



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# MIDLANDS

## Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Final Progress Report



An initiative of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

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# Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to welcome this publication of the final Progress Report on implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 for the Midlands region. The report shows that the Midlands Steering Committee with regional stakeholders has advanced 100 percent of the actions set out in the Regional Enterprise Plan and are continuing their work on the ongoing actions.

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

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

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

I want to thank all the members of the Midlands Steering Committee for all of your work in 2020 and since the commencement of the Regional Enterprise Plan and for your input to this Progress Report. I want to commend in particular the work of the Chair Dr. Anne Cusack, Managing Director of Critical Healthcare and Sarah Morgan, Programme Manager of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan.

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



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Troy' with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

# Message from the Chairperson

As Chair of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan 2020 it gives me great pleasure to mark the publication of the Final Progress Report. The plan was launched at a time when we found ourselves in a changed economic landscape, where we needed to build resilience for our region, prepare for Brexit and seize the opportunities presented by Bord na Móna's announcement to accelerate its decarbonisation plans.

However, nothing had prepared us for the devastating impact of COVID-19 on our region during 2020. It did, therefore, emphasise the strong collaborative ethos within the Midland Region, with agencies and business interests working together for the greater economic benefit resulting in significant progress. I would like to acknowledge and thank the incredible efforts by the Committee members (and the working groups in particular) with the support of our Local Authorities, Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath as well as the efforts of our Programme Manager, Ms. Sarah Morgan who has ensured the focus has continued on our strategic objectives despite these challenging times.

The strategic objectives outlined in this report have been built on the existing strengths of the region. Progress was achieved through a suite of defined actions, assigned to each Regional Development Objective lead and / or partnership of agencies and businesses operating in the region. Projects like the development of the Grand Canal Greenway, the Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trails, the remote working hubs to the national designation of Portlaoise as the only 'demonstration low carbon town' all serve to position the region as a low carbon energy region across all sectors. This Progress Report is testimony to the enormous efforts of everyone involved and we should all be proud of the collaborative approach that this Region enjoys.

The Midlands is currently in Phase 1 of Pathway to Transition, the period covering the early years of change. The Midlands Engagement Process invited communities, public and private sector bodies to register projects which could assist a positive transition in affected communities and related groups in the wider Midland Region. The second progress report from the Just Transition Commissioner, Mr. Kieran Mulvey, has been released, which demonstrates the considerable work that has been undertaken so far to ensure a coordinated and effective approach to Just Transition.

A total of 101 projects progressed to the Just Transition Fund applications process and provisional offers under Strand 1 & 2, totalling €29m for 63 projects in the Midlands, have been announced.

To conclude, on behalf of the Midland Region Steering Committee I would like to thank the Enterprise Initiatives Unit, within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment for their commitment to the Region and the Future Jobs Initiative.



**Dr. Anne Cusack,**  
Chair, Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan

# 1. Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Final Progress Update

## MIDLANDS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

Ensure that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy.



### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

Leverage opportunities in big data and data analytics from iLOFAR.



### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

Position and support the growth of the Midlands as an advanced manufacturing centre of excellence.



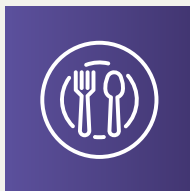
### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:

Enhance the collective offering of the Midlands as a place to live, work and invest in.



### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5:

Strengthen the attractiveness of the Midlands as a destination to visit.



### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6:

Harness the potential of the food and beverage industry in the Midlands.



### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7:

Ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the Midlands' economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

# Overall high-level outcomes for the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020

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

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

**Action commenced but requires further work:**

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

**Action not commenced:** The Committee has deemed that these actions were either not initiated, or insufficient progress was made within the scope and lifetime of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020. These actions will be from being reconsidered as part of future strategic objectives in the next Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan.

Table 1: Progress on Actions during 2020 and Final Status

Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan	
Total Actions	31
Complete	13
Action commenced but requires further work	18
Action not commenced	0

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

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

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

Region	Numbers Employed			Actual Increase in Employment Q1 2015 – Q4 2020	Unemployment Rate	
	Q1 2015	Q4 2020	Growth Rate Q1 2015 – Q4 2020		Q1 2015	Q4 2020
Midlands	108,100	140,200	29.6%	32,100	14.9%	6.0%
State	2,014,400	2,306,200	14.4%	291,800	10.5%	5.7%

Source: CSO Labour Force Survey, Q4 2020

Since the launch of Regional Action Plan for Jobs in 2015, 32,100 more people are in employment between Q1 2015 and to Q4 2020. This is an increase of 29.6 percent which exceeds the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 target while the unemployment rate also fell from 14.9 percent to 6.0 percent over the same period, in the region, again well inside the 2020 target.

The figures in Table 2 exclude people who were receiving the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) at the end of 2020. As of the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, a total of 16,787 people were in receipt of the PUP (see Table 3 for a county and regional breakdown).

County	Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (Number)
Laois	4,758
Longford	2,187
Offaly	4,299
Westmeath	5,543
Midlands	16,787

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

## 2020 Highlights



Under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF)

- » The Cube, Low Carbon Enterprise Hub allocated over €2m
- » Longford Premier Lakelands Food Hub allocated €1.35m
- » Co-Worx Edgeworthstown allocated funding.



Midlands Regional Transition Team conduct Midlands Engagement Process and publish Midlands Pathway to Just Transition.

€135m announced for Bog Rehabilitation & Retrofit Schemes under Jobs Stimulus Plan.

LOETB secure National SOLAS NZEB Training facility for the Midlands.



Under the Just Transition Fund the Midlands provisional letters of offer issued for the following:

Strand 1 – 16 projects and for a of total €1.2m

Strand 2 – 47 projects and for total of almost €30m



Minister Ryan announces Greenways Funding that will benefit the Midlands including:

- » Galway-Athlone – €8.1M
- » Daingean to Edenderry €3.1M
- » Grand Canal- Daingean to Lough Boora €1.6M



Midlands Region & Principal Town Profiles launched

Midlands Network of Co-working Facilities Directory 20/21 published

LOETB in partnership with Grow Remote and IDA Ireland launch RemoteWork Ready and Leading Remote Team online training



Under Enterprise Ireland's Enterprise Centre Fund, an Tánaiste announced funding of €451,327 for 7 Enterprise Centres & Hubs in the Midlands

Each receiving between €10k - €150k



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

1

Ensure that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy



**Action 1:**

Support the actions of the Regional Transition Team to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the acceleration of decarbonisation by Bord na Móna, including the submission of funding applications to Project Ireland 2040 funding schemes.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT) Steering Committee Members: Regional Enterprise Development Office, Cathaoirligh & Chief Executives of the Local Authorities of the wider Midlands, Bord na Móna, ESB, ICTU – Bord na Móna and ESB, Department of Environment, Climate & Communications, Oireachtas Members, Directors & Cathaoirligh of the Regional Assemblies, Office of Just Transition Commissioner

**WG1** – Education/Training/Research: Regional Skills Forum/ Local Enterprise Office (LEOs)/ Education Training Boards (ETBs)/Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) / Limerick IT/Carlow IT/GMIT/UL/NUI Galway/ Maynooth University/ESB Apprenticeship/National Construction Training Centre /Skillnets /CIF/ The Cube

**WG2** – Employment Generation Committee: IDA/Enterprise Ireland/IBEC/Regional Enterprise Development Office/LEOs/Bord na Móna/ESB/Regional Skills Forum/Chambers of Commerce / Regional Assemblies

**WG3** – Employment Continuity Pathways: Regional Enterprise Development Office/Bord na Móna/ESB/ ICTU/DEASP/Regional Skills Forum/ ETBs

**WG4** – Community Assistance Programme/Social Enterprise Interventions: Regional Enterprise Development Office/CARO/Local Development Companies/ Local Community & Development Committees, Public Participation Networks

**Timeframe for delivery:**

2020- 2025

**Final Status:**

Complete

## Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

### MRTT START

The START team provided technical assistance to the MRTT over the December 2019-October 2020 period through an SLA with Offaly County Council on behalf of the MRTT. The assistance provided included the development of:

- Regional Profile
- Midlands Engagement Process
- Future Employment & Skills Paper
- Midlands Pathway to Transition

The Midlands Pathway to Transition document provided guidance to the Working Groups as they developed their work plans was informed by the Midlands Engagement Process. The Midlands Pathway to Transition envisages three phases to Transition. The Midlands is currently in Phase 1, the initial transition period covering the early years of change, measures in this phase relate to the following objectives:

1. Mitigating redundancies and the effects of restructuring in short term
2. Assessing, securing and addressing peat related assets and legacies
3. Developing community resilience and adaptation
4. Enhancing public sector capacity and regional profile
5. Innovation, investment and research to realise new opportunities and sectors

### Midlands Engagement Process:

The Midlands Engagement Process commenced in May 2020, and invited communities, public and private sector bodies to register projects that could assist a positive transition in affected communities and related groups in the wider Midland Region. Over 154 projects were registered, of which 101 progressed to applications to the Just Transition Fund (JTF).

The first strand of projects under the JTF received provisional letters of offer in September 2020, while Strand 2 projects received letters of offer in November 2020. The details of the projects are in appendix 3.

### Just Transition Commissioner

The government appointed Mr. Kieran Mulvey as the first Just Transition Commissioner in November 2019. Since his appointment, the Commissioner has engaged with all regional stakeholders in line with his terms of reference, including the Midlands Regional Transition Team. The First Progress Report of the Commissioner was published in May 2020. The report made a number of recommendations, including the restructuring of the MRTT and the establishment of working groups. The second progress report of the Commissioner was published in November 2020.

### Working Groups

The working groups were convened in October 2020 and have been tasked with the following which will continue into 2021 and beyond, to:

- Develop an annual work programme for delivery
- Progress the measures/actions of the Midlands Pathway to Transition
- Assist projects registered through the Midlands Engagement Process
- Contribute to the development of the Territorial Plan

**Action 2:**

Support the development and designation of Portlaoise as a “Low Carbon Town”.

The pilot project of Portlaoise as a low carbon town will be managed by Laois County Council, which was successful in securing funding under the first call of the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF). This pilot project will serve as a roadmap for the development and rollout of similar low carbon initiatives in county towns of Longford, Offaly and Westmeath.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Laois County Council, in partnership with Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Climate Action Regional Office (CARO), Downtown Portlaoise, ESB Networks, Midland Energy Agency and Transport Infrastructure Ireland. Further roll-out initiated by Longford, Westmeath and Offaly Local Authorities

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:**

**Project Value €2.7million of which €2million supported by Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)**

- Public lighting network in Portlaoise now substantially complete with 2,000 new energy efficient LEDs in place. (50% savings in energy and cost)
- Tenders received for provision of electric charging network (20no.) in core town centre area.
- Cycling infrastructure being rolled out including off road routes to schools
- Litter bins in town centre operated by solar panel

**Measuring the Carbon Footprint**

Siemens Advanta Consulting have been engaged by LCC to undertake the brief of measuring the carbon footprint (population 24,000) and providing a register of opportunities.

Preliminary findings indicate an annual emission of 89,000 tons p.a. from the following sectors

<b>Residential</b>	45,000 tons p.a.
<b>Commercial</b>	31,000 tons p.a.
<b>Transport</b>	12,000 tons p.a.
<b>Public Utilities</b>	1,000 tons p.a.

Opportunities to reduce the footprint include

- Five Wind Turbines will provide 34% reduction
- 500,000 m<sup>2</sup> of PV panels on rooftops will lead to an 18% reduction
- Retrofitting of 2,100 homes (€42 million) will reduce footprint by 19%
- Transport Electric vehicles 1% (replacing 5% of car stock)
- On aggregate a **72% reduction** if all measures were adopted.

Work progressing on value of carbon sinks including value of boglands in the county.

**Action 3:**

Develop and implement County Climate Change Adaptation Strategies including the identification of regional actions and economic opportunities.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Midlands Sub Regional Adaptation Steering Group, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Local Authority Climate Adaptation Teams, Midland Energy Agency, SEAI, and Climate Action Regional Office (CARO)

**Final Status:**

Complete

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:**

In October 2020, the local government sector submitted a progress report of adaptation efforts from across all local authorities since the preparation of the strategies. The Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO) continue to play an active role in supporting local authorities to establish supportive frameworks to enable positive climate action efforts and in facilitating collaboration across local authorities and with other stakeholders to deliver effective climate action. The CARO have also developed the Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme. This programme, with its six unique pillars has been developed in response to action 150 of the Climate Action Plan which calls for *'the development of Local Authority climate action leadership and capacities'*. The training plan identifies and targets the short to longer terms training needs of local authorities arising from their enhanced climate action role, responsibilities and commitments to deliver as part of the Local Government Sector.

Work continues around climate action across all functions within the local authorities in accordance with the adaptation strategies and in meeting the commitments of the local authority climate action charter.

The roll out of the Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme will commence in Q1 2021.

**Action 4:**

Complete a feasibility study into the development of an energy park at a Bord na Móna cutaway peatland site.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Bord na Móna, Local Authorities

**Timeframe for delivery:**

Revised to Q4 2021

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:**

Work started on the project and limited progress was made in 2020, considerable work is required to complete the feasibility phase of the project. Progress in 2020 was impacted for a variety of reasons mainly linked to the current COVID-19 crisis and mitigation measures required to deal with that situation. A revised programme has been planned for 2021 and it is expected to complete this phase of the project before the end of 2021.

In 2020 it was hoped to make progress on the current technical and regulatory barriers to co-location to allow more detailed design considerations to be assessed on the selected site(s). Decisions were to be made on the most suitable demand to be located within the energy park proposal, as this would allow more focused site suitability assessments to be completed. It was planned that once the various strands of site suitability assessments were completed, a preferred location could be selected to pursue a more detailed design, with a view to finalizing the initial feasibility phase and devising a planning strategy for the proposed development.

- Finalise lay-out for generating assets on all selected sites
- Conclude initial phase of site suitability assessments and identify the most suitable demand centres to be located on the selected sites
- Progress design of co-located demand centres within the selected sites
- Progress site screening to select preferred site for more focused and detailed assessment
- Conclude working group on co-location and integrate proposed solutions into overall site design

One of the key aspects of the project is to make progress on resolving the current technical and regulatory barriers to the co-location a number of generating assets on the same site. This is required to allow more detailed design considerations to be assessed on the selected site(s). Whereas some progress was made on this matter in the early part of 2020, the matter was not progressed sufficiently in 2020 to allow the target level of progress to be achieved on the project in 2020.

Progress was made on assessing the range of demand centres that could be located on each site and this work was well progressed during 2020. Three sites are currently under assessment, however, there were several reasons for the delays in this aspect of the project but the lack of progress on the technical and regulatory barriers to co-location played a role as did aspects of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Due to some of the issues outlined above limited progress was made on the provisional design of the layout of the demand centres on selected sites and the plan to complete final screening of the site to select a preferred location has not yet taken place. The project milestones identified for 2020, which were not achieved will be moved in to 2021, with the intention of selecting a preferred location for the next phase of the development of the project in 2021. However, it must also be emphasised that progress must be made on the regulatory and technical barriers to collation of generating assets if the 2021 milestones are to be progressed. As this involves multiple agencies, further discussions as to how best to overcome the challenges arising due to the continuing COVID-19 crisis is required.

**Action 5:**

Complete a feasibility study into the potential for aquaculture on Bord na Móna cutaway Peatlands.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Bord na Móna, Local Authorities, BIM, Bord Bia

**Final Status:**

Actions commenced but requires further work

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:**

The AQUAMÓNA system is a multi-trophic fish farm trial being undertaken at Mountlucas wind farm in Co. Offaly. The key aim of the project is to assess suitability of cutaway peatlands for aquaculture production.

The system designed and utilised for the trial is based on similar systems in use in North America for species such as catfish, bluegill, perch etc. Following feasibility assessment aquaculture experts recommended design changes to peatland system to ensure year-round commerciality. Any modifications would require testing and a further feasibility study to assess the effect. This process will likely take 2-3 years.

**Final outcome achieved:**

The impacts of COVID-19 on the fisheries and aquaculture food systems vary, and the situation is rapidly evolving. In aquaculture, there is growing evidence that unsold produce will result in an increase of live fish stocks, and therefore higher costs for feeding as well as greater risk of fish mortalities. The fish sector is still subject to indirect impacts of the pandemic through changing consumer demands, market access or logistical problems related to transportation and border restrictions.

Bord na Móna are exploring with Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) the utilisation of live aquaculture site as base for innovation hub in midlands as research and development site.

**Action 6:**

Complete a study into the potential to produce herb products on Bord na Móna cutaway peatlands.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Bord na Móna, Local Authorities, Enterprise Ireland

**Final Status:**

Complete

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:**

A business case was approved by senior management to proceed to a commercial scale trial, growing medicinal herbs on 40 hectares, drying and processing them by refurbishing an existing building to a food grade processing facility.

All milestones were achieved, 1.2 million plants were grown on 40 hectares, drying and processing equipment was procured and commissioned, the facility and growing site are now organically certified. Bord na Móna employees were retained, upskilled and redeployed into this new industry.

**Final outcome achieved:**

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the project, as raw materials, plant material, fertiliser, and expertise were planned to be sourced from mainland Europe and the UK. Delays were experienced, consultants could not travel and carry out site visits. Contingency plans were invoked to use Irish suppliers, reducing reliance on international suppliers. However, delays were experienced, and some impacts were recorded.

This project will continue into 2021, and plans are in place to secure more orders for dried, cut herbs for the wholesale market in Europe.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

## 2

## Leverage opportunities in big data and data analytics from iLOFAR

**Action 1:**

Establish STREAM Creative Suite in BIRR.

Services will include hot desk facilities and office space, IT training facilities and training, industry focused events, and industry-led research projects (undergraduate and post-graduate). Connecting STREAM Creative Suite with Athlone Institute of Technology, Irish Manufacturing Research Centre (IMR) in Mullingar and co-working facilities throughout the region will create a new and dynamic hub for research and economic development in the Midlands. It will harness cutting edge research, advanced manufacturing, industry led training initiatives, enterprising start-ups and investment throughout the Midland Region.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Offaly Design & Innovation CLG, Offaly Local Authority, LEO Offaly, iLOFAR Consortium, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Skillnet Ireland

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:**

- Branding Revisions
  - » STREAM BIRR Branding revision was complete
- Development of STREAM BIRR's facilities
  - » STREAM BIRR's four offices were occupant ready by the end of February 2020.
- Launch event for STREAM BIRR
  - » Website and Social media channels established for STREAM BIRR in 2020.
  - » Further launch events delayed because of the impact of COVID-19.
- Job Creation Targets
  - » Over the 3-year period, this initiative is projected to create 60 jobs. This includes direct jobs i.e. those renting in STREAM BIRR and indirect jobs i.e. those that have availed of the services and as a result set up/expanded their own business.
  - » STREAM BIRR continues to provide hot desk and dedicated desk services to relevant clientele. Networking and Training events continue to be impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.
- Capacity Building Targets
  - » Over the 3-year period, 360 people will receive training in Data Analytics and/or related subjects.
  - » STREAM BIRR remains committed to developing specified capacity building targets in relation to the provision of data analytics training and/or related subjects.
  - » Networking and Training events continue to be impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.
- Self-Sustainability
  - » STREAM BIRR will be financially viable in Year 4.
  - » STREAM BIRR is committed to being financially viable in Year 4.



**Final outcome achieved:**

As a result of COVID-19 and government restrictions, the usage of STREAM BIRR for hot desking and office provision purposes was severely impacted. Individuals and companies that planned to work in the facility had to reassess their plans and work from home. STREAM BIRR is experiencing an increase in footfall and usage of the facility from this Autumn onwards because of changes in restrictions in relation to 'essential workers.

- COVID-19 has resulted in a reduction of desks available in our coworking environments as we allow for safe social distancing practice resulting in a significant income reduction.
- STREAM BIRR has begun the process of furnishing the open space with hot desking and meeting pod facilities so that we can increase numbers using the facility safely.
- Training and networking events that would have been booked have all been cancelled resulting in a significant income reduction.
- STREAM BIRR has experienced a significant increase in costs as facilities adopt new procedures to ensure a safe COVID-19 free environment that is safe for all tenants and staff.

**Action 2:**

Connect the BIRR Creative Suite with AIT, IMR Mullingar and regional Business Innovation Hubs to create a formal network of linked e-Hubs to leverage economies of scale in research, advanced manufacturing, collaboration, training and funding applications.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Offaly Design & Innovation CLG Network of Innovation Hubs, Midlands Local Authorities, Midlands LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, IMR, AIT

**Timeframe for delivery:**

Q4 2020

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:**

The Directors are discussing options with two Consortium Members (Trinity College Dublin and Athlone IT) to pilot under-graduate residentials at STREAM BIRR.

- At present, a PhD student, Jeremiah Scully (AIT), in a joint venture with Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS) is working on Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) methods to perform near real-time classification of Solar Radio Bursts (SRBs) from the I-LOFAR data. Prof Peter Gallagher and Dr. Eoin Carley from DIAS are co-supervising along with Dr. Ronan Flynn and Dr. Mark Daly from AIT. In addition, they have just secured funding for another PhD student to work alongside Jeremiah on a related AIT/DIAS/I-LOFAR project. The supervision team is the same as for Jeremiah. In the future, there may be the possibility of adding a third PhD student to the mix but that is still in the application stage.
- STREAM BIRR is actively onboarding residents to the floor for hot desking, dedicated desking, and meeting room facilities.
- The Directors of Offaly Innovation & Design Centre CLG will ensure ongoing interaction with enterprise, education, and relevant agencies/stakeholders to promote and develop STREAM BIRR.
  - » STREAM BIRR facilitated discussions between industry and one of the members of the consortium of I-LOFAR. The outcome of this discussion appears promising and is continuing.
  - » STREAM BIRR has a workplan in place that will progress the building of relationships with enterprise, education and relevant agencies and stakeholders. This workplan has developed and changed because of the impact of COVID-19.
  - » STREAM BIRR continues to liaise with LEO Offaly and collaborate to provide supports for their clients as required. This itself has been a useful exercise as we use this platform to promote and create awareness of the facility available in Birr.
- Training and industry events will predominantly target businesses in the Midlands but will be open for businesses in the other regions.
  - » COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on the provision, collaboration and participation in training and industry events.
  - » As we move to the provision of digital events, STREAM BIRR will follow suit in 2021.

**Action 3:**

Identify sites that are suitable for data centre development and complete a feasibility study and planning designations.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Bord na Móna, Local Authorities, working with REP Steering Committee

**Timeframe for delivery:**

Revised to Q4 2021

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

### Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

Work started on the project and limited progress was made in 2020, considerable work is required to complete the feasibility phase of the project. Progress in 2020 was impacted for a variety of reasons mainly linked to the current COVID-19 crisis and mitigation measures required to deal with that situation. A revised programme has been planned for 2021 and it is hoped to complete this phase of the project before the end of 2021.

In 2020 it was hoped to make progress on the current technical and regulatory barriers to co-location to allow more detailed design considerations to be assessed on the selected site(s). Decisions were to be made on the most suitable demand to be located within the energy park proposal, as this would allow more focused site suitability assessments to be completed. It was planned that once the various strands of site suitability assessments were completed, a preferred location could be selected to pursue a more detailed design, with a view to finalizing the initial feasibility phase and devising a planning strategy for the proposed development including the following:

- Finalise lay-out for generating assets on all selected sites
- Conclude initial phase of site suitability assessments and identify the most suitable demand centres to be located on the selected sites
- Progress design of co-located demand centres within the selected sites
- Progress site screening to select preferred site for more focused and detailed assessment
- Conclude working group on co-location and integrate proposed solutions into overall site design

One of the key aspects of the project is to make progress on resolving the current technical and regulatory barriers to the co-location a number of generating assets on the same site. This is required to allow more detailed design considerations to be assessed on the selected site(s). Whereas some progress was made on this matter in the early part of 2020, the matter was not progressed sufficiently in 2020 to allow the target level of progress to be achieved on the project in 2020.

Progress was made on assessing the range of demand centres that could be located on each site and this work was well progressed during 2020.

Three sites are currently under assessment and the final layout of potential generation assets on only one of the proposed sites. There were a number of reasons for the delays in this aspect of the project but the lack of progress on the technical and regulatory barriers to co-location played a role as did aspects of the COVID-19 restrictions.

### Final outcome achieved:

Due to some of the issues outlined above limited progress was made on the provisional design of the layout of the demand centres on selected sites and the plan to complete final screening of the site to select a preferred location has not yet taken place.

The project milestones identified for 2020, which were not achieved will be moved on to 2021, with the intention of selecting a preferred location for the next phase of the development of the project in 2021. However, it must also be emphasised that progress must be made on the regulatory and technical barriers to collation of generating assets if the 2021 milestones are to be progressed. As this involves multiple agencies, further discussions as to how best to overcome the challenges arising due to the continuing COVID-19 crisis is required.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

3

Position and support the growth of the Midlands as an advanced manufacturing centre of excellence

**Action 1:**

Promote and support the growth of the Midlands as an advanced manufacturing centre of excellence.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Includes IMR, AIT, Abbott Diagnostics, Grant Engineering, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, LEO Westmeath and Regional Skills Forum

**Timeframe for delivery:**

Q4 2019

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

**Expected Completion Date:**

Q1 2021

Following a procurement process, consultants were appointed to develop an action plan to promote the Midlands as an Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence. The Steering Committee and the working group has received representation from industry and enterprise agencies across the region. It is anticipated that the action plan will be published in Q1 2021 and will inform the development of the future iteration of the Regional Enterprise Plan.

<b>Action 2:</b>
Complete feasibility study and concept development for a Midlands Technology Campus at AIT.
<b>Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:</b>
AIT, working with regional stakeholders, including enterprise agencies, IMR, industry
<b>Timeframe for delivery:</b>
Q4 2019
<b>Final Status:</b>
Action commenced but requires further work
<b>Expected Completion Date:</b>
Q1 2021
<b>Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:</b>
Tecnovus is very successfully and professionally progressing the MTC Feasibility project. A Midlands Technology Campus Project Group at AIT is driving and supporting the project. Technology Subgroups are also working on the project. The initial focus of the Feasibility project was on Background Research (Government/agency policy, national infrastructure), and the work of the Technology Subgroups on 'Grand Challenges facing industry'.
<b>Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:</b>
While the COVID-19 situation initially constrained contacting stakeholders, extensive staff and industry surveys and consultation are currently underway. The MTC Feasibility project will be complete in Q1 2021.
<b>Action 3:</b>
As part of the Skills for Growth and EXPLORE initiatives the Regional Skills Forum (RSF) will assist local manufacturing enterprises to identify and address their skills needs to ensure that the Region has the effective use of skills to support economic and social prosperity. Once skills needs have been identified, the RSF will link companies with the education and training providers best suited to responding to identified skills need.
<b>Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:</b>
RSF, and partners including EI, IDA, ETB, IMR, Skillnet Ireland and DEASP
<b>Final Status:</b>
Complete

**Action 4:**

Build on the success of the Regional Engenuity Programme through further roll-out.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

LEOs, Regional Skills Forum, Skillnet Ireland & ETBs

**Timeframe for delivery:**

2020

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

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

The Engenuity Engineering Midlands cluster has employed a Cluster Manager to develop and deliver tailored supports for the cluster, to enhance the competitiveness and resilience of member companies to respond to changing market challenges and opportunities arising from COVID-19 and Brexit. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Network. Physical events have been cancelled as have international trade events planned. The strategy for Engenuity has been reviewed and updated to provide results and tangible benefits for members.

During COVID-19 the work of the cluster has progressed through virtual meetings, with some actions deferred to 2021.

The Cluster Manager is currently focusing on a programme which includes:

- Business development and marketing research
- B2B and supply chain opportunities within the network
- Deliver R&D collaboration between cluster members,
- Utilising the advantage of the Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR) and Athlone IT.
- Engagement with educators (third level and further educators involved in apprenticeships) to address the shortfall of engineering talent in the Midlands.
- Encourage women in engineering as part of cluster growth.

**Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:**

The Engenuity Cluster currently works with approximately 25 members from across the region and has developed a suite of marketing material and has established panels for CE Marking and ISO training to assist members. An external contractor has been hired to create a suite of sales videos which can be used by Engenuity members to sell their companies online as individual firms and as part of the Network. A collaborative sales presentation is also being prepared to sell the benefits of Engenuity and to create awareness of the multiple capabilities, machine list and capacity that is available across all Engenuity members.

An Executive Committee is in place which has representatives from key stakeholders across the region: Local Enterprise Offices; Westmeath; Longford; Laois and Offaly. Enterprise Ireland; IDA Ireland; Irish Manufacturing Research Centre; Midlands Regional Skills Forum; Education & Training Board in Westmeath, Longford; Athlone IT and the Programme Manager of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

4

Enhance the collective offering of the Midlands as a place to live, work and invest in

**Action 1:**

Develop, resource and deliver a digital marketing strategy for the region, building on the work already undertaken to develop <https://www.midlandsireland.ie>

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Local Authorities, State Agencies, local industry and other regional partners

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

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

A proposal seeking support for the development and implementation of a cross sectoral 'destination platform' promoting the Midlands as a destination of choice in which to live, work and invest through <https://www.midlandsireland.ie> was submitted to the Just Transition Fund by Laois County Council on behalf of the four Midlands Local Authorities.

It is envisaged that project components would include the development, resourcing and delivery of a destination platform marketing strategy encompassing content development for use domestically and internationally and numerous events highlighting the attractiveness of the Midland Region. The development and delivery of an integrated destination platform will serve to best position the region and realise new economic opportunities and maximise the region's considerable tourism strengths as identified in the report of the Just Transition Commissioner – Clean Energy Region, visitor destination of choice, well connected second site location with access to talent, including networking/ dialogue forums; encouraging our commuter base to work from the region, increasing the spend within our local communities, reducing emissions, realising alternative employment opportunities for the communities directly impacted by the decarbonisation programme.

**Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:**

The ability to realise the opportunities identified rests with the outcome of the JTF evaluation process.

**Action 2:**

Establish and market a network of 'remote working' hubs and enterprise landing space in the region that will form the basis of a value proposition to be developed and presented to companies in Dublin, Galway and elsewhere interested in second sites/remote working sites in the Midlands Region. Advance the formation of proposals for the development of new hubs as appropriate.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Local Authorities, IDA Ireland, LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, AIT

**Timeframe for delivery:**

2020

**Final Status:**

Work has commenced and ongoing

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

The Midlands Network of Co-working Facilities (MNCF) held quarterly meetings to progress the agreed annual work programme. The second iteration of the MNCF directory was published in July 2020 to promote and market the facilities collectively for remote working, e-learning gates and as enterprise landing space in the region.

COVID-19 has impacted the facilities enormously and the impact was collated nationally through National Association of Community Enterprise Centres (NACEC) and Enterprise Ireland developed a programme to mitigate impacts which closed in September. The announcements are expected in the coming weeks.

The MNCF members have also established county level Grow Remote Chapters to promote awareness of services available in the facilities.

To realise the 'Powering the Regions' objective of 600 desks in the Midlands, a number of applications were submitted to the JTF for individual facilities to support impacted communities. An application was also submitted by Laois County Council for a Business Development Manager for the MNCF and we await the outcome of the evaluation process. Under Strand 1, JTF announcements, related to projects of less than €100,000, Athlone Remote Working has received assistance to undertake a feasibility for the development of a facility within Athlone urban area.

Laois County Council received funding under REDF to develop The Cube Innovation Hub in Portlaoise Town Centre. In September 2020 Edgeworthstown based CoWorx received grant assistance and its development is progressing working towards a June 2021 opening date.

**Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:**

The members of the MNCF continue to support each other in development and collaboration and are engaging with the Department of Community and Rural Development as the development of a national database of hubs gets underway. The network will continue to operate in future iterations of the MREP.



<b>Action 3:</b>
Development of County and Regional data sets to support value proposition for the Region.
<b>Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:</b>
Secretariat for Regional Enterprise Plan, Midland Local Authorities, LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, AIT, ETBs
<b>Timeframe for delivery:</b>
2019
<b>Final Status:</b>
<p>Complete</p> <p>A regional profile and a suite of town profiles have been developed, showcasing what each of the principal towns across the Midland Region has to offer a business, whether it be a start-up or an established business, or those considering the development of a second site outside of the congested and expensive coastal cities.</p> <p>The profiles have been prepared for the Midland Region, and the principal towns of Athlone, Longford, Mullingar, Portlaoise and Tullamore, providing a snapshot of key considerations of when establishing a new base.</p> <p>The profiles highlight the centrality of the region, ease of access to airports and ports and an ability to serve both national and international markets with ease. Specific data relates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to the young, dynamic and talented labour force</li> <li>• the Midlands Network of Co-working Facilities (MNCF), which offer a landing space option and a base for those wishing to work remotely and 'beat the commute';</li> <li>• price comparability in terms of living costs such as renting / buying a home and childcare costs,</li> <li>• quality of life attractions, there are many down-time options, whether it be the arts, sports or pursuing the great outdoors</li> </ul> <p>The development of these datasets was supported by the regional LEOs and the profiles have been shared with regional stakeholders including Chambers of Commerce.</p>
<b>Action 4:</b>
Identify, scope, develop and promote available greenfield and brownfield sites as potential enterprise landing spaces.
<b>Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:</b>
Local Authorities, LCDs, LEOs, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Regional Chambers of Commerce, Ibec
<b>Timeframe for delivery:</b>
2019-2020
<b>Final Status:</b>
<p>Action commenced but requires further work</p> <p>Identification of suitable sites ongoing by Local Authorities and funding applications submitted as appropriate.</p>

**Action 5:**

Identify the cultural assets and creative resources that can be used to help improve places that the region's citizens view as important to community living and daily experiences.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Local Authorities, LEOs, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Regional Chambers of Commerce, Ibec

**Timeframe for delivery:**

2020

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

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

Several projects are being delivered across the region with support from Project Ireland 2040 funds and matched funding from Local Authorities and associated partners. Such developments include library developments in Edgeworthstown and Portlaoise and many public realm projects in towns and villages throughout the region.

**Action 6:**

Strengthen collaboration and alignment around regional promotion by establishing 'Team Midlands', comprising regional stakeholders including Local Authorities, Enterprise Agencies, and private sector representatives. Team Midlands will ensure that up to date information and relevant testimonies are readily available, better aligned and coordinated, and capable of being mobilised efficiently, such that a robust value proposition for the region is presented to companies considering investing in the region in support of the enterprise agencies.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Regional Steering Committee, working with LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, AIT, ETBs, Regional Skills Forum, Ibec and others

**Timeframe for delivery:**

2020

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

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

Suite of marketing materials developed, however COVID-19 impacted on the ability to target potential second site companies.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

5

## Strengthen the attractiveness of the Midlands as a destination to visit



### Action 1:

The Regional Tourism and Heritage Officer Network will identify collaborative projects for development under Project Ireland 2040 funding streams, in support of Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands propositions.

### Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Local Authorities, Fáilte Ireland and other State Agencies

### Timeframe for delivery:

2020

### Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work

### Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

#### Platforms for Growth:

Fáilte Ireland's current Investment Strategy "Platforms for Growth – A Programme for Investment 2019 – 2025" identified several Innovation Platforms to inform future product development investments required to deliver on our core strategic objectives. Capital investment programme is worth €150 million. This platform is currently at stage 3 of 5 which is final evaluation stage for decisions. Currently two proposals from the Midlands are under evaluation at Stage 3 in the process.

#### Greenways

An allocation of €63.5m has been committed to Greenway development for 2021. In Co Offaly this investment will provide for the extension of the Grand Canal Greenway from Daingean to Edenderry, meaning that by the end of next year it will be possible to cycle the Greenway the whole way from Edenderry to Lough Boora, over 50km worth of cycleway. This funding will also be used for refurbishment of the Longford Canal with improved infrastructure being provided along this cycleway.

To further support the development of Greenways, Fáilte Ireland in partnership with the CCMA undertook research with Mayo County Council and Waterford City and County Council regarding the development of their respective Greenways; Fáilte Ireland have researched and prepared a case study about the Danube Greenway and prepared a baseline audit of the planned development for Greenways throughout Ireland's Ancient East over the coming years.

The findings were presented to the Tourism Co-ordination Steering Group in February and, at that meeting, five Greenways in Ireland's Ancient East were prioritised including the Royal and Grand Canals for activation and development support during 2021.

### The Safety Charter for Tourism and Hospitality Business

The COVID-19 Safety Charter is a Government-endorsed initiative to reinforce confidence in domestic and overseas visitors in tourism businesses. The COVID-19 Safety Charter is designed to give comfort and reassurance to employers, employees and customers that your business is ready to re-open safely.

Number of businesses across the Midlands that are COVID-19 compliant:

Co. Laois	49 businesses
Co. Offaly	46 businesses
Co. Westmeath	74 businesses
Co. Longford	21 businesses

### Adaptation Funding

The €26m COVID-19 Adaptation Fund for tourism and hospitality businesses was announced as part of the July stimulus package. The Adaptation Fund is now closed to new applications.

Co. Laois	9 application processed and paid	€44,000 paid in total
Co. Offaly	16 application processed and paid	€71,720 paid in total
Co. Westmeath	23 application processed and paid	€109,031 paid in total
Co. Longford	5 application processed and paid	€12,328 paid in total

### Regional Food and Drink Strategy

Representatives from Fáilte Ireland's Food Team, IAE and IHH are involved in the consultation and are submitting feedback to the Draft Strategy.

### Destination Towns Funding Scheme

Fáilte Ireland's Destination Towns scheme is funded under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy with the aim of driving sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector and higher revenue and job creation around Ireland. Up to €500,000 per Local Authority was made available through an evaluation process by Fáilte Ireland to boost the attractiveness and tourism appeal of towns nationwide. Funding was awarded this year and the projects will be delivered by March 2022. Towns funded in the Midlands: Portlaoise – €500,000, Athlone – €500,000, Birr – €412,500, Longford – €500,000

### IHH Web Development Scheme

Website Improvement Programme is a training and investment programme to help visitor attractions and activity providers in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands to win more customers by improving their websites. Investment grants from €3,000 up to €30,000 were awarded to 34 Midlands businesses.

**Action 2:**

Support Fáilte Ireland in the delivery of and implementation of visitor experience development plans (VEDP's) under Irelands Ancient East and Irelands Hidden Heartlands brands. The first plan, 'Tale of Two Worlds' has been created by public and private sector working together. The plan focuses delivery of the County Tourism Action Plans by the Local Authorities. Fáilte Ireland will work with Local Authorities on agreed county specific tourism projects for Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Fáilte Ireland, Local Authorities, Waterways Ireland, OPW, Coillte

**Timeframe for delivery:**

2020

**Final Status:**

Complete

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:****Business Supports Clinics**

12 tourism business across the four midlands counties availed of Fáilte Irelands business support clinics through September and October. These were financial and operational reviews for businesses in the region covering topics such as HR, debt management, recruiting costs and asset utilisation. These clinics were 1.5-hour face to face clinics with finance mentors (virtual option too). Businesses were provided with a Short Action Plan Report immediately after the clinic with identification of critical areas that need immediate support.

**Houses and Gardens Experience Development Programme**

Five tourism business from the Midlands participated on this bespoke 15-month Great Houses & Gardens Experience Development Programme delivered industry commitments to enhance visitor experiences including new and improved saleable experiences for leisure and incentive markets and improved audience engagement skills through Abbey Theatre programme. Businesses also attended a best practice benchmarking learning journey to the UK.

**Slieve Bloom Experience Development Programme**

Phase 1 of the Mountain Bike Trails development in the Slieve Bloom are open. Subsequent phases are being developed through collaboration between Fáilte Ireland, Coillte and the local authorities with most of the funding coming though the Government's Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RDDF) which will create four national trail centres across the country.

Fáilte Ireland through a strategic partnership with The National Parks and Wildlife Service are also supporting the developing of a Visitor Experience Plan for the Slieve Bloom Nature Reserve as well as the wider locality. This report and recommendations are due in 2021.

To support ongoing capital investments and increased awareness of the Slieve Bloom Fáilte Ireland has developed a suite of supports developed for all those engaged in tourism in the Slieve Bloom and wider geographic area.

50 businesses across Laois and Offaly have signed up to a modular programme between November and March 2021 and will gain insights Post COVID-19 and beyond for what motivates visitors to a destination and to be fully equipped to understand the value of tourism and visitors to the area.

**IHH Tourism Networks**

Businesses from the 'Midlands counties' are involved in the Mid-Shannon and Lough Derg Network.

**Action 3:**

Complete a study into the potential to develop Lough Boora Discovery Park into an Eco Tourism destination of national and international significance.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Bord na Móna, Offaly County Council

**Timeframe for delivery:**

Q4 2019

**Final Status:**

Complete

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:**

The Feasibility study commissioned by Offaly County Council and Bord na Móna is now complete, and a development plan of action for the site is underway with the support of Fáilte Ireland. The draft report has been circulated for final approval by steering group.

**Final outcome achieved**

While COVID-19 had a significant impact on operations, the site reopened in mid-June 2020. Several customer experience improvement initiatives identified in the operations review will be in progress in 2021.

**Action 4:**

Development and roll out of the Slieve Bloom Brand The brand will be used by the local business communities to promote the Slieve Bloom area for rural retreats, walks and mountain biking.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Laois and Offaly Local Authorities, Local Partnership Companies, Coillte, Communities of the Slieve Bloom

**Final Status:**

Complete

**Outline of work undertaken during 2020:**

The Slieve Bloom brand has been designed and the following digital items have been developed:

- Development of the Slieve Bloom Brand
- Brand guidelines
- Slieve Bloom Walking mapcards
- Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trailcards – Baunreagh and Kinnitty
- Driving Route Map
- Offaly Way and Slieve Bloom Way Maps

**Final outcome achieved**

<https://slievebloom.ie> reflects the new brand and all digital outputs are available for download from this site. Future efforts will be focused on building brand recognition.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

6

Harness the potential of the food and beverage industry in the Midlands



**Action 1:**

Develop a Regional Food Strategy to identify areas for cross-county collaboration, including the development and linking of food hubs and support for food producers, including artisan.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Bord Bia, LEOs, Local Authorities, Regional Rep from Hotel Federation and EuroToques, Regional Food Producers, AIT, Skillsnets, The Kitchens Mountmellick, Ferbane Food Campus

**Timeframe for delivery:**

2020

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

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

Consultation on the draft Regional Food Strategy is underway and it is anticipated it will be launched during 2021.

**Action 2:**

Develop the Midlands as a food and drink destination, capitalising on its local food and drink offerings and develop a Regional Food Story with Fáilte Ireland.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

Fáilte Ireland, Bord Bia, LEOs, Local Authorities

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

Addressed as part of the Regional Food Strategy

**Action 3:**

Establish a food learning network between food hubs, education providers, hospitality sector in the region to capture/identify best practice, share expertise, and fill gaps in provision through collaboration.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

LEOs, Local Authorities, AIT, The Kitchens Mountmellick, Ferbane Food Campus, Bord Bia

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

Addressed as part of the Food Strategy

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

7

Ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the region's economic potential and address upskilling requirements

**Action 1:**

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

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

RSF, and partners including EI, IDA Ireland, ETB, and DEASP

**Timeframe for delivery:**

2020

**Final Status:**

Action commenced but requires further work

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

This is an ongoing process working with companies across the region.

The Skills for Growth initiative is continuing through the facilitation of an online engagement form through each regional skills Forum website. In the absence of face-to-face audits, the online form allows the same process to be applied to ensure the business can maintain the engagement to submit skills needs for RSFM to respond to outcomes.

In addition, the Spotlight on Skills Project in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland has now also gone online and webinars will be facilitated regionally. The process online facilitates business developing their critical skills strategy with an online meeting then conducted with each RSFM to respond with outcomes based on needs identified by each company.



**Action 2:**

Double the number of participants on the EXPLORE programme over the 2018 figure. The EXPLORE programme is designed to address the need for enhanced digital skills among older workers in manufacturing sectors within the region.

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

ETB, Regional Skills Forum

**Final Status:**

Complete

This initiative will extend into mid-2021.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 and the inability to conduct onsite business consultations, it is being proposed regionally to run the EXPLORE programme where feasible again in 2021. The intention within the ETB's nationwide where this can be facilitated, is to specifically open to sectors which have been hugely impacted by COVID-19 - so where business can facilitate on site visits adhering to the guidelines EXPLORE will be offered.

**Action 3:**

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

**Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:**

RSF, HEIs

**Final Status:**

Complete

Springboard + & HCI Pillars – Given the announcement over the summer of funding for the available outcomes for approval of Springboard (a total of 331 approved nationally) and Pillar 1 (a total of 90 approvals nationally) are being promoting and commenced from September onwards.

Additional places, given the July stimulus package announced, extra modular courses are on offer from Jan 2021. In total around 2500 upskilling places were funded for the Midlands in 2020.

<b>Action 4:</b>
Support all actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan where linkages to Education and Training Providers are required.
<b>Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:</b>
RSF
<b>Timeframe for delivery:</b>
2020
<b>Final Status:</b>
Action commenced but requires further work
<b>Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:</b>
<p>Supports continued on all REP actions where linkage to educational and training providers are required. Collaboration of all partners within RSF has continued over COVID-19 where RSFM very much continued its work and activities but all conducted online since mid-March. The focus of supports highlighted business needs and skills specific to impacts of COVID-19.</p> <p>Each Region continues to work with SME's and Business regionally to identify and address skills needs where interventions specific to COVID-19 require development.</p>
<b>Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:</b>
<p>The RSF help support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Advanced Manufacturing Plan</li> <li>• The Food and Drink Strategy for the Midlands.</li> <li>• Scoping exercise on the Advanced Manufacturing campus in Athlone.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Action 5:</b></p>
<p>Communicate to employers the services available through Regional Skills Forum to assist with resolution of emerging skills needs.</p>
<p><b>Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:</b></p>
<p>RSF</p>
<p><b>Timeframe for delivery:</b></p>
<p>2020</p>
<p><b>Final Status:</b></p>
<p>Action commenced but requires further work</p>
<p><b>Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:</b></p>
<p>This is an ongoing service of the RSF.</p> <p>RSFM have continued to be open for business and support its efforts specifically based on impacts of COVID-19 through online communications channels since mid-March and continues.</p>
<p><b>Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:</b></p>
<p>Given the particular needs of business within each region a specific online campaign was developed by RSF to showcase the various supports available including all financial state funded opportunities as well as all available skills provision most of which was translated online and fully funded.</p> <p>In addition, the Regional Skills websites have facilitated a specific COVID-19 hub section and online portals to update and communicate using E-zines and Social Media.</p>

## 2. Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Local Enterprise Office activities and outcomes in the Midlands Region during 2020

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

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

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

### Enterprise Ireland

Powering the Regions is Enterprise Ireland's response to recent Government Regional Initiatives including the Future Jobs Ireland framework, the Regional Assemblies, the Regional Enterprise Plans and Project Ireland 2040. It provides an overarching national plan underpinned by nine regional specific plans, to grow and sustain jobs, and to expand the reach of the Enterprise Ireland client base in every county and region in Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland has identified the following initiatives for the Midlands region to scale and expand reach of our indigenous enterprise:

#### Building on Regional Strengths:

- Build upon the region's **STEM** capabilities (science, technology, engineering and maths). Leverage the data science opportunities of **Birr Castle's iLofar Project**, grow existing data analytics companies and develop start-ups.
- Focus on new opportunities in the **Low-Carbon Renewables** sector by supporting the Midlands Response Team, driving start-ups and upskilling to retain talent in the regions.
- Drive the Mid-East/Midlands as a **centre of excellence for advanced manufacturing** leveraging Irish Manufacturing Research, manufacturing companies and the region's third level institutes.
- Working with regional stakeholders, develop an **Innovation District in the Midlands** to enhance capability and drive economic growth. The Innovation District will house a co-working Hub and RDI capability for the **life sciences** sector.

### Enterprise Ireland Engagement with Midlands Regional Transition Team

In response to the job losses at Bord na Móna, Enterprise Ireland is actively engaged with the Midlands Regional Transition Team.

Working together the Team is:

- Pursuing funding opportunities and actions to mitigate the impact of the Bord na Móna job losses on the individuals concerned and the impact on the local and regional economy; and
- Positioning the region to develop alternative forms of employment, attract investment and maximise existing employment opportunities and resources.

A key policy objective identified for the Midlands transition is the development of enterprise capability in the region for green and sustainability initiatives. Under this heading Empower eco, a collaborative entity spearheaded by EI, AIT, BNM and others has been successful in attracting €1.1m from Just transition, BNM and others. Further funding support and structures to develop new enterprises and to strengthen capabilities in existing enterprises to create employment opportunities in this area is required. Potential activities for this objective include:

- Establishment of Green Accelerator (*Accelerate Green*), to work with SMEs and start-ups. Enterprise Ireland to provide advice and guidance on the design and implementation of an accelerator programme. (Noting that initial funding for the establishment of this incubator has been secured through the **Empower Eco** group under the Just transition fund).
- Establishment of a targeted investment fund *Accelerate Green* (€10m), co-financed by Enterprise Ireland, BNM and other bodies.

### REP and Powering the regions highlights

Development of Hub and Innovation Infrastructure throughout the Midlands in Line with the Regional enterprise process and EI powering the regions. Significant progress has been made in the midlands. EI is significantly involved in all these developments.

In 2020, 12,276 people were employed in Enterprise Ireland supported companies in the Midlands, down 0.6 from 2019.

### IDA Ireland

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

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

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

The Midlands Region includes the counties of Westmeath, Longford, Offaly and Laois. There are 44 IDA supported companies in the Midlands Region, employing 6,308 people in total at the end of 2020. The Region has been successful over a number of years in mobilising inward foreign direct investment (FDI), with employment levels in IDA client companies increasing every year since 2011.

There is a thriving, dynamic and innovative enterprise base in the Region, with an impressive range of companies across all industry sectors, but with particular strengths in Life Sciences, Technology, Global Business Services, International Financial Services and Engineering.

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

Reflecting the ambition of the Government's National Economic Recovery Plan, IDA Ireland's new Strategy 2021 - 2024 aims to target 800 investments and 50,000 new jobs with focus on five pillars – Growth, Transformation, Regions, Sustainability and Impact. Three hundred of these investments are targeted to be achieved in the Dublin region.

Stakeholders across the Region benefit from a collaboration approach to ensuring that the Midlands continues to meet the needs of both indigenous and overseas companies. In particular, the IDA Midlands Team have worked closely with the Regional Enterprise Plan over the past two years, with a number of notable successes.

The Midlands Region is very well positioned to continue to attract new FDI investment and grow employment in existing companies and IDA Ireland will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders and parties in the Region to achieve this objective.

Overall, there were 6,308 new jobs created in the Midlands region by the FDI sector during 2020.

### Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3. Achieving a Just Transition in Ireland's Regions

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

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

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

The Regional Enterprise Plan in the Midlands has supported the work of the Regional Transition team established in the Midlands to address the specific challenges posed by the transition to a low-carbon economy in that region, as envisaged under Action 162 of the Climate Action Plan 2019. During 2020, there was continued engagement between the Just Transition Commissioner and the Midland Regional Transition Team (MRTT). In addition, two calls for proposals under the Just Transition Fund, administered by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, have resulted in Strand 1 grant offers totaling €1.2m for 16 successful applicants, and Strand 2 grant offers totaling €27.8m for 47 projects, all to be implemented in the transitioning peatlands area<sup>1</sup>.

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

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

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

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

1. A detailed list of projects which received provisional letters of offer appears at Appendix 3.



# Appendix 1: Regional Funding approved for the Midlands supported by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 2020

## Regional Enterprise Development Fund

The Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) was launched in May 2017 with the overarching aim of driving enterprise development and job creation in each region throughout Ireland. Administered by Enterprise Ireland, it supports new collaborative and innovative initiatives that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the region/across regions, or nationally. Just under €100m has been approved across 68 projects nationally.

During 2020 the Midlands Region secured funding of €3,408,560 for two projects\*.

Project	Location	Description	Grant amount €
The Cube - Portlaoise Innovation Centre DAC	Laois	Incubation hub to develop a Low Carbon Centre of Excellence, to attract and develop companies with a low carbon focus.	2,050,560
Premier Lakelands Food Hub	Longford	Development of a state-of-the-art food hub and incubation space for micro scale food producers.	1,358,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>€3,408,560</b>

\*See the first Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan for details of Calls 1 & 2.

## Enterprise Centres Fund

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar TD, announced €451,327 in grants for 7 enterprise centres in the Midlands under Enterprise Ireland's Enterprise Centres Fund. Enterprise centres are embedded in communities in every county in the country. They provide space and training for entrepreneurs, allowing them to work remotely, access training and advice, and network with other business leaders.

### Approvals (For profit centres)

Applicant Name (Correct legal entity name)	County	Nuts III Region	Grant amount €
Blackgate Innovation Ltd t/a Vision 85	Portlaoise	Midlands	46,800
<b>Total</b>			<b>€46,800</b>

**Approvals (Not for profit centres)**

Applicant Name (Correct legal entity name)	County	Nuts III Region	Grant amount €
Athlone Community Development Association CLG	Westmeath	Midlands	82,600
Ferbane Business & Technology Park CLG	Offaly	Midlands	40,000
Midlands Innovation and Research Centre	Westmeath	Midlands	56,327
Offaly Innovation and Design Centre CLG	Offaly	Midlands	69,760
Portarlinton Enterprise Centre CLG	Laois	Midlands	67,840
Portlaoise Enterprise Centre	Laois	Midlands	88,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>€404,527</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>€451,327</b>

## Appendix 2: Statistical snapshot – Midlands

Constituent counties	Laois, Longford, Offaly & Westmeath	
Regional Population and change (1996-2016)	205,542 (1996): 292,301 (2016) increase of 86,759*	
Total in employment	140,200	
Labour Force participation rate	62.9%*	
% of Male employment (State)	54.3%	
% of Female employment (State)	45.7%	
Live Register at 31/12/20	14,032	
Unemployment rate	6.0%*	
Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment at 31/12/20	16,787	
Unemployment blackspots <sup>1</sup>	4 <sup>2</sup>	
Employed in Enterprise Ireland companies	220,613	
Total Employment outside Dublin in Enterprise Ireland companies	65%	
Jobs created in Enterprise Ireland companies <sup>3</sup>	16,496	
Job Losses in Enterprise Ireland companies <sup>4</sup>	17,368	
Net Change in Enterprise Ireland companies <sup>5</sup>	-872	
EI supported employment and number of client companies (2019 – 2020)	2019	2020
	Jobs: 12,343	Jobs: 12,276
	Companies: 258	Companies: 263
IDA supported employment & number of client companies (2019 - 2020)	2019	2020
	Jobs: 6,209	Jobs: 6,308
	Companies: 43	Companies: 44
New jobs created in 2020 by the IDA <sup>6</sup>	Over 20,000	
% of IDA investments to regional locations <sup>7</sup>	52%	
IDA net job created <sup>8</sup>	8,944	
LEO supported employment & number of client companies (2019 - 2020)	2019	2020
	Jobs: 335	Jobs: -72
	Companies: 827	Companies: 856

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

2. Unemployment blackspots in the Region: Longford (3) & Westmeath (1).

3. Enterprise Ireland End of Year Statement 2020

4. Enterprise Ireland End of Year Statement 2020

5. Enterprise Ireland End of Year Statement 2020

6. IDA Ireland Results for 2020

7. IDA Ireland Results for 2020

8. IDA Ireland Results for 2020

\* CSO Q4 2020 Labour Force Survey

## Appendix 3: Just Transition Fund Projects (Department of Environment, Climate and Communications)

### Stream 1

	Project Name	Lead Applicant	Counties impacted
1	Provision of Remote Working Hub and Training Facility: Moore Community Hall	Moore Community Council	Roscommon
2	Mide	Enterprise Ireland	Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath
3	Training Workshop	Ballycommon Telework and Training Centre CLG	Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath
4	Geopark and Biosphere Research Study	Green Offaly	Offaly
5	Umeras Peatlands Park: Design Study	Umeras Community Development	Kildare, Laois, Offaly
6	Athlone Co-Working Hub	Athlone Co-Working Hub (CWH)	East Galway, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon, Westmeath
7	Producing and Promoting Green Energy Birr and SW Offaly	Birr 20:20 Vision Company Limited	East Galway, North Tipperary, Offaly, Roscommon
8	Extension to Peatland Biodiversity Boardwalk 4 <sup>th</sup> Final Phase	Peatland Biodiversity Boardwalk Fourth Final Phase – Lullymore	Kildare, Offaly
9	Alektra: Feasibility Study Stage 2 PolySafe	Lumcloon Energy Limited RR Power Projects	Offaly Kildare, Laois, Longford, Offaly Westmeath
10	Lanesboro Anaerobic Digestion Facility: Feasibility Study	Longford County Council	Longford, Roscommon
11	West Offaly: Quality of Life, Place and Experience	Offaly Local Development Company	Offaly
12	Lough Ree Technology Cluster Study	FDT Consulting Engineers and PM Limited	Longford, Roscommon

## Stream 2

	Project Name	Lead Applicant	Counties impacted
1	A Brown to Green Jobs Transition to Eliminate Energy Waste in Midlands Homes	Hub Controls Ltd	All counties
2	Bord na Móna Employee Supports - Training and Upskilling Project	Bord na Móna	All counties
3	Bord na Móna Medicinal Herbs Project	Bord na Móna	All counties
4	Building Resilience and Adaptability in Primary School Children through STEM in Impacted Communities	Offaly County Council	Offaly
5	Climate Action Training and Mentoring Programme	Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office	All counties
6	Cloontuskert Ballyleague Bog Heritage Train	Roscommon County Council	Roscommon
7	Cloontuskert Ballyleague Visitor Centre and Organic Farm	Roscommon County Council	Roscommon
8	Connecting Communities with Peatlands	Irish Rural Link	All counties
9	Conservation and Pollination - Medieval Churches in Laois and Offaly	Laois County Council	Laois, Offaly
10	Digital Learning Hub - Longford	Longford Westmeath ETB	Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath
11	Edenderry Carbon Challenge: Feasibility Study	Edenderry Tidy Towns	Offaly
12	Employment Development Information Centre Transition Campus	Employment Development Information Centre Longford	Longford, Offaly, Roscommon, Westmeath
13	Empower Eco	Athlone Institute of Technology	All counties
14	Enablers of a Just Transition for Communities in the Midlands Region	University of Limerick - Centre for Environmental Research	All counties
15	Ferbane Food Campus and Innovation Centre	Ferbane Business and Technology Park CLG	Offaly
16	Green HQ for Offaly	Offaly Local Development Company and Green Offaly	Offaly
17	Ballinahown Village Hall Revitalisation Project	Ballinahown Community Development Ltd	Westmeath
18	Kinnegad Economic Enterprise Space	Westmeath County Council	Westmeath
19	Lanesboro Food Hub	Premier Lakelands Hub	Longford, Roscommon
20	Lanesborough Tourism Hub	Longford County Council	Longford, Roscommon
21	Littleton Labyrinth	Tipperary County Council	East Galway, Laois, North Tipperary
22	Lough Boora Discovery Park and Midlands Cycling Destination - Sustainable Connections 2020	Offaly County Council	All counties
23	Lough Boora Enhancement: Cycle Way and Feasibility Study – Industrial Art Space	Bord na Móna	All counties

24	Lough Ree Access for All	Lough Ree Access for All CLG	Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath
25	Lough Ree Distillery - Phase 2	Blacksmith Ventures Limited	Longford, Roscommon, Westmeath
26	Midland Bioenergy Development Project	Irish BioEnergy Association	All counties
27	Midlands <a href="https://ireland.ie/">https://ireland.ie/</a> Digital Roadmap	Laois County Council	Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath
28	Midlands Network of Co-working Facilities - Business Development	Laois County Council	Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath
29	Midlands Retrofit Growth	KORE Retrofit Ltd	All counties
30	Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park Greenway	Longford County Council	Longford, Roscommon
31	Pedestrian and Cycle Link – Killucan to Royal Canal	Westmeath County Council	Westmeath
32	Pulse Hub: Creation of Remote Working Hubs in Ballinasloe Town	Ballinasloe Area Community Development CLG	East Galway, Offaly, Roscommon, Westmeath
33	Real Leaf Farm	Galway Herb Farm Limited t/a Real Leaf Farm	Offaly
34	Regenerating Abbeyshrule for Technology, Tourism and Culture	The Yard Hub CLG	Longford
35	Renovation of the Harbour Building, Kilbeggan	Kilbeggan Grand Canal Harbour Amenity Co Ltd and Westmeath County Council	Westmeath
36	Rhode Green Energy Park	Offaly County Council	Offaly
37	Rhode Green Energy Park Integration Study	Newleaf	Offaly
38	Social Enterprise Exchange	The Cluster Centre	East Galway, Laois, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon, Westmeath
39	St. Joseph's Community Centre Development	Kilcormac Development Association	Offaly
40	Strategic Area Response Plan Implementation	Shannonbridge Action Group	East Galway, Offaly, Roscommon, Westmeath
41	Superhomes Midlands	Tipperary Energy Agency CLG	All counties
42	The Lir Project	Fergal Moran and Brian O'Carroll	Offaly, Roscommon, Westmeath
43	Traveller Community Enterprise and Social Farming Project	Offaly Traveller Movement	Offaly
44	Tullamore Enterprise Space and Infrastructure	Offaly Innovation and Design Centre CLG	Offaly

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