An Roinn Fiontar,
Turasóireachta agus Fostaíochta
Department of Enterprise,
Tourism and Employment

MID-EAST

Regional Enterprise Plan 2022-2025

Final Progress Report



Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment
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Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to present this Final Progress Report on the implementation of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2025. Since its launch in 2022, the Plan has sought to drive economic growth, innovation, and sustainable enterprise development across the region.

The Mid-East region comprises the counties of Meath, Kildare, and Wicklow. Since 2022, the focus has been on enhancing its economic vitality and integral role in contributing to the broader economy of the country.

The Regional Enterprise Plans are bottom-up plans developed and led by regional stakeholders, which focus on collaborative initiatives to strengthen the enterprise environment in each region. Each Regional Enterprise Plan is tailored to reflect regional strengths and opportunities and are aligned with the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022–2027 and national enterprise policy priorities such as decarbonisation and digitalisation.

To support balanced regional development and the implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plans, my Department, through Enterprise Ireland, has made over €150 million in regional enterprise development funding available since 2017. Schemes such as the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) have seen substantial investment in enterprise centres and hubs around the country, delivering supports to businesses in line with regional strengths. In the Mid-East, over €10 million was allocated across five projects through the REDF. This funding was complemented by the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme launched in 2023.

Strategic sectors in the Mid-East region, such as agri-food, equine, low-carbon, and content creation, have been supported through targeted investment, collaborative initiatives, and innovative programmes. These efforts have strengthened competitiveness, fostered local innovation, and supported high-quality, sustainable employment opportunities. A defining feature of this Plan has been the spirit of collaboration. Government agencies, local authorities, educational institutions, business representative bodies, and local industry have worked together to address challenges and seize opportunities, ensuring the Mid-East is well positioned to compete nationally and internationally.

Over the lifetime of the Plan, the region has seen the opening of the National Equine Innovation Centre at the National Irish Stud in 2022, the Boyne Valley Food Hub in 2023, and the THRIVE Centre of Business Excellence in 2025, as well as the delivery of the Clermont Screen Hub in Wicklow. These initiatives are making a major contribution to the region's enterprise ecosystem and demonstrate the Mid-East's ambition and capacity for innovation.

While challenges remain, the achievements documented in this report reflect the dedication and vision of all stakeholders. I have been heartened by the collaboration on display and encourage all stakeholders to continue to work together to deliver real results for the Mid-East.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Chairperson Owen Brennan for his leadership and bringing his wealth of experience to support delivery of the Plan's objectives. I would also like to thank Programme Manager Michelle Goodwin and her predecessors Conor Sweeney and Chris Fogarty, the members of the Steering Committee, and all regional partners whose commitment has been instrumental in delivering on the actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan.



My Department commissioned an independent review of the Regional Enterprise Plan initiative in 2025, which consulted widely with regional stakeholders and provided an opportunity to take stock of our approach. Taking on board the findings of the review, we will continue to build on what has been achieved and strengthen our support for regional enterprise development into the future.

Peter Burke TD
Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

Chairperson's Introduction

It is with great pride that I present this final progress report on the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan. Over the course of this initiative, our collective efforts have been guided by a clear vision: to strengthen enterprise by harnessing our unique strengths, to foster innovation, and build a resilient enterprise ecosystem across the counties of Meath, Kildare, and Wicklow.

At the heart of this vision were five strategic objectives, each designed to unlock new opportunities and position the Mid-East as a leader in enterprise development:

- **Agri-Food Hubs:** We set out to establish the Mid-East as the primary location for the development of interconnected agri-food hubs. These hubs are now laying the foundation for a thriving ecosystem that unites entrepreneurs, leading-edge companies, and public sector partners in advancing food innovation and education.
- **Screen Content Creation:** By developing a dedicated **Content Creation Enterprise Hub** at Wicklow County Campus, the Mid-East has strengthened Ireland's East Coast as a centre of excellence for screen content. This initiative provides specialised supports that empower creative entrepreneurs to explore new business models, scale their businesses, and expand internationally.

  The region has also become a **catalyst for global film and television production**, hosting internationally acclaimed series such as *The Traitors*, *Wednesday*, and *Vikings*. These productions showcase the Mid-East's unique landscapes, skilled workforce, and supportive infrastructure, reinforcing its reputation as a premier destination for screen content creation.
- **Equine Innovation:** The establishment of the National Equine Innovation Centre at the Irish National Stud has provided a single access point for equine technical and entrepreneurial innovation. This has supported the growth of equine businesses across the Mid-East, ensuring that our region remains synonymous with excellence in this globally recognised industry.
- **Low-carbon Transition:** In line with Ireland's *National Energy and Climate Plan*, the Mid-East has accelerated its transition to a low-carbon economy. Through projects in offshore wind, circular economy initiatives, and Just Transition supports, we have demonstrated our commitment to sustainability and regional leadership in climate action.

- **Enterprise Ecosystem:** Finally, we have worked to strengthen the region's enterprise ecosystem by expanding networks of co-working and innovation hubs. This connectivity has fostered resilience, innovation, and collaboration, ensuring that businesses across the Mid-East are well positioned to thrive in a rapidly changing economy.

Together, these objectives have delivered tangible progress and lasting impact. They reflect the dedication of our Steering Committee, enterprise agencies, local authorities, and the many stakeholders who contributed their expertise and energy.

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Regional Enterprise Programme Manager, Michelle Goodwin, the Economic and Enterprise Development Teams in Wicklow, Meath and Kildare local authorities, the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee and all the stakeholders who actively engaged and collaborated.

As Chairperson, I am deeply grateful for the commitment shown throughout this journey. While this report marks the conclusion of the current plan, it provides a strong foundation for future ambition and growth.



The lessons learned and successes achieved will inform the next phase of enterprise development, ensuring that the Mid-East region remains competitive, inclusive, and forward-looking - ready to seize future opportunities.

Owen Brennan
Chairperson of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan

Mid-East Final Progress Report

This progress report documents overall implementation of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to end of 2025, building on the information in the Mid-East mid-term progress report published in April 2024. The progress report has been prepared and signed off by the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee.

Mid-East Highlights

The **THRIVE Centre of Business Excellence**, opened in September 2025, is a 21,000 square foot hub for enterprise growth and FDI in the Mid-East region. Located in Navan's IDA Business Park and supported by a €6 million investment from Meath County Council, THRIVE offers a training facility, board and meeting rooms, mentorship, industry networks, and training supports to help SMEs and start-ups scale. Since launch, more than 1,000 participants have taken part in programmes, events, and network activities. The centre fosters collaboration, innovation, and knowledge-sharing, positioning Navan as a competitive location for investment and entrepreneurship while supporting creation of high-value jobs.

The Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) and Programme Manager supported THRIVE's development including the strategic brief, contributing to industry insights, and facilitating the formation of four new enterprise networks. This groundwork strengthened stakeholder engagement and ensured the facility aligned with industry needs.

The **Food, Drink and Agri-Innovation Hub** in Athy supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Kildare County Council, and Coca-Cola offers a fresh approach to food and culinary skills training, as well as space for food producers in County Kildare and the wider region to access high-class facilities. These facilities support them in developing innovative food concepts and commence small-scale production. In 2025, an expert in food science and development was appointed food/ programme manager tasked to deliver effective programmes for entrepreneurs and trainees, supported by Local Enterprise Office Kildare, Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board, Maynooth University, and the South East Technological University.

The **Clermont Screen Hub** in Wicklow is a dynamic creative facility at the centre of Ireland's film and television sector. The 10,000 square foot hub offers private offices, co-working spaces, and a programme of networking events, workshops, and sector meetups designed to foster collaboration, support enterprise growth, and stimulate job creation.

Wicklow is Ireland's second most filmed county, hosting more than 40 major productions including *Irish Wish*, *The Wonder*, *Disenchanted*, *The Last Duel*, and *Vikings*. Nationally, the screen industry contributed €322 million to the economy in 2023, highlighting the strategic value of regional hubs. Screen-driven tourism also delivers significant returns, with Wicklow generating €130 million from overseas visitors and €92 million from domestic tourists in 2024. The Hub is continuing to build momentum by nurturing talent, supporting small businesses, and capitalising on location appeal. There are also plans to expand which will see further supports for the industry.

The **National Equine Innovation Centre** was opened in the Irish National Stud in 2022 and focuses on innovation, applied research, commercialisation and learning in the equine sector. Since opening, the NEIC has become Ireland's leading hub for equine innovation, applied research, and knowledge exchange. NEIC connects industry, academia, and technology partners to drive advancements in equine science, sustainability, and commercialisation. It is part of Ireland's Connected Hub network.

Over the past three years, the Centre has delivered specialist training programmes, supported collaborative research projects, and facilitated technology adoption to enhance competitiveness within the sector. Positioned in the centre of Ireland's equine industry, the Centre is shaping the future of equine business and education, strengthening Ireland's global reputation as a centre of excellence. Looking ahead, the NEIC will continue to expand its research partnerships, accelerate innovation pathways, and create new opportunities for economic growth and international collaboration in the equine sector.

The **GRID - Greystones Regional Innovation District** has become a cornerstone for enterprise development in Wicklow since its launch. Located in a modern, sustainable environment, The GRID offers 10,000 square feet of flexible office space across two floors, including private office suites and dedicated desks. Designed to accelerate start-up growth and empower regional businesses, it provides lease and license options as well as individual desk rentals to meet diverse business needs.

The GRID, part of Ireland's Connected Hub network fosters collaboration and innovation through networking opportunities and shared resources, creating a vibrant ecosystem for entrepreneurs and SMEs. By supporting businesses in technology, creative industries, and professional services, The GRID is driving job creation and economic resilience in the region. Looking ahead, The GRID aims to strengthen Wicklow's position as a regional innovation hub, contributing to long-term economic growth and supporting the creation of high-value jobs across the county.

The **Boyne Valley Food Hub** at the Meath Enterprise Centre, Navan, is a flagship initiative of the Boyne Valley Food Innovation District and a cornerstone for food enterprise development in the Mid-East. Officially opened in May 2023, the €2.4 million project—funded through €1.58 million from the Regional Enterprise Development Fund with the balance supported by Meath County Council - provides seven state-of-the-art food-grade production units and a dedicated co-working and knowledge lab. These facilities foster clustering, collaboration, and innovation in line with Foodwise 2025 and the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan. Since launch, the Hub has delivered new product development and sensory science training through the GEN Sandbox programme, alongside strong partnerships with Maynooth University and Teagasc.

The Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan played a critical enabling role by prioritising agri-food hubs, securing funding, coordinating partners, and supporting phased development. The Hub strengthens the region's reputation as a centre of food innovation.



Case Studies from the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan

1. Centre of Food Culture Ireland

Centre of Food Culture Ireland

Strategic Objective

To create a national Centre for food and drink culture to facilitate education, discussion, enterprise, and advocacy by connecting people to their food, soil, and sea.

Key Actions and Outcomes

Carried out in 2021/2022, the feasibility study for the Centre of Food Culture Ireland (COFCI) involved consultation with educators, chefs, industry bodies, producers, state agencies, and established culinary centres. The study confirmed a clear gap and strong demand for a centre of excellence representing Irish gastronomic heritage, shaping the future food landscape, and strengthening connections to the source of our food. Its findings informed the development of a five-year strategy for establishing the Centre.

A Development Manager was appointed in late 2023 to oversee implementation. Following administrative setup, COFCI began delivering Meet the Maker and Farm Walk events in Meath and Louth in 2024, expanding to Dublin, Wicklow, Leitrim, and Galway in 2025. These educational events support knowledge transfer in artisan food production and farming, platform SMEs, and have engaged almost 300 participants over two years.

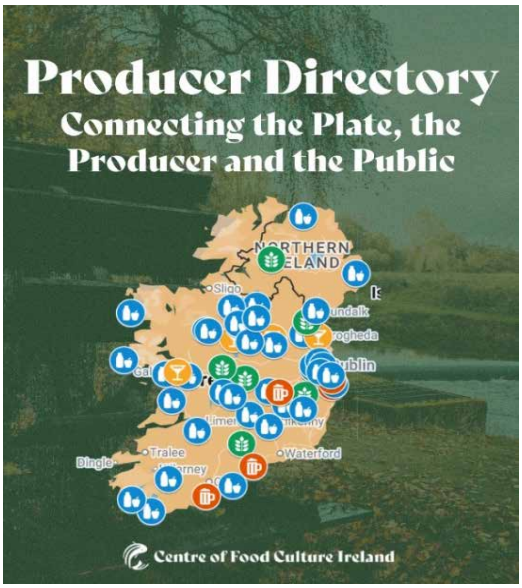
In 2024, management of the Samhain Festival of Food and Culture transferred to COFCI. Now its flagship event, the festival attracted over 7,500 attendees in 2025 (+50% vs 2024), providing a platform for artisan producers and offering a four-day tourism opportunity for the region. As part of the festival, COFCI delivers the Samhain Symposium, introduced in 2024, gathering more than 100 national food-system stakeholders. In 2025 it focused on integrated food policy, was attended by Minister Helen McEntee TD, and received significant press coverage.

COFCI has also strengthened its partnership with UNISG Pollenzo, Italy, coordinating internships and study visits, including a 2024 seven-day programme for 15 international students visiting over 20 Irish producers and hospitality providers. This model will guide future collaborations with educational institutions.

In Q4 2025, COFCI launched Ireland's first islandwide directory of food producers, now featuring over 100 producers and growing. The directory and other initiatives have driven a 300% increase in social media followers, now almost 4,500 across COFCI channels, with a further 5,500 following Samhain Festival channels.

COFCI is now entering Year 3 of its strategy, progressing feasibility work for a physical centre, expanding its events programme and partnerships, and developing a digital food-heritage library. Initial setup was funded by Meath and Louth County Councils. A key success is COFCI's emerging financial sustainability through ticketed events, grants, and sponsorship from organisations including Fáilte Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Creative Ireland, LEADER, Bord Bia, Bank of Ireland, and Musgraves.

The Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) supported COFCI's rise to national prominence by increasing visibility, integrating it into the REP Steering Committee, expanding networks, and helping secure sponsorships. COFCI has grown from a regional initiative into an emerging national platform in Ireland's food culture and innovation ecosystem.





2. Clermont Screen Hub and Wicklow's Screen Industry: Sector Highlight

Wicklow is widely regarded as *Europe's Hollywood*, hosting Ireland's most established studio cluster and attracting global productions. The county combines world-class infrastructure with stunning locations, making the screen industry a cornerstone of Wicklow's economy.

Launched in 2023, the Clermont Screen Hub is a dynamic creative space designed to bring together filmmakers, content creators, and industry professionals. Located on Wicklow County Campus in Rathnew, it offers 10,000 square feet of private offices and co-working spaces, meeting rooms, podcast and screening facilities, and event spaces. Its mission is to boost job creation by supporting local businesses in the film and audio-visual sector.

Now in its second year of operation, the Hub is gaining momentum with rising occupancy, increased use of training and meeting facilities, and strong participation in industry events. Tenants represent a diverse mix of services including:

- Film, TV and video production
- Post-production sound and foley
- Digital content creation
- Sector-specific accountancy
- Prop and model making
- Gaming and animation development
- Podcast and audio production.

Some flagship productions in recent years include:

- **Netflix's** Wednesday **(Season 2)**: Filmed at Ardmore and Ashford Studios with Wicklow locations like Powerscourt, boosting global visibility.
- **Amazon's Vikings and Vikings: Valhalla:** Multi-season franchise headquartered at Ashford Studios, leveraging Wicklow's landscapes.
- **Jason Statham's** Shelter **(2026)**: Shot across Wicklow Town, Enniskerry, Sally Gap, and Clermont House.
- **Chris O'Dowd's** Small Town, Big Stories: Used Clermont Hub as a production base.

Integrated Supports and Infrastructure

A major benefit of the Hub is its co-location with a range of key industry services and supports, including:

- The Film and TV Crew Academy – a Screen Ireland-funded initiative delivering regionally focused skills training to address crew shortages.
- Screen Wicklow – the county's one-stop shop for filmmakers, offering free services for permits, location scouting, and crew connections. Screen Wicklow facilitates over 100 film requests annually, including shoots on Wicklow County Campus grounds, reinforcing the region's reputation as a film-friendly location with skilled crews and versatile landscapes.



- Studios – Ardmore Studios (Bray) offers 8 sound stages and over 120,000 square feet of space; Ashford Studios (Ashford) is home to *Vikings* and other major series. Three Rock Studios (Kilcoole) serves commercials and smaller productions.
- The Local Enterprise Office Wicklow, the Wicklow County Council Economic Development Team and the Town Centre First team.



Vikings, Filmed in Wicklow

Impact and Strategic Value

Clermont Screen Hub strengthens Wicklow's position as Ireland's leading screen destination, complementing major studios (Ardmore, Ashford) and supporting SMEs that service global productions. By providing affordable, professional space and integrated training and networking, the Hub:

- Drives job creation and enterprise growth
- Supports inward investment from high-profile productions
- Builds a sustainable talent pipeline
- Enhances regional competitiveness in a sector worth €430 million annually to Ireland's economy
- Provides a landing space for foreign direct investment in this globally developing sector.

Looking Ahead

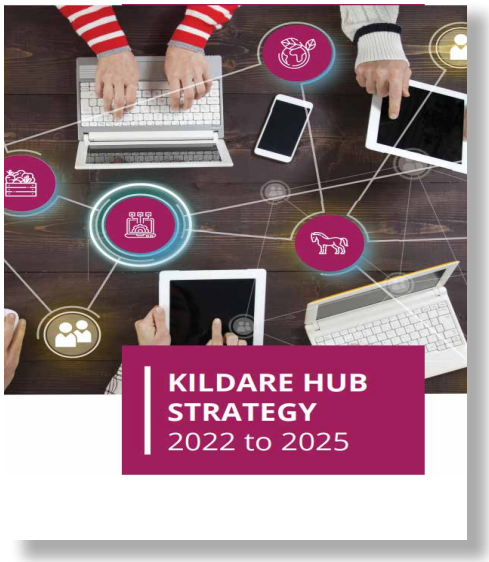
A new post-production studio is due to launch in Q1 2026, enabling tenants and hub users to produce podcasts and advanced post-production work. With continued investment in facilities, skills, and business supports, Clermont Screen Hub will remain central to the Mid-East's ambition to be a premier hub for screen content creation, delivering economic impact, creative innovation, and global visibility for Wicklow.

3. Kildare Hub Strategy

In 2022, Kildare County Council launched its *K-Hub Strategy 2022–2025*. The strategy aims to develop a network of enterprise and innovation hubs that supports entrepreneurship and remote/blended work, regenerates town and village centres, and aligns with national/regional priorities on climate action, digitalisation and skills - delivering a collaborative, sustainable, future-focused hub ecosystem in Kildare.

The strategy is based on four pillars:

1. Policy development toolkit – location assessment and commuter/workforce data.
2. Infrastructure development – sites, facilities, sustainable systems, and capital assets.
3. Ecosystem development – collaboration, knowledge sharing, and community building.
4. Promotion and marketing – branding and positioning of the hub network.



Achievements delivered under the strategy include:

- **MERITS, Naas (flagship tech hub):** Fully operational 'Innovation ThinkSpace' for startups and scale-ups; facilities include offices, hot desks, meeting rooms, podcast/VR labs, programmes and LEO supports. Recently joined the SIRO–Vodafone Gigabit Hub Initiative to enhance connectivity.
- **National Equine Innovation Centre (Irish National Stud):** Open and hosting equine startups with offices/desks and meeting space; established under Kildare's hub network to accelerate equine tech and research commercialisation.
- **Athy Food, Drink & Agri Innovation Hub (Model School):** Opened in October 2025, the Hub provides a fresh approach to culinary skills training and enterprise development. It offers high class facilities for food producers enabling them to develop innovative food concepts, commence small scale production, and gain practical experience through a dedicated demonstration café.

Projects underway include:

- **The Circular Works (Athy, former CBS):** New circular-economy and green-skills centre, supported by €1 million in funding under the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht's Community Recognition Fund, providing training and social-enterprise incubation.
- **Fashion, Textiles & Design Hub (Monasterevin):** Building work has commenced on this new hub which will provide infrastructure and a range of supports to the fashion and textile sector.

Network & Community Impact

- A growing mixed public–private hub network (e.g., Osprey Business Centre, Venture House, Clane Project Centre), strengthening flexible workspace, supports and sector expertise county-wide, contributing to town-centre revitalisation, upskilling and inclusive employment.

Policy Alignment & Governance

- The KHub Strategy is anchored in national and regional policy frameworks and the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan (e.g., equine innovation and low-carbon transition strategic objectives), with a network-wide management model led by Kildare County Council and partners.

Recognition

- Winner, Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards 2025 – Promoting Economic Development, citing Kildare's leadership in partnership-driven, sustainable enterprise infrastructure and its blend of public hubs and nine privately owned mixed-use hubs.

Outcome

In summary, Kildare's hub programme has moved from plan to county-wide delivery, with flagship assets operational, sector-specific centres launched, and two new hubs due by mid-2026 - all under an award-winning, policy-aligned strategy that couples regeneration with entrepreneurship, skills and climate action.

Overview of the Regional Enterprise Plans

Balanced regional enterprise development is a Government priority; the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and its agencies contribute to this agenda in several ways, including through the nine Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs).

The Regional Enterprise Plans 2022-2025 were bottom-up plans developed and led by regional stakeholders, which focused on collaborative initiatives to strengthen the enterprise ecosystem in each region. They were considered complementary to the ongoing work of key enterprise stakeholders including IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland. The REPs aimed to help drive economic growth and sustain better standards of living throughout Ireland. Each plan was underpinned by an understanding of the unique local strengths and assets in that region.

The REPs were aligned to national policy priorities including the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027, green growth and digitalisation. Each plan included several strategic objectives and actions under each of these. Some REP actions focused on delivery of enterprise centres and hubs in the regions and associated programmatic supports to businesses. Since 2017, the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment has allocated over €150 million to regional enterprise development through a range of schemes administered by Enterprise Ireland, some of which have funded key REP projects.



The nine REP regions are the North-East (Cavan, Monaghan, Louth), North-West (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim), West (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon), Mid-West (Limerick, Clare, Tipperary), South-West (Cork, Kerry), South-East (Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford), Midlands (Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath), Mid-East (Meath, Kildare, Wicklow) and Dublin.

The REPs evolved from the Regional Action Plans for Jobs in place from 2015 to 2017. The first set of REPs launched in 2018 and covered the period to 2020.

The latest plans launched in 2022 and were originally to run until the end of 2024; following a one-year extension to support implementation and enable an independent review of the REP initiative, the plans came to an end in December 2025. Mid-term progress reports for each of the REPs were published in April 2024 and are available on the Department's website.

At regional level, each REP is implemented by a Steering Committee made up of regional stakeholders and chaired by an enterprise champion, typically a senior private sector businessperson. A full-time REP Programme Manager, hosted in a local authority, drives implementation on the ground. The Department oversees implementation of the REP initiative at the national level; this includes hosting the REP National Oversight Group (NOG), co-chaired by the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, and Ministers of State. The NOG provides overall strategic direction for the REP initiative and typically met twice annually to review progress, share insights and guide future planning.



Smart Specialisation

In July 2022, the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (DETE) published Ireland's National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022–2027 (S3). Its goal is to drive innovation-led and sustainable regional growth by leveraging local sectoral strengths and emerging opportunities through collaboration among businesses, research institutions, public authorities, and civil society. S3 links DETE's Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) and the Regional Assemblies' Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) with national innovation strategies, ensuring alignment in Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) policy and planning both regionally and nationally.

Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy fulfils a European Commission requirement for Ireland to access structural funding under European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Policy Objective 1: A Smarter Europe. The preparation of the strategy itself represents a key strategic outcome under Ireland's ERDF Programmes 2021-2027.

Launched in November 2022, the Regional Development Monitor (RDM) is a joint initiative of Ireland's three Regional Assemblies and the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO). The RDM provides an online mapping viewer with socio-economic and environmental indicators, enabling stakeholders to track progress under themes such as:

- Green Region
- Liveable Region
- Creative and Innovative Region

This tool supports evidence-based decision-making and promotes transparency in regional development. The Regional Development Monitor also includes a Smart Specialisation dashboard to enable better monitoring of progress.

The first progress report on Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy was published in March 2025 and progress under the eight goals of the strategy were highlighted.

- Goal 1: Linking national and regional enterprise and innovation policy
- Goal 2: Enabling "A Smarter Europe"
- Goal 3: Improving research and innovation capacity in Ireland's regions
- Goal 4: Encouraging more regionally dispersed RD&I
- Goal 5: Advancing the twin green and digital transformation
- Goal 6: Skills for innovation
- Goal 7: Reinforcing sectoral strengths
- Goal 8: Monitoring progress on regional innovation, and building international connections

Each of the Regional Assemblies sit on the National Smart Specialisation Implementation Group which has overall responsibility for the delivery of the Strategy's national and regional strategic priorities. In ensuring delivery of regional priorities, the Regional Assemblies also sit on the steering committees for the REPs. Working with the REPs is an important vehicle in translating S3 into regional and local impact.



Smart Specialisation in the Mid-East Region:

Smart Specialisation is an EU-driven policy concept that provides a place-based and sectoral perspective on innovation policy that helps focus investment on areas of regional strength to drive competitiveness and growth. The development of Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022–2027 was an EU Commission requirement under Policy Objective 1 of EU Cohesion Policy: 'A Smarter Europe', ensuring access to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and other funding streams. The selection by the European Commission of the wider Eastern and Midland Region to receive a Regional Innovation Valley (RIV) label in 2024 has the potential to unlock new collaboration and funding opportunities.

Regional Strategic Objectives & Smart Specialisation Domains

Regional Strategic Objective	Smart Specialisation Domain
1. Collaborative Food Ecosystem	Agri-Food Innovation – interconnected hubs supporting artisan and advanced food businesses. 3 established Food and Drink Networks.
2. Screen Content Leadership	Screen Content Creation – Wicklow's hub driving film, TV and digital media.
3. Equine Sector Innovation	Equine Industry – National centre fostering technical and entrepreneurial growth. Possible Cluster opportunity.
4. Low-Carbon Transition	Low-carbon Technologies – Offshore wind, circular economy, renewable energy and Just Transition/ Urbact initiatives.
5. Enterprise Connectivity & Resilience	Enterprise Ecosystem – Expansion of co-working and innovation hubs across the region. Quality job creation – Management development programmes, upskilling/reskilling.

Smart Specialisation in the Mid-East Region is about focusing innovation investment on the region's strongest sectors – agri-food, screen content, equine, low-carbon and enterprise ecosystems – to create jobs, attract investment, and build resilience. It connects local strengths to national and EU strategies, ensuring the Mid-East is positioned as a competitive, forward-looking region.



Strategic Objective 1:
Position the Mid-East as the primary location for the development of agri food hubs

Action 1.1: The completion of the Boyne Valley Food Hub (Phase 1) and the development of the Digital Innovation Smart Agri Hub (Phase 2)

Action Leader: Meath County Council, Meath Enterprise, and Boyne Valley Food Innovation District
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Phase 1 - Action Complete; Phase 2 - Action Partially Complete

Action Update:

Introduction

Phase 1 – Boyne Valley Food Hub
The Boyne Valley Food Hub, located at the Meath Enterprise Centre in Navan, is a flagship initiative under the Boyne Valley Food Innovation District. Officially opened in May 2023 by Minister of State Neale Richmond, the Hub was developed to accelerate the growth of food and drink enterprises across the Mid-East. It provides state-of-the-art facilities, fosters collaboration, and strengthens the region's reputation as a centre of food innovation. The project represents a total investment of €2.4 million, with €1.58 million provided through the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) and the balance funded by Meath County Council.

Steps Taken – Food Hub

- **Facilities development:** Seven food-grade production units established to support start-ups and scaling SMEs.
- **Knowledge and co-working lab:** A food-specific co-working and knowledge lab created to encourage clustering, connectivity, and knowledge sharing.
- **Integration with strategy:** Aligned with *Foodwise 2025* and the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan, ensuring national policy coherence.

Outcome – Food Hub

The Hub has become a catalyst for regional food development, having delivered new product development and sensory science training through the GEN Sandbox programme and collaborations with Maynooth University and Teagasc. The facility provides infrastructure and access to collaborative networks that enable SMEs to scale, innovate, and compete globally.



Conor Cogan, Business Owner, Meath Enterprise Centre, Councillor Mike Bray, Meath County Council, Gary O'Meara, CEO, Meath Enterprise, Neil Richmond TD, Minister of State, Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Carol Gibbons, Divisional Manager, Enterprise Ireland, Jackie Maguire, Chief Executive, Meath County Council

Phase 2 – Digital Innovation Smart Agri Hub

Building on the success of the Food Hub, Phase 2 involves the development of the Digital Innovation Smart Agri Hub, designed to provide the structure and environment for ambitious food and agri-tech disruptors.

Steps Taken – Agri Hub

- **Feasibility study:** Enterprise Ireland-funded study completed in February 2020.
- **Design:** Plans for a 2,750m² innovation centre over four floors at the Meath Enterprise Centre.
- **Digital adoption:** Supports SMEs in AI, augmented reality, robotics, machine learning, blockchain, big data, cleantech, and deeptech.
- **Collaboration and resilience:** Strengthens regional collaboration and future-proofs the ecosystem, particularly in climate and supply chain systems.
- **Funding exploration:** Meath Enterprise is actively pursuing funding to complete Phase 2.

Outcome – Agri Hub

Once operational, the Smart Agri Hub will provide SME innovation and accelerator supports, drive digital transformation, and enhance productivity and inclusion. It will complement the Food Hub by integrating advanced technologies into food and agri-tech enterprises, ensuring competitiveness in a changing global environment. Together, these multimillion investments directly advance Action 1.1, positioning the Boyne Valley as a focal point for food innovation, resilience, and sustainability.

Action 1.2: The development of the Food, Drink and Agri-Innovation Hub

Action Leader: Kildare County Council and Kildare Local Enterprise Office (LEO)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction

The Food, Drink and Agri Innovation Hub in Athy represents a transformative investment in the Mid-East's food enterprise ecosystem. The Hub provides a fresh approach to culinary skills training and enterprise development. It offers high-quality facilities for food producers in County Kildare and the wider region, enabling them to develop innovative food concepts, commence small scale production, and gain practical experience through a dedicated demonstration café.

Steps Taken

- **Refurbishment of heritage building:** The old Model School in Athy was redeveloped with a €5.1 million investment through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), with matched funding by Kildare County Council, and further support from Coca Cola, completed in October 2025.
- **Skills hub:** A 16-station learning and demonstration kitchen was established to deliver accredited career training programmes, continuing education, and industry focused courses for food entrepreneurs, professionals, and chefs.
- **Community timeshare incubator kitchen:** A shared use commercial kitchen business model was created to allow culinary entrepreneurs to develop and expand their operations.
- **Community Food Discovery Centre:** Chefs and nutritionists now work with food companies, retailers, restaurateurs, and community groups to educate on nutrition science and healthy food practices.
- **Co-working / Collaboration Zone:** A hot desk facility with 16 workstations, two private meeting rooms, and a food learners' lounge was developed to foster peer to peer connection, mentoring, and innovation.
- **Programme manager appointment:** In 2025, a food programme manager with food science and development expertise was appointed to deliver effective programmes, supported by the Kildare Local Enterprise Office, the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB), Maynooth University, and the South East Technological University (SETU).
- **Community engagement:** Local schools are being engaged to raise awareness of skill development and career pathways, particularly for early school leavers.

Final Outcome

The Hub complements Kildare County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan objectives by strengthening local food systems, supporting producers, markets, and restaurants through Local Enterprise Office training and mentoring, and capitalising on regional tourism growth. It directly enhances food tourism initiatives along the River Barrow and supports flagship events such as the annual Taste of Kildare festival.

The opening of the refurbished Hub in October 2025 marked a significant milestone in regional enterprise development. The Hub now provides a comprehensive ecosystem for food innovation, skills training, and entrepreneurship. It is expected to deliver long-term impact by fostering sustainable food enterprises, creating career pathways, and positioning Athy as a focal point for food innovation and tourism in the Mid-East.

Action 1.3: The development of food incubation development hub in County Wicklow

Action Leader: Wicklow County Council
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Partially Complete

Action Update:

Introduction

This action focuses on strengthening smart specialisation and innovation capacity. In Wicklow, this has translated into the exploration of a food incubation development hub to build on the success of the Wicklow Naturally food and drink brand and to provide infrastructure for food and agri enterprise growth. The hub would serve as a focal point for entrepreneurs, producers, and innovators, supporting enterprise development, skills training, and food tourism.

Steps Taken

- **Brand growth:** Wicklow Naturally has experienced continuous growth throughout 2025, supported by networking events and food festivals that have promoted local producers and hospitality businesses. A number of networking events and festivals have taken place which has resulted in promotion and growth of the brand. The network has hosted a number of national and international media trips to highlight Wicklow based food and drink developers resulting in high profile media coverage.
- **Knowledge sharing:** In October 2025, the Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) Programme Manager organised a field trip to the Bia Innovator Campus in Athenry. This provided valuable insights into funding models, successful planning, and the operation of food incubation facilities.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** The REP is engaging with stakeholders and food and agri-sector experts to assess the requirement for a food hub in Wicklow. These consultations are helping to identify demand, potential activities, and infrastructure needs.
- **Feasibility study planning:** Following the field trip and stakeholder engagement, funding will be sought to complete an updated feasibility study. This study will provide evidence on demand for a food incubation hub and outline the facilities required to support local enterprise.

Final Outcome

The development of a food incubation hub in Wicklow will provide a dedicated space for food entrepreneurs and producers, enabling them to innovate, collaborate, and scale their businesses. By leveraging the success of *Wicklow Naturally* and adopting best practice models from the Bia Innovator Campus, Wicklow can establish a hub that is demand driven, sustainable, and aligned with regional enterprise needs.

The hub will also complement Wicklow's food tourism initiatives, strengthen local supply chains, and create new career pathways in the food and agri-sector. Once completed, it will directly advance Action 1.3 by embedding smart specialisation into the region's food economy, ensuring Wicklow plays a central role in the Mid-East's innovation ecosystem.



Wicklow Naturally

Action 1.4: The creation of the Centre of Food Culture, Ireland

Action Leader: Meath County Council and Boyne Valley Flavours
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
The Centre of Food Culture Ireland (COFCI) was established following a feasibility study carried out in 2020/2021, initially launched as the Centre of Food Culture Boyne Valley. Conceived as a social enterprise, COFCI aims to promote Ireland's food culture, support artisan producers, and foster knowledge transfer across the food system. A Development Manager was appointed in late 2023 to oversee the initial setup phase, working with founding local authorities and the board of directors to establish the organisation's foundations.

Steps Taken

- **Administrative setup and digital launch:** In 2023, COFCI completed its governance and operational structures, enabling the launch of digital channels in early 2024.
- **Educational programmes:** Beginning in 2024, COFCI delivered Meet the Maker, Masterclass, and Farm Walk events in Meath and Louth. These expanded nationwide in 2025 to Galway, Leitrim, Wicklow, Dublin, Meath, and Louth. The programmes facilitated knowledge transfer in artisan food production and farming, while also educating consumers, students, and hospitality professionals about provenance and sustainability. Almost 300 participants engaged in these initiatives across 2024–2025.
- **Flagship festival:** In 2024, management of the Samhain Festival of Food and Culture transferred to COFCI. By 2025, the festival attracted 7,500 attendees, representing a 50% increase on 2024 figures (5,000 attendees). Alongside the festival, COFCI hosts the Samhain Symposium, which convened 80 food networks in 2024 and 100 stakeholders in 2025, focusing on integrated national food policy.
- **International partnerships:** Building on relationships established during the feasibility study, COFCI strengthened its collaboration with the University of Gastronomic Sciences (UNISG) in Italy. In 2025, COFCI coordinated internships and a 7-day study trip for 15 students to over 20 hospitality providers and producers in the Boyne Valley. A return visit has already been confirmed for Q1 2026, cementing the partnership as a recurring exchange.

- **Digital innovation:** At the 2025 Samhain Symposium, COFCI launched Ireland's first islandwide directory of food producers, which already includes over 200 entries spanning artisan and farmhouse producers, growers, craft breweries, and distilleries. This platform connects producers with chefs, consumers, and state agencies, strengthening networks and visibility across the food sector.

Final Outcome

COFCI has quickly established itself as a national platform for food culture, combining education, events, and international partnerships. Its flagship Samhain Festival and Symposium have become central fixtures in Ireland's food calendar, while its educational programmes and producer directory provide tangible supports for artisans and entrepreneurs.

Looking ahead, COFCI is progressing into Year 3 of its five-year strategy. Priorities include feasibility work on a physical centre, expansion of its educational events programme into accredited courses and seasonal schools, and the development of a Digital Food Heritage Library to preserve and promote Ireland's food traditions.

Conclusion

By embedding food culture into the region's economic and social fabric, Centre of Food Culture Ireland directly advances Action 1.4 of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan, positioning the Mid-East as a leader in food tourism, heritage, and enterprise.



Strategic Objective 2:
Develop the Mid-East as a hub for the screen content creation sector

Action 2.1: Develop and operate a Content Creation Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus, Rathnew

Action Leader: Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Local Enterprise Office (LEO)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
In Q4 2024, Wicklow County Council and the Wicklow LEO successfully delivered Action 2.1 under the strategic objective to position the Mid-East as a hub for screen content creation. The launch of the Clermont Screen Hub at Wicklow County Campus marked a significant milestone in strengthening Wicklow's reputation as Ireland's *Hollywood of Europe*. This initiative provides a dedicated space for film, television, gaming, and digital media professionals, fostering collaboration, innovation, and job creation in the audio-visual sector.

Steps Taken

- **Construction and launch (2023–2024):** The Hub was developed at Wicklow County Campus, offering 10,000 square feet of private offices, co-working areas, and production facilities.
- **Facilities established:** State-of-the-art amenities include film and video production suites, sound recording studios, gaming and animation spaces, and conferencing facilities.
- **Tenant engagement:** Expressions of interest were sought from creative businesses, attracting early tenants such as major international productions.
- **Funding and support:** The Hub benefited from an estimated €1.8 million investment from Wicklow County Council and €1.43 million from the Regional Enterprise Development Fund. The Hub is complemented by Arts Council initiatives like the Wicklow Short Film Award Scheme, which allocated €30,000 in grants to local filmmakers
- **Community integration:** Partnerships with Screen Wicklow enabled events, training, and networking opportunities for local creatives, embedding the Hub within the regional creative ecosystem.

Outcomes and Impact:
By H1 2025, the Clermont Screen Hub entered its second year of operation, achieving strong occupancy and industry recognition. Notable productions supported by the Hub include:

- Netflix's *Wednesday* – a globally successful series filmed in Ireland.
- *UPS Shelter*, a Jason Statham production – reinforcing Wicklow's status as a premier filming destination.

These productions have since wrapped, freeing space for long-term tenants such as Gold as Gold, Create School, and Mosart Ltd. A post-production studio, scheduled for launch in Q1 2026, will enable podcast creation and advanced editing services, further expanding the Hub's capabilities.

Film is now also a growing industry for Meath, strengthening its reputation as both a cultural destination and an economic driver. County Meath has become a thriving centre for film and television, with productions such as Ridley Scott's *The Last Duel*, *Braveheart* and the recent filming of *The Traitors* showcasing its historic sites and landscapes. This activity has a significant economic impact, generating local employment, boosting hospitality and attracting international investment. Tourism benefits strongly, as visitors flock to iconic locations like Slane Castle, renowned for concerts and filming, and the Spire of Lloyd in Kells,

offering panoramic views of the Boyne Valley. In 2025, Meath County Council commissioned a TV show to promote all of these iconic locations that the county has to offer – the TV series will be distributed across the US by PBS and will also be shown in Australia, mainland Europe and the UK.

Conclusion

The establishment of the Clermont Screen Hub has been a resounding success, delivering on its promise to create a vibrant enterprise hub for screen content creation. With continued investment, evolving facilities, and strong partnerships, the Hub is positioned to remain a cornerstone of Ireland's creative economy.



Hill of Slane, Meath, The Traitors



Wicklow Head Lighthouse

Action 2.2: Establish a Crew Development Hub to develop and nurture new and diverse talent from across the region

Action Leader: Wicklow County Council, Wicklow LEO, Wexford LEO, Wicklow Film Office, Screen Wexford
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction

In Q4 2024, Wicklow County Council, Wicklow Local Enterprise Office (LEO), and the Wicklow Film Office, successfully delivered Action 2.2 by establishing the National Talent Academy for Film and TV Crew East (Crew Academy East). An initiative of Screen Ireland and managed by Clermont Screen Hub,

it was designed to nurture new and diverse talent across the Mid-East region. Its vision is to create a highly skilled crew base nationally, while ensuring inclusivity and clear pathways for individuals who may otherwise face barriers to entry in the film and television industry.

Steps Taken

- **Launch (2022):** Crew Academy East was established as part of Screen Ireland's national strategy to expand crew capacity.
- **Management:** Clermont Screen Hub CLG was appointed to oversee operations, leveraging its facilities and industry connections.
- **Programme design:** A 4-tier training model was introduced, tailored to new entrants, emerging talent, experienced professionals and all levels seeking upskilling
- **Mentoring and placements:** Structured mentoring programmes and industry work placements were embedded to ensure practical, hands-on experience.
- **Diversity agenda:** Recruitment strategies emphasised inclusion, targeting underrepresented groups and next-generation talent.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration with Screen Wexford and Wicklow Film Office ensured regional integration and outreach.
- **Funding:** Supported by Screen Ireland, with additional investment from local authorities, ensuring sustainability and alignment with national priorities.

Final Outcome

By H1 2025, Crew Academy East had entered its third year of operation and was successfully evaluated by Screen Ireland. The Academy has become a cornerstone of Ireland's crew development infrastructure, aligning directly with Screen Ireland's strategy to sustain the current boom in film and television production.

Key achievements include

- Delivery of comprehensive training programmes across multiple disciplines.
- Establishment of a pipeline of talent ready to support both domestic and international productions.
- Securing Clermont Screen Hub CLG's tender to continue delivering training through 2025–2026, ensuring continuity and growth.
- Hosting industry events and workshops at Clermont Screen Hub, including networking sessions with production companies and masterclasses led by experienced crew members.

- Over 3,000 participants have availed of the Academy's offers of mentoring, training and work placements since 2022. The work of the Academy aligns to Screen Ireland's strategy to help the industry sustain the current boom and continue to expand.

Conclusion

The establishment of Crew Academy East has delivered on its promise to develop and nurture diverse talent across the Mid-East region. By combining structured training, mentoring, and work placements, the Academy has created clear pathways into the industry for new entrants while supporting the upskilling of experienced professionals. Its alignment with Screen Ireland's national strategy ensures that Ireland can sustain its current production boom and remain competitive internationally.

With Clermont Screen Hub CLG confirmed to deliver training through 2026, Crew Academy East is well-positioned to continue expanding opportunities, strengthening the regional workforce, and ensuring that Ireland's film and television sector thrives into the future.

Action 2.3: Implement the Wicklow Screen Sector Development Strategy to support the growth of the industry across the region

Action Leader: Wicklow LEO, Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Screen Office
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction

Wicklow has cemented its position as one of Ireland's premier destinations for film and television production, ranking second nationally among top filming locations. Over 40 films and TV shows have been shot in the county, earning Wicklow international recognition in markets such as the US, Canada, and the UK. This success is driven by the implementation of the *Wicklow Screen Sector Development Strategy 2022-2026*, which aims to strengthen the region's screen industry cluster and unlock new economic opportunities.

Steps Taken

- **Screen Wicklow support services:** Provided on-the-ground assistance for production companies, including location scouting, permissions, and local expertise.

- **Clermont Screen Hub promotion:** The Hub Manager actively marketed the facility to ensure strong occupancy and offered pre- and post-production services.
- **Strategy delivery:** Wicklow Screen Office implemented key recommendations from the development strategy to sustain industry growth.

Film tourism development: Initiatives launched to expand Wicklow's film tourism offering, including a dedicated website, enhanced signage, and curated film trails to leverage the success of major productions.

Digital infrastructure: A new Screen Wicklow website, launched in Q3 2025, features a supplier directory, locations database, and a Wicklow Film Trail section, with plans for further expansion in 2026.

Outcome and Key Achievements

Industry growth: Wicklow's screen sector now attracts major international productions, reinforcing its reputation as Ireland's "Hollywood of Europe."

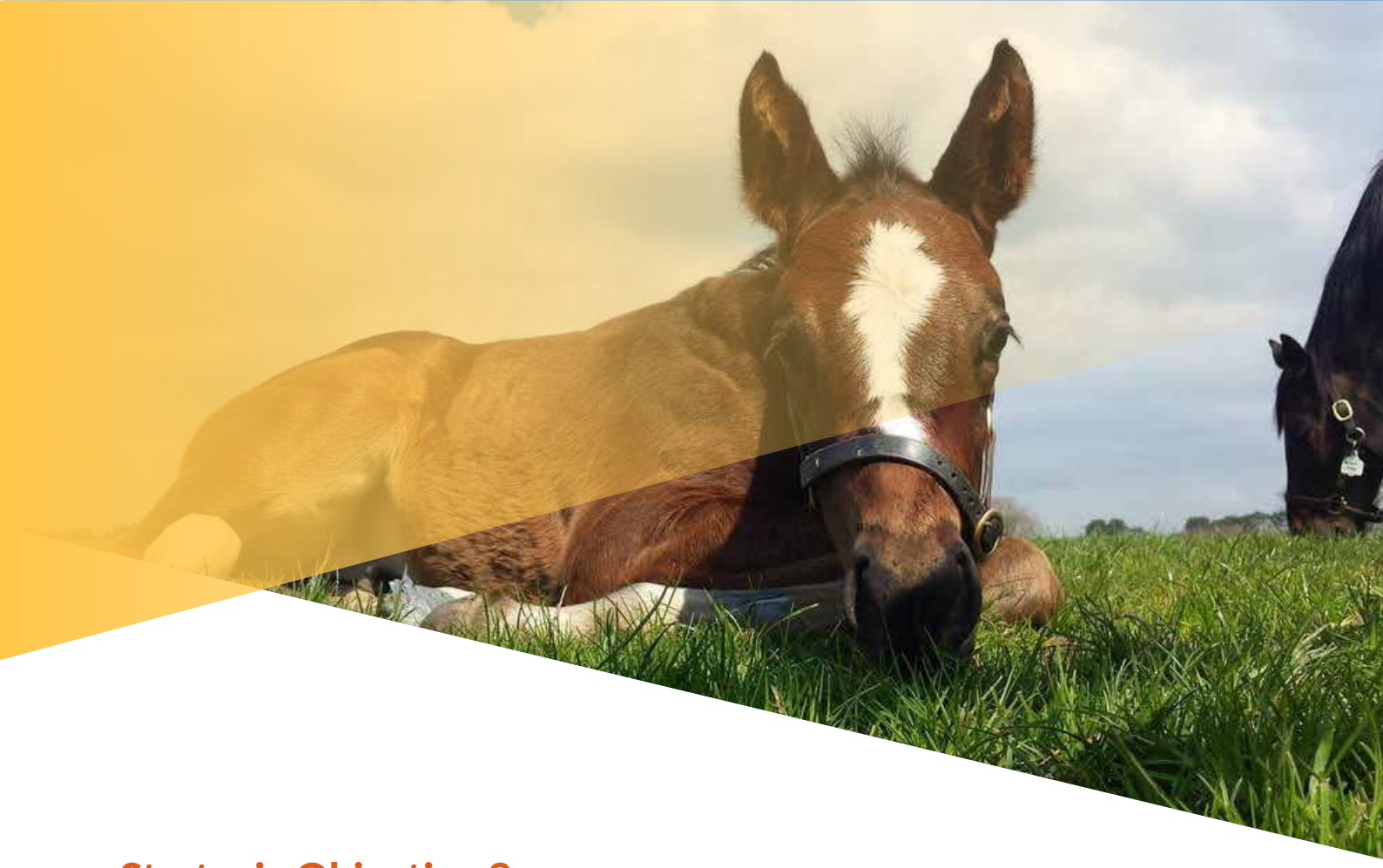
- **Economic impact:** The sector contributes an estimated €45 million annually in direct and indirect spend, supporting local businesses and services.
- **Job creation:** Over 500 jobs have been created or sustained in film, audio-visual, and related industries.
- **Tourism development:** Film tourism initiatives are projected to increase visitor numbers by 15% over the next two years, creating additional revenue streams for the county.
- **Global recognition:** Wicklow's cluster model, anchored by Ardmore Studios and Ashford Studios, is internationally recognised as best practice for regional screen sector development.
- **Digital innovation:** The new Screen Wicklow website provides a comprehensive resource for producers, suppliers, and visitors, enhancing accessibility and engagement.

Conclusion

From 2021-2023, the sector supported approximately 15,899 full time equivalent employees (FTEs), generated around €862 million in labour compensation, and achieved a total Gross Value Added (GVA) of €1.061 billion across the country, underlining its pivotal role in Ireland's economic landscape.

The successful implementation of the *Wicklow Screen Sector Development Strategy* has positioned the county as a leading hub for screen content creation. With world-class infrastructure, skilled talent, and proactive support services, Wicklow is set to maintain its leadership role in Ireland's creative economy. Future plans include expanded film tourism and enhanced digital resources, will ensure continued growth and global competitiveness.

Actions 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 have collectively delivered on Strategic Objective 2, establishing the Mid-East as a dynamic hub for screen content creation. The Clermont Screen Hub provides world-class facilities, while the Wicklow Screen Sector Development Strategy strengthens industry capabilities and global reputation. Together, these actions have created a thriving cluster anchored by Ardmore Studios, Ashford Studios, and innovative infrastructure, ensuring sustainable growth and positioning the Mid-East as a cornerstone of Ireland's creative economy.



Strategic Objective 3:
Enable the development and expansion of equine businesses across the Mid-East

Action 3.1: Establish the first National Equine Innovation Centre in Ireland

Action Leader: Kildare County Council
Timeframe for delivery: Q1 2022
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
In Q1 2022, Kildare County Council completed the establishment of Ireland's first National Equine Innovation Centre (NEIC) at the Irish National Stud. The Centre was designed to accelerate innovation, applied research, commercialisation, and learning within the equine sector. Its creation reflects Ireland's ambition to strengthen its global leadership in horse breeding, racing, and equine science by providing a dedicated hub for entrepreneurship and technical advancement.

Steps Taken

- **Redevelopment of infrastructure:** The former museum at the Irish National Stud was transformed into a modern innovation hub.
- **Launch of co-working facility:** A 14-desk co-working space was created to host equine-focused start-ups, researchers, and SMEs.
- **Training programmes:** Tailored courses were introduced in partnership with the Kildare LEO to meet sector needs (linked to Action 3.2).
- **Business support:** Mentoring, networking, and commercialisation pathways were embedded to help equine entrepreneurs bring innovations to market.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration with universities, veterinary researchers, and equine industry stakeholders ensured alignment with international best practice.
- **Funding:** Supported by Kildare County Council and the Kildare, with enterprise and innovation funding streams ensuring sustainability.

Final Outcome

By H1 2025, the NEIC had firmly established itself as a hub for equine innovation and enterprise. Several businesses now operate from the co-working facility, benefiting from shared resources and tailored support. The Centre has become a focal point for:

- **Applied research:** Projects in equine health, breeding technologies, and digital innovation.
- **Commercialisation:** Fast-tracking equine-related products and services to market.
- **Learning and training:** Delivering sector-specific programmes to upskill professionals and attract new talent.
- **Networking:** Hosting events that connect equine businesses with investors, researchers, and international partners.



National Equine Innovation Centre,
Irish National Stud

Measurable Outcomes

- Multiple equine enterprises established at the Centre.
- Training programmes delivered to dozens of professionals annually.
- Research projects advanced toward commercialisation.
- Contribution to job creation and knowledge-based business growth.
- Recognition of Ireland as a leader in equine innovation.

Conclusion

The National Equine Innovation Centre has successfully combined infrastructure, service provision, and business networking to support Ireland's high-potential equine economy. By fostering innovation and enterprise, the Centre strengthens Ireland's global reputation and ensures sustainable growth for the sector.

Action 3.2: The development of programmes and training to support the equine sector

Action Leader: Kildare Local Enterprise Office (LEO)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction

In Q4 2024, Kildare Local Enterprise Office (LEO) successfully delivered Action 3.2 by rolling out the Focus on Equine programme. This initiative was designed to strengthen County Kildare's equine businesses, ranging from start-ups to long-standing operators, by providing tailored training and development opportunities. The programme reflects Kildare's ambition to build a resilient, innovative, and internationally competitive equine sector.

Steps Taken

- **Programme launch:** The Focus on Equine series was introduced to address the operational and strategic needs of equine businesses.

- **Training modules**: Courses included Lean Thinking to improve efficiency, financial management, digitalisation, and energy efficiency.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Kildare County Council (KCC) engaged the equine sector as a key stakeholder in developing the *County Kildare Skills Strategy* 2030, ensuring training aligned with sector challenges and opportunities.
- **Partnerships:** Kildare LEO collaborated with the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) and the Racing Academy & Centre of Education to design and deliver specialised courses.
- **European collaboration:** Since 2024, KCC has partnered on the Erasmus+ Young Equine Innovators project, working with Iceland, Sweden, and Denmark to identify new career pathways and develop entrepreneurial-focused modules for a pan-European equine curriculum.

Final Outcome

By H1 2025, the programme had established itself as a cornerstone of equine training in Ireland. Businesses across Kildare benefited from tailored courses, while international collaboration expanded opportunities for young innovators. The initiative has positioned Kildare as a leader in equine education and enterprise development.

Looking ahead, in spring 2026, KCC will launch the first National Equine Summit, showcasing Ireland's strengths in the equine sector and highlighting its growing international reach.

Measurable Outcomes

- Delivery of multiple training programmes to equine businesses of all sizes.
- Enhanced operational effectiveness and digital adoption across the sector.
- Development of the *County Kildare Skills Strategy 2030* with equine input.
- International collaboration through Erasmus+, creating new career pathways
- Planned launch of the National Equine Summit 2026 to showcase Ireland's global leadership.

Conclusion

Action 3.2 has successfully delivered responsive training programmes that strengthen County Kildare's equine economy. By combining local training initiatives with international collaboration, the programme has enriched skills, fostered innovation, and prepared the sector for future growth. With the National Equine Summit, Ireland's equine industry is set to further enhance its global profile.

Action 3.3: Conduct a feasibility study to examine the expansion of the National Equine Innovation Centre

Action Leader: Kildare County Council
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2022
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
In Q4 2022, Kildare County Council completed Action 3.3 by commissioning a feasibility study to examine the potential expansion of the National Equine Innovation Centre (NEIC). The study was intended to assess whether additional infrastructure or a new site would be viable to meet future demand and strengthen Ireland's equine innovation ecosystem.

Steps Taken

- **Funding secured:** Enterprise Ireland Feasibility funding was received to support the study.
- **Study commissioned:** Independent consultants were engaged to evaluate expansion options and market demand.
- **Options identified:** Two potential pathways were explored:
    - Extending the first floor of the existing NEIC building.
    - Developing a greenfield site to house a larger facility.
- **Primary research:** Stakeholder engagement was conducted to assess demand from equine businesses, researchers, and entrepreneurs.
- **Alignment with strategy:** Findings were considered in the context of the *County Kildare Skills Strategy 2030* and Ireland's broader enterprise and innovation priorities.

Final Outcome
The feasibility study was completed in Q3 2023. While both expansion options were technically possible, the research concluded that neither option was commercially viable in the current environment. Demand levels, cost implications, and market conditions did not justify immediate expansion.

Instead, the recommendation was to consolidate and strengthen existing NEIC operations, focusing on maximising the impact of current facilities, supporting equine entrepreneurs, and building demand before revisiting expansion in the future.

Conclusion

Action 3.3 has successfully delivered a feasibility study that provides clarity on the future of the NEIC. While expansion is not viable at present, the study ensures that Kildare County Council and its partners have a robust evidence base to guide future planning. The focus now shifts to consolidating the NEIC's role as Ireland's hub for equine innovation, building demand, and preparing for expansion opportunities.





Strategic Objective 4:
Ensure that the Mid-East Region accelerates the transition to a low-carbon economy

Action 4.1: Conduct a feasibility study for the development of a regional green technology enterprise hub

Amended Action 4.1: Conduct feasibility studies into the viability of industrial Green Zones

Action Leader: Kildare County Council, Kildare LEO, Meath LEO, and Wicklow LEO
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
Originally framed as a feasibility study for a regional green technology enterprise hub, the action was amended to focus on industrial Green Zones. The objective was to assess how under-utilised lands could be repurposed to support sustainable commercial and industrial development, reduce vacancy, and align with Ireland's climate and circular economy goals.

Steps Taken

- **Feasibility studies:** Two studies were conducted in different areas of County Kildare to evaluate the viability of suitable land parcels for industrial Green Zones.
- **Site acquisition:** In 2025, Kildare County Council (KCC) acquired the old CBS site in Athy, earmarked for redevelopment as the Circular Economy and Green Skills Hub (linked to Action 4.5).
- **Pilot activities:** Some proposed initiatives are already being trialled at the Athy Community Enterprise Centre (ACEC), a light industrial unit owned by KCC since 2024 and part of the Kildare Hub Network.
- **Climate action integration:** The ACEC is undergoing analysis for energy efficiency improvements and the installation of EV charge points, ensuring alignment with climate action priorities.
- **Strategic alignment:** The studies were designed to complement KCC's broader objective of reducing vacancy, repurposing sites, and combating underutilisation of industrial lands.

Final Outcome

The feasibility studies confirmed that industrial Green Zones could play a significant role in supporting sustainable enterprise development. While the studies identified viable land parcels, the immediate focus shifted to piloting activities through existing infrastructure such as the ACEC and progressing the redevelopment of the Athy CBS site. This phased approach ensures that lessons learned from pilot projects inform the full-scale implementation of Green Zones.

Measurable Outcomes

- Completion of two feasibility studies assessing land viability.
- Acquisition of a strategic site in Athy for redevelopment.
- Launch of pilot activities in the ACEC, including energy efficiency measures.
- Integration of climate actions such as EV charging infrastructure.
- Strengthened regional collaboration across Kildare, Meath, and Wicklow LEOs.

Conclusion

Action 4.1 has successfully delivered feasibility studies that provide a clear roadmap for the development of industrial Green Zones. By coupling site acquisition, pilot projects, and climate-focused initiatives, Kildare County Council and its partners have laid the groundwork for sustainable

industrial development. The forthcoming Circular Economy and Green Skills Hub in Athy will serve as a flagship project, ensuring that the region remains at the forefront of green enterprise and innovation.

Action 4.2: The development of a green investment and enterprise zone in Allenwood, County Kildare

Amended Action 4.2: Form the foundation of a connected network of circular-economy facilities that will drive low-carbon enterprise growth, support regional sustainability goals, and create new opportunities for innovation and job creation.

Action Leader: Allenwood Community Development Association
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
Action 4.2 was originally intended to establish a green investment and enterprise zone in Allenwood, County Kildare, led by the Allenwood Community Development Association. The project was scheduled for delivery in Q4 2022 but was subsequently discontinued. However, the ambition to embed circular economy principles into enterprise development has continued under Kildare County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), with new initiatives emerging through the K-Hub Network.

Steps Taken

- **Shift in focus:** While the Allenwood zone did not proceed, Kildare County Council (KCC) redirected efforts toward developing circular economy hubs across the county.
- **Site acquisition:** In 2025, KCC acquired the old CBS site in Athy, earmarked for redevelopment as the Regional Green / Circular Economy Hub for Kildare.
- **Model inspiration:** The Athy hub is designed to mirror the Rediscovery Centre in Ballymun, Dublin, a flagship circular economy project.
- **Programme development**: Focus areas include paint recycling, bicycle repair, furniture restoration, textiles, and musical instruments, alongside research offices and a training centre.

- **Community engagement:** Workshops for bicycle repair and paint recycling have already been piloted at the Athy Community Enterprise Centre (ACEC), with activities set to transfer to the CBS site upon completion.
- **Partnership building:** LEO Kildare is in discussions with local authorities to establish partnerships for paint collection and redistribution.
- **Additional hub development:** In 2022, KCC purchased the old Bank of Ireland building in Monasterevin, which will be redeveloped as a fashion and textile hub, embedding circular economy principles in the retail sector.

Final Outcome
Although the Allenwood project was discontinued, the vision for green enterprise zones has evolved into a broader county-wide circular economy strategy. The Athy hub, due to open in Q3 2026, will serve as a flagship facility, while the Monasterevin hub will lead innovation in sustainable fashion and textiles. Together, these initiatives will provide employment opportunities, promote entrepreneurship, and raise community awareness of circular economy practices.

Action 4.2 has evolved into a broader circular economy agenda for the region. Through the Athy and Monasterevin hubs, KCC is embedding sustainability into enterprise development, creating opportunities for innovation, and positioning the county as a leader in circular economy practices.

Action 4.3: The establishment of marine enterprise facilities in the Mid-East

Action Leader: Wicklow County Council and Wicklow LEO
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
Action 4.3, led by Wicklow County Council (WCC) and Wicklow LEO, aimed to establish marine enterprise facilities across the Mid-East region. With responsibility for Wicklow, Arklow, and Bray Harbours, the Council is leveraging these assets to support offshore renewable energy, fishing, leisure, and cargo activities.

Steps Taken

Wicklow Harbour:

- Designated as a Port of Regional Significance under the National Ports Policy, accounting for 8% of national trade.
- A scoping study identified infrastructure optimisation options to meet growing offshore renewable energy demand.
- Planning permission granted for an offshore renewable energy facility, supporting education, research & development, and business development.
- Wicklow Enterprise secured a Smart Regions grant in H1 2025 to scope projects for the facility.

Arklow Harbour:

- This harbour is Central to offshore renewable energy, particularly the Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 2.
- In 2025, planning permission was granted for a state-of-the-art operations and maintenance facility at Arklow Harbour, providing long-term support for offshore wind projects.
- The harbour continues to serve fishing and leisure activities alongside renewable energy development.

Bray Harbour:

- Focused on leisure and tourism, with events such as Summer in Bray 2025 and the Seafront Funfair enhancing community engagement.
- While not a renewable energy hub, Bray contributes to the region's marine enterprise profile through tourism and leisure.

Events Supporting Offshore Renewable Energy:

- **East Coast Offshore Renewable Energy Event (November 2024**): Hosted by Wicklow County Council and Wicklow LEO, showcasing opportunities for local businesses in offshore renewables.
- **East Coast Offshore Wind Event (November 2025, Arklow Bay Hotel):** Focused on aligning skills, policy, and supply chain development for the offshore renewable sector.

These events provided networking platforms for industry professionals, educators, and businesses, reinforcing Wicklow's leadership in offshore energy.

Measurable Outcomes

- Planning permission secured for Wicklow Harbour's offshore renewable energy facility.
- Smart Regions funding awarded for project scoping.
- Arklow Harbour advanced with an operations and maintenance facility for offshore wind.
- Bray Harbour strengthened its leisure and tourism profile.
- Offshore renewable energy events in 2024 and 2025 attracted industry stakeholders and supported skills development.

Conclusion

Action 4.3 is firmly on track, with Wicklow Harbour positioned as a regional hub for offshore renewable energy, Arklow Harbour advancing as a base for wind energy operations, and Bray Harbour enhancing leisure and tourism. Through infrastructure development, planning approvals, and high-profile events, Wicklow County Council is ensuring the Mid-East region plays a central role in Ireland's marine enterprise and renewable energy future.



Offshore Renewable Energy event, 18 November 2025,
East Coast Offshore Renewable Energy Network and Wicklow County Council

Action 4.4: The establishment of marine training facilities in the Mid-East

Action Leader: Wicklow County Council, Wicklow LEO
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
Wicklow County Council (WCC) and Wicklow LEO are progressing work to establish dedicated marine training facilities in the Mid-East region. This action is ongoing and forms part of Wicklow's broader strategy to strengthen skills, education, and enterprise capacity in the marine and offshore renewable energy sectors.

Steps Taken

- **Partnerships:** Discussions are underway with the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) to develop a training facility at Wicklow County Campus, ensuring alignment with national education frameworks.
- **Integration with Wicklow Skills Strategy:** The marine training facility is embedded within the *Wicklow Skills Strategy 2030*, which identifies marine and offshore renewable energy as priority growth areas.
- **Collaboration with Skillnet:** Wicklow LEO and Wicklow County Council are working with Skillnet Ireland to design industry-led training programmes, ensuring that courses are responsive to employer needs and future workforce demands.
- **Regional Skills Forum:** Engagement with the Regional Skills Manager ensures that training provision is coordinated across the Mid-East, avoiding duplication and maximising impact.
- **Curriculum development:** Programmes under consideration include offshore renewable energy operations, marine engineering, safety and compliance, and logistics management.

Current Progress

- A scoping study has been completed to identify infrastructure requirements for the marine training facility.
- Planning is underway to integrate training with Wicklow Harbour's Offshore Renewable Energy Facility and Wicklow County Campus (Action 4.3), ensuring synergy between enterprise and education.
- Pilot training modules are being explored with KWETB and Skillnet partners, with delivery expected to begin in 2026.

Measurable Outcomes

- Stakeholder engagement completed with KWETB, Skillnet, and Regional Skills Forum.
- Scoping study delivered for marine training infrastructure.
- Alignment achieved with *Wicklow Skills Strategy 2030*.
- Early-stage curriculum design underway for offshore and marine-related training

Conclusion

Action 4.4 is progressing steadily, with strong partnerships ensuring that the marine training facility will meet the needs of the region's growing offshore renewable energy and marine enterprise sectors. By embedding the project within the *Wicklow Skills Strategy*, and working closely with Skillnet Ireland and the Regional Skills Forum, Wicklow County Council is laying the foundation for a sustainable skills pipeline that will support regional growth and national climate goals.



Wicklow Port

Action 4.5: The creation of a circular economy cluster for the Mid-East Region

Action Leader: Kildare LEO, Wicklow LEO, and Meath LEO
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Partially Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
Action 4.5 focuses on embedding circular economy principles into enterprise development across the Mid-East. This action is ongoing and aims to increase circular economy business opportunities, reduce waste, and foster sustainable innovation through the continuous support of the local authorities and local enterprise offices' as well as the K-Hub Network and wider regional initiatives.

Steps Taken - Kildare

- **Regional Green/Circular Economy Hub (Athy):** In 2025, Kildare County Council (KCC) acquired the old CBS site in Athy, to be redeveloped into the Regional Green / Circular Economy Hub, opening in H2 2026.
- **Focus areas:** The hub will target paint recycling, bicycle repair, furniture restoration, textiles, and instruments, alongside research offices and a training centre.
- **Workshops delivered:** Kildare LEO has piloted bicycle repair and paint re-use workshops at the Athy Community Enterprise Centre, with activities to transfer to the CBS site once complete.
- **Fashion and Textile Hub (Monasterevin):** In 2022, KCC purchased the old Bank of Ireland building, now being redeveloped as a fashion and textile hub, embedding circular economy principles in retail and promoting entrepreneurship.

Steps Taken - Meath

- **URBACT (European exchange and learning programme) IV – In4Green project:** Meath LEO supported Meath County Council's successful selection as a project partner in the In4Green initiative under the URBACT IV programme, alongside nine other European city partners.
    - Formation of an URBACT Local Group to engage stakeholders in developing an Integrated Action Plan for a sustainable, green future.

  - Promotion of circular economy principles such as resource efficiency, waste reduction, and innovative business models.
  - Hosting of the In4Green event in October 2025, bringing together businesses, community representatives, and experts to share insights and foster collaboration.

- **Community campaigns:** Initiatives such as Sick of Plastic Trim launched a returnable coffee cup scheme in May 2025, with plans to replicate county-wide.
- **Eco Chic campaign:** County-wide events promoting sustainable consumption, swap shops, and upcycling workshops.
- **Skills development:** Discussions with Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) on a Circular Economy Skills Initiative (CESI).

Measurable Outcomes

- Acquisition of two strategic sites in Kildare (Athy CBS and Monasterevin Bank of Ireland).
- Delivery of pilot workshops in bicycle repair and paint reuse.
- Successful participation in URBACT IV In4Green, securing European collaboration.
- Launch of community-driven initiatives such as Sick of Plastic Trim and Eco Chic.
- Strengthened partnerships for circular economy skills and enterprise development.

Conclusion

Action 4.5 is advancing strongly, with Kildare delivering hubs in Athy and Monasterevin anchoring circular economy innovation, and Meath LEO driving European collaboration through In4Green. Together, these initiatives are building a regional circular economy cluster, fostering entrepreneurship, reducing waste, and positioning the Mid-East as a leader in sustainable enterprise and low-carbon transition.



Strategic Objective 5:
Support the continued development of a positive enterprise ecosystem in the Mid-East

Action 5.1: Deliver upon multi stakeholder initiatives that will support start-ups, SMEs and microbusiness across the region

Action Leader: Kildare LEO, Meath LEO and Wicklow LEO
Timeframe for delivery: Q4- 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:
Action 5.1, led by Kildare LEO, Meath LEO, and Wicklow LEO, resulted in the successful delivery of a range of projects and collaborations that supported start-ups, SMEs, and microbusinesses to scale and grow, while responding to global uncertainty.

Meath County Council (MCC) strengthened its enterprise ecosystem through targeted initiatives 2023 - 2025. A Business Relationship Manager was appointed to connect businesses with supports, while a Business Supports Pack outlined grants, funding, and opportunities. A pilot programme with five companies focused on efficiencies, digitalisation, finance, exports, and planning, helping fast-track their transition to Enterprise Ireland. The Council also established a land bank for economic

development and produced a marketing document promoting Meath for investment. Meath LEO hosted Lunch and Learn events with 220 attendees. It pioneered a programme for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities, and celebrated the opening of Thrive in September 2025, a flagship centre of business excellence supporting start-ups and SMEs.

Kildare LEO and Kildare County Council (KCC) remain the first stop for micro and small businesses, driving entrepreneurship, job creation, and accessible supports. Key initiatives include appointing a Food Manager to deliver programmes for culinary clients, publishing a *Business Development Guide*, and hosting the biennial Economic Forum in November 2024 with CSO and KPMG data insights. In March 2025, Minister James Lawless TD launched the *County Kildare Skills Strategy 2030* to address skills gaps and employment opportunities. KCC continues engagement with foreign direct investment clients through its Property Portal and delivered the Big Business Show at MERITS, Naas. In Q4 2024, a procurement event and masterclass supported SMEs. KCC also leads European-funded projects, including Repower Regions and Young Equine Innovators.

Wicklow County Council (WCC) and Wicklow LEO have delivered a series of successful events aligned with the *Wicklow Skills Strategy* and global developments. Offshore energy has been identified as a priority sector, with the Preparing for Offshore event, run in collaboration with the East Coast Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Network, highlighting opportunities for local businesses in Ireland's renewable energy industry. A second event, Tariffs and Trade Tactics – Mitigating Risk, featured international trade expert Brian Murphy, who advised attendees on duties, margins, and diversified market strategies. In addition, a recent ORE event in Arklow showcased the town's role in supporting offshore wind projects, connecting enterprises to supply chain opportunities and reinforcing Wicklow's position as a hub for marine enterprise and renewable energy.

Action 5.2: Commission a regional strategy that will adopt an evidence-based approach to co-working hub and innovation space development and investment for the Mid-East

Action Leader: Kildare County Council, Wicklow County Council and Meath County Council
Timeframe for delivery: Q2 2022
Final Status: Action Discontinued

Action Update:

Introduction
As outlined in the Mid-Term progress report, action 5.2 was formally discontinued. However, significant progress has been achieved across the Mid-East region through county-led strategies and investments.

Key Developments
A number of hubs and innovation spaces have been opened and/or expanded over the timeframe of the Regional Enterprise Plan, with development well advanced on a number of other projects.

- In Kildare, the National Equine Innovation Centre opened at the National Stud in October 2022 and the Food, Drinks and Skills Innovation Hub in Athy was completed in autumn 2025. Progress is well advanced in the Circular Economy and Green Skills Hub in Athy and the Fashion, Textiles and Design Hub in Monasterevin, with both due to open in 2026.
- Wicklow County Council has delivered the Clermont Hub and The GRID (Greystones Regional Innovation District), while a new facility in Carnew is progressing through the Part 8 planning process.
- Meath County Council has expanded its enterprise infrastructure with remote working facilities in Dunshaughlin and Enfield, offering private office space to support flexible working. The flagship Thrive Centre of Business Excellence (COBE), opened in September 2025, further strengthens the ecosystem by providing meeting rooms, event space, and a boardroom, enabling collaboration and business growth.

Outcomes

- Delivery of multiple hubs across Kildare and Wicklow.
- Expansion of Meath's enterprise infrastructure with Thrive COBE and remote working facilities.
- Evidence-based development guided by commuter and workforce data.
- Enhanced regional ecosystem for innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable enterprise.

Conclusion
The Mid-East now benefits from a robust hub network, ensuring long-term support for entrepreneurs, SMEs, and innovation-driven enterprises.

New Action 5.3: Progress the acquisition of tech innovation enterprise space in Greystones from Cairn

Action Leader: Wicklow County Council
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024
Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Introduction
Wicklow County Council successfully completed the acquisition of the Tech Innovation Enterprise Space in Greystones from Cairn, delivering on its commitment to foster innovation and enterprise in the region. This strategic investment aligns with national and regional objectives to support entrepreneurship, attract investment, and create high-quality jobs. The flagship facility, The GRID (Greystones Regional Innovation District), was officially opened in October 2024, by the then Taoiseach Simon Harris and Cathaoirleach Councillor Paul O'Brien, marking a significant milestone in Wicklow's innovation ecosystem.

Steps Taken

- **Acquisition completed:** Wicklow County Council finalised the acquisition of the Tech Innovation Enterprise Space from Cairn, securing long-term ownership and sustainability of the facility. Significant investment was made in fit-out and technology infrastructure to ensure the facility meets the highest standards for innovation and enterprise.

- **Official launch event:** The GRID was formally opened in October 2024 at a high-profile event attended by government representatives, industry leaders, and local enterprises. The launch showcased the facility's role in driving regional innovation and economic growth
- **Facility fit out and features delivered:** The GRID was equipped to the highest standards, offering:
    - Private offices for businesses of all sizes
    - Co-working and hot desk spaces for freelancers and remote workers
    - Meeting rooms and event spaces with state-of-the-art technology
    - High-speed internet for seamless connectivity
    - Networking opportunities through curated events and programmes
- **Operational Management:** An initial management contract was put in place to oversee day-to-day operations and a new tender for a long-term management partner was advertised in H2 2025.
- **Community engagement and events:** Since opening, The GRID has hosted;
    - Networking sessions for local entrepreneurs
    - Industry-focused workshops
    - Board meetings and stakeholder consultations

    These events have strengthened collaboration and positioned The GRID as a hub for innovation.

Outcomes

- **Business uptake:** The GRID has seven full-time licensees, with ongoing enquiries from new businesses.
- **Economic impact:** The facility is fostering entrepreneurship, supporting start-ups, and creating a collaborative environment for innovation.
- **Regional positioning:** Greystones is now positioned as a key innovation district within the Mid-East Region, complementing national enterprise objectives.

Conclusion

The GRID represents a transformative investment in Wicklow's innovation landscape. With strong uptake, active community engagement, and strategic plans for long-term management, the facility is delivering on its promise to drive economic growth and enterprise development. Wicklow County Council remains committed to leveraging The GRID as a catalyst for innovation, job creation, and regional competitiveness.

Action Status Key

Action complete: *The Steering Committee has deemed that these actions have been fully completed.*

Action discontinued: *The Steering Committee has agreed that these actions are no longer being pursued.*

Action partially complete [ongoing or no further action]: *The Steering Committee notes that this action is partially completed; work may continue to progress beyond the finalisation of current plans.*

Action could not be completed: *The Steering Committee has determined that this action could not be delivered as originally envisaged.*

This final progress report documents implementation to end of Q4 2025 and has been prepared and signed off by the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee.

Action Status Table by Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 1: Position the Mid-East as the primary location for the development of the agri food hubs.	Status	Completion Date
Action 1.1: The completion of the Boyne Valley Food Hub (Phase 1) and the development of the Digital Innovation Smart Agri Hub (Phase 2).	Phase 1 - Action Complete Phase 2 - Action Partially Complete	Phase 1 - May 2023
Action 1.2: The development of the Food, Drink and Agri-Innovation Hub, Athy.	Action Complete	October 2025
Action 1.3: The development of food incubation development hub in County Wicklow.	Action Partially Complete	-
Action 1.4: The creation of the National Centre of Food Culture Ireland	Action Complete	Q4 2023

Strategic Objective 2: Develop the Mid-East as a hub for the screen content creation sector.	Status	Completion Date
Action 2.1: Develop and operate a Content Creation Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus, Rathnew.	Action Complete	Q4 2024
Action 2.2: Establish a Crew Development Hub to develop and nurture new and diverse talent from across the region.	Action Complete	Q4 2024
Action 2.3: Implement the Wicklow Screen Sector Development Strategy to support the growth of the industry across the region.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Strategic Objective 3: Enable the development and expansion of equine businesses across the Mid-East.	Status	Completion Date
Action 3.1: Establish the first National Equine Innovation Centre in Ireland.	Action Complete	Q1 2022
Action 3.2: The development of programmes and training to support the growth of the equine sector.	Action Complete	Q4 2024
Action 3.3: Conduct a feasibility study to examine the expansion of the National Equine Innovation Centre.	Action Complete	Q4 2022

Strategic Objective 4: Ensure that the Mid-East Region accelerates the transition to a low-carbon economy.	Status	Completion Date
Action 4.1: Conduct feasibility studies into the viability of industrial Green Zones [Amended].	Action Complete	2023
Action 4.2: Form the foundation of a connected network of circular-economy facilities that will drive low-carbon enterprise growth, support regional sustainability goals, and create new opportunities for innovation and job creation. [Amended]	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.3: The establishment of marine enterprise facilities in the Mid-East.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Action 4.4: The establishment of marine training facilities in the Mid-East.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.5: The creation of a circular economy cluster for the Mid-East.	Action Partially Complete	-

Strategic Objective 5: Support the continued development of a positive enterprise ecosystem in the Mid-East.	**Status**	**Completion Date**
Action 5.1: Deliver upon multi stakeholder initiatives that will support Start-Ups, SMEs and microbusiness across the region.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 5.2: Commission a regional strategy that will adopt an evidence-based approach to co-working hub and innovation space development and investment for the Mid-East.	Action Discontinued	-
Action 5.3: Progress the acquisition of tech innovation enterprise space in Greystones from Cairn. [New]	Action Complete	Q4 2024

Appendices

Appendix 1 Membership of Regional Steering Committee

Chairperson of Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan
Owen Brennan, Executive Chairman of the Devenish Group
Programme Manager of Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan
Michelle Goodwin
Membership of the Committee
Meath County Council
Kildare County Council
Wicklow County Council
Local Enterprise Office - Meath, Wicklow and Kildare
InterTrade Ireland
Enterprise Ireland
IDA Ireland
Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly
Fáilte Ireland
Regional Skills Forum – Mid-East
Kildare & Wicklow Education and Training Board
Louth & Meath Education and Training Board
Maynooth University
Meath Enterprise
Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment
Kildare, Meath and Wicklow Chambers

Appendix 2 Statistical Snapshot

Mid-East Region[1]

Constituent counties	Wicklow, Kildare, Meath and Louth
Mid-East Population[2]	786,500
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment[3]	403,700
ILO Participation Rate[4]	68.1%
ILO Unemployment Rate[5]	6.1%
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Male)[6]	217,000
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Female)[7]	186,700
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment from Q1 2019[8]	342,900
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment from Q3 2025[9]	403,700
Actual Increase in Employment from Q1 2019 – Q3 2025[10]	60,800
Employment Growth Rate between Q1 2019 – Q3 2025	17.7%
Persons aged 25 years and over on Live Register in the Mid-East region at 01/12/2025[11]	19,166
Irish-owned Companies under the remit of the enterprise agencies - Total Employment in the region, 2019[12]	24,062
Irish-owned Companies under the remit of the enterprise agencies - Total Employment in the region, 2025[13]	26,993
Change between 2019 - 2025[14]	2,931
Foreign-owned Companies under the remit of the enterprise agencies - Total Employment in the region, 2019[15]	21,318
Foreign-owned Companies under the remit of the enterprise agencies - Total Employment in the region, 2025[16]	22,209
Change between 2019 - 2025[17]	891

Endnotes

1 To note: The NUTS 3 classification was used to compile the statistical snapshot

2 CSO - Estimated Population (Persons in April) - https://data.cso.ie/table/PEA08

3 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF08

4 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF08

5 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF08

6 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF01

7 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF01

8 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF01

9 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF01

10 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF01

11 CSO Persons on Live Register https://data.cso.ie/table/LRM17

12 DETE - Annual Employment Survey 2024 – companies under the remit of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta

13 DETE - Annual Employment Survey 2024 – companies under the remit of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta

14 DETE - Annual Employment Survey 2024 – companies under the remit of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta

15 DETE - Annual Employment Survey 2024 – companies under the remit of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta

16 DETE - Annual Employment Survey 2024 – companies under the remit of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta

17 DETE - Annual Employment Survey 2024 – companies under the remit of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta

An Roinn Fiontar, Turasóireachta agus Fostaíochta
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