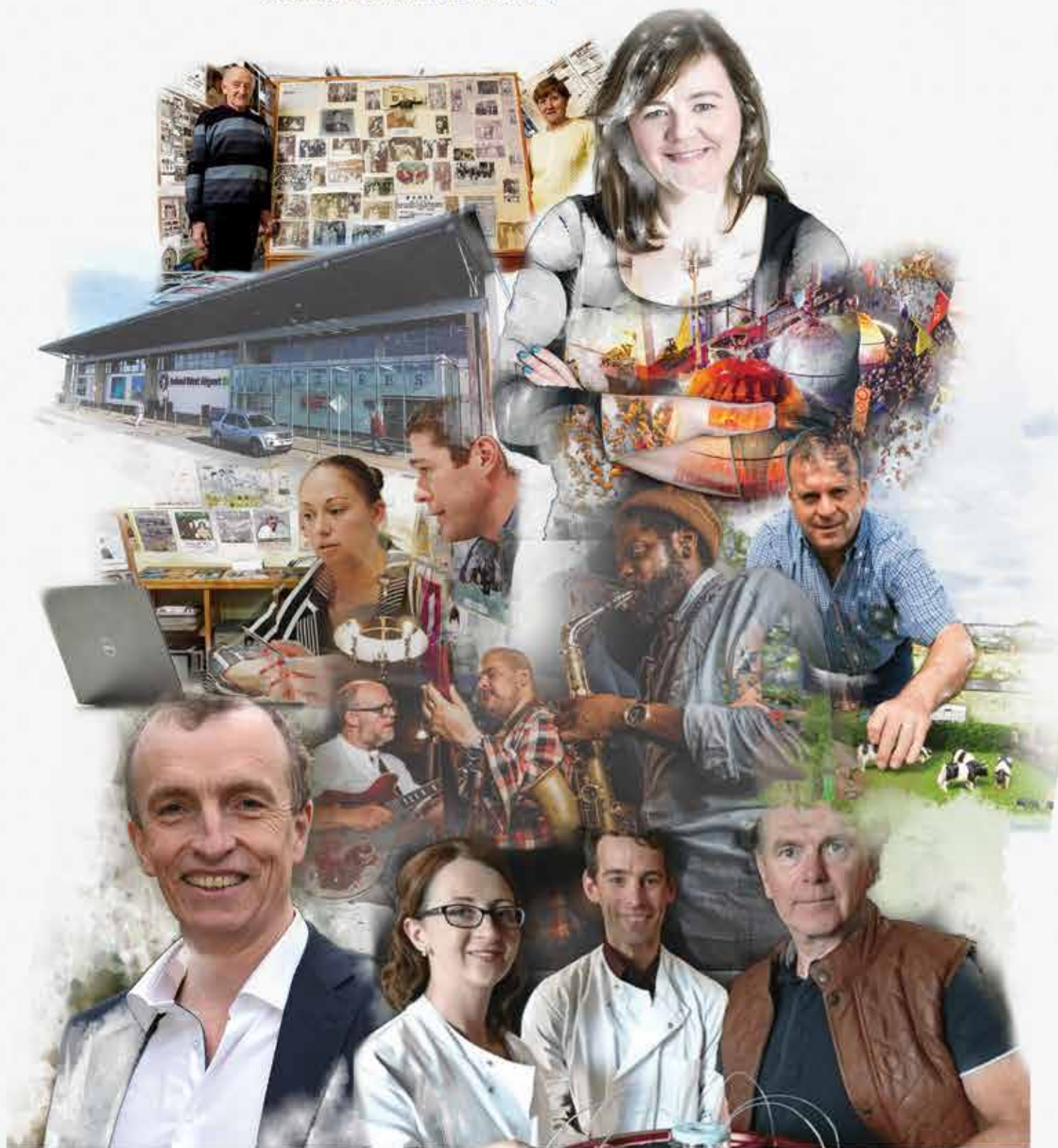




WESTERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
COIMISIÚN FORBARTHA AN IARTHAIR

WDC STRATEGY 2019-2024



WORK SMARTER. LIVE BETTER.

THE
WESTERN
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION

STRATEGY
2019-2024





THE STORY SO FAR...

5,000

Jobs supported
in 156 enterprises
2001-2018

**LOOK
WEST.IE**

#work smarter |
#live better

7 counties in
the WDC Region;
Donegal, Sligo,
Leitrim, Mayo,
Galway, Roscommon
and Clare

€72M

The current
value of WDC's
investment
portfolio

€13.5M

Value of
current
EU projects

€4M

in lending
to 42
communities
and businesses

Statement from the Chair

The Western Development Commission (WDC) was established in 1997 with the statutory remit, 'to foster and encourage economic and social development in the Western Region'.

Since its formation it has had a significant impact on the economic and social development of this region. Our stakeholder analysis showed that the role of the WDC and the competencies developed by the agency over this time is clearly valued.

This is evident in the success of the Western Investment Fund, the regional insight provided by the policy team and the long-term impact of integrated regional development. The success of the audiovisual, film and TV (WRAP) fund illustrates the potential to create new regional growth sectors which are distinctive to the region.

While some challenges remain in regional disparities, new opportunities also emerge as the wider environment changes. Project Ireland 2040 has laid out the Government's plan for the country's long-term development and establishes the strategic priority of having a more effective balance of growth between Ireland's regions. It is within this context that we have aligned our vision "to develop a globally competitive region of vibrant connected communities that work smarter and live better". To achieve this, we will work collaboratively with other agencies in an integrated way.

Our strategic themes of Regional Promotion, Regional Leadership and Sustainable Enterprise will focus our decisions on key regional projects in a coherent way to continue to impact both social and economic development. Our strategic plan recognises the important basis of our competitive advantage in the attractiveness and distinctiveness of the region.

On behalf of the Board of the WDC, I am delighted to present the 'Work Smarter, Live Better' strategy for the period 2019-2024. This strategy is the result of considerable effort by internal and external stakeholders over the course of 2018. Particular thanks to the staff of the WDC, upon whose achievements we will build and who positively contributed to developing the strategy. I look forward to working with the staff, the Board and all our stakeholders in taking this strategy forward. Balanced regional development is a national issue and the WDC has an important role in achieving this.

Dr Deirdre Garvey



Statement from the CEO

We are entering a period of unrivalled opportunity for the region.

Technological advances, a unique environment, and the offer of an enviable quality of living on the bridging point between the EU, the UK and the US make a compelling case for the Western Region in a global context. In parallel, a dynamic and mobile workforce, the growing consensus of the need for balanced development and a strengthening cohesion in state, industry and community activity offer a glimpse of the full potential of the Western Region as we move towards 2020 and beyond. This strategy is the culmination of a year's work. Engagement with the Board and staff of the WDC, the Department of Rural and Community Development and other key stakeholders informed the process. The broader context was informed by the on-going and identified technological, economic and social trends, but the 2019-2024 Strategy is designed to be a dynamic plan, to adapt, and change as necessary. 80% of the population within the WDC region live in rural and urban areas of less than 10,000 people. These people, supported by, and supporting the urban centres, are a key focus of this strategy.

The strategy is built on three pillars, which reflect, in parallel, the short, medium and long term.

These strategic aims; Regional Promotion, Regional Leadership and Sustainable Enterprise are set out in detail in this document and build on the core competencies of the WDC in investment, policy analysis and regional development. They promote, develop and seek to identify flagship projects that will deliver tangible outputs, within and beyond this five year plan. The primary driver is the economic and social development of the west, but the broader goal is changing the narrative in bringing the unique resources of this region to a global audience.

Tomás Ó Síocháin



HOW WE PUT THE STRATEGY TOGETHER

The work to develop a strategy for the Western Development Commission began early in 2018 with the establishment of a sub-committee of the Board to lead and oversee the work. This is a short summary of the work taken since then to inform, and develop, our new strategy.

We reflected: The WDC reviewed the previous strategy, its key relationships and subsequent changes in the environment in the Western Region.

We looked at the world around us: The WDC looked at comparable regions worldwide, and at government and sectoral policies.

We listened: The WDC, with the support of an independent facilitator, undertook a detailed stakeholder consultation, arranging one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders, and undertook a web based engagement with a variety of sectors and published a draft for public consultation.

We undertook a critical analysis of ourselves:

The Board and Staff of the **WDC** separately carried out a SWOT analysis, and then brought these analyses together to fully reflect the strategic and operational issues facing the organisation. Based on this analysis, we crafted a new Vision for the organisation.

We considered action: Drawing on the SWOT, we considered action that could respond to the opportunities and threats faced by the organisation and the region, and looked to how we could capitalise on our strengths and address our weaknesses.

We identified our strategic priorities: Based on the emerging actions, we identified common strategic themes, and within those established our strategic goals for the next five years.

ABOUT THE WESTERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Western Development Commission is a statutory body that was established by statute in 1997 to promote both social and economic development in the Western Region (defined as the counties of Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare). It has a statutory obligation to advise the Government on issues that impact on the Western Region and to promote Government policy that is directed at improving social and economic standards in the region.

It manages the WDC Investment Fund to provide loans and equity to businesses and local communities in the Western Region.

The Commission has eleven members appointed by the Minister for Rural and Community Development. The Commission's head office is located in Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon and the full time equivalent of 15.4 staff. The Western Development Commission is a trusted organisation with expertise in policy analysis, regional development, fund management and corporate governance.

ABOUT THE REGION

The seven-county Western Region covers 37% of the State's landmass and is home to 17.4% of the country's population. It is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern; 80% of the population live outside of large urban centres (10,000 or more) with two-thirds living outside of centres of 1,500 or more.

Forty urban centres are located across our predominantly rural region. The six largest - Galway, Ennis, Letterkenny, Sligo, Castlebar and Ballina - play a central role in their wider catchment areas. Other towns, including county towns, drive local development and are important economic centres in areas distant from larger urban areas.

Advanced manufacturing is a key strength for the region which is a global location for Life Sciences. Other regional strengths include tourism, renewable energy, education services, the blue economy and creative industries.



POLITICAL & ECONOMIC CONTEXT & ENVIRONMENT

The WDC Strategy for the coming years acknowledges the dynamic environment in which we operate. The preparation of our strategic plan coincides with significant changes in the external environment, Brexit and climate change in particular, that will continue to shape and influence the political and economic environment during the next five years.

In that context, this plan is intended to be a living document that is sufficiently dynamic to recognise and engage with these and other external challenges.



The work of the WDC is cross-sectoral in nature and as a result is influenced by government policies that relate both to economic and social development and policies relating to specific sectors, including:

● **IRELAND 2040:**

- THE NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK (NPF)
- THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP) 2018-2027
- THE REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGIES
- REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGIES
- THE ATLANTIC ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (AEC)

● **THE ACTION PLAN FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

● **FUTURE JOBS IRELAND 2019**

National sectoral policies frame the context within which the WDC operates. A key goal of the organisation is therefore to inform the policy-making process by highlighting issues and priorities for the Western Region. Aligning to national policies in areas such as transport, energy and communications infrastructure, regional and rural development, social enterprise, venture capital financing, marine, enterprise development, creative economy, tourism, low carbon economy and renewable energy all influence our work.

We are a state agency operating in the context of the quadruple helix of state, community, industry and education. Thus the WDC operates in collaboration with a number of other national and regional actors and agencies in adding value in our region.

- Enterprise Ireland
- IDA
- Regional Assemblies
- Údarás na Gaeltachta
- Local Authorities
- Local Enterprise Offices
- Sectoral development agencies
- Higher education institutions
- Private and community/voluntary sector

OUR MISSION

To foster and promote
economic and social
development in the
Western Region





The Western Development Commission Act of 1998 sets out a clear and wide ranging mandate for the organisation. This mandate extends to supporting business, social enterprises and projects with the aim of encouraging economic and social development in the Western Region. It provides for the WDC to co-operate with, and co-ordinate, national, regional and local state bodies and to promote infrastructural and other initiatives that will support business and social enterprise in the region.

The Act provides for the WDC to consult with the Minister for Rural and Community Development and other Ministers of the Government on any matter relating to its mandate insofar as they relate to the Western Region. The Act also provides for the WDC to operate an Investment Fund to enable it to further the economic and social development of the region.

OUR VISION

To develop a globally
competitive region of vibrant
connected communities that
work smarter and live better



WORK SMARTER

Connectivity and sustainability are key drivers, supporting and creating sustainable business that supports communities across the Western Region, in a way that protects our unique environment. Working collaboratively with others, we will support and create opportunities that balance the needs of our region, its people, and future, building on existing and emerging sectoral and indigenous strengths.

OUR VISION

For the next five years is to work collaboratively to promote our region at a global level and to identify, analyse and seek to mitigate and overcome the challenges at a regional level to ensure vibrant, connected communities.

LIVE BETTER

We will promote the Western Region as a globally competitive region with an exceptional work-life balance. We will work to mitigate regional disparity, both within the region and with other regions, and lead in offering a balance of smarter working opportunities and equality of opportunity and access to state supports for all citizens across the region.

WE RECOGNISE THAT . . .

Despite significant, and on-going, social environmental and technological change, the Western Region of Ireland offers a work life balance and personal and professional opportunities to progress that are among the best in the world.

OUR VALUES

Leadership, Sustainability,
Innovation, Collaboration,
Public Service, Equality,
Dignity & Respect.



LEADERSHIP

As a trusted organisation we will advocate for, influence and advise on issues affecting the Western Region and on regional issues nationally.

SUSTAINABILITY

We are committed to sustainability, both in sustaining vibrant communities and businesses and to sustaining the natural resources in the beautiful region in which we live.

INNOVATION

We will put innovation at the core of everything we do, embracing change and balancing risk and opportunity to bring bold ideas to life.

COLLABORATION

We will work with others to make the best use of available resources.

PUBLIC SERVICE

We will act with honesty, integrity and impartiality in serving the public, our use of state resources and working for the public good.

EQUALITY, DIGNITY & RESPECT

We will create a positive and accepting work environment where each member of staff is treated equally, with dignity and with respect.

STRATEGIC THEMES

We have identified three strategic themes which will align the work that we do to ensure that we best respond to the region's needs.

For each strategic theme we have set out key projects that will form the basis of our annual work plans for the next five years. We will review progress, and adjust course as required, on an annual basis.

Regional Promotion.

**We will promote the Western Region,
engaging people in the work that we do.**

**Working with others, we will inform and support
those living, working or drawn to the renowned
quality of life and beautiful region in which we live.**

Regional Leadership.

**We will take a lead role in informing, and where
appropriate, delivering national and regional
policies and programmes.**

**We will work collaboratively with key stakeholders
to build a globally competitive region.**

Sustainable Enterprise.

**Taking the long-term view, we will identify, support and
develop key sectors to build a sustainable future.**

**We will invest to grow businesses and employment;
sustaining the region's natural resources, unique
culture and vibrant communities.**

Regional Promotion

Flagship project

Flagship project

Lookwest.ie

Key Goals 2019-2024

We will make lookwest.ie the platform of choice to engage and inform those drawn to living or working in the Western Region

We will develop an online talent and skills pipeline, with labour market insights, for employers and employees in the WDC and AEC regions

We will work with private and public organisations to develop an AEC marketing and communications network to share content and stories to promote the Western Region

We will strive for excellence in communication and governance

Community & Diaspora Engagement

Key Goals 2019-2024

We will work with, and inform the work of, regional and local authorities and state agencies to support and sustain communities in the Western Region

We will work with communities to optimise the drawdown of national and EU funding through increased community engagement and support

We will increase the take-up of WDC bridging finance and enterprise investment in the Western Region.

We will promote the west to the Irish diaspora working with, and through, state agencies and county networks abroad. We will strive for excellence in engaging with, and serving, the public

Regional Leadership

Flagship project

Flagship project

Flagship project

Atlantic Economic Corridor

Key Goals 2019-2024

We will co-ordinate, inform, and where appropriate, lead the work of the AEC as envisaged in Ireland 2040

We will collaborate with others to develop and promote a cohesive network of enterprise and remote working hubs, resources and supports along the AEC

Policy Analysis

Key Goals 2019-2024

As a trusted organisation, we will continue to provide evidence based policy analysis that informs and advises public policy on issues that impact on regional and rural development, propose actions based on this analysis and where appropriate, promote and lead those actions

We will continue to advocate for growth, for a sustainable, low carbon economy and for vibrant communities with access to services that reduce inequality and income disparity across the region

We will agree policy work programmes with the Department of Rural and Community Development, higher education institutions and other agencies to further the scope and impact of our work

Creative Economy

Key Goals 2019-2024

We will lead the development of the Creative Economy in the Western Region, working collaboratively with other agencies to develop a 10 year plan to 2030

We will provide dedicated funding mechanisms for the Creative Economy in the Western Region through the Western Region Audiovisual Producers (WRAP) Fund and Micro-loan Fund

Sustainable Enterprise

Flagship project

Western Investment Fund

Key Goals 2019-2024

We will address funding gaps in the Western Region by providing risk capital to new and expanding SMEs through our Business Investment Fund

We will support and develop collaborative Regional Accelerators to build out the enterprise and funding support ecosystem for start-ups in the region

We will strive for excellence in project management and governance

Flagship project

Social Enterprise

Key Goal 2019-2024

We will support the implementation of a National Policy on Social Enterprise and continue to lend and invest in social enterprise in the Western Region

Flagship project

Emerging Sectors

Key Goal 2019-2024

We will analyse, identify and support emerging sectors that will build a sustainable competitive advantage for the region in the long term

Key Enablers

WESTERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Resources

We will align our organisational resources and capacity to best deliver our strategic themes.

We will engage proactively to ensure that we have sufficient human and financial resources to deliver our goals on an on-going basis

Growth

We will seek to grow as an organisation to best respond to projected growth of the region

Communication

We will ensure excellence in internal and external communication to promote the region, to further the impact, and raise the profile of, our work

Collaboration

We recognise that more efficient use of state resources will be achieved through active engagement and co-operation with others

Project Delivery

We will ensure excellence in project management and delivery, liaising with central and local government to deliver regional needs

Cohesion

We will align our activities, engagement and outreach to act as one organisation to achieve more, with greater impact.

Regional Outreach

We will increase our visibility and profile to ensure that we represent, and engage with, stakeholders in all parts of our region.

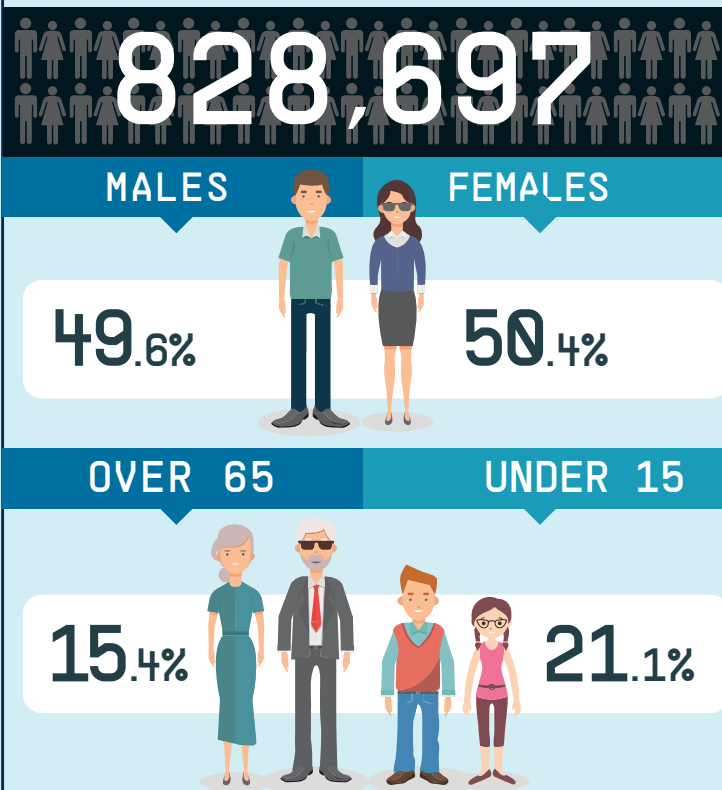
Governance

We will ensure that our governance, controls and systems are continuously reviewed, maintained and improved to meet the needs of a dynamic and growing public service organisation

WESTERN REGION

CENSUS 2016

POPULATION OF COUNTY 2016



POPULATION CHANGE

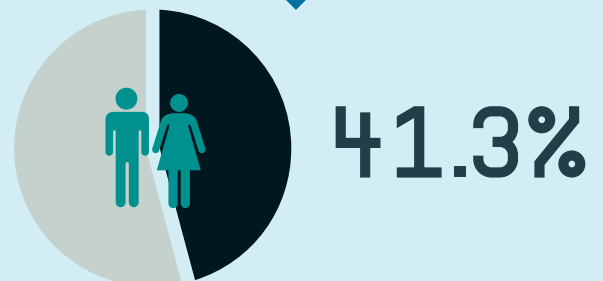
2011-2016

1.0%
↑

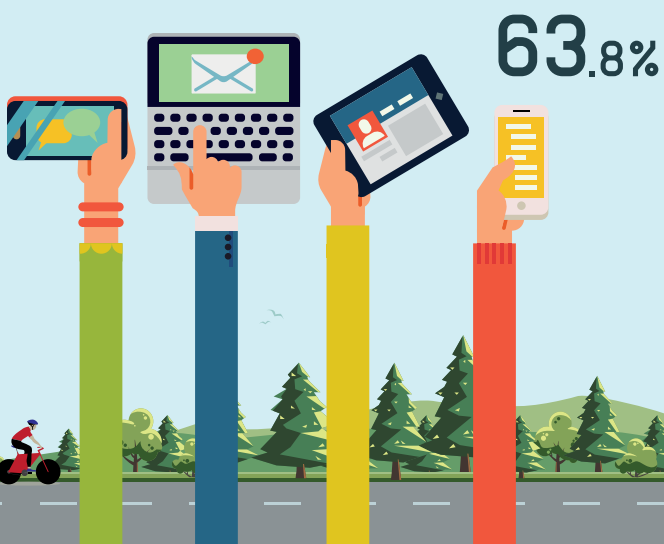
2006-2016

8.7%
↑

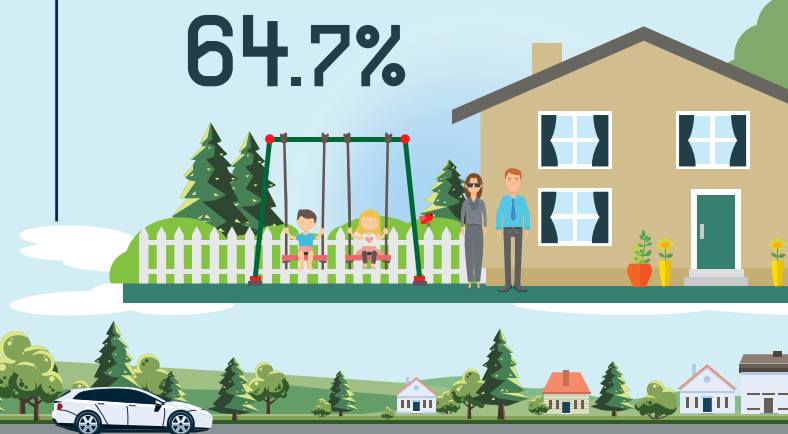
POPULATION IN 2016 AS % of 1841

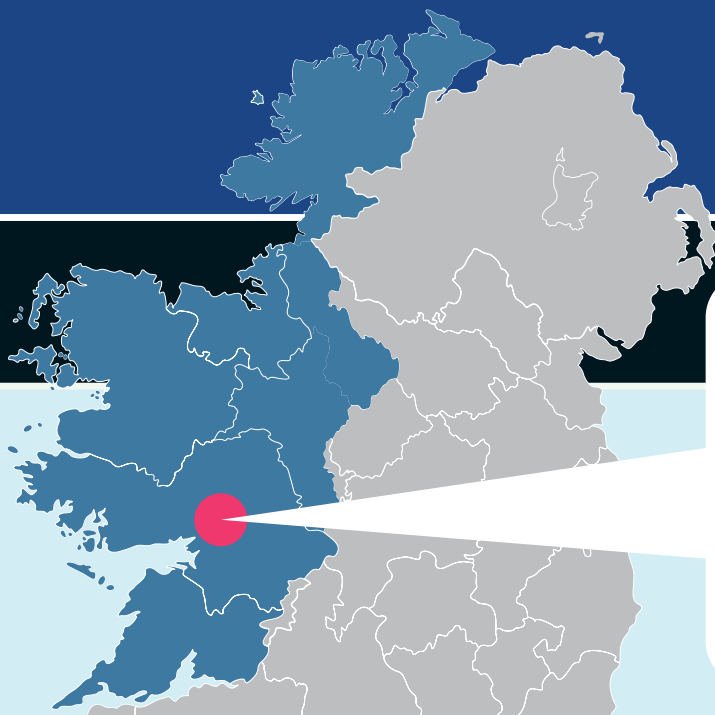


BROADBAND ACCESS



LIVING IN RURAL AREAS





LARGEST TOWN:

GALWAY CITY

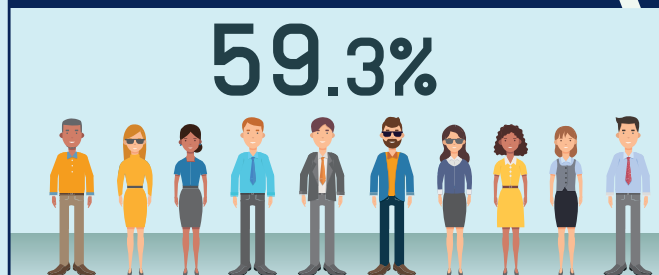
POPULATION:

79,934

WITH 3RD LEVEL QUALIFICATION



IN LABOUR FORCE



WORKING IN AGRICULTURE



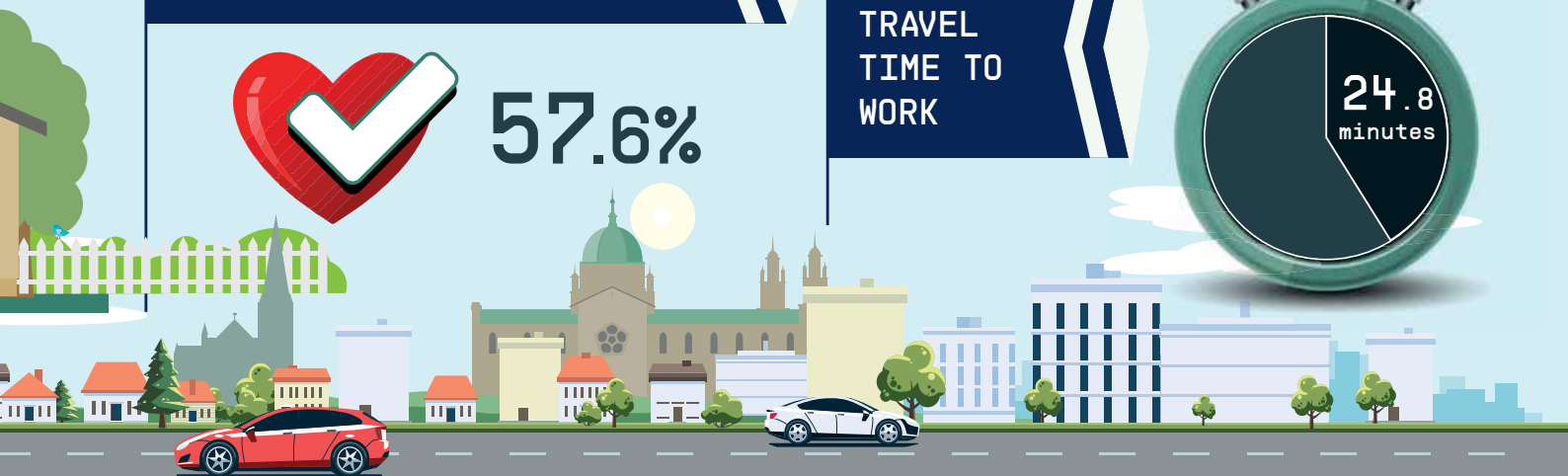
WORKING IN INDUSTRY



IN VERY GOOD HEALTH



AVERAGE
TRAVEL
TIME TO
WORK



Success Stories

Rolling back the years in Glenfarne's Ballroom of Romance

Glenfarne Ballroom of Romance, supported by the WDC, is a multi-functional rural community, heritage and tourism facility founded in 2000. As a rural community development organisation, it helps to improve social and economic conditions for the 700 residents of the Glenfarne area in North Leitrim.

A lofty goal of 1m passengers by 2026

The WDC has been a long term funder of *Ireland West Airport Knock*, Ireland's fourth international airport. 134 people are currently employed at the airport with almost 800,000 passengers. The airport has made significant investment in facilities and infrastructure over the past decade and has a very ambitious investment plan to grow the airport to 1m passengers by 2026.

AI in Ardara, Co. Donegal

The WDC has supported *Dr Gillian Doyle and Dr Kenneth Doherty* who founded *Cerebron Technologies* in Ardara Co. Donegal. The company, which employs four, provides

software to business that uses AI and image recognition to carry out complex financial and administrative processes. The company is working towards adding a further 16 employees as their technology is taken up.

AEROGEN. A World Leader.

John Power is the founder of *Aerogen*; the world leader in acute care aerosol drug delivery. He lives in Moycullen Co. Galway and with the support of the WDC led the management buy-out of the company in 2007. The company has increased the number of people employed 10-fold since then, growing from 21 staff at the time of the investment to over 200 currently. There are a further 200 employed with sub-contractors.





That's a WRAP!

Sarah Dillon, Development Manager of WRAP Fund. The Western Region Audio-visual Producers Fund (WRAP Fund) is a collaboration supported by the WDC that makes funding of €2m available to attract and support content production in the Western Region. The projects can avail of up to €200,000 in investment funding and are required to employ local talent across cast and crew and provide training and up-skilling where possible.

Top of the class for grass!

Prompted by his three year old son's request for a field for his toy animals, *Padraic Cuddy* created a realistic model toy field complete with hedging and traditional timber gate. The idea has been covered in both the national and international media. The WDC supported his company *Class Grass*, providers of artificial grass products which, following expansion, will employ five people in Castlecoote, Co. Roscommon.

Jazzin' it up in Sligo

Sligo Jazz Project, supported by the WDC, employs one full time and thirty part-time tutors and hosts the biggest annual event of its kind in Europe. The project incorporates a world renowned jazz summer school (Sligo Jazz Summer School) running hand in hand with one of Europe's most unique jazz and improvised music festivals (Sligo Jazz Festival). Photographer - *Lieve Boussauw*

Bio-tech in the Banner County

Hooke Bio Ltd. is an emerging bio-tech company supported by the WDC and based in Co Clare. The company is focused on the development of improved testing platforms for faster and more effective drug screening. The company currently has four full time employees and four PhD interns and is projected to grow to 11 employees in the near future as the product develops.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE...

€48M

Available to
invest &
lend

**A 10 YEAR
PLAN**

For the
Creative
Economy

**ATLANTIC
ECONOMIC
CORRIDOR**

Bringing the region
to the world and &
world to our region

**CONNECTING
HUBS**

For remote workers
that create jobs
that sustain rural
communities

**#WORK
SMARTER**

**#live
better**

**HELPING
THE REGION**

to optimise the
drawdown of
national
and EU funding

WORK SMARTER.
LIVE BETTER.

