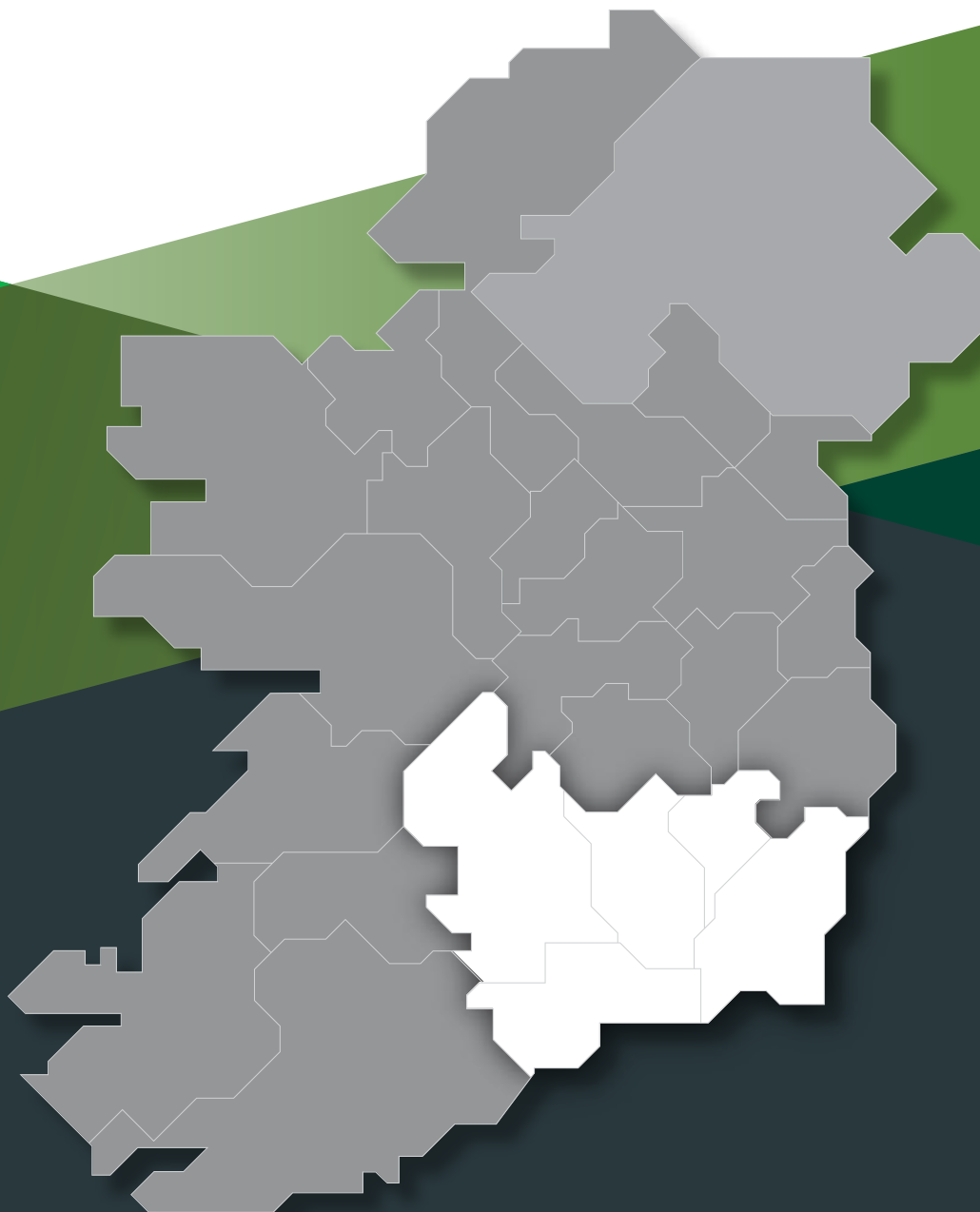




Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

SOUTH-EAST

Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Final Progress Report



An initiative of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Contents

Minister's Foreword	1
Message from the Chairperson	2
1. South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Final Progress Report	3
Overall high-level outcomes for the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020	4
2020 Highlights	6
Strategic Objective 1 Enhance the existing environment for enterprise activity and company growth; and build greater resilience into the regional economy.	7
Strategic Objective 2 Establish the South-East as a place of choice for talent and investment and market the region as such.	11
Strategic Objective 3 Develop a regional engagement strategy that aligns with the Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and highlights the critical infrastructural developments required to enhance the economic potential in the South-East.	16
Strategic Objective 4 Make the South-East a 'learning region' with education, knowledge generation and exchange, and innovation as central activities that allow all to play a role in the economic, social and cultural development of the region.	18
Strategic Objective 5 Develop a region that is attractive to both domestic and international visitors with a sense of place and connected tourist amenities.	27
2. Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Local Enterprise Office activities and outcomes in the South-East Region during 2020	29
3. Achieving a Just Transition in Ireland's Regions	33
Appendix 1: Regional Funding approved for the South-East supported by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment during 2020	34
Appendix 2: Statistical snapshot – South-East	36

Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to welcome this publication of the final Progress Report on implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 for the South-East region. The report shows that the South-East Steering Committee with regional stakeholders has completed almost all but one of the actions set out in the Regional Enterprise Plan and are continuing their work on this outstanding action.

Delivering balanced regional growth through a coherent policy approach to the enterprise needs of every part of Ireland is central to the Programme for Government (PFG). My Department contributes to this agenda in several ways, including through, the enterprise agencies; the local enterprise offices at county level; and direct investments in strengthening the enterprise ecosystem (including the regional enterprise development fund, regional technology clustering, investment in RD&I infrastructures, and the IDA Ireland property programme).

This report demonstrates that there is added benefit for all if we work together to understand challenges, recognise opportunities and make the most of our complementary skills and resources. The Regional Enterprise Plans, first launched in early 2019, bring together local and regional Stakeholders to focus on both vulnerabilities and opportunities critical to the acceleration of enterprise growth and job creation in each region.

The conclusion of the first Regional Enterprise Plan for the South-East has arrived as Ireland's society and economy is facing one of its greatest challenges with the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and now is the opportune time to refresh the Regional Enterprise Plans and ensure that each region makes its contribution to national recovery.

I want to thank all the members of the South-East Steering Committee for all of your work in 2020 and since the commencement of the Regional Enterprise Plan, and for your input to this Progress Report. I also want to commend the work of Alan Quirke, Programme Manager and Richard Hickey, Project Executive.

In welcoming our new chairperson to the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the South-East, Patsy Carney, Director Kinetic Labs, I also want to pay tribute to the contribution of the outgoing chairperson, Frank O'Regan, formerly Bausch & Lomb, Waterford. Frank led the committee through the preparation and implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 and before that, the implementation of the previous South-East Regional Action Plan for Jobs from 2015-2018.

I very much look forward to further engagement with the South-East Steering Committee over the coming months as a new enterprise recovery and growth agenda is articulated in a refreshed South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024.



Robert Troy TD,
Minister of State for Trade Promotion,
Digital and Company Regulation

Message from the Chairperson

I present the final Progress Report of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020, to the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment on behalf of the South-East Regional Steering Committee. The Committee is made up of the major economic stakeholders, both public and private, who have an input into economic development in the region.

When the programme managers and the regional committee set about preparing this plan, we had no idea that we would be completing it in the middle of a global pandemic that has shaken the national and regional economy to such an extent. However, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis has further highlighted the importance of having strategies in place and continually making efforts to build resilience into the regional economy.

The importance of having industry leaders who are engaged and in creating a link from the private to the public sectors was also brought to the forefront during this crisis. During the summer of 2020 key industry leaders from across the South-East's sectors of strength came together to identify immediate and strategic regional responses to the economic challenges created by the COVID-19 health crisis. Several key actions and outcomes from these workshops were then brought forward in a regional submission to the *National Economic Recovery Plan*. That spirit of collaboration and a common sharing of goals among regional stakeholders has been evident throughout the duration of this plan and its predecessor the *Regional Action Plan for Jobs*.

Our shared vision of developing a thriving, innovative and creative regional economy with high-value output, top-quality jobs and being a place of choice to work and invest in, has not changed despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. Certain opportunities have also arisen as the volume of people looking to relocate to the region has increased and companies consider the advantages of having regional hubs for their employees.

The tasks and actions undertaken in this plan were structured under five strategic objectives and all of the objectives have been advanced significantly in the two years of the plan. Further details of progress towards our objectives and actions are contained in this report; some regional highlights from 2020 are also provided.

We have very talented and innovative people succeeding in business in the South-East and many of these are taking on leadership roles as Enterprise Champions for the Regional Enterprise Plan in their respective sectors.

These are all extremely busy people who give their time freely to altruistically try and develop the economy of the region. I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge them and thank them for their efforts over the last couple of years:

- Patsy Carney, Chair of Kinetic Labs is Enterprise Champion in the pharma/medtech space.
- Terry Clune, CEO of the Taxback Group, Enterprise Champion for financial and global business services.
- Liam Griffin, of the Griffin Hotel Group, Chair of the tourism stakeholder group.
- Karen Hennessy, CEO of the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland, Enterprise Champion for design.
- Seamus Kilgannon, CEO of Schivo Medical, Enterprise Champion for engineering.
- Des Whelan Owner of WLR/Beat FM, Enterprise Champion for communications

We are also fortunate to have five forward-thinking Chief Executives in each of the local authorities (Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford, and Wexford) and I would like to thank them for their continued involvement and support for the various initiatives undertaken in this plan. They have invested in the delivery of the Regional Enterprise Plans and have uniquely created an economic development office in the South-East that focuses on leveraging regional economies of scale and fostering collaboration within the region.

Finally, there exists a strong sense of unity in the South-East which did not exist to any measurable extent before. This is enabled in no small measure by the very capable two full-time executives engaged in this process. We now have meaningful regional statistics, a clear strategy to bring the region forward, a range of tactical efforts with the Regional Enterprise Plan at the core, a focus on the University of the South-East and regional communication and marketing. The South-East has been unaware of its potential in the past. This is no longer the case. We look forward to our bright future, even at this time of COVID-19.



Frank O'Regan,
Chair South-East
Regional Enterprise Plan

1. South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Final Progress Update

SOUTH-EAST STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

Enhance the existing environment for enterprise activity and company growth; and build greater resilience into the regional economy.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

Establish the South-East as a place of choice for talent and investment and market the region as such.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

Develop a regional engagement strategy that aligns with the Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and highlights the critical infrastructural developments required to enhance the economic potential in the South-East.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:

Make the South-East a 'learning region' with education, knowledge generation and exchange, and innovation as central activities that allow all to play a role in the economic, social and cultural development of the region.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5:

Develop a region that is attractive to both domestic and international visitors with a sense of place and connected tourist amenities.

Overall high-level outcomes for the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020

This is the final Progress Report of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 which closes out this iteration of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan. For the Steering Committee to present a final assessment on the level of implementation achieved during the 2019-2020 period, actions have been classified into four categories.

Complete: The Committee has deemed that these actions have been fully completed within the scope and lifetime of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020.

Action commenced but requires further work:

The Committee has deemed that while these actions were not completed in full, work had commenced, and significant progress was made during the lifetime of the Plan and will continue, as many projects are of a delivery period which exceed the plan duration. The Committee will consider if these actions could be included as part of future regional strategic objectives in the new South-East Regional Enterprise Plan through to 2024.

Action not commenced: The Committee has deemed that these actions were either not initiated, or insufficient progress was made within the scope and lifetime of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020. However, this does not preclude these actions from being reconsidered as part of future strategic objectives in the new South-East Regional Enterprise Plan.

Table 1: Progress on Actions during 2020 and Final Status

South-East Regional Enterprise Plan	
Total Actions	18
Complete	17
Action commenced but requires further work	1
Action not commenced	0

Each of the previous Regional Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017/8 set out two core outcomes for achievement in each region by the end of 2020 and these continued to be monitored under the Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020:

- employment growth of between 10 and 15 percent; and
- an unemployment rate reduced to within one percentage point of the State average.

Table 2: Utilising data from the CSO Labour Force Survey (LFS), the rate of growth and unemployment rates achieved for the Border region during the period Q1 2015 up to Q4 2020 are as follows:

Region	Numbers Employed			Actual Increase in Employment	Unemployment Rate	
	Q1 2015	Q4 2020	Growth Rate Q1 2015 – Q4 2020	Q1 2015 – Q4 2020	Q1 2015	Q4 2020
South-East	169,200	190,900	12.8%	21,700	11.7%	5.8%
State	2,014,400	2,306,200	14.4%	291,800	10.5%	5.7%

Source: CSO Labour Force Survey, Q4 2020

Since launch of Regional Action Plan for Jobs in 2015, 21,700 more people are in employment between Q1 2015 and to Q4 2020. This is an increase of 12.8 percent which achieves the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 target while the unemployment rate also fell from 11.7 percent to 5.8 percent over the same period, in the region, again well inside the 2020 target.

The figures in Table 2 exclude people who were receiving the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) at the end of 2020. As of the 31st December 2020, a total of 26,804 people were in receipt of the PUP (see Table 3 for a county and regional breakdown).

Table 3: Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment at the end of 2020

County	Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (Number)
Carlow	3,239
Kilkenny	6,030
Waterford	7,458
Wexford	10,077
South-East	26,804

Source: CSO, Labour Market Live Register
<https://data.cso.ie/table/LRW03>

2020 Highlights



Pandemic response: The Ireland South-East Development Office worked with key industry leaders from across the region's sectors of strength to identify immediate and strategic regional responses to the economic challenges created by the COVID-19 health crisis. Several key actions and outcomes from the workshops were brought forward in a regional submission to the National Economic Recovery Plan.



Cluster development: The Ireland South-East Financial Services Cluster appointed a full time cluster manager, fully funded by the five county councils in the South-East. The South-East now has three formalised and managed clusters in ICT, engineering, and financial services, with discussions beginning around forming a cluster of life sciences companies.



Kinetic labs: funded under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), has now opened its doors and will provide science-based companies with high quality lab space for product and process R&D; and provide start-ups with wet lab space and the supports required to develop their business.



Intrapreneurship project: this EU-funded project is now underway and is working with key private and public stakeholders in the region to undertake a regional case study of intrapreneurship, understand obstacles and develop an implementation-focused workplan with key stakeholders which will seek to boost this activity in the region.



Ireland South-East regional brand: the brand is continuing to gain recognition and collaboration amongst all other stakeholder and county brands is growing. The Ireland South-East LinkedIn page, as an example, has grown from 0 followers to over 1600 in the space of a year. A promotional video for the region achieved over 100k impressions across social media platforms.



Regional Greenway/Blueway network: 2020 was another hugely significant year in terms of the development of a network of greenways, blueways and trails in the South-East. Over €15m in funding was secured and work has commenced on the 24km New Ross to Waterford Greenway (the South-East Greenway). Plans are being explored to link the South-East Greenway to not only the Waterford Greenway but also the Suir Blueway at Carrick-on-Suir. The Suir Blueway opened in May 2019 and also secured additional funding in 2020, the route includes 53km of walking, cycling and watersports trails from Cahir to Carrick-on-Suir.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

1

Enhance the existing environment for enterprise activity and company growth; and build greater resilience into the regional economy

**Action 1:**

Position the South-East as a region with formalised and vibrant economic industry-led clustering thus encouraging more employees/businesses to locate and relocate here.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Industry led with Ireland South-East Development Office and the enterprise development agencies (IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices), Local Authorities, Chambers, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), Education and Training Boards (ETBs), successful Enterprise Ireland REDF projects and the relevant research centres in the South-East

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

Encouraging clustering activity and positioning the South-East as a region with formalised and vibrant economic industry-led clusters is critical for the region's economic development and is an ongoing action. Work across 2019/2020 included:

- Crystal Valley ICT cluster promoted the South-East as a region of strength for the ICT sector including hosting a successful careers event in July 2019 in Waterford.
- An industry led engineering cluster *Engineering the South-East* was formed and launched with the backing of key stakeholders including Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, higher education providers, and the Regional Skills Forum (RSF). Michael Carbery, Head of Innovation and Development Programmes with Keenan (Alltech Farming Solutions Ltd) has been appointed Chair. The cluster will focus activities on three main areas: skills; promotion and communications and innovation.
- The *Ireland South-East Financial Services Cluster* has been formed and a manager was appointed to advance the cluster. This initiative has been fully funded by the five county councils in the South-East.
- The branding and marketing of the South-East as a region with vibrant economic clusters is now much enhanced with the launch of www.irelandsoutheast.com which presents six clusters of strength: engineering, life sciences; financial services, ICT, agri and creative. The digital marketing of company activity within these clusters continues.
- The supports and resources for each sectoral ecosystem continue to be enhanced: Kinetic labs will provide science-based companies with lab space for product and process R&D, 3DWIT at SEAM will offer additive manufacturing training programmes to industry in the region and Insurtech Network Centre supports the development of the insurance and financial services sector.

Final outcome achieved:

The South-East now has three formalised and managed clusters in ICT, engineering, and financial services. Companies in the region are showing a desire to collaborate on shared problems in a spirit of 'coopetition'. The supports and resources for each sectoral ecosystem continue to be enhanced and it will be vital that the needs of each industry group are articulated and listened to so that opportunities to further enhance these ecosystems can be pursued. The opportunity to form a cluster for the life sciences sector that can align with the developments in Kinetic labs is one example of how this action can continue to develop.

Action 2:

Explore the potential for current employees as well as entrepreneurs and SMEs to work entrepreneurially with multinational enterprises and large indigenous businesses in the region to identify challenges and solutions to their business processes, product and service offerings, thereby leveraging the existing enterprise support activity in the region.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

ISED, SEBIC, South-East LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, industry, Chambers, HEIs, research centres, NDRC@Arclabs and regional incubation spaces

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

It is hugely important for the region that our existing multinationals and large indigenous businesses continue to think entrepreneurially so they can scale and grow and remain competitive. Funding for this action was applied for and secured from the European Union.

- The project is now underway and is working with key private and public stakeholders in the region to undertake a regional case study of intrapreneurship, to identify characteristics of successful intrapreneurs, understand obstacles and develop an implementation-focused workplan with key stakeholders which will seek to boost this activity in the region.
- Researchers are currently interviewing both private and public stakeholders within the region and carrying out best practice analysis of intrapreneurship and public policies in other countries.
- A web page detailing the progress of the project has been set up and can be viewed at www.irelandsoutheast.com/intrapreneurship

Final outcome achieved:

The project will culminate with the development of a workplan and a toolbox for companies. Having a workplan and toolbox to boost the levels of intrapreneurship will increase the opportunity for innovation and diversity in firms and widen the range of export products and markets. This will increase the competitiveness of companies in the region, combat regional economic disparity, and provide resilience against future economic shocks such as Brexit.

Action 3:

Develop a Smart Region initiative that uses technology as a vehicle for regional cohesiveness and enhanced impact in support of sustainable, coherent and inclusive economic development across the South-East.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

CEDRE, WIT; ISEDO; Local Authorities, Ireland South-East Development Office, Local authority broadband officers, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, HEIs, Chambers of Commerce, Crystal Valley Tech, Teagasc, Regional Technology Gateways, incubators and accelerators, research groups, and the South-East Regional Skills Forum

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work

Expected Completion Date:

There are ongoing activities around this action within the region

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

- Waterford County Council and TSSG in WIT received €15k in funding from the Public Service Innovation Fund to contribute to their *Smart Waterford* strategy. A member of the All Ireland Smart Cities Forum, the Waterford City and County Council (WCCC) team is finalising a *Smart Waterford* strategy and one of the early objectives will be to define what *Smart Waterford* could be. The proposal involves creating Smart City testbed areas within Waterford City. This would enable the use of data analytics and business intelligence in support of high-quality sustainable place-making. The project involves collaboration between WCCC and partners at Waterford Institute of Technology: RIKON, TSSG and the Lean Enterprise Excellence Forum.
- Since the publication of the South-East Regional Enterprise Strategy in Q1 2019, CEDRE (WIT) has performed a great deal of research and analysis on the concept of Smart Region. The difficulty is that currently there are very few published actuations of the Smart Region concept in Europe. Therefore, the development of the Smart Region concept for the South-East has been based on research and analysis of Smart Cities, and more recently, on Smart Villages. Out of this research a funding proposal for a project called DORIC to Horizon 2020 was prepared by TSSG and CEDRE. DORIC stands for *Digitally Optimised rural-based Integrated Communities*. Developing a smart region initiative was a large component of the proposal.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

- Regional applications to the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund.
- The publication of South-East Smart Region Joint Action Plan.

These actions will be funding dependent.

Action 4:

Key stakeholders in the region will collaborate to drive regional green projects of scale; to promote and apply for green funding sources on a regional basis; and to ensure that the region has a pipeline of skills which can avail of emerging opportunities in the sector.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Ireland South-East Development Office with Local Authorities, 3CEA, Tipperary Energy Agency, Irish BioEconomy Foundation, industry, research institutes, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Teagasc, Regional Skills Forum, ETBs, HEIs

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

- Mapping of LEO clients in the region in the green economy was completed leading to a funding application for the LEOs *Green for Micro* project which aims to assist enterprises incorporating sustainable practices to assist them in transitioning to a low carbon economy focused on water, energy, waste, procurement and transport in collaboration with 3 Counties Energy Agency (3CEA).
- There has been ongoing engagement with the ports in the South-East to position the region for offshore renewable energy opportunities.
- The 3CEA have developed a new strategy that incorporated the inputs of multiple stakeholders in the region.
- 3CEA are continuing work on multiple projects that strengthen the region's response to climate change, such as the *Driving Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) Efficiently Into Brexit* project and the work they are carrying out in relation to the region's solar opportunities.
- The Irish Bioeconomy Foundation in Lisheen, Co. Tipperary, is continuing to increase awareness of new technologies and establish mutually beneficial business relationships both nationally and within the region.
- The region also took part in the *Bio-based Industries Consortium (BIC)*, a new digital bioeconomy platform for regions and industry in early 2020. The concept is based on a digital, partnering platform where regions and industry can make contact based on mutual interest.

Final outcome achieved:

Funding has now been sought under the auspices of this action through the EU's Technical Support Instrument for a Green Transition project for the South-East. The TSI support requested would seek to work with key private and public stakeholders in the South-East to develop a regional Action Plan to support economic growth during a green transition in the region. This action plan would identify green growth enhancing reforms and ensure that structural changes are put in place now to effectively underpin this regional opportunity. Funding announcement is due in the early part of 2021.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

2

Establish the South-East as a place of choice for talent and investment and market the region as such



Action 1:

Develop and implement a branding and marketing strategy that promotes the region as a great place to live, work, and invest using multiple marketing channels.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

ISED0; Local Authorities; Enterprise Ireland; IDA Ireland; LEOs; Chambers; Regional Skills Forum; HEIs; Cluster groups

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

The branding and marketing promotion of the South-East region as a great place to live, work, and invest using multiple marketing channels is an ongoing action for the region. All of the marketing activity is funded by the five local authorities in the South-East. Work across 2019/2020 included:

- Two analysis reports of the regional economy *South-East: Economy at a Glance* were published with updated economic information.
- A new website www.irelandsoutheast.com was launched in 2019 which captures the stories of the businesses and people who are successful here. It also showcases the clusters of strength that the region has. The website is updated continuously with positive news stories from the region.
- The new website was accompanied by a short video that captures the mix of high-end industry with the quality of life benefits the region offers.
- The website and video were promoted by an extensive digital marketing campaign designed to promote the attractiveness of the region for talent and investment to a wide audience, both in Ireland and internationally.
- The Ireland South-East Development Office has continued to generate positive PR content in relation to the region, securing coverage in local and national papers such as the Sunday Business Post.
- An event was held in Trinity College's Science Gallery in Dublin in 2019 to promote the region as a great location for talent and investment in the ICT sector.
- The regional tourist product offering is being strengthened by the collaborative activity of the five county tourism officers and Fáilte Ireland as is detailed further in Objective 5 below.
- Crystal Valley Tech held a very successful careers event in Waterford in 2019, showcasing available jobs in ICT and life sciences in the region.
- Kilkenny LEO hosted a well-attended careers event in Kilkenny at Christmas 2019 showcasing all available jobs in Kilkenny.
- A brochure *Why move to the South-East?* was developed that outlined all the benefits of a move to the region and was made available at the above career events and at a EURES careers event in London in 2019.
- A *Move to the South-East* campaign was launched in late 2020 to engage with talented people and decision makers considering moving to the region, particularly in light of COVID-19.

Final outcome achieved:

The Ireland South-East regional brand is beginning to gain recognition and collaboration amongst all other stakeholder and county brands and is growing. The Ireland South-East LinkedIn page, as an example, has grown from 0 followers to over 1500 in the space of a year. Visits to the website are also increasing and the promotional video reached 100k impressions.

Work will continue around:

- Regional promotion through the digital marketing strategy with a focus on maintaining contact with people who may be interested in moving to or investing in the region through newsletters and events.
- Raising the profile of the region as a place of choice to live, work, and invest.

Action 2:

Work with key stakeholders to strengthen the South-East's value proposition as a first choice or second site location for companies wishing to locate outside Dublin and other cities.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Ireland South-East Development Office with Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, and local authorities

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

Strengthening the South-East's value proposition as a first choice or second site location for companies wishing to locate outside Dublin and other cities took on an added importance during the COVID-19 crisis. Work across 2019/2020 included:

- An event was held in Trinity College's Science Gallery in Dublin to promote the region as a great location for talent and investment in the ICT sector.
- A mapping of the key available commercial properties took place with the links to these properties made available on the website www.irelandsoutheast.com
- Funding for a skills mapping project was achieved through the Local Enterprise Office competitive fund as part of the Initium start-up project.
- Mapping up-to-date information on cost-of-living factors such as housing and childcare costs was published in the *South-East: Economy at a Glance* document and is also made available throughout the website.
- Two regional LEO projects received funding that will further enhance the region's value proposition as a first-choice location for investment, those are:
 - » The Initium South-East project is an innovative series of start-up programmes led by the South-East LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, and the Ireland South-East Office in partnership with South-East BIC and IT Carlow which aims to animate, develop and support the creation of 40 new specialised start-up companies in the South-East.
 - » The *Incrementum* South-East project is a targeted business development programme for the LEO portfolio of clients over 10 employees which aims to increase their engagement in R&D and export activity.
- Remote working hubs, where a number of employees from a particular company can meet to keep contact while also working from home, are now an even more important part of the business ecosystem in the region. The region will continue to promote these and promote the benefits of allowing employees to work remotely within the South-East.

Final outcome achieved:

The cost, affordability and quality of life benefits of basing your business in the South-East continue to be communicated. COVID-19 has heightened business interest in developing second sites outside of the major cities. The available property in the region and the case studies of the many success stories of second site locations needs to be continually promoted.

Action 3:

Pilot a Town Renewal Project. (Incorporating Actions 3.1 and 3.2: Baseline audit and targeted campaign to increase activity on main streets of towns).

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Local authorities, ETBs

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

Good progress has been made as two towns per county were selected, funding requirements were analysed and plans were formed to increase activity. The towns selected were:

Waterford	Kilkenny	Tipperary	Carlow	Wexford
Tramore >10k pop.	Kilkenny >10k pop.	Tipperary Town	Tullow	Enniscorthy
Cappoquin <10k pop.	Callan <10k pop.	Carrick-On-Suir	Bagenalstown	New Ross

Final outcome achieved:

This action has progressed steadily in the towns selected with work including:

Tramore

A Town Centre Management Group was established involving statutory, business and local community groups. This group prepared a Town Centre Management Plan which set out objectives. Work has now begun addressing the perceived lack of a town centre, way finding and quality of public realm issues.

Cappoquin

As a collaborative effort between Cappoquin Community Development Company and Waterford City and county council, in 2019 a number of vacant properties on the Main Street (five in total) have been purchased by compulsory purchase order or have been acquired via agreement with a view to re-invigorating them as sustainable commercial and residential spaces.

Kilkenny

Kilkenny County Council are leading on the development of two major areas of the city, namely,

1. The regeneration of the Abbey Quarter (AQ) site; and
2. The development of a significant new neighbourhood area (for up to 2,500 new homes over the next 10 years) in the Breaghagh Valley in the western environs.

Callan

Kilkenny County Council embarked on a town centre renewal process in line with the framework for town centre renewal developed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. This process involved stakeholder engagement, a health check, establishment of a town team and the development of a town action plan.

Tipperary Town

The process of revitalisation of Tipperary Town has commenced.

Carrick-on-Suir

The digital hub in the restored old courthouse has now opened.

Carlow: Tullow and Bagenalstown

Carlow County Council engaged the services of Spatial Insights to develop a town and village 'Framework and What's Next For' report for Tullow and Bagenalstown.

Wexford: Enniscorthy and New Ross

Consultation meetings were held in Enniscorthy by Wexford County Council with the Enniscorthy Town Team and Tidy Towns Association and The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI). Funding was secured for New Ross town centre for tourism projects to revitalize the town and public realm.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

3

Develop a regional engagement strategy that aligns with the Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and highlights the critical infrastructural developments required to enhance the economic potential in the South-East

**Action 1:**

Ensure that the region's priorities are aligned among the five counties of the South-East and that the region speaks with one voice on issues relating to critical infrastructure of strategic regional importance at key fora such as the RSES and the Project Ireland 2040 frameworks.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Ireland South-East Development Office, Local authorities

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

Activities under this action included:

- The five local authority CEOs meet on a bi-weekly basis to agree discuss the key strategic objectives and maintain efforts towards achieving them. Joint CEO submissions were developed around:
 - » Waterford Airport
 - » Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
 - » DA Ireland Strategy
 - » CIE Strategy
 - » Ireland 2040
- The Ireland South-East Development Office (ISED) has been set up to assist in working towards those objectives.
- Regional economic data is being continually monitored by ISED and has been published in the *South-East: Economy at a Glance* publication.
- Political and stakeholder engagement has continued with clearly defined ambitions for the region being articulated.
- A regional submission will be made to the *Review to Renew* process for the National Development Plan. The submission will outline the collaborative regional approach to important challenges including climate change, balanced regional development, and infrastructural developments.

Final outcome achieved:

The importance of aligning the region's priorities among the five counties of the South-East was established during the *Action Plan for Jobs* initiative. The region now speaks with one voice on many issues relating to critical infrastructure of strategic regional importance and has jointly contributed to such key fora such as RSES, Ireland 2040, and the National Economic Recovery Plan.

Action 2:

The South-East will seek to increase national/EU and private investment for strategically important projects at the regional level which will continue to improve the environment for economic growth.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Ireland South-East Development Office and Local authorities

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020

Applications from the South-East submitted to:

- Urban Regeneration and Development Fund
- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
- Climate Action Fund
- Disruptive Technologies Fund
- Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Development Fund
- Funding for greenway/blueways/ and trails under the Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport
- Action Plan for Rural Development fund

And many funding applications were supported. For example:

- Joint LEO funding by the five LEOs and ISEDO – successful for three projects
- Enterprise Ireland REDF Projects – ISEDO supported a number of individual project applications
- Greenway funding application – ISEDO worked with local authorities on funding applications – successful on two projects
- RRDF projects – ISEDO worked with local authorities on funding applications
- URDF projects – ISEDO worked with local authorities on funding applications
- EU SRSP – ISEDO directly applied for EU funding
- EU TAIEX – ISEDO directly applied for EU funding
- SFI Discovery – ISEDO supported CALMAST funding application
- DTIF – Presentations made to WIT research
- Waterford airport – regional submission prepared

Final outcome achieved:

The South-East has sought to increase national/EU and private investment for strategically important projects at the regional level which will continue to improve the environment for economic growth. This is an ongoing activity within the South-East. The region and the five local authorities of the South-East will continue to coordinate and agree on the key strategic objectives and associated enabling infrastructure for the region. These regional priorities will then be communicated effectively and cohesively externally. Economic data for the South-East will also continue being developed and communicated broadly.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

4

Make the South-East a 'learning region' with education, knowledge generation and exchange, and innovation as central activities that allow all to play a role in the economic, social and cultural development of the region

**Action 1:**

As part of the *Skills for Growth* initiative the Regional Skills Forum (RSF) will assist local enterprises identify their skills' needs through a variety of audit tools to ensure that the region has the effective use of skills to support economic and social prosperity. Once skill needs have been identified, Regional Skills Fora will link companies with the education and training providers best suited to responding to identified skills need.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

RSF, and partners including Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, ETB, and the Department of Social Protection

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2019

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020

The SERSF conducted regular skills audits with private industry to ascertain their skills and training needs. This has formed the basis for a number of new and amended programmes.

There is a range of programmes in development at present including the following being promoted by the South-East RSF:

- Three higher education courses – to be developed in 2021
- Four further education courses – to be developed in 2021

The Regional Skills Forum will continue to assist local enterprises identify their skills' needs through a variety of audit tools to ensure that the region has the effective use of skills to support economic and social prosperity.

Final outcome achieved:

The information gathered by South-East RSF has been used by both higher and further education providers to develop or support a range of new courses. These include Springboard+ funded courses, new modular and post graduate courses funded under the July Stimulus initiative and a number of FET courses under *Skills to Advance*. Overall, the level of awareness of what the publicly funded education and training providers can do for industry has increased.

Action 2:
Double the number of participants on the Explore programme over the 2018 figure. The Explore programme is designed to address the need for enhanced digital skills among older workers in manufacturing sectors within the region.
Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:
RSF; HEIs; Industry
Timeframe for delivery:
Q4 2020
Final Status:
Complete
Outline of work undertaken during 2020
The three ETBs in the South-East delivered this programme in 2019 with very positive feedback from employers. The Explore programme was then suspended in 2020 due to COVID-19 resulting in a number of courses not being completed.
Final outcome achieved:
It is intended that these courses will recommence in 2021.

Action 3:

Support education and training providers in preparing applications under Springboard+ 2019 in collaboration with local enterprise in order to increase provision of programmes for upskilling and reskilling within the region.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

RSF, HEIs

Timeframe for delivery:

Q2 2019

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020

Springboard+ was available in 2020 in addition to a number of new related courses funded under the *Human Capital Initiative* and the July Stimulus. The majority of these programmes are part time within one year and all have or will commence from September 2020.

The following are the numbers of programmes funded in 2020:

- Springboard+: 46 part time courses (29 in IT Carlow / 17 in WIT)
- Human Capital Initiative Pillar 1: 6 new conversion courses (5 IT Carlow / 1 WIT)
- Human Capital Initiative Pillar 3: 5 new conversion courses (3 IT Carlow / 2 WIT)
- July Stimulus – Modular courses: 33 short courses (17 WIT / 16 IT Carlow)
- July Stimulus – post grad courses: 11 new courses (9 WIT / 2 IT Carlow)
- Springboard+ Courses Approved: 37 part time courses across IT Carlow (13), WIT (14) and LIT Tipperary (10) across all sectors.

Action 4:

Support all actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan where linkages to education and training providers are required.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

RSF

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work. There is continuing action with multiple components, see below for examples

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:**Focus for 2021**

1. Effective research and labour market information to inform programme development.
 - Skills audits across targeted sectors – at least 10 per sector (50 over year)
 - Research – identify two sectors for more detailed research.
 - Feedback from external data sources to education and training providers.
 - Encourage sectors to proactively gather regional data on skills and training needs.
2. Help employers connect with the range of services and supports available.
 - Host and support a number of industry specific events to promote available training and education opportunities.
 - In collaboration with existing clusters, facilitate engagement by education and training providers.
 - Regular and timely communications with employer about available training and education opportunities.
 - Develop a series of case studies to highlight opportunities to employers.
3. Greater collaboration and utilisation of resources across education and training
 - More coherent promotion of education and training provision across higher education (HE) and further education training (FET).
 - Regional promotion of current / new education and training:
 - » Springboard and human capital initiative solutions from higher education.
 - » FET through *Skills to Advance*.
 - » Regional Skillnets offerings to industry.
 - » New: supervisory practice / management development from FET and higher education with clear demonstration of progression paths.
4. A structure for employers to become more involved in promoting employment roles and opportunities for career progression in their sectors.
 - Through existing and new clusters.
 - Better presentation of education and training to support career progression.

Action 5:

Communicate to employers the services available through Regional Skills Forum to assist with resolution of emerging skills needs. (This action is merged with Action 4 above).

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

RSF and other stakeholders

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

(This action is merged with Action 4 above)

Action 6:

Enterprise-led employment initiative targeted at unemployment blackspots.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Waterford and Wexford Education Training Board, Kilkenny and Carlow Education Training Board; Tipperary Education Training Board, Department of Employment and Social Protection, regional employers, Ireland South-East Development Office, Mid-West Enterprise Plan Manager

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020

During 2020, Over 6000 learners attended programmes at Kilkenny/Carlow ETB FET centres and while a large proportion of these learners attended programmes in Kilkenny and Carlow urban areas, learners also attended in smaller towns previously identified as unemployment blackspots.

Kilkenny/Carlow ETB delivered both full-time and part-time programmes throughout Kilkenny and Carlow. In the targeted areas, part time programmes were delivered in partnership with Department of Social Protection, Family resource centres, as well as local and community agencies.

In 2020 (to date) over 500 learners have progressed to employment outcomes on completing FET courses:

- 246 learners entered full-time employment on completing courses (to date).
- 142 learners entered part-time employment on completing the course.
- 26 progressed to self-employment.
- 96 commenced employment schemes on completing courses.

The following programmes had learners progressing to full-time employment on completion:

BTEI	43
Community education	31
Community training centres	8
Local training initiatives	4
Other including self-financing	26
Post Leaving Cert (PLC)	68
Skills to Advance	42
Specific skills training	13

The following programmes had learners progressing to part time employment on completion:

BTEI groups	25
Community education	42
Community training centres	3
FET cooperation hours	4
Other funding	11
Post Leaving Cert (PLC)	41
VTOS Core	10

Waterford and Wexford

- Fund a Local Training Initiative (LTI) in Ballybeg, Waterford City. It was expected to provide training for up to 16 unemployed people.
- Fund an LTI in Manor St. John, Waterford City. The LTI was expected to provide training in catering support at level 4 for up to 14 people.
- Fund an LTI in Courtown, Wexford. This LTI was expected to provide training in employability skills at level 4 to up to 18 unemployed people.

Carrick-on-Suir

- In Carrick-on-Suir, 14 courses in adult literacy ran in 2019 including: Driver theory test preparation; Preparation for D1 Mini-bus driver theory test; Confidence with communications; Essential English for non-native English speakers; Adult basic education and Family learning (run in conjunction with Home-School liaison officers).
- 15 courses were run through the ETB part-time accredited programme, *Back to Education* initiative. These courses were all accredited offering both full and part-time QQI courses at Levels 3, 4 and 5. Awards are available in Office Skills (4M2070); General learning (3M0874); Information and Communication Technologies (3M0877); Early childhood care and education (5M2009); Healthcare Support (5M4339) and Private security studies.
- EHA primary certification in food safety was run for a number of groups who were able to secure employment in food preparation, deli's and service stations on completion of the programme.
- Many of the learners who participated on these courses have secured either full-time or part-time employment.
- A total of 422 adult learners took part on the ETB courses in Carrick-on-Suir in 2019.

Tipperary Town

- A total of 779 learners participated in TETB education and training programmes in 2019 including: adult literacy, Back to Education initiative, community education, ESOL, evening training, ITABE, LTI's, *Skills for Work* and specific skills training.

Final outcome achieved:

This QQI Level 5 accredited programme delivered through the Back To Education Initiative aimed to enable the learner to acquire the knowledge, skill, and competence to work independently and under supervision in providing support in a variety of healthcare settings and or to progress to higher education and training.

Callan: Healthcare Support

- 9 learners entered full-time employment on completing the course
- 7 learners entered part-time employment on completing the course

Ferrybank: Healthcare Support

- 9 learners entered full-time employment on completing the course
- 7 learners entered part-time employment on completing the course

Piltown: Healthcare Support

- 2 learners entered full-time employment on completing the course
- 3 learners entered part-time employment on completing the course

Urlingford: Healthcare Support

- 8 learners entered full-time employment on completing the course
- 4 learners entered part-time employment on completing the course

Bagenalstown: Bus Driving D Licence

This programme delivered through training services aimed to equip learners with the necessary skills and competence to drive a D-vehicle in a safe, economical and improved manner and in accordance with the Road Traffic Acts. It offered additional modules in customer service, Gluais, eco and defensive driving techniques, manual handling as well as basic CPR. The successful completion of the *RSA – Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC)* enables applicants to source work in the transport sector in a skill area such as Bus Driver.

- 6 learners entered full-time employment on completing the course
- 7 learners entered part-time employment on completing the course

Bagenalstown: Community Education Part Time Provision in General Learning.

Programmes offered through community education aimed to increase the learner's confidence and capability to engage with everyday activities including employment. From courses provided by community education at Bagenalstown during 2020:

- Four learners entered part time employment on completing the course.

Tullov: Community education part-time provision in general learning.

Programmes offered through community education aimed to increase learner's confidence and capability to engage with everyday activities including employment. From courses provided by community at Tullov during 2020:

- 8 learners entered full-time employment on completing the course
- 4 learners entered part-time employment on completing the course

Waterford and Wexford

- The three LTI's has developed close links with the hotel, restaurant and horticulture industry with associated employment opportunities.
- Each learner completes a work experience module as part of their course
- The Wexford/Waterford ETB adult literacy service delivered additional supports in the identified unemployment blackspots – examples include:
 - » ICT for traveller women (Ballybeg, Waterford).
 - » Family learning in Portlaw National School, Co. Waterford.
 - » Maths and ICT in the Portlaw community facility.
 - » ESOL family learning in Kilmuckridge, Co. Wexford.
 - » Traveller programmes in Dungarvan (Co. Waterford), Taghmon and Drumgoold (Co. Wexford).
 - » Cappoquin, Tallow and Dungarvan town literacy provision.

Action 7:

Roll out the pilot careers initiative, first initiated for Carlow, at a regional level to improve the promotion of careers in a number of key sectors; and continue to promote STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Maths) subjects in a holistic manner so that a positive attitude towards STEAM is generated.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

CALMAST, HEIs, ETBs, Chambers, Industry

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

Calmast received €150,000 funding from Science Foundation Ireland to develop its hub and cluster model for STEM provision across the region. Calmast will act as the STEM hub with clusters of local actors (education/industry/governmental/NGOs) across the region. Progress slowed because of COVID-19 but we have added two new staff (October 2020) who will enable this development. West, Abbott, MSD, Sanofi, Bausch + Lomb have joined this programme and we are actively recruiting further partners.

Engineers Week took place just before lockdown with events at IT Carlow and WIT where events attracted 2,000. A *Careers in Space* session at WIT arena attracted 500 secondary pupils to learn how they could work in STEM careers related to space. The panel included John O'Donoghue and Enbio Space, Clonmel.

In response to COVID-19 restrictions, Calmast pivoted to an online mode to ensure that STEM engagement still took place. Calmast also ran a successful online biodiversity and environmental festival online with daily live broadcasts reaching 5,000. *Maths Week Ireland* was founded in the South-East and is run by Calmast and 33,000 pupils in the South-East participated.

Two careers events were aligned with the *South-East Science Festival* and the new *Kilkenny Science Festival*. It was decided to prioritise women in STEM. On Tuesday 10 November 2020, 23 transition year classes (estimated 550 students) attended two Zoom events chaired by Dr. Niamh Shaw. The first was part of the new *Kilkenny Science Festival* and featured early/mid-career female engineers, scientists, coders and animators from Glanbia, Lighthouse Studios, Prochem, MSD, Security Risk Advisors and two engineering students from Kilkenny. The second event also chaired by Dr. Shaw included female STEM professionals from West, Abbott, Sanofi, MSD, Boston, GSK, Servier. Schools from every county in the region participated in the event.

The STEM-reach programme for secondary schools switched online and there is big demand with six schools starting in Q3 and a further 13 schools across the region wanting to join. These will be facilitated these in 2021.

Calmast and IT Carlow cooperated in the organisation of *Engineers Week* (March 2021) as part of the preparation for the merger. We look forward to greater cooperation and coordination in STEM provision in TUSEI.

Final outcome achieved:

- 500 secondary pupils attended *Careers in Space* event at WIT Arena.
- 550 transition year students from 23 schools attended *Women in STEM* careers webinars.
- Despite the COVID-19 restrictions STEAM promotion continued with either online delivery of programmes or online support of in-school activity with a combined reach over 40,000.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

- Liaison with other bodies was difficult as organisations struggled to adapt to new COVID-19 work practices.
- Establishment of clusters has been interrupted by COVID-19, but it is continuing with progress expected in Q1 2021.
- Further STEMreach programmes will be rolled out in Q1 2021.
- A Regional STEM Forum was planned for Q2 2020, but organisations were at that stage trying to come to grips with the new situation and were attending to their core activities. It is hoped to run it online in 2021.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

5

Develop a region that is attractive to both domestic and international visitors with a sense of place and connected tourist amenities

**Action 1:**

Develop an agreed regional identity that aligns and sits within the Ireland's Ancient East brand.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

South-East regional tourism lead actor(s). The Working Group is made up of representatives from Ireland South-East Development Office, Fáilte Ireland and tourism officers from each local authority as well as the Regional Enterprise Plan industry champion, Liam Griffin

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

Strong progress has been made around the development of a regional product offering across the five counties and a regional identity that can maximize the return the region gets from the *Ireland's Ancient East* brand and increase the chances of visitors staying within the region.

Increased collaboration on a regional basis: to bring together the five counties to ensure a more coordinated approach.

Development of a plan around regional tourism priorities which aims to deliver on the objectives:

- To support and amplify the *Ireland's Ancient East* brand by building the differentiating appeal of the region for national and international visitors, positioning the region as the place to go to be alive outside, enjoy fine food inspired by nature, discover great castles, houses and gardens and experience Ireland's rich history and vibrant culture
- To ensure a coordinated approach to tourism growth and development by motivating and mobilising all those involved, creating connections and networks and aligning efforts
- To drive sustainable growth in the tourism sector in the region and support the delivery of outstanding visitor experiences

Final outcome achieved:

COVID-19 has brought huge challenges to the tourism sector, a sector that is of critical importance to the South-East region. 2021 may well see a necessary focus on domestic tourism only for the second year in a row. The region and the five counties will continue to work on its identity and product offering within the *Ireland's Ancient East brand*. Work will include:

- Continuation of a coordinated approach to tourism growth and development by motivating and mobilising all those involved, creating connections and networks and aligning efforts.
- Positioning the region as the place to go to be alive outside, enjoy fine food inspired by nature, discover great castles, houses and gardens and experience Ireland's rich history and vibrant culture.

Action 2:

Continue the work to roll out an integrated network of greenways, blueways and key trails that stretch across the entire region and connect to networks outside of the region.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Special Projects Office, Ireland South-East Development Office

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

2020 was another hugely significant year in terms of the development of a network of greenways, blueways and trails in the South-East. Over €15m in funding was secured and work has commenced on the 24km New Ross to Waterford Ferrybank Greenway (to be known as the South-East Greenway) as well as the Billberry to Waterford Ferry Bank Greenway. Plans are being explored to link the South-East Greenway to not only the Waterford Greenway but also the Suir Blueway at Carrick-on-Suir. The Suir Blueway opened in May 2019 and also secured additional funding in 2020, the route includes 53km of walking, cycling and water-sports trails from Cahir to Carrick-on-Suir. Connecting the three routes will create an integrated network of greenway/blueway running across the region that will be an unparalleled greenway/blueway product offering in the country.

Final outcome achieved:

The work to create an integrated network of greenways, blueways and key trails that stretch across the entire region and connect to networks outside of the region is ongoing and will include during 2021 and beyond:

- The South-East regional greenways office currently has 18 greenway and blueway projects under consideration at various phases from feasibility, to planning, to construction.
- Work is continuing on Rosslare Harbour to Waterford Greenway – Submission of application for development consent and procurement of detailed design, tendering and construction management services.
- Work will intensify on animating the business opportunities of the network of greenways, blueways and trails across the South-East in conjunction with South-East Regional Tourism working group and industry stakeholders.

2. Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Local Enterprise Office activities and outcomes in the South-East Region during 2020

In order to achieve the 2020 employment targets and maintain strong regional enterprise and job creation performance, the Strategic Objectives and collaborative actions identified for the South-East region complement and reinforce the core activities of the Enterprise Agencies, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs).

The Enterprise Agencies each have corporate strategies which include national level objectives as well as frameworks for bespoke regional activities that support regional enterprise development potential and leverage regional assets and opportunities.

During 2020, the Agencies and LEOs worked in partnership with regional stakeholders to strengthen regional enterprise ecosystems as well as maintaining their focus on attracting foreign investment, providing guidance and financial supports to the installed base of companies in the region, and fostering new enterprise start-ups.

Enterprise Ireland

In January 2020 it was reported that 19,868 people were employed by Enterprise Ireland supported companies across the South-East region, this represented a 3% growth in employment from the previous year and an employment growth of 25% over the last five years.

Support and investment continue through 2020 into developing the start-up ecosystem across the South-East, this includes significant investment into the following initiatives:

- South-East Business Innovation Centre
- New Frontiers Waterford IT + IT Carlow
- NDRC@Arc Labs Accelerator
- Sure Valley VC
- South-East Halo Business Angels Network
- Incupharm Hub
- Insurtech Hub
- Centre 4 Design Hub
- Additional budget approvals for the South-East LEOS

In January 2020, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation Heather Humphreys announced the results of the third call of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), an open national competitive call to support regional projects that drive sustainable job creation in the regions. A total of 26 successful applicants representing all regions of the country have been approved for funding of over €40m for their collaborative projects and today's announcement brings the total amount awarded under the Fund to almost €100m to date. The fund is an initiative of the Government under Project Ireland 2040 and it aligns with the Future Jobs Ireland framework. It is administered for the Government by Enterprise Ireland.

€2m in Regional Enterprise Development Funds were allocated for the South-East and the projects included:

- Lean Industry 4.0 Hub, Waterford
- Tradebridge Cluster Collaboration, Wexford
- Rural Entrepreneurship Project Carlow,

Throughout 2020 there were examples of significant investments and expansions / acquisitions by client companies across the South-East Region, examples included:

- Carlow-based company MicroGen Biotech has raised €3.47m in a funding round
- Zervas Communications open a new office in Dungarvan creating 30 new jobs
- Scurri announced €1.5m new investment to support their continued growth internationally
- Sonru were acquired by Modern Hire
- Eishtec were acquired by Infosys
- Sullivan Brewery raises additional €1m investment to drive growth
- Immersive VR continue to grow internationally
- Nearform wins major COVID-19 Tracker Contracts in Ireland and US
- Danone has received carbon neutral certification for its plant in Wexford, making it the first baby food manufacturer in the world to achieve the standard.
- Kilkenny based payroll technology firm, Immedis, valued at €500m following a new investment deal with New York based investment fund Lead Edge Capital, continues to expand adding clients such as Uber, ServiceNow and Nutanix. The new investment will support growth, including the opening of US West Coast and Singapore offices
- Transfermate Global Payments, a payments technology firm, based in Kilkenny has secured licenses in Brazil and Chile as part of its expansion plans.

IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland's mission is to partner with multi-national companies to win and develop foreign direct investment, providing jobs for the economic and social benefit of Ireland. IDA Ireland works with key stakeholders both in the public and private sectors in order to deliver on this mandate. IDA Ireland partners closely with Enterprise Ireland across the regions on multiple initiatives under the Regional Enterprise Plans and in relation to the provision of property solutions to the indigenous base, where appropriate.

On January 6th, 2021, IDA Ireland launched summary results for FDI for the country for 2020, and also launched a new Strategy, *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024*.

Employment growth of 3.6 percent in IDA Ireland supported companies was achieved in 2020. Total employment in IDA Ireland client companies in Ireland now stands at 257,394, accounting directly for 12.4 percent of COVID-19 adjusted national employment.

The IDA South-East Region includes the counties of Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny and Carlow. There are 74 IDA supported companies in the region, employing 13,461 people in total. The South-East region continued to be successful in 2020 in attracting inward foreign direct investment (FDI) right across the Region.

Significantly, in February 2020 the South-East Region was ranked by the Financial Times as a top ten region for FDI in Europe. This rating by an external global publication demonstrates the attractiveness of the region for FDI and reflects the dynamic existing FDI base, and supportive value proposition for FDI that has been developed and delivered. A number of important infrastructural developments led by key stakeholders in the South-East region, were supported in 2020 and these will help further develop the FDI value proposition for the region overall. Projects to note include the support by Government for the North Quays Project in Waterford, the further development of the Abbey Quarter site in Kilkenny, the granting of planning permission for the Trinity Wharf Project in Wexford and the confirmation that the Technological University for the South-East will be confirmed by January 2022.

The region continues to perform in the area of high value manufacturing (over 6,500 jobs created within the life-sciences cluster of companies in the Biopharma, Pharma and MedTech sectors). This is evidenced with the continued growth of investment by companies such as MSD in Carlow (major expansion in 2019), Waters Technologies and BD in Wexford and Sanofi in Waterford. The attraction of new investments by Opko Healthcare/Eirgen Pharma and West Pharmaceuticals in Waterford continues to build the Life Sciences Cluster in the Region.

Overall, there were 745 new jobs created in the South-East region by the FDI sector in 2020, bringing the total to 13,461.

In response to COVID-19, IDA migrated many of its business development and client engagement activities to digital platforms. IDA Ireland has developed a suite of digital content which can be accessed by potential investors. The Agency has developed this further and has put in place an E-site visit experience for potential investors. The use of digital platforms by IDA Ireland staff has contributed to an enhanced digital engagement with existing clients and also in hosting e-site visits with potential new investors.

Industry Clustering:

The IDA supports a growing Financial Services cluster in the South-East with significant client company operations in the Region including State Street, Kilkenny, BNY Mellon, Wexford and Sun Life Financial, Waterford. Indos Financial and Opus Funds (second site) both expanded in 2019 and in 2020 CSC Global also launched a second site in Wexford. An Industry Cluster – *Ireland South-East Financial Services Cluster* – was set up in Q1 2020 and a cluster manager was appointed. The cluster has been very active in gauging the needs of the Industry in the South-East over the course of 2020 and IDA continue to support.

This Industry Clusters has all enhanced the environment for enterprise activity as outlined in Strategic Objective 1 in the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan and IDA Ireland will continue to support the objective into the future.

The initiative in turn assist IDA in selling the South-East as a destination of choice for a second site location – being the main pillar of Strategic Objective 2.

There is a thriving, dynamic and innovative enterprise base in the Region and the presence of the 3rd level institutes of the Waterford Institute of Technology, IT Carlow and LIT (Clonmel Campus) is key to nurturing and producing the talented graduates required to help attract further investment in existing FDI companies in the region and winning new projects along with research centres such as TSSG, SEAM, 3D-WIT and PMBRC.

Winning investments is a challenge, particularly in the context of the current international operating environment due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Building on the success achieved to date IDA Ireland will continue to work with its partners and regional stakeholders in the South-East region through the Regional Enterprise Plans process.

Local Enterprise Office (LEOs)

In 2020 the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) continued to be the 'first stop shop' providing entrepreneurs and business owners with advice, guidance, financial assistance, and other supports. The developing pandemic saw their focus shift from assisting with start-up or growth, to triage and rescue. With 31 offices spread throughout the country the LEOs were truly operating at the coalface of the COVID-19 response to the SME sector and provided a 'signposting' service for all the relevant COVID-19 supports available through all State bodies.

The LEOs supported 35,236 jobs across 7,529 client companies in 2020 of which there was an additional 82 companies outside of the Dublin region. In 2020 there was a fall of 1,494 net jobs during the year the State. It is worth noting however, that micro enterprises were adding jobs with a gross job gains across all regions. The challenge ahead will be to restore businesses to growth once the impact of the pandemic subsides. The LEOs provided significant training and mentoring to small businesses in 2020 to help them navigate the particularly difficult trading environment created by COVID-19 and Brexit. Last year, the Local Enterprise Offices trained over 77,000 entrepreneurs and business representatives, up from 37,000 the year previous. 16,231 completed business mentoring assignments up from 10,756 in 2019.

In response to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, the LEOs quickly moved to introduce new schemes and adapt existing supports to meet the needs of micro and small enterprises across all regions and business sectors.

The Business Continuity Voucher, introduced in March 2020, offered businesses with up to 50 employees, across all sectors, a voucher of up to €2,500 in third party consultancy costs, and helped companies and sole traders to develop short-term and long-term strategies to respond to the COVID-19 restrictions and prepare for reopening of the economy.

This scheme closed for new applications in May 2020 and within that period the LEOs processed 14,871 applications and approved 12,077 of these to a value of €25.8m.

The **Trading Online Voucher Scheme (TOVs)** was adjusted from a 50% co-funding basis to 90% and businesses who had successfully implemented a previous voucher were now allowed to apply for a second voucher. Further amendments enabled sectors that were normally excluded from the scheme to apply.

In previous years this scheme would have seen an average of around 1,200 applications; in 2020 the LEOs processed 17,315 applications for TOVs and approved 12,984 of these. The unprecedented demand for the scheme saw funding rise from €2.3m to an estimated cost of €30m.

The Micro Enterprise Assistance Fund, introduced in September 2020, targeted a small cohort of micro enterprises that could not avail of existing government supports by virtue of their sector, size or by way of operating from a non-rateable premises, many of which were small local traders who provided unique services within their communities. A total of 196 successful applicants were awarded a grant of between €500 - €1,000 of vouched expenditure on adaptation and reconfiguration costs, as well as COVID-19 consumables such as PPE and sanitisation equipment.

Throughout 2020 and in spite of the pandemic and lockdowns, the LEOs continued to offer grant aid to entrepreneurs who spotted opportunities in the current climate to start or grow their businesses through their Feasibility, Priming and Expansion grant programmes. To assist in their remit of developing regional employment, the LEOs also continued to offer 'soft' supports by way of their free of charge **Mentoring programme**, where clients work with an experienced mentor to identify solutions to areas of exposure within their business.

The LEOs have pivoted their extensive suite of **Training programmes**, workshops and networking meetups to an online platform covering areas such as: cash management in a crisis; leading your business through COVID-19; and advice for employers impacted by the crisis.

During 2020, there have been 10,255 participants in the Mentoring Programme and 49,623 participants in the COVID training programmes. In addition to this, the LEOs launched a new 'Lunch & Learn' live training webinar series that is open and accessible to all LEO client companies and prospective clients across the country, with no registration or sign-up required. This new series complements existing online training and webinar programmes offered by the LEOs.

Many of the successful projects under the LEO Competitive fund in 2019 had to be put on hold as a result of the pandemic. These were collaborative projects between two or more LEOs; and LEOs working with other local groups like Chambers, Community Enterprise Centres, Education or training bodies, Local Authorities, or colleges. Many of these projects are aligned with the Strategic Objectives in the Regional Enterprise Plans and it is hoped that they can progress during 2021.

3. Achieving a Just Transition in Ireland's Regions

The Climate Action Plan 2019 sets out the measures by which Ireland can reduce its emissions from sectors outside the EU's Emissions Trading System by 30% (relative to 2005 levels) by 2030. It sets out ambitious environmental targets for Ireland to meet over the next 40 years.

Just Transition is a key part of climate action policy. It supports the idea that communities and individuals are safeguarded in the move to face the challenges presented by climate change, in a climate-proofed economy.

Under Action 164 of *Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019* the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committees were asked to include a Just Transition standing item on the agenda of each of the nine regional areas. This is now in place for all the committees and has encouraged consideration of region-specific impacts that transitioning to a low carbon economy will have in their region, and the possible solutions to mitigate these impacts.

How to manage a transition to a fundamentally new economic future was the focus of work at the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in late 2019 and early 2020. The Council's work, a key deliverable in the Government's Climate Action Plan and Future Jobs Ireland 2019, was detailed in their final report, *Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland* published in May 2020.

NESC's report is focused on how to manage the transition associated with climate change and digital automation, and identified recommendations to help Ireland address them and embrace the significant opportunities presented through three broad areas:

- continuous, pre-emptive workforce development;
- building resilient enterprises; and
- delivering high-impact targeted funding to support transition.

In the preparation of their report, NESC consulted with a number of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committees to consider the engagement already taking place in the regions and explore how place-based collaborative solutions could be adopted.

Appendix 1: Regional Funding approved for the South-East supported by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment during 2020

Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF)

The Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) was launched in May 2017 with the overarching aim of driving enterprise development and job creation in each region throughout Ireland.

Administered by Enterprise Ireland, it supports new collaborative and innovative initiatives that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the region/across regions, or nationally. Just under €100m has been approved across 68 projects nationally.

During 2020 the South-East Region secured funding of €1,987,378 for three projects*.

Project	Location	Description	Grant amount €
National Design Innovation HUB DAC	Carlow / Laois	The project involves a dedicated approach to entrepreneurship and ecosystem development in Rural Towns & Villages	396,800
South-East Economic Development Office	Waterford	The overall aim of this project is to create a Lean Industry 4.0 facility (LI4)	1,342,751
The Tradebridge Collaboration DAC	Wexford	This project creates new opportunities for EI & LEO clients to generate export sales and to open opportunities for the three South-East Ports.	247,827
Total			€1,987,378

*See the first South-East Regional Enterprise Plan for details of Calls 1 & 2.

Enterprise Centres Fund

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar TD, announced €775,655 in grants for nine enterprise centres in the South-East under Enterprise Ireland's Enterprise Centres Fund. Enterprise centres are embedded in communities in every county in the country. They provide space and training for entrepreneurs, allowing them to work remotely, access training and advice, and network with other business leaders.

Approvals (Not for profit centres):

Applicant Name (Correct legal entity name)	County	Nuts III Region	Grant amount €
Arclabs Research & Innovation Centre Waterford Institute of Technology	Waterford	South-East	119,830
Carlow Community Enterprise Centres CLG	Carlow	South-East	96,478
Dungarvan Enterprise Centre CLG	Waterford	South-East	64,369
Enterprise & Research Incubation Centre (ERIC)	Carlow	South-East	32,000
Kilkenny Community Enterprise Centre CLG t/a The Abbey Business Centre	Kilkenny	South-East	86,880
The Model County Enterprise Group CLG - Centre Enniscorthy	Wexford	South-East	98,400
The Model County Enterprise Group CLG - Centre The Hatch	Wexford	South-East	52,800
Waterford City Community Enterprise Centre CLG: Trading as: Waterford City Enterprise Centre	Waterford	South-East	80,503
Wexford Community Development Association Society Limited Trading as Wexford Enterprise Centre	Wexford	South-East	144,395
Total			€775,655

Appendix 2: Statistical snapshot – South-East

Constituent counties	Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford	
Regional Population and change (1996-2016)	449,538 (1996): 581,615 (2016) increase of 132,007	
Total in employment	190,900*	
Labour Force participation rate	57.4%*	
% of Male employment (State)	54.3%	
% of Female employment (State)	45.7%	
Live Register at 31/12/20	21,347	
Unemployment rate	5.8%*	
Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment at 31/12/20	26,804	
Unemployment blackspots ¹	15 ²	
Employed in Enterprise Ireland companies	220,613	
Total Employment outside Dublin in Enterprise Ireland companies	65%	
Jobs created in Enterprise Ireland companies ³	16,496	
Job Losses in Enterprise Ireland companies ⁴	17,368	
Net Change in Enterprise Ireland companies ⁵	-872	
EI supported employment and number of client companies (2019 – 2020)	2019	2020
	Jobs: 19,868	Jobs: 19,277
	Companies: 459	Companies: 473
IDA supported employment & number of client companies (2019 – 2020)	2019	2020
	Jobs: 13,096	Jobs: 13,461
	Companies: 73	Companies: 74
New jobs created in 2020 by the IDA ⁶	Over 20,000	
% of IDA investments to regional locations ⁷	52%	
IDA net job created ⁸	8,944	
LEO supported employment & number of client companies (2019 – 2020)	2019	2020
	Jobs: 360	Jobs: -144
	Companies: 971	Companies: 975

1. Unemployment Blackspots are defined as Electoral Districts with at least 200 people in the labour force and an unemployment rate of 27% or higher

2. Unemployment blackspots in the Region: Kilkenny (1), Tipperary (2), Waterford (9) and Wexford (3)

3. Enterprise Ireland End of Year Statement 2020

4. Enterprise Ireland End of Year Statement 2020

5. Enterprise Ireland End of Year Statement 2020

6. IDA Ireland Results for 2020

7. IDA Ireland Results for 2020

8. IDA Ireland Results for 2020

* CSO Q4 2020 Labour Force Survey

An Roinn Gnó, Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

23 Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 TD30
23 Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 TD30

T +353 (0)1 631 2121, 1890 220 222

www.enterprise.gov.ie

www.gov.ie

info@enterprise.gov.ie

An initiative of the Department of
Enterprise, Trade and Employment
gov.ie



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland