joe O'Connell, Lorraine Gallagher and John Horan at Wicklow County Council's Business Breakfast Briefing in Druids Glen Hotel.