



**Mid East Region**

**First Progress Report:**

**Actions to June 2016**



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## MINISTER'S FOREWORD



The Regional Action Plans for Jobs initiative is a key element in supporting the delivery of balanced regional development, which is a key priority of Government. The Programme for a Partnership Government sets a goal to help create 200,000 additional jobs by 2020. Importantly, 135,000 of those jobs are to be in the regions outside Dublin.

The Action Plan for Jobs for the Mid East region, covering the counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow, aims to build on the unique strengths of the region to support businesses to start up, grow and generate exports.

While much emphasis is placed on multi-nationals, we remain for the most part, an economy dependent on small, family business. Across the towns and villages of our regions, employment is heavily based on the SME sector. Ensuring these SMEs have access to both supports and market opportunities is vital to ensuring consistent and real recovery across the country. No matter what part of the country you are in, developing an idea with the support of the Local Enterprise Office or Enterprise Ireland and growing to scale is something we want to see happening more and more in every county. The LEO network is a great asset and my firm view is that it offers great potential to support job creation and help entrepreneurs and small businesses start up and grow.

Overall what these reports demonstrate is that we are making progress on the Government ambition to ensure all regions reach their economic potential. We are nowhere near our endpoint, but we are getting better and enhancing both the employment and economic potential of the Mid East.

From a low of 216,700 in 2013 employment levels have now reached 239,500 in this region – an increase of 10.5%. The QNHS shows that there is positive jobs growth across a range of sectors, including Industry, Agriculture, Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities.

In tandem with strong jobs growth, the unemployment rate has reduced from a high of 14.5% in 2013 to 6.9% in Q3 2016. This represents real progress for the Mid East. Every job created has a real effect on men, women and children and the wider community. That is why we cannot be complacent about job creation but I am happy to see that we continue to move in the right direction.

Contrary to popular belief, employment recovery is not confined to Dublin – in fact over 72% of the new jobs created over the last twelve months have gone to people from outside Dublin. As was the case with all regions, the downturn in employment hit the Mid East heavily in 2008 but there is potential to improve that and grow sustainable jobs in the region, based on the sectoral strengths, skills profile and innovative capacity within this region.

Every day, world-leading companies based in the Mid East such as Kerry Group, O'Brien Fine Foods, and Shire, all of which recently announced new jobs in the region, are showing that by investing in people and talent, global opportunities are possible regardless of the location. What we need to do is enhance the job-potential environment and ensure companies based in Kildare, Meath and Wicklow have access to global market opportunities. What this report demonstrates is that in

regions like the Mid East, with the right environment, world-leading companies, both Irish and foreign-owned, co-exist and create a dynamic enterprise base. Our enterprise agencies are available to provide assistance to companies at all stages of their journey, whether as start-ups, companies that are scaling or exporting or companies seeking to invest in Ireland.

Government does not create jobs, but is an enabler of jobs. This region has rich potential in Manufacturing at all levels, International Services, Agri-Food, Tourism and Hospitality, and Film. We have responded to the crash, but now is the time to build resilience in the economy with a global competitive business offering.

There is no doubt but that Brexit will test our economic resilience. Many companies in the Mid East will have some exposure to the UK. Although there is still a lack of clarity as to the extent to which Brexit will impact on the businesses in the area, Enterprise Ireland, IDA and the LEOs are working with these companies to focus on talent, innovation, competitiveness and investing in people. This remains the best way to build resilience in a company.

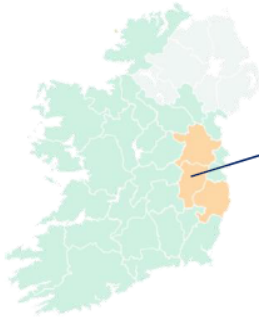
Of course the Regional Action Plans themselves will not solve everything. A full recovery requires more than just jobs. These Plans will be complemented by other programmes the Government is working on at national level, including the Action Plan for Rural Development, infrastructure projects, the Action Plan for Jobs, skills strategies and the Action Plan for Housing.

Employment recovery is a critical element of a wider social recovery. Now is not the time for complacency. Despite global uncertainty, the goal of full employment in the lifetime of this Government is within reach. This employment will be sustainable, built on the back of talent and innovation – something the Mid East, with its excellent skills and talent base and strong education and research infrastructure, has in abundance.

I would also like to pay tribute to Eamonn Sinnott, the Chairman, the Enterprise Champions and all members of the Implementation Committee for their ongoing commitment to the Mid East Regional Action Plan, to job creation within the region and in helping to drive the ambition of the Plan. The input which you bring to the process creates a real step-up in the level of innovation and jobs impact of this process. This is a genuine public service which will make a real impact to the Mid East region.



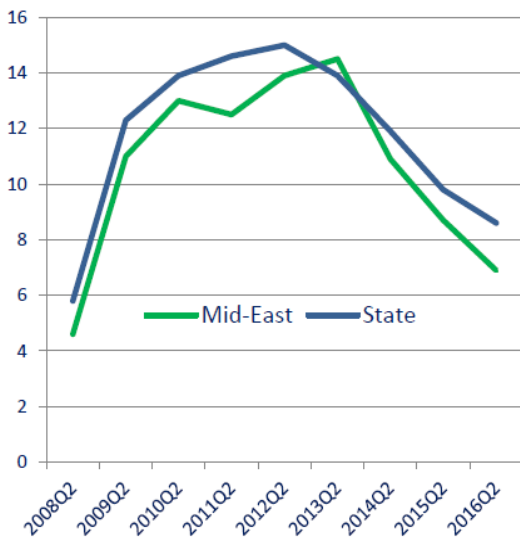
**Mary Mitchell O'Connor, TD**  
**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation**



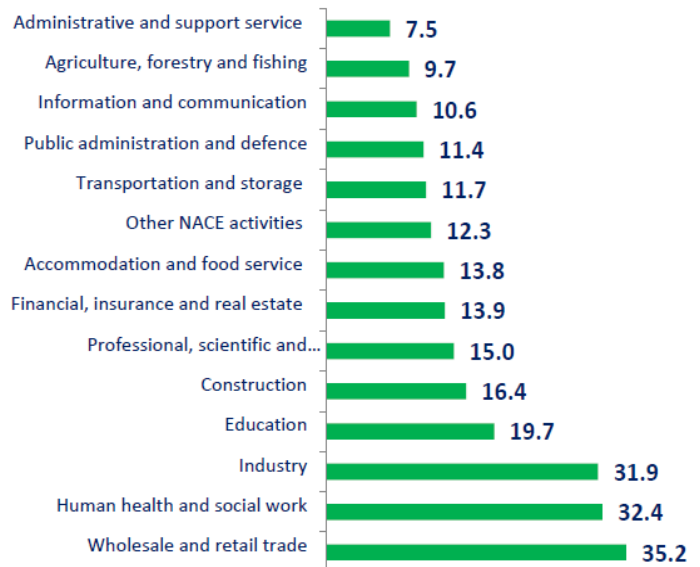
## EMPLOYMENT SNAPSHOT: MID EAST REGION

	2015 Q1	2016 Q1	2016 Q2
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (,000)	234.6	231.4	242.2
Unemployed Persons aged 15 years and over (,000)	19.7	14.5	17.7
Persons aged 15 years and over in Labour Force (,000)	254.3	245.9	259.9
ILO Unemployment Rate (15 - 74 years) (%)	7.8	5.9	6.9
ILO Participation Rate (15 years and over) (%)	61.3	58.9	61.9

ILO Unemployment Rate (15 - 74 years) (%) by NUTS 3 Regions and Quarter



Persons aged 15 and over in employment (ILO) classified by region and NACE Rev. 2 Economic Sector



### Mid East Employment Trends

(see graph above)

- There are currently 242,200 people in employment in the Mid East region
- The Mid East currently has the lowest unemployment rate in the State at 6.9%
- The Unemployment Rate has declined by 0.9% since Q1 2015
- In the last Quarter, the unemployment rate has risen by 1%; however the labour force has also increased significantly (+14,000 persons), as have numbers employed (+10,800)

Source: CSO QNHS Q2 2016 Persons aged 15 years and over by NUTS3 Regions, Statistical Indicator and Quarter

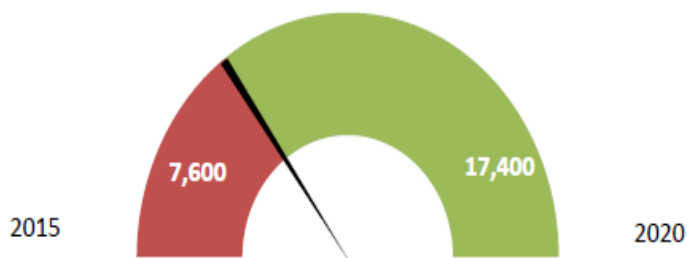
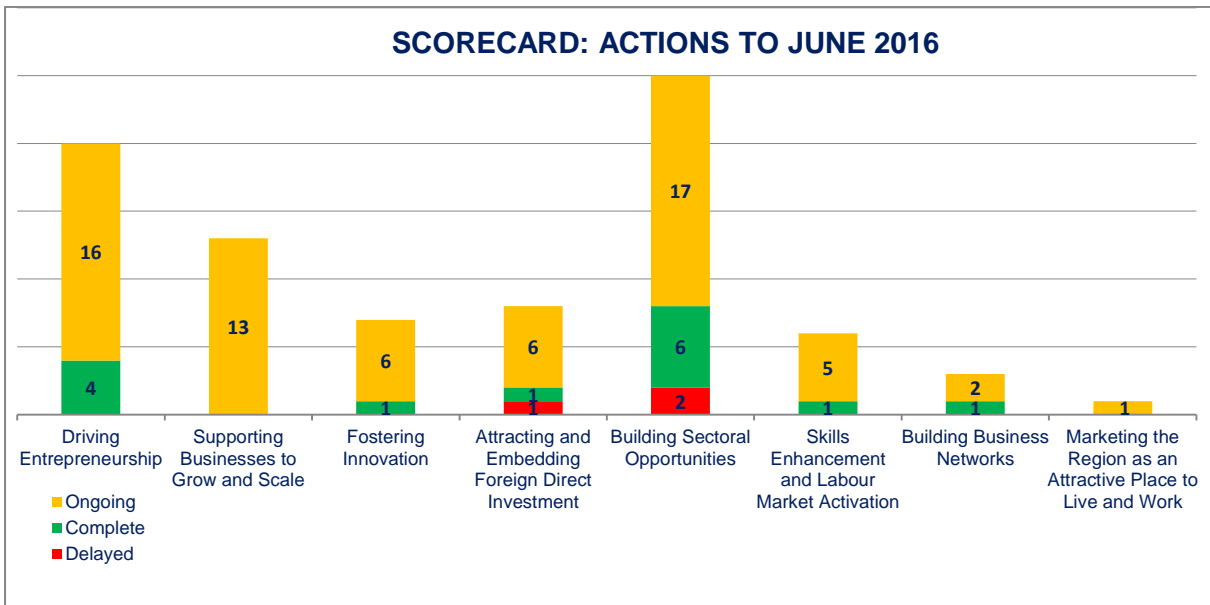
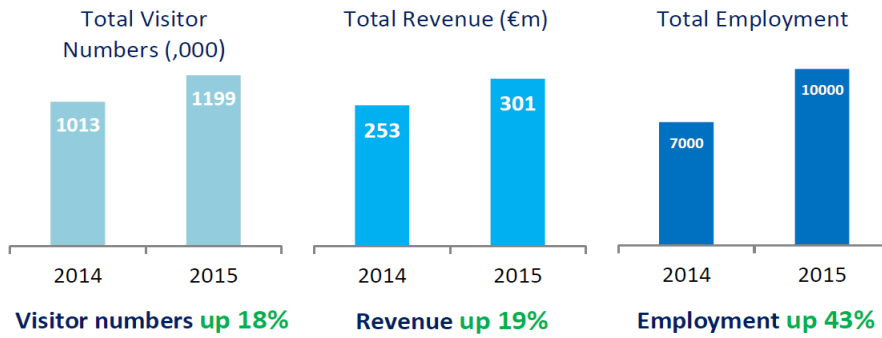
### Sectoral Breakdown of Employment

(see chart above)

- The largest sector of employment in the Mid East is Wholesale and Retail, with 15% of the workforce
- Health and social work is the second largest sector, employing 32,400 people
- Since the start of 2015, this sector has also seen the largest increase in employment, with 6,300 more people employed in the sector to Q2 2016
- The accommodation and food service sector has seen the largest loss in numbers employed since Q1 2015, down 11% from 15,500 to 13,800 in Q2 2016
- Industry and the retail sector have seen the second and third largest increases in numbers employed since 2015, with 2,700 and 2,600 people joining these sectors from Q1 2015 to Q2 2016

Source: CSO QNHS Q2 2016: Persons aged 15 and over in employment (ILO) classified by sex, region and NACE Rev. 2 Economic Sector

### Tourism in the Mid East 2014 -2015



**Jobs Target for 2020- APJ Mid East Region Q1 2015 to Q2 2016**

### Actions due by June 2016

82 of the Mid East Action Plan’s 163 actions were due to be initiated or completed by the first half of 2016. 79 of these are on track to be delivered, or have been completed. Three actions that were due for completion by June 2016 will not now be delivered.



## **OPENING COMMENTARY**

This is the first Progress Report from the Implementation Committee established by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to oversee and monitor implementation of the measures outlined in the Mid East Action Plan for Jobs 2016- 2017. The report details progress made on measures due for completion up to and including the first half of 2016, as well as measures that are ongoing during the full lifetime of the Plan.

The Mid East Action Plan was launched on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016, to help progress a key priority for Government – to deliver local jobs and ensure that every region achieves its economic potential. This will be achieved through the delivery of 163 collaborative actions focusing on increasing the number of start-ups as well as developing the capacity of existing enterprises, with actions targeted at sectors of strength and potential competitive advantage such as manufacturing, food, tourism, and film and the creative industries.

Each Plan is driven and overseen by an Implementation Committee, made up of representatives from the Enterprise Sector, Local Authorities, Enterprise Agencies, and other public bodies in the region. The Mid East Implementation Committee is chaired by Eamonn Sinnott, General Manager of Intel Ireland.

The overarching objective of the Plan is to support the creation of an extra 25,000 jobs across Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. This represents an important step towards the Government's ambition of creating 200,000 jobs across the State by 2020, with 135,000 of these to be outside Dublin.

In common with other regions, employment in the Mid East suffered significantly during the economic crisis. At Q4 2007, the Mid East had the lowest unemployment rate (3.6%) of all regions in the State, with 251,900 people in employment. In the three year period to Q4 2010, this rate rose substantially to 12.8%, with the loss of over 25,000 jobs. As in other regions, the construction sector accounted for the majority of this figure with a decrease of over 18,000 jobs. The industrial sector was also badly affected, with the loss of over 6,000 jobs.

Employment has steadily improved in recent years however, and in Q2 2016 the region had the lowest unemployment rate (6.9%) in the country, below the State average of 8.6%. In the year to date (Q2 2016), the number of people unemployed in the Mid East has declined by 4,500, while the number in employment has increased by 9,500. In the same period there have been small increases in Labour Force and Participation Rates. Historically however, the Mid East has typically experienced very high levels of outbound commuting, and preliminary releases from Census 2016 show that Kildare, Meath and Wicklow are again among the fastest growing counties in the country in population terms. Further releases from Census 2016, expected in the coming months, will quantify the proportion of the population that is remaining in the region to work. Nonetheless the challenge remains to create and maintain sustainable employment opportunities within the region, to allow people to continue to live and work in their local areas.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS



**6 projects** involving LEOs and other organisations in the Mid East have been **successful in securing competitive funding** through Enterprise Ireland's Community Enterprise Initiative and LEO Competitive Call (**Actions 11 & 13**)



IDA have appointed a **dedicated Regional Business Development Manager** for the Mid East (**Action 75**)



**Roll out of Ireland's Ancient East by Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland has begun**, including significant international and domestic marketing campaigns, and the awarding of **€244,500 in funding for four projects in the Mid East** under Failte Ireland's *New Ideas in Ancient Spaces* Capital Grants Scheme (**Actions 77-80**)



**Planning and development has begun for the Boyne Valley Food Hub**, which has received **funding of €187,000** via the Enterprise Ireland Community Enterprise initiative (**Action 121**)



The **Regional Skills Forum for the Mid East has been established**, and a Forum Manager appointed. The forum will provide an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of the Mid East region (**Actions 137**)



Approval has been given by the Enterprise Ireland Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee (IRCC) to fund the Design+ IT Carlow proposal for the **Technology Gateway Network**, which commenced on 1 January 2016. **Design + (Applied Design)** is part of the Technology Gateway Network: a nationwide resource for industry based in the Institutes of Technology, delivering solutions on near to market problems for industrial partners (**Action 65**)



To support training and skills for the **Film Sector**, **Wicklow LEO has piloted a training workshop** for those seeking to work in the industry (**Action 113**)



In 2015 the Mid East LEOs delivered: **15 Start Your Own Business (SYOB) programmes** run with 241 participants; **training programmes for over 2,600 participants**; training programmes for **1,620 female participants**; and **schools entrepreneurship programmes in 39 schools with 2,319 participants**. (**Actions 1**)

### Announcement of Enterprise Ireland Funding for Regional Projects

€50 million is being made available to the 8 regions out to 2020 through three competitive calls administered by Enterprise Ireland. These calls are being targeted at innovative and collaborative approaches to support job creation across the regions. In this context, on June 1st 2016, an initial allocation of €5m in competitive funding for local and regional initiatives was announced; the LEO Competitive Fund and the Community Enterprise Initiative. Among the 48 projects allocated funding as at Q2 2016 are:

- An initiative from LEO Wicklow, LEO Tipperary, LEO Wexford, LEO Carlow, and LEO Kilkenny to **consolidate a creative hub in the South Eastern region** through an extensive networking and training programme for established SMEs and Start Ups servicing the creative industries.
- An initiative from LEO Kilkenny, LEO Carlow, and LEO Wicklow for an **'EMBARC Programme'** that will proactively prepare small businesses, identified by the LEOs as having potential for growth and export, to exploit **new export opportunities**.

- An initiative from LEO Wexford, LEO Tipperary, LEO Waterford, LEO Wicklow LEO Kilkenny, LEO Carlow, LEO Kildare, and LEO Laois, for a **pilot programme** that will offer carefully selected micro-enterprises with growth ambitions the opportunity to benefit from **concentrated support from a dedicated advisory panel** of 3 experts per enterprise.
- A collaboration between LEO Tipperary and LEO Wicklow to develop a strong **Digital Media and Gaming corridor** linking the Mid West and the South & East Regions, building on existing strengths, heightening awareness of the potential of the creative industries and assisting in diversifying the current employment base.
- Meath Enterprise Centre Company Limited have been granted funding to **develop a Food Innovation & Research Centre and a Digital Media Hub** while continuing to manage, promote and develop existing facilities, projects and initiatives.
- Arklow Business Enterprise Centre Limited has been granted funding for development. ABEC currently supports a variety of businesses in the ICT, Food, Services, Construction, Consultancy/Training and Distribution sectors. **Development plans aim to support a Call Centre Business and to convert space to provide a Commercial Kitchen and a Hot Desk location.**

Further funding calls will be announced in early 2017.

### **Roll out of Ireland's Ancient East and Associated Business Supports**

Tourism is a sector that directly and indirectly has the potential to generate employment; the Mid East's prominence in Ireland's Ancient East is an area this plan seeks to capitalise on. Progress by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland in rolling out this campaign has been significant in 2016, with highlights including:

Tourism Ireland's new Ireland's Ancient East advert launched in January 2016, in key markets around the world. Ireland's Ancient East is being promoted across a range of platforms overseas including TV, print and online advertising; on Ireland.com and through social media channels; and at major international consumer and trade fairs.

Fáilte Ireland has initiated a programme called Dwell across Ireland's Ancient East, with 5 Dwell programmes delivered in Meath, Kildare & Louth. There are three main elements to the workshop resulting with participants being able to explain Ireland's Ancient East to visitors, engage with visitors through local story telling thus enhancing customer care, support and plan itineraries and cross sell other attractions of interest in the area and so increase the dwell time of the visitor.

In May 2016 Fáilte Ireland launched an integrated marketing campaign to introduce Ireland's Ancient East to the domestic audience. The campaign includes TV, press and social media advertising, and will reach 3.1m Irish people. Irelandsancienteast.com was also launched in May 2016.

In 2016 Fáilte Ireland has delivered a range of business supports for the tourism trade in Ireland's Ancient East including storytelling workshops, revenue workshops, customer care, cross selling and practical skills training.

25 projects from phase 1 of Failte Ireland's 'New Ideas in Ancient Spaces' Capital Grants Scheme are now well underway. New experiences in the Mid East region include:

- Lullymore Heritage Centre, Kildare (Grant investment €29,000)
- Boyne Valley 'Waterway through Time', Meath (Grant investment €86,000)
- 'Ireland's Ancient Eats', Meath (Grant investment €49,500)
- Powerscourt, Wicklow ( Grant investment €80,000)

The new Lullymore experience is now complete and open. Phase 2 of the New Ideas in Ancient Spaces will commence in Quarter 4 2016.

### **Boyne Valley Food Hub**

The Boyne Valley Food Hub is in early planning stage. The project has been awarded €187,000 in funding via the Enterprise Ireland Community Enterprise initiative (see above); part of this will be allocated to the development of a Food R&D (UHT) laboratory for the Hub.

### **Regional Promotion of Funding Opportunities: EU Horizon 2020**

In addition to the regular business of promoting participation in collaborative research by the Commercialisation team at Maynooth University (with IT Carlow, WIT and Athlone IT under TTSI3), a special initiative is underway for the Mid East APJ region with regard to EU Horizon 2020 projects for innovative SMEs. Maynooth University are currently working with LEO representatives on a "Guide to European Funding for SME in Meath Kildare & Wicklow" for use across the region.

### **Film Sector Training**

Wicklow LEO piloted a 1 day workshop for those seeking to work in the film industry. The conversion course took place on Saturday 28th May with 11 participants.. The workshop gave a clear understanding of the demands of hair dressing for film and television, and was targeted at experienced hair dressers who wish to expand their business by targeting the film /TV industry. The course was delivered on behalf of LEO Wicklow by Multi Award winner, Dee Corcoran who is currently Head of the Hair Department on the set of Vikings in Ashford Studios, and has accumulated a wealth of experience in specialisation hairdressing for film / TV including working on Excalibur, Michael Collins, Veronica Guerin, King Arthur, Reign of Fire, Tudors and Camelot.

### **National Broadband Plan (Progress to June 2016)**

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland. The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through private investment by commercial telecommunications companies and through a State intervention in areas where commercial investment is not forthcoming.

The procurement process formally commenced in December 2015 with the publication of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire and Project Information Memorandum. Five responses were received from prospective bidders to this stage of the competitive procurement process by the deadline of 31 March 2016. These responses have been evaluated by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources from a technical, financial and legal compliance perspective. A number of companies have qualified to proceed to the next stage of the procurement process, in which

qualified bidders will be invited to formally dialogue with the Department, based on detailed schedules drawn up by the Department.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **O'Brien Fine Foods**

O'Brien Fine Foods, producer of cooked meats and breakfast products under the Brady Family and Rudds brands, announced in January 2016 a €14m development at its Co Kildare facility. The 8,000 sq m expansion will create 40 jobs, with a further 150 jobs created during construction.

### **Kerry Group**

On 1st October 2015 Kerry Group, the global taste & nutrition and consumer foods group, opened a new Global Technology & Innovation Centre to serve the Group's global and regional customers in the EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) region. The new Global Centre is located on a 28 acre site, in the Millennium Business Park, Naas.

Kerry Group has invested €100m in establishment of the new Technology & Innovation Centre which today accommodates 800 research, product commercialisation, business development and business support positions, and which will accommodate a further 100 positions by the end of 2016.

### **Shire**

On 15th April 2016 Shire plc announced plans to expand its global biotechnology manufacturing capacity over the next four years by investing US\$400 million in Ireland to meet the rapidly growing demand for its highly innovative products and robust pipeline.

Shire will create a new, state of the art biologics manufacturing campus, which it expects will lead to the creation of approximately 400 permanent jobs on a 120 acre site at Piercetown, County Meath. Construction of the new site will begin in mid-2016 with the site expected to be operational by mid-2019.

### **Student Enterprise Awards**

A young entrepreneur from Wicklow this year won the top award at the Student Enterprise Awards National Finals, organised by the Local Enterprise Offices, for a product that is now patent-pending. Co-ordinated by all 31 Local Enterprise Offices across Ireland, the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Student Enterprise Awards National Final saw 201 student entrepreneurs competing across three categories. A record-breaking 22,000 students took part in the programme this year.

### **Facebook**

On 6th April 2016, Facebook announced that construction had begun on the company's newest data centre at Clonee, County Meath. Development of a second building at the same site was also confirmed, bringing the total size of the facility to 621,000sq ft – the equivalent of 14 Aviva stadiums. The facility, Facebook's first in Ireland and second in Europe, will become part of the infrastructure that enables billions of people to connect with the people and things they care about on Facebook and across its family of apps and services. Ireland has been home to Facebook's international headquarters since 2009 and the facility at Clonee continues Facebook's significant investment in the country and in Europe. The company recently announced the creation of a further 200 jobs in Dublin in 2016, to add to the 1,300 employees it currently has.

## **Endress+Hauser**

In July 2016 the Swiss process automation company Endress+Hauser announced it is to establish an international SAP IT Hub, in Kill, Co. Kildare, creating 20 jobs over five years. The company offers comprehensive process automation products, solutions and services across pressure, level, flow, analytics and temperature allowing customers to optimise their processes to achieve greater efficiency, safety and environmental protection. Clients include manufacturers in packaging, energy, pharmaceutical, food and beverage, water and wastewater and exploration industries as well as Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM). Endress+Hauser already have a local sales and service centre in Kill with a satellite office in Cork, both serving its domestic Irish client base. Twenty-six people are employed between the two operations.

## **BREXIT (Position at end-June 2016)**

The UK decision will not take effect for some time and the precise implications of the referendum result will now depend on the period of negotiation ahead, involving the UK and our EU partners.

Government has a clear plan in place to respond to the referendum outcome and has a Contingency Framework which maps the key issues that will be most important to Ireland in the coming weeks, months and years, including the future changing trading relationship between the UK and Ireland, and the protection of jobs here, both of which are of course interlinked. The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation is fully engaged in the risk analysis and contingency planning work that is being undertaken at cross-Government level, led by the Department of the Taoiseach.

The Government, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the enterprise agencies are fully committed to supporting business in this period of heightened uncertainty; however, this is being done against the background of a strong economy and a highly competitive enterprise sector.

There have been multiple contacts already between IDA and Enterprise Ireland and their respective senior business clients. Enterprise Ireland, has already set up a helpline and email address to provide assistance to its clients, and will implement a range of plans to assist Irish exporters. In addition, EI will fine-tune existing support tools to address new UK market conditions. The IDA will continue to market Ireland across the globe as the number one location for foreign direct investment.

## **ACTIONS NOT DELIVERED AS PLANNED BY H1 2016**

As stated above, three of the actions due for delivery by June 2016 have not been delivered on schedule:

**Action 72:** Connect Ireland's *Connectivation* competition has been postponed due to contractual issues; a further update will be provided in H2 2016.

**Action 132:** Due to a re assignment of staff resources in Tesco, delivery of the Tesco Taste Buds project (delivered together with Bord Bia) has been delayed until H2 2016.

**Action 104:** Initiation of this action has been delayed as the feasibility of the project is being assessed; a further update will be provided in H2 2016; a further update will be provided in the second progress report.

## ACTION UPDATES

### DRIVING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### ENCOURAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**Action 1:** Each of the Local Enterprise Offices in the Mid East region will aim to increase employment in its baseline through increased start-ups and the scaling of existing clients. Annual Business Plans will be developed, setting out clear targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in their region. Key aggregate targets for LEOs in the Mid East are: • Over 900 participants at Business Advice sessions • 20 Start Your Own Business courses will be run, for over 285 participants • Over 200 clients will be assigned Start-up/ Business Development mentors • Approx. 800 women will participate on core LEO training programmes (Start Your Own Business, Accelerate, Hi Start, Export Awareness, Lean, Mentoring) • 65 schools to participate in Student Enterprise programme, with almost 4,000 participants These targets will be further developed in 2016 and 2017.

**Status:** Ongoing

#### Progress Update:

In 2015, the following were provided/delivered by the **Mid East LEOs**:

- Over 2,600 participants took part in training programmes.
- 15 Start Your Own Business (SYOB) programmes run with 241 participants.
- Total of 1,282 participants took part in mentoring assignments.
- Total of 1,620 female participants took part in training programmes.
- 39 schools with 2,139 participants took part in schools entrepreneurship programmes.

#### Local Enterprise Office Mid East Region Annual Employment Survey Results for 2015:

LEO	2015 No of LEO Clients	2015 Client All Jobs Total (FT & PT)	2015 Gross All Job Gains (FT & PT)	2015 Net All Job Gains (FT & PT)
Kildare	127	770	222	136
Meath	205	876	247	156
Wicklow	108	588	200	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>2,234</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>366</b>

**Meath LEO** Annual Plan has been completed. Highlights include 40 business development courses being run with 500 participants, with 9 separate start-your-own-business courses being offered. Meath LEO plan to operate the Student Enterprise awards in 15 second level schools in 2016 and are beginning engagement with primary schools in the area. The Accelerate and Discovery Zone programmes for high potential micro businesses will also be undertaken by up to 20 entrepreneurs.

**Wicklow LEO** Annual Business plan for 2016 has been completed. Activity targets for Business Advice, Start Your Own Business programmes, Female participation rates and student enterprise are on track for achievement.

**Kildare LEO** have completed their 2016 annual Business Plan, including the following targets: 290 participants at Business Advice Sessions; 5 Start Your Own Business Courses with 85 participants; 200 clients to be assigned business development mentors; 16 schools to participate in Student

Enterprise Awards Programme with 1,250 participants; and a 5% increase in women participants.

**Action 3:** Maynooth University EDEN Centre will run a 2016 Student Enterprise Challenge

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

The Student Enterprise Challenge 2016 has concluded; the final was held on April 29th 2016 and was filmed for outreach use. Four ideas made it into the final, having been selected from an extensive list of entries in a semi-final the week previous. These four finalists pitched their ideas to a panel of judges, with the winner (Peter Lillis: 'Civeeta') receiving a prize of €4000.

**Action 5:** Enterprise Ireland will run a "Start-up Open Day & Clinic" in the Mid-East for newly registered Start-ups in Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Services from the region, with a view to prospecting for future start-ups and communicating and raising awareness of supports available to potential entrepreneurs in the Mid-East

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

In the Mid East (and Dublin) region support for start-ups in Manufacturing & Internationally Traded Services is primarily driven through Enterprise Start events (see Action 22) and through Project Assessment Days (PAD). PAD days are being held approximately every 6 weeks; more frequently if needed. Prospective clients (start-ups that have gone through some pre-assessment) have an opportunity to pitch their business to a panel consisting of High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) Development Advisors and representatives from the Dublin Business Innovation Centre (BIC). Feedback is given to each client and in some cases as needed more detailed support is given through Dublin BIC. Prospective HPSUs are also met by the HPSU start team who give a detailed outline of the milestones a specific client must meet in order to progress through to funding. These events and PAD days are currently covering the needs of Enterprise Ireland clients in both Dublin and the Mid East.

**Action 7:** Increase awareness of non-financial supports available to enterprise in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Active promotion of enterprise supports is taking place by **Wicklow LEO** on an ongoing basis including communication and awareness-raising through digital channels, newsletters, direct mail, and speaking at events. In addition Wicklow LEO is now running monthly "Accessing Finance for your Business" workshops.

**Kildare LEO** is holding fortnightly Advice Clinics. There is also ongoing contact with the two main Chambers of Commerce in Kildare, including speaking at their events along with events held by business associations and the Kildare Network of Women in Business.



Information and advice clinics are being held regularly by **Meath LEO** to promote both financial and non-financial supports. These clinics were initiated as part of Enterprise week and continue as a regular part of the Start Your Own Business (SYOB) programme. A new emphasis has been placed on the LEO Facebook and Twitter pages to “get the message out”, along with a revamped email communication strategy.

As part of the **Enterprise Ireland** client engagement model, there is a joint assessment of the business needs of the client to ensure that Enterprise Ireland deliver the right supports, at the right time, relative to the company’s growth ambitions, together with a clear timeline for action by the company and by Enterprise Ireland. Non-financial supports are an integral part of this support offering. Enterprise Start events, for example, include detailed discussions on financial and non-financial supports (see action 22 for Mid East Enterprise Start events).

**Action 8:** Establish 'enterprise zones': space for entrepreneurs, both high-tech (linked to colleges/universities, focus on graduate/student entrepreneurs) and low-tech (focus on building space/property solutions)

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Meath LEO:** Kells Innovation Zone is currently being fitted out; it is envisaged that this centre will provide shared services and hot-desking facilities. The centre will include incubation space for start-ups, a training centre and an innovation centre. The first phase is planned to be complete by the end of Q3 2016, with first tenant occupancy in Q4 2016.

**Kildare County Council** has established enterprise space/industrial parks, while **Kildare LEO** has produced a brochure outlining available work space for SMEs. This is available at: <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Kildare/Enterprise-Development/Enterprise-Space-Kildare/>

A number of projects are being investigated by **Wicklow LEO** and potential funding opportunities being explored in partnership with IT Carlow and other bodies. A new strategic plan has been developed for Wicklow County Campus and a number of options are being pursued. In addition, the feasibility of creating co-working spaces in Local Authority owned premises are currently under investigation.

**Action 10:** The Local Enterprise Offices will maximise collaboration with the Community Enterprise Centres to assist start-ups and existing businesses to grow and develop

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Wicklow LEO** has a protocol in place in support of this action. There is formal representation on the board of Arklow Business Enterprise Centre (ABEC), and regular interaction and referrals are taking place. Discussions are also taking place on further development of enterprise space. Joint promotion of initiatives is underway aimed at supporting business growth and development. Close working relationships are in place.

**Kildare LEO** is actively engaged with Community Enterprise Centres. Discussions are currently taking place regarding establishing food incubation units in Athy and Clane Enterprise Centres.

In support of this action the Head of **Meath LEO** has joined the Meath Enterprise Centre board of directors.

**Action 11:** Enterprise Ireland will support and monitor successful applicants under the €5 million Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme launched in 2015

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Incubation space for start-ups and entrepreneurs in the region is a key piece of the start-up ecosystem. In mid-2015 Enterprise Ireland launched the Community Enterprise Initiative, a scheme focused on three elements - Collaboration Initiatives; Renovation Projects; and support for Business Development Managers. Through a national competitive call process, this initiative aims to provide support for Community Enterprise Centres and other enterprise centres to collaborate to utilise and promote their infrastructure, and thus to assist in driving start-ups and entrepreneurship in their region. Two projects in the Mid East have been successful in securing funding through this scheme:

- **Meath Enterprise Centre Company Limited** have been granted funding to develop a Food Innovation & Research Centre and a Digital Media Hub while continuing to manage, promote and develop existing facilities, projects and initiatives.
- **Arklow Business Enterprise Centre Limited** has been granted funding for development. ABEC currently supports a variety of businesses in the ICT, Food, Services, Construction, Consultancy/Training and Distribution sectors. Development plans aim to support a Call Centre Business and to convert space to provide a Commercial Kitchen and a Hot Desk location.

**Action 12:** Local Enterprise Offices will work with Enterprise Ireland (EI) to increase the number of start-ups in the region through, for example, competing for a place in Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE), Competitive Feasibility, Competitive Start, and High Potential Start-ups (HPSUs)

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Meath LEO** is actively promoting all EI programmes through social media, websites and through emails to clients, with a view to increasing the number of start-ups and scaling.

**Wicklow LEO:** EI is represented on LEO Evaluation and Approvals (EVAC) committees. IBYE competition arrangements are in planning stage. A referral process for HPSUs in place. The promotion of the Competitive Start Fund, New Frontiers, Innovation Vouchers, EI exporting seminars and other EI initiatives is ongoing.

**Kildare LEO** has confirmed its commitment to participate in IBYE, Competitive Feasibility, Competitive Start & HPSU. Kildare LEO is currently promoting these initiatives through social media, e-zine, and its website.

**Action 13:** Enterprise Ireland will evaluate proposals under the €5 million Competitive LEO fund

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

The Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation, Mary Mitchell O'Connor, announced the results of the recent LEO collaborative call in June 2016. Mid East LEOs are involved in 5 projects:

Lead LEO	Partner LEO/Others	Project
Wicklow	Tipperary, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny and others	Consolidate a creative hub in the South Eastern region through an extensive networking and training programme for established SMEs and Start Ups servicing the creative industries.
Kilkenny	Carlow, Wicklow,	The EMBARK Programme will proactively prepare small businesses, identified by the LEOs as having potential for growth and export, to exploit new export opportunities.
Wexford	Waterford, Wicklow, Tipperary, Carlow, Kilkenny, Kildare, Laois	A pilot programme that will offer carefully selected micro-enterprises with growth ambitions the opportunity to benefit from concentrated support from the dedicated advisory panel of 3 experts per enterprise.
Tipperary	Wicklow and other partners	Develop a strong Digital Media and Gaming corridor linking the Mid West and the South & East Regions, building on existing strengths, heighten awareness of the potential of the creative industries and assist in diversifying the current employment base.

**Action 16:** The local authorities in the Mid East region, as in other areas, will each develop and publish a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), setting out, for a six-year period, objectives and actions to support economic development and local and community development in their administrative regions

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

**Wicklow:** following extensive consultation and research, Wicklow LECP has been completed and approved by Wicklow County Council. The final plan will be published in September following submission to the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. The high level economic objectives of the County Wicklow LECP plan are to:

- Support inward investment and promote the creation and expansion of new and existing

- employment opportunities in the county to drive economic development within the county
- Support and develop the Wicklow County Campus to allow it to reach its full potential as a centre of learning and innovation in the county
- Support the provision of high quality infrastructure throughout the county that will facilitate and support economic expansion
- Enhance the attractiveness of town centres and retail premises across the county
- Stimulate and support the development and expansion of micro-enterprises and SMEs
- Harness the county’s existing assets and encourage collaborative opportunities and business engagement amongst sectors to develop new markets and initiatives
- Promote and direct the tourism development of the county in a sustainable manner
- Capitalise on the immediate and future economic opportunity in the film and television industry and support the expansion of the industry in the county
- Realise the potential benefits of the county’s maritime assets
- Support the rural economy and promote rural economic diversification
- Maximise the economic development in the county through improved and strategic branding and marketing
- Support the development of renewable energy and a low energy future for the county

**Kildare** LECP was completed end 2015 and has been published. Kildare LECP has been developed in accordance with eight “Guiding Principles”:

1. To make a positive difference by creating an imaginative and ambitious plan based on the evidenced needs of Kildare
2. To “Build Society in Kildare” by creating sustainable, coherent, inclusive communities and a sustainable economic environment
3. To have a collective and accessible vision that is owned by people across the county
4. To implement, facilitate and encourage changes in the way agencies and structures work in Kildare, by linking initiatives, maximising return, and by changing our expectation of how we work together
5. To create a framework that aligns with a range of other statutory, collaborative and local development plans
6. To maximise the ability of Kildare to leverage additional resources that will support the delivery of an appropriate and fair level of services and economic opportunities
7. To provide a working plan with space to reflect and plan ahead
8. To create a plan in accordance with the principles of sustainable development

**Meath** LECP has been published, and represents the first integrated economic and community plan for the county. The vision identified by the Plan for Meath is a county that will build upon its unique heritage to enable the diversity of its people and communities to have the resources for economic, social and environmental wellbeing, the creativity to flourish, and the strength to be resilient and that will develop a vibrant, sustainable, and competitive economy, all based on shared goals and collaboration between statutory, community, voluntary, environmental and private sectors. The values underpinning the plan are those of Community, Community Development, Equality and Human Rights, Sustainability, Sense of Place, and Partnership.

**Action 17:** The Local Development Companies in the region will provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment and deliver a range of programmes to support entrepreneurship and social enterprise. The Local Development Companies will work with the LEOs, with a view to progressing clients to the LEO services

**Status:** Ongoing

## **Progress Update:**

### **LDCs LEADER Overview of Services**

The LEADER 2014-2020 Programme commenced in July. The programme provides support to entrepreneurs (including people who have been long-term unemployed) and social enterprises through the provision of a range of supports including capital, analysis & development and training grant assistance. Local Development Companies (LDCs) are also engaging in animation and capacity building to assist individuals and community groups to access LEADER supports and funding. LEADER programme staff in the Mid East are liaising with LEOs in relation to all enterprise projects and regularly referring promoters to the LEOs where appropriate. Projects are also being referred to LDCs by the LEOs where relevant. The forthcoming LEADER programme 2014- 2020 will see a continuation of this work with further emphasis on social inclusion (including unemployed and underemployed people) as well as enterprise development and job creation.

### **LDCs SICAP Overview of Services**

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) provides support and training to disadvantaged individuals and communities by way of training courses for the unemployed and low income workers and households, information events and activities to encourage engagement across communities with SICAP, and one to one guidance for individuals who are seeking employment or looking to become self-employed. SICAP staff are providing supports across a wide spectrum of needs such as CV writing, job search skills, interview techniques and application writing. For those seeking to retrain or upskill, guidance and advice is being offered on a one-to-one basis to help identify the individual's requirements and how to apply for courses. Where an individual has a business idea the SICAP Programme is working closely with them to provide one to one advice on starting a business, funding applications and training courses such as start your own business and bookkeeping and taxation.

### **LDCs TUS Overview of Services**

The Tús Programme provides support to unemployed individuals during their year on Tús. Supports provided directly by Tús Supervisors are on a one to one basis through a development and progression plan. Once a need is identified, where possible, referrals for supports are made. The Tús programme is working closely with SICAP to provide supports for CV writing, Job search skills, Interview Techniques and Application Writing. For those seeking to retrain or upskill, guidance and advice is offered on a one to one basis to help identify the individual's requirements and how to apply for courses. Where an individual has a business idea the Tús Supervisor refers the individual to the SICAP Programme to provide one to one advice on starting a business, funding applications and training courses, such as start your own business, bookkeeping, and taxation.

**Action 18:** Enterprise Ireland will work with client companies from the region, including high potential start-ups, to increase participation on capability building programmes and to accelerate their capacity to scale up and succeed in international markets

**Status:** **Ongoing**

## **Progress Update:**

A key focus of Enterprise Ireland is to support the establishment of high potential start up companies and to scale up indigenous industry to compete in international markets. In addition to

financial support to companies in the Mid East, Enterprise Ireland supported business growth plans of individual companies in the region. This extra support was provided through access to a range of capability building programmes such as Management & Leadership development, Trade Missions, Selling Opportunity events, Mentoring, the provision of Market Intelligence and more. In addition, Enterprise Ireland has been active in the development of the market for risk money, enterprise space, and innovation infrastructure. Some funding is provided to schemes nationally that deliver locally, while other funding streams are provided locally. Start-up businesses are also being supported in the region through targeted programmes such as Enterprise Start workshops (two held in the Mid East in 2016), the New Frontiers entrepreneur development programme (delivered in the region in partnership between Maynooth University and Athlone Institute of Technology), and Competitive Feasibility Funding (3 projects in the region successful in securing funding in H1 2016).

**Action 21:** Promote and support entrepreneurship and start-ups in the region through showcasing local success stories/testimonials on platforms such as LEO and council websites

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Meath LEO** is working on developing case studies: examples have been identified and will be promoted via the LEO website and on the Meath LEO Facebook and Twitter accounts.

**Kildare LEO** is regularly showcasing local success stories/testimonials on social media and on the LEO website.

**Wicklow LEO:** Case Studies of client companies are being showcased on the LEO website and updated on a regular basis, and featured in LEO newsletters and promoted via social media.

**Action 22:** Drive and encourage entrepreneurship in the Mid East region through initiatives such as Enterprise Start workshops and the New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Enterprise Start Workshops:** These workshops target people who have an idea for an innovative and ambitious start-up business that has the potential for exporting and growth in International Markets. The objective of these workshops is to explore key business areas of focus, such as customer, market and funding needs. Two have been run so far in the Mid East in 2016 (Newbridge in April, and Kells in June) with a total of 22 participants. A further programme will be held in September/October in Wicklow.

**New Frontiers:** New Frontiers is Enterprise Ireland's national entrepreneur development programme for innovative, early-stage start-ups. It is a three-phased programme, based in 14 campus incubation centres across the country. Nationally, each year, New Frontiers funds approximately 150 companies. In the Mid East, Maynooth University participates on the New Frontiers programme as partners with Athlone Institute of Technology. Earlier this year, a 5 year

successful round of funding was announced. The first intake will be in place by end 2016 and will be housed in the new Maynooth University incubator, 'Eolas'. This incubator was also part funded by Enterprise Ireland.

**Competitive Feasibility Fund:** Additionally Enterprise Ireland offers feasibility funding for business start-ups in various sectors and geographic regions. The objective of the Competitive Feasibility Fund for the Mid East Region was to assist new start-up companies or entrepreneurs to investigate the viability of a new growth-orientated business proposition which has the potential to become a High Growth Potential Start-up. A joint programme was run between the Midlands and the Mid East regions in H1 2016. Seven projects were awarded Competitive Feasibility Funding of which 3 were from the Mid East. Individual projects can attract up to a maximum of €25,000 each depending on the plan submitted. This is 50% of the cost of the feasibility study.

## ACCESS TO FINANCE

**Action 23:** Increase the take up by start-up and growth enterprises of the various financial supports for enterprise (SURE, Microfinance, Seed and Venture Funds, SBCI, etc)

**Status:** Ongoing

### Progress Update:

**Meath LEO:** Active promotion of all funding supports is taking place at local and county events. There has been a recent spike in the number of applications for Microfinance Ireland (MFI) finance (12 to date in 2016); Meath LEO is actively promoting these funds at all information and training events.

**Kildare LEO** has set a target to increase take up of Microfinance Loans by 5% (from 18 to 19) and will continue to promote SURE, Seed & Venture Funds & SBCI (Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland).

**Wicklow LEO:** Formal protocols are in place between LEOs, Revenue and MFI. Information on schemes is available in LEO offices, on LEO websites and through one to one business advice sessions.

**IT Carlow** is also working with LEOs in the region to promote all forms of support and assistance available to start ups and scale ups. This is done through formal and informal means; formally through programmes such as New Frontiers and mentoring programmes and informally through meetings and initiatives organised to support entrepreneurship.

**Action 24:** Communicate to business the opportunities that exist from EU funds

**Status:** Ongoing

### Progress Update:

In Enterprise Ireland the opportunities for companies from Horizon 2020 funding are being

continuously promoted through traditional and online channels. In addition, the Research and Commercialisation Support Centre at IT Carlow and the Design + Technology Gateway are actively supporting businesses in identifying and applying for EU funds to programmes such as the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument. The Horizon 2020 National Contact Points have met with researchers and businesses to identify suitable calls; this is being done on an ongoing basis.

**Action 25:** InterTradelreland will run its annual Seedcorn Competition on a regional basis, to give companies the opportunity to improve their investor readiness and greatly increase their chances of raising equity. Local companies will have the opportunity to compete on a regional basis for a prize of €20,000. The regional winner can go on to compete for overall prizes of €50,000 and €100,000

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

In 2016, early stage companies from all counties were given the opportunity to enter the competition before the end of May. 302 applications were received, and following initial shortlisting of applications and video submissions, 176 companies have been invited to upload a full business plan by the closing date of 2 September 2016. Results of all finals (regional and overall) will be announced on the InterTradelreland website.

**Action 26:** Promote national supports available to provide access to finance to start ups and existing businesses

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Meath LEO, Wicklow LEO, and Kildare LEO** are actively promoting supports and financing opportunities to their client base. Formal protocols are in place between LEOs and Revenue, MFI (MicroFinance Ireland), the Department of Social Protection, and the Companies Registration Office. Information on schemes is being made available in LEO offices and is also being promoted on LEO websites and through one to one business advice sessions.

**Action 27:** InterTradelreland will host a workshop under their “Funding for Growth” initiative in the Mid East region to promote all traditional and non-traditional sources of finance to local businesses, as well as providing an opportunity to meet with a corporate finance expert

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

There are 11 Funding for Growth workshops being held across the island in 2016; one of which was held in Kildare on 13 June. These regional workshops are linked to the Funding for Growth Clinics, and aim to encourage SMEs seeking finance to do so in a strategic manner with a well-prepared business plan and to explore all finance options available to them.



**Action 28:** InterTradeIreland will deliver a series of equity awareness events in the Mid East including the unique equity advisory clinics where companies can meet with an equity expert, business planning workshops and venture capital case studies

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A Funding for Growth Clinic was held in Newbridge on 13 June. The clinic provides an opportunity for up to five companies to meet with a corporate finance advisor on a private basis to discuss their individual funding requirements. All funding options are considered and companies are advised on the most suitable type for their requirements and given practical feedback on how to improve their fundability. Four companies attended the Newbridge Clinic.

## SUPPORTING BUSINESSES TO GROW AND SCALE

### SUPPORTING EXISTING ENTERPRISES TO GROW AND SCALE

**Action 36:** Enterprise Ireland will roll-out their new client engagement model to different cohorts of companies to drive development and growth, targeting those with the potential to grow and create employment

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

This new client engagement model is currently being employed with companies in the Mid East. The client engagement model includes a joint assessment of the business needs to ensure that EI deliver the right supports, at the right time, relative to the company's growth ambitions and with a clear timeline for action by the company and by Enterprise Ireland, based on agreed needs. EI is currently piloting this approach with a limited number of sectoral departments.

**Action 37:** Identify locations for the development of enterprise units, with provision of shared services, to help small companies grow

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Meath LEO** is currently conducting a review of available space in the county. In **Wicklow**, enterprise facilities are available in Arklow Business and Enterprise Centre and Wicklow Enterprise Park, with additional potential sites also being actively pursued including Wicklow County Campus and other Local Authority owned premises. **Kildare LEO** is undertaking discussions regarding the possibility of establishing food incubation units in Athy and Clane Enterprise Centres.

**Action 38:** Raise awareness of the EII (Employment and Investment Incentive scheme) as a finance option, following its recent extension to SMEs in the Mid East

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The EII allows individual investors to obtain income tax relief on investments made, in each tax year, into EII certified qualifying companies. There is no tax advantage for the company in receipt of the EII, but securing EII status may enhance their ability to attract other external funding. Companies seeking EII must directly seek certification from the Revenue Commissioners.

All LEOs in the Mid East have protocols in place with the Revenue Commissioners in support of this action. **Wicklow LEO** has made information on the scheme available in LEO offices and online, in addition to providing information at one-to-one business meetings. **Kildare LEO** is raising awareness of the EII amongst client companies. **Meath LEO** are in planning stage for this action.

**Action 39:** InterTradelreland will promote its Acumen and Elevate programmes in the Mid East region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

InterTradelreland (ITI) is proactively engaging with the LEOs and other stakeholders in the region to promote these programmes. Contact has been made with each of the LEOs and other stakeholders in the region to update them on the programmes available to SMEs to help them identify new cross border sales. ITI also has a representative based in the Leinster region who promotes the ITI suite of Trade Programmes in the region to all interested parties on an ongoing basis. ITI also recently participated in the North Kildare Chamber summer expo.

**Action 41:** InterTradelreland will set a target of at least 10 Acumen approvals in the region to investigate and pursue export opportunities in Northern Ireland

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

To date four companies in this region have been approved to participate on the Acumen Programme. The Acumen programme assists businesses to source the right expertise and people to target new markets effectively and increase cross-border sales. The programme offers three support options: support towards employing a full or part-time sales person, or specialist consultancy support of up to £4,000/€5,000 to research cross-border opportunities and implement a cross-border strategy.

**Action 42:** EI will utilise the new Regional Aid designation of Athy, Arklow and Kells to assist enterprises in the Mid East to grow as appropriate

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Enterprise Ireland has developed an ongoing approach with companies in these areas. This opportunity is being communicated to relevant companies through traditional and online media channels and also at public events, for example in Arklow, December 2015, with Chambers of Commerce (audience of 30+).

Enterprise Ireland is also working closely with the Local Authorities and other Agencies in promotion of the various supports available under Regional Aid.

**Action 43:** Through its Trade Accelerator Voucher scheme, InterTradelreland will help companies to identify and break down barriers to trade leading to new export opportunities in Northern Ireland

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

InterTradeIreland (ITI) is proactively engaging with the LEOs and other stakeholders in the region to promote this programme. Contact has been made with each of the LEOs and other stakeholders in the region to update them on the programmes available to SMEs to help them identify new cross border sales. ITI also participated in the North Kildare Chamber summer expo. In addition, ITI have a representative based in the Leinster region who promotes the ITI suite of Trade Programmes in the region to all interested parties on an ongoing basis.

**Action 44:** Enterprise Ireland will target manufacturing and internationally traded service companies in the Mid-East region to scale, innovate and develop international markets

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Supporting manufacturing and internationally traded service companies in the Mideast Region to grow is a key focus of Enterprise Ireland. A variety of channels is being used on a continuous basis to make entrepreneurs and existing manufacturing and internationally traded service companies aware of the range of supports available. These include 1-1 consultations with executives of Enterprise Ireland, briefing seminars, provision of relevant literature, attendance at exhibitions and conferences to promote the supports to new audiences. Promotion is also being enhanced through the use of social media (regionally & nationally) and e-zines. Enterprise Ireland is also supporting these companies to scale and innovate through Management & Leadership development programmes, Trade Missions, Selling Opportunity events, Mentoring, and the provision of Market Intelligence.

**Action 45:** LEOs in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland will develop progression pathways for clients to EI's HPSU programme

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**LEOs in Kildare, Meath and Wicklow** have strong collaborative relationships with Enterprise Ireland on potential growth companies. EI are represented on the Evaluation Committees of all three LEOs, where new and growing companies' applications for funding are discussed. Clear routes for referrals are in place between EI and all three LEOs, in addition to the promotion by the LEOs of EI schemes and offerings including Competitive Start Fund, New Frontiers, Innovation Vouchers, Export Seminars, and Enterprise Start.

**Action 46:** The telecoms industry, through the Telecommunications and Internet Federation (TIF), to work with DCENR, DTTS, CCMA and NRA to address any barriers to the rollout of high speed broadband

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Ibec has initiated engagement with all relevant stakeholders to progress this action.

**PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

**Action 47:** Collaboration & Global Sourcing: To enhance the Regional offering and increase collaboration with existing clients, and introduce relevant Enterprise Ireland clients to IDA clients

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA Ireland is working closely with Enterprise Ireland to increase collaboration, including the sourcing of goods, between multinational and indigenous companies. This is reflected by the Global Sourcing Trade Mission hosted in Athlone on May 18th and by the continued use of Enterprise Ireland client companies on company site visits. Multinationals who participated and conducted one to one meetings with EI clients at the Global Sourcing Event included; Abbott Diagnostics, Ericsson, AXA Assistance, Jazz Pharmaceuticals, Alexion, NPD Group, Teleflex, Kelpac, Renew Health, Transitions Optical and Logstrup.

**Action 48:** InterTradeIreland will deliver 3 public tendering workshops for SMEs in the Mid East over the period 2015-2016 and will provide relevant training for local small businesses in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

InterTradeIreland delivered 6 Go2Tender workshops in the region in H2 2015, in Wicklow and Naas, for a combined total of 33 participants. These workshops provide a comprehensive review of public procurement markets on the island, where to find tender opportunities, e-tender portals, and how to complete tender documentation. The programme consists of a two day workshop and a half day of mentoring. This mentoring may be extended by up to three additional days and all mentoring is delivered by an experienced consultant to assist with tender development.

**Action 49:** InterTradeIreland will promote public tendering opportunities to SMEs in the region including cross border public sector opportunities, consortia building for larger contracts and below threshold contracts

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

First piloted in 2003, the programme has successfully delivered 6 phases of the Go2Tender programme with very positive independent evaluations. ITI continues to promote public tendering

opportunities and will shortly launch Phase 7 of the Go2Tender programme with particular emphasis on micro-enterprise supports.

## FOSTERING INNOVATION

**Action 51:** IDA will continue to roll out its Research, Development & Innovation Program to incentivise client companies in the region to develop new processes and products

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA's RD&I Program is an ongoing offering available to both new and existing client companies. IDA targets and engages with its existing client base at both corporate and local executive level following analysis of the company's R&D strategy. IDA highlights where capability in a location matches the skills needs of the client and therefore seeks out potential opportunity within the company's R&D strategy.

**Action 52:** Maynooth University Commercialisation Team to continue to offer Connect networking events to facilitate academic-industry partnerships

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Maynooth University delivered a Connect event on 5 April 2016. 190 delegates attended the event at Carton House, Kildare. CONNECT is an event that provides a networking platform both for companies and entrepreneurs in the business community and companies interested in research collaborations with third level institutes. The event includes a line-up of speakers presenting on topics such as regional development, leveraging supports for research and development, and accessing services or facilities, including business incubation. Additional workshops were also delivered in tandem with this CONNECT event.

Following the success of the 2016 event, two further events are planned in 2017 and 2018. These may focus on a sectoral theme (e.g. Food Innovation, 5G future), or a cross-cutting theme such as Design for Business. Themes must have a technology/innovation focus.

**Action 57:** Maynooth University will investigate the potential for developing a Research and Innovation centre in the Mid East focused on business opportunities linked to climate change

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Maynooth University has assembled a consortium of Universities, Agencies and Industry for a Research and Innovation centre to build business opportunities linked to climate change. This project is being led out of Maynooth University. €7.8m has been committed by industry to date, as part of a €26m project. A funding request has been submitted to Science Foundation Ireland and is undergoing assessment.

**Action 58:** Develop a regional promotion and outreach programme to assist enterprises and research teams participate in collaborative research, especially EU Horizon 2020 projects

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Research and Commercialisation Support Centre at IT Carlow and the Design + Technology Gateway are actively supporting businesses in identifying and applying for EU funds to programmes such as the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument. The National Contact Points have met with researchers and businesses to identify suitable calls. This is being done on an ongoing basis.

In addition to the regular business of promoting participation in collaborative research by the Commercialisation team at Maynooth University (together with IT Carlow, Waterford IT and Athlone IT under the Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative programme- TTSI3), a special initiative is underway for the APJ region with regard to EU Horizon 2020 projects for innovative SMEs. Maynooth University is currently working with LEO representatives on a “Guide to European Funding for SME in Meath Kildare & Wicklow” for use across the region.

**Action 61:** InterTradeIreland will promote the Fusion Programme to SMEs in the Mid East and will set a target of at least 7 Fusion approvals in 2015/2016

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Five companies from the region have been approved for support through the FUSION programme since 1 January 2015; all of these companies have subsequently commenced the FUSION programme.

**Action 62:** InterTradeIreland will provide access to its Challenge programme to SMEs in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Challenge remains open to all eligible companies in the region and is being promoted through the engagement with the LEOs. 36 companies attended information sessions in Naas in September 2015. 18 of these engaged further with the programme by attending workshops in October 2015, and nine received one-to-one mentoring following these workshops.

**Action 65:** IT Carlow to pursue the establishment of Design+ Technology Gateway, part-funded by Enterprise Ireland, in order to support and enhance technology driven disciplines, linking that technology to business opportunities and user needs. Design-led innovation employs processes and techniques to allow companies to capture customer needs, realise opportunities, and create usable and market desirable products across Business, Computing, Engineering, Manufacturing, Environment and Science. Design+ Technology Gateway will develop an inclusive design-led



regional and national industry portal which will complement existing Technology Gateways

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Approval was given by the Enterprise Ireland Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee (IRCC) to fund the Design+ IT Carlow proposal for the Technology Gateway Network, which commenced on 1 January 2016. Design + (Applied Design) is part of the Technology Gateway Network: a nationwide resource for industry based in the Institutes of Technology, delivering solutions on near to market problems for industrial partners.

The Design+ Gateway is applying its Industrial Design capabilities for companies based in the Midlands, Southeast and nationally. The technology offer to industry falls under categories: Engineering (prototype design and scale to manufacture), ICT & Software (integration of user experience and interface design), and Bio Lifesciences (product design orientated by end user needs)

## ATTRACTING AND EMBEDDING FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

**Action 66:** IDA will target a 30 to 40% increase in investments for the Mid East over the period 2015-2019

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA Ireland continues to target an increase of investment into the Mid-East by 30% to 40% from 2015-2019, including R&D investments. IDA is marketing the Mid-East as a location for a range of different investment opportunities. Potential opportunities are assessed and corresponding locations within the Mid-East are put forward along with an invitation to site visit. IDA also continues to work with all stakeholders to enhance the proposition of the Mid East, thus better positioning it to secure additional investment into the future. For the first six months of 2016, IDA has had 11 itineraries in the Mid East.

**Action 67:** Drive Transformation with IDA clients by seeking new mandates with the established base of companies

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA Ireland works with client companies to review operations and to support investments that will ultimately make the operation more sustainable. Transformation investments are aimed at Existing clients in the region, to ensure the sustainability for the operation and to further embed the companies in the region. IDA Client companies of all scale are met by IDA on a regular basis and many of these clients have recently availed of incentives such as Lean Start, Training and RD&I. There are 59 existing IDA clients in the Mid-East region. IDA engages regularly with senior executives in the Irish operations as well as in Corporate headquarters. Discussions are focussed around the client's strategic direction with a view to identifying transformation opportunities.

**Action 69:** Continually review all property options across the region identifying potentially suitable options for new and existing clients

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA's Property Division's marketing team and Mid East Office engage frequently with the private sector and review all property options in the region on an ongoing basis. Due to the range of activities that can exist across potential investment opportunities, IDA Property and Mid East Regional Office are engaging with estate agents and local stakeholders often on a weekly basis, to identify property solutions for activities including High End Manufacturing, Data Centre and Global Business Services. The regularity in which this exercise takes place ensures that the Mid-East property portfolio of solutions is up to date and can meet the needs of a range of potential investments.

**Action 70:** Develop a Regional Connect Ireland Plan that is integrated with the local authorities' enterprise development and job-creation activities and formalise the name of a nominated officer from each county in the region for the roll-out of the Plan

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Connect Ireland have been working individually with the counties in the Mid-East region to create a diaspora-focused business message. In particular, Connect Ireland have worked on a series of videos promoting a business message aimed at the diaspora. The next step for this project will be to bring together local liaison officers to convert this county focus into an overall regional message. This is scheduled to take place in H2 2016. In particular, Connect Ireland worked on two business videos with Meath LEO, promoting Ashbourne for business and Meath in general as a start-up venue. A similar video was produced with Wicklow LEO on the benefits of doing business in the county.

**Action 71:** IDA to utilise the new additional Regional Aid designations of Athy, Kells and Arklow to target relevant investors

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IDA Ireland continues to work closely with relevant stakeholders to market Athy, Kells and Arklow to relevant investors. Marketing material has recently been created for both internal and external use promoting the financial supports available. IDA's Mid-East Regional Manager is working closely with Kildare County Council and local stakeholders in marketing Athy as a location for FDI investment. IDA has three clients in Athy, two of which have been awarded grant payments. IDA and Enterprise Ireland, together with Arklow and District Chamber also held a public event in December 2015 to highlight opportunities in Arklow under the regional aid map.

**Action 72:** Announce and run the Connectivation competition, inviting third Level students to share their ideas for the future development of the Succeed in Ireland initiative

**Status:** Delayed

**Progress Update:**

This competition has been postponed due to contractual issues; a further update will be provided in H2 2016.

**Action 75:** IDA Ireland will appoint a dedicated Regional Business Development Manager for the Mid-East

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Conor Simpson was appointed as Manager of the Mid East region in October 2015.

**Action 76:** Continue to encourage and positively influence infrastructure improvements in the Region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Meath County Council:** one of the eight key elements of the recently published Economic Development strategy for County Meath 2014-2020 is the identification of and support of investment in infrastructure and services that enable and deliver economic development. A key output of the strategy is the merging of investment opportunities with land use planning.

**Wicklow County Council** is working with developers and Road engineers to plan improved road infrastructure to service Wicklow County Campus and the Rathnew area. The Council are also working with individuals and interested parties to improve access to Broadband for business.

**Kildare County Council** are progressing a number of infrastructure improvements, including upcoming tender assessments for the Naas Newbridge Bypass upgrade, Osberstown Interchange, and Sallins Bypass; progression of the Athy Distributor Road, the final section of Naas IRR, and Maynooth Outer Orbital Routes; tender advertised for completion of Newbridge Link Road to Athgarvan Road; initial designs being costed for Park and Ride facility at Kilcock and Castledermot interchange. Upgrades have also been completed of the The Square Kilcock, and of the Public Realms in Allenwood and Robertstown.

## BUILDING SECTORAL OPPORTUNITIES

### TOURISM

**Action 77:** Roll out Ireland's Ancient East international advertising campaign

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Tourism Ireland's new Ireland's Ancient East advert launched in January in key markets around the world. Ireland's Ancient East is being promoted across a range of platforms overseas including TV, print and online advertising; on Ireland.com and through social media channels; and at major international consumer and trade fairs.

Recent examples include online ads on TV, websites and social media platforms that reached almost 14 million potential visitors in France and Germany alone this spring; in the same period in the US, some 1.6 million Americans saw TV ads for Ireland's Ancient East on the PBS TV network. In Britain, Tourism Ireland teamed up with actor Richard E Grant and Smooth Radio to showcase Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way through a series of short online films and on-air mentions, reaching about 5.5 million people across Britain. Tourism Ireland has also teamed up with Irish Ferries to boost visitors from Britain by highlighting Ireland's Ancient East and the Pembroke/Rosslare ferry service to over 9 million potential visitors.

**Action 78:** Fáilte Ireland will: • Conduct customer service and cross-selling workshops • Make available an Ireland's Ancient East digital toolkit • Launch a domestic campaign to promote the trail • Launch phase 1 of Ireland's Ancient East online presence

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Fáilte Ireland has initiated a programme - 'Dwell' - across Ireland's Ancient East, with 5 Dwell programmes delivered in Meath, Kildare & Louth. There are three main elements to the workshop, resulting in participants being able to:

- Explain Ireland's Ancient East to visitors
- Engage with visitors through local story telling, thus enhancing customer care
- Support and plan itineraries that will make memories for visitors that they will remember and talk about long after they have returned home
- Cross sell other attractions of interest in the area, thus increasing the dwell time of the visitor

Fáilte Ireland is developing a Digital Toolkit which will provide trade and stakeholders with the resources they need to bring Ireland's Ancient East brand to life, together with advice on how to use them. This toolkit will be available in September.

In May 2016 Fáilte Ireland launched an integrated marketing campaign to introduce Ireland's Ancient East to the domestic audience. The campaign includes TV, press and social media advertising, and will reach 3.1m Irish people. The campaign aims to motivate, inspire and achieve broad appeal for Ireland's Ancient East.

Irelandsancienteast.com was also launched in May 2016. This is a mobile first website aimed at

visitors, for use while on holiday. The objective is to:

- Create an immersive digital presence that brings the rich stories and experiences of Ireland's Ancient East to life
- Allow people to explore Ireland's Ancient East through the use of an innovative mobile site
- Use best in class technology that integrates digital and real world experiences to increase visitor numbers, revenue and dwell time in the region.

**Action 79:** Put in place an extensive familiarisation programme to attract media and international buyers to Ireland's Ancient East

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

A programme of familiarisation visits for tour operators, travel and lifestyle journalists and bloggers from around the world was put in place at the start of 2016 and is operating year-round. The aim is to encourage tour operators to include Ireland's Ancient East as a new destination in their programmes or to expand the 'Ireland' content of their existing programmes, and to raise the profile of Ireland's Ancient East through the articles or broadcasts produced by visiting journalists and bloggers. Their itineraries are designed by Fáilte Ireland. For example, a group of Nordic tour operators visited Ireland's Ancient East in May; and journalists from seven markets – including Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Canada and India – visited Ireland's Ancient East in June.

**Action 80:** Fáilte Ireland will: • Roll out an extensive range of supports for tourism businesses • Co-ordinate installation of orientation signs and county boundary signs • Progress 25 projects of phase 1 'New Ideas in Ancient Spaces' Capital Grants Scheme in co-operation with key stakeholders • Progress phase 2 of the 'New Ideas in Ancient Spaces' Capital Grants Scheme

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

In 2016 Fáilte Ireland has delivered a range of business supports for the tourism trade in Ireland's Ancient East including storytelling workshops, revenue workshops, customer care, cross selling and practical skills training.

In order to bring the brand to life on the ground, there are two signage schemes in delivery:

- Branded Orientation Signage at key attractions in Ireland's Ancient East
- Upgrade of county boundary signage to incorporate a branded plate with the Ireland's Ancient East logo

14 Orientation signs will be installed by the end of the year in the Mid East region. A pilot sign will be in place by the end of July at Wicklow Gaol. 51 county boundary signs are currently in place in the Mid East region.

25 projects of phase 1 of the 'New Ideas in Ancient Spaces' Capital Grants Scheme, in co-operation with key stakeholders, are well underway. New experiences in the Mid East region include:

- Lullymore Heritage Centre, Kildare (Grant investment €29,000)
- Boyne Valley 'Waterway through Time', Meath (Grant investment €86,000)
- Ireland's Ancient Eats, Meath (Grant investment €49,500)

- Powerscourt, Wicklow ( Grant investment €80,000)

The new Lullymore experience is now complete and open. Phase 2 of the New Ideas in Ancient Spaces will commence in Quarter 4 2016.

**Action 83:** Maintain and manage 156km of Inland Waterway for navigational and recreation purposes

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

This action is ongoing, with the management and maintenance of the Royal Canal, Grand Canal (Main Line) and Grand Canal (Barrow Line) in Counties Meath and Kildare continuing to facilitate boating, canoeing, canoe polo, walking, cycling, fishing and triathlons (TriAthy).

**Action 84:** Promote and raise awareness of Fáilte Ireland's Welcome Standard (new accreditation for accommodation that is innovative, quirky and distinctive) among providers of, or those interested in developing, non-mainstream accommodation options in the region.

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Nationally 291 have signed up to this Standard to date; and 277 approved. 24 of these are based in the Mid East region. Fáilte Ireland is continuing to actively promote this new tourist accommodation standard.

**Action 89:** Develop an implementation strategy to maximise Kildare's potential to become a dedicated and recognised location for recreational and cultural tourism within the Greater Dublin Area, including the Strengthening of Kildare's digital tourism marketing capability, online presence and social media platforms

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Kildare's new Tourism Strategy is currently in development, and is scheduled for launch in January 2017.

**Action 90:** Investigate the use of recent technological advances in digital humanities to promote the heritage and cultural heritage of the region, with the potential pilot for two assets on Ireland's Ancient East

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Maynooth University have put together a Digital Humanities group to develop propositions for Boyne Valley Tourism and Ireland's Ancient East. Proposals will be based on practices used to promote heritage tourism elsewhere. The team is currently working on Decade of Commemoration projects (Battle of Mount St Bridge & Letters 1916), and will connect with stakeholders in Boyne Valley Tourism and Ireland's Ancient East as 1916 projects wind down.

**Action 94:** Produce tourist literature for the region's key tourist sites that includes information for visitors with disabilities

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Wicklow County Council** has planned to liaise with disability groups and tourism bodies in the county to review and upgrade literature. Work is ongoing for **Meath County Council**. **Kildare County Council** is developing a Digital Marketing Platform. Digital promotion to international tourism markets must take account of potential customers accessing online content through fixed, portable and mobile technologies from a range of market segments. Intelligent tracking will re-engage potential visitors with responsive offers appropriate to planned trips to Kildare and the surrounding region. An integrated content management system will streamline Kildare's businesses tools to deliver high impact audio and visual content with location sensitive contexts in increasingly competitive global environment. It will enable tourism providers in Kildare to engage tourists with a wider range of attractions and to stand out among our collaborators in Ireland's Ancient East.

**Action 98:** Wicklow, Kildare and Meath County Councils to explore recommendations, outlined in the NTA's draft GDA Cycle Network Plan, for the promotion of existing roadways as potential cycling tourism routes

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Wicklow County Council** is engaged in ongoing work with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to create and improve cycle routes within the county, such as the Bray cycle Network.

**Kildare County Council** is considering the installation / improvement of cycling facilities as an integral part of all new traffic management projects.

**Meath County Council** is currently involved in two flagship Cycleways:

1. Galway Dublin Cycleway: this will be the first inter-city greenway in a proposed national network. Stretching 276 km from coast to coast, it will be a world-class amenity for families, communities and tourists to enjoy, providing a cross-country route away from busy roads. From west to east the route passes through counties Galway, Roscommon, Westmeath, Meath, Kildare and Dublin. It will travel by rivers and through woods, along a disused railway line and old canal paths, and on well-signed, purpose-built cycle paths, offering rural tranquillity in a safe and traffic-free environment to everyone who uses it. Work on the cycleway commenced in 2013 with funding from the NRA and in collaboration with the local authorities.



2. The Boyne Greenway: a shared use walking and cycling route from Drogheda Ramparts to Oldbridge entrance (Battle of the Boyne site). This is Phase 1 of a route from Drogheda to Slane, Navan, Trim and connecting onto the Dublin to Galway corridor at Enfield. Total route length is approximately 45km.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

**Action 99:** Promote and assist the delivery of cost savings through energy efficiency programmes and training for businesses and public sector organisations in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Programmes for business are assisting local SMEs and Public Sector organisations to save in the region of 20% from their energy bills. SEAI has worked with Meath and Louth County Councils and the Louth Meath Education and Training Board to develop a training course for small business energy managers. This has now commenced and is a model for other regions to follow. It will provide savings to the 45 businesses signed up in Louth and Meath, as well as providing training for up to 20 course attendees.

**Action 104:** Investigate potential of Tara Mines site to provide sustainable geo-thermal heating solutions for horticulture, agriculture and aquaculture

**Status:** Delayed

**Progress Update:**

Initiation of this action has been delayed as the feasibility of the project is being assessed; a further update will be provided in H2 2016.

## CLUSTERS

**Action 105:** Leverage Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to identify clusters and areas of strength that support the region as a whole, and build a streamlined strategy around clusters that avoids duplication and competition

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The process of preparing and adopting the Regional Economic Strategy will commence after, or in tandem with, the preparation and adoption of the National Planning Framework (NPF). The NPF will be the successor document to the National Spatial Strategy and is being prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. The Regional Assembly will inform all the constituent local authorities of the process and timelines of preparing and adopting the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, when this information is available.

**Action 106:** Examine the potential for a digital hub in the region, and identify opportunities for integrating ICT with sectors such as Heritage/Tourism, Retail, etc. The group will conduct a feasibility study to examine where opportunities exist and where the focus should be

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

IT Carlow has a long history of leading Innovation in ICT and Engineering projects involving national and international partners. Engagement with larger firms will be channelled through Design+. Design+ (Applied Design) is part of the Technology Gateway Network, a nationwide resource for industry based in the Institutes of Technology and delivering solutions on near to market problems for industrial partners. The gateway will promote convergence opportunities and work with other gateways to communicate various offerings, including building digital capabilities.

## CULTURE AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

**Action 113:** Wicklow LEO will pilot a one day workshop in film industry related training

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

The course took place on Saturday 28th May with 11 participants. The aim of this pilot conversion course was to provide each participant with an idea of what it is like to work in the Film/TV industry. The course was targeted at experienced hairdressers who wish to expand their business by targeting the Film/TV industry. The course was delivered on behalf of LEO Wicklow by Multi Award Winner Dee Corcoran, who is currently Head of the Hair Department on the set of Vikings in Ashford Studios, and has accumulated a wealth of experience in specialisation hairdressing for Film/TV. The workshop gave a clear understanding of the demands of hairdressing for film and television, and programme objectives were to help participants to:

1. Have a greater understanding of the way hairdressing in Film/TV works
2. Be aware of the different types of hairdressing required for Film/TV, for example wigs, contemporary styles, styles for period drama, styles for current television, etc
3. Read a script and break it down
4. Understand what 'continuity' means and how that shapes the work of the Hair Department on set.
5. Understand the media landscape in Ireland, covering Film and TV production.
6. Understand how to get started in the Film/TV industry.

**Action 116:** Explore the development of a regional Arts Hub as a centre to support arts practice, research and learning, linking research practitioners with the creative and tourist industries

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Maynooth University has now incorporated a Regional Arts Hub into its development masterplan.

**AGRI-FOOD**

**Action 120:** Target an increase in the number of participants on the Food Academy Programme and progress a number of companies in the region to the next level -Food Academy Advance

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

**Meath LEO** launched its Second Food Academy in this period, in conjunction with **Kildare LEO**. Four companies from Meath participated. There is also a planned 'starter' programme to increase the skill base of start-up companies, so that they can join the next food Academy programme. **Wicklow LEO** has delivered a Food Academy programme annually and has the third highest rate in the country of progression to SuperValu trials.

**Action 121:** Build on the Boyne Valley and Powerscourt brands to develop food hubs in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Boyne Valley Food Hub is now in early planning stage. First funding for this project has been received via the Enterprise Ireland Community Enterprise Initiative. A total of €187,000 has been awarded, and part of this will be allocated to the development of a Food R&D (UHT) laboratory for the Hub.

**Action 122:** Commence implementation of the Athy Regeneration Strategy as a Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) and identify other potential REDZ zones across the county and assist them to prepare for future funding opportunities

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Implementation of this Regeneration Strategy is ongoing. The Dominican Church has been purchased and is being converted into a new library in a joint action with the Department of Education. Consultants have been engaged to prepare a design for the rejuvenation of Emily Square; public consultation commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 with works to commence in 2017. Work has commenced on the upgrade and rebranding of the Heritage Centre to become the Shackleton Centre, and work is also underway on the visual image of the town. Funding was received under REDZ to purchase a barge; four people have been trained to operate it (under a Department of Social Protection funded Community Employment Scheme) and cruises are now being offered – it is hoped this will provide an impetus to private sector operators to offer other water based

activities. A regional training centre for civil defence is being developed with Athy Rowing and Canoe Club. TriAthy is also growing in national significance.

**Action 130:** Bord Bia will work with retailers to increase shelf space for local produce

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Three companies from the Mid East region were amongst the twenty participants nationally who completed the Food Academy Advance programme, which is run in conjunction with SuperValu (Musgraves). This programme affords food companies the opportunity to grow their business with SuperValu to a provincial (c.30 stores) or even national level.

**Action 131:** Build on the success of marketing Irish Whiskey and beers internationally by demonstrating the linkages of these products to the wider agri-food sector

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine made presentations to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and tourism agencies in Q4 2015 on Food Wise2025 and opportunities for collaboration.

Bord Bia is developing a whiskey-food strategy, and hosted an Irish craft beer/ Irish Whiskey Expo on the 9th March at the Irish Embassy in London – the event aimed to increase awareness among UK retailers, distributors, food and drink writers and bloggers of the growing Irish drinks industry and provide a platform for exporters and potential customers to build fruitful relationships.

IT Carlow has also recently launched Ireland's first Bachelor of Science Honours Degree Programme in Brewing and Distilling. This programme is the result of two years research and development in consultation with industry, representative organisations, national bodies and government.

**Action 132:** Bord Bia will work with LEOs to assist food and drink companies in the Mid East to be included in the Tesco Taste Buds programme

**Status:** Delayed

**Progress Update:**

A change in role for the original project manager in Tesco has pushed this project into the second half of 2016. This action will be reported in the next progress report.

**Action 133:** Enterprise Ireland will target food companies in the Mid East to scale and innovate in line with national policy

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Supporting food companies in the Mid East Region to grow is a key focus of Enterprise Ireland. This is achieved through supporting food entrepreneurs to participate on the New Frontiers Programme and through a dedicated Food Accelerator programme called FoodWorks: a partnership between Teagasc, Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland, and also through the core activities of working with client companies on a 1 – 1 basis to deliver on their business plans. In 2016 Enterprise Ireland also designed and developed an Innovation Voucher Scheme for Artisan Food Sole Traders and Partnerships. The scheme was launched on 7th March and was open for applications for 6 weeks with a closing date of 21th April. Through this scheme, Artisan businesses were able to apply for a €5,000 voucher enabling them to avail of leading edge academic expertise in the third level Knowledge Providers to improve business innovation capability.

## RETAIL

**Action 134:** Kildare County Council to operate a Shopfront/Town Centre Improvement Scheme to financially assist and support independent business owners to improve the appearance of their shopfronts/commercial properties

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

This scheme launched in 2016 on a pilot basis, with 70 businesses applying for funding by mid July. It is expected that the scheme will continue in 2017. The Council has established this scheme to financially assist and support independent business owners to improve the appearance of their shopfronts or commercial properties. This funding is being provided in recognition of the fact that a building's facade makes a big impact on our town centres.

**Action 136:** Progress involvement in the EU funded, Urbact III Project "City Centre Doctor" and strengthen partnership with other European cities to inform future development strategies for retail innovation in Naas town centre

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The URBACT Programme assists projects in a structured manner with three types of interventions namely by engaging partner cities in transnational exchanges which fosters inter-city learning; by building the capacity of partner cities through skills training and knowledge sharing; and by capturing and publishing the knowledge created in the projects.

Naas is a partner member of the City Centre Doctor Project, which is a partnership of smaller cities in ten European countries that are located in proximity to larger cities. The aim of the project is for

the partner cities to develop collaboration mechanisms and integrated action plans that will drive revitalisation of their city centres. The City Centre Doctor Project has now entered Phase 2, and Kildare County Council are actively working with the other European cities in the network. An Urbact Local Group has been established in Naas.

## SKILLS ENHANCEMENT AND LABOUR MARKET ACTIVATION

**Action 137:** Establish a Regional Skills Forum (RSF) for the Mid East region to foster better engagement between education providers, employers and other regional stakeholders, on an ongoing basis, to collaborate in building the skills of the region

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Siobhan Keogh, Regional Skills Forum Manager for the Mid East, was appointed on 23 May 2016. Forum meetings are now ongoing, attended by Maynooth University, Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board, Louth Meath Education and Training Board, Skillnets, Enterprise Ireland, IDA, IBEC, the Department of Social Protection (DSP), the Department of Education and Skills (DES), SOLAS, CIF, Chambers, LEOs, Kildare County Council, and Wicklow County Council.

The forum meeting on 21 June 2016 included presentations from DES and Siobhan Keogh outlining the structure of the RSF, the role of the RSF manager, progress to date, and stakeholder engagements. Draft Working Terms of Reference for the RSF Mid East were also formally adopted by the group. An action plan and associated performance indicators will be developed over the coming months. The next RSF meeting is scheduled for week commencing 12 September. The RSF Manager will continue to meet and engage with Forum members and stakeholders between meetings. The RSF manager also sits on the Mid East APJ committee.

**Action 140:** Develop new apprenticeships across a range of sectors

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Regional Skills Forum is working with the Apprenticeship Council to assist in developing apprenticeship proposals into sustainable national apprenticeships. The Apprenticeship Council is also working closely with the proposers of new apprenticeships with a view to developing them into sustainable apprenticeships that can be delivered on a nationwide basis. In carrying out its role, the Council is taking account of on-going and future skills needs, including through data and reports produced by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and the Strategic Labour Market Research Unit.

Recent months have seen the first of the new apprenticeships with the new Insurance Practitioner Apprenticeship launching and the Industrial Engineer Apprenticeship getting underway. Further new apprenticeships are due to launch in the coming months in various sectors including medical devices, polymer processing and financial services.

**Action 142:** The Local Enterprise Offices will collaborate with Skillnets to ensure a streamlined approach to training offerings in the region

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Local Enterprise Offices have a protocol with Skillnets. The aim of the agreement is to:

- Establish a structured link between the LEO and Skillnets regarding the provision of information and guidance on measures in support of enterprise development
- Increase and maintain mutual awareness of the services and supports offered to SMEs through Skillnets and LEOs
- Provide for cooperation on awareness and promotion activities
- Build on best practice by broadening awareness of good working relationships that are already in place between Skillnets networks at regional level by encouraging the replication of such relationships
- Identify further areas of strategic importance and collaborative initiatives between Skillnets and the LEOs, including measures to address the Mid East Regional Action Plan for Jobs

There has been progress on the implementation of this agreement. Emphasis will be placed on further improving the collaboration between Meath, Kildare and Wicklow LEOs and Skillnets and individual Skillnet training networks operating in the MidEast Region in 2016/2017.

**Action 143:** Promote the Graduate Business Growth Initiative, which supports the placement of graduates with SME companies, through EI's Mid East office

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

This is continuously promoted by Enterprise Ireland through traditional and online media channels (including social media and the Enterprise Ireland website). Enterprise Ireland has also developed a specific website - [www.gradhub.ie](http://www.gradhub.ie) - to promote this initiative. To support client companies to attract and recruit graduates, companies can advertise their opportunities via this website.

The Graduate Business Growth initiative supports Enterprise Ireland SME client companies to hire up to two graduates per year. This is a broad-based graduate placement across all disciplines and sectors. The initiative is a 12 month placement support to embed higher levels of graduate capability in our SME client companies. It supports companies with ambitious growth plans to employ up to two graduates per year, with a Level 8 degree qualification on the National Vocational Qualifications Framework or equivalent. The offer will be available to all Enterprise Ireland client companies who meet the programme criteria. The graduate will complete a project defined by the company linked to their overall growth plan. The company will identify an in-company mentor to work with the graduates, and they will provide an infrastructure that supports them, both in their development and in the completion of the project, for the duration of the graduate's employment.

**Action 148:** Skillnets will raise awareness among the Mid East region's enterprises of the significant benefits of enterprise led training offered by Skillnets through the Training Networks Programme and of management development offered through the ManagementWorks programme

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**



Skillnets continues to interact with local enterprise through a number of fora and channels to promote the benefits of enterprise-led training. There are two Skillnet networks based in the Mid-East region, Wind Skillnet and Trainers Learning Skillnet, together with a number of national sectoral networks who have a significant presence in the Mid East. Each Skillnets network has a remit to promote their training plans to private enterprise which is an ongoing part of their operation. Networks also collaborate with other local agencies in this regard. One such example is the recent collaboration between IMDA (Irish Medical Devices Association) Skillnet, IDA, Ibec and the Department of Social Protection to provide training conversion programmes at Level 6 to meet the skills shortages in process technician roles in Med Tech, Plastics and Engineering companies, some of which are located in the Mid East.

Skillnets also continues to promote management development training offered through the ManagementWorks programme. Since January 2016, two briefing sessions have been held in the region to promote the programme, and in the year to date, three ManagementWorks programmes have been held in the region with a total of 33 participants. 12 participants attended a LEAN programme in Naas and 21 participants attended two separate Business Growth programmes run in Meath. These numbers are anticipated to grow with future programmes and additional briefing sessions to be rolled out later in 2016.

**Action 149:** The Department of Social Protection, will collaborate with stakeholders such as IDA and Enterprise Ireland in promoting the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst client companies

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Meetings have taken place between Department of Social Protection (DSP) Employer Engagement Teams, the IDA and Enterprise Ireland to explore how to advance this Action. The DSP is working with Enterprise Ireland to create a database of key companies in different counties/sectors with a view to arranging information sessions and/or individual meetings with company representatives on the range of services available from the DSP, including job-matching services, JobBridge, JobsPlus, JobsIreland (currently being revamped), and EURES (the European Employment Services). DSP is also preparing an online information pack, outlining these supports, which could be utilised by IDA's overseas offices in promoting the services available to potential employers considering moving to Ireland. Employer Engagement Officers have commenced engagement with some companies in their respective areas.

## BUILDING BUSINESS NETWORKS

**Action 150:** Leverage business networks to identify hubs of activity that could be supported in the region: Film, Food, etc.

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The County Wicklow Economic Think Tank which comprises of businesses and is supported by the Local Authority has identified a number of key areas of opportunity and developed a strategy. Working Groups have been formed to develop individual action plans and monitor implementation. Included in these groups are a Maritime Development Group and a Film Development Group. In addition, the first Business Forum took place in May hosted by the Local Authority and including businesses from all sectors and company types (MNCs, SMEs & Micros). In Kildare a network of local food producers has been established under the banner “Foodscape” ([www.kildarefoodscape.ie](http://www.kildarefoodscape.ie)). LEO Kildare is also working with Naas Lions Club and North Kildare Chamber of Commerce to support the retail sector through a series of workshops and mentoring. The Kildare Arts Officer is also working on a database of sites suitable as film locations. This action is ongoing in Meath as part of wider Action Plan for Jobs activities.

**Action 151:** Hold a Mid East Business Roadshow on a topic of relevance to businesses in the region

**Status:** Complete

**Progress Update:**

Ibec held a business roadshow entitled 'The Ibec Regional Insights Series' for businesses in the Mid East region and Dublin region in May 2016. The regional event explored how innovation can drive a company's performance. It demonstrated how local companies have used State supports and worked with higher education institutions to grow their business through research, development and innovation.

**Action 154:** Ibec will work with its Regional Executive Committee on the key business policy issues facing businesses in the Mid East

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

The Ibec Dublin and Mid-East Regional Executive Committee is meeting on a quarterly basis to shape and lead business policy priorities for the region. The committee engages with local stakeholders on regional business policy issues.

## MARKETING THE REGION AS AN ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO WORK AND LIVE

**Action 159:** Relevant IDA Executives based overseas will visit relevant companies in the region to enhance marketing knowledge

**Status:** Ongoing

**Progress Update:**

Visits took place during IDA's Annual Conference in January 2016 and further visits will take place throughout the year. IDA Regional Team presented to the Annual Conference in Q1 on a number of regional initiatives. The Regional team presents at internal sectoral departmental global team meetings and regularly updating our overseas colleagues. This engagement within IDA continues through visits to locations across the Mid-East, including where IDA staff accompany clients visiting Mid-East locations or meeting with existing clients.