

# A MODEL ROADMAP TO RECOVERY FOR WEXFORD

*The Government's Temporary Covid-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme must remain in place for a full 12 months along with a reduction or suspension in commercial rates this year in order for businesses in County Wexford to prosper again, according to the findings of a major report produced by the recently-formed County Wexford Chamber of Commerce.*

The 'Reviving Wexford' report, one of the first initiatives in the country by a local business body and supported by Wexford County Council, is aimed at rejuvenating the local Wexford economy in the aftermath of the pandemic and sets out a roadmap to recovery for the county.

Wexford also wants to ensure its 'First Mover' advantage in domestic tourism with the county heavily promoting itself as the number one destination in the country through a 'Wexford is Open' campaign. And the County Wexford Chamber is seeking Government supports to promote more remote working, arguing that Wexford's close proximity to Dublin could bring benefits from a society and traffic viewpoint if this is carried through.

These are amongst key findings in a major report entitled 'Reviving Wexford' produced by County Wexford Chamber of Commerce. Over 200 Wexford businesses who responded to the Chamber's survey, said that the biggest impacts on business due to the Covid-19 crisis were financial (98%) and jobs (54%), while the greatest challenges over the next 12 months were identified as cash flow (73%) and consumer demand (55%).

Fiona Lewis, Chief Executive Officer of County Wexford Chamber, stated: "This is our response to Covid-19, to support our members, to be their voice, to lobby on their behalf, to prioritise their needs and to ensure they are included in any and all discussion around resuming normal business activity in County Wexford."

Sean Reidy, President of County Wexford Chamber, said that the report is a great deal more than a mere petition. "It is a roadmap to steer our way out of these uncharted waters. Necessary and defined financial and other supports are set out including outstanding new ideas and initiatives which can help County

Wexford emerge into a post coronavirus phase energised and ready to act," he added.

## ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

The survey provided business owners and managers with an opportunity to detail the assistance they believed would be required for Wexford to emerge from the crisis with confidence. The findings will form part of the 'Reviving Wexford Action Plan' which will be used to lobby Government and State agencies for support.

The report states: "The 'Reviving Wexford' initiative is a clarion call for rejuvenation amongst the business owners and managers of County Wexford. Its chief goal is to guarantee that Wexford is in prime position for the post pandemic phase, to seek effective supports and to reactivate commercial activity and life into the Model County again."

## Wexford businesses are also calling for:

- VAT reduction to 9% in the hospitality sector
- Lower bank interest rates and a 'holiday' on repayments
- Reductions in insurance premiums
- Targeted grants rather than loans
- Supports for remote working
- Grants for introducing COVID-19 protocols
- Government to pay all redundancy costs incurred as a result of Covid-19

The report notes that despite the appearance of tentative pathways to re-opening, it remains imperative that the genuine concerns expressed, and novel ideas voiced, in the survey are recognised by Government.

"By so doing they will enable the twin prongs of trust and confidence to be reclaimed



**Fiona Lewis, Chief Executive Officer of County Wexford Chamber.**

by a populous presently fatigued by isolation and lockdown. The broad range of viewpoints, opinions and actions proffered plainly illustrates that the County Wexford business community are at the forefront of how to concretely tackle this crisis and emerge from it with optimism and strength combined," according to the report.

The report sets out specific actions for a number of sectors including hospitality, tourism, retail, services, construction, manufacturing, transport and motor trade, agriculture and healthcare.

Business people also highlighted important infrastructural projects needed in Wexford, including investment in stable and faster broadband, upgrading of Rosslare Europort and the acceleration of Greenways.