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

SOUTH-EAST

Regional Enterprise Plan 2022-2025

Final Progress Report



Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment
www.enterprise.gov.ie



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Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to present this Final Progress Report on the implementation of the South-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 Plan focuses on harnessing the potential of the South-East region, encompassing counties Waterford, Carlow, Wexford, and Kilkenny, ensuring it thrives economically and contributes to the broader well-being of the entire country.

The Regional Enterprise Plans are developed and led by regional stakeholders and tailored to reflect regional strengths and opportunities. They are aligned to 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 available over €150 million in regional enterprise development funding 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 South-East, over €8 million was allocated for eight projects through the REDF. This funding was complemented by the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme, launched in 2023.

Strategic sectors such as life sciences, offshore renewable energy and financial services have been supported through targeted investment, collaborative initiatives, and innovative programmes. These efforts have strengthened competitiveness, fostered local innovation, and created 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 South-East is well positioned to compete nationally and internationally.

Over the lifetime of the Plan, the region has advanced a range of initiatives that are supporting entrepreneurship, innovation and growth including – development of Li4, a National Centre of Excellence in Lean Industry 4.0, establishment of the National Aerospace Academy at Waterford Airport

and progressing developments at Rosslare and Waterford Ports to establish the South-East as a national offshore renewable energy hub. These achievements demonstrate the South-East's ambition, and capacity for innovation.

While there is work to be done to further enhance the region's competitiveness, 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 South-East.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Chairperson Patsy Carney and Interim Chairperson Kathryn Kiely, for their leadership and drive; they made a significant impact bringing their wealth of experience to bear in this voluntary role. I would also like to thank Programme Manager Richard Hickey and predecessor Alan Quirke, 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.

Niamh Smyth TD
Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation

Chairperson's Introduction

I am pleased to present this final progress report for the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan (SEREP) 2022–2025, on behalf of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee. The Committee brings together public and private stakeholders with responsibility for, and influence over, economic development across the region, and has provided strategic oversight throughout the lifetime of the Plan.

Launched in March 2022, the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan provided a shared framework to align regional ambition with national enterprise policy. Over its implementation, stakeholders progressed a range of actions under the Plan's five strategic pillars: Start and Grow; Green Growth; Smart Specialisation and Clustering; Innovate; and Placemaking. This final report reflects the progress achieved over the four-year period and demonstrates the value of consistent, regionally led collaboration in delivering meaningful and measurable outcomes.

Early momentum to underpin the Plan was supported by the region securing €785,000 through the Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme in 2022. This enabled feasibility and priming activity across priority sectors including financial services, ICT, life sciences, engineering, agri-food and sustainability. These investments shaped a pipeline of initiatives, some of which progressed to delivery, while others informed regional actions and investment priorities.

A defining milestone during this period was the establishment of South-East Technological University (SETU) in May 2022. Investment in SETU has strengthened the region's capacity in research, innovation, advanced skills and enterprise engagement. SETU plays a central role in the regional innovation ecosystem, supporting enterprise development, enhancing industry-academia collaboration and advancing knowledge and skills capability. The Regional Enterprise Plan has aligned closely with SETU's evolving role, ensuring public investment in research and innovation infrastructures and supports delivers tangible outcomes to advance enterprise productivity, innovation adoption and long-term competitiveness across the South-East. A significant achievement has been the region's success in securing investment under the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme to support critical enterprise infrastructure and business support initiatives. Notably, €7.1 million in funding secured by Carlow County Council will enable the development of Catalyst HQ, a major Regional Export and Innovation Campus that will act as a hub for business growth, innovation and collaboration across the South-East.

In Enniscorthy, GreenTechHQ secured Smart Regions funding to deliver BASSE (Business Advantage & Sustainability South-East), a multi-year business acceleration programme focused on scaling high-quality SMEs while embedding sustainability and resilience into business models. BASSE directly responds to

identified gaps in the regional enterprise ecosystem and reflects the Plan's emphasis on strengthening indigenous enterprise through peer learning, expert mentorship and industry engagement.

The latter stages of the Plan have also seen substantial progress in positioning the South-East as a major hub for offshore renewable energy. Advancement of infrastructure proposals at Rosslare Europort and the Port of Waterford, coupled with the establishment of the Ireland South-East Offshore Wind Partnership demonstrates the region's ambition and partners' commitment to coordinate effectively across local authorities, enterprise agencies, education providers and industry. This collaborative approach has helped articulate a clear regional proposition and identify the skills, infrastructure and supply chain opportunities associated with offshore wind development.

The progress under this Plan highlights the importance of a workable, accessible and ongoing investment model to support regional economic development initiatives under future Regional Enterprise Plans. Experience from this period demonstrates that targeted funding is critical to mobilise key strategic regional projects which are required to underpin sustainable economic development within the region.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all members of the SEREP Steering Committee, Mr Richard Hickey, SEREP Programme Manager, and the wide range of regional stakeholders who contributed their time, expertise and commitment to delivering this Plan. I would also like to pay tribute to Mr Patsy Carney, SEREP Chair from 2021 to Spring 2025, for his vision and leadership from the Plan's inception and his guidance and support throughout its implementation.



The partnerships, projects and shared ambitions of regional stakeholders provide a strong platform for the next iteration of regional enterprise planning. This foundation supports continued alignment with national and European innovation and competitiveness policies and better positions the South-East to strengthen regional resilience and respond to future economic opportunities and challenges.

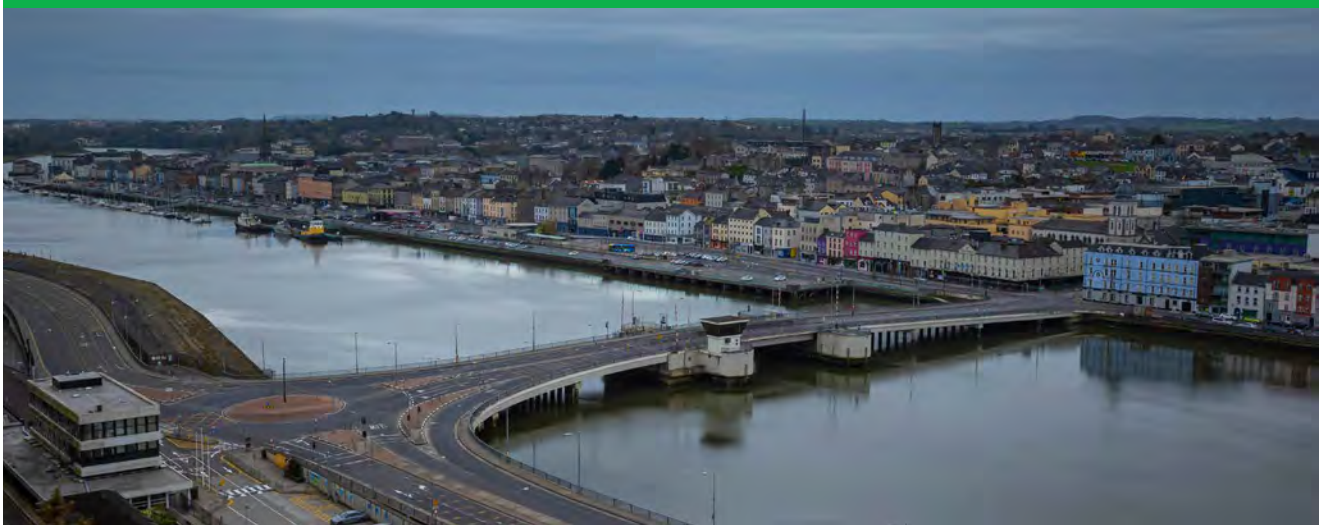
Kathryn Kiely
Chair of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan
Steering Committee

South-East Final Progress Report

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

South-East Highlights

Both Rosslare Europort and the Port of Waterford have now lodged planning applications to deliver the critical enabling infrastructure required to support the development of the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) offshore windfarms and to establish the South-East as a national Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Hub, as noted in Action 2.1 of this plan. Together, these complementary investments reflect a wider coordinated response from regional stakeholders to Ireland's offshore wind ambitions and the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan 2024. The proposed developments will provide purpose-built port capacity to support turbine assembly, marshalling, installation, and long-term operations and maintenance, addressing a key national infrastructure gap. Crucially, they will also underpin the growth of a strong indigenous supply chain, attract international developers and contractors, and create significant opportunities for skills development, innovation, and high-value employment across the region.



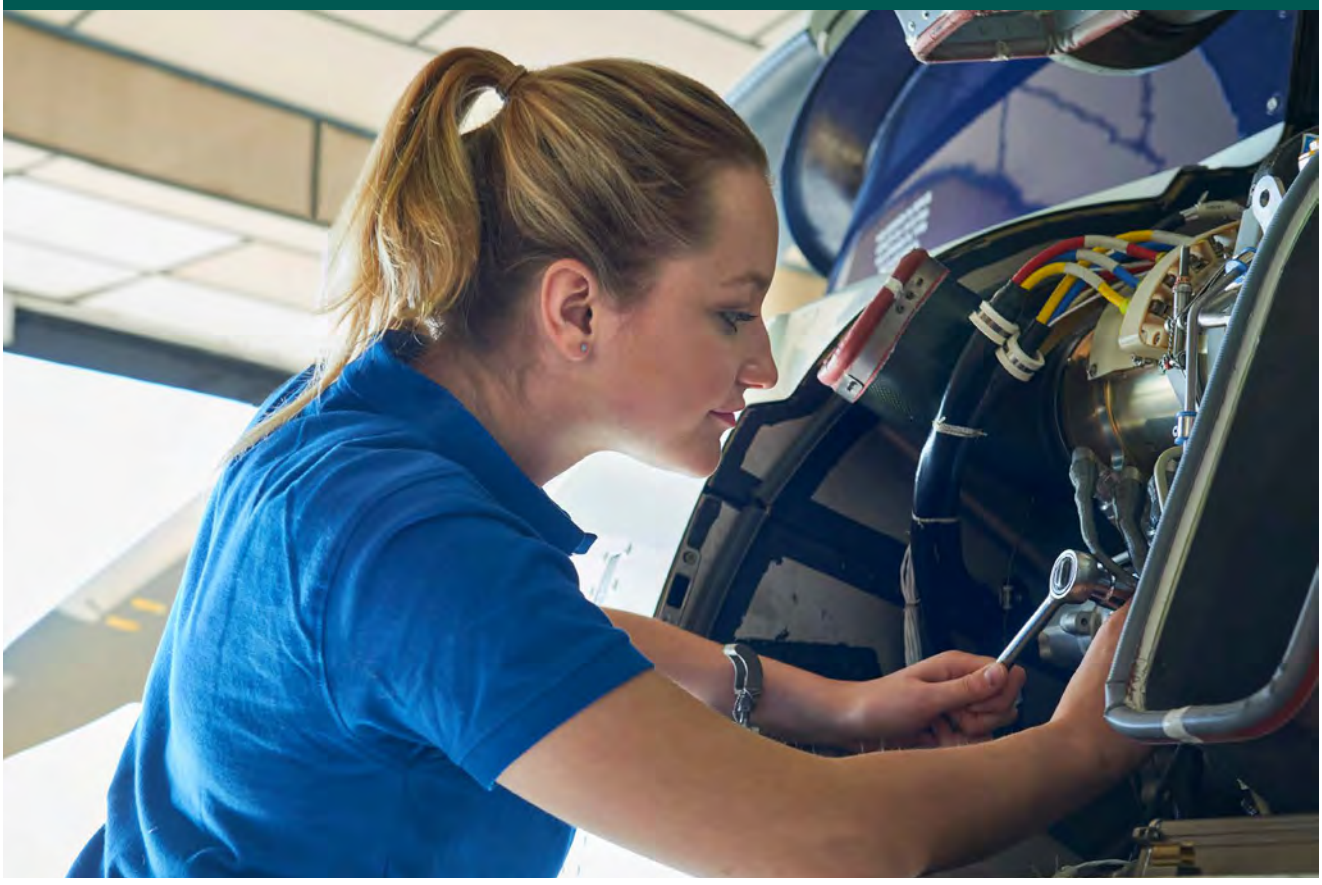
The Li4 Productivity and Process Improvement National Centre of Excellence in Lean Industry 4.0 at WorkLAB Waterford continues to scale its activity and impact, as noted in Action 4.11 of this plan. This project is funded under Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Development Fund. The centre now delivers a range of services to support productivity, sustainability and digital transformation for companies across multiple sectors. Li4 also supports the regional enterprise environment through ongoing knowledge exchange. The annual South-East Lean Forum brings the South-East Lean Network community together at scale and has been delivered by SETU Lean Industry 4.0 for the last two years. The forum positions the region as a place that tests and applies digital transformation in ways that support competitiveness and job creation. Through this combined activity Li4 strengthens the innovation ecosystem of the South-East.

Propelor Business Innovation Centre's (BIC) Big Pitch competition is a flagship entrepreneurship initiative in the South-East that supports ambitious early-stage founders to refine ideas, build investor readiness and accelerate business growth, as described in Action 1.1. The competition provides selected startups with structured one-to-one engagement with experienced founders and pitch preparation, culminating in a live pitching event where founders present to an experienced judging panel of investors, entrepreneurs and business leaders. A core strength of Big Pitch is its deliberate use of the knowledge and experience of successful entrepreneurs. Participants benefit from one-to-one advice, support and practical insights drawn from real-world scaling journeys, covering areas such as market validation, funding strategy, governance and leadership. This peer-to-peer learning model ensures advice is grounded, relevant and immediately applicable. Beyond supporting individual companies, Big Pitch plays an important regional role by showcasing the South-East's collaborative enterprise ecosystem, strong support infrastructure and talent base.

The Engineering the South-East cluster – funded under Enterprise Ireland's Regional Technology Cluster Fund and noted in Action 3.2 – is a collaborative, industry-led network bringing together engineering and manufacturing companies, education providers and enterprise agencies across the South-East. Its core purpose is to strengthen the region's engineering base by supporting skills development, innovation, collaboration and long-term competitiveness. The cluster has demonstrated strong industry engagement, identifying shared challenges and opportunities, particularly in advanced manufacturing and automation, including multi-company sponsorship of a Scholarships in Automation programme during 2025. A key focus is developing the future workforce, with events delivered in this area, including the Engineering Careers Fair in November 2025. By aligning industry needs with education and training provision, Engineering the South-East helps build a resilient, future-ready engineering ecosystem, positioning the region as a nationally significant centre for engineering excellence and industrial capability, supporting productivity and sustainable regional employment.

The Ireland South-East marketing programme, as described in Action 5.3, continues to promote the region's strengths in sectors including advanced manufacturing, engineering, life sciences, agri-tech and offshore renewable energy. This marketing strategy was recognised by the Financial Times fDi Intelligence magazine when it ranked the region #1 in Europe for FDI Strategy in its European Regions of the Future Awards 2025. Ireland South-East has consistently leveraged the voices and experiences of business leaders, investors and entrepreneurs already operating in the region, using authentic peer advocacy to build credibility with prospective investors. The award acknowledges not only effective promotion, but a joined-up regional strategy that aligns talent, infrastructure, skills and quality of life. It reinforces the South-East's growing reputation as a competitive, investor-ready region.

The establishment of a National Aerospace Academy at Waterford Airport marks a significant development for the South-East and positions the region at the forefront of aerospace education, research and innovation in Ireland. Formalised in April 2025 through a Memorandum of Understanding between South-East Technological University and Waterford Airport, the Academy will specialise in Unmanned Air Vehicles and related aerospace technologies. The Academy will build on SETU's existing strengths in aerospace and aircraft systems, integrating expertise in engineering, electronics, imaging and data processing. Its location at Waterford Airport provides access to controlled airspace, enabling research, testing, training and certification activities not readily available elsewhere nationally. This action was facilitated by the Regional Enterprise Plan, which co-ordinated collaboration between two members of the South-East Offshore Wind Partnership. In line with Strategic Objective 2 Green Growth, the initiative draws on international best practice and will support skills development, applied research and industry engagement, aligned with emerging offshore renewable energy – drones are expected to play a supporting role in the management of future offshore wind infrastructure.



Case Studies from the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan

1. Ireland South-East Offshore Wind Partnership

The Ireland South-East Offshore Wind Partnership was established in late 2023 under the auspices of the Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) to coordinate and accelerate the South-East's leadership role in Ireland's emerging offshore wind sector. Chaired by Dr David Dempsey, the Partnership represents a collaborative regional initiative that brings together local authorities, ports, enterprise agencies, education and training providers, and industry stakeholders. Its purpose is to deliver a unified, strategic response to the significant economic and industrial opportunities arising from offshore renewable energy development — particularly within the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) and in line with Strategic Objective 2 of the Regional Enterprise Plan.

Since its formation, the Partnership has met regularly and actively engaged with national and international experts across the offshore wind industry. Members have participated in Wind Energy Ireland conferences as well as the WindEurope events in Bilbao and Copenhagen, gaining insights into global best practice. Study visits to the North-East of England and Scotland — both established offshore wind regions — have further strengthened the Partnership's understanding of the infrastructure, policy, and supply chain frameworks required to build a successful regional offshore industry.

IRELAND SOUTH EAST
OFFSHORE WIND
PARTNERSHIP



Logos of the Members of the Ireland South-East Offshore Wind Partnership

In late 2025, the Partnership, in collaboration with the South-East Energy Agency and with funding from the region's Local Authorities, published a comprehensive report titled *Offshore Renewable Energy in Ireland's South-East Region*. This report outlines the scale of potential economic benefits that offshore wind development could deliver to the South-East and identifies the critical strategic enablers — including port readiness, supply chain capability, skills development, and planning coordination — required to fully capture these opportunities.

The Partnership has worked closely with Rosslare Europort, Waterford Port, and Waterford Airport as they progress to the planning application stage for infrastructure projects essential to positioning the South-East as Ireland's principal Offshore Renewable Energy Hub. Dedicated sub-groups have been established to drive targeted actions, including the development of an indigenous supply chain, the creation of Green Energy Parks, and the attraction of new waves of foreign direct investment (FDI) to the region.

The concept of Green Energy Parks has been identified as a particularly high-impact opportunity. To advance this, an economic benefits study is planned for 2026 to assess the potential employment, investment, and value-chain impacts of such developments. In parallel, a regional supply chain and skills event will be held in 2026 to highlight opportunities for local companies to engage directly with offshore wind projects and strengthen their capacity to service the sector.

By working collectively through this partnership model, the South-East is now presenting a clear, credible, and investor-ready proposition to offshore developers and international supply chain companies. The collaboration ensures that the economic and employment benefits of offshore renewable energy are maximised within the region, positioning Ireland's South-East as a centre of excellence for offshore wind and a key driver of the State's clean energy transition.



Members of the Ireland South-East Offshore Wind Partnership at the Able Seaton Assembly Port for the Dogger Bank WIndfarm in the UK

2. Business Advantage & Sustainability South-East Programme

Feedback from established entrepreneurs across the South-East consistently identified a gap in the regional enterprise ecosystem — the absence of a dedicated support structure to accelerate the growth of high-quality small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). While the region has a strong entrepreneurial base and a growing innovation culture, many scaling businesses found that national programmes did not always address the specific challenges and opportunities of operating in the South-East.

To address this, GreenTechHQ in Enniscorthy, County Wexford, successfully secured €1 million in 2025 under Stream 3 of Enterprise Ireland's Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme. This funding enabled the creation of a new, regionally focused accelerator programme — BASSE (Business Advantage & Sustainability South-East) — designed to provide tailored growth, innovation, and sustainability supports for ambitious companies in the region.

The BASSE programme is a multi-year business support and acceleration initiative aimed at helping growing companies scale strategically, embed sustainability and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) practices into their business models, and build long-term resilience. Its overall goal is to help participating companies double their revenue, strengthen competitiveness, and future-proof their operations by integrating sustainable business strategies at every level.

The first cohort of 16 high-potential South-East businesses was selected through a competitive process, making BASSE a highly selective and intensive support programme. Each participant benefits from a structured mix of peer coaching circles, expert mentorship, and collaborative learning designed to encourage problem-solving and innovation among business leaders. This model of shared learning and practical support directly builds on the approach outlined in Action 1.1 of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan, which identified peer-to-peer learning and mentoring as key accelerators of SME growth. The REP also played an important enabling role in securing the funding for the BASSE project by joining the Board of Directors and ensuring the triple helix model of ownership was achieved.

In addition to these tailored supports, BASSE provides participants with enhanced access to regional business networks, industry partnerships, and other strategic enterprise supports available through GreenTechHQ and Enterprise Ireland. The programme also positions sustainability not

as a compliance exercise, but as a core driver of business performance, market differentiation, and resilience in an evolving economic landscape.

Early feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Ben Brosnan of Bodibro in Gorey commented:

"I've been on many programmes and done much training, but the BASSE programme is another level in terms of the learning, guidance and connections I have already made. The mentors have been incredibly supportive and insightful, the modules are comprehensive and directly applicable to real-everyday work challenges, and the peers I've met bring great perspectives and advice. Thanks so much to a great GreenTech team for putting together such a valuable experience."

The BASSE programme will continue throughout 2026, with plans to onboard a new cohort of companies while maintaining ongoing engagement with the inaugural group. This two-tiered approach ensures continuity of learning and collaboration within the BASSE community, fostering a growing network of ambitious, sustainability-focused businesses driving the next phase of enterprise growth in Ireland's South-East.



The Taoiseach Micheal Martin meeting participants of the BASSE programme with Ian Mernagh, CEO of GreenTech HQ

3. Funding Secured to develop Regional Innovation and Enterprise Hub

Funding of €7.1 million has been secured by Carlow County Council through the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme to develop Catalyst HQ. Catalyst HQ will act as a central hub for business growth, innovation, and collaboration across the region. This project represents a major step forward in strengthening the South-East's enterprise and innovation ecosystem.

The project comprises the development of two modern buildings on O'Brien Road in Carlow Town — a 915m² single-storey light industrial facility with ancillary office space and a 1,369m² two-storey office building. Construction is scheduled to begin in Q2 2026, with completion expected in 2028. The first phase of the project was formally launched by Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Peter Burke, at Enterprise House, Carlow, in late 2025. South-East Catalyst Innovation Company CLG, trading as Catalyst HQ, will lead the project in partnership with Carlow County Council, Carlow Chamber, Propelor BIC, SETU, Carlow County Development Partnership, and a specialist panel of enterprise advisors.



Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Peter Burke with Brian Ogilvie, Head of Entrepreneurship and Rural Engagement, SETU, and The Mayor of Carlow, Cllr Paul Doogue at the launch of Catalyst HQ

David Walsh, lead of the Entrepreneurial Advisory Panel, described Catalyst HQ as *"a genuine game-changer for the South-East"*, highlighting that while state-of-the-art infrastructure is essential, *"the true value lies in the community and network behind it."* Catalyst HQ will host a vibrant ecosystem of experienced entrepreneurs, professional advisors, and industry specialists supporting the next generation of South-East innovators, as identified within Strategic Objective 1 of the Regional Enterprise Plan. The SE REP played a supporting role in the securing of this funding by signposting the funding opportunity from REISS through to Smart Regions and engaging in the early-stage concept development process.

The facility will provide export readiness and compliance support, high-quality market intelligence, global trade insights, and innovation mentoring to help firms adopt advanced technologies and scale sustainably. Entrepreneurs from Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford and beyond the region will gain access to industry-specific expertise and tailored interventions that strengthen competitiveness and market reach.

Catalyst HQ will operate two dedicated support streams — Catalyst Scale, targeting early-stage scale-ups with fewer than 10 employees, and Catalyst Grow, supporting more established firms with 10 or more staff and their own premises.

By integrating world-class infrastructure with a strong network of mentors and institutional partners, Catalyst HQ will foster a long-term culture of innovation, collaboration, and global market engagement, accelerating entrepreneurship and driving sustainable job creation across Ireland's South-East region.



Architects drawing of one of the Catalyst HQ buildings

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.

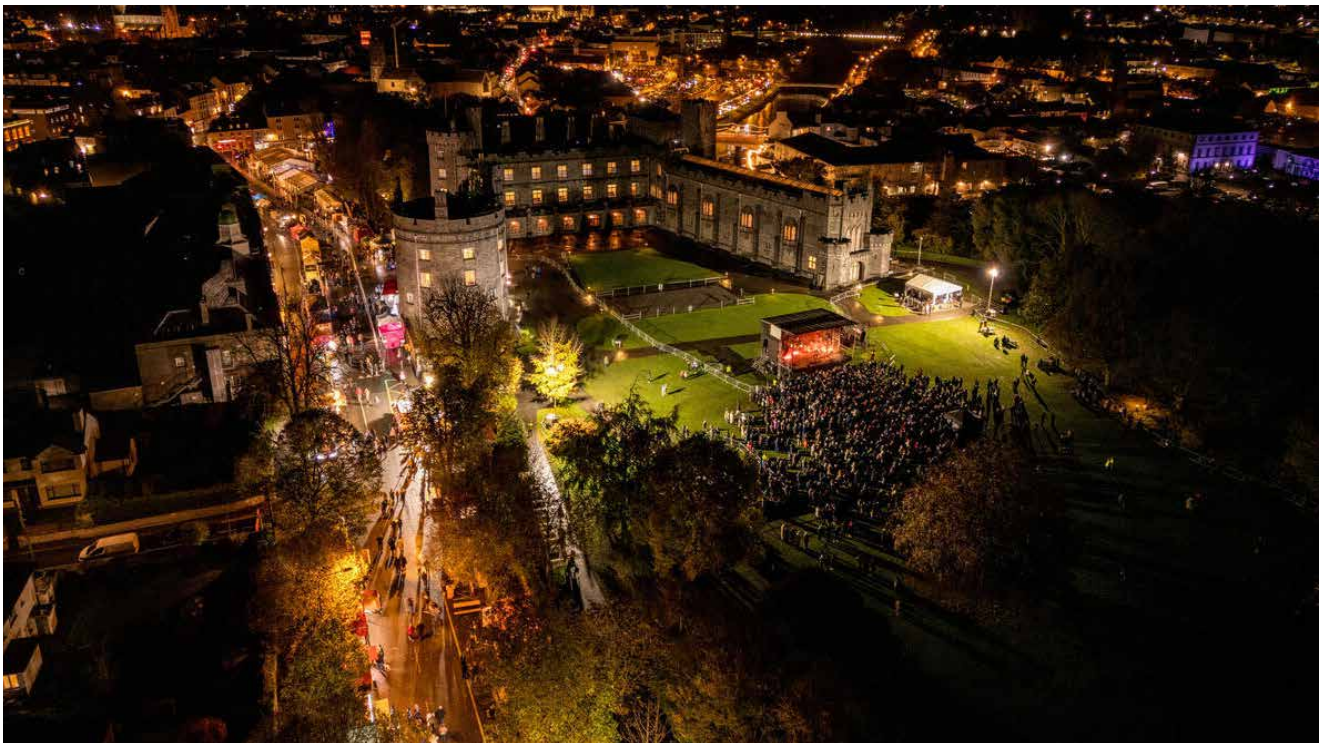


The nine REP regions are *the North-East (Cavan, Monaghan, Louth), North-West (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim), West (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon), Mid-West (Limerick, Clare, Tipperary), South-West (Cork, Kerry), South-East (Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford),* Midlands (Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath),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

At the outset of the Regional Enterprise Plan process, the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) produced a report titled *Regional Approach for the Development of a Smart Specialisation Strategy in the Southern Region*. Stakeholders from across the South-East actively contributed to this work, ensuring that the region's industrial base, research capacity and enterprise strengths were reflected in the analysis. The report identifies a set of thematic priority areas where the South-East and wider Southern Region can focus research and innovation (R&I) policy, interventions and investment to drive long-term economic transformation. It also sets out a roadmap for future stages of co-development, providing a structured framework to align regional enterprise activity with national and EU smart specialisation objectives and to inform the evolution of subsequent Regional Enterprise Plans.

The South-East is increasingly recognised as a sub-region with distinct and complementary industrial strengths, providing a strong foundation for a focused smart specialisation strategy. The region benefits from a dense concentration of global companies, applied research assets and sector-specific expertise, which together underpin its smart specialisation potential.

For the South-East, the key thematic priority areas identified were:

- **Agri-Food, Agri-Tech and Precision Agriculture**
  Building on the region's strong agri-food base, global food companies, Teagasc capability and digital agriculture research, with a focus on productivity, sustainability, nutrition and data-driven farming.
- **Bioeconomy and Green / Low-Carbon Technologies**
  Including bio-based products, circular economy solutions, biorefining and renewable energy, supported by assets such as the National Bioeconomy Campus at Lisheen and regional energy agencies.
- **Life Sciences, Pharmaceuticals and Medical Technologies**
  Leveraging the region's large concentration of multinational and indigenous firms, applied research centres and manufacturing capability in pharmaceuticals, medical devices and biotechnology.
- **Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering**
  Encompassing materials science, additive manufacturing, automation, lean systems and Industry 4.0, closely linked to the region's IDA-located manufacturers and engineering networks.

- **International Financial Services (IFS) and FinTech**
  Recognising the South-East's role as a strong regional location for fund administration, insurance, risk and data analytics, and financial technology outside Dublin.
- **Digital Technologies and Creative Industries**
  Including ICT, data, immersive technologies, design-led innovation and creative media, supported by research centres and internationally recognised creative enterprises.

Renewable energy is now also emerging as a clear smart specialisation opportunity for the South-East, building on the region's natural assets and growing infrastructure pipeline. The South-East is recognised as having the strongest solar resource in Ireland, creating significant potential for large-scale and distributed solar generation to support both enterprise and community energy needs. The region is also at the centre of Ireland's offshore wind opportunity, as documented in this report, with the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) identifying substantial capacity off the south coast.

In June 2024, Ireland's three NUTS 2 regions were designated as Regional Innovation Valleys, joining a network of 149 regions across Europe. This initiative aims to connect less and more innovative regions, and to strengthen collaboration between research, industry and public bodies.

A concerted effort has been made to monitor S3 implementation. In December 2024, the *Progress Report 2024 for the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027* was published. The Regional Assemblies have led the creation of a Smart Specialisation dashboard within the Regional Development Monitor to enable better monitoring of progress.

Funding and Programmes relevant to the South-East:

- **Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme:** European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) co-funded scheme launched in 2023 to support local enterprise infrastructure, innovation clusters, SME services and feasibility studies.
- **TU RISE Programme:** Builds research capacity in Technological Universities, fostering industry-academic collaboration including in the South-East Technological University (SETU). TU RISE outlines targeted industry engagement and innovation across four smart specialisation areas:
  - Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering
  - Biopharma, Life Sciences and Food
  - ICT and Creative Industries
  - Sustainable Development.

- **Technology Gateways:** Connects local industry with research expertise in Technological Universities (TUs) and Institutes of Technology (IoTs). SETU is host to four Technology Gateway Centres (Pharmaceutical and Molecular Biotechnology Research Centre; South-East Applied Materials; Design+; Information and Communication Systems Tech Gateway Walton).

The development of the next Regional Enterprise Plan represents a clear opportunity to refine and sharpen these specialisations, focusing on areas where the region has demonstrated scale, delivery capacity and emerging momentum.





Strategic Objective 1: Start and Grow

Action 1.1: Establish a South-East advisory board of established senior entrepreneurs and develop a structured programme of engagement for this group

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office
Timeframe for delivery Q3 2022
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
The South-East continues to utilise the expertise of its established senior entrepreneurs to strengthen its position as a leading region for entrepreneurship and innovation through a coordinated suite of mentoring, acceleration, and infrastructure initiatives. Central to this progress has been the engagement of experienced entrepreneurs and industry leaders, who have aligned themselves with projects supported under Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS) and Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme.

A group of senior business leaders met in January 2023 to identify opportunities to enhance regional collaboration and to share their expertise with emerging and scaling companies. Many have since taken on mentoring roles across several major initiatives, ensuring that the next generation of entrepreneurs benefits directly from their experience, networks, and strategic insight.

One of the flagship programmes harnessing this expertise is BASSE (Business Advantage & Sustainability South-East), based at GreenTechHQ in Enniscorthy. Funded under the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme, BASSE supports high-potential SMEs to scale strategically, embed sustainability and ESG principles, and build business resilience. Mentors drawn from the region's most successful entrepreneurs are central to the programme, facilitating peer coaching circles and one-to-one guidance that help companies overcome growth challenges and implement innovative, sustainable business strategies.

Propelor Business Innovation Centre's (BIC) Big Pitch competition is another key example of peer-led enterprise support, pairing each finalist with an experienced entrepreneur who mentors them through business development and investor readiness.

Similarly, the South-East Technological University (SETU) has expanded its mentoring ecosystem through pre-accelerator programmes, where entrepreneurs work closely with early-stage founders to build scalable, market-ready ventures. SETU's GrowthHub Entrepreneurial Ambassadors Programme also brings accomplished business leaders into the classroom, inspiring student entrepreneurs and strengthening the university's connection with the regional enterprise community.
The Catalyst HQ infrastructure project in Carlow, supported under the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme, will also provide access to a high-quality mentor network to support manufacturing, export-focused, and technology-driven businesses. By combining state-of-the-art infrastructure with a network of experienced mentors and enterprise partners, the South-East is building a deeply connected entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The Regional Enterprise Plan played a convening role by bringing together relevant partners to support collaboration and alignment in progressing this action. Together, initiatives such as Big Pitch, BASSE, Catalyst HQ, and SETU's New Frontiers and GrowthHub are providing a structured programme of engagement for entrepreneurs and embedding a culture of collaboration, innovation, and peer-to-peer learning.

Action 1.2: Enhance coordination of public start-up supports across the region

Action Leader: Enterprise Ireland
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
Early in the Regional Enterprise Plan process Enterprise Ireland in the South-East took proactive steps to strengthen regional collaboration and enhance alignment among enterprise support agencies in the South-East.

In 2023, a series of in-person learning sessions were hosted for client-facing team members from Enterprise Ireland, Propelor BIC, the four Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), and other key regional stakeholders. The purpose of these sessions was to build a shared understanding of each organisation's goals, explore areas of overlap, and identify practical ways to deliver more integrated supports for businesses. By encouraging open dialogue and cooperation, these sessions have helped to embed a "client needs first" approach — ensuring that companies engaging with the regional enterprise network receive coordinated, efficient, and high-quality assistance tailored to their growth stage and ambitions.

The next stage of this collaboration is now underway and is focused on identifying key gaps in the regional start-up ecosystem — whether in access to finance, innovation infrastructure, scaling supports, or access to mentoring. Insights from this process are expected to directly inform the development of the next iteration of the Regional Enterprise Plan, ensuring it responds to real start-up needs in the South-East and emerging opportunities.

Action 1.3: Deliver on the South-East Technological University's objective of supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development in the region

Action Leader: South-East Technological University (SETU)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
SETU's strategy *Connecting for Impact 2022-2028*, aligns itself with the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan, which explicitly tasks SETU with delivering an entrepreneurship strategy that links students with entrepreneurs, agencies, investor networks and accelerators.

Since 2011, SETU and its legacy institutions, have collaborated with regional stakeholders to deliver the Enterprise Ireland funded New Frontiers Programme in the South-East. Between 2021 and 2025, SETU supported 416 entrepreneurs through participation in Phase 1 of the programme and 90 entrepreneurs via Phase 2. This activity has resulted in the establishment of 48 new businesses, with six ventures securing Pre-Seed Start Fund (PSSF) investment and two progressing to become High-Potential Start-ups (HPSUs).

In addition, SETU's GrowthHub initiative embeds entrepreneurship and innovation as core elements of the student and staff experience. Funded under the Higher Education Authority's Human Capital Initiative (HCI) Pillar 3, its goal is to develop entrepreneurial mindsets, support the creation of new ventures, and strengthen the pipeline of innovative start-ups emerging from the South-East. Activities from 2022 to 2025 included: delivery of 196 Ideation workshops for 2,600 students; 86 guest speakers who shared their entrepreneurial journeys with 1,806 students; delivery of three pre-accelerator programmes and four bootcamps attended by 70 students; mentoring of 115 students; two one-day entrepreneurship festivals which engaged 400 students. Initiatives like GrowthHub, Student Inc. and the Enterprise Ireland Student Enterprise Award competition bootcamps are developing essential skills for the next generation of entrepreneurs.

In 2025, supported by TU RISE, SETU established four Rural Innovation Hubs in Co. Carlow; Co. Kilkenny, Co. Waterford and Co. Wexford. These outreach facilities serve to build and service a community of rural businesses and start-ups in locations away from the main urban centres. Through partnering with local enterprise centres and venues across the region, programmes such as HubStart (early stage start your own business course) provide a pipeline of new enterprises to New Frontiers.

SETU has unified its entrepreneurship infrastructure by building on existing assets such as the Xcelerate Centres[1], Technology Gateways and research centres (e.g. SEAM, PMBRC, Walton, Design+, Li4) into a coherent innovation and commercialisation platform that connects students, researchers, startups and industry. SETU commits to leading the "Innovation Region" and "Entrepreneurial Region" agendas, including through the development of Glassworks, a university enterprise quarter, at the iconic former Waterford Crystal site, as a regional focal point for new ventures, industry collaboration and test beds across a range of disciplines, in the first instance One Health.

1 ArcLabs in Waterford and ERIC in Carlow have been merged and rebranded Xcelerate Centres

Action 1.4: Increase investment in RDI support structures to maximise opportunities for enterprises to effectively engage, access and exploit knowledge and IP

Action Leader: South-East Technological University (SETU)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
During the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan, South-East Technological University (SETU) has continued to strengthen its role as a focal point for research, development and innovation (RDI) engagement for enterprises across the South-East. SETU has deepened connections with the regional enterprise ecosystem, working closely with Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland regional offices, Propelor BIC, Chambers of Commerce, Industry Research & Development Group (IRDG), Ibec, and other High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) support agencies to improve pathways for businesses to access knowledge, research capability and intellectual property.

SETU has been successful in securing funding for Knowledge Transfer (KT Boost) and Technology Transfer activities from 2024 to 2029 which will result in additional headcount to provide supports both internally and externally to stakeholders. The key activity in this KT Boost Programme will be to drive impactful outputs ultimately leading to the creation of jobs through HPSUs, underpinning the strategic mission of SETU.

A significant outcome of this funding is that SETU has developed a comprehensive Xcelerate Strategy for the period 2025-2028, with a clear and ambitious purpose: to drive out integrated RDI structures that actively support the progression of entrepreneurs into scaling enterprises across the South-East. The strategy is focused on building a coherent pipeline of supports through the delivery of targeted development programmes, structured accelerators, designated activity companies, and enhanced incubation and innovation supports operating across SETU's campuses.

Xcelerate provides the strategic framework through which SETU connects academic excellence, applied research capability and enterprise need, ensuring that founders, start-ups and scale-ups can access the right supports at the right stage of their growth journey. Central to the strategy is the creation of robust pathways for commercialisation, company formation and sustainable enterprise growth, aligned with regional and national economic priorities. The Technology Transfer Office plays an instrumental

role in working with researchers to codify the intellectual property emanating from SETU, ensuring that research outputs are protected, commercially viable and positioned for translation into enterprise, licensing opportunities and wider economic impact.

SETU has also significantly strengthened its capacity to deliver on this ambition through a €13 million TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise (TU RISE) funding award. This investment substantially bolsters in-house enterprise-facing services, enabling expanded research engagement, innovation support, doctoral and postdoctoral collaboration, and enhanced technical and commercial expertise. Collectively, the Xcelerate Strategy positions SETU as a key regional engine for entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise scaling, delivering tangible economic and societal impact across the South-East.

Action 1.5: Build on EU-funded pilot South-East Intrapreneurship Report to support local companies realise new opportunities

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
The South-East continues to advance its reputation as a hub of innovation by promoting intrapreneurship – the practice of developing new ideas and solutions within existing organisations – during the lifetime of this plan across multiple sectors and initiatives.

At South-East Technological University (SETU), the new StartX pre-accelerator programme included a dedicated intrapreneurship component that enabled SMEs with innovative concepts to participate alongside early-stage entrepreneurs. This model allowed established firms to test and refine new ideas, access mentoring, and connect with SETU's network of researchers, entrepreneurs, and enterprise partners. The inclusion of intrapreneurship within StartX reflects SETU's broader commitment to nurturing innovation capability across both the start-up and established business communities in the region.

The Ireland South-East Offshore Wind Partnership is also adopting best practice in intrapreneurship to help indigenous companies pivot into the offshore renewable energy sector. By encouraging firms to innovate from within, the Partnership aims to expand Irish company participation in the offshore wind

supply chain, supporting sustainable employment, regional economic development, and increased local content in the domestic market. This, in turn, will enhance Irish firms' capacity to compete and export into the growing global offshore wind industry.

The South-East REP co-ordinated the efforts of regional researchers who hosted targeted workshops for SMEs to help them explore innovation pathways and potential diversification into new sectors. One example of a multinational company engaging in intrapreneurship is where Sanofi have begun piloting an intrapreneurship programme with its employees – with results to be monitored as a potential model to encourage other multinationals in the region to adopt similar initiatives. Looking ahead, this Intrapreneurship action will form a part of the discussions around the start-up ecosystem and learnings can be brought into the development of a new broader action around start-up supports.

Collectively, these initiatives, coordinated by the South-East REP, demonstrate a regional commitment to fostering innovation from within organisations, strengthening the adaptability of local enterprises, and ensuring the South-East remains at the forefront of Ireland's transition to a knowledge-driven, sustainable economy.



Strategic Objective 2: Green Growth

Action 2.1: Position the South-East as an offshore and onshore wind energy hub

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office, Rosslare Europort, Port of Waterford, and Industry
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
The South-East is making significant progress in positioning itself as a major Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Hub, underpinned by strong regional collaboration and major infrastructure investment. Central to this progress has been the establishment of the Ireland South-East Offshore Wind Partnership, alongside the advancement of critical enabling port infrastructure to support the delivery of the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) offshore windfarms, as set out in Action 2.1 of the Regional Enterprise Plan and aligned with the national Climate Action Plan 2024.

The Ireland South-East Offshore Wind Partnership was established in late 2023 under the auspices of the Regional Enterprise Plan to coordinate and accelerate the region's leadership role in Ireland's emerging offshore wind sector. Chaired by Dr David Dempsey, the Partnership brings together local

authorities, ports, enterprise agencies, education and training providers, and industry stakeholders to deliver a unified, strategic response to the economic and industrial opportunities arising from offshore renewable energy development within the South Coast DMAP.

A major milestone in delivering this ambition has been the decision by both Rosslare Europort and the Port of Waterford to lodge planning applications to develop purpose-built port infrastructure to support offshore wind. These complementary investments will provide capacity for turbine assembly, marshalling, installation, and long-term operations and maintenance, addressing a critical national infrastructure gap. Collectively, they represent a coordinated regional response to Ireland's offshore wind ambitions and will underpin the development of a strong indigenous supply chain, attract international developers and contractors, and create significant opportunities for skills development, innovation, and high-value employment across the South-East.

Since its formation, the Offshore Wind Partnership has met regularly and engaged extensively with national and international experts. Members have participated in Wind Energy Ireland conferences and WindEurope events in Bilbao and Copenhagen, as well as undertaking best-practice study visits to the North-East of England and Scotland. These engagements have strengthened regional understanding of the infrastructure, policy, and supply chain frameworks required to successfully develop a competitive offshore wind sector.

In late 2025, the Partnership, working with the South-East Energy Agency and funded by the region's Local Authorities, published the report *Offshore Renewable Energy in Ireland's South-East Region*. The report quantifies the potential economic benefits of offshore wind for the region and identifies key strategic enablers, including port readiness, supply chain development, skills pipelines, and coordinated planning.

The Partnership continues to work closely with Rosslare Europort, Waterford Port, and Waterford Airport, supported by dedicated sub-groups focused on indigenous supply chain development, the creation of Green Energy Parks, and attracting further FDI. Looking ahead, an economic benefits study on Green Energy Parks and a regional supply chain and skills event are planned for 2026 to further unlock regional opportunity.

Through this collective, partnership-led approach, the South-East is presenting a clear, credible, and investor-ready proposition, maximising the regional economic benefits of offshore renewable energy and positioning the South-East as a centre of excellence for offshore wind and a cornerstone of Ireland's clean energy transition.

Action 2.2: Develop a strategic approach to regional green skills at further and higher education level

Action Leader: Regional Skills Forum, South-East Technological University and Education and Training Boards.
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
South-East stakeholders continue to play an active role in shaping the national response to the skills and workforce requirements associated with offshore wind development. Regional representatives have engaged closely with the national Offshore Wind Energy Expert Advisory Group on Skills, coordinated by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), ensuring that the specific needs, strengths, and opportunities of the South-East are reflected in the comprehensive national Offshore Wind Skills Action Plan currently being progressed.

Representatives from South-East Technological University (SETU), Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Boards (ETBs), and the South-East Regional Skills Manager are active participants on this advisory group, providing direct regional input into policy development and implementation planning.

In parallel, a range of sustainability and offshore-related education and training programmes have been developed and expanded across the region in response to growing industry demand. These programmes are being delivered through a collaborative model involving SETU, the regional ETBs, and Greentech Skillnet, supporting both new entrants and existing workers to upskill or reskill for opportunities arising in the offshore wind and wider green economy sectors. This provision spans further education, higher education, professional development, and short-course delivery, helping to build a flexible and responsive skills pipeline aligned with emerging industry needs.
To support a robust, evidence-led approach, an assessment of offshore wind skills and workforce requirements in Ireland's South-East has been prepared by the Skills Sub-Group of the Ireland South-East Offshore Wind Partnership, coordinated by the South-East Regional Skills Forum. The assessment draws on national research, including Building Our Potential: Ireland's Offshore Wind Skills and Talent Needs and the Offshore Wind Skills Action Plan, and applies these insights to the regional context.

The report profiles the anticipated skills demand associated with the 900MW Tonn Nua offshore wind project, as well as a potential 2,500MW future offshore wind scenario, identifying workforce needs across construction, port and marine logistics, grid connection, and long-term operations and

maintenance. It highlights critical skills gaps, priority occupations, and training requirements, while also outlining opportunities to leverage offshore wind development to support green industrial growth, including energy-intensive industries and expanded indigenous supply chains.

Action 2.3: Support the growth of a National Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Food, Forestry and Marine Innovation in the South-East

Action Leader: South-East Technological University (SETU)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
Action 4.8: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the agri-food, forestry innovation, research and development ecosystem in the South-East and Action 3.6: Explore potential to start and grow an industry-led South-East Agri-food, Forestry and Marine Cluster are now grouped under this action to avoid duplication in reporting.

Significant progress has been made in strengthening the South-East's capacity to support the development of a National Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Food, Forestry and Marine Innovation, anchored by South-East Technological University (SETU) and supported by strong national and international partnerships.

SETU's Land Sciences Living Lab at Carriganore provides key enabling infrastructure for this ambition. Initially supported through Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS) in 2022, the Living Lab operates as a shared platform for education, applied research, knowledge exchange and community engagement across sustainable food systems, land use and biodiversity. It supports over 650 undergraduate and postgraduate students and facilitates collaboration between academic staff, industry partners, community groups and visiting researchers. Facilities including a research yard, climate-controlled horticultural glasshouse, outdoor trial areas, and incubation and nursery spaces enable applied research in horticulture, land management, climate resilience and sustainability, supporting both teaching and externally funded research. The co-location of the National Biodiversity Data Centre further strengthens its role as a regional focal point for biodiversity research, conservation, education and public engagement.

Beyond infrastructure, SETU has secured nationally and internationally competitive research funding that directly advances the Centre of Excellence ambition. In July 2025, SETU was announced as the only Irish partner in the €2.6 million RESILCROPS project, funded through the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme (2021-2027). This European collaboration focuses on harnessing circular economy approaches to improve crop resilience and addresses key challenges such as drought, pests and temperature extremes, positioning the South-East as an active participant in European-level research on sustainable agriculture, landscape resilience and food system transformation.

SETU's Department of Land Sciences is also a research collaborator in the BASELine European Innovation Partnership, a 4.5-year regenerative agriculture project that commenced in June 2025. Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the project brings farmers, scientists and other experts together to implement, evaluate and promote regenerative practices that restore soil health, increase biodiversity and improve the resilience and sustainability of farming systems.

Applied innovation capacity has been further strengthened through Enterprise Ireland's Commercialisation Fund Programme, which supported the advancement of Eye-Q in October 2025. Led by researchers in SETU's Department of Land Sciences, Eye-Q is an AI-powered solution designed to reduce food waste across the agri-food supply chain, enabling smarter decision-making from farm to fork and supporting food security and sustainability objectives.

In November 2025, SETU researchers from the Department of Land Sciences secured DAFM funding to lead C-BioStock, a collaborative project with UCC and UCD. This project uses 3D laser scanning to detect changes in carbon stocks and biodiversity across native and commercial Irish forests, supporting evidence-based evaluation of land management practices.

The wider regional research ecosystem has also been enhanced through complementary national investment, including the opening of Teagasc's National Agricultural Sustainability Research and Innovation Centre (NASRIC) at Johnstown Castle in November 2025. This major national investment strengthens the South-East's capacity in soil health, land-use sustainability, climate mitigation and policy-relevant research.

In the marine and blue economy space, SETU continues to build capability through strategic collaboration, including participation in the EU-CONEXUS Blue Growth Leaders' Academy and a strategic cooperation agreement signed with the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) in September 2025 to support collaborative research, data exchange and curriculum development linked to maritime planning and offshore renewable energy.

Collectively, these developments demonstrate sustained progress towards establishing the South-East as a nationally significant centre for sustainable food, forestry and marine innovation, built on applied research strength, national investment, international collaboration and strong regional partnerships.

Action 2.4: Support the growth of a National Centre of Excellence for High Performance Buildings in Wexford

Action Leader: Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board and Wexford County Council
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
The High Performance Building Alliance (HPBA) is a United Nations-recognised Centre of Excellence focused on advancing sustainable construction and high-performance building practices, based in Enniscorthy, County Wexford. Since its inauguration, HPBA has played a leading role in championing sustainability within the built environment, acting as a convening platform for a wide range of stakeholders, including architects, construction firms, material suppliers, policymakers, educators, and academic researchers. Through collaboration, knowledge sharing, and advocacy, HPBA has helped to promote innovation and best practice in sustainable design, materials, and construction methods across Ireland. The project received funding under Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS) in 2022.

In 2024, HPBA set a strategic challenge for the All-Island BioDirect project, aimed at increasing awareness of the potential for Irish-grown, bio-based construction materials to be processed and utilised within Ireland. This initiative highlighted opportunities to strengthen domestic supply chains, reduce embodied carbon, and support rural and regional economies. As a direct outcome of this work, the Irish Materials Hub was established to continue advocacy and collaboration in this area. Over the next two years, the Hub will focus on building industry awareness, supporting policy alignment, and encouraging greater uptake of indigenous materials in the construction sector.

In 2025, HPBA further strengthened its international engagement by hosting a delegation from Pittsburgh's Green Building Alliance, a fellow UN Centre of Excellence. The delegation participated in a series of site visits across Ireland, including Kingspan's IKON Centre, Saint-Gobain's Technical Training Centre, the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE) in Dundalk, the National

Construction Training Campus in Mount Lucas, Kilkenny County Council, Waterford and Wexford ETBs, and Wexford County Council. These visits showcased Ireland's capabilities in sustainable construction, training and innovation.

The visit culminated in the signing of Memoranda of Understanding, including agreements between Pittsburgh's Catapult and AMTCE, and between SETU and Mascaro Construction, strengthening transatlantic collaboration in sustainable construction, skills development, and innovation. Through initiatives such as these, HPBA continues to position the South-East as a leader in sustainable building and a key contributor to Ireland's low-carbon transition.

Action 2.5: Green Awareness – Promotion of Industry Best Practice in Sustainability and Green Opportunities

Action Leader: South-East LEOs, Ireland South-East Development Office and the 3 Counties Energy Agency (3CEA)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) across the South-East continue to play a critical role in supporting SMEs to transition towards more sustainable and environmentally responsible business practices. Working closely with their respective Local Authority Climate Action Teams, the LEOs in Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford are aligning enterprise development supports with local and national climate objectives. Through coordinated promotion of advisory services, grant schemes, training programmes and awareness campaigns, the LEO network is ensuring businesses across the region are well informed of the supports available to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency and enhance long-term competitiveness.

LEO Carlow continues to collaborate closely with Carlow County Council's Climate Action Team to promote sustainability best practice and raise awareness of supports available to businesses, including SEAI energy audits and financial incentives. LEO Carlow staff participate in public information sessions hosted by the Climate Action Team, ensuring strong alignment between enterprise development and climate action priorities. During 2024 and 2025, LEO Carlow delivered a programme of sustainability-focused initiatives, including circular economy workshops for the hospitality sector, green efficiency training for general business and targeted sustainability supports for tourism enterprises, supported by active promotion through LEO communication channels.

LEO Kilkenny continues to actively promote the Green for Business and Energy Efficiency Grant schemes. Activity has included a green-themed 'Boost Your Business' competition with KCLR, targeted print and social media campaigns, and direct business engagement. In September 2023 and September 2025, LEO Kilkenny, in collaboration with Kilkenny County Council's Climate Action Team, hosted regional conferences highlighting sustainability funding and supports. LEO Kilkenny also produced short videos showcasing sustainability journeys of local businesses, launched on Climate Action Day 2024.

LEO Waterford continues to promote sustainability and energy efficiency supports, with a focus on increasing awareness of SEAI audits, grant schemes and advisory supports through public information events and targeted communications.

LEO Wexford works closely with Wexford County Council's Climate Action Team to highlight sustainability best practice and available supports. In November 2025, LEO Wexford, in conjunction with SETU (TU RISE), delivered a sustainability clinic in Rosslare, supported by promotion through LEO channels.

During the period of the Plan, the South-East Energy Agency has continued to support enterprises in translating climate and energy policy into practical action. Through advisory supports, pilots and demonstration projects, it assists SMEs to improve energy efficiency, adopt renewable energy solutions and implement carbon measurement and reduction approaches aligned with emerging ESG requirements.

Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate a strong regional commitment to supporting SMEs on their sustainability journey while embedding climate action at the core of enterprise development across the South-East.



Strategic Objective 3: Smart Specialisation and Clustering

Action 3.1: Develop a coherent approach with industry-driven governance to strategic development of key South-East clusters

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2022
Final Status: Action discontinued

Final Outcome Achieved: As reported in the Mid-term Progress Report, this action was discontinued during the plan as activities were being pursued under Action 1.1.

Action 3.2: Expand and enhance industry engagement with the South-East Engineering Cluster

Action Leader: Sector industry champion and cluster manager
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:

Engineering the South-East (ESE) is a regional, industry-led cluster supported through Enterprise Ireland's Regional Technology Cluster Fund and anchored by South-East Technological University (SETU). The cluster plays a central role in strengthening collaboration between engineering and manufacturing companies, the higher and further education system, and enterprise support agencies across the South-East. Its overarching objective is to enhance regional competitiveness by supporting skills development, innovation, collaboration and talent attraction across engineering and related sectors.

During the reporting period, ESE continued to operate as a key convening platform for companies active in advanced manufacturing, automation, construction, offshore renewable energy and the wider built environment. A strong emphasis was placed on industry engagement, with the cluster facilitating one-to-one company interactions, thematic group engagements, sectoral sub-clusters and joint site visits. This collaborative, company-led approach has enabled businesses to identify shared challenges and opportunities, particularly in emerging areas such as offshore wind, automation, cyber security for operational technology and energy resilience.

A significant milestone during the period was the completion of the *Evaluation of the Engineering Skills and Training Needs of Manufacturing and Construction Sectors in the South-East* (January 2024). This survey, conducted by the South-East Regional Skills Forum in collaboration with Engineering the South-East, engaged 109 enterprises across the region. The study provided a detailed profile of existing engineering skills within industry and identified current and future skills gaps, helping to inform education and training providers and guide the development of industry-aligned programmes across the region.

ESE has also supported the development of collaborative initiatives that link companies with education and research capability in the South-East. These include actions focused on graduate retention and talent pipelines, applied research collaboration and the co-design of industry-informed training programmes. The cluster has played an enabling role in supporting companies to explore funding opportunities and build consortia for national and European innovation programmes, strengthening networks and generating learning even where projects did not ultimately proceed.

Skills development remains a core strand of ESE's activity. The cluster has contributed to the design and delivery of industry-relevant upskilling initiatives, including training in high-voltage electrical systems, offshore wind-related skills, automation and specialist manufacturing disciplines. These activities support the region's capacity to meet current and future workforce demands while aligning with national industrial, climate and energy objectives.

ESE has delivered a strong programme of outreach, promotion and awareness-raising. Engineering careers fairs, industry conferences, CPD events and engagement with second-level guidance counsellors have helped raise the profile of engineering careers and strengthen connections between students, graduates and regional employers. This work supports longer-term objectives around talent attraction, graduate retention and workforce sustainability in the South-East.

Overall, Engineering the South-East continues to demonstrate the value of a cluster-led approach in supporting enterprise development, skills alignment and innovation, making a meaningful contribution to the objectives of the Regional Enterprise Plan and the long-term economic resilience of the South-East region.

Action 3.3: Expand and enhance industry engagement with the South-East Financial Services Cluster

Action Leader: Sector industry champion and cluster manager
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action could not be completed

Final Outcome Achieved:
The South-East Financial Services (FS) Cluster was active during the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan and made meaningful progress in building a regional platform for collaboration across financial services, fintech, and related professional services. However, despite this early momentum, the cluster was unable to continue its work due to being unable to secure the matched private investment required to achieve Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme funding.

As a result, further development of the cluster will need to be considered as part of the next iteration of the Regional Enterprise Plan, informed by national clustering policy and available funding mechanisms. Prior to the pause in activity, the FS Cluster was active throughout 2022 and 2023, with a membership base exceeding 70 organisations. The cluster delivered a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening the visibility and connectivity of the financial services sector in the South-East. These included a regional showcase event aligned with the Department of Finance's Ireland for Finance Action Plan, helping to position the region within the national financial services ecosystem.

The cluster also launched a dedicated Jobs Board, advertising hundreds of regional employment opportunities across financial services and fintech, supporting talent attraction and retention in the region. In response to business accommodation challenges, a property solutions resource was developed to support companies at different stages of growth, from start-ups and scale-ups to multinational firms. In addition, the cluster invested in capability building and international benchmarking. The cluster manager was awarded a place on the European Commission's Cluster Booster Academy, including a visit to Strasbourg, to examine best practice cluster models across Europe. A FinTech Centre of Excellence feasibility study grant was also secured, with preparatory work underway prior to the pause in activity.

Action 3.4: Assess and progress the South-East ICT Cluster

Action Leader: Sector industry champion and cluster manager
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
There has been stakeholder engagement across the South-East on the potential to progress a regional ICT cluster, reflecting the sector's increasing importance to the regional economy and its role in supporting digital transformation across multiple industries. These discussions have involved enterprise agencies, local authorities, higher education, and industry, with a shared recognition that any future cluster development must be aligned with national clustering policy and supported by an appropriate and sustainable funding model. This will be a key consideration for the next iteration of the Regional Enterprise Plan.

South-East Technological University already maintains an active ICT industry board, which plays an important role in strengthening industry engagement, informing curriculum development, and supporting graduate employability. This provides a strong foundation on which any future cluster activity could build, ensuring close alignment between industry needs, skills provision, and research capability.

Waterford City and County Council commissioned the RIKON business research group in 2024 to deliver the South-East Tech Pulse study. This research examined the scale and characteristics of the regional ICT sector, its economic outlook and industry appetite for clustering. The findings highlighted the sector's strong contribution to the national economy and identified significant support for a more structured regional approach, with 92% of respondents indicating a willingness to participate in a wider ICT network to address shared challenges.

An emerging foundation for a South-East ICT cluster is evident through a series of enterprise- led technology meet-ups taking place across Carlow, Waterford, Wexford and Kilkenny. While these gatherings are not formally connected or structured as a cluster, they bring together individuals working across the ICT and digital economy, providing regular forums to share challenges, explore new technologies and discuss innovation trends, often supported by guest speakers from industry and academia.

Collectively, these place-based networks – combined with the positive results of the RIKON research – demonstrate an underlying level of critical mass, engagement and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange within the regional ICT community that can provide a platform from which a more coordinated regional ICT cluster could be potentially developed.

Further consideration of structure, scope, and alignment with national clustering policy will be progressed as part of wider regional discussions planned for Q1 2026 and will inform priorities for the next Regional Enterprise Plan.

Action 3.5: Explore potential to start and grow an industry-led South-East Life Sciences Cluster

Action Leader: Chair of Ireland South-East Development Office, IDA Ireland, and Enterprise Ireland
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
During the lifetime of the current Regional Enterprise Plan, funding was secured through Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme to scope and assess the feasibility of developing a Life Sciences cluster for the South-East, including support for a cluster manager based at Kinetic Labs. This work enabled early engagement with Life Sciences companies across the region to assess industry demand, identify shared challenges, and explore the potential value of a structured cluster model. Engagement with stakeholders also helped to identify key priorities around skills, innovation and collaboration, confirming the relevance of the Life Sciences sector to the regional economy and testing industry appetite for a more formalised approach.

While this early-stage work demonstrated potential, progression beyond the feasibility and scoping phase has been constrained by the current funding landscape. In particular, the requirements of the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme — including the requirement for 50% private sector

funding from the outset and restrictions on the use of public funding — present a significant challenge for the establishment of a new regional cluster at this stage of maturity. As a result, the development of a fully operational Life Sciences cluster has not been achievable to date.

In the interim, South-East Technological University continues to support collaboration and maintain industry momentum through its Life Sciences Industry Forum. The forum provides a practical platform for companies to engage with one another and with the education system, particularly in relation to skills, training and workforce development, ensuring that relationships and dialogue continue in the absence of a formal cluster structure.

More recently, in late 2025, it was announced that a South chapter of the Connected Health and Wellbeing Cluster will be launched at an event at SETU in January 2026. The Connected Health and Wellbeing Cluster is Ireland's national platform for collaboration across digital health, Life Sciences, MedTech, healthcare providers, academia and public agencies, and is funded under Enterprise Ireland's Regional Technology Cluster Fund. The establishment of a South chapter will create a regional hub for organisations across the South and South-East to connect, collaborate and shape the future of connected health innovation.

Action 3.6: Explore potential to start and grow an industry-led South-East Agri-food, Forestry and Marine Cluster

Action Leader: Industry chair to be identified with South-East Technological University
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024
Final Status: Action discontinued

Final Outcome Achieved: As reported in the Mid-term Progress Report, action discontinued as activities are now captured under action 2.3.

Action 3.7: Local Enterprise Offices to develop four regional micro-clusters in pharma, lean manufacturing, green and digital marketing

Action Leader: Four Local Enterprise Offices of Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
As part of the implementation of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan, the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) across the region undertook a programme of work to explore the potential for micro-clusters as a means of strengthening collaboration among SMEs in key sectors. This work recognised that smaller, sector-focused clusters can provide an effective pathway to deeper collaboration, knowledge sharing and future cluster development.

Initial research focused on green cluster activity in 2023, led by LEO Wexford, reflecting growing enterprise demand for sustainability supports and peer learning. Building on this early work, further micro-cluster activity was developed across the region, including pharma and life sciences (led by LEO Waterford), lean manufacturing (led by LEO Kilkenny) and digital marketing (led by LEO Carlow). These initiatives tested industry appetite, mapped sectoral ecosystems and supported early engagement between businesses operating in similar domains.

As part of the lean manufacturing micro-cluster, LEO Kilkenny progressed Lean for Business events in 2024 and 2025, supporting SMEs to improve productivity, operational efficiency and competitiveness. Engagement also included targeted company visits, helping to ground cluster activity in real operational challenges faced by firms across the region.

In the pharma and life sciences sector, LEO Waterford worked with Kinetic Labs to develop a comprehensive database of pharma and life sciences businesses operating across the South-East. This work has now been completed and provides a valuable resource to support structured engagement with companies, enabling the LEOs to identify shared challenges, skills needs and opportunities for future collaboration.
Across the region, the LEOs have continued to champion digital transformation through the Digital for Business and Grow Digital schemes. These supports assist SMEs to adopt new technologies that enhance productivity, competitiveness and sustainability. To strengthen awareness and uptake, the LEOs partnered with Google to deliver two regional digital events focused on digital marketing, online capability building and support for the craft and creative sectors.

To further enhance digital engagement, LEO Wexford launched a pilot initiative, *Tap Retail*, Ireland's first Digital Retail Village. This programme clustered 14 retailers on a single online platform in Enniscorthy, supporting them to expand reach, increase competitiveness and strengthen customer engagement.

LEO Wexford also delivered a strong programme of sustainability engagement, including seminars and workshops on energy supports, green procurement and best practice in sustainability. Throughout 2025, these initiatives highlighted supports to reduce energy consumption, adopt sustainable packaging, optimise logistics and improve resource efficiency. In addition, LEO Wexford continued to support the High Performance Building Alliance, including facilitating an international delegation visit in September 2025, which has since led to a collaborative project involving SETU and international industry partners. Collectively, these actions demonstrate how the LEOs, supported by the Regional Enterprise Plan, have tested micro-cluster approaches while advancing sustainability, digitalisation and collaboration across the South-East SME base.



Strategic Objective 4: Innovate

Action 4.1: Explore a feasibility study for a SETU multi-disciplinary research centre of excellence

Action Leader: South-East Technological University (SETU) and Ireland South-East Development Office
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
While a feasibility study was initially considered for this action, this work was subsequently overtaken by the development of SETU's research strategy, which absorbed and reframed the original objectives. SETU's research strategy, Connecting Research to Impact 2025–2028, explicitly positions cross-disciplinary and challenge-driven research as a core pillar of the University's future development.

SETU has already demonstrated capability in multi-disciplinary research delivery through its Technology Gateways and applied research centres, which integrate expertise across engineering, ICT, life sciences, sustainability, design, and business to address industry and regional challenges.

Looking forward, the strategy commits SETU to scaling and formalising cross-disciplinary research structures, with a clear ambition to establish one or more pan-University research institutes spanning multiple strategic research themes. Examples highlighted include Smart South-East and One Health,

both of which explicitly require collaboration across engineering, health, environmental science, ICT, business, and social sciences to address complex, real-world challenges.

SETU's research is aligned with seven interdisciplinary themes that reflect SETU's strengths and respond to societal needs:

- Information and communication technologies
- Environment, bioeconomy and sustainability
- Pharmaceutical, chemical and biological sciences
- Engineering and advanced manufacturing
- Health, well-being, sport and physical activity
- Business, finance, entrepreneurship and management practice

The University-Enterprise Quarter at the Glassworks site is identified as a critical enabler of this approach. The strategy positions Glassworks as a focal point for co-located research, innovation, education, and enterprise activity, designed to stimulate idea exchange and interdisciplinary collaboration.
Planned developments include a dedicated One Health building combining research and innovation space, enabling interaction between researchers, clinicians, enterprises, and policymakers. This physical co-location is intended to accelerate knowledge transfer and support cross-sectoral research programmes with direct regional impact.

Overall, the SETU's research strategy makes clear that cross-disciplinary research is not an add-on but a defining characteristic of SETU's future research identity, with the Glassworks site playing a central role in translating integrated research into measurable economic, social, and environmental impact for the South-East.

Action 4.2: Create a LEO South-East virtual innovation Hub

Action Leader: South-East Local Enterprise Offices
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
Over the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan, this action to 'Create a LEO South-East virtual Innovation Hub' has evolved from the concept of a virtual innovation hub to the development of the Catalyst HQ project in Carlow. This project represents a significant step forward in strengthening the

South-East's enterprise and innovation ecosystem. Early in the Plan period, funding was secured under Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS) to progress the development of a Regional Export and Innovation Campus in Carlow. This initiative was identified as the delivery vehicle for the South-East Innovation Hub, developed in partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices, and provided the strategic foundation for what has since evolved into Catalyst HQ.

Carlow County Council has now successfully secured €7.1 million in funding under the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme to advance the project to delivery stage. This project will place Catalyst HQ as a central hub for business growth, innovation, and collaboration, positioning Carlow as a focal point for enterprise development serving the wider South-East region.

The Catalyst HQ project comprises the construction of two purpose-built facilities on O'Brien Road in Carlow Town: a 915 square metre single-storey light industrial building with ancillary office space, and a 1,369 square metre two-storey office building. Together, these facilities are designed to support manufacturing, export-oriented, and technology-driven enterprises. Construction is scheduled to commence in Q2 2026, with completion anticipated in 2028, marking a major investment in the region's enterprise infrastructure.

A key milestone in the project's development was the formal launch of its first phase by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment at Enterprise House, Carlow, in late 2025. Delivery of the project is being led by South-East Catalyst Innovation Company CLG, trading as Catalyst HQ, in partnership with Carlow County Council, Carlow Chamber, Propelor BIC, South-East Technological University, Carlow County Development Partnership, and a specialist panel of enterprise advisors.

Aligned with Objective 1 of the Regional Enterprise Plan, Catalyst HQ has been designed not just as a physical space, but as a connected enterprise ecosystem. It will provide export readiness and compliance supports, market intelligence, innovation mentoring, and global trade insights, alongside two tailored support streams — Catalyst Scale for early-stage scale-ups and Catalyst Grow for more established enterprises.

By combining high-quality infrastructure with a strong network of mentors and institutional partners, Catalyst HQ will foster a culture of innovation, collaboration, and international ambition, accelerating entrepreneurship and supporting sustainable job creation across the South-East region.

Action 4.3: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the life sciences innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East

Action Leader: Pharmaceutical and Molecular Biotechnology Research Centre (PMBRC), South-East Technological University (SETU) and Kinetic Labs
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
As part of the Regional Enterprise Plan, targeted actions have been progressed to strengthen and scale the life sciences innovation, research and development ecosystem in the South-East, with a particular focus on improving enterprise access to specialist infrastructure, applied research capability and collaboration opportunities.

Funding was secured through Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme and Regional Enterprise Development Fund to further advance the life sciences innovation and R&D ecosystem in the region, with Kinetic Labs in Waterford identified as a key enabling asset. Kinetic Labs plays an important role in strengthening the ecosystem by acting as a dedicated innovation and collaboration space for companies, researchers and start-ups in the sector. As a specialised technology and enterprise hub, it provides critical infrastructure, laboratory facilities and technical support that enable life sciences firms to develop, validate and scale new products and processes.

Complementing this infrastructure, the Pharmaceutical and Molecular Biotechnology Research Centre (PMBRC) at South-East Technological University has continued to play an active role in engaging industry across the pharmaceutical, medical device and wider life sciences sectors. PMBRC operates as one of Enterprise Ireland's Technology Gateways, delivering applied research support and collaborative problem-solving for companies ranging from SMEs to larger indigenous and multinational organisations across pharmaceuticals, healthcare, veterinary science, food ingredients and related sectors.

In 2022, PMBRC achieved significant industry recognition for its applied research impact, receiving Pharma Industry Awards for R&D Achievement and Research Centre of the Year. In addition, researchers and teams associated with PMBRC have been recognised through SETU's Research Excellence Awards, including Research Impact and Industry Partnership accolades, underlining the centre's effectiveness in translating research expertise into commercial and sectoral outcomes.

Collectively, these developments have strengthened the foundations of the South-East's life sciences ecosystem. While further work is required to increase enterprise utilisation of available infrastructure and deepen industry engagement, the progress achieved under this action demonstrates the region's growing capability in applied life sciences research and provides a strong platform for scaling enterprise participation and collaboration in the next iteration of the Regional Enterprise Plan.

Action 4.4: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in advanced manufacturing innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East

Action Leader: South-Eastern Applied Materials (SEAM) in South-East Technological University (SETU)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
As part of the Regional Enterprise Plan action to identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the advanced manufacturing innovation, research and development ecosystem in the South-East, sustained investment has been made in strengthening research infrastructure, applied innovation capacity, and industry collaboration.

The completion of the **Human Capital Initiative project** 'Additive Manufacturing Advancing the South East' has delivered lasting benefits to the South-East, embedding advanced manufacturing innovation and enterprise engagement into the region's economic fabric. SETU, through Enterprise Ireland's Design+ Technology Gateway and SEAM Technology Gateway, has provided local and regional enterprises with critical expertise in design, materials, and process innovation, directly supporting the delivery of the BEng in Advanced Manufacturing and enabling companies to adopt new technologies more effectively. The Innovative Materials for Industry 4.0 (IMI4) programme, funded under HCI Pillar 3, upskilled industry professionals in advanced materials and sustainability, ensuring that South-East enterprises are equipped to compete in the Industry 4.0 era. SETU's postgraduate pathways, such as the MSc in Applied Materials, have produced graduates with specialist skills in material characterisation and design for manufacturing, strengthening the region's R&D capacity. Meanwhile, the AMASE project (Additive Manufacturing Advancing the South-East) established state-of-the-art additive manufacturing facilities and created new degree pathways in collaboration with leading employers including Stryker, Boston Scientific, and Bausch & Lomb, anchoring high-value industry partnerships in the region.

Through Enterprise Ireland's Technology Gateway Programme, SEAM was awarded €4.8 million to further develop its advanced manufacturing and materials engineering capabilities. This investment enhances SEAM's capacity to support industry with applied research, testing, prototyping, and problem-solving, particularly for SMEs and scaling companies seeking to innovate and remain competitive.

SEAM also secured €2.2 million from Research Ireland (formerly Science Foundation Ireland) to acquire Ireland's first high-power 450kV industrial CT scanner, a nationally significant piece of infrastructure. This unique infrastructure was installed earlier in February 2025 with the capability that allows for non-destructive internal inspection of large and complex components, offering industry unprecedented access to advanced materials characterisation and quality assurance within the region. In parallel, €1.6 million was awarded through an Enterprise Ireland infrastructural call helped to establish a new Materials Sustainability Lab this year, that focuses on supporting greener manufacturing practices, materials optimisation, and circular economy approaches.

Additional developments include a €1.9 million microscale manufacturing laboratory that will be launched in 2026, which will support rapid prototyping and low-volume production, and SEAM's leadership of a €700,000+ carbon reduction project for the cement industry, demonstrating the centre's ability to deliver practical, high-impact solutions for emissions-intensive sectors.

SEAM has also broadened its outreach to public service organisations, engaging beyond its traditional industrial base. In addition to supporting Irish industry, SEAM has now made the Irish Defence Forces aware of its expertise and capabilities to inform future Technology Capability Development needs, and looks forward to working with its R&D team in the coming years.

Collectively, these initiatives have delivered a pipeline of skilled graduates, enhanced innovation infrastructure, and deepened enterprise collaboration, positioning the South-East as a hub of advanced manufacturing excellence and a driver of Ireland's wider industrial competitiveness.

Action 4.5: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the ICT innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East

Action Leader: Walton Institute in South-East Technological University (SETU)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
Strengthening research engagement with the ICT sector has been a key priority during the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan, with South-East Technological University (SETU) playing a central role in connecting industry with applied research, innovation funding, and advanced digital capabilities. At the heart of this engagement is SETU's Walton Institute, which acts as a critical interface between academic research and enterprise needs across the South-East.

To support companies at all stages of digital maturity, the Walton Institute has developed a comprehensive Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) funding roadmap. This roadmap outlines how organisations of any size can access and combine national and international funding supports to build their RD&I capacity in collaboration with academic partners. Over the past year, this roadmap has been presented to a significant cohort of regional companies, providing clarity on funding pathways and encouraging increased industry participation in research-led innovation.

The Walton Institute has also maintained a strong focus on engaging SMEs, ensuring that advanced ICT research is accessible beyond large corporates. Through initiatives such as Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Vouchers and Walton's European Digital Innovation Hub (ENTIRE), SMEs are supported to collaborate with Walton researchers on exploratory projects, including the application of digital twin technologies to optimise operations, improve efficiency, and enhance decision-making.

In parallel, Walton has continued to build research depth through a number of high-impact national and European projects. In 2025, the Institute developed the AgriDISCRETE roadmap, supporting the digitalisation of Ireland's agri-food sector, while participation in the DIVINE Horizon Europe project is advancing research on data sovereignty and privacy – critical issues for ICT-driven enterprises. Additionally, Walton's Executive Director produced a strategic report for the European Commission which details the challenges and opportunities presented by standardisation and digitalisation related to the Green Deal and EU Twin Transition.

In the telecommunications domain, Walton secured substantial funding for Beyond-6G research, focused on designing resilient next-generation networks capable of withstanding cyberattacks and operational disruption.

Sustainability and climate resilience are increasingly central to Walton's ICT research engagement. Projects such as SAtComm, which is developing smart energy communities using digital technologies, and GreenSphere, which is reducing the carbon footprint of AI systems in partnership with industry, demonstrate how ICT research can deliver both economic and environmental impact.

Beyond software-based research, Walton continues to expand its laboratory footprint, with additional facilities coming onstream in 2026 (including extended AI/High Performance Computing facilities).

Alongside formal research activity, Walton continues to invest in outreach and skills development, including Transition Year programmes, women-in-tech initiatives, and community-focused digital applications. Collectively, these activities are strengthening enterprise engagement with ICT research, enabling SMEs to adopt advanced technologies, and building the digital and green skills base required to support the South-East's long-term competitiveness.

Action 4.6: Position the South-East as a destination for design-led thinking, design innovation, education, and training

Action Leader: Design+ in South-East Technological University (SETU)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
Based on campus in SETU Carlow, Design+ has a proven track record in knowledge transfer and delivering innovation solutions to industry. With a primary focus on design strategy and product design, Design+ has the resources onsite for R&D support in the form of additive manufacturing capabilities, rapid prototyping, 3D printing and electronic prototyping. Design+ engages with companies on a one-to-one basis and through programmes; companies from multiple sectors including engineering, ICT and bioscience, can access a vast range of research expertise and development support.

Supported by Enterprise Ireland with European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding, in 2023 Design+ received €1.7 million for the current Technology Gateway programme which runs until the end of 2029; this will allow Design+ to continue to engage with industries across the region.

A key area of focus for Design+ is its engagement with Local Enterprise Offices and Chambers of Commerce across the South-East region. Design+ continues to deliver innovative design thinking programmes and workshops, with a number of engagements progressing into further collaborative projects. Strong relationships have also been developed with local schools and, supported by Higher Education Authority funding, design thinking workshops have been delivered to almost 100 Transition Year students over the past two years.

Design+ has completed over 30 projects with industry partners based in the South-East, the majority supported through Innovation Vouchers and direct funding mechanisms. A significant milestone has been the delivery of three Innovation Partnerships since the commencement of the current programme, each supported by Enterprise Ireland. Drawing on its strong engineering heritage, these three projects represent a combined investment of over €750,000.

Through sustained engagement with industry and alignment with South-East Technological University's wider design and applied research activity in Carlow and across the region, Design+ supports enterprise-driven innovation and strengthens the South-East's position as a centre for design-led research, development and innovation, as well as talent development.

Action 4.7: Explore opportunity to develop a Financial Services Centre of Excellence in the South-East

Action Leader: INC DAC, Ireland South-East Financial Services Cluster, CIRDAS with collaborative industry partners from these networks, and Funds Academy with collaborative industry partners
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
During the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan, work has progressed to explore the opportunity to develop a Financial Services Centre of Excellence in the South-East, reflecting the sector's importance as a source of high-value employment and its potential to support long-term talent retention in the region. While the Mid-Term Progress Report identified Q4 2023 as the delivery timeframe, it was subsequently agreed to extend the timeframe to the end of the Plan, to maximise the scope for successful delivery.

Funding was secured through Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme to advance this action and undertake a feasibility assessment of a Centre of Excellence. This work explored industry demand, delivery models and potential regional impact. While the assessment confirmed the

strategic value of the concept, it also identified limitations in progressing the initiative to full delivery under the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme, which was not considered a suitable funding mechanism at this stage. As a result, progression of the Centre of Excellence has been paused, pending identification of a more appropriate funding stream aligned with national policy.

In parallel, substantial progress has been made in advancing the skills, education and industry engagement elements of a potential Centre of Excellence through the successful delivery of the Funds Academy. The Funds Academy is a joint initiative between South-East Technological University (SETU) and Munster Technological University (MTU), supported through the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) Pillar 3, which is specifically designed to support deep, structured collaboration between higher education and industry.

The Funds Academy has engaged extensively with employers across the regional financial services ecosystem and was established with a clear objective to address regional brain drain, enabling graduates and professionals to access specialist education and career pathways locally. Its activities have extended beyond formal education delivery to include industry networking events, regional conferences, podcasts, undergraduate engagement initiatives, and outreach activities that promote careers in financial services and strengthen awareness of opportunities within the region.

The Academy has now reached the end of its current funding period and will need to identify an appropriate funding stream to support its continuation and potential evolution.

Action 4.8: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the agri-food, forestry innovation, research and development ecosystem in the South-East

Action Leader: EIRC, Envirocore in South-East Technological University (SETU)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024
Final Status: Action discontinued

Final Outcome Achieved: Actions 4.8 and 3.6 have been discontinued as these activities were pursued under Action 2.3

Action 4.9: Advance Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board's Further Education and Training College of the Future

Action Leader: Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
A key priority under the Regional Enterprise Plan has been to progress the development of a state-of-the-art Further Education and Training (FET) College of the Future serving Kilkenny and Carlow, designed to respond to regional skills demand and provide modern facilities for apprenticeships, traineeships, and lifelong learning. The commitment to establishing this facility was first announced by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in December 2022, recognising the opportunity to transform FET provision in the South-East and better meet industry needs in a consolidated campus setting rather than dispersed training locations.

As part of this process Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) completed a detailed site selection report and prepared a business plan which was submitted to SOLAS in September 2024. In October 2024, the Government confirmed the purchase of a 15-acre site at Joinersfolly, south of Kilkenny City, which will be the home of the new campus. This development brings significant capital investment into the region and provides the space necessary to deliver a modern, integrated further education and training campus.

Following refinement of the proposed Schedule of Accommodation, KCETB will move to the Pre-Tender / Project Design, Planning and Procurement Strategy stage. This phase will establish the detailed design, procurement route and cost plan for the facility, which will consolidate FET provision currently delivered across multiple locations into a single campus with modern, industry-relevant facilities.

Once completed, the College of the Future will play a critical role in expanding capacity for apprenticeships, traineeships, and specialist training, providing students from Kilkenny, Carlow and beyond with access to high-quality skills development aligned to employer needs. It will support workforce development in key sectors, strengthen pathways from FET into higher education and industry, and contribute to the region's ambitions for enhanced skills, economic participation and regional competitiveness.

Action 4.10: Complete the development of the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) Wexford Further Education and Training (FET) College

Action Leader: Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB)
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
Significant progress has been achieved by Waterford–Wexford ETB in opening their College of the Future in 2023. The €11 million development aligns with the SOLAS Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy, which seeks to modernise provision, expand apprenticeship capacity, and better align skills delivery with labour market demand.

The new Wexford College of FET, a 52,000 sq. ft purpose-built facility, entered its opening phase in 2023. By the end of September 2023, all further education programmes were fully operational, marking the formal commencement of the College of the Future model in the region. Training provision, including craft apprenticeship programmes in areas such as electrical and plumbing, commenced in October and November 2023, supported by the recruitment of dedicated teaching and training staff. When fully operational, the Wexford College of FET will accommodate approximately 350 learners on a daily basis, significantly enhancing local access to high-quality FET provision in a modern learning environment.

In parallel, the expansion of the Waterford Training Centre is progressing through a phased opening of a 50,000 sq. ft extension located in the adjacent former Techniform building. Several craft apprenticeship workshops are already operational, including an electrical programme currently in delivery. A further four craft apprenticeship workshops are scheduled to open, with class scheduling underway in collaboration with SOLAS. Collectively, these developments represent a substantial investment in skills infrastructure and delivery capacity across Waterford and Wexford. They will support increased participation in apprenticeships and traineeships, improve progression pathways, and ensure that learners and employers have access to industry-standard facilities aligned with regional and national skills needs. The successful rollout of these projects demonstrates strong alignment between regional enterprise priorities and national FET policy and provides a solid foundation for future workforce development in the South-East.

Action 4.11: Position the South-East as a productivity and process improvement hub for companies through increased engagement in enterprise excellence research, innovation, training, and clustering

Action Leader: RIKON and South-East Technological University
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
The Li4 Productivity and Process Improvement National Centre of Excellence in Lean Industry 4.0 at WorkLAB Waterford continues to scale its activity and impact and has positioned the South-East as a productivity and process improvement hub for companies. This project was funded under Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Development Fund.

The centre now delivers a range of services to support productivity, sustainability and digital transformation for companies across multiple sectors.

Li4 (Lean Industry 4.0) is reshaping how organisations approach improvement and innovation. Li4 has built Ireland's first Intelligent Optimisation Platform that integrates AI, simulation, data analytics and Lean tools. The platform allows firms to design, test and optimise future operations before investment. The distinctive strength of the platform is the combination of socio technical capabilities within a single system. The simulation and digital twin solutions developed by Li4 allow users to model plants, services and hospital wards in virtual environments, while immersive VR training strengthens employee engagement in transformation. A set of short use case videos is available on the Li4 youtube channel.

Li4 guides clients through a clear transformation journey. Each engagement begins with a Lean Digital Maturity Assessment to benchmark readiness and identify improvement opportunities. Li4 then develops a tailored roadmap that starts with people and training, moves on to process optimisation and finally embeds the technologies required for long term performance. This staged approach ensures that change is structured, practical and measurable.

Li4 has also pioneered a Model Area Approach that allows large organisations to trial new technologies or practices in a controlled environment. This method reduces risk because the organisation evaluates results before wider adoption. It also accelerates learning because teams see evidence of what works and what needs adjustment.

Li4 have leveraged its advanced capabilities, purpose-built platform and the wider Lean Industry 4.0 methodology to deliver quantifiable results. Clients have reported savings of €3.3 million each year, average productivity increases of 20-30% and over 160 professionals have completed training. Projects have reduced operational costs and carbon emissions. These outcomes highlight the contribution of the South-East to national and international innovation activity.

Li4 also supports the regional enterprise environment through ongoing knowledge exchange. The annual South-East Lean Forum brings the South-East Lean Network community together at scale and has been delivered by SETU Lean Industry 4.0 for the last two years. The forum positions the region as a place that tests and applies digital transformation in ways that support competitiveness and job creation.

Through this combined activity Li4 strengthens the innovation ecosystem of the South-East. The centre builds skills, provides evidence of impact and supports organisations that want structured, people focused, and technology enabled transformation.



Strategic Objective 5: Place

Action 5.1: Implement the Ireland's Ancient East South-East Tourism Action Plan to enhance visitor experiences in activity tourism; food and drink tourism; history and culture tourism; and castles, houses, and gardens

Action Leader: Fáilte Ireland and County Councils
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action partially complete: ongoing work

Final Outcome Achieved:
Several actions were progressed during the lifetime of the Plan to enhance visitor experiences across the South-East, with a particular focus on activity tourism; food and drink tourism; history and culture; and castles, houses and gardens, in line with the objectives of Ireland's Ancient East initiatives and strategy.

In the area of food and drink tourism, a regional initiative titled *South-East Food Stories* was piloted as a collaborative approach involving food producers, hospitality and accommodation providers across the region. The initiative was supported by local authority tourism officers and Fáilte Ireland, and was designed to strengthen the region's food tourism proposition through storytelling and coordinated promotion. A trial phase of South-East Food Stories was delivered during 2022, with funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and participating local authorities.

To support the development of castles, houses and gardens tourism, a strategic report was prepared examining opportunities to collectively market the region's gardens and strengthen linkages between sites. This work identified potential for improved visitor journeys and themed experiences that could encourage longer stays and increased dwell time.

The South-East also has a particularly strong offering in activity tourism, centred on its expanding network of greenways and blueways. This offering was significantly enhanced during the lifetime of the Plan through the delivery of the South-East Greenway, with Phase 1 opening in July 2023. This investment has strengthened the region's appeal for walking, cycling and outdoor recreation, supporting both domestic and international visitors.

In parallel, each county across the South-East is working closely with Fáilte Ireland on the development and implementation of Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs). These plans provide a structured framework to enhance local tourism assets and experiences while aligning with national tourism strategy. Further collaborative work with county tourism officers is planned for January 2026 to build on this progress and strengthen the collective regional tourism offering across the South-East.

Action 5.2: Strengthen upskilling opportunities in hospitality and customer service in the South-East

Action Leader: Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the South-East Regional Skills Forum
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
During the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan, a broad range of upskilling and training opportunities in hospitality and customer service have been available across the South-East through further and higher education providers. Overall, the breadth and quality of provision is considered reasonably strong. However, a persistent challenge under this action has been lower-than-anticipated uptake, both from industry and from individuals, despite ongoing skills needs within the sector.

Demand for training has been affected by the current economic context of near full employment, which has reduced the incentive for individuals to pursue new qualifications, particularly in culinary and front-of-house roles. Enrolments on full-time higher education programmes in hospitality have remained low,

while participation in part-time FET provision, although better aligned with industry needs, has also been weaker than expected. Feedback from employers suggests that flexible, part-time and modular delivery may be more appropriate for the sector, given working patterns and seasonal pressures.

Notwithstanding these challenges, there have been several positive developments. Kilkenny Carlow ETB (based in Gowran and Kilkenny) and Tipperary ETB (based at Archerstown, Thurles) are now both delivering the commis chef apprenticeship, which is serving the region well and providing a structured pathway for entrants to the sector while allowing participants to earn and learn. This apprenticeship model has been particularly valuable in supporting skills development in a tight labour market.

At higher education level, SETU, supported through Springboard+, has introduced targeted part-time programmes designed to upskill those already in employment. These include the Certificate in Culinary Skills (Level 6), fully funded and delivered in Waterford from September 2023, and the Diploma in Restaurant Management (Level 7), with a high level of funding support, which commenced in January 2024. These programmes respond directly to the need for flexible progression routes for the existing workforce.

In response to the Unified Tertiary System Policy, further work is underway to explore how hospitality and tourism programmes can be better aligned across FET and higher education, improving progression pathways and participation. Increasing awareness, improving flexibility, and strengthening employer engagement should be considered for the next iteration of the Regional Enterprise Plan, informed by the lessons learned under this action.

The South East Regional Skills Forum has worked closely with the hospitality sector throughout 2024 and 2025 to assist them access appropriate part time courses for staff development across culinary and other hospitality roles including management development. This has been building upon the recommendations of the SERSF Hospitality Sector Report *South-East Hospitality Industry Training and Education Review with Recommendations December 2021* and subsequent research conducted in 2025.

Action 5.3: Scale up the Ireland South-East marketing campaign for the region

Action Leader: South-East Marketing Stakeholder Group to be established by Ireland South-East Development Office, Enterprise Ireland, and IDA Ireland
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
Significant progress has been made during the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan in scaling and strengthening the Ireland South-East marketing campaign, positioning the region as an attractive place to invest, work and live. Marketing activity has focused on promoting the South-East's competitive advantages, supporting inward investment, and strengthening talent attraction through a consistent, evidence-led and peer-to-peer approach.

A major milestone was achieved when the Financial Times fDi Intelligence magazine selected the South-East as the #1 region in Europe for FDI Strategy in its European Regions of the Future Awards. Following the 2023 award, a targeted digital marketing campaign was delivered in Q1 2023 to amplify the achievement, generating thousands of impressions on LinkedIn. A short, responsive campaign was also trialled during this period to attract ICT talent, following job losses in major Dublin-based technology firms, demonstrating the programme's ability to react quickly to changing labour market conditions.

Marketing activity continued at scale throughout 2023 and 2024, with consistently strong engagement on LinkedIn. The Ireland South-East LinkedIn account achieved 389,000 organic impressions between December 2022 and December 2023, supported by a small, sponsored campaign that generated an additional 25,000 impressions. In the subsequent 12-month period to September, the account delivered a further 83,000 organic impressions, reflecting sustained interest in the region's enterprise narrative.

The Ireland South-East marketing programme continues to highlight the region's strengths in advanced manufacturing, engineering, life sciences, agri-tech and offshore renewable energy. A defining feature of the campaign has been its use of peer-to-peer marketing, leveraging the voices of business leaders, investors and entrepreneurs already operating in the region to build authenticity and credibility.

A notable strength of the Ireland South-East marketing programme during the lifetime of the Plan was its rapid and agile response to the emerging offshore wind opportunity. In response to increased national and international interest in Ireland's offshore renewable energy pipeline, a dedicated offshore

wind webpage was developed and launched at short notice to clearly articulate the South-East's value proposition. This content set out the region's advantages in port infrastructure, supply chain capability, skills provision, and research capacity, providing a single, credible point of reference for developers, contractors and investors.

In parallel, the Ireland South-East Development Office is participating in the TALENT4S3 project under the Southern Regional Assembly, focused on improving talent attraction and retention policies aligned with smart specialisation. Together, these actions are strengthening the South-East's reputation as a competitive, investor-ready and future-focused region, providing a strong platform for continued marketing activity to support regional enterprise development.

Action 5.4: Position the South-East as Ireland's top remote working location

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office
Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025
Final Status: Action Complete

Final Outcome Achieved:
During the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan, sustained progress has been made in positioning the South-East as an attractive and competitive location for remote and blended working. This action recognises the growing importance of remote working in supporting regional competitiveness, talent attraction, quality of life and balanced regional development. A central element of delivery has been the promotion of the region's network of remote working hubs through the Ireland South-East digital platform at www.irelandsoutheast.com.

Available remote working locations across the region have been showcased alongside a clear value proposition highlighting the South-East's strengths, including high-quality hubs, strong digital connectivity, affordable living, and access to lifestyle and outdoor amenities. This coordinated promotion has contributed to a number of early successes, with several organisations establishing second-site teams within hubs across the South-East. These teams represent an important foothold for future growth, with the potential to scale over time as companies gain confidence in the region's infrastructure, talent base, and operating environment. This model supports decentralisation of employment while embedding high-value roles within regional communities.

At a local level, individual County Councils have played a complementary role by actively promoting hubs within their own county boundaries, supporting hub operators, and progressing the development of new remote working facilities across the region. This locally driven activity has strengthened the overall regional offer and ensured that remote working options are available across both urban and rural locations.

Collectively, these actions have helped to raise the profile of the South-East as a credible, connected and lifestyle-driven remote working destination.

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 South-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee.

Action Status Table by Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 1: Start and Grow	Status	Completion Date
Action 1.1: Establish a South-East advisory board of established senior entrepreneurs and develop a structured programme of engagement for this group.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 1.2: Enhance coordination of public start-up supports across the region.	Action partially complete: ongoing work	Q4 2025
Action 1.3: Deliver on the South-East Technological University's objective of supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development in the region.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 1.4: Increase investment in RDI support structures to maximise opportunities for enterprises to effectively engage, access and exploit knowledge and IP.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 1.5: Build on EU-funded Pilot South-East Intrapreneurship Report to support local companies realise new opportunities.	Action partially complete: ongoing work	Q4 2025

Strategic Objective 2: Green Growth	Status	Completion Date
Action 2.1: Position the South-East as an Offshore and Onshore Wind Energy Hub.	Action partially complete: ongoing work	Q4 2025
Action 2.2: Develop a strategic approach to regional green skills at further and higher education level.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 2.3: Support the growth of a National Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Food, Forestry and Marine Innovation in the South-East.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 2.4: Support the growth of a National Centre of Excellence for High Performance Buildings in Wexford.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 2.5: Green Awareness – Promotion of Industry Best Practice in Sustainability and Green Opportunities.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Strategic Objective 3: Smart Specialisation and Clustering	Status	Completion Date
Action 3.1: Develop a coherent approach with industry-driven governance to strategic development of key South-East clusters.	Action discontinued	N/A
Action 3.2: Expand and enhance industry engagement with the South-East Engineering Cluster.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 3.3: Expand and enhance industry engagement with the South-East Financial Services Cluster.	Action could not be completed	Q4 2025
Action 3.4: Assess and progress the South-East ICT Cluster.	Action partially complete: ongoing work	Q4 2025

Action 3.5: Explore potential to start and grow an industry-led South-East Life Sciences Cluster.	Action partially complete: ongoing work	Q4 2025
Action 3.6: Explore potential to start a South-East Agri-Food, Forestry and Marine Cluster.	Action merged into 2.3 (and with 4.8)	Q4 2025
Action 3.7: Local Enterprise Offices to develop four regional micro-clusters in pharma, lean manufacturing, green and digital marketing.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Strategic Objective 4: Innovate	**Status**	**Completion Date**
Action 4.1: Explore a feasibility study for a SETU multi-disciplinary research centre of excellence.	Action partially complete:	Q4 2025
Action 4.2: Create a LEO South-East virtual Innovation Hub.	Action partially complete: ongoing work	Q4 2025
Action 4.3: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the life sciences innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.4: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the advanced manufacturing innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.5: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the ICT innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.6: Position the South-East as a destination for design-led thinking, design innovation, education, and training.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Action 4.7: Explore opportunity to develop a Financial Services Centre of Excellence in the South-East.	Action partially complete: ongoing work	Q4 2025
Action 4.8: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the agri-food, forestry innovation, research and development ecosystem in the South-East.	Action activities being pursued under Action 2.3	Q4 2025
Action 4.9: Advance Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board's Further Education and Training College of the Future.	Action partially complete: ongoing work	Q4 2025
Action 4.10: Complete the development of the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) Wexford Further Education and Training (FET) College.	Action Complete	Q4 2024
Action 4.11: Position the South-East as a productivity and process improvement hub for companies through increased engagement in enterprise excellence research, innovation, training, and clustering.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Strategic Objective 5: Place	**Status**	**Completion Date**
Action 5.1: Implement the Ireland's Ancient East South-East Tourism Action Plan to enhance visitor experiences in activity tourism; food and drink tourism; history and cultural tourism; and castles, houses and gardens.	Action partially complete: ongoing work	Q4 2025
Action 5.2: Strengthen upskilling opportunities in hospitality and customer service in the South-East.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 5.3: Scale up the Ireland South-East marketing campaign for the region.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 5.4: Position the South-East as Ireland's top remote working location.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Appendices

Appendix 1 Membership of Regional Steering Committee

Chairperson of South-East Regional Enterprise Plan
Kathryn Kiely, Vice President for External Affairs at South East Technological University
Programme Manager of South-East Regional Enterprise Plan
Richard Hickey
Membership of the Committee
Carlow County Council
Kilkenny County Council
Waterford City and County Council
Wexford County Council
Chamber of Commerce (Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford)
Local Enterprise Offices (Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford)
Enterprise Ireland
IDA
South-East Regional Skills Forum
South-East Technological University
Waterford Wexford ETB
Kilkenny Carlow ETB
Fáilte Ireland
Southern Regional Assembly
Regional Enterprise Champions

Appendix 2 Statistical Snapshot

South-East Region[1]

Constituent counties	Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford
South-East Population[2]	457,410
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment[3]	239,800
ILO Participation Rate[4]	63.4%
ILO Unemployment Rate[5]	4.7%
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Male)[6]	126,600
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Female)[7]	113,200
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment from Q1 2019[8]	187,500
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment from Q3 2025[9]	239,800
Actual Increase in Employment from Q1 2019 – Q3 2025[10]	52,300
Employment Growth Rate between Q1 2019 – Q3 2025	27.9%
Persons aged 25 years and over on Live Register in the South-East region at 01/12/2025[11]	17,661
Irish-owned Companies under the remit of the enterprise agencies - Total Employment in the region, 2019[12]	19,475
Irish-owned Companies under the remit of the enterprise agencies - Total Employment in the region, 2025[13]	22,261 (2024)
Change between 2019 - 2025[14]	2,786
Foreign-owned Companies under the remit of the enterprise agencies - Total Employment in the region, 2019[15]	12,765
Foreign-owned Companies under the remit of the enterprise agencies - Total Employment in the region, 2025[16]	16,644 (2024)
Change between 2019 - 2025[17]	3,879

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
Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

23 Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 TD30
23 Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 TD30
T +353 (0)1 631 2121, 0818 302 121
www.enterprise.gov.ie
www.gov.ie
info@enterprise.gov.ie



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland