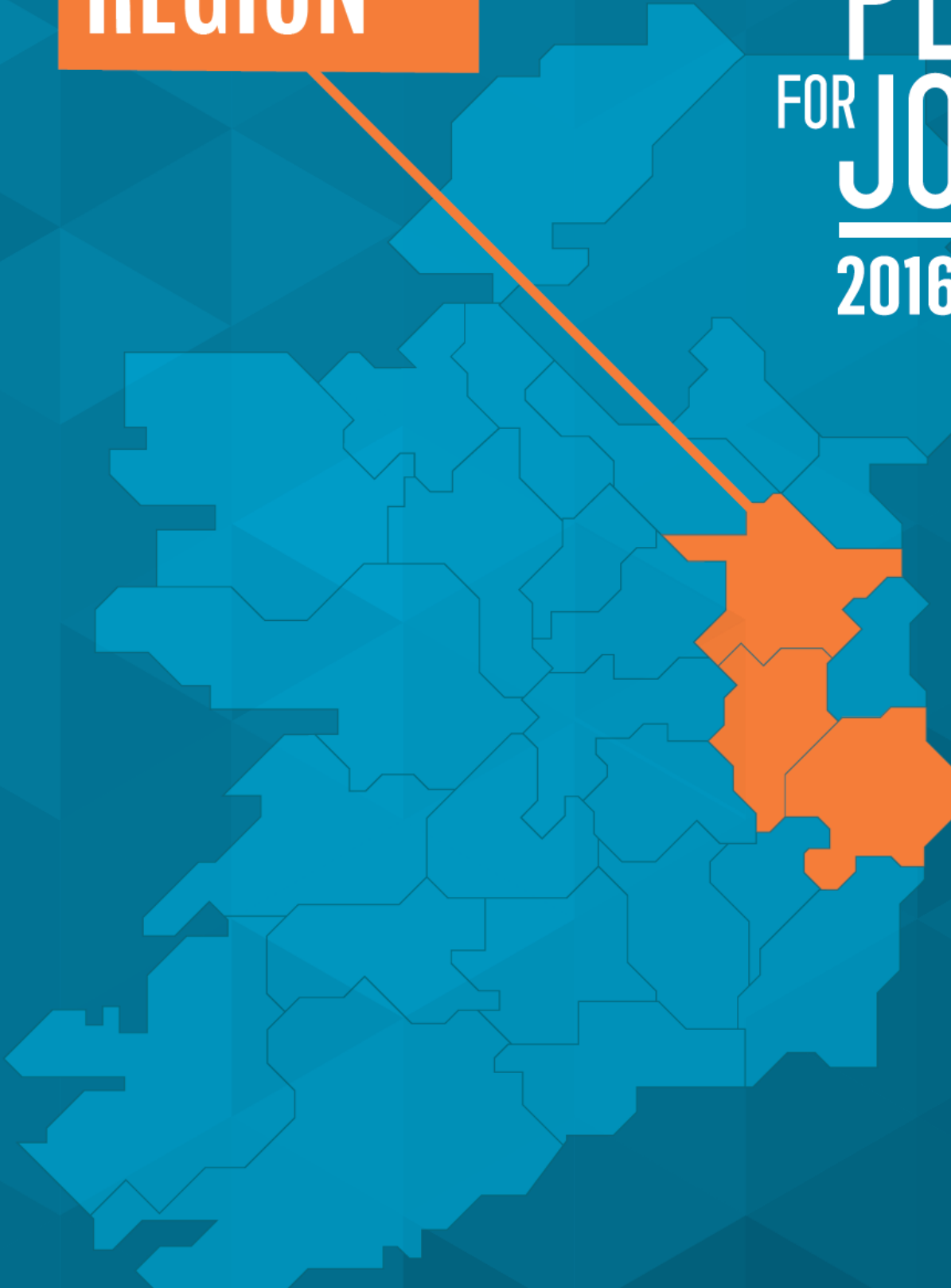


**MID EAST
REGION**

**ACTION
PLAN
FOR
JOBS**

2016-2017





Action Plan for Jobs: Mid East Region
2016 -2017

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Ministers' Foreword



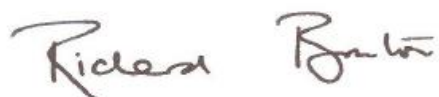
Since the Action Plan for Jobs process commenced in 2012, employment nationally has increased by over 135,000, net of reductions in public sector employment. While this represents good progress, not all regions are yet fully experiencing the benefits of economic recovery. The pace of progress in the regions – and especially those with the highest unemployment levels - needs to be accelerated through targeted supports for enterprise and job creation. Vibrant and competitive regions are important, not just from an economic perspective, but also from a societal point of view. Growing the economic base of regions supports social cohesion and provides opportunities for families to continue to live and work in their local communities.

To support enhanced enterprise growth and job creation in the regions, the Government will provide €250 million over five years to support the implementation of the locally developed Regional Action Plans. This includes the roll out of a five year, €150 million property investment programme by the IDA over the next five years and up to €100 million to be made available through Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices over the next five years, for innovative and collaborative proposals to support jobs creation across the regions.

All of the regions in Ireland have potential for economic growth and employment creation. It is critical that we focus on the potential within regions to position them as key contributors to Ireland's national growth and the creation of employment. Regions differ from each other in terms of potential, critical mass, stage of development, nature of sectoral strengths, skills profile and innovative capacity – elements that can drive or inhibit progress.

This Action Plan for Jobs focuses on the Mid East and covers the counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. The Plan has been developed on the basis of a series of consultations with stakeholders in the region, identifying particular strengths and opportunities in the region. Like the national Action Plan for Jobs, the Mid East APJ is a whole-of Government initiative, setting out a series of commitments on the part of public bodies, complemented by some actions from the private sector, which will support enterprise growth and job creation. Further actions will be added on an on-going basis, as new initiatives and commitments emerge, reflecting the dynamic nature of the new regional Action Plans. It is the cumulative effect of these measures - and the collaboration which they will bring about in their delivery - which will make a real and lasting impact on the jobs potential of the region.

While my Department has facilitated the compilation of this Action Plan based on the engagements with stakeholders in the Mid East, ownership of the Plan – and ensuring delivery of actions - rests with the people, businesses, and public sector bodies in the Mid East region.

Handwritten signature of Richard Bruton in black ink.

**Richard Bruton, T.D.,
Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation**

Handwritten signature of Damien English in black ink.

**Damien English, T.D.,
Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation**

KEY OBJECTIVES



EMPLOYMENT

Increase employment in the Mid East by 10 to 15% over the period to 2020



START-UPS

Achieve an increase of at least 25% in the number of start-ups in the region, and 25% improvement in the survival rate of new businesses



CLUSTERS

Support clustering around the region's sectoral strengths in International Services and High-Tech Manufacturing



FILM INDUSTRY

Further develop the region's potential as a hub for indigenous and international film production



RDI

See a substantial step-up in the number of enterprises in the region using RDI to win new sales



EQUINE INDUSTRY

Enhance and further develop the region's strengths in the Equine and Sport Horse Industry



INNOVATION

Build on the region's innovation capacity and reputation by encouraging and supporting more businesses to access research commercialisation services



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Support the region's enterprises to develop further through tailored training opportunities



TOURISM

Capitalise on the region's prominence in Ireland's Ancient East to contribute to the targets in the Government's Tourism Policy Statement to grow overseas tourist numbers to 10 million, increase overseas tourism revenue to €5 billion, and grow employment in the sector by 25% to 2025

Executive Summary

Context

Since the Government's Action Plan for Jobs process commenced in 2012, over 130,000 jobs have been created across the economy as a whole. There is still some way to go to recover the full extent of the jobs which were lost during the recession. However, building on the success of the Action Plan for Jobs process to date, the Government has set an objective of achieving full employment by 2018.

Creating vibrant and competitive regions will be central to realising that ambition, and the Government has committed to developing individual Action Plans for each of Ireland's regions. The Action Plan for Jobs: Regional initiative will lay the foundations for building on the strengths of each region and developing their full potential for enterprise growth and job creation.

This Action Plan for Jobs for the Mid East region covers the counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. The primary objective of the Plan is to have a further 10-15% employment in the region by 2020 and to ensure the unemployment rate is within 1% of the State average. The Mid East region has significant existing enterprise strengths and assets, and the capability to surpass these objectives. However a new level of collaboration between key players in the region is needed to ensure these common objectives are achieved.

This increased collaboration will be facilitated through a number of policy reforms that have been put in place by the Government, including:

- the growing impact of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network developed through the close cooperation between Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities;
- the fresh mandate of the new Education and Training Boards, who like the Higher Education Institutes are now focused on developing stronger links with their local enterprise base;
- the strengthening of the Regional Offices of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland with a new focus in their respective national strategies on regional job growth;
- the reform of Local Government, with a greater emphasis on the economic development role of the local authorities; and
- the emergence of stronger policy framework to underpin sectoral opportunities with a strong profile at regional level.

Employment Trends

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

Employment has improved significantly in recent years, and the region currently has the second lowest unemployment rate (8.1% at Q3 2015) in the State, second only to Dublin. At end 2014,

32,014 people were employed in Enterprise Agency (Enterprise Ireland, IDA, Údarás na Gaeltachta) supported companies, accounting for 13.5% of all employment in the region.

The number of enterprises and jobs supported by Enterprise Ireland, IDA, and the LEOs are set out below. The ambition is to see the employment base from these enterprises grow, through new forms of engagement by these agencies.

	Client companies	Number of Jobs
IDA	59	14,006
Enterprise Ireland	508	17,819
Local Enterprise Offices	507	2,061

While agency supported employment also suffered during the recession, levels are recovering with a net increase of 2,929 jobs between 2011 and 2014. Manufacturing companies supported by Enterprise Ireland, with food production as the largest area, account for the significant majority of this increase, with a growth of 2,251 jobs since 2011. IDA Ireland currently has 59 client companies in the Mid East, supporting 14,006 jobs. Among these companies, high tech manufacturing is dominant. Further to Enterprise Ireland and IDA, 2,061 people in the Mid East were employed in companies supported by the region's three Local Enterprise Offices at end 2014, with 354 jobs created in these companies during the year.

Strengths and Opportunities

The Mid East has key areas of strength and areas of strong potential that offer opportunity for strategic development:

- Well-established and growing clusters of multinational and indigenous companies in sectors such as **Internationally Traded Services and High-Tech Manufacturing**
- Competitive advantage in its excellent **connectivity and access**, an asset for enterprise development as well as facilitating tourism and infrastructure-dependent sectors such as distribution and logistics
- A strong and diverse **agri-food sector** encompassing microenterprises, companies of significant scale, in addition to food technology and innovation facilities
- Proximity to many of the State's major Universities and Institutes of Technology, as well as its own **Maynooth University**, which has a strong track record in facilitating and prioritising **research commercialisation**
- Strong assets to support **tourism, leisure and recreation**, including some of the country's most significant heritage assets and an internationally-renowned horse sport tradition
- A reputation as a hub for the **film industry**; the region has excellent capacity for large-scale film production, hosting two state-of-the-art film studios facilitating both indigenous and international productions

- Competitive advantage in the **education and experience levels of its workforce**: which ranks above the national average for both educational attainment and share of workforce working as managers and professionals

Key Themes

Key actions and objectives to be delivered by a range of stakeholders in the region, through collaborative action, include:

- Increasing innovation capability in the region through enhancing engagement between Institutes of Technologies in the region and industry
- Increasing the numbers of new start ups
- Increasing the flow of critical skills to the region
- Attracting and embedding FDI
- Increasing employment in the existing base of companies by strengthening their capacity to scale up their business and win new markets. The existing base of over 560 enterprises supported by the agencies, which now employ over 32,000 people will provide the platform on which to focus this effort
- Developing solutions to revive and reinvigorate retailing at a local and regional level
- Strengthening business networks in the region to support deeper business to business collaboration and create supply chain opportunities

The Enterprise Agencies, Local Authorities and Educational Institutions will work collaboratively with leaders in the Enterprise Sector to deliver on these ambitions.

Specific Actions for the Mid East

Bring together Boyne Valley Tourism and Kildare/Wicklow Destinations strategy stakeholders to drive **collaboration on tourism initiatives** and focus on issues of skills, job creation, amenity development and supporting companies in the tourism sector

Increase the flow of critical skills to the region's enterprises and enhance enterprise participation in the delivery of key education programmes through a **Regional Skills Forum**

Skillnets will promote the significant benefits of its **enterprise led training and management development** programmes

IDA will develop a value proposition to market the Mid-East Region as a **second site location** option for existing multinationals in the Dublin area

IDA will develop marketing propositions for **Global Business Services and High Value Manufacturing** in the region, to build on its existing cluster of international brands in these sectors

Build on the region's strengths as a hub for **film production** through the development of an internationally recognised audio-visual industry cluster

Build on the region's food innovation, research and start-up incubation capacities through the early-stage development of the **Boyne Valley Food Hub**: securing anchor tenants, promoting workspace to start-ups, and developing links with third level

Enterprise Ireland will run a "**Start-up Open Day & Clinic**" in the Mid-East for newly registered Start-ups in Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Services from the region

IDA will target a **30-40% uplift in investments** for the Mid East over the period 2015-2019

Education and Training providers will deliver and develop projects aimed at **building enterprise capacity among students** at all levels

IDA and Enterprise Ireland will effect a national **collaboration and global sourcing initiative** to increase collaboration with existing clients and provide opportunities for Irish companies to engage with IDA companies

Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of the Action Plan for Jobs is to support enterprise growth and job creation in every region of the country. While progress has been made towards this objective, not all regions are yet fully experiencing the benefits of economic recovery. The pace of progress in the regions – and especially those with the highest unemployment levels - needs to be accelerated through targeted supports for enterprise and job creation.

Building the national Action Plan for Jobs process, the Government has committed to developing Action Plans for each of the regions at NUTS III level. This Action Plan, for the Mid East region, covers the counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow.

The objective of the Action Plan is to establish a cohesive approach to enterprise support and job creation in the region on the part of the Enterprise Development Agencies (Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices), other public bodies (e.g. Local Authorities, Education & Training institutions, Fáilte Ireland), local business leaders, and community-based enterprises. While there is already a lot of practical and strategic cooperation taking place at local and regional levels, this Action Plan provides a framework in which cooperation and collaboration can be further enhanced between both public and private sector stakeholders.

The first part of the Plan provides an overview of the Mid East region and identifies its strengths, assets and sectors with growth potential. This has been developed on the basis of desk research and a series of engagements with regional stakeholders, including a Regional Stakeholder Forum on 12th October 2015, which was attended by over 100 participants from the public, private and voluntary sectors. These stakeholder engagements have played an important part in helping to identify the opportunities in the region to support enterprise growth and job creation.

The second part of the Plan contains a series of actions to support job creation in the region, capitalising on the strengths of the region and reflecting the areas which have been identified through the consultation process as being particularly important for the region. Each action has an identified body or bodies responsible for delivery, within a given timeframe. Progress in the implementation of each of these actions will be overseen by a Monitoring Committee (see Chapter 15), which will involve the key stakeholders in the region and which will meet twice each year.

The Plan covers the period 2016-2017 but through the monitoring process new actions can be added during that period, making the Plan a dynamic and living basis for progressing the jobs agenda in the region.

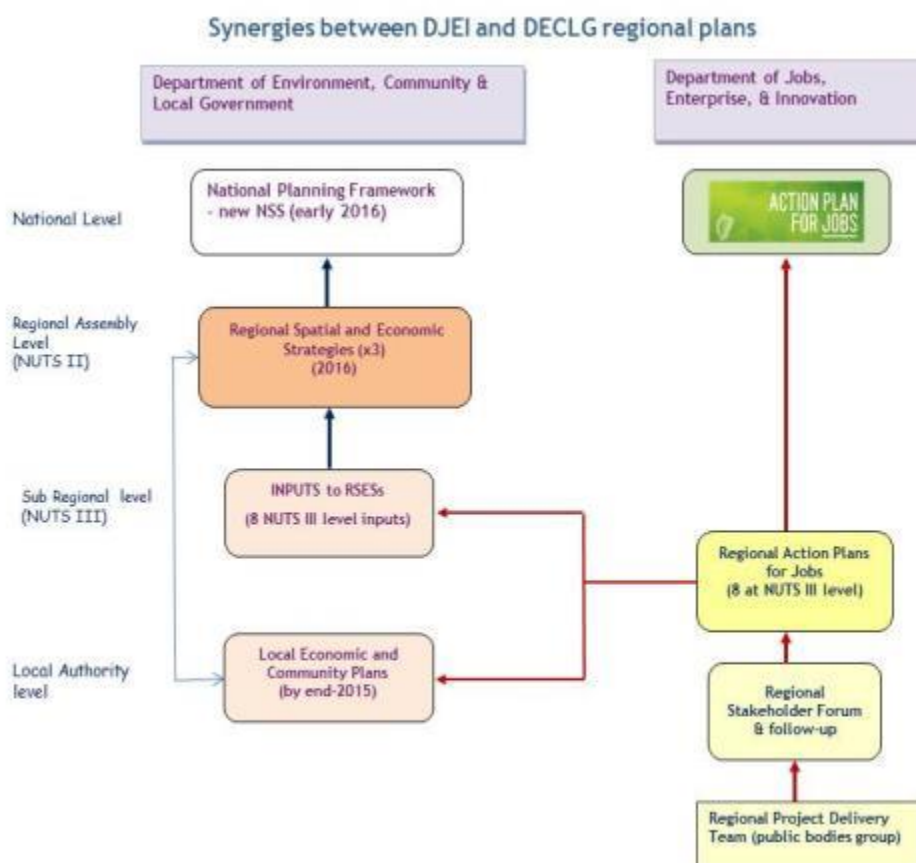
Synergies with Local Government Reform

This Action Plan is developed at NUTS III¹ level and will complement and contribute to rural development initiatives and to the Local Economic and Community Plans being developed by the local authorities in the region, as well as contributing to the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) to be developed by the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, in common with the other

¹ On 1st of January 2015 three new NUTS II Regional Assemblies consisting of a total of 8 Strategic Planning Areas at the NUTS III level came into operation.

Regional Assemblies (see Figure 1 below). The RSES will support implementation of national spatial policies and the economic policies and objectives of the Government, including the national Action Plan for Jobs and these Regional Action Plans for Jobs, by enhancing co-ordination of planning and economic development functions of relevant Government departments and agencies and the local government sector, including the new Local Economic and Community Plans.

Figure 1

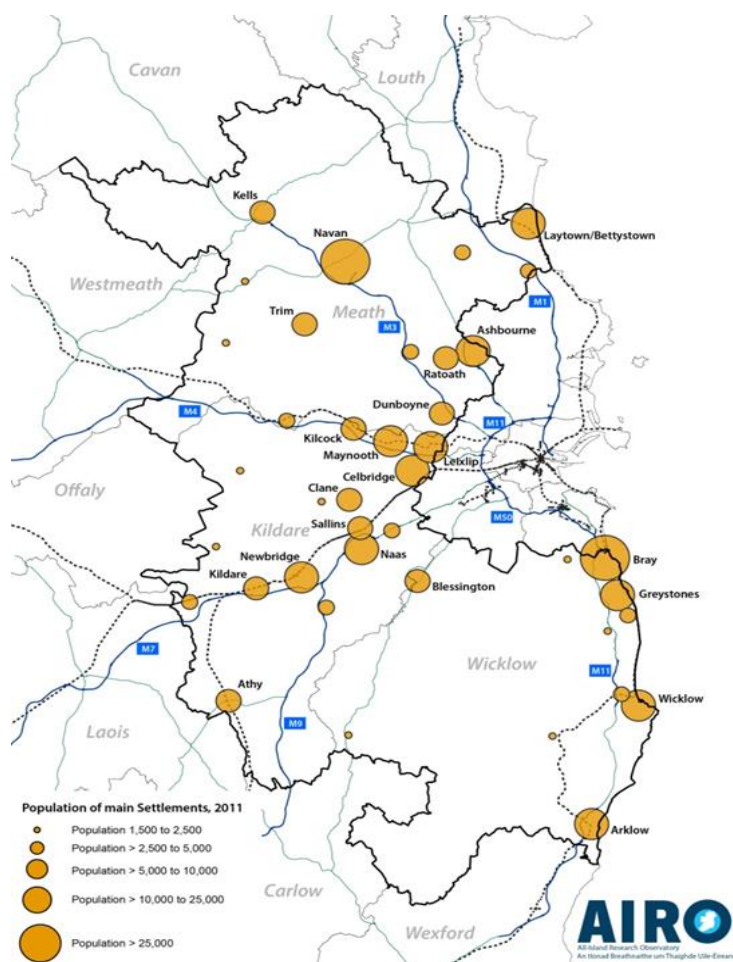


National Spatial Strategy

The National Planning Framework will be prepared in 2016 and will seek to build on the successes of the National Spatial Strategy to provide a strategic spatial policy context for balanced national and regional development over the next 20 years. It will provide the over-arching framework to inform co-ordinated decision-making by relevant Government Departments and Agencies that must be followed through in subsidiary plans, including the RSES, – as such its influence will range from nationally important projects that will contribute to the strategic profile of the State, to more local actions that provide vital supports to our communities. In this regard the NPF will play a key enabling and co-ordinating role in the national effort to secure sustainable economic recovery.

Chapter 2: Mid East Region Overview

Population and Main Urban Centres



increase of 11.7%, making it the second fastest growing region in the State during this period. Population in Wicklow grew by 8.3%, Kildare by 12.9%, and Meath by 13.1%. 2011 data also showed however that the region experiences very high levels of outbound commuting, with each county recording comparatively high net losses in daytime working population (Kildare: 16,248, Meath: 22,569, Wicklow: 12,759)

Connectivity

The Mid East region as a whole is well served by high quality road networks. Motorway corridors radiating out from Dublin to the rest of the country traverse the Mid East region, providing fast access to Dublin city centre in addition to other urban centres such as Galway, Limerick, Drogheda, Cork and Waterford.

The Mid East comprises counties Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. The region spans 6,061 km², 8.68% of the total area of the state. The Mid East has a combined population of 531,087² (11.57% of State total), making it the third largest of the eight administrative regions in terms of population.

The major urban centres are Bray (pop. 31,872), Navan (pop. 28,559), Newbridge (pop. 21,561), Naas (pop. 20,713), Celbridge (pop. 19,537), Greystones (pop. 17,468), Leixlip (pop. 15,452), Arklow (pop. 13,009), Maynooth (pop. 12,510), Ashbourne (pop. 11,355) and Wicklow (pop. 10,358).

2011 census data showed significant population increases in the Mid East. The region as a whole grew by 55,727 between 2006 and 2011, representing an

Mid East population by county

Kildare:	210,312
Meath:	184,135
Wicklow:	136,640
Total:	531,087

² CSO Census of Population, 2011

80% of the State is connected to Dublin by roads passing through Kildare, while Meath is served by the M1, M2 and M3. Ongoing development of the N11/M11 corridor continues to improve access and travel times between Wicklow, Dublin and Belfast.

Due to region's location and good road connectivity most areas enjoy fast access to Dublin airport and Dublin Port, the principal international gateways for travel in and out of the country, as well as seaports in Drogheda, Dun Laoghaire and Rosslare.

The region enjoys good rail and bus connections to Dublin city, with services meeting the high levels of workers commuting into Dublin. Intercity rail connections provide links to other urban centres.



Quality of Life

“Quality of Life” is a complex and subjective issue, but is increasingly an important factor in attracting and retaining skilled people - particularly internationally mobile skilled labour - and in attracting mobile foreign direct investment.

The Mid East region has an attractive combination of urban and rural amenities and lifestyle options. Its towns are vibrant and enjoy good connectivity and access to other major towns and cities, with resultant access to a very wide range of cultural, lifestyle and educational facilities. Outdoor and sporting recreation is also well supported, capitalising on the natural diversity and beauty of the landscape in the region and its strong sporting traditions in areas such as equestrian activity. The region also boasts a rich cultural tradition and many nationally important examples of built heritage stretching back from the great houses of recent centuries to medieval, early Christian and ancient sites.

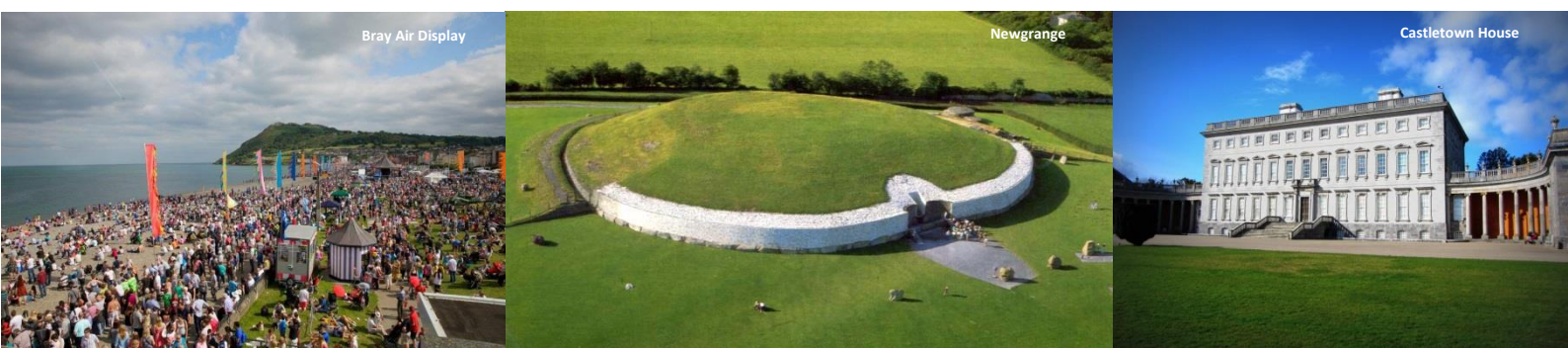
Recreation and Leisure

The Mid East region covers areas of strong rural tradition as well as developed and expanding urban centres, and as a result has a broad range of lifestyle and leisure amenities. The region is geographically diverse, encompassing coastal areas, central plains, mountains and bogland. The region has a wealth of outdoor and sporting amenities. There is a rich equestrian tradition, particularly in Kildare and Meath, where there are a number of equestrian centres and racecourses, including the National Stud and racecourses at the Curragh, Punchestown, Naas, Navan, Bellewstown, Laytown and Fairyhouse. The presence of championship golf courses such as the Irish Open venues of Carton House and Druid's Glen, and the K Club—Ireland's only Ryder Cup venue—acts as a particular draw for high net worth individuals and for active tourism more broadly.

The sandy Meath coastline has beaches of exceptional standards and profile that are perfect for beach based sports, including surfing, sand yachting and stand up paddling, which offer family friendly activities and the opportunity to create employment. The coastal areas of the region as a whole are well developed amenities including the seaside towns of Laytown, Bettystown, Bray, Greystones and Arklow, in addition to Wicklow's renowned blue flag beaches, while three of the region's inland waterways (Royal Canal, Grand Canal and Barrow Navigation) continue to be developed by Waterways Ireland as multi-activity **Blueways**. The Wicklow Mountains National Park is a nationally important area of natural beauty that is also well developed to cater for hiking and hillwalking, and includes the 129km Wicklow Way, Ireland's first national waymarked trail. Retail and recreational attractions in the region include Kildare Village outlet and Tayto Park, both currently expanding and subject of multi-million euro investments from their respective operators.

Arts, Culture and Heritage

There is a vibrant arts and culture scene in the Mid East region, with annual events and festivals covering a range of contemporary and traditional cultural activities. These include the Gerard Manley Hopkins International festival (Kildare), the Winter Solstice event at Newgrange (Meath), and the annual Bray Summerfest, incorporating the Bray Air Display (Wicklow).



This proposition is coupled with and deepened by the Mid East region's importance as a setting for some of the State's most important heritage assets. It is currently covered by Failte Ireland's **Ireland's Ancient East** proposition, which promotes the region's impressive range of historical sites, such as Bru na Boinne and Newgrange, a UNESCO world heritage site, the early Christian monuments at Glendalough, Trim Castle, Castletown House, Powerscourt House, and Wicklow Gaol.

Education and Training

There is a broad range of educational institutions located in the Mid East region, providing learning opportunities at Primary, Secondary, Further and Third Level in addition to courses for adult and lifelong learners. The region is covered by two Education and Training Boards, and has 298 primary schools, 69 secondary schools, and 7 special schools.

The Mid East is well placed in terms of Third Level education: it is host to one of the State's seven Universities, Maynooth University, and also benefits from proximity to other Universities and Institutes of Technology in Dublin city and county, in addition to Institutes of Technology in Athlone, Dundalk and Carlow. The recently established Wicklow County Campus is a further asset to the region, providing part-time lifelong learning opportunities with courses accredited by IT Carlow.

Key Infrastructure Requirements to Support Enterprise

Broadband Access

In 2014 69.1% of households in the Mid East region had broadband internet access, the second highest rate in the State after Dublin; however it is acknowledged that broadband infrastructure in rural areas of the region needs to be strengthened to enable all companies to benefit from growth opportunities and to do business more effectively.

This will be delivered through the Government's draft Intervention Strategy under the National Broadband Plan; published on 15th July 2015, it sets out a strategy to make high speed broadband with at least 30Mbps connectivity available to all homes and businesses throughout Ireland, through a combination of commercial and public investment.

Water

Water supply infrastructure has also been identified as a key area requiring investment in the Mid East, as the area continues to experience population growth. Quality water infrastructure is crucial to enterprise development at all stages.

In January 2014 Irish Water took over management of the Water Supply Project, Eastern and Midlands Region (WSP) from Dublin City Council. Studies have determined that a new source of water is needed to support the region to meet increased demand from both population and economic growth. Public consultation was undertaken this Spring, and an Options Working Paper published on the 9th June. Consideration and assessment is now underway on four technically viable options for new supply as mentioned in this paper. A Project Road Map, outlining the next steps, can be viewed at <http://watersupply.lcdesignportal.com/>.

Transport Infrastructure

While the region is well connected and supported by a high quality road network, the existing infrastructure tends to draw economic activity towards Dublin. Connectivity between strategic employment centres, ports and airports are necessary to support business, having an impact on both product and labour market. There is scope for more integrated infrastructure, either through road, rail or other public transport to improve radial connections within the region and work to link together the region's own centres of economic activity.

Chapter 3: Economic Performance

Employment and Unemployment

Overview

As was the case with all regions, employment in the Mid East was substantially impacted by the economic recession which commenced in 2008.

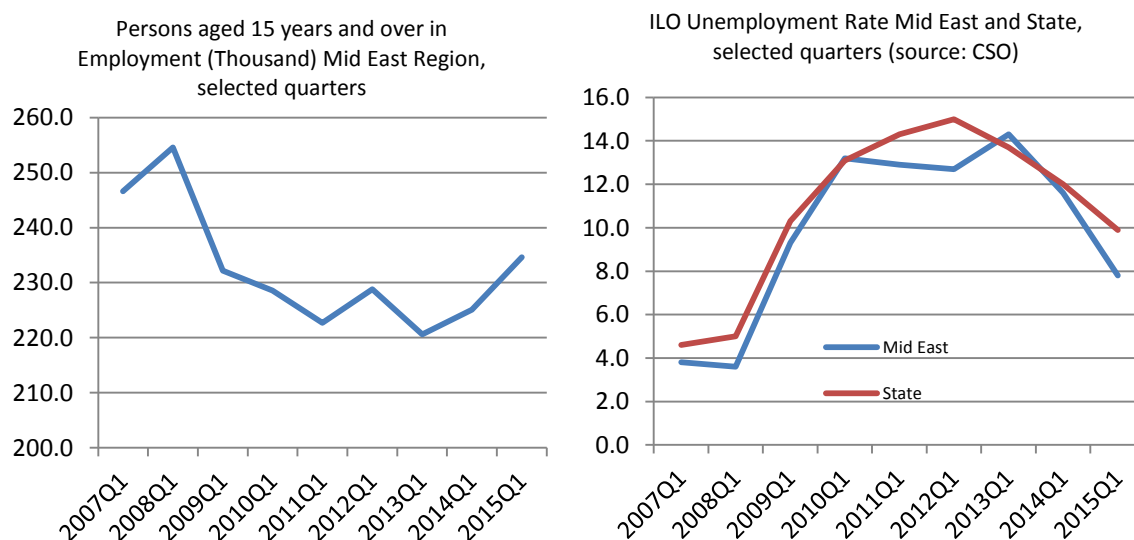
In 2007, when employment in Ireland was at its highest historically, the Mid East region had 251,900 people in employment (Q4, 2007), with an unemployment rate of 3.6%; the lowest unemployment rate of all regions and below the national rate of 4.6% at that time.

In the three year period up to Q4 2010, employment in the region fell by over 25,000 to 226,300 and the unemployment rate for the region rose to 12.8%. As the national economy recovers, the employment situation in the Mid East has improved, with the numbers in employment standing at 234,600 at Q1 2015 and the unemployment rate having dropped to 7.8% (see trend at Figure 2 below) compared to the national unemployment rate of 9.9%.

Mid East key labour market data, Q1 2015

Nos. in employment:	234,600
Unemployed:	19,700
In Labour Force:	254,300
Unemployment Rate:	7.8%

Figure 2: ILO Unemployment Rate (%) Mid East Region State, and Numbers Employed in Mid East Region



Sectoral trends

Table 1 provides a summary of employment by broad sectoral category from 2007 to 2015. The headline figures illustrate the significant decrease in employment in the Mid East region between 2007 and 2013, with a reduction of 26,000 people at work. However the table also shows the steady recovery that has taken place since this point, with an additional 4,500 people in employment between 2013 and 2014, and a further increase of 9,500 in employment between 2014 and 2015.

The Services Sector now accounts for 75.6% of employment in the Region, Industry accounts for 12.4%, Construction 7.4% and Agriculture 4.4%.

Table 1

Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Thousand) NACE Rev 2 Economic Sector

Mid East Region						Change Between Q1 2007 and Q1 2012		Change Between Q1 2012 and Q1 2015	
	2007 Q1	2012 Q1	2013 Q1	2014 Q1	2015 Q1	(,000)	%	(,000)	%
All NACE economic sectors	246.6	228.8	220.6	225.1	234.6	-17.8	-7.2	5.8	2.5
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	10.8	7.9	9.7	8.4	10.3	-2.9	-26.9	2.4	30.4
Industry (B to E)	36.1	30	27	30.6	29.2	-6.1	-16.9	-0.8	-2.7
Construction (F)	32.6	14	15.6	13.8	17.3	-18.6	-57.1	3.3	23.6
Services (G to U)	166.7	176.7	168.3	172.3	177.4	10	6.0	0.7	0.4

Source: CSO StatBank / Quarterly National Household Survey Main Results / QNQ40 (accessed 25 May 2015)

Services Sector

The Services sector currently accounts for over 75% of all employment in the Mid East Region, with 177,400 people working in Services at the end of Quarter 1 2015. As with all other sectors of the economy, there was fluctuation in the numbers employed in the Services sectors during the recession; however, the numbers employed in services have improved above 2007 levels. In 2007, this sector accounted for 67.6% of employment.

Industry and Manufacturing

Employment in the Industry/Manufacturing sector decreased by 9,100 over the period 2007 to Quarter 1 2013, from a high of 36,100 to 27,000. However, the numbers employed in this sector have started to increase again since 2013, standing at 29,200 at Quarter 1 2015; and most recent data from Q3 2015 shows the sector is continuing to recover, with employment now at 31,600. In Quarter 1 2007 Manufacturing accounted for 14.6% of employment in the Mid East, but at 12.4% in Quarter 1 2015 is in line with the national figure of 12.8%.

Construction

The Construction sector accounted for approximately 13% of total employment in the region in 2007, which is in line with the State as a whole where construction accounted for 12.8% of total employment. The numbers employed in this sector in the Mid East region dropped over 50% from 32,600 in 2007 to 14,000 in 2012 but have started to grow again and currently the sector employs 17,300 people in the region accounting for 7.4% of total employment compared to 6.3% of employment nationally.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

Agriculture accounts for approximately 4.4% of employment in the Mid East which is slightly below the national average of 5.6% of all employment. Numbers employed in this sector have now broadly recovered to 2007 levels.

Employment in the Services Sector

Within the Services sector, Wholesale and Retail Trade is the most significant area of employment, with 32,600 persons employed, representing almost 14% of total employment in the region.

The combined areas of Public Administration/Defence, Human Health/Social work and the Education sector account for 56,400 of those employed in the Mid East which represents almost 32% of all Services employment and 24% of total employment in the region. The area of Human Health/Social Work is particularly strong with 26,100 working in the sector, representing 11% of all employment in the region.

Given that a significant proportion of those employed in Human Health/Social Work and the Education sectors are likely to be public servants, there is a high level of public sector employment in the Region. Other significant areas in Services sector employment are Professional, Scientific and Technical services (15,600), Accommodation and Food (15,500), and Financial, Insurance and Real Estate (14,300).

While there are variations, the majority of areas within the Services sector have seen an increase in numbers employed since 2007, with overall employment in the Services sector increasing by 6.4% on 2007 peak employment levels.

Other sectors which make up the total numbers employed in Services are shown on Table 2 below.

Table 2
Services Employment (Thousand) NACE Rev 2 Economic Sector and Quarter

Mid East Region	2007 Q1	2012 Q1	2015 Q1
Services (G to U)	166.7	176.7	177.4
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	35	36.7	32.6
Transportation and storage (H)	10.6	9.2	13
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	13.1	11.8	15.5
Information and communication (J)	8.8	11	10
Financial, insurance and real estate activities (K,L)	12.9	15.7	14.3
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	13.2	12.6	15.6
Administrative and support service activities (N)	8.6	7.9	7
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O)	13.8	12.4	12.5
Education (P)	16.7	17.8	17.8
Human health and social work activities (Q)	21	28.8	26.1
Other NACE activities (R to U)	12.7	12.7	12.8
Not stated

Source: CSO StatBank / Quarterly National Household Survey Main Results / QNQ40 (accessed 25 May 2015)

Employment in Industry and Manufacturing

Employment in Industry and Manufacturing in the Mid East region was at its lowest in Q1 2013, with 27,000 employed; at this stage numbers employed in the sector had fallen by 25% since Q1 2007. However employment levels have increased by 8% since this low point, with 29,200 currently working in the sector.

Detailed CSO employment statistics for Industry are not available below the NACE 'Industry' classification, however more detailed data is available from Enterprise Agency (Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland) employment statistics, which serves as a useful indicator of underlying trends. This data is set out in Table 3.

Agency supported employment in manufacturing stood at 23,600 at end 2014, accounting for over three quarters of total industrial employment in the region.

The Food sector and the Computer and Electronic Equipment sector are the largest areas of employment within Manufacturing, each representing approximately 30% of Manufacturing employment in the Mid East region. The Food sector in particular saw significant increases in employment levels between 2007 and 2014, with an additional 1,618 employed in this area by end 2014.

Chemicals and Chemical Products is also a significant sector with nearly 3,000 employed. Other important sectors include Rubber and Plastic Products (1,113), Non-Metallic Mineral Products (978), Machinery and Equipment (851) and Basic and Fabricated Metal Products (757).

Table 3

CSO Industrial Employment and Enterprise Agency Manufacturing Employment (Selected Periods)			
Mid East Region	2007 Q1	2012 Q1	2015 Q1
CSO Industrial Employment	36,100	30,000	29,200
Manufacturing Employment in Agency Supported Companies	End 2006	End 2011	End 2014
All Agency Manufacturing Employment	27,414	21,207	23,600
Food, Drink and Tobacco	6,056	5,929	7,463
Textiles	234	205	120
Clothing, Footwear, and Leather	157	113	114
Wood and Wood Products	519	311	317
Paper and Printing	880	642	588
Chemicals and Chemical Products	3,993	3,360	2,969
Rubber and Plastic Products	992	826	1,113
Non-metallic Mineral Products	1,357	732	978
Basic and Fabricated Metal Products	1,217	684	757
Computer, Electronic, Optical Products and Electrical Equipment	8,562	6,376	7,106
Machinery and Equipment	1,444	789	851
Transport Equipment	278	172	231
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	1,725	1,068	993

Source: CSO QNHS Data and DJEI 2014 Annual Agency Employment Survey

Employment in Companies Supported by State Agencies

At end 2014, 32,014 people were employed in Enterprise Agency (Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta) supported companies in the Mid East, across all sectors. This accounts for 13.46% of all employment in the region. While total employment in agency-supported companies across all sectors fell by over 15% from end 2006 to end 2011, levels have since shown signs of recovery with a rise of 10% between 2011 and 2014: an increase of 2,929 jobs. This growth has come mainly from Enterprise Ireland's base of companies, amongst which employment increased by over 20% during this period. Employment in foreign owned companies has only started to recover since 2014.

Table 4 below demonstrates the changes in agency-supported employment over the period 2006-2011, as well as showing sectoral trends.

Table 4

Employment in Enterprise Agency Supported Companies (Selected Years)

	Mid East Region			Change between 2006 and 2011		Change between 2011 and 2014	
	2006	2011	2014		(%)		(%)
All Sectors	34,241	29,085	32,014	-5,156	-15.1%	2,929	10.1%
Manufacturing	27,414	21,207	23,600	-6,207	-22.6%	2,393	11.3%
International Services	4,297	5,156	5,342	859	20.0%	186	3.6%
Financial Services	735	871	870	136	18.5%	-1	-0.1%
Other	1,795	1,851	2,202	56	3.1%	351	19.0%

Enterprise Ireland has 508 client companies in the Mid East region. At end 2014 these companies sustained 17,819 jobs: nearly 10% of all Enterprise Ireland supported employment in the State.

Manufacturing is the dominant sector among Enterprise Ireland supported companies with 12,980 employed, representing 72.8% of all Enterprise Ireland supported employment in the region. This sector has seen a strong recovery since 2011 with growth of 21%. Within the manufacturing sector, food production is the largest area among indigenous companies supported by Enterprise Ireland in the region, with 7,315 employed.

Enterprise Ireland supported employment has enjoyed a strong recovery, with 2014 employment levels the highest over this decade. A key driver of this increase has been growth in food manufacturing.

Enterprise Ireland clients based in the region include Dawn Farm Foods, Green Isle Foods, Kerry Group Services International (Kildare), Trinity Biotech, Duffy Meats, Holfeld Plastics (Wicklow), Largo Food Exports, Kilsaran Concrete, and Primeline Logistics (Meath).

IDA Ireland, the State body responsible for foreign direct investment in Ireland, currently has 59 companies in the Mid East. These companies support 14,006 jobs, approximately 8% of all IDA employment in the State.

Enterprise Agency Employment in Mid East Region by Main Sector in 2014

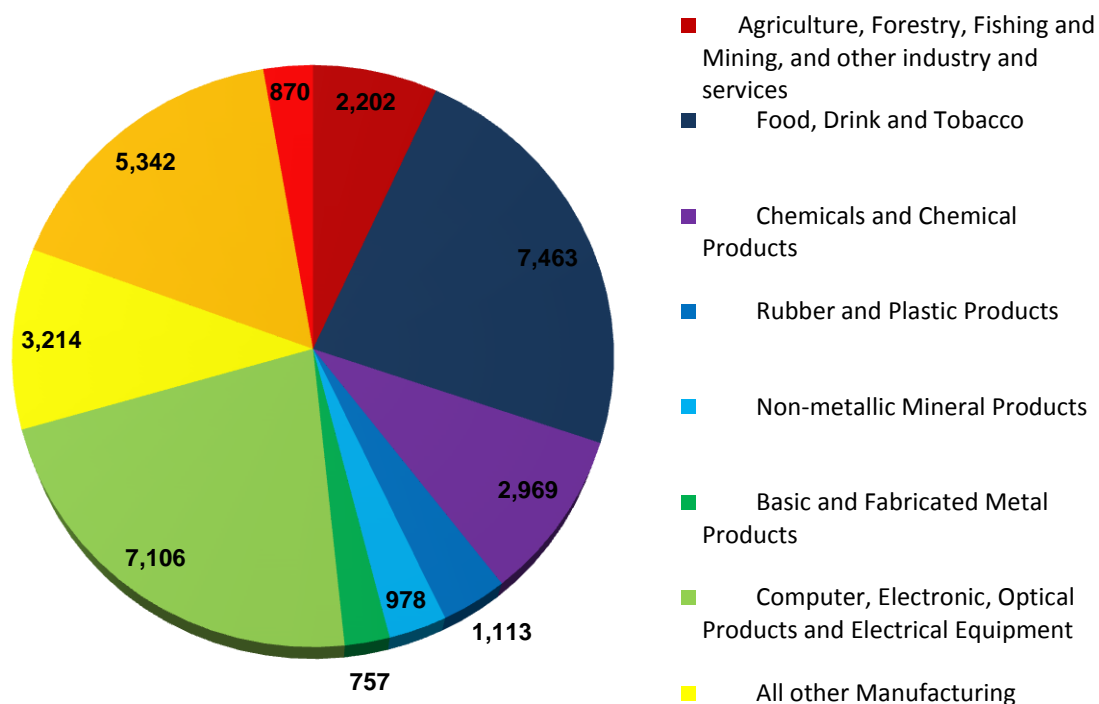


Figure 3

As with Enterprise Ireland, manufacturing is the largest area of employment among IDA client companies with 10,467 jobs supported in the sector. However while food production leads this sector for indigenous firms, among IDA client companies the dominant manufacturing areas are Computer, Electronic and Optical Products (5,870 employed) and Chemicals and Chemical Products (2,744). Employment growth in International Services has not seen much of a recovery to date and represents an opportunity for growth in the years ahead.

Across all agency supported enterprises in the Mid East region, manufacturing is the largest sector, employing 23,600 people and representing nearly three quarters of agency supported employment in the region. While activity declined in the period 2006-2011, when manufacturing employment levels fell by 6,207, the sector has shown signs of recovery between 2011-2014 with an uplift of 11.3%.

Manufacturing of Food, Drink and Tobacco and Computer, Electronic, Optical Products and Electrical Equipment are the most significant areas and are equally strong, currently supporting 7,463 and 7,106 jobs respectively. International and Financial services are also strong, with 6,212 currently employed in agency supported companies in this area. The sector has grown steadily over the past decade, with an increase of 27% since 2005. The majority of these jobs are in the areas of computer programming, consultancy, and related activities.

Figure 3 above demonstrates the sectoral spread of all agency-supported employment in the Mid East region.

In addition to those employed in Enterprise Ireland and IDA client companies, 2,061 people in the Mid East were employed in companies supported by the region's three Local Enterprise Offices at end 2014, with 354 jobs created in these companies during the year.

Employment by Occupation

Figure 4 below shows a breakdown of employment by occupation across the Mid East region as at Q1 2015. It is notable that a substantial proportion (39.6%) of the region's workforce falls into the ABC classifications (managers and professionals), compared to a national average of 37.7%.

The largest proportion of the workforce in the Mid East region (16.8%) is engaged in Professional occupations. Occupations in this classification would require a degree or equivalent qualification, and in some cases postgraduate qualification and/or formal experience-related training. The Mid East is close to the State figure of 17.9% in this area.

The region also has, relative to the national average of 11.7%, a high proportion of workers in Associate, Professional and Technical occupations (13.9%), areas also often involving substantial full-time training or study. The region is also above the national average of 8.1% for proportion of the workforce (8.9%) employed as Managers, Directors and Senior Officials.

Figure 4

Percentage Share of Employment by Occupation QNHS Q1 2015 Mid East and State



Source: CSO Persons aged 15 years and over in employment (ILO) classified by UK SOC2012 – 1 digit and NUTS3 Region Q1 2015

Business Demographics in the Mid East Region

The previous section has outlined the labour market position of those who live in the Mid East region, including those working outside the region. A closer examination of the number of enterprises active in the region indicates that there were 20,395 active enterprises operating in the Mid East in 2012, the most recent period for which data is available from the Central Statistics Office on Business Demographics. This figure excludes Agriculture and Public Service and reflects a reduction of over 4,053 (16.6%) in the number of enterprises active in 2007.

Table 5 below provides a breakdown of the number of active enterprises for selected sectors in the Business Economy and the numbers employed in those enterprises in the years 2007 and 2012. The number of people employed in these sectors fell by more than 21,712 overall over the period 2007 to 2012.

Table 5

Number of Enterprises and Employees: Selected Sectors (2007-2012)

Mid East Region		2007	2012	% Change
Business economy excluding activities of holding companies (B to N,-642)	Active Enterprises (Number)	24,448	20,395	-16.6%
	Employees (Number)	105,302	83,590	-20.6%
Manufacturing (C)	Active Enterprises (Number)	1,588	1,385	-12.8%
	Employees (Number)	23,981	19,301	-19.5%
Construction (F)	Active Enterprises (Number)	7,525	4,330	-42.5%
	Employees (Number)	21,574	7,057	-67.3%
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	Active Enterprises (Number)	4,923	4,550	-7.6%
	Employees (Number)	24,447	21,924	-10.3%
Transportation and storage (H)	Active Enterprises (Number)	1,670	1,277	-23.5%
	Employees (Number)	4,036	3,268	-19.0%
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	Active Enterprises (Number)	1,427	1,436	0.6%
	Employees (Number)	12,312	11,198	-9.0%
Information and communication (J)	Active Enterprises (Number)	1,064	1,147	7.8%
	Employees (Number)	2,512	2,395	-4.7%
Financial and insurance activities excluding activities of holding companies (K-642)	Active Enterprises (Number)	299	336	12.4%
	Employees (Number)	1,310	1,451	10.8%
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	Active Enterprises (Number)	3,126	3,215	2.8%
	Employees (Number)	5,616	4,776	-15.0%
Administrative and support service activities (N)	Active Enterprises (Number)	1,473	1,220	-17.2%
	Employees (Number)	6,096	7,564	24.1%
Education (P)	Active Enterprises (Number)	595	827	39.0%
	Employees (Number)	4,907	6,987	42.4%
ICT total (261 to 264,268,465,582,61,62,631,951)	Active Enterprises (Number)	910	975	7.1%
	Employees (Number)	7,074	5,256	-25.7%

Source: CSO Database BRA18: Business Demography NACE Rev 2 by Activity, County, Year and Statistic

It is important to note that the numbers employed in these sectors differ significantly from the corresponding sectoral data in the CSO Quarterly Household Employment Survey (QNHS) (225, 500 in employment at Q4 2012), as Agriculture and the Public Services sectors are not included on the

table. People living in the region but working outside the region are also not included in the Business Demographic figures above.

The time period for the above data precedes the recent upturn in the economy. Nonetheless, the figures show the impact of the recession on the Construction sector, with this sector accounting for the loss of 3,195 businesses (78.8% of all enterprises losses in the region) between 2007 and 2012. 14,517 jobs were lost in Construction companies in the region over the same period – more than 67% of the total number of job losses on the above table.

The Manufacturing sector also saw a significant decrease in the number of people employed in enterprises in the Mid East region between 2007 and 2012, with 4,680 job losses.

Despite job losses, Wholesale/Retail, Manufacturing, and Accommodation and Food Services continued to be the most important sectors in terms of supporting people working in the region.

Scale of companies

Of the companies active in 2012, approximately:

- 92.5% employed less than 10 people
- 881 employed between 10 and 19 people
- 452 employed between 20 and 49 staff
- 170 employed between 50 and 249 employees
- 29 employed more than 250 employees

These statistics show that the enterprise base in the Mid East is dominated by indigenous companies, with a relatively small number of large FDI companies accounting for approximately 19,599 employees. However, this is a profile shared with many other regions.

Education and Skills Attainment

Table 6 below shows the highest level of Education completed by the population in the Mid East region, based on the 2011 Census of Population. The average for the State is provided for comparative purposes.

The most significant feature of this data is the proportion of people living in the region with Third Level education or higher; 30% of those living in the Mid East are educated to Third Level or above, higher than the national average of 29.1%. When the data is broken down across the regions, the Mid East ranks second highest in the State (after Dublin at 36.3%) for proportion of population at this level of educational attainment. This is a significant attraction for industry and enterprise looking to source skills locally.

According to Higher Education Authority (HEA) statistics, there were approximately 16, 621 Full Time students from the Mid East region attending HEA funded Institutions in 2013/2014. Of these, 9,309 (the highest proportion at 56%) are enrolled in Universities, and 6,732 in Institutes of Technology.

Table 6

Highest Level of Education completed: Mid East region and national average, 2011

Level of Education	Mid East	State
Primary or no Formal	12.7%	15.2%
Lower Secondary	16.5%	16.6%
Upper Secondary	36.9%	34.4%
3rd Level +	30%	29.1%
Not Stated	4%	4.7%
Persons (,000)	337.04	3,003.5

Source :Derived from CSO Census of Population 2011

Over 60% of those students enrolled in Universities were attending the three Dublin Universities, with roughly 27% attending Maynooth University, the Mid East region's University. Of those students attending Institutes of Technology, the largest proportion (2,550 students) were attending Dublin Institute of Technology.

Gross Value Added (GVA)

Gross Value Added (GVA) is a measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy. In 2012, the latest year for which this data is available, the Mid East accounted for 7.7% of the total Gross Value Added within the State – the fourth highest level of output after Dublin, the South West, and the West.

The Services sector in the Mid East contributed €8.7 billion to national GVA in 2012, Manufacturing and Construction €3.3 billion, and Agriculture €222 million; this breakdown broadly reflects the sectoral composition of employment detailed earlier in the analysis.

In terms of GVA levels per capita in the Mid East, the region is below most other regions, with the 3rd lowest level of GVA produced per person at €22,863, compared to a national average of €34,408.

Mid East region – GVA 2012 Data

Mid East GVA represents 7.7% of State Total

Composition of GVA:

Services: 70.9%
 Manufacturing and Construction: 26.5%
 Agriculture: 2.7%

GVA per Capita 2012:

€22,863 compared to the State average of €34,308

The relatively modest levels of GVA in the Mid East seem surprising given the high level of education among the population, and the high proportion of the workforce employed in managerial, professional and qualified technical occupations. However it is worth noting that given the very high levels of outbound commuting from the region a significant proportion of the region's population is contributing to the GVA totals in other regions, especially Dublin, thus reducing the Mid East's own per capita figures.

Chapter 4: Enterprise Assets

Enterprise Agencies in the Mid East Region

Enterprise Ireland



Enterprise Ireland works with companies in the Mid East to help them start, grow, innovate and win export sales in global markets. In this way, it supports sustainable economic growth and regional development, and secures employment. As an open economy, export success is fundamental to Ireland's regional and national growth.

The development of Mid East companies is important because locally owned businesses are more likely than others to:

- Generate a self-sustaining cycle of growth and reinvestment. Companies' profits are more likely to remain in Ireland and seek new investment and business opportunities within existing businesses or new startups;
- Form part of a balanced portfolio of economic activities that provide insurance against technology, sector or market-specific shocks;
- Provide and sustain a base of sub-supply and services companies to service the multinational company base; and,
- Generally operate a wide range of business functions in the Mid East and Ireland and provide opportunities for employee advancement and for the development of world-class companies.

Employment Levels in EI Client Companies in the Mid East

According to the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Annual Employment Survey, there were 17,819 people employed in EI client companies in the Mid East in 2014³. This represents nearly 10% of EI-supported employment nationally.

Enterprise Ireland's Role

Enterprise Ireland works with SMEs and large companies and works extremely closely with the Local Enterprise Offices in the Mid East. This ensures that targeted supports are available to companies regardless of their size but based on their needs.

Enterprise Ireland provides strategic support (aimed at developing capability within companies) and financial supports (for co-funded development projects). Very often both are combined to maximise the impact of the supports provided. Over the two year period 2013 to 2014, Enterprise Ireland approved €29 million in financial support to client companies in the Mid East.

Such supports are aimed at all aspects of a company's business plan and are designed to work together and mutually reinforce each other. Supports cover anything from management development programmes, export development programmes, lean/productivity improvement,

³ DJEI SPD Annual Employment Survey 2014

various financial supports (including grants to undertake feasibility, R&D) the provision of equity to start-ups, access to 31 Overseas Offices around the world, access to mentors and access to third level research (e.g. Maynooth University)

Enterprise Ireland's agenda covers a number of key areas:

Entrepreneurship & New Companies: Developing the pipe-line of Mid East entrepreneurs and start-up companies with the potential to trade internationally in the future in cooperation with, for example, the Mid East Local Enterprise Offices and local Universities and Institutes of Technology.

Non-Exporting Established Companies: Working with domestically focussed companies with the potential to export via the Potential Exporters Division (PED) regionally-based seminars, workshops, on-line diagnostic tools and market research resources are all provided to companies seeking new opportunities and preparing to enter new markets.

Established (Exporting) Companies: Enterprise Ireland engages with established Mid East companies in developing their capability to consolidate and deepen their footprint in existing export markets. Supports range from LEAN, R&D, management development, funding and access to 30 Overseas Offices – all as part of a comprehensive growth strategy.

Innovation: Enterprise Ireland offers a range of supports to drive innovation activities within all companies at different stages of development, such as Innovation Vouchers, Innovation Partnerships and Commercialisation funding.

IDA Ireland



IDA Ireland is the agency responsible for attracting Foreign Direct Investment into Ireland. In February 2015, IDA Ireland launched a new five-year corporate strategy which places a renewed emphasis on FDI in the regions.

IDA is targeting a minimum increase in investment of 30% to 40% in each region outside Dublin over the period 2015-2019 compared to the agency's 2010-2014 strategy.

IDA Ireland's regional strategy implementation is centred on:

- Engagement with the existing client base in the region, and at corporate level, in order to ensure job retention, to explore expansion opportunities where they arise and to consider new business mandates when feasible. One third of IDA expansion and R&D projects occur in regional locations, and expansion projects on average tend to generate a higher number of jobs than 'new name' projects;
- Leveraging the enterprise cluster strengths of each region;
- Working with stakeholders to ensure each region has suitable property solutions available to potential FDI and EI clients;
- Engaging with all stakeholders, local authorities, Enterprise Ireland, third level institutes, indigenous and multinational companies etc., to ensure that IDA can market each region's competitive business environment.

IDA Ireland's Mid East office is based in IDA Ireland's Head Office at Wilton Place, Dublin.

The IDA and Enterprise Ireland co-operate on a local level to support FDI and enterprise development, through actions such as global sourcing events for indigenous and FDI client companies.

IDA Property

IDA's portfolio includes several Business and Technology Parks in the Mid East:

The **Arklow Business & Technology Park** is a c.32 hectare (c.79 acre) park, designed and landscaped to a high standard including a services infrastructure to suit further investment in manufacturing and international services sectors. This high quality and well maintained park has Greenfield site options available for future development.

Navan Business and Technology Park is a 37 hectare (91 acre) park located on the main N3 Dublin to Cavan route. The park has been landscaped to a high standard and boasts a unique office complex in the form of Athlumney House. The park has been developed and maintained to a high standard, which includes existing designs for advanced offices and advanced technology buildings.

Newbridge Business & Technology Park is a c. 16.3 hectare park with 2.9 hectares of available land.

Drogheda Business & Technology Park is c. 25.9 hectare park with 22.5 hectares of available land.

Greystones offers a c. 25.6 hectare park with 17.3 hectares of available land.

All sites are designed, serviced and landscaped to the highest standard.

Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority. Its role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. Fáilte Ireland provides an extensive range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services, such as:

- Research and insights into the tourism industry and visitor experience
- Advice on how to start and grow a tourism business
- Latest tourism industry news
- Quality assurance schemes
- Management development programmes
- Online and offline marketing training and support
- Best practice and case studies
- Access to funding

Local Enterprise Offices

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), which operate within the local authority structure, act as a "First Stop Shop" for anyone seeking information and support on beginning a new business or growing an existing business. Their role is to drive the development of local enterprise,

putting local micro and small business at the heart of job creation. They support business start-ups and work to increase the job potential of new and existing micro and small businesses. Support is provided in the form of information, advice, training, mentoring, seminars and selective financial support.

Local Enterprise Offices located in counties Kildare, Meath and Wicklow play a key role in supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development within the Mid East region. They provide a range of services including:

- Business Information and Advisory Services;
- Enterprise Support and Development Services;
- Entrepreneurship Support Services;
- Local Economic Development Services.

Enterprise Ireland has a central role in maximising the impact of LEOs in the region through key interaction areas. This includes ensuring proactive progression pathways for client enterprises between the supports of the LEOs and those offered by EI— increasing the pipeline of local entrepreneurs competing for programmes such as the New Frontiers Entrepreneur Development Programme, Competitive Start Funds, HPSU (High Potential Start-Up) Funding, and IBYE (Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur).

The LEOs are also an important element in the wider economic development role of local authorities, which has been significantly enhanced under the Government's *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (October 2013) and the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Key strategic objectives of the local authority economic development role will be to implement actions to capitalise fully on the economic potential of local strengths and assets, and also to collaborate with relevant agencies to maximise the economic impact of major growth centres, in accordance with regional economic priorities which, in future, will be agreed in the context of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

In 2014 the Local Enterprise Offices had 507 clients with a combined total of 3,120 jobs in LEO supported companies. In 2015 and in subsequent years, each LEO will publish an annual Business Plan, setting out clear targets for job creation and enterprise support.

InterTrade-Ireland



InterTradeIreland is the only organisation which has been given responsibility by both Governments to boost North /South economic co-operation to the mutual benefit of Ireland and Northern Ireland. By encouraging better use of collective resources InterTradeIreland helps to expedite trade and business growth across the island and create an environment where it is easier to do business. InterTradeIreland supports businesses throughout the island to take advantage of cross-border opportunities to improve capability, drive competitiveness, and create growth and jobs.

To date over 25,000 small businesses have been supported by InterTradeIreland to identify and develop all-island trade and innovation opportunities. 6,000 have participated directly on its Programmes with over €980m worth of trade and business development value and over 3,000 jobs

created. InterTradelreland helps small businesses capitalise on the extraordinary possibilities that exist on the island of Ireland, where cross-border trade exceeds £2bn/ €2.8bn annually. This is delivered through a strong mix of funding support, business intelligence and meaningful contacts.

Funding

Sourcing specialist advice or finding the right person with the right skills can be a challenge for businesses, while partnering with academic institutes can be complex. InterTradelreland can support companies financially in these areas, assisting not only with funding, but also with specialist expertise and vital introductions. InterTradelreland also helps early stage companies become more 'investor ready' with a range of Equity and Venture Capital Advisory Services and links to key Business Angel networks on the island. For more established businesses looking to grow, InterTradelreland's Funding for Growth Advisory Services and expertise can help guide them to the most appropriate form of finance for their business stage.

InterTrade-Ireland supports SMEs to prepare for public procurement opportunities through workshops, Meet the Buyer events and tender alerts. The body also helps SMEs to gain access to cross-Border sales through programmes such as Acumen and Elevate, and to identify sources of finance. The annual Seedcorn Competition, run by InterTrade-Ireland, is aimed at early and new start companies that have a new equity funding requirement and has a total cash prize fund of €280,000. The competition is run on a regional basis across four regions – Munster, Connaught & Leinster, Dublin and Northern Ireland.

Intelligence

InterTradelreland provides valuable business & policy intelligence on opportunities, regulation, market trends and important influencers. InterTradelreland also provides access to a strong knowledge base through graduates, Universities, company collaboration and specialist advisors to support innovation and product development. InterTradelreland produces the largest all-island Business Monitor survey quarterly, publishes research reports and provides a unique all-island trade statistics portal.

Contacts

InterTradelreland's extensive networks and partnerships, formal and informal, are central to its purpose to grow business in Ireland and Northern Ireland. A series of business events including conferences, seminars, workshops and masterclasses on various topics and themes, most of which are free to attend, offer local companies the valuable opportunity to make those all important connections across the island.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Established in 1980, Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations.

The authority endeavors to achieve that objective by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community based activities.

The Mid East region has two small Gaeltacht communities located in Meath; Ráth Chairn and Baile Ghib, with a combined population of 1,771.

Economic mission

Údarás encourages investment in the Gaeltacht through a range of financial and non-financial incentives for new and existing enterprises in the Gaeltacht.

The organisation supports businesses in developing new markets, technologies, products and strategic alliances through research and development. Gaeltacht companies span a range of commercial sectors, including life sciences, ICT, tourism, fish processing and aquaculture, renewable energy, food, niche manufacturing, audio visual and digital media, arts and crafts.

Over 7,000 people are currently employed full time in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies and these companies have a significant economic impact and make a substantial contribution to the Irish economy. At year end 2013 there were 186 full-time equivalent jobs supported in Údarás na Gaeltachta client-companies in the Meath Gaeltacht.

Regional Aid

In April 2014, a new Regional aid map was published, providing details of areas of the country in which the State can provide investment aid to businesses to support development and employment. Under the new map, Kells, Athy and Arklow have been included in the areas eligible for State Aid. Aid to large enterprises is permitted for new economic activities, expansions involving new products or services, and product innovation.

This expansion of the Regional aid map presents a significant opportunity for developing businesses and growing the enterprise base in areas of the Mid East. Regional aid in Ireland is typically given in the form of capital grants for initial investment in fixed capital for new establishments or extensions and employment grants linked to initial investment. Regional aid is also provided under schemes for tourism grants, marine tourism, urban and rural renewal and other tax-based development schemes.

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is the regional tier of government for the Eastern and Midland region, including the counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow, and is based in Dublin. The main functions of the Assembly are to:

- Implement the appropriate Regional Planning Guidelines operational within its geographical area
- Prepare, adopt and implement the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies

- Ensure consistency with RPG/RESES in relation to the Local Economic and Community Plans of the 12 constituent Local Authorities
- Participate on EU operational programme monitoring committees
- Identify, participate and co-ordinate certain EU projects
- Support the national delegation to the Committee of the regions
- Support the work of the National Oversight and Audit Commission

Local Authorities

There are three local authorities in the Mid East region - Wicklow County Council, Meath County Council and Kildare County Council. These local authorities provide an extensive range of services for the residents of the Mid East counties, covering areas such as economic development, community development, housing, planning, tourism and physical infrastructure. The local authorities also play an active role in the development of industry, business, social, arts, heritage and cultural affairs.

The local authorities also have an enterprise development remit, with supports in the Mid East including:

- Provision of incubation and start-up space (Meath County Council: Navan and Kells Enterprise Centres)
- Engaging with business and industry to promote locations and provide advice and information to enterprises seeking to expand or locate locally (Wicklow County Council Economic Development Unit, Kildare County Council)
- Analysis of business opportunities available locally (Kildare County Council Wicklow County Council Economic Development Unit)
- Provision of zoned and serviced development sites (Kildare County Council, Meath County Council: Kells and Trim)
- Economic Think Tank to bring to together businesses of different sizes and from different sectors, council officials and elected representatives (Wicklow County Council)
- Business Incentive Scheme targeting rates reductions at small businesses (Meath County Council; Wicklow County Council)
- Development Contribution Scheme that reduces, discounts, or removes development levies on economic development projects (Meath County Council; Wicklow County Council: 20% reduction for commercial developments, 100% reduction for film)
- A 'fast-track' planning team and process in place for business development (Meath County Council)
- Shop Front/Town Centre Improvement Scheme to financially assist and support independent business owners to improve the appearance of their shop fronts/commercial properties (Kildare County Council)

The economic development role of local authorities has been significantly enhanced under the Local Government reform programme as set out in the Government's *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (October 2013) and given statutory effect by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

In addition to their enterprise support functions, based particularly on the operation of the Local Enterprise Offices, this involves not only an increased focus on economic development in local

authority functions generally, such as planning, infrastructure, amenity and environment, but also pursuing economic development as a core local authority function in its own right. Key strategic objectives of the local authority economic development role will be to implement actions to capitalise fully on the economic potential of local strengths and assets, and also to collaborate with relevant agencies to maximise the economic impact of major growth centres, in accordance with regional economic priorities which, in future, will be agreed in the context of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. The formulation of Local Economic and Community Plans will bring greater strategic co-ordination and coherence, and added impetus to and guidance for, the economic development role of local authorities.

An aspect of local economic development to which local authorities are particularly well placed to contribute is tourism, given the importance to that sector of many of the functions of local authority, notably the natural and built environment, heritage, amenities and open spaces, and generally enhancing the quality of life in local areas. The potential of local authorities to contribute to tourism should be fully exploited in the formulation of the Tourism Action Plan arising from the Government's Tourism policy document People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025, which was published in March 2015.

Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017

The **Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017** came into effect in May 2011 and includes in depth assessment and strategic goals for the economic development of the county. The Economic Development pillar of the strategy aims to promote the growth of employment opportunities in concert with the principles of sustainable development, to lower the levels of outbound commuting through the provision of local job creation opportunities, and to develop community building and quality of life in the county.

Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022

The **Economic Development Strategy for Co. Meath 2014-2022** was launched in June, with the ambitious but attainable target of creating 7,500 new jobs in the county by 2022. There are three pillars to the strategy: economics, spatial planning, and marketing, with the overall aims to promote the business support remit of Meath County Council, develop a strong enterprise culture to increase investment into the county by 40%, and advocate for Meath as a distinct and diverse location in which to do business. Key outputs from the strategy include:

- An evidence-based economic vision for the county
- A roadmap identifying sectoral opportunities for economic and employment growth
- Key recommendations to enable the county to realise its economic potential
- The integration of these recommendations with land use planning proposals
- A marketing plan with key messages to support the strategy
- An action plan to implement the key recommendations and bring the vision to life

Wicklow County Development Plan 2016 – 2022

The **Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022** (CDP) is currently being prepared, following consultation with, and submissions from, members of the public and elected representatives. The

CDP will address strategic issues relating to the creation of jobs, business development, and economic growth, in tandem with Wicklow’s forthcoming LECP. Proposed elements that the CDP can address within its remit to support economic development centre around promoting the employment base in the county, stimulating existing businesses to expand, and facilitating new ways of working to address the issue of outbound commuting.

County Wicklow Economic Think Tank (CWETT) Action Plan is collaboration between Wicklow County Council, local business and the LEO which sets out the strategic priorities for County Wicklow as the result of extensive consultation. The plan was adopted by Wicklow County Council in January 2015. The CWETT centres on a “Big Idea”: re-branding Wicklow, and six strategic objectives. The plan highlights areas where Wicklow excels, with the key message that Wicklow is “Open for Business”. The CWETT Action Plan is currently at implementation stage. It forms the platform on which the Local Economic element of the LECP process is based.

Community Enterprise Centres

Community Enterprise Centres play an important role in nurturing and growing start-ups and supporting enterprise at local and regional level. There are eight Community Enterprise Centres (CECs) located in the Mid East region. Collectively these CECs support the employment of approximately 600 people, with approximately 150 tenants. Table 7 presents information on occupancy rates and square footage of each CEC

Table 7

Name of CEC	County	Occupancy	Square Footage
Thompson Enterprise Centre	Kildare	82%	23,000
Allenwood Community Development Association	Kildare	87%	24,900
Athy Community Enterprise Centre	Kildare	80%	14,190
Navan Enterprise Centre	Meath	94%	85,000
Kells Enterprise and Technology Centre	Meath	25%	30,397
Wicklow Enterprise Park	Wicklow	85%	70,000
Arklow Business Enterprise Centre	Wicklow	85%	40,000

Education & Training Providers

Maynooth University

Maynooth University supports approximately 9,000 full time students (undergraduate and postgraduate) across its campus, with a further 1,600 enrolled in part time courses. The University and the region as a whole stand to benefit from significant recent investment in the campus’ high

tech infrastructure with the purpose of establishing Maynooth and its environs as an attractive location for knowledge based industry.

The University has three academic faculties: Science and Engineering, Social Sciences, and Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy. It is responding to regional and national demand for undergraduate and postgraduate education across a wide spectrum of disciplines and interdisciplinary areas, and is planning for significant further growth over the next decade. The University is a significant international research institution with top-level research focussed on global challenges in biosciences, social sciences and in information and mathematical sciences, with a particular emphasis on mobilising European **Horizon 2020** funding to support research activity.

The University has the best record for commercialisation return per Euro invested in research of any Irish University, with activity in this area supported by its Enterprise Ireland-funded **Commercialisation Office**.

In 2012 Maynooth University entered into a collaboration, known as the **3U Partnership**, with Dublin City University and the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland. The aims of the partnership include the development of joint degree programmes, the provision of a forum for collaborative solution-focused research in areas such as healthcare, sustainability and technology, and the sharing of best practice in teaching and learning. Maynooth University is also a member of the HEA Midlands-East / North Dublin (MEND) regional cluster comprising DCU, Maynooth University and the Institutes of Technology in Athlone and Dundalk, and is a partner in the Mid-East Regional Skills Forum.

The University has ambitious plans for growth, aimed at greatly increasing the competency and skill level among the workforce in the Mid East region. The University is embarking on an ambitious 5 year capital development plan supported by a €150m investment including €70m EIB support, with the ambition to create 50 new jobs in 2016/2017. A new 8000sqm facility comprising ICT teaching, research and **MaynoothWorks** business incubation space has been opened in summer 2015. The planned infrastructure development programme includes a new national 5G testbed.

To meet national skills and competency needs, Maynooth University has in the last 16 months undertaken a radical review of its undergraduate curriculum. A comprehensive suite of initiatives will ensure that future graduates will have acquired a wide range of transferable skills to supplement the deep knowledge they will have developed in their chosen disciplines. The revised curriculum will enable students to study across the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, and provide opportunities for all students to develop skills in entrepreneurship and modern languages, amongst others to meet the emerging knowledge and skills needs of the region.

Institute of Technology Carlow

IT Carlow (ITC) is the fourth largest Institute out of 14 Institutes of Technology in the country with 7000 learners. In 2014 IT Carlow was named the Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year.

ITC provides higher educational taught programmes from level 6 – 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications, along with research programmes at level 9 & 10 and enterprise development opportunities, through its centres in Carlow and Wexford. The Institute also provides part-time programmes in Carlow, Wexford, Wicklow, Kilkenny, Kildare (the Curragh), Shannon and Dublin.

80% of learners are enrolled on honours degree programme pathways with a further 12% enrolled on higher degrees to PhD level.

The Institute develops and maintains linkages at all levels with Commercial Enterprises, Industries, Statutory Bodies, State Agencies and International Organisations in order to create economic development through technology transfer and education. On a regional level the Institute works closely with Enterprise Ireland, Business Network Groups, Skillnet, Chambers of Commerce and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEO) in the region to promote the Enterprise Development supports at IT Carlow.

IT Carlow has a strong relationship with the Mid East region:

- More than 10% of all those from Co Kildare in full time higher education are studying in IT Carlow
- More than 25% of IT Carlow part time learners are residents of Co Kildare
- An average of 200 members of the Defence Forces have graduated from IT Carlow programmes in the past three years from certificate to masters level, levels 6 to 9 of the national framework
- Approximately 300 learners are studying for programmes from certificate to masters level at the Wicklow County Campus
- 20% of Enterprise Ireland innovation vouchers completed by IT Carlow are for companies based in the Mid-East region

From 2010 – 2014 inclusive an average of 90% of ITC graduates had gained employment within six months of completing their studies; a testament to the fit between ITC programmes and employer needs.

Wicklow County Campus

Wicklow County Campus, located at Clermont House, Rathnew, is the county's first dedicated Third Level educational facility, developed by Wicklow County Council in partnership with Carlow Institute of Technology. Opened in 2006, its first intake of student graduated in November 2009 with diplomas accredited to IT Carlow. The campus offers Lifelong Learning higher education programmes on a part-time basis, with courses in Business, Accounting and Law, Engineering, Computing and Science, and Social Sciences/Humanities.

Dundalk Institute of Technology

The Dundalk Institute of Technology caters for approximately 4,500 students and 1,500 graduates per annum and offers under-graduate and post-graduate degree programmes. The Institute has four main faculties which are Business and Humanities; Informatics and Creative Arts; Engineering and Health and Science. Dundalk Institute's regional centre includes Meath, and relations and outreach facilities are currently being developed with Meath County Council.

The **Regional Development Centre** is Dundalk Institute's Innovation Support and Technology Transfer organisation. The Centre is the commercially oriented interface between DKIT and the industrial, commercial and business life of the region, and makes available the expertise, facilities

and resources of the Institute for the wider benefit of the local economy. The centre is supported by and works in partnership with Enterprise Ireland.

The Institute's research and innovation agenda, within both established and emerging areas is driven by various research teams which are embedded across the Institute's four academic schools – Engineering, Informatics & Creative Arts, Health & Science, and Business & Humanities. DkIT has always recognised the need to have a diversity of research centres and groups, including academic, industry facing and mission orientated centres.

DkIT-DCU Strategic Alliance

This partnership consolidates education and research foundations for the Dublin - Belfast economic corridor and the Eastern Corridor, delivered through national and global engagement, using the key drivers of teaching, research, knowledge transfer and enterprise and innovation.

The strategic co-development of higher education needs along the Eastern Corridor and North East Region aligns with the National Strategy for Regional Clusters, as articulated in the Higher Education Authority Landscape Document. This alliance enables both institutions to widen the access opportunities for the population of the Eastern Corridor and ensure that they play a co-ordinated role in the economic development of the North East. Combined, the two institutions continue to support enterprise and innovation in the economy in a manner that both operating independently could not achieve.

SOLAS

SOLAS, the new Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland, is responsible for the delivery of integrated Further Education and Training by the Education and Training Boards. SOLAS works closely with a wide range of stakeholders about the needs of the labour market, including learners, employers, Education & Training Boards, Government departments, state bodies, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Institutes of Technology (IoTs) and representative organisations. SOLAS is taking a lead role in the development of⁴ :

- A National Course Database, a 'live' tool listing all relevant training programme (content, certification and learning outcomes)
- A National Course Calendar, identifying when courses are due to start and where they are available
- A 'real time' National Learner Database to track learners and provide performance measures that can be used to inform future funding decisions (learner profiles, completion rates etc)

SOLAS undertook a comprehensive consultation process with a range of key stakeholders inside and outside of the FET sector as part of the development of a five year 2014-2019 strategy for the FET Sector.

The first annual FET Service plan was prepared by SOLAS in conjunctions with the ETBs in 2014. For the first time it provided integrated information on a common basis, of the full range of further

⁴ SOLAS Corporate Plan 2014-2016

education and training provision at both national and ETB level, as funded by the Department of Education & Skills and included analysis by ETBs of demographic and employment data. A similar plan was prepared in 2015.

Pipefitting Apprenticeship

A new apprenticeship programme, which will see apprentices working with the latest technologies in commercial and industrial piping systems, was officially launched by Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation, Mr Damien English T.D, in the Louth Meath ETB Regional Skills and Training Centre in Dundalk in December 2015.

The apprenticeship has been developed by SOLAS, in partnership with industry and trade union representatives and the Education and Training Boards in direct response to an identified industry need.

New Apprenticeships

The Apprenticeship Council devised and issued a call for proposals from enterprises and education and training providers for the development of new apprenticeships early in 2014. Following the receipt of proposals and an evaluation process, the Council recommended 25 proposals for priority development. The Apprenticeship Council is now working with the 25 category one proposers on developing the new apprenticeships and the Council will work with consortia to commence enrolments on as many of the new apprenticeships as possible in 2016.

Education and Training Boards

There are two ETBs covering the Mid East region:

- Louth and Meath Education and Training Board
- Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board

ETBs are statutory education authorities which have responsibility for the provision of further education and training programmes, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, pilot community national schools and a range of adult and further education and training centres, delivering education and training programmes to support learners in the region.

Skillnets

Skillnets actively supports and works with businesses in Ireland to help them address their current and future skills needs through an enterprise-led approach. Skillnets funds groups of companies with similar training needs, through training networks that deliver subsidised training to Irish businesses and their employees, as well as free training to job-seekers. Skillnets has 63 training networks nationwide. Through its ManagementWorks programme, which offers structured learning and one-to-one mentoring support, Skillnets works with SMEs to build their management and financial capability.

Skillnets training networks based in the Mid-East region include:

- Wind Skillnet
- ICT Ireland Skillnet
- Trainers Learning Skillnet

Other national sectoral Skillnets that deliver training to companies in the Mid-East Region include:

- MBE Skillnet
- National Organic Training Skillnet
- CPA Ireland Skillnet (Certified Public Accountants)
- ManagementWorks Network
- Farm Business Skillnet
- ISME Skillnet

700 companies in the Mid- East region were members of a Skillnets training network in the past year and over 2000 employees benefited from training. The main sectors supported by Skillnets in the Mid- East region are Services, Agriculture, Retail, Food & Drink, Manufacturing and Health.

Further information on Skillnet networks and training courses is available on www.skillnets.ie

Research and Technology Centres

Maynooth University

Maynooth University is home to several research institutes that interact with industry and state agencies to deliver human capital, cutting edge expertise, intellectual property and spin-out companies. The ethos is to perform excellent research that supports the needs of society and enterprise to solve the key issues facing the region and the country. The major research and innovation institutes include:

The Innovation Value Institute, co-founded with Intel is an Enterprise Ireland Technology centre that develops business value through bespoke ICT research for major industries internationally and SME. IVI facilitates a thriving international consortium which now includes over 90 global organizations, including BCG, BP, Chevron, Cisco, Fujitsu, BNY Mellon and EY.

The **Hamilton Institute** hosts multidisciplinary research in applied mathematics and ICT. Its experts are members of the SFI distributed national centres CONNECT (Future telecoms) and LERO (software). It has particular expertise in electronic and software systems, wireless communications, knowledge extraction and cognition, and is central to the development of a national radio testbed facility to support its drive to provide commercially relevant research and innovation.

The **Health & BioInnovation Institute** incorporates centres specialising in high tech life science research for the biomedical devices, diagnostics and agri-tech sectors. Working closely with companies and agencies (SFI, Teagasc, EI) it has performed fundamental and applied internationally renowned research into diseases and their treatment leading to spinout companies such as Avectas and research collaborations with Pharmaceutical industries. Most recently these scientists have

examined issues around soil health and new crops/foods, joining colleagues and industry as part of the Enterprise Ireland supported Food Health Ireland Technology Centre

The **National Centre for Geocomputation** and the **National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis** are both based in Maynooth University. The former works with industrial partners to develop the potential for Earth observation and drone technologies to meet opportunities for sectors from transportation, logistics, to insurance. The latter works with many partners including enterprise, national and local government to analyse, interpret and visualise data for planning and decision support e.g. Dublin City dashboard: <http://www.dublindashboard.ie/pages/index>. Both groups work together to develop coherent solutions to meet the challenges created by climate change.

The **Maynooth University Humanities Institute (An Foras Feasa)** has a broad role in promoting and disseminating the cultural richness of Ireland and the region. It has specific expertise in digitisation and its use to promote historical and cultural traditions including tourism. Expertise in historic houses is supporting these enterprises and state assets to add value in attracting cultural tourists (<http://historicroishouses.ie/> and <http://letters1916.maynoothuniversity.ie>).

Enterprise Networks

Chambers of Commerce

Chambers of Commerce provide support to enterprises and work to create an improved business environment for both new and existing businesses. They also provide employee training and upskilling, space and, importantly, information for businesses on the supports and services that are available to them. At a regional level, they work to provide networking opportunities and business information events and work with key influencers and decision-makers on behalf of their members on issues that are impacting on their businesses.

There are eight Chambers of Commerce in the Mid East region, with the Drogheda and District Chamber also supporting businesses in East Meath:

- Newbridge Chamber
- North Kildare Chamber
- Kells and District Chamber
- Navan Chamber
- Arklow Chamber
- Bray and District Chamber
- Wicklow and District Chamber
- Drogheda and District Chamber of Commerce (incorporating representation of businesses in East Meath such as Bettystown, Laytown and Stamullen)

Local Development Companies

Integrated Local Development Companies are not-for-profit companies that target the areas of greatest need in the country, to provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment and to promote social inclusion across a number of measures including: Services for the Unemployed, Community Development and Community Based Youth Initiatives. There are four Integrated Local Development Companies in the Mid East region:

- County Kildare LEADER Partnership
- Meath Partnership
- County Wicklow Partnership
- Bray Area Partnership

The focus of the Local Development Companies falls into two broad categories – Rural Development and Social Inclusion. They provide a range of services to clients, including services to support the development of enterprise throughout the region. Programmes provided include the Rural Development Programme, Business Development Training Programmes and Coach and Mentoring services.

The Local Development Companies work as closely as possible with the LEOs and have successfully progressed some clients to LEO supports. The Companies also provide supports to clients under the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme and the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP), which are funded by the Department of Social Protection and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government respectively. SICAP includes an Economic Development strand, which supports initiatives aimed at promoting employment and self-employment, including developing and/or sustaining Social Enterprise.

Other Bodies supporting Enterprise in the Region

Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement. It has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development, promotion and restoration of inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes.

The waterways under the remit of the Body are the Shannon-Erne Waterway, the Shannon, the Erne Navigation, the Barrow Navigation, the Grand Canal, the Lower Bann, and the Royal Canal.

Teagasc

Many farm families are interested in diversification opportunities to improve their income and sustain the farm into the future. While the priority on many farms is to improve the technical performance of the existing farm enterprises, on others there may be opportunities to add value to the farm output or to diversify into other activities.

Teagasc **Options** Programme can help farm families to take a serious look at the viability of the farm and farm household and provide them with information on a variety of diversification ideas. The

programme is implemented mainly through a series of **Farm Options** workshops in the Teagasc Regional Management units, in conjunction with local development and training agencies. In 2012 over 500 people attended 13 of these courses nationwide and received invaluable advice from a range of specialists and entrepreneurs in basic farm finance, idea generation, rural tourism, organic farming, forestry, artisan food production, direct selling, applying for LEADER grant aid, farm social supports, basic business planning and more. On completion of the course, over 60 % of course participants had obtained at least one new idea to generate more income and put a plan to pursue their idea.

The Teagasc **Options Plus** programme partners with external agencies to provide a range of courses and information to meet the skills needs of farmers and their families to help them access the off-farm labour market or supplement family farm income through either on or off-farm diversification opportunities. Teagasc, with its nationwide network of offices and advisory staff will partner with skills and enterprise support agencies including the ETBs, LEOs, Department of Social Protection, Local Development Committees and third level institutions in providing elements of training courses such as those related to farm financial planning, business planning, farm and household cash-flow management and direct selling.

Succeed in Ireland Initiative - ConnectIreland

Succeed in Ireland is a Government-supported initiative to create new jobs by harnessing the power of the global diaspora to attract into Ireland, through the diaspora, foreign companies that are expanding internationally. The initiative provides financial rewards those that help attract new, sustainable jobs into the country. Succeed in Ireland complements the work of IDA Ireland and is delivered under contract by ConnectIreland.

Over the lifetime of the Succeed in Ireland initiative, 2,500 companies have been introduced to the programme. 48 companies involved in internationally traded services have been approved by IDA Ireland under the programme and these companies hope to create over 1,300 jobs. A further 78 companies are considering locating to Ireland and will continue to be in dialogue with IDA Ireland and ConnectIreland.

The Mid East has seen benefits from this initiative – under Succeed in Ireland, Mafic (Black Basalt) Ireland Limited (Mafic) in 2013 announced the creation of 70 manufacturing jobs over a three year period with a multi-million euro investment in their new production facility in Kells.

In 2014, ConnectIreland began running a more regional and community focused campaign and introduced their Community Action Plan. The overall objective of the campaign is to create visibility and awareness jointly with the 31 City and County Councils of the key role that communities can play in job creation through the use of the ConnectIreland mechanism. Each county is encouraged to appoint a local ambassador who will champion the campaign in their area. The Community Action Plan is an ongoing campaign that has already yielded company introductions in several counties.

ConnectIreland is also running an initiative to encourage Higher Education Institutions at regional level to create and engage an alumni network. A structured network will support the goal of reminding alumni of the advantages of returning to Ireland's regions to do business.

ConnectIreland's **Connectivation** competition asks members of Third Level institutions to submit engagement models to assist in increasing the audience of the ConnectIreland message and ultimately raise further awareness of the advantages of 'doing business' in the region and the importance of the link between diaspora relations and increasing FDI. The competition will be looking for an understanding of both the areas of diaspora engagement and FDI by competitors.

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland is Ireland's national energy authority. SEAI's mission is to play a leading role in transforming Ireland into a society based on sustainable energy structures, technologies and practices and help advance Ireland to the vanguard of the global green technology movement.

Bord Bia

Bord Bia is the national State agency for the promotion of Irish food and horticulture domestically and internationally, and offers a number of supports and programmes aimed at start-up or growing food businesses.

For start-up food businesses, Bord Bia, together with SuperValu and the Local Enterprise Offices, runs a **Food Academy** training programme aimed at developing start-ups in the sector into viable companies, while offering them the opportunity to trial their products in a commercial retail environment.

The **Food Works** programme, delivered in partnership with Teagasc and Enterprise Ireland, is aimed at entrepreneurs aiming to establish a food business with the potential to export. The programme provides a structure for participants to explore the feasibility of their idea and develop a strong business plan with the aim of securing external investment.

Bord Bia also operates a dedicated website, **Vantage**, aimed at small food businesses and potential food entrepreneurs. Vantage offers advice and information on marketing, available agency supports, as well as analysis and reports on different market segments.

Department of Social Protection/Intreo (Employment Services)

In January 2012, FÁS Employment Services and Programmes transferred to the Department of Social Protection. October 2012 saw the launch of Intreo, a new service managed by the Department of Social Protection. Intreo services provide a single point of contact for all employment services and supports for both jobseekers and employers. In addition to services such as income support payments, practical, tailored employment supports such as job search assistance and advice on training /education for jobseekers is provided. Intreo services also provide employers with information and guidance on the range of employment supports available to them from the Department and assistance with the recruitment of jobseekers.

In the Mid-East region, Intreo Centres are located in Newbridge, Bray and Arklow. A new Intreo Centre is due to open in Navan in 2016. The Department of Social Protection also has Branch Offices in Baltinglass, Wicklow, Athy, Maynooth, Kells and Trim.

Chapter 5: Strengths and Opportunities

Strengths

Connectivity and Access

The Mid East region has a strong competitive advantage in its accessibility and the quality of its infrastructure. It enjoys good national and international connectivity due to its high proportion of motorway corridors and major roads, which provide links to adjoining regions, cities of scale such as Dublin, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford, as well as providing fast access to Dublin airport and seaports in Drogheda, Dun Laoghaire and Rosslare.

The region's connectivity and location serves as an asset in the attraction of investment and talent into the region, in the attraction and facilitation of tourists, as well as being a key factor for the development of infrastructure-dependent sectors such as **Distribution and Logistics**.

Higher Education and Research

Maynooth University hosts renowned **research centres**, has a strong track record of facilitating **commercialisation and innovation** opportunities, and has also recently announced a €150 million investment programme that will see significant development in its research, academic, and residential facilities.

The University has six technology and research centres, covering areas including electronic and software systems, wireless communications, geocomputation, regional and spatial analysis. A key asset is the University's strength in collaborating with enterprise – it holds the best record for research commercialisation of any Irish University and leads an Enterprise Ireland-supported technology transfer consortium in partnership with Athlone IT, IT Carlow and Waterford IT, aiming to enhance the potential for innovation in Irish industry. Maynooth University also hosts a dedicated Commercialisation Office with support from Enterprise Ireland. The development of postgraduate and post-doctoral expertise by the university also serves to make the region attractive to knowledge intense employers.

Workforce: Education and Training

The Mid East also has competitive strength in the education and experience of its local workforce, a significant factor in the attraction of industry and enterprise and a major asset to the region. The population of the Mid East outperforms the national average in its proportion of those educated to Third Level or above (30%), and ranks second highest in the State (after Dublin) for proportion of population at this level of educational attainment.

The Mid East also ranks above the State average in the share of its workforce employed in ABC (managers and professionals) classifications (39.6%); Within this the region is above the national average for proportion of the workforce employed as Managers, Directors, and Senior Officials, and those working in Associate, Professional and Technical Occupations – areas of work associated with substantial full-time training or study.

Tourism, Leisure and Cultural Assets

The Mid East region has very strong tourism and leisure offering including heritage sites of international importance, infrastructure for outdoor recreation and areas of natural beauty, as well as excellent national and international connectivity.

The region's tourist sites include Bru na Boinne and Newgrange, a UNESCO world heritage site (Meath), the early Christian monuments at Glendalough (Wicklow), Trim Castle (Meath) and Castletown House (Kildare), all of which are currently marketed under Fáilte Ireland's **Ireland's Ancient East** initiative. The region also has a developed network of waymarked trails, including the Wicklow Way, blue flag beaches, Blueway Activity Trails, and equestrian recreation facilities.

Opportunities

Innovation and Research Commercialisation

The recently announced capital investment programme at Maynooth University presents an opportunity to further drive awareness of, and increase the capacity of, commercialisation services and research collaborations led by the University. With support from Enterprise Ireland and Knowledge Transfer Ireland the University typically licences or discloses in the region of twenty technologies to industry every year.

The recent opening of a Business Incubation Centre on the University campus, **MaynoothWorks**, will also provide an opportunity for high potential start-ups and spin-out companies to develop their potential in a supportive environment. Innovation infrastructure across the region should be further bolstered by the above-mentioned technology transfer consortium formed by Maynooth University in partnership with Athlone IT, IT Carlow and Waterford IT.

Software and ICT

Ireland has become a global technology hub for ICT – hosting nine of the world's top 10 ICT companies. The enterprise ecosystem that surrounds the M4 corridor includes major international companies (e.g. Intel, Hewlett Packard), education and research providers and innovation infrastructure (Maynooth University, MaynoothWorks) and a vibrant SME system (eg Verify, 3XM, i-Geotech). This enterprise cluster offers an opportunity to attract further ICT investment to the North Kildare/Meath area and serve as a location to create future communications and software enterprises. A specific opportunity exists in developing new industries preparing for 5G communications and the emerging internet of things.

Renewable Energy

Ireland's renewable energy industry is growing significantly in view of its binding commitment to EU targets of 40% renewable electricity by 2020. In 2012, the Mid East had a single windfarm with capacity to generate 3.6MW of electricity; in 2015 the Irish Wind Energy Association (IWEA) estimates its 7 windfarms in Wicklow (6) and Kildare (1) are contributing an output of approximately 43MW, relative to the State's total estimated capacity of 3014MW. As the sector continues to develop there is an opportunity for related jobs growth in the Mid East region; further development

of the wind energy sector in the region is also strengthened by the **Wind Skillnet**, providing sector-specific training and networking opportunities.

Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

The Mid East region's natural, heritage and recreational assets, together with its national and international connectivity, are aspects that could be further capitalised on to increase visitor numbers to the region. Tourist attractions in the Mid East generated significant visitor numbers in 2014, such as Tayto Park (450,000), Newbridge Silverware Museum of Style Icons (350,000), Castletown House (285,410), Powerscourt House (232,605), and Bru na Boinne Newgrange (139,173).

Figure 5-Ireland's Ancient East



Ireland's Ancient East offers a personal experience of 5,000 years of Europe's history. Your journey of discovery in this relaxing, off the beaten track, lush beautiful landscape, that attracted warring settlers for millennia, will be made illuminating by stories from the best storytellers in the world.

The brand promise:

- A destination that is easy and enjoyable to explore.
- A destination where stories unfold through exploration of our history and heritage.
- A destination where the storytellers at each heritage site encourage further exploration of other historical eras, building up to an unforgettable journey through 5,000 years of time.
- A destination set against the lush, green, pastoral landscapes of Ireland.

Strategic Objectives

1. Drive growth of international visitors, revenue and associated employment in this geographical area.
2. Reposition this area from transit zone to touring destination.
3. Create a brand of international quality and credibility, presenting Ireland's Ancient East as the best place to experience Ireland's incredible built heritage brought to life by the best storytellers in the world.
4. Work with stakeholders, experience providers and heritage assets on the ground to develop world-class visitor experiences.
5. To link the larger iconic visitor attractions with lesser-known sites nearby in order to disperse visitors and increase their dwell time and spend in the area

Failte Ireland's **Ireland's Ancient East** proposition (Figure 5), will be a key opportunity to achieve tourism growth in the Mid East region over the next number of years. The proposition, in which

several of the Mid East's tourist attractions (such as Bru na Boinne, Hill of Tara, Glendalough, Powerscourt House and Gardens, Mount Usher Gardens, Wicklow Gaol, Castletown House, Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park) are featured prominently, also demonstrates the potential value of a co-ordinated tourism approach that connects/links attractions and resources across several counties.

In recent years Meath and Louth County Councils have adopted a holistic approach towards the development and marketing of the Boyne Valley. The **Boyne Valley Destination** is an initiative of Louth and Meath County Councils working together to jointly promote the destination. There has been significant investment in the Boyne Valley in areas of enterprise development, marketing and destination development by Fáilte Ireland in conjunction with both County Councils.

Landscape is core to Ireland's Ancient East and as such the development and promotion of **Blueways** in Kildare and Meath (Barrow Blueway, Royal Blueway, Grand Blueway) also offers the opportunity for the region to further develop its presence as a destination for activity holidays to domestic and overseas holidaymakers, in combination with renewed promotion of established assets such as the Wicklow Way trail. Internationally, competitor destinations are using advances in digital technology to drive footfall to cultural assets. The development of appropriate scientific and cultural content to both promote and underpin the visitor experience to Ireland's Ancient East could offer opportunities to promote this in a way that increases tourism in the region.

Overnight Tourism and Accommodation Development

While the region's proximity and connectivity to Dublin is an asset in this area, a key opportunity/challenge for the region lies in developing overnight tourism, capturing visitors who travel into the region on day-trips.

Developing and raising standards in existing accommodation stock is key, but complementary to this there is a market opportunity for alternative accommodation options: Fáilte Ireland's new **Welcome Standard** is targeted at providers of atypical or innovative accommodation options, and presents an opportunity for these providers to be assessed with a view to accreditation under Fáilte Ireland's internationally recognised quality assurance standards. In addition to this accredited providers are entitled to participate in and work with Fáilte Ireland's strategic programmes such as Ireland's Ancient East.

New Inward Investment

Opportunity to attract new inward investment is served by the presence of existing FDI in areas such as **High Value Manufacturing, Global Business Services and Research & Development**, the region's high quality national and international connectivity, its highly educated/experience workforce, and its proximity to Dublin. The region has a strong track record in this regard and hosts several significant IDA client companies in the pharmaceutical and technology sectors such as Intel, Generali, Coca Cola, Servier, Takeda, Capita, Essilor and Hewlett Packard. The competitive landscape in securing Inward Investment is increasingly more challenging, however, and Inward Investment by its very nature tends to be attracted to large urban areas.

Education and Skills

The skills and education of the Mid East workforce should continue to be promoted as a key asset to industry/enterprise looking to source talent locally. The region has the capacity to continue to generate a broadly based and highly educated workforce due to the presence of, and regional proximity to, several Universities and Institutes of Technology. The recent establishment of **Wicklow County Campus** presents opportunities to further upskill the existing workforce, offering part-time lifelong learning courses (accredited by IT Carlow) in Business, Accounting and Law, Engineering, Computing and Science, and Social Sciences/Humanities. ETBs in the region also provide education and training programmes aimed at meeting the needs of local employers and local learners.

In terms of future skills needs of local industry an opportunity exists to enhance awareness and uptake of Skillnets courses, which allows businesses to avail of subsidised employee training in areas relevant to the region's enterprise base.

Film Industry and Film Induced Tourism

Wicklow has been home to well-renowned film and television studio complex Ardmore Studios since 1958, and the recent establishment of another state-of-the-art studio, Ashford Studios, demonstrates the region's suitability as hub for the indigenous and international film industry in Ireland. The regional presence of the **Wicklow Film Commission** (established in 1992 by Wicklow County Council and Bray Town Council) is an additional support to filmmakers exploring options for filming in the area.

The suitability of these locations is built on factors such as the presence of the above mentioned high-quality studios, close proximity and good access to Dublin airport, seaports at Drogheda, Dun Laoghaire and Rosslare, the presence of a broad variety of rural and urban filming locations, and the availability of local crew and services.

Furthermore the recent launch of Coillte's film location marketing initiative **Coillte on Film** promotes several Forest Park locations across all counties in the Mid East region: an important opportunity as the development of the film industry serves not just to support jobs and enterprises in that sector but also has impacts on tourism and tourist activity, with Irish filmed productions acting as long-lasting international showcases for set locations.

Equine Sector

Most recent available data from 2012 estimated the contribution of the Irish Sport Horse Industry to the national economy as in excess of €708million per annum. The industry was also estimated to support 12,512 full-time equivalent jobs.⁵ A recent report from the Sport Horse Strategy Committee⁶ highlighted the need for greater collaboration across all branches of the industry, including breeding, competition and leisure, in order to leverage the commercial opportunities in the equine sector.

Existing infrastructure and facilities in the Mid East include racecourses at The Curragh (which recently received approval for a 65m development plan), Naas, Punchestown, Fairyhouse, Navan,

⁵ UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science, *Economic Contribution of the Sport Horse Industry to the Irish Economy 2013*

⁶ Sport Horse Strategy Committee, *Reaching New Heights*, 2015

Bellewstown and Laytown, internationally renowned breeders and bloodstock agents, a comparatively large number of accredited coaching courses across all three counties, a broad network of recreational equestrian centres, and a dedicated undergraduate degree programme in Equine Business at Maynooth University. Relevant organisations headquartered in the region include Horse Sport Ireland (the governing body for the horse sport industry in Ireland), Horse Racing Ireland, Irish Thoroughbred Marketing, and The National Stud.

The Mid East is well positioned to capitalise on its existing high-quality facilities and tradition in this sector, to expand on its established reputation and become a hub for the sport-horse industry and associated activities including racing, training and education, breeding and bloodstock, research and development. The scope of this opportunity includes the development of equine tourism, as well as the promotion of the region as a location for national and international equine events.

Chapter 6: Driving Entrepreneurship

Key ambitions to drive entrepreneurship in the Mid East region are to:

- Increase the number of start-ups in the region by a minimum of 25% through promoting and encouraging entrepreneurship through targeted programmes and initiatives
- Improve the survival, progression, and scaling of new start-ups
- Increase the take up by start-ups of the sponsored supports for access to finance
- Increase the number of start-ups entering incubation and enterprise spaces

Growing the number of successful enterprises and start up businesses is hugely important for Ireland's economic development. Given that recent research by the Central Bank has shown that two-thirds of new jobs in Ireland have been created by companies in their first five years, it is critical that the necessary supports are in place to optimise the role of entrepreneurship as an essential source of economic growth and job creation.

The Government is committed to fostering entrepreneurship. The Government's National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland sets out our ambition for Ireland to be among the most entrepreneurial nations in the world and acknowledged as a world class environment in which to start and grow a business. It also sets targets to increase the number and survival rate of start-ups by a minimum of 25%, and improve the capacity of start ups to grow and scale by 25%

While private industry engagement must be the catalyst for driving entrepreneurship, national policy and regional public sector bodies also play a key role in creating the right framework for enterprise to start up, grow and succeed. A strong theme identified by stakeholders during consultation was the need to enhance communication to startups and existing enterprises of the supports, services and opportunities available, both from the State and from industry, to support enterprises at every stage of their lifecycle.

There are a number of bodies in the region, both public and private sector, working with enterprise in the region to help deliver this ambition.

Key actions to support the above ambitions in the Mid East region include:

- Enterprise Ireland will run a 'Start-up Open Day and Clinic' in the Mid East for newly registered start-ups in the region in Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Services
- Maynooth University EDEN Centre will run a 2016 Student Enterprise Challenge
- InterTradelreland will deliver a series of equity awareness events in the Mid East including equity advisory clinics
- Local Authorities and LEOs in the region will pursue an awareness campaign, targeted at commuters, to encourage entrepreneurs to stay in the region to set up a business

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland, through its Mid East Region Office, works closely with entrepreneurs, local development agencies and local representative bodies to drive an increase in the number of start-up companies through provision of supports such as the New Frontiers Entrepreneur Development Programme, Competitive Feasibility Funds and Competitive Start Funds.

Local Enterprise Offices

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) act as a “*First Stop Shop*” for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland. They provide supports in the form of information, advice, training, mentoring, seminars and selective financial supports to drive the development of local enterprise, putting local micro and small business at the heart of job creation.

At the end of 2014, total direct employment among the Mid East LEO client companies stood at 2,061, with total jobs growth during the year of 354. From 2015, the three Mid East LEOs will publish annual Business Plans, setting out clear targets for enterprise support.

Over the lifetime of this plan, the three Mid East LEOs will work to support business start-ups and increase the job potential of new and existing micro and small businesses in the region, working in close partnership with Chambers of Commerce in their respective areas.

Entrepreneur Development

Enterprise Ireland’s **New Frontiers** national entrepreneur development programme is delivered locally by Institutes of Technology and offers selected participants a package of supports to help drive and accelerate their business development. In the Midlands and East region, the programme is delivered by Athlone Institute of Technology in partnership with Maynooth University; the programme is also delivered in nearby Institutes of Technology, such as Dublin Institute of Technology and Dundalk Institute of Technology, both of which are within easy access for Mid-East based entrepreneurs interested in participating in this programme.

MaynoothWorks, located at Maynooth University, is an Enterprise Ireland supported business incubator focused on providing modern office space and support for emerging technology start-ups. Early stage entrepreneurs based at the centre are supported in their development through mentoring, networking opportunities, peer to peer learning and executive coaching.

Opened in October 2015, MaynoothWorks’ client companies include Verifyly, the latest venture from Hailo co-founder Jay Bregman which provides web and mobile applications for recreational drone users; Accuplex Diagnostics, an early stage diagnostics company which is already selling product internationally aimed at treating both human and equine conditions; and Avectas, which develops technology in pursuit of in-vivo diagnostic and therapeutic applications with a current focus on oncology.

There is also great potential for tapping into student creativity and ambitions toward entrepreneurship given the numbers of under 25s in the region. In January 2014 Maynooth University established the **EDEN centre for Entrepreneurship, Design and Innovation**. This centre offers courses in entrepreneurial capability and thinking to students across the university. The centre

has proven effective in encouraging and assisting students to develop business ideas that have led to success in the Microsoft Imagine Cup, and the Enactus national competition for Social Entrepreneurship.

The annual Maynooth **Student Entrepreneurship Challenge** is designed to encourage young student entrepreneurs to develop novel and promising ideas, with seed funding of €5,000 available for the winner's nascent enterprise.

Incubation Space for Enterprise

The provision of suitable incubation space plays an important role in nurturing and growing start ups and supporting enterprise at local and regional level. Having this business infrastructure in place allows start ups to focus on starting and growing their core business. Community Enterprise Centres in the Mid East region currently support the employment of approximately 600 people, and support approximately 150 tenants.

MaynoothWorks, mentioned above, consists of 19 specialist office/enterprise spaces, and 14 hot desks with two wet labs as part of a 1500 sq m facility. It represents the latest thinking in incubator design and practice by locating the incubator within the 8000 sq m **Eolas Building**, which accommodates much of Maynooth University's research and education expertise in the digital domain.

By December 2015 MaynoothWorks was host to 8 spin-out/spin-in client companies employing 37 staff. By mid 2016, incubator clients will be employing 65 people in more than 16 businesses. By mid 2017 the ambition is that up to 110 new people will be employed in enterprises of different scale at MaynoothWorks. Overall ambitions for the centre are to foster strong integration between the enterprise clients for student placements and researcher engagement, and to add value to enterprise, research and student preparation.

Access to Finance

The ability to access credit promotes growth, encourages start ups and enables existing business to develop and grow. The Government has introduced a number of initiatives to improve access to finance for SMEs, including the Microenterprise Loan Fund, the Credit Guarantee Scheme and the provision of funds through the new Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland. Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices will provide information on these, and other schemes which are available nationally to clients, and aim for increased take-up.

InterTradeIreland is also active in this area and in the coming years will promote access to finance for Start-Ups through workshops under their "Funding for Growth" initiative, equity awareness events, equity advisory clinics and the annual Seedcorn Competition, aimed at early and new start companies, which is run on a regional basis across four regions, including Leinster.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
Encouraging Entrepreneurship			
1.	<p>Each of the Local Enterprise Offices in the Mid East region will aim to increase employment in its baseline through increased start-ups and the scaling of existing clients. Annual Business Plans will be developed, setting out clear targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in their region. Key aggregate targets for LEOs in the Mid East are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 900 participants at Business Advice sessions • 20 Start Your Own Business courses will be run, for over 285 participants • Over 200 clients will be assigned Start-up/ Business Development mentors • Approx. 800 women will participate on core LEO training programmes (Start Your Own Business, Accelerate, Hi Start, Export Awareness, Lean, Mentoring) • 65 schools to participate in Student Enterprise programme, with almost 4,000 participants <p>These targets will be further developed in 2016 and 2017.</p>	2015-2018	Local Authorities, LEOs, Enterprise Ireland
2.	Pilot a project between Kildare County Council and Maynooth University to develop a “Kildare Data Hub”, to serve as an online socio-economic profile and information tool, increasing information sharing to encourage entrepreneurship and the future employment potential in the county	2017	Kildare County Council, Maynooth University
3.	Maynooth University EDEN Centre will run a 2016 Student Enterprise Challenge	2016	Maynooth University, EDEN Centre

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
4.	Develop an awareness initiative/campaign ('Work Where You Live'), targeted at commuters, to encourage entrepreneurs to stay in the region to set up a business	2017	LEOs and Local Authorities
5.	Enterprise Ireland will run a "Start-up Open Day & Clinic" in the Mid-East for newly registered Start-ups in Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Services from the region, with a view to prospecting for future start-ups and communicating and raising awareness of supports available to potential entrepreneurs in the Mid-East	2016 and 2017	Enterprise Ireland
6.	Consider the feasibility of establishing a Foundation for Entrepreneurship in County Meath in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including enterprise agencies and the Boyne Valley Food Hub	2016	INFE, GEN Ireland, Meath Enterprise, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders
7.	Increase awareness of non-financial supports available to enterprise in the region	Ongoing	All Enterprise Development agencies
8.	Establish 'enterprise zones': space for entrepreneurs, both high-tech (linked to colleges/universities, focus on graduate/student entrepreneurs) and low-tech (focus on building space/property solutions)	2016	Local Authorities, LEOs, Maynooth University and TTSI consortium
9.	Create networks for advice/mentoring around the above 'enterprise zones'	2017	Local Authorities, LEOs, Maynooth University and the TTSI consortium, MaynoothWorks
10.	The Local Enterprise Offices will maximise collaboration with the Community Enterprise Centres to assist start-ups and existing businesses to grow and develop	Ongoing	Local Authorities, LEOs, Community Enterprise Centres
11.	Enterprise Ireland will support and monitor successful applicants under	2016-2017	Enterprise Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
	the €5 million Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme launched in 2015		
12.	Local Enterprise Offices will work with Enterprise Ireland to increase the number of start-ups in the region through, for example, competing for a place in Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur, Competitive Feasibility, Competitive Start, and High Potential Start-ups	2016	LEOs, Enterprise Ireland
13.	Enterprise Ireland will evaluate proposals under the €5 million Competitive LEO fund	2015 and ongoing	Enterprise Ireland
14.	Review the provisions of the CEDRA reports and examine the potential for a pilot CEDRA REDZ (rural economic development zones) in Meath or similar concepts to enhance the capacity of local economic development at sub county and town level	2017	Meath County Council
15.	Design, promote and deliver an economic preplanning clinic through Kildare County Council to support the development of micro-enterprises and SME's in a sustainable manner	2017	Kildare County Council
16.	The local authorities in the Mid East region, as in other areas, will each develop and publish a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), setting out, for a six-year period, objectives and actions to support economic development and local and community development in their administrative regions	2015 and ongoing	Mid East local authorities
17.	The Local Development Companies in the region will provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment and deliver a range of programmes to support entrepreneurship and social enterprise. The Local Development Companies will work with the LEOs,	Ongoing	Local Development Companies, Local authorities, LEOS, and other relevant enterprise development bodies

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
	with a view to progressing clients to the LEO services		
18.	Enterprise Ireland will work with client companies from the region, including high potential start-ups, to increase participation on capability building programmes and to accelerate their capacity to scale up and succeed in international markets	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland
19.	Develop Local Development Strategies for the delivery of the LEADER programme over the period 2015-2020	2016-2016	Local Development Companies, Local Community Development Committees
20.	Develop a communications strategy to build awareness of available enterprise/business supports, including financial, training, and incubation units	2016	Local Authorities, LEOs
21.	Promote and support entrepreneurship and start-ups in the region through showcasing local success stories/testimonials on platforms such as LEO and council websites	2016	LEOs, Local Authorities
22.	Drive and encourage entrepreneurship in the Mid East region through initiatives such as Enterprise Start workshops and the New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
Access to Finance			
23.	Increase the take up by start-up and growth enterprises of the various financial supports for enterprise (SURE, Microfinance, Seed and Venture Funds, SBCI, etc)	2016-2017	LEOs, EI, IDA, HEIs, Chambers

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
24.	Communicate to business the opportunities that exist from EU funds	2015-2019	EI, Regional Assembly, IBEC, Chambers, DJEI, IDA, Local Authorities/LEOs, HEI
25.	InterTradelreland will run its annual Seedcorn Competition on a regional basis, to give companies the opportunity to improve their investor readiness and greatly increase their chances of raising equity. Local companies will have the opportunity to compete on a regional basis for a prize of €20,000. The regional winner can go on to compete for overall prizes of €50,000 and €100,000	2015-2019	InterTradelreland
26.	Promote national supports available to provide access to finance to start ups and existing businesses	Ongoing	Local Authorities/ LEOs/ Enterprise Ireland
27.	InterTradelreland will host a workshops under their "Funding for Growth" initiative in the Mid East region to promote all traditional and non traditional sources of finance to local businesses, as well as providing an opportunity to meet with a corporate finance expert	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
28.	InterTradelreland will deliver a series of equity awareness events in the Mid East including the unique equity advisory clinics where companies can meet with an equity expert, business planning workshops and venture capital case studies	2015-2016	InterTradelreland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
Incubation Space for Enterprise			
29.	Link, develop and market innovation/incubation space in the region	2016	Maynooth University, Meath Enterprise Centre

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
30.	Audit and identify potential for improvement of incubation space within the region	2016	Local Authorities
31.	Audit vacant industrial units in the region with a view to developing shared-service enterprise units, innovation centres, or incubation units	2016	Local Authorities, LEOs
32.	Pursue the expansion of existing incubation facilities available in Wicklow County Campus to support the development of early-stage HPSU businesses by providing increased access to mentorship and support	2016	IT Carlow Wicklow County Campus, LEOs, EI, HEIs

Chapter 7: Supporting Business to Grow and Scale

A core objective of this Action Plan is to assist companies in the Mid East region to grow and scale , in order to increase job creation and contribute to the regional and national economy. Growing a business requires management and entrepreneurial skills as well as supports to access new market opportunities to grow the business.

Key ambitions under this chapter of the Action Plan for Jobs for the Mid East are to:

- Increase the number of EI, LEO and IDA enterprises who grow and scale
- Increase the number of enterprises who become first time exporters, first time mentees, first time online traders, first time lean adopters
- Increase the number of enterprises and the value of sales derived from sub supply to multinationals and to the public sector

Key actions to support these ambitions include:

- Enterprise Ireland will target manufacturing and internationally traded services companies in the Mid-East to scale, innovate and develop international markets
- IDA and Enterprise Ireland will effect a national collaboration and global sourcing initiative: increasing collaboration with existing clients and introducing relevant Enterprise Ireland clients to IDA clients
- LEOs in the region, in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland, will develop effective progression pathways for clients to EI's HPSU programme

Accessing International Markets

Success in export markets is crucial to the long-term growth of Irish enterprises and the Irish economy. The relatively small size of Ireland's domestic market means many companies looking to grow and scale their business must look to international markets for growth. Export events, workshops and programmes run by Enterprise Ireland and InterTradelreland help new and early exporters to develop the tools and techniques to succeed in export markets.

Enterprise Ireland will support companies in the Mid East to achieve scale and grow internationally by building capability, accessing opportunities for markets and ideas, providing resources and finance, and influencing their business environment. Enterprise Ireland will run exporting events in the region to help new and early exporters to develop the tools and techniques to succeed in export markets.

InterTradelreland supports businesses throughout the island of Ireland to take advantage of cross-border trade and innovation opportunities, including the provision of supports to help companies pursue export opportunities to Northern Ireland.

Public Procurement

The presence of three local authorities, along with decentralised Government offices in the region, represents a significant public sector purchasing base for companies supplying products and

services. Although public sector procurement is governed by clear rules to ensure access and transparency, there are opportunities for regionally based companies to bid for supply of services and goods.

Enterprise Ireland, InterTradeIreland and LEOs will work with SMEs in the region to support them in tendering for opportunities to supply products and services to the public sector.

In addition, IDA Ireland and Enterprise will continue to work closely on initiatives such as the Global Sourcing Strategy, which aims to create new global supply chain opportunities for EI client companies through initiatives such as networking events for indigenous and FDI companies.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
Supporting Existing Enterprises to Grow and Scale			
33.	Enterprise Ireland will run 1 “Get Export Ready” workshop in the Mid East region in 2016 to outline supports available to drive development of local enterprises who are considering an export agenda	2016	Enterprise Ireland
34.	Enterprise Ireland will run 1 “Exploring Exporting Workshop” in the Mid-East region for early and pre-export companies, to explore the export opportunities for their companies	2016	Enterprise Ireland
35.	Carry out an audit of business/enterprise/industrial parks in Kildare to identify the existing range of facilities, as well as infrastructural and service deficits, and so plan for current and future needs	2017	Kildare County Council
36.	EI will roll-out their new client engagement model to different cohorts of companies to drive development and growth, targeting those with the potential to grow and create employment	2016	Enterprise Ireland, LEOs
37.	Identify locations for the development of enterprise units, with provision of shared services, to help small companies grow	2016	Local Authorities, LEOs

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
38.	Raise awareness of the EIS (Employment and Investment Incentive Scheme) as a finance option, following its recent extension to SMEs in the Mid East	2016-2017	LEOs, Revenue, EI
39.	InterTradelreland will promote its Acumen and Elevate programmes in the Mid East region	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
40.	InterTradelreland will host a “Going North” workshop in the Mid East	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
41.	InterTradelreland will set a target of at least 10 Acumen approvals in the region to investigate and pursue export opportunities in Northern Ireland	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
42.	EI will utilise the new Regional Aid designation of Athy, Arklow and Kells to assist enterprises in the Mid East to grow as appropriate	2016-2017	Enterprise Ireland
43.	Through its Trade Accelerator Voucher scheme, InterTradelreland will help companies to identify and break down barriers to trade leading to new export opportunities in Northern Ireland	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
44.	Enterprise Ireland will target manufacturing and internationally traded service companies in the Mid-East region to scale, innovate and develop international markets	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland
45.	LEOs in collaboration with EI will develop progression pathways for clients to EI’s HPSU programme	Ongoing	LEOs, EI
46.	The telecoms industry, through the Telecommunications and Internet Federation (TIF), to work with DCENR, DTTS, CCMA and NRA to address any barriers to the rollout of high speed broadband	2016	Ibec TIF

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
Procurement Opportunities			
47.	Collaboration & Global Sourcing: To enhance the Regional offering and increase collaboration with existing clients, and introduce relevant Enterprise Ireland clients to IDA clients	Effective Immediately	IDA and Enterprise Ireland
48.	InterTradelreland will deliver 3 public tendering workshops for SMEs in the Mid East over the period 2015-2016 and will provide relevant training for local small businesses in the region	2015-2016	InterTradelreland in partnership with local LEOs & other relevant local organisations
49.	InterTradelreland will promote public tendering opportunities to SMEs in the region including cross border public sector opportunities, consortia building for larger contracts and below threshold contracts	2015-2016	ITI, Local Authorities/EI/LEOs

Chapter 8: Fostering Innovation

Innovation is a key driver of economic growth. Innovation enables enterprises to develop new products and services for the global marketplace, boost productivity and create competitive advantage.

Key ambitions for innovation in the Mid East include:

- Increase the quantity and quality of engagement of enterprises with the research base
- Strengthen the region's research capability to support its areas of competitive advantage
- Increase the intellectual property exploited by new or established enterprises
- Increase the numbers of enterprises who become first time innovators
- Increase the number of enterprises introducing innovative products or services to their offering

The key actions that will support these ambitions are:

- Maximise the potential of Horizon 2020 funding by developing a regional promotion and outreach programme to assist enterprises and research teams participate in collaborative research
- Maynooth University Commercialisation team will host a Connect networking event in 2016 to facilitate academic-industry partnerships
- InterTradeIreland will promote the Fusion Programme to SMEs in the Mid East and will set a target of at least 7 Fusion approvals in 2015/16
- IDA will continue to roll out its Research, Development & Innovation Program to incentivise client companies in the region to develop new processes and products

During the consultation process, stakeholders considered there was potential to capitalise on existing research & innovation strengths in the region and promote greater take up of research supports to strengthen collaborative links between firms and higher education institutes in the region and promote a culture of innovation.

Key ambitions of the Mid East Action Plan for Jobs in this area are to build on the existing research assets in the Mid East Region to foster innovation by increasing innovation capacity within the region, supporting companies to develop new products, services and processes.

Research Assets

Key research assets within the region include Maynooth University's research centres (detailed above), its Enterprise Ireland supported **Innovation Value Institute** and its **Commercialisation Office**, all of which contribute significantly to the effective alignment of research output and industry needs. With support from Enterprise Ireland and Knowledge Transfer Ireland Maynooth University typically licences or discloses in the region of twenty technologies to industry every year.

The **Innovation Value Institute** is a national centre for excellence in IT Innovation, co-founded by Intel and Maynooth University, which focuses on delivering business value through improved use of

IT. The centre has over 70 organisational members operating as an open innovation consortium drawn from multinational companies, SMEs and public organisations in the region and internationally. The centre has also given rise to a commercial spin off in 2015 which focuses on providing training services and a capability improvement programme to a range of client companies. The centre researches, develops and disseminates IT best practice through collaboration with leading academics and industry practitioners. Its key research areas contribute to the development of the most effective, efficient, and innovative practices in information and technology management:

- Defining and presenting the capability that organisations need to develop in order to use the opportunities presented by technology and information management
- Developing the tools and training needed to allow organisations use the Institute's research output
- Defining and developing an IT capability framework for SMEs
- Using the IVI capability framework to address current business challenges
- Developing a European framework for ICT professionalism for the European Commission

Maynooth University **Commercialisation Office** focuses on three areas of activity, each of which contributes to the growth and development of Ireland's knowledge economy and, ultimately, job creation:

- Connecting Maynooth University researchers with industry and the marketplace
- Developing a culture of research commercialisation
- Identifying and commercialising the Intellectual Property developed at Maynooth University

The office runs an annual series of Industry R&D collaborations or **Connect events** in Carton House Co. Kildare. These focus on specific challenges facing entrepreneurs and showcase the opportunities for partnership. For example, in 2014 the theme was *Connect to China*: a one day workshop and networking resource for those interested in expanding their business or strengthening their links to the Chinese market, and raising awareness around the ways in which Universities and the national research system can support enterprise strategies.

Maynooth University also leads an Enterprise Ireland funded **Technology Transfer Consortium** in partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology, Athlone Institute of Technology, and Institute of Technology Carlow. The Consortium works to ensure a professional and efficient approach to the identification, protection and commercialisation of research at each institution.

Research, Development and Innovation is also an integral part of IT Carlow's activities and is a vital aspect of the interaction of the Institute with industry and other HEIs, nationally and internationally. Its collaborative RDI programmes have been variously funded by various Irish Government departments, the European Union Programmes, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Industry, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Irish Research Council for Science Engineering & Technology (IRCSET), the Technological Sector Research Programme, Enterprise Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland. The Institute has a strategic collaborative relationship with Teagasc Oak Park Research Centre Carlow.

The Institute's strategic research areas are:

- Bioenvironmental technologies (**EnviroCORE**);
- Product design and innovation (**DesignCORE**);
- Interactive applications software and networks (**GameCORE**);
- Health sciences (**HealthCORE**)

CIT is also building research capacity in Advanced Security Technologies (**SecurityCORE**) in association with the Irish Defence Forces in The Curragh. The newest CORE is **EngCORE** which provides an umbrella for the diverse research interests of the School of Engineering and acts as a focal point for the exchange and development of research programmes in relation to its main thematic areas; Applied Mechatronics, Circuits and Systems and the Intelligent Built Environment. The Institute's RDI activities are complemented by various campus-based specialist centres and campus companies, which include the Campus Innovation Centre and the Enterprise & Research Incubation Centre and in particular the most recent addition the Dargan Centre.

ITC's **Dargan Centre for Research, Development and Innovation** is a significant expansion of the Institute's RDI environment that maximises the beneficial synergies between the teaching and research activities and the enterprise development initiatives of the Institute. Opened in 2014, the centre has been designed to allow the Institute to capitalise on the opportunities for idea generation, knowledge production and knowledge exchange, through the co-location of specialised multidisciplinary research facilities and personnel, with a range of high quality research, commercialisation, enterprise development and postgraduate support services.

Support for Design-driven Innovation

Innovation 2020, the Government's new strategy for research and development, science and technology, positions design-driven innovation as an important aspect of the innovation ecosystem and a key differentiator in an increasingly competitive business environment.

Maynooth University's **Department of Design Innovation** runs programmes in design-driven innovation at BSc, MSc and PhD levels. The BSc in Product Design (Marketing and Innovation) takes in over 40 students each year. The MSc in Design Innovation was initiated in 2014 and is now in its second year. It has deep engagement with local industries, large and small, through its mature student profile and practical student assignments situated in local businesses.

The Maynooth University Department of Design Innovation staff has run two Design Thinking Masterclass workshop courses (each over 3 months) in Spring and Autumn of 2015. These will be offered again in 2016. So far, over 90 industry participants from over 30 companies have taken part.

Supports for Innovation

Enterprise Ireland plays a key role in supporting research and innovation in the Mid East. In addition to providing in company research supports, Enterprise Ireland operates a range of programmes to help companies undertake collaborative research with third level researchers, leading to jobs and sales of innovative products and services from technologies and ideas developed in Irish research institutions.

From 2016 Maynooth University's **EDEN centre** will run a series of half-day workshops for industry participants on the topic of Business Model Innovation, with follow-up individual mentoring available through quarterly workshops.

InterTradeIreland will also promote its Fusion programme in the region, which helps embed innovation capability in SMEs through the introduction of new product and process development opportunities, along with its Challenge programme, which provides SMEs with the opportunity to learn how to develop a culture of innovation

Dairy Glen Innovates with FUSION



Dairyglen Products Ltd is a family owned business located in Bray, Co. Wicklow specialising in the supply of soft serve ice-cream, milkshake mixes and slush beverages for retail and food service industries.

Through **InterTradeIreland's FUSION programme**, Dairyglen invested in market research to identify innovative processes and new product concepts to exploit market opportunities.

Working with Loughry Campus (CAFRE) in Northern Ireland, Dairyglen had access to technical expertise and best practices in the food industry which led to the implementation of new processes and quality management frameworks to support the launch of new products in market and development of its Smooch brand.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
50.	EDEN Centre will run a series of half-day workshops and mentoring for industry participants on the topic of Business Model Innovation	2016	Maynooth University EDEN Centre
51.	IDA will continue to roll out its Research, Development & Innovation Program to incentivise client companies in the region to develop new processes and products	Ongoing	IDA Ireland
52.	Maynooth University Commercialisation Team to continue to offer Connect networking events to facilitate academic-industry partnerships	2015-2019	Maynooth University, Enterprise Ireland
53.	Maynooth University Department of Design will run two Design Thinking Masterclass workshop courses for industry participants	2016	Maynooth University Department of Design

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
54.	Establish a Mid East Region forum to bring together Enterprise Development Agencies, HEIs and Technology Transfer Offices, and Industry representatives to identify and exploit development opportunities	2016-2017	HEIs, Industry, EI, LEOs
55.	Explore the potential for Meath to host an Innovation summit during Meath Enterprise Week 2016 (MEW2016) and Global Entrepreneurship Week in Ireland (GEW2016) and in collaboration with GEN Ireland	2016	Meath Enterprise, GEN Ireland, INFE
56.	Assess the feasibility of developing a Pharmaceutical Research and Incubation centre in the region	2016	IT Carlow
57.	Maynooth University will investigate the potential for developing a Research and Innovation centre in the Mid East focused on business opportunities linked to climate change	2016-2017	Maynooth University, HEIs, SFI, EI, EPA
58.	Develop a regional promotion and outreach programme to assist enterprises and research teams participate in collaborative research, especially EU Horizon 2020 projects	2016 onwards	Maynooth University, HEIs, InterTradelreland
59.	Maynooth University will explore the potential of an innovation approach based on the Spanish 'Gradient' organisation (non-for-profit research company) for Innovation Value	2016	Maynooth University
60.	Support the development of spin-off companies for the distribution and logistics sector: explore potential for innovation links with HEIs	2016	HEIs, Industry
61.	InterTradelreland will promote the Fusion Programme to SMEs in the Mid East and will set a target of at least 7 Fusion approvals in 2015/16	2015-2016	InterTradelreland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
62.	InterTradelreland will provide access to its Challenge programme to SMEs in the region	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
63.	Unique infrastructural investments (such as those for 5G testing) will be scoped and identified to promote the development of high tech business, act as a support for SMEs and an attractor for FDI	2016	Maynooth University and TTSI consortium, EI, IDA
64.	Develop a 'Design Thinking' initiative for young people, through partnership between LEOs, culture and arts venues and education providers to deliver enterprise skills to young people using existing resources, similar to the coder dojo model for enterprises	2016	IT Carlow/DesignCORE, LEOs, Local Authorities, Maynooth University
65.	<p>IT Carlow to pursue the establishment of Design+ Technology Gateway, part-funded by Enterprise Ireland, in order to support and enhance technology driven disciplines, linking that technology to business opportunities and user needs. Design-led innovation employs processes and techniques to allow companies to capture customer needs, realise opportunities, and create usable and market desirable products across Business, Computing, Engineering, Manufacturing, Environment and Science.</p> <p>Design+ Technology Gateway will develop an inclusive design-led regional and national industry portal which will complement existing Technology Gateways</p>	2016	IT Carlow, Technology Gateway network members, Enterprise Ireland

Chapter 9: Attracting and Embedding Foreign Direct Investment

The key ambitions to support the base of Foreign Direct Investment in the Mid East are:

- Attract new investments to the Mid East
- Collaborate with existing FDI client companies to sustain, grow and expand their business presence in the region

The following key actions are focused on these ambitions, and on leveraging the region's competitive strengths and existing clusters:

- IDA will target a 30 to 40% increase in investments for the Mid East over the period 2015-2019
- IDA will develop a value proposition to market the Mid-East Region as a second site location option for existing multinationals in the Dublin area
- IDA will develop a marketing proposition for **Global Business Services** in the region, to build on its existing cluster of international brands
- IDA will also develop a marketing initiative to promote the region's strengths in **High Value Manufacturing**
- IDA will also appoint a dedicated **Regional Business Development Manager** for the Mid East

A key objective of the Action Plan for Jobs: Regional strategy is to win new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for the regions by using and developing the region's competitive strengths to offer a supportive environment for the growth of those enterprises. It is, however, important to note that FDI, whilst extremely important to economic development nationally, is not the only means to economic development. Indigenous companies and sectoral opportunities in areas such as tourism and agri-food all offer significant potential for enterprise development and employment growth across the region.

IDA's new five-year corporate strategy places a renewed emphasis on FDI in the regions. The agency is targeting a minimum increase in investment of 30% to 40% in each region outside Dublin over the period 2015-2019 compared to the agency's 2010-2014 strategy.

IDA works closely with its existing base of companies to encourage additional investment, particularly in activities such as R&D, customer support and back office functions.

IDA and Enterprise Ireland also co-operate on a local level to support FDI and enterprise development, through actions such as networking events for indigenous and FDI client companies and the promotion of regional supply chains to potential FDI clients.

The Mid East region is a proven location for international business, and is host to a number of significant clients in the pharmaceutical and technology sectors. The region has a strong competitive edge in attracting investment; however, in the face of increasing international competition for

investments, greater collaboration by all stakeholders will be needed to ensure that Ireland's investment offering continues to be attractive and competitive.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
66.	IDA will target a 30 to 40% increase in investments for the Mid East over the period 2015-2019	2015-2019	IDA Ireland
67.	Transformation: Drive Transformation with IDA clients by seeking new mandates with the established base of companies	2015 -2019 ongoing	IDA Ireland
68.	Second Site Initiative: Develop a value proposition to market the Mid-East Region as a second site location option for existing multinationals in the Dublin area	2016	IDA
69.	Property: Continually review all property options across the region identifying potentially suitable options for new and existing clients	Ongoing	IDA and Enterprise Ireland
70.	Develop a Regional Connect Ireland Plan that is integrated with the local authorities' enterprise development and job-creation activities and formalise the name of a nominated officer from each county in the region for the roll-out of the Plan	2015	Connect Ireland
71.	IDA to utilise the new additional Regional Aid designations of Athy, Kells and Arklow to target relevant investors	2016-2017	IDA Ireland
72.	Announce and run the Connectivation competition, inviting third Level students to share their ideas for the future development of the Succeed in Ireland initiative	2016	Connect Ireland, HEIs
73.	Develop Value Proposition- Global Business Services: The international business services cluster of Generali, Welch Allyn, Hewlett Packard, Intel, Elavon is supported by an IT / technology capability. These	2016	IDA, Enterprise Ireland, private sector, Maynooth University Innovation Value Institute

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
	international brands are an attraction & very significant reference for additional companies to potentially locate to the Mid-East		
74.	Develop Value Proposition – High Value Manufacturing: IDA will develop marketing proposition around this cluster	2016	IDA, Enterprise Ireland and private sector, Maynooth University
75.	Resources: IDA Ireland will appoint a dedicated Regional Business Development Manager for the Mid-East	Q3 2015	IDA Ireland
76.	Infrastructure: Continue to encourage and positively influence infrastructure improvements in the Region	End 2016	Local Authorities, Enterprise Ireland and IDA

Chapter 10: Building Sectoral Opportunities

Sectors of strength which can be built upon in the Mid East include Tourism, Agri-food, Equine, Culture, Design and Creative Industries (particularly film), Retail, and Renewable Energy.

Key ambitions for the Mid East to support its sectoral strengths are:

- Increase numbers of, and revenue generated by, overseas tourists in the region in particular through capitalising on the region's prominence in Ireland's Ancient East to sustain and grow tourism jobs
- Increase the value of agri-food exports by supporting food start-ups to scale and building on the region's food innovation capabilities
- Build collaboration and enhance infrastructure around the Mid East's unique sectors of strength, such as film and the equine industry, to develop the region's competitive advantage and support clustering

These ambitions will be supported by specific actions, including:

- Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland will carry out a phased programme of actions to drive, co-ordinate and publicise the development of Ireland's Ancient East
- Develop awareness and capacity in the accommodation sector to capture more overnight tourism through promoting and developing Fáilte Ireland's new international accreditation for alternative accommodation (Welcome Standard)
- Wicklow County Council Film Industry Development Group will commence a feasibility study and business plan for the development of a Film Industry Cluster in the county
- Examine the potential for a Digital Hub in the Mid East, and identify opportunities for integrating ICT with sectors such as heritage, tourism and retail
- Initiate development of the Boyne Valley Food Hub to enhance the region's capacity for food innovation, research and supporting food related industry

Tourism

A key objective of this Regional Action Plans for Jobs is to support efforts from Fáilte Ireland, the local authorities and the community in sustaining tourism employment and providing new commercial opportunities for businesses in the region. The recent tourism policy document "People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025"⁷ sets out ambitious targets for employment growth in the sector to increase to 250,000 by 2025, including the accommodation and food sectors. To realise this ambition will require an integrated approach from both private and public sector to enhance the development and marketing of the tourism assets in the region.

A key driver for the region in terms of these sectoral targets will be the ongoing development of the **Ireland's Ancient East** proposition, in which the Mid East features prominently. A number of projects

⁷ "People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025", Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, March 2015

in the region (such as Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park, Powerscourt Visitor Experience, Boyne Valley Waterway through Time, and Maperath Farm Ltd.) are currently being developed and enhanced with capital support from Fáilte Ireland under the New Ideas in Ancient Spaces Capital Grants Scheme, with expected completion in summer 2016. Further details are included in Chapter 14.

It is very important that strong experience development continues in the Region's tourism infrastructure which is aligned to a cohesive marketing programme featuring the Region's excellent accessibility from outside and within Ireland, its strong product and accommodation base, and its attraction to each of the key Fáilte Ireland market segments – Great Escapers, Culturally Curious and Social Energisers. There also needs to be a close alignment of the marketing activities of public sector bodies involved in tourism promotion and the active tourism trade that exists in the Region. Key ambitions to sustain and grow jobs in the Tourism sector in the Mid East are to:

- Maximise the potential for the region deriving from its prominence in Ireland's Ancient East
- Increase the region's capacity to capture overnight visitors
- Develop further tourism offerings in areas such as equestrian recreation, convergence with the food and beverage sector and offerings based on the cultural heritage of the region
- Enhance the marketing of the compelling tourism offering in the region
- Support the development of relevant further education and training to build capability within businesses in the tourism sector
- Capitalise on the Tourism assets of the region, which include a wealth of important heritage sites as well as its trails and Blueways: contribute to the Government's national targets of increasing overseas tourism revenue to €5 billion, and growing employment in the sector by 50,000 to 2025

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
77.	Roll out Ireland's Ancient East international advertising campaign	Q1 2016	Tourism Ireland, Fáilte Ireland
78.	Fáilte Ireland will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct customer service and cross-selling workshops • Make available an Ireland's Ancient East digital toolkit • Launch a domestic campaign to promote the trail • Launch phase 1 of Ireland's Ancient East online presence 	Q1 2016	Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland
79.	Put in place an extensive familiarisation programme to attract media and international buyers to Ireland's Ancient East	Q2 2016	Tourism Ireland, Fáilte Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
80.	<p>Fáilte Ireland will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out an extensive range of supports for tourism businesses • Co-ordinate installation of orientation signs and county boundary signs • Progress 25 projects of phase 1 'New Ideas in Ancient Spaces' Capital Grants Scheme in co-operation with key stakeholders • Progress phase 2 of the 'New Ideas in Ancient Spaces' Capital Grants Scheme 	Q2 2016	Fáilte Ireland
81.	<p>Fáilte Ireland will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact phase 2 of Ireland's Ancient East online presence • Commence phase 2 of Ireland's Ancient East attraction signage 	Q3 2016	Fáilte Ireland
82.	<p>Development and Promotion of Barrow Blueway (Multi Activity Trail) in Kilkenny, Carlow, Laois and Kildare</p> <p>Development and Promotion of Royal Blueway (Multi Activity Trail) in Meath, Westmeath and Longford</p> <p>Development and Promotion of Grand Blueway (Multi Activity Trail) in Kildare and Offaly</p>	2016-2017	Waterways Ireland, Local Authorities, Department of the Environment
83.	Maintain and manage 156km of Inland Waterway for navigational and recreation purposes	Ongoing	Waterways Ireland
84.	Promote and raise awareness of Fáilte Ireland 's new accreditation for alternative accommodation ('Welcome Standard') among providers of, or those interested in developing, non-mainstream accommodation options in the region	2016-2017	Fáilte Ireland , LEOs, Local Authorities
85.	Investigate the feasibility of key tourism opportunities such as those centred on the racing industry, retail and golf to include: Arthur's Way, Dublin- Galway Greenway, Barrow Blueway, Shackleton Trail, the	2017	Kildare County Council

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
	Gordon Bennett Route and other opportunities		
86.	Provide support to the holders of Boyne Valley Tourism digital assets with integration of Ireland's Ancient East into existing online information around the Boyne Valley tourism area	2016	Boyne Valley Tourism, Local Authorities, Fáilte Ireland
87.	Enable/inform stakeholders so they can identify new business opportunities to capitalise on 'Ireland's Ancient East': tourism, heritage, cultural, food	2016	Local Authorities, LEOs, Fáilte Ireland stakeholder groups, Leader groups, LDCs
88.	Seek to develop the maritime sector in the region for commerce and tourism; including the development of marinas for leisure activities	2016	Wicklow/Meath Local Authorities, Port Authorities, DAFM
89.	Develop an implementation strategy to maximise Kildare's potential to become a dedicated and recognised location for recreational and cultural tourism within the Greater Dublin Area, including the Strengthening of Kildare's digital tourism marketing capability, online presence and social media platforms	2017	Kildare County Council
90.	Investigate the use of recent technological advances in digital humanities to promote the heritage and cultural heritage of the region, with the potential pilot for two assets on Ireland's Ancient East	2016-2017	Maynooth University, Local Authorities
91.	Build on 'Ireland's Ancient East' by identifying facilities, producing of brochures, identifying main draws, improving standards through training, upskilling, and making sites more accessible	2016-2017	Local Authorities, Fáilte Ireland , EI, OPW, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, ETBs
92.	Build on 'Ireland's Ancient East' by developing trails and trail activities around identified sites/locations	Ongoing	Local Authorities, local tourism agencies, Fáilte Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
93.	Bring together Boyne Valley Tourism and Kildare/Wicklow destinations strategy stakeholders to drive collaboration and focus on issues of skills, job creation, maintaining trails /walkways and supporting small companies in the sector	2016	Boyne Valley Tourism Steering Group, Kildare/Wicklow Destinations Strategy
94.	Produce tourist literature for the region's key tourist sites that includes information for visitors with disabilities	2016-2017	Local Authorities, Fáilte Ireland
95.	Improve the existing provision of bus and coach parks around the region's major tourist sites	2017	Local Authorities, OPW
96.	Develop the cycle/pedestrian path from Dublin to Athlone via Kildare, Meath and Westmeath, and progress plans to continue the development of the Boyneside Trail greenway, to encourage tourism and facilitate commuters	2016	Local Authorities, Waterways Ireland, NTA
97.	Work to improve tourism infrastructure: address issue of bed space, lack of accommodation, and local transport	2016	Local Authorities, tourism steering groups
98.	Wicklow, Kildare and Meath County Councils to explore recommendations, outlined in the NTA's draft GDA Cycle Network Plan, for the promotion of existing roadways as potential cycling tourism routes	2016-2017	Local Authorities, NTA

Renewable Energy

The Mid East region is positioned to further grow its potential as a productive base for wind energy on the island, based on its location, natural resources and developing infrastructure. As Ireland works towards its EU commitments to supply 40% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020, the renewable sector is becoming increasingly active. Building on the Mid East's assets offers potential for the development of alternative/ renewable energy projects within the region, benefiting the environment, while generating employment opportunities and reducing costs for industry.

At national level, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) aims to make Ireland a recognised global leader in sustainable energy. It runs a range of programmes and schemes across all regions to assist businesses, public sector bodies, homeowners and communities to achieve energy savings. As energy is a significant cost for industry, improving energy efficiency will improve the competitiveness of businesses and support job creation. The SEAI will work to build capacity with the Mid East region to deliver sustainable energy projects and to leverage funding for local investment.

Also at national level, EirGrid, a state-owned company, is responsible for the consistent and reliable transmission of electricity that homes and businesses in the Mid East can rely on. Earlier this year EirGrid published a draft strategy for developing Ireland's national grid. Central to the draft strategy is the provision of a strong and reliable electricity supply to the regions. This will ensure that the Mid East and other regions are equipped for investments by both energy intensive indigenous and multinational companies seeking to expand in the region.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
99.	Promote and assist the delivery of cost savings through energy efficiency programmes and training for businesses and public sector organisations in the region.	Ongoing	SEAI in partnership with Local Authorities
100.	Investigate the potential of an Energy Agency/Not for Profit Organisation to be established for County Kildare and the region as a whole to enable EU and Irish funding and financing to be obtained for the development of a sustainable economy and green infrastructure	2017	Kildare County Council, all Local Authorities
101.	Work with SEAI to develop and promote Sustainable Energy Communities model in the region and identify willing early adopter communities to act as exemplars.	2016-2017	Mid East local authorities, SEAI
102.	Support the resourcing of an Energy Officer in Kildare to support implementation of relevant actions outlined in the LECP and to identify further opportunities for collaborative working with the SEAI and EPA on energy awareness and conservation projects	2017	Kildare County Council
103.	Explore potential to develop off shore wind energy off the Wicklow coast	2016-2017	DCENR, SEAI, DAFM

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
104.	Investigate potential of Tara Mines site to provide sustainable geo-thermal heating solutions for horticulture, agriculture and aquaculture	2016	Meath Chamber, SEAI, EI

Clusters

Economic Clusters that connect firms and supporting infrastructures are recognised as a valuable source of much needed innovation and knowledge transfer and as key economic drivers within regions. Actions to support the development of clusters, where appropriate, within the Mid East region and across other regions are set out below:

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
105.	Leverage Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to identify clusters and areas of strength that support the region as a whole, and build a streamlined strategy around clusters that avoids duplication and competition	2016-2017	Regional Assembly, Local Authorities, Sectoral organisations, EI, IDA
106.	Examine the potential for a digital hub in the region, and identify opportunities for integrating ICT with sectors such as Heritage/Tourism, Retail, etc. The group will conduct a feasibility study to examine where opportunities exist and where the focus should be	2016-2017	Maynooth University, HEIs, Private Sector Company representatives from relevant sectors and Local Authorities.
107.	Explore the potential opportunities along the M4 corridor for Communications/5G research development as a lever for FDI	2016	Maynooth University, IDA, Kildare and Meath CoCo.

Equine Industry

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
108.	Develop a joint marketing strategy to brand the region as the Equine Capital of the World, including	2016	Local Authorities, Relevant industry, Regional Assembly (in co-ordination role)

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
	details of relevant companies/services in the region		
109.	Build on the Equine industry in the region: Research and Development, Bloodstock, Centres of Excellence, Human Resources and Industry Skills.	2016	HEIs, Industry, DTTAS
110.	Establish connections between Maynooth University and equine industry representatives to explore innovation and R&D opportunities	2016	Maynooth University, HEIs, ETBs

Culture and Creative Industries

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
111.	Wicklow County Council Film Industry Development Group will commence a feasibility study and business plan for the development of a Film Industry Cluster in the county	2016	Wicklow County Council, LEO Wicklow, Film Industry Development Group
112.	Activate a film industry network to contribute towards the development of an audio-visual cluster	2016	Wicklow County Council, LEO Wicklow, Film Industry Development Group
113.	Wicklow LEO will pilot a one day workshop in film industry related training	2016	Wicklow LEO
114.	Build on the success of the film sector by providing supports and incentives, and developing ancillary services	2017	Local Authorities, LEOs, Education and Training providers
115.	Commence the provision of film industry related training programmes in partnership with 3rd level institutions and Screen Training Ireland	2016	Wicklow County Council, LEO Wicklow, Film Industry Development Group
116.	Explore the development of a regional Arts Hub as a centre to support arts practice, research and learning, linking research practitioners with the creative and	2016-2017	Maynooth University, Local Authorities, Arts and Cultural Organisations

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
	tourist industries		

Agri-Food

A new agri-food strategy, Food Wise 2025, has recently been developed for the coming decade. This sets out a cohesive, strategic plan for the development of the agri-food sector to 2025 with a strong focus on maximising the development of the industry in all sectors and geographic areas. Its vision of 'Local Roots Global Reach' is based on the knowledge that this sector is embedded in local rural communities and that the continued efficient production of environmentally-friendly product will drive direct and indirect employment in local areas as well as achieving export growth on global markets.

Food Wise 2025 envisages a growth projection of 23,000 direct jobs in the agri-food sector all along the supply chain, and an increase in the value of agri-food exports by 85% to €19 billion by 2025 if the actions identified in the Report are implemented.

The Mid East has a strong and diverse agri-food sector encompassing microenterprises, companies of significant scale, in addition to food technology and innovation facilities. Significant employers in this sector based in the region include Dawn Farm Foods, Green Isle Foods, Kerry Group Services International, Duffy Meats, Largo Food Exports, QK Meats, Kepak Group, Kildare Chilling, and Glenhaven Foods. The recent opening of Kerry Group's Global Technology and Innovation Centre in Naas is a further asset to the region's reputation for food manufacturing, research and innovation. The Mid East region's proximity to the Dublin area will continue to be a key source of opportunity for this sector. Given that the Agri-food sector is ideally positioned for export growth, Enterprise Ireland will work with businesses in the sector to maximise their success, with supports available across all stages of development. Locally this will include the promotion of Food Innovation Vouchers, running a pre Food Works clinic, and working with food companies based in the region to help them scale and innovate.

SMEs and start ups with a potential to upscale will be the driving force behind increased employment levels in the agri-food sector, both nationally and within the Mid East region. Public and private sector bodies play a key role in supporting food enterprises and start ups in the food and beverage sector in the region. For example, the **Food Academy Start** training programme, a collaboration between Bord Bia, the region's three Local Enterprise Offices and Supervalu, provides integrated support and training to food companies as they progress on their journey of growth from start-up to national distribution and export.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
117.	Explore feasibility of developing the Boyne Valley Food Hub: securing anchor tenants, promoting workspace to start-ups, developing links with third level	2016	Meath Enterprise, IoTs, Local Authorities

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
118.	Promote the 'Smart Farming' initiative to farmers across Kildare to inform them of environmental sustainability and resource management to reduce Co2 production on farms	2017	Kildare County Council
119.	To ensure a good quality pipeline of food entrepreneurs, run a pre Food Works clinic in the Mid East in 2016	2016	EI, Bord Bia, Teagasc
120.	Target an increase in the number of participants on the Food Academy Programme and progress a number of companies in the region to the next level -Food Academy Advance.	Ongoing	Bord Bia, LEO
121.	Build on the Boyne Valley and Powerscourt brands to develop food hubs in the region	2016	Local Authorities, Teagasc, Bord Bia, LEOs
122.	Commence implementation of the Athy Regeneration Strategy as a Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) and identify other potential REDZ zones across the county and assist them to prepare for future funding opportunities	2017	Kildare County Council
123.	DAFM, in conjunction with stakeholders, will develop an agri-food tourism measure with an emphasis on food, beverage and eco-trails pairings, to complement the current Marine Leisure and Tourism schemes	2016	DAFM
124.	Promote the uptake of Innovation Vouchers specifically among small food companies	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, DAFM
125.	Create civic and festival markets similar to the English market in Cork and Harvest Festival in Waterford in major towns and cities	Ongoing	DAFM

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
126.	Teagasc will support and increase the level of farm diversification in the Mid East through their Options programme and their pilot <i>Opt-In</i> web portal	Ongoing	Teagasc
127.	Expand the Dublin Food Chain initiative to other cities	Ongoing	DAFM
128.	Evaluate Kildare's agricultural economy within the context of the Greater Dublin region, and provide strategic direction for its future development in supporting the delivery of Agri-Innovation – Agri-Tech, Agri-Green, Food Innovation, Niche Food, programmes for consumers in the Greater Dublin Area	2017	Kildare County Council
129.	Help small/primary food producers to add value to/develop their products	2016	Teagasc, LEOs
130.	Bord Bia will work with retailers to increase shelf space for local produce	Ongoing	Bord Bia
131.	Build on the success of marketing Irish Whiskey and beers internationally by demonstrating the linkages of these products to the wider agri-food sector	Ongoing	DAFM
132.	Bord Bia will work with LEOs to assist food and drink companies in the Mid East to be included in the Tesco Taste Buds programme	2016	Bord Bia, LEO
133.	Enterprise Ireland will target food companies in the Mid-East to scale and innovate in line with national policy	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland

Retail

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
134.	Kildare County Council to operate a Shopfront/Town Centre Improvement Scheme to financially	2016	Kildare County Council

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
	assist and support independent business owners to improve the appearance of their shopfronts/commercial properties		
135.	Meath County Council will explore the development of retail plans for Navan and Ashbourne, in collaboration with Retail Excellence Ireland	2016	Meath County Council, REI
136.	Progress involvement in the EU funded, Urbact III Project “City Centre Doctor” and strengthen partnership with other European cities to inform future development strategies for retail innovation in Naas town centre	2017	Kildare County Council

Chapter 11: Skills Enhancement and Labour Market Activation

Key ambitions for the Mid East in this area are to:

- Position the Mid East, through the Regional Skills Forum and the talent pool of its people, as a region that can fulfil the needs of high ambition enterprises in their target sectors
- Develop within the region's student population (from primary onwards) a growing interest in, and exposure to, entrepreneurial thinking

Key actions to support the continued development of the region's high quality skills base, and to support enterprises in training and development, include:

- Establishing a Regional Skills Forum for the Mid East region to foster better engagement between education providers, employers and other regional stakeholders
- Maynooth University will expand its undergraduate offering to include new courses in Robotics and Intelligent Devices, and specialist business degrees in management and marketing
- Enterprise Ireland will promote the Graduate Business Growth Initiative, to support the placement of graduates with SMEs in the region
- IMDA Skillnet and Ibec will provide training conversion programmes at level 6 to meet the skills shortages in process technician roles in Med Tech, Plastics and Engineering in the Mid East
- Skillnets will raise awareness among businesses in the Mid East of the benefits of enterprise led training and management development training

The quality and quantity of Ireland's skills base is well recognised internationally. The IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2014 ranks Ireland in first place in the world for availability of skilled labour. To support enterprise growth, we need to ensure the continued quality and relevance of our skills base emerging from the education system, along with a continued focus on upskilling the existing workforce.

Consultations with stakeholders highlighted the importance of matching skills supply and demand within the region, and the need for enhanced engagement between education and enterprise to ensure that graduates emerging from all levels of our education system are "workplace ready" and have an appreciation of entrepreneurship as a career option.

Significant reforms are underway in the education sector, aimed at ensuring the availability of high quality skills at all levels and encouraging and facilitating deeper engagement between enterprises and the education system. Key elements of these reforms include:

- The roll out of Regional Skills Forum to promote greater engagement between publicly funded education and training providers and employers in building skills within a region. The fora will also help promote awareness among employers of the range of services available from public training providers and provide an ongoing platform for engagement between employers and the education/ training sector on skills issues
- The development, supported by SOLAS, of a Further Education and Training sector that is more responsive to the needs of learners and employers
- The development of new traineeships and new apprenticeships

Maynooth University has a number of specific initiatives to enhance skills and activate the regional labour market. The University has advanced plans to establish a portal to further facilitate university/industry engagement and integration, especially around the area of work experience and jobs. The benefits will include:

- Greater involvement of employers in course design and delivery
- Inclusion of all voluntary/paid internships available in local industry and business and using this to integrate with the region's SME sector
- Engaging students with entrepreneurs through the centre for Entrepreneurship, Design and Innovation and through strengthened links with external stakeholders and expertise
- Improved information for students on how various organisations work, and types of jobs available

These initiatives are key aspects of a new Maynooth Curriculum that will provide opportunities for greater numbers of graduates to gain proficiency in modern languages and to benefit from work placements recommended by the University's enterprise partners. This will also result in an expansion of undergraduate programmes in business with the introduction of specialist business degrees in management and marketing. These new programmes will have their first intake in 2016. For the ICT sector, the University will offer a new undergraduate B.Sc. degree in Robotics and Intelligent Devices. This four year degree is a combination of computer science and electronic engineering with a focus on robotics and the embedded systems which underpin much of technological innovation. This degree will have its first intake in 2016.

At postgraduate level, Maynooth University is planning a Postgraduate Diploma and MSc in Data Science. This combination of mathematics, statistics and computer science is aimed at developing the skills to meet the growing demand for analysis of large databases, driven by the increased availability of data. This may be supported by additional offerings in Design-driven Innovation (MSc) and specific skills development short courses for enterprise in areas such as Business Model Innovation and user centric design.

The Education and Training Boards in Kildare/Wicklow and Louth/Meath will play an important role in the provision of further education and training at regional level and will be involved, through the Regional Skills Forum and other initiatives, in addressing the skills needs of the local and regional economy.

IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland will also continue to work closely with educational institutions, training boards and Government Departments in the Mid East region and its surrounding area to develop the skill sets necessary for current and future enterprises based in the region.

Encouraging Entrepreneurship

At primary and secondary level, the important role of education in promoting an entrepreneurial mindset is now widely recognised. A key objective of the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship is to support the development of entrepreneurship in the education system.

Encouraging and promoting an enterprise culture among the student population is an important area of activity for the Local Enterprise Offices. Nationally, over 20,000 students a year now participate in the various LEO supported programmes implemented in the education sector at both primary and secondary level including:

- Student Enterprise Awards - Second Level;
- Exploring Enterprise - Second Level;
- Bi Gnothach Enterprise Programme - Primary Level.

At third level, Maynooth University's EDEN centre for Entrepreneurship, Design and Innovation offers courses to students with the aim of developing their entrepreneurial capability and mindset. The centre has assisted students to develop business ideas, and also hosts an annual student entrepreneurship competition.

Labour Market Activation

Unemployment in the Mid East currently (Q1 2015) stands at 7.8%. A key priority for the Government is to support persons who are unemployed to get back into the workforce. Alongside the measures in the national and regional Action Plans for Jobs to help create new employment opportunities, the Department of Social Protection, through its Intreo (Employment Services) Centres across the region, provides support for both Jobseekers and Employers, including income support payments, advice on training options and assistance in securing employment.

Incentives for employers to recruit from the Live Register include financial assistance through the JobsPlus programme and free recruitment services through Intreo centres. Enterprise Ireland and IDA will collaborate with the Department of Social Protection by promoting the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst their client companies.

Locally, Maynooth University also provides foundation courses for mature applicants who wish to undertake level 8 study in STEM disciplines.

Ambitions for the Mid East Region in this area are:

- to build the skills of the region by fostering better engagement between education providers and employers in the region;
- to ensure that the Mid East region has a strong supply of talent to support enterprise within the region

In-House Upskilling

Actions in this area will focus on increasing awareness of the benefits of in-house training for employers, and the availability of subsidised courses in the particular sectors in the region.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
137.	Establish a Regional Skills Forum for the Mid East region to foster better engagement between education providers, employers and other regional stakeholders, on an ongoing basis, to collaborate in building the skills of the region.	2015 and ongoing	Regional Education and Training providers, ETBs, Enterprise Ireland, Department of Social Protection, Ibec, Chambers, IDA, industry, relevant public bodies
138.	Develop a skills profile for the region to identify skills of existing workforce	2016	Local Authorities, HEIs, LEOs, ETBs, Department of Education and Skills, Department of Social Protection
139.	Maynooth University will offer a new four year undergraduate B.Sc. degree in Robotics and Intelligent Devices	2016	Maynooth University
140.	Develop new apprenticeships across a range of sectors	2015 and ongoing	Apprenticeship Council, ETBs, LIT, Education & Skills Providers, EI, IDA
141.	Maynooth University will expand its undergraduate programmes in business with the introduction of specialist business degrees in management and marketing	2016	Maynooth University
142.	The Local Enterprise Offices will collaborate with Skillnets to ensure a streamlined approach to training offerings in the region	Ongoing	LEOs, Local Authorities, Skillnets, Department of Social Protection
143.	Promote the Graduate Business Growth Initiative, which supports the placement of graduates with SME companies, through EI's Mid East office	ongoing	Enterprise Ireland
144.	Assess the feasibility of establishing IoT outreach offices in the region	2016	Local Authorities, IoTs, ETBs. Department of Social Protection
145.	Ibec and IMDA Skillnet will provide training conversion programmes at level 6 to meet the skills shortages in process technician roles in Med	2016	Ibec, IMDA Skillnet

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
	Tech, Plastics, and engineering in the Mid East		
146.	Enhance collaboration between ETBs and Chambers of Commerce to improve awareness of training offering among employers	2016	ETBs, Chambers
147.	Pilot a Regional Vocational model to support new jobs - Level 5 and 6 students are given access to employer/ employment for 1-2 days per week as opposed to the "Block Model" for work placement	2016	Intreo, ETBs , LEOs, Local Companies in region, EI
148.	Skillnets will raise awareness among the Mid East region's enterprises of the significant benefits of enterprise led training offered by Skillnets through the Training Networks Programme and of management development offered through the ManagementWorks programme	2016	Skillnets, Ibec, Industry
149.	The Department of Social Protection, will collaborate with stakeholders such as IDA and EI in promoting the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst client companies	Ongoing	Department of Social Protection & SOLAS, IDA, Enterprise Ireland and other relevant stakeholders

Chapter 12: Building Business Networks

Business networks provide a powerful tool for entrepreneurs and enterprises to tap into advice and expertise, support deeper business-to-business collaboration and create supply chain opportunities. They also play an important role in supporting enterprise growth by bringing together groups of talented entrepreneurs and enterprises who are united around the idea of sharing, creating and developing new ideas within and across sectors.

Chambers of Commerce provide support to enterprises and work to create an improved business environment for both new and existing businesses. They also provide employee training and upskilling, office accommodation and, importantly, information for businesses on the supports and services that are available to them. At a regional level, they work to provide networking opportunities and business information events and work with key influencers and decision-makers on behalf of their members on issues that are impacting on their businesses.

In addition to Ibec's national remit, Ibec works at regional level to develop local engagement between business communities and public bodies to enhance the business environment and build business networks. Ibec's regional network will hold conferences, member fora, HR fora, training programmes, networking and briefing events at both regional and sectoral level. The Greater Dublin Regional Executive Council (REC) represents Ibec's membership in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow; The North East REC represents companies in Meath, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth.

Cross-regional networks offer an opportunity to develop networking and collaboration between regions, improve connectivity across regions and provide enterprise with a wider knowledge and client support base.

Stakeholder consultations identified scope to build on existing networks, such as the Chambers of Commerce within the Mid East region, to support both sector specific and broader regional networks, with the latter identified as being of particular value to start up companies.

The actions below are aimed at strengthening networks across the Mid East region, deepening collaborative working and connecting enterprises across the region to a wider knowledge and support base.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
150.	Leverage business networks to identify hubs of activity that could be supported in the region: Film, Food, etc.	2016	Local Authorities, LEOs SFI, IDA, 3rd level
151.	Hold a Mid East Business Roadshow on a topic of relevance to businesses in the region	2016	Ibec

152.	Establish a business network with flagship companies/enterprise champions from each county, to focus on looking within the region for skills and supply chain opportunities	2016	Local Authorities, Chambers, IDA, Enterprise Ireland
153.	Maynooth University will establish a 'top table' advisory forum on linking University and regional employment needs, to include representation from IDA and EI	2016	Maynooth University, IDA, EI
154.	Ibec will work with its Regional Executive Committee on the key business policy issues facing businesses in the Mid East	2016	Ibec
155.	Develop and implement an information and networking event for IDA clients, with EI clients to be invited also	End 2016	IDA Ireland (In conjunction with IDA's Business Development and Client Networking Team)
156.	Ibec will host a seminar in the Mid East, in association with relevant stakeholders, in the context of its recent Manufacturing survey	2016-2017	Ibec, relevant stakeholders

Chapter 13: Marketing the Region as an Attractive Place to Work and Live

The local authorities will play a key role in supporting place-making and marketing of the region through their many activities around amenity, environment and economic and community development.

Significant investment is being made in recreational and leisure facilities and other projects aimed at creating an attractive environment for people to live, work and learn in, all of which will help to enhance the attractiveness of the Mid East for business investment, talent and tourism.

Building on the strong social, cultural and community assets within the region, the following actions will be taken to support economic growth by attracting investment, talent and tourists to the Mid East region.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
157.	Develop a marketing strategy for the Mid East region as a whole, targeted at enterprise	2016/2017	Local Authorities, Regional Assembly (in co-ordination role), Enterprise Ireland, IDA
158.	Kildare County Council will advance a plan for a marketing strategy for the county	2016	Kildare County Council
159.	Relevant IDA Executives based overseas will visit relevant companies in the region to enhance marketing knowledge	2015/2016	IDA
160.	Meath County Council will advance a plan for a marketing strategy for the county to support its Economic Development Strategy	2016	Meath County Council
161.	Wicklow County Council will develop a brand and a supporting marketing strategy that communicates all that Wicklow has to offer to its citizens, diaspora, visitors, business and investors	2016	Wicklow County Council
162.	Wicklow County Council will develop a web portal which will operate as a show window for the County, highlighting its quality of life, USPs, and will aim to attract inward investment	2016	Wicklow County Council

163.	Meath and Kildare County Councils will explore the development of marketing plans for larger towns in collaboration with local business representative bodies	2016	Meath County Council, Kildare County Council, Local business representatives
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Chapter 14: Potential Strategic Areas for Further Job Creation

At the time of finalisation of this Action Plan, there were a number of emerging projects with potential for job creation and enterprise opportunity in the region in the future. These projects require further development by the promoters and are medium-term in timescale. Progress on these projects will be kept under review over the lifetime of the Action Plan.

Boyne Valley Food Hub

To compete successfully in today's global economy, innovation and research is vital. The long-term strategic investment in innovation and research centres can help generate sustainable and scalable economic growth. The Boyne Valley Food Hub will seek to accelerate business innovation and research in the region by fostering the establishment of collaborative partnerships between local and national government agencies, academic/research institutions and the companies, large and small, that have ambitions for growth in the ever expanding global food markets.

Under this proposal, the Boyne Valley Food Hub will be developed on a 20 acres site owned by Meath County Council and located on the outskirts of Navan, close to the M3 motorway. The project will be co-ordinated and driven by Meath Enterprise in conjunction with Meath County Council and in partnership with several key stakeholders that will include the relevant state agencies, academic/research institutions and the private sector. The project is to be part of an overarching, long term comprehensive economic development strategy for the region that will help to achieve a rising standard of living by supporting existing industry clusters, developing emerging new clusters, and attracting new regional economic drivers.

Short to Medium Term Vision:

To establish the region as a major national and international 'food start-up hub' by 2025, and to become recognised as a global model for regional economic development.

Long Term Vision:

That the 'Boyne Valley will be to food what Silicon Valley is to technology'

The Boyne Valley Food Hub will strive to help:

- Famers and Agricultural Co-operatives to create new businesses base on value-added agricultural products and/or develop new markets for their existing commodities
- Start-up food companies with challenges such as exporting, financing, packaging technology, regulations, food claims, international food legislation, labelling legislation, sourcing raw materials, contract negotiations, market development, new product development, infrastructure requirements, etc.
- Existing small and mid-size Food/Agri companies seeking to develop new products and services, access new technologies, upgrade quality assurance capabilities, enter new (global) markets, train their workforce, expand and improve their operations, etc.
- Retail and Foodservice establishments seeking to improve their operations and purchase locally grown products

- Food Start-ups and SME's to access the full range of necessary shared services and supports such as admin, book-keeping, reception, security, maintenance, HR, IT, storage, distribution, production, purchasing, business planning, crowd funding, networking etc.

Proposed Infrastructure and Facilities

The Boyne Valley Food hub will be developed on a phased basis and the following infrastructure and facilities would be envisaged:

- Incubation space/units (various sizes) for Food/Agri related start-ups and SMEs
- Meeting, conference and training rooms
- Centralised waste management facilities
- Specialised waste water management facilities
- Outsourced food production, manufacturing and packaging facilities/services
- Large industrial kitchens for cooking and baking
- Specialised gas and steam cooking/production services and facilities
- Centralised distribution and storage facilities
- Convention and exhibition centre
- NPD and R&D Facility to include:
 - General labs
 - Sensory labs/panels
 - Micro labs – food testing/safety
 - Testing labs/UHT labs

Proposal for 2016-2025 and potential impacts

During the period 2016-2025 it is anticipated that the economic development impacts of the Boyne Valley Food Hub would include the following:

- New scaleable and sustainable food related businesses created
- Businesses sustained in the region
- Direct and Indirect jobs created/retained
- Increased client revenue-profits
- State, Venture and Private Equity funding brought to clients
- Domestic and International companies moving to the region
- Increased community wealth, rural/urban revitalisation

- National and International collaborations with incubators and Universities resulting in knowledge transfer and regional economic development
- Commercial space taken at enterprise, innovation and incubation centres in the region by students, graduates, and entrepreneurs creating new start-up businesses

‘New Ideas in Ancient Spaces’ Capital Grant Scheme

In 2015 the first phase of funding for capital projects associated with Ireland’s Ancient East was announced, as part of Fáilte Ireland’s ‘New Ideas in Ancient Spaces’ Capital Grants Scheme. Second phase funding was announced in December. A number of projects in the Mid East region have been awarded funding, in order to develop visitor experiences that match the brand promise of Ireland’s Ancient East as a destination: namely one that is easy and enjoyable to explore, where heritage experience are memorable because they tell their story so well, and where stories told at individual heritage sites link to other sites across the region and to an overall timeline, building to a unique, fascinating and enriching journey through 5,000 years of European history.

The development of tourist attractions in the Mid East region will, in the medium-term, deliver greater numbers of visitors to the region and increase visitor revenue. The three projects awarded funding for ‘New Ideas in Ancient Spaces’ are:



Redevelopment of Powerscourt Visitor Interpretation Experience

The proposed redevelopment involves interpretation and enhancement projects at Powerscourt House, including a new audio visual presentation to share the stories of the estate; redevelopment of the visitor experience at Powerscourt Waterfall, including a sensory trail, new interpretive and information panels, and the upgrading of existing signage and

information panels; and the restoration of important historical artefacts in Powerscourt Gardens.



Boyne Valley: Waterway through Time

The Boyne Valley ‘Waterway through Time’ project aims to boost economic development in the Boyne Valley region through the restoration of some 35km of waterways, including the navigation on the River Boyne and along the canal network between Drogheda at Oldbridge, to the Newgrange Interpretive Centre. Restoration work will be carried out on lock

walls and the canal to Bru na Boinne, creating a channel between the visitor sites of the Battle of the Boyne and Newgrange and the villages along the route.

In addition to an enhanced visitor experience, the opening up of the waterway will create new opportunities for SMEs to develop visitor experiences and tourism enterprises along the route, such as heritage tours, barge trips, water based activities, cafes and shops, and eco-trails.



Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park Ltd

Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park, located on 60 acres of land in the Bog of Allen between the villages of Rathangan and Allendwood, is a visitor attraction offering a comprehensive experience of the peatlands and the history and culture of the rural communities that lived there through the ages. The proposed redevelopment of the Park will involve improving the visitor experience through the development and

installation of new interpretive panels, replica models, the upgrading of its website, investment in multi-lingual audio guide devices, and developing costumed tours.

Maperath Farm Ltd.: *Ireland's Ancient Eats*

Located in a demesne near Kells, and dating back to 1798, 'Ireland's Ancient Eats' will provide a rich and immersive experience based on the history and heritage of food in Ireland's Ancient East.

Visitors will learn about the timeline of Irish food from ancient times, the story of farming in an Irish context and will gain insight into 'old school' traditional methods of food production. They will also take part in the cooking and consumption of locally-sourced traditional food. Project elements include the refurbishment of a building into a visitor reception facility, reconstruction of a 'fulacht fiadh' (outdoor oven), landscaping and furnishings.

Audio Visual Production / Creative Industry Cluster

There is a real and immediate opportunity to build on the existing strengths of the audio visual production⁸ and creative Industry sector in the Mid-East Region. The scale of the opportunity is considerable, and the potential impact on exports and employment creation is significant.

The vision proposed, with the support of the key players in the industry, is the development of an internationally recognised audio visual industry cluster, centered in County Wicklow, and involves a collaborative approach between key actors in the industry, related industries, and in the private and public sectors.

The vision for this project encompasses a broad range of activities that are related to audio visual production. The related sectors within the broader creative industries category include Animation, CGI, Graphic Design, Creative and Digital media, Technical arts, Special Effects, Digital Design. In

⁸ The audio visual production sector comprises of the production of cinema films, TV drama, TV animation, documentary and factual programmes, entertainment and reality TV, sports, news and current affairs as well as TV commercials, multimedia projects and all forms of commercially produced content for online distribution.

addition, audio visual production requires ancillary services across sectors such as Fashion and textiles, Food, Financial services, Construction, Lighting etc.

The audio visual production sector alone is worth over €550 million nationally and employs almost 7,000 people directly. The multiplier effect of any major production is 1.4. There are over 500 (mostly small) businesses operating in the sector.

The film industry is one of County Wicklow's unique selling points due to the location of Ardmore and Ballyhenry (Ashford) studios and the long history of film making in the county. However there are also many opportunities for the entire region arising out of the film industry including film tourism, training and education opportunities, and opportunities to develop sectors associated with the industry as described above e.g. animation, CGI, graphics etc.

The proposed regional cluster project will include:

- Development of studio space
- Development of incubation hub/s for knowledge intensive businesses in the creative industries
- Development of cluster networks
- Development of talent pool
- Development of innovation in the sector
- Identification of requirement for feeder industries & supports for same
- Support to businesses operating in sectors within the broad cluster to become internationally traded
- Development of film tourism potential linked to Irelands Ancient East brand

The opportunity:

- Basis for a cluster in place and working alliances in formation
- Significant number of businesses within the industry located in the region
- The cluster is cross cutting across industry sectors including Audio Visual, ICT, Design, Construction, Food, Tourism etc. offering growth opportunities across the region.
- Strong basis for the creation of a sustainable, clearly identifiable business cluster that is innovation led, export orientated, and linked to existing assets.
- Strong potential to build an internationally visible brand
- Clearly identified immediate opportunity to capitalise on demand for studio space from international production companies
- Infrastructure is already in place to create the required talent pool to meet the changing requirements of the industry including courses run locally by the ETBs, and third level programmes in the Institutes of Technology
- Wicklow County Campus Clermont is perfectly situated to become the "Hub" of creating and scaling small business spin-offs and further education in the field of Film Industry through existing Institute of Technology Carlow presence on-site to infuse innovative and creative talent into professions/businesses.
- Existing studio infrastructure in the county
- Access – the region is well serviced by motorways and in close proximity to the capital
- Section 481 is unique and proving successful in attracting inward investment

- Significant immediate opportunity to capitalise on UK 80% cap on tax incentives
- Superb range of locations across the region supported by local authorities

Next Steps

The lead on this project is Wicklow County Council (including LEO Wicklow). A Film Industry Development Group has been established and has been working together for over 12 months, and includes representatives from WCC/LEO, Wicklow Film Commission, and elected representatives.

Next steps are to prepare a feasibility study and business plan, including identification of financing partners and industry partners, and in tandem to commence the activation of an industry network. Provision of film industry related training programmes will be explored in partnership with 3rd level institutions and Screen Training Ireland. A programme in partnership with Screen Training Ireland in Wicklow County Campus has been run in autumn 2015, and Wicklow LEO will pilot a one day workshop in early 2016. The vision for the further development of this cluster encompasses Infrastructure (i.e. studio space), Incubation, Network, Training and Marketing.

Student Placement Portal – Maynooth University

There is strong evidence that a key to employability for graduates across a wide range of disciplines is prior work experience via placements. Maynooth University's experience of placement is that students blend conceptual knowledge with practical insights, effectively learning how to work and thus significantly improving employability to their own benefit and to the benefit of the companies that host the placement.

The employment impact of placement occurs in two ways. First, employers consistently report that in making hiring decisions they value work experience, acquired through placements, as equally important to a postgraduate qualification (53.3%), or where they express a preference 28.9% say placement is more valuable than postgraduate qualifications⁹. Second, employers note that they make recruitment decisions on the basis of the final year marks of a student and evidence in Ireland shows that students whom take a placement subsequently have improved final year degree grades *. These two impacts combine directly into employability: 68% of employers report that in thinking about whom to shortlist placement work experience was one of their most important factors, and the only other factor that had as high an impact was their overall academic result (Association of Higher Education Careers Services 2014, Graduate Recruitment and Employability Skills Survey 2013). Placement impacts both key factors influencing employability.

Additionally industry partners are willing and actively engaging with universities in provision of placement experience, reporting increased numbers of placement positions on offer in their firm and more paid placements (85.7% of surveyed employers offering placements in 2015 with 93.5% of these being paid placements: GradIreland 2015).

A challenge with placements is one of scale for employers. Placements are extremely beneficial for companies that can host student interns, but few SMEs have the capacity to organise these. Most placements therefore take place in large enterprises where an advantage of scale works for both the company and the university: maximum numbers of placements at lowest cost. Large employers have

⁹ GradIreland, Graduate Salary and Graduate Recruitment Survey 2015, p,16

the HR capacity to actively support placement initiatives and our placement office reports that they are increasingly use these are pre-screening of prospective candidates: thus the absence of placement may now be becoming a barrier to employability.

SMEs are a key engine of employment growth in the regional economy, but many lack the HR capacity to actively seek and support placements without support from the infrastructure of a placement office. We propose that investment in placement infrastructures within universities should prioritise both SMEs and students from degrees where placement is not currently available.

Maynooth University is exploring new ways to allow undergraduates across all disciplines to have the option to avail of a work placement as part of their degree studies. The University is considering new degree structures that involve summer placements or which include an intermediate work placement year. In some technical areas a limited number may be co-funded by industry partnerships.

Maynooth University has advanced plans to establish a portal in the university that would facilitate university/industry engagement and integration, especially around the area of work experience and jobs, and is exploring funding options. Some advantages would include:

- Greater involvement of employers in course design and delivery
- Inclusion of all voluntary / paid internships available in local industry and business and using this to integrate with regional SME sector
- Engaging students with entrepreneurs via scaled-up centre for Entrepreneurship, Design and Innovation and via strengthened links with external stakeholders and expertise.
- Information for students how various organisations work, types of jobs.

Wicklow Port Project

The objective of this proposed project is to realise the benefits of the Mid East region's marine assets through the development of a Maritime Industry cluster.

The development of the Maritime Industry in the region offers significant potential for employment creation and exports. The opportunities in the industry are cross-cutting and involve a wide variety of sectors offering strong potential for export including:

- Internationally Traded Services e.g. Maritime Finance, Insurance, HR, Logistics
- Tourism
- Food
- Shipping
- Transportation
- Energy e.g. Offshore Wind Farms

In County Wicklow, a Maritime Business Development Group has already been formed to further examine opportunities in the maritime industry. The lead on this project is Wicklow County Council

(including LEO Wicklow), who will work with the Maritime Business Development Group, which includes representatives from the sector and the Chamber of Commerce. In relation to Wicklow Port, initial scoping work has been undertaken and a significant project scoped as follows:

Wicklow Port Project

The proposed project would involve the construction of a 1km breakwater and Outer Harbour in Wicklow Bay to enable Maritime trade to develop, and to protect the existing port facilities and the Murrough Foreshore.

The Opportunity

- To develop a world class harbour with connecting infrastructure
- Create a shore side business hub for support services and internationally traded maritime services
- To develop Wicklow as a hub for servicing the offshore wind industry. Wicklow Port is already used as a base for the servicing of the Arklow Windfarm
- Wicklow has the significant advantages of the recently constructed Port Access Route, railway line, and deep water converging.
- Via the Wicklow Port Access Route there is immediate access to the motorway network linking in with the principal towns in the region.
- Wicklow is ideally placed halfway between Rosslare Europort and Dublin Port
- Increase in Offshore renewable energy in the Irish Sea, offshore wind & tide.
- Increase in International trade – over 90% goods moved by sea
- Increase in short sea shipping – European initiative
- Expansion of Dublin Port, Port of Cork, clear signs of growth in Irish shipborne trade

North Kildare Digital Economy Hub

The opportunity exists to continue to develop North Kildare as a digital economy hub or leadership "hot spot" by:

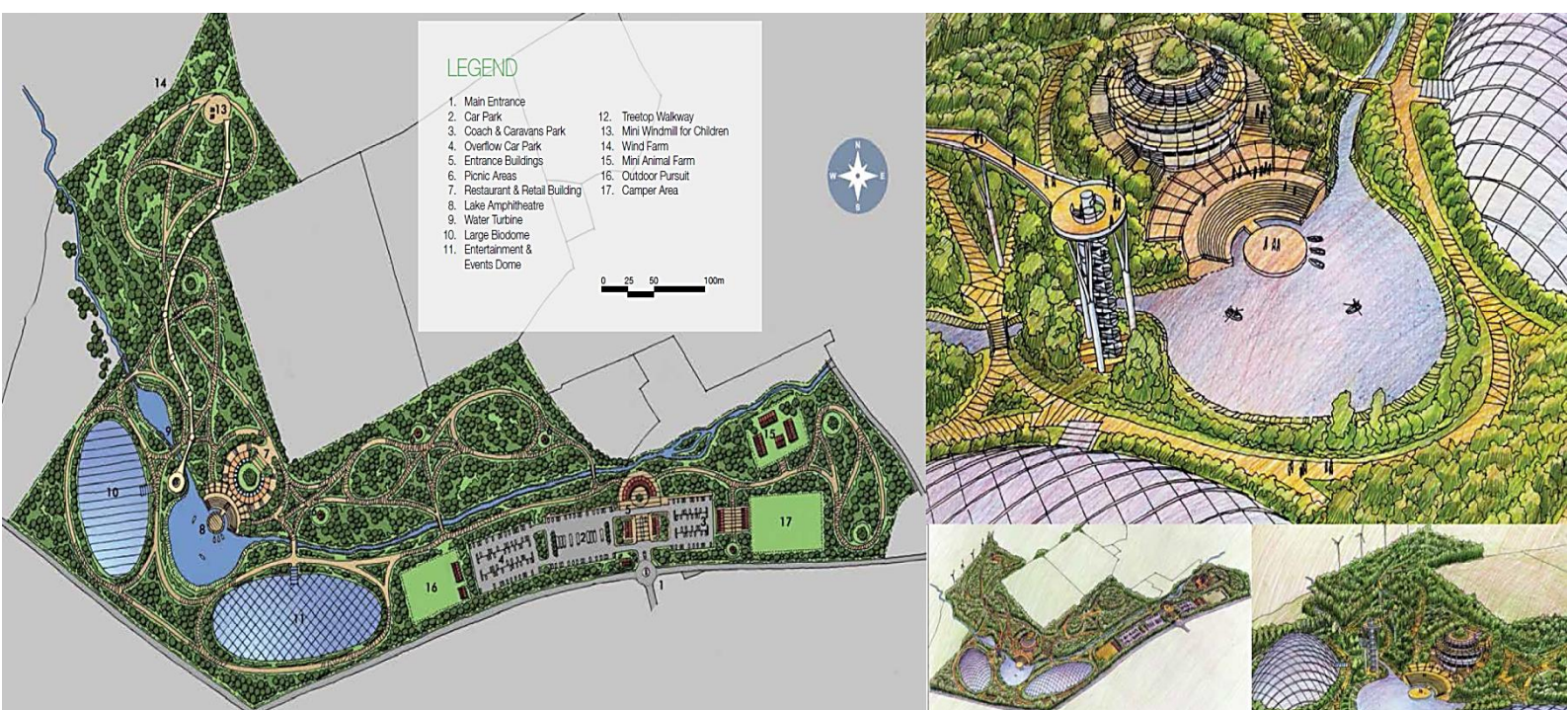
- Building on an existing critical mass in the IT / digital sector to attract further significant investment and further develop the sector to maximum potential
- Capitalising on the other assets and resources of North Kildare, i.e. quality of life, education and skill set of its workforce.
- Mobilising support for, and active involvement in, efforts to pursue these objectives on the part of leaders in the ICT, Education / Research sectors and the economic development agencies by establishing a network or forum
- Promoting innovation and facilitate the development of advanced technologies across enterprises generally

- Promoting linkage between the ICT, Research sectors and other relevant sectors and enterprises to achieve synergy between sectors
- Availing of opportunities under all relevant programmes and funding streams, particularly by maximising the potential to combine them in a complementary manner in developing relevant projects and initiatives.

This area will be progressed as part of the Kildare LECP and monitored accordingly.

Seasons Project

The Seasons Project is a business concept for a proposed visitor amenity and sustainability project that would be based in Newtownmountkenny. The project would be based on providing indoor and outdoor amenities, recreational and educational facilities, and would act as a showcase for environmental and sustainability projects. The proposal for the centre incorporates biodomes for the showcase of native and non-native flora, exhibition/interpretive areas, children's zones, research areas, sustainability exhibits, and associated visitor facilities.



The proposal highlights the following aspects:

- Education/learning experience: the Seasons Project proposes a centre in which visitors can learn about the environment, biodiversity, and sustainable energy generation. The centre would aim to provide resources such as tours and field trips to groups from primary to third level, in addition to training courses in horticulture, landscaping, energy usage, etc.

- A tourist/visitor destination: adjacent to the M11, convenient for major transport hubs, and in close proximity to Dublin. The location would also position the project near other major tourist and visitor destinations such as Glendalough, Powerscourt Estate, The Wicklow Way, etc.
- Recreational facility: the centre would also aim to provide outdoor and indoor recreation facilities to fulfil its positioning as a 'family friendly' day-out destination, with proposed facilities such as exhibition areas, walking and biking trails, restaurants and cafes, etc.
- Commercial use: the centre would also aim to position itself as a suitable venue for commercial and cultural events such as launches, conferences, festivals etc. The centre's location and proximity to Dublin and transport links would be an advantage in this area.

Progress on this project is subject to receiving satisfactory planning permission and securing investment. Developments in relation to the project will be monitored over the course of this Action Plan and any tangible actions arising from it will be added to the Plan.

Chapter 15: Implementing the Plan and Monitoring Progress

The Action Plans for Jobs for the Mid East region has been developed following wide local stakeholder engagement, using a “bottom-up” approach, with actions coming from regional stakeholders including the private sector.

The Action Plan covers the period 2016-2017, to allow for the process to take hold and develop, and to capture a more medium-term ambition for the regions. The Plan will be flexible and dynamic to allow additional actions and ideas to be added as they emerge over the period of the Plan.

Progress on the actions will be monitored on a 6 monthly basis by an Implementation Committee, and Progress Reports on the implementation of the Plan will be published twice each year. The Progress Reports will also identify areas for further action in a rolling framework.

All of the key regional stakeholders who have actions for delivery in the Action Plan will be involved on the Implementation Committee and will be asked to provide updates on the delivery of actions.

Given that strong business representation is also required to drive the enterprise and jobs focus of the Plan, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will appoint locally-based Enterprise Champions to participate on the Implementation Committee and work with the public bodies on the implementation of the Plan.

The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will also appoint the Chair of the Implementation Committee.

Notwithstanding the need for local buy-in and ownership of this Action Plan, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and innovation will continue to oversee the Plan at political level and facilitate updates to the Plan through membership of the Implementation Committee.

Processes put in place to monitor this regional Action Plan should complement other monitoring arrangements in the Local Government sphere.



An Roinn Post, Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

The Action Plan for Jobs is an initiative of the
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation