

CHAIRPERSON SELECTED FOR MEATH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Colm O'Rourke, Meath GAA Football Manager, has been appointed to chair the Meath Economic Development Forum, which was established to oversee the preparation and implementation of the new Meath Economic Development Strategy.

The Forum will see business leaders and entrepreneurs sharing their experiences to facilitate economic activity and growth in the county, to build on and increase collaboration within the county to maximise its assets, attract further investment and create additional employment and opportunities.

Colm O'Rourke said that he looks forward to working in "collaboration with like-minded individuals" who will invest their energy and time in addressing key challenges and identifying new job opportunities with a view to increasing prosperity and the quality of life for all the citizens of Meath.

The Economic Development Forum has been established by Meath County Council to oversee the preparation and implementation of the new strategy. Meath's Chief Executive Fiona Lawless has said that work on the next Economic Development Strategy is due to start later this year or early next year.

O'Rourke's appointment by the Council's Corporate Policy Group follows the summer launch of Meath County Council's Economic Development Strategy Roadmap, which is set to continue the vision as identified in the current Meath Economic Development Strategy.

It has identified several key focus areas and sectoral opportunities for attracting new investment, sustaining existing indigenous business and enterprise and ensuring the long-term and sustainable growth of the county. The aim is to also attract further Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by marketing Meath to overseas and indigenous investors.

ROADMAP FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Fiona Lawless was joined at the official launch of the roadmap by Meath's Cathaoirleach Cllr Tommy Reilly, Minister for Justice Helen McEntee and Minister for Sport and Physical Education Thomas Byrne at the Council's Head Office in



Chairperson of Meath Economic Development Forum, Colm O'Rourke, pictured with Meath County Council's Chief Executive Fiona Lawless, and Director of Services with responsibility for Economic and Tourism Development, Des Foley.

Navan at the end of June.

Launching the strategy's roadmap, Minister Helen McEntee had said that Meath Economic Development Strategy set out very clear strategic priorities to deliver on economic growth and new jobs in the coming years.

"We must continue to promote Meath, locally and internationally, support initiatives that enhance the quality of life and finally, continue to further co-ordinate and to focus development on connectivity, digitalisation and smart initiatives," the Minister noted.

Meath's Cathaoirleach Cllr Reilly said that economic development will be his priority, noting that the "new innovative

strategy will build on the county's successes to date".

Paying tribute to the work done to date, Fiona Lawless acknowledged the work of the elected members, the Strategic Policy Committee, the Planning and Economic Development teams, the Local Enterprise Office and Meath Enterprise staff on the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy.

DUBLIN BELFAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

Meath County Council has also been working with the other seven local authorities and agencies north and south of the border along the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC), since the

corridor was set up in 2021 to identify and establish opportunities linked with the DBEC Corridor and promoting this on an international level.

The cross-border partnership includes the councils of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Belfast City Council; Dublin City Council; Fingal County Council; Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Louth County Council; Meath County Council; and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. The partnership, which includes representation from Dublin City University and Ulster University, aims to develop a regional proposition for economic growth between Dublin and Belfast, with a population of two million.

“One of the first aims has been to jointly support initiatives that will boost economic growth throughout the region for mutual benefit. KPMG will conduct a feasibility study on developing regional innovations hubs within the cross-border Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor area,” Lawless pointed out.

It was created partly in response to the uncertainty in Ireland north and south, following the UK withdrawal from the EU on 31 January 2020. “Brexit created several challenges for businesses in Meath, particularly those in the food and farming sectors. Meath needed to identify its unique circumstances and develop tailored strategies to mitigate the risks and take advantage of new opportunities,” Meath’s Chief Executive noted.

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

With the rise of the digitalisation and tech industries now fuelling job creation and innovation in Ireland, added to the increasing importance of sustainability and climate action, she said that Meath remained responsive to these economic trends, ensuring it could anticipate and mitigate any potential risks and opportunities and adjust the strategy accordingly.



Pictured at the launch of Meath Economic Development Strategy Roadmap Meath’s Cathaoirleach Cllr Tommy Reilly (centre) with Minister for Sport and Physical Education Thomas Byrne TD and Meath County Council’s Chief Executive Fiona Lawless, (back row): Meath’s Director of Services Des Foley, General Manager of Finnegan’s Farm John Smith, Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD, and Meath’s Senior Planner Padraig Maguire.



According to Meath County Council’s Chief Executive, Fiona Lawless, work on the next Meath Economic Development Strategy will commence later this year or early next year.

“Meath’s unique selling points are centred around the proximity to national and global markets, availability of a large amount of appropriately zoned lands across the 12 strategic employment sites identified in our County Development Plan, access to a very skilled and educated workforce, together with the good quality housing, and quality of life for inhabitants, with all the recreational, heritage and entertainment facilities.”

Overall, the local economy of County Meath is influenced by a complex set of factors, including demographic changes, tourism, agriculture, technology, infrastructure investment and Brexit, she noted.

“International supply chain issues and weary investors affect all counties in Ireland indiscriminately. However, Meath remains informed and well-positioned to take advantage of these drivers and to reduce any negative effects. As we look to 2030, Meath County Council remains focused on driving sustainable economic growth and development across a range of sectors.”