

**WESTERN
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Annual Report 2022

Supporting communities to grow,
investing in businesses to scale and planning
for the future of the western region.

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8,400

**responses to the 2022
National Remote
Working Survey**

€9.3M

**Disbursed across 39
projects from the
WDC Investment Fund**

€88M

**value of Western
Investment Fund**

300

**hubs live on the
connectedhubs.ie
platform**

Chairperson's Foreword

Dear Stakeholders,

As we present the Western Development Commission's Annual Report, we take pride in the progress made towards our strategic pillars of Regional Promotion, Regional Leadership, and Sustainable Enterprise. Despite the significant headwinds faced by the global economy and the potential inflection point in the geopolitical landscape, we continue to see opportunities for rural and regional development.

As Ireland responded to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, the West of Ireland's support for the citizens of Ukraine is commendable. However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has added to global inflationary pressures, creating renewed uncertainty. Additionally, Brexit, which caused supply chain difficulties in 2022, and the future trajectory of EU-UK relations will continue to impact the outlook in the coming years.

Our sectors of focus remain well aligned to the global economy of today and are well-positioned to capitalise on the transformed economy of the future.

Investing in the region remains a priority for us. We are pleased to report that the Western Investment Fund (WIF) valued at €88m has had a very significant and positive impact on the Western Region over the past two decades. In 2022, our Investment Fund disbursed over €9.3m across 39 projects, including SMEs, community/social enterprise, and strategic projects. Our goal in the next five years is to extend the investment and lending by working with agencies and third level sector to create a platform and develop a global competitive advantage for the region in key areas.

Looking to the future, the WDC is committed to building a thriving economy and society in the Western Region. In 2022, the WDC released a new report, 'Creating an Atlantic Innovation Ecosystem,' with an aim to establish the West of Ireland as a region of innovation. This model sees academia, civic society, government, and industry work together to build networks and support innovation. The ambition of the Atlantic Innovation Region is to build a World Class Place-based Innovation Ecosystem. In 2023, the WDC will commit resources to drive this ambitious project for an initial five year period, creating a pipeline of investment for the fund.

The third National Remote Working Survey was launched in April 2022, building on two previous annual national surveys undertaken by the WDC and the Whitaker Institute at the University of Galway. The 2022 study provides insights on how remote working has changed employees' work and employment experiences.

Connected Hubs is now a partnership with our parent department at the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The team provides a vehicle for individual hubs to come together under a shared identity to maximise the impact of the hub sector on a range of national policies. The digital platform has reached 300 hubs with a target of 400 by 2025. There was a 500% increase in the number of registered users on the platform with over 11,000 registered by the end of December 2022.

It's important to highlight the role that sustainable mobility plays in promoting economic prosperity and improving the quality of life in small towns. The Sustainable Mobility Index developed by the WDC in 2022 will provide a useful tool to measure and compare the sustainability of mobility systems in rural towns and their readiness for the low carbon transition. This study, the first of its kind in the country is a base model that can and should be replicated across the island.

Additionally, the Timely Economic Indicators developed by the Policy Analysis team will provide valuable insights into economic activity in the Western Region and AEC on a quarterly basis, tracking trends across key areas such as the labour market, consumption, and housing and construction.

We continue to work with EU partners to access funds for projects that test ideas, support niche areas of development, and build relationships with stakeholders across other EU member states. These projects support the remit and strategic aim of the organisation by bringing knowledge, funding, and partnerships that can impact the region.

The WDC is committed to promoting the West as a place to live, work and invest in. One of the ways this is achieved is through the TV series Moving West, which completed filming for its second series in 2022. Another initiative is Westernjobs.ie, an online jobs platform that promotes the diverse range of high-quality career opportunities available in the Western Region.

The WDC also creates engaging content on a weekly basis to promote jobs and employers, including videos and social media assets. Additionally, the WDC Image Bank is a collection of professional photographs showcasing businesses based in the western counties. This free to use resource is made available for regional promotional purposes including publications, PR, presentations, Case Studies and more.

In April 2022, the WDC began a campaign to raise awareness of social enterprise activity across the region. This included a series of networking and educational events, and a new interactive map which was launched to highlight social enterprises operating in the western region.

We are proud to be part of a collaboration of regional stakeholders on a number of new reports including one, which identifies an unprecedented opportunity for the Atlantic Region in the Growth of Onshore to Offshore Wind. The report found that by 2037 there could be upwards of 5,000 jobs supported directly by the offshore wind sector, generating up to €400 million in annually for the Atlantic region.

In conclusion, the WDC remains committed to regional development, and we look forward to working with our stakeholders to build a sustainable and prosperous future for the West of Ireland.



Gerry Finn

Chairperson

Western Development Commission



Stephen Carolan speaking at Digital First Day



Tánaiste Leo Varadkar officially opened Future Mobility Campus Ireland



Mary Kennedy during filming of Moving West Season 2



We partnered with global company Zoom to support the collaboration of hub managers and users across the country.



Arise Social Enterprise Event

Chief Executive's Report

The Western Development Commission's (WDC) vision is to create a sustainable and prosperous region that allows people to work smarter and live better. To achieve this, we focus on strategic investments that develop the region's most productive activities while capitalising on local specificities to generate new competitive advantages.

In 2022, the WDC continued to make significant progress towards this vision and I've chosen a few to outline. One of our major achievements was the success of the Western Investment Fund, a unique fund set up 20 years ago to invest public money in West of Ireland-based businesses. The fund has generated a return of almost three times its original value in that time, providing Ireland's economy with a €3.3 billion boost. The fund is currently valued at €88m and has been self-financing since 2010. Over the past twelve months, the fund has disbursed over €9.3m across 39 projects, including €6.2m invested in SMEs, €430k to Creative Industries and €3.1m across community and social enterprises and strategic initiatives. The fund had investment commitments of €8m at the end of 2022.

Our Policy Analysis team continued to make submissions on a range of local and national issues, including the Electrical Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy, the Government's Enterprise White Paper, the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, and submissions to the Shannon Estuary Economic Task Force. In May, alongside NUIG and the Whitaker Institute, the policy team released the third annual remote working survey. The team continued to produce their Timely Economic Indicators to help assess economic activity in the Western Region (WR) and wider Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC), closer to real-time. A comprehensive Rural Towns Sustainable Mobility Index on 35 smaller towns in the western region, in collaboration with a working group of experts from across the country, is also underway with results expected in Q1 2023.

Filming season 2 in Overstock Co. Sligo.

Promoting the region globally is a crucial aspect of our mission, and our communications team are experts at creating content that highlights the benefits of living in, moving to, and working in the West of Ireland. We target those looking to move home, those looking for a challenging career, and those looking to find balance. In 2022, the team filmed their second series of *Moving West*, a six-part TV series for TG4 which will air in January 2023. To support the region's promotion, they launched their industry-focused image bank for counties Donegal and Leitrim, building on work in previous years. Our podcast series *Pulse of the West* continued examining innovation, remote work trends, the future of small towns, attracting talent, and more. As part of our *More To Life* campaign, the team shot a new series with Connacht Rugby and a new promotion video for Co. Donegal. They also launched a new event series focused on supporting regional social enterprises. Our free online jobs platform for the region, [WesternJobs.ie](https://www.westernjobs.ie), continued to perform well, linking job seekers with open roles from Donegal to Kerry.

[ConnectedHubs.ie](https://www.connectedhubs.ie) is another crucial project that has been instigated by the WDC to contribute to regional development in the West of Ireland. Following a successful trial as part of our Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative, a project to connect the digital hubs, co-working spaces, and incubators was launched first in the West and has grown to become a national project of strategic importance. [ConnectedHubs](https://www.connectedhubs.ie) is now a partnership with our parent department at DRCD. Our team provides a vehicle for individual hubs to come together under a shared identity to maximise the economic opportunity of remote working. On the digital platform, we have reached 300 hubs, with a target of 400 in 2025.

In 2022, our EU teams worked on several projects to test ideas, support niche development areas, and build relationships with stakeholders across the EU. These projects align with our strategic aim of bringing knowledge, funding, and partnerships that can impact the region. We completed projects focused on Literary Tourism, digital mentoring, and the Blue Circular Economy. We also applied to lead or partner on over 40 new projects through the WDC and the West and North West Regional Enterprise Plans, which we provided program management support for in 2022.

We continued our efforts to establish a regional ecosystem for innovation with the release of a new report titled “Creating an Ecosystem for Atlantic Innovation “ This report aims to build a World-Class Place-based Innovation Ecosystem through a quadruple helix approach that involves academia, civic society, government, and industry working together to build networks and support innovation. One of the key projects orchestrated through this approach is the Clare Island Digital Health Living Lab, which provides an integrated digital health solution to Clare Island’s people and proactively monitors and intervenes for the islanders’ health.

Throughout 2022, we collaborated with partners to bring projects to life and highlight opportunities, including identifying an unprecedented opportunity for the Atlantic Region in the Growth of Onshore to Offshore Wind. We also announced a partnership with CISCO to explore opportunities for digitisation, including strengthening rural connectivity and mobility across the region.

Our teams participated in various events and discussions, such as The National Ploughing Championships, Dublin Tech Summit, the OECD Rural Development Conference, and the InterCeltic Business Forum in Lorient. This work would not be possible without the support of our colleagues in the Department of Rural and Community Development and other key stakeholders in the public and private sectors at local, regional, national and EU levels. I also wish to acknowledge Tomás Ó Síocháin who stepped down as CEO earlier this year. Our team would like to thank him for his commitment, dedication, professionalism and his vision.



Allan Mulrooney

Interim Chief Executive Officer
Western Development Commission

A man with a light beard and glasses, wearing a white surgical cap, is smiling at the camera. He is in a clinical or hospital setting, with a blurred background showing medical equipment and a bright light source. A dark blue diagonal overlay covers the bottom right portion of the image, containing white text.

Vistamed Medical Devices,
Carrick on Shannon

Our Mission

To foster and promote
economic and social
development in the region.

Our Mission

At the Western Development Commission (WDC), our mission is to foster and promote economic and social development in the Western Region of Ireland. As a statutory body established in 1997, we play a vital role in advising the government on issues that impact the Western Region and promoting policies to improve economic and social standards in the region.

To achieve our mission, we have developed a strategic roadmap called '**Work Smarter, Live Better**', which outlines our work in three key pillars: **regional promotion, regional leadership, and sustainable enterprise**. Our efforts in these areas aim to support the region's short, medium, and long-term strategic goals. As part of our mandate, we manage the WDC Investment Fund, which provides loans and equity to businesses and local communities in the region. Through this fund, we support sustainable enterprise and help to drive economic growth and development in the Western Region.



Our Vision

Promote the region globally and overcome regional challenges for vibrant communities.



Ward Automation, Sligo

Our Vision

Live Better: Promote the Western Region as globally competitive with exceptional work-life balance, mitigate regional disparity, and offer smarter working opportunities and equality of access.

We Recognise That: The Western Region of Ireland offers world-class work-life balance and personal and professional opportunities amidst significant social, environmental, and technological changes.



Structure of the WDC

Meet the team

The Western Development Commission has a team of 28 employees working together to achieve our goals.

[VIEW A FULL LIST OF OUR STAFF HERE](#)

Board Members

The WDC Board is made up of a Chairperson and 11 ordinary members, all appointed by the Minister of the Department of Rural and Community Development. Each member serves for a period of 3 years. In 2022, the Board held 9 meetings to discuss and make decisions on matters relating to the development of the Western Region. Please refer to the table below for details of the current board members.

The table below details the appointment of the current board members.

Board Member	Role	Date Appointed
Mr. Gerry Finn	Chairperson	November 12th 2020
Ms Aisling Meehan	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020
Ms. Audrey Crummy	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020
Mr. Christy Loftus	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020
Mr. Edmund Jennings	Ordinary Member	August 22nd 2021
Ms. Mary McKenna	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020
Ms. Mary Coyne	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020
Prof. Mary P. Corcoran	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020
Mr. John Kelleher	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020
Mr. Henry McGarvey	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020
Mr. Peter Hynes	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020
Ms. Sandra Nolan	Ordinary Member	November 12th 2020

The Region

The Western Region of Ireland, situated on the edge of Europe, is a place of exceptional natural beauty and striking contrasts. It is a hub of global med-tech innovation, industrial expertise in sensors and mobility, and a thriving creative economy.

Since its inception, the Western Development Commission has played a significant role in driving economic growth in the region. In 2020, the Western Region was home to 46,105 business economy enterprises, which accounted for 16.5% of all such enterprises in Ireland. The majority of these were micro-enterprises (93%). Leitrim had the highest shares of micro-enterprises in the country, at 95%.

The Western Region comprises the counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway, and Clare, and is largely rural, encompassing some of the most remote areas of Ireland. In fact, 64.7% of the region's population lives outside of towns with a population of 1,500 or more. Therefore, the WDC places particular emphasis on addressing the needs and opportunities of rural and peripheral areas.



Regional Promotion

Our focus in the short term is to raise the region's profile and share its story with a wider audience, especially those interested in living or working here. The Western Region's breath-taking physical beauty, located on Ireland's Atlantic coast, makes it a natural entry point from the Americas. This year, we had a number of exciting projects and launches dedicated to promoting the region.

Westernjobs.ie

In April 2021, we successfully launched westernjobs.ie – an online jobs platform dedicated to promoting the diverse range of high-quality career opportunities available in the Western Region. This platform is the first of its kind in the area and offers jobseekers a wide range of job opportunities across various sectors including full-time, part-time, remote and hybrid roles. Our team has been working closely with employers in the region to showcase mid-senior level roles in ecommerce, medtech, IT, finance, education, engineering and more.

We have been consistently creating engaging content on a weekly basis on our social media channels including videos and visuals to promote available jobs and the regions employers. Our team also attended the Jobs Expo in Croke Park, Dublin on March 26th, which was our first in-person event since the launch of the platform. We are thrilled to report that we received over 300 sign ups on the day, showing great promise for the success of this new platform. We had over 400 employers registered to promote their jobs on the platform by the end of 2022.

Podcast Series

Our Pulse of the West podcast series continued throughout 2022, featuring insights from the WDC, industry, and academia. Hosted by our then CEO Tomás O'Siocháin and others, the podcast is intended to reach our key stakeholders, including county councils, chambers, and the Department of Rural and Community Development, to highlight the WDC's role across the region.

In March 2022, we aired Episode 10, featuring Harry Moseley, Global CIO of Zoom, discussing their new partnership with Connectedhubs.ie and the future of work.

In November 2022, we aired Episode 11, where guest presenter Trevor Murray spoke with Helen Nolan from Spraoi agus Sport and Nora Fahy from Cycle Up about the power and importance of social enterprise in solving social problems in their community.

[LISTEN TO ALL PODCASTS HERE](#)



Moving West on TG4

Filming for the second series of Moving West, the motivational and inspiring TV series for TG4 was completed in 2022. The series, presented by one of Ireland's favourite television personalities Mary Kennedy is produced by Dundara Television & Media in association with The Western Development Commission. Shot against the backdrop of the unique natural beauty and culture of the West, this series puts a spotlight on Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, Galway, Kerry and a special episode on the Islands. Throughout the series we followed the lives of individuals and families who have moved or are in the process of moving to a new home along the Atlantic coast. Moving West, Season Two will go live on TG4 on January 11th 2023 at 8.30pm. Our aim is to build on the first season which was viewed by over 750,000 people.



West of Ireland Image bank

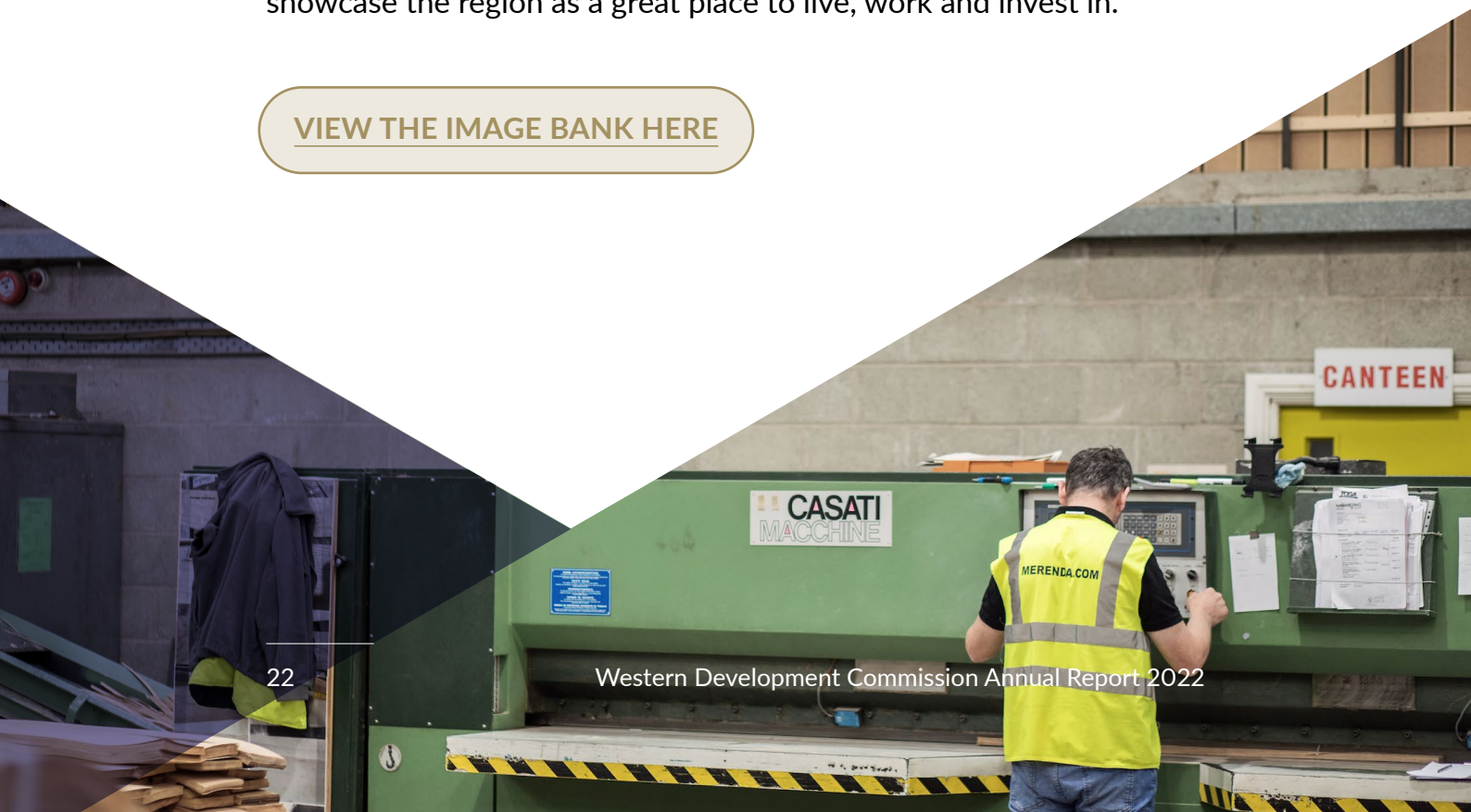
The WDC Image Bank is a collection of professional photographs showcasing businesses based along the western counties. It's a resource we provide for promotion of the region. In partnership with Donegal and Leitrim County Councils we launched an industry focused Image Bank for both counties. The image bank, which is part of the 'More To Life' campaign has been created to highlight the opportunities for highly skilled career choices across the region.

Donegal Image Bank was launched in April 2022. The variety of high-quality images include MMG Welding, Tata Consultancy Services, Swan Net Gundry, Donegal Craft Village, The CoLab facility at Letterkenny Atlantic Technological University Campus and others.

Leitrim Image Bank was launched in October 2022 and the variety of high-quality images include Merenda, The Food Hub, The Hive, Vistamed, Cora Systems, Mohill Enterprise Centre and many more.

We expect to cover the other counties across the AEC in Q2 2023 ensuring we have an up to date image bank which will help to showcase the region as a great place to live, work and invest in.

[VIEW THE IMAGE BANK HERE](#)



Content Creation

As part of our More to Life campaign, we shot a new video showcasing the global career opportunities and local living in Donegal. This video will form part of a new Local Living, Global Opportunities campaign which will be launched in Q1 2023. The video tells the story of a woman who grew up in Donegal and had a real connection to the landscape, people and place. She travelled for work and adventure, eventually relocating to her home in County Donegal to start a family and grow her career. The video highlights the magic and simplicity of local living whilst still availing of global opportunities from your home place.

Alongside some of the key industries, the new campaign will also highlight global opportunities in sporting bodies, the education sector and the start-up community. Partnering with Connacht Rugby, we filmed some short videos including the story of Andy Friend, Paul Boyle and others. The videos give an insight not only into their life at the club, but the difference the community in the West has made to them along the way.

We also developed a bank of case studies featuring some of the social enterprises in our region as part of the Arise project, funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund.



.IE Digital Towns Awards 2022

The WDC sponsored the .IE Digital Towns Awards under the category “Community Digital Award” which shines a light on initiatives and projects that support improvements in communities across the country.

The .IE Digital Town Awards had a total prize fund of €100,000 across 14 categories to honour local towns and people that, through digital projects and innovation, have contributed to enhancements in areas such as e-health, digital tourism, community, education, and digital business.

Northwest in the City event

This project led by Western Development Commission, IDA Northwest and Enterprise Ireland (with collaboration from other stakeholders) will focus on promoting the global career opportunities available in the North West. The event will primarily be focused on companies (both FDI and Indigenous) from a range of sectors and career opportunities and attract talent to the Northwest. The event will take place in Dublin in February 2023. A number of stakeholders will exhibit at the event including employers, Local Authorities and other stakeholders.



Regional Leadership



This includes our medium-term goals to build cohesion across the region, through significant projects such as the Atlantic Economic Corridor. It also shows our support of the shift to remote and distributed work, which offers significant scope for rural and regional growth. This pillar of our strategy also covers policy analysis of key regional issues and both national and EU projects that explore and assess new ways of working and collaborating and provide the platform for forward thinking and regional resilience.

Policy Analysis

The policy analysis team examine data and issues relevant to the social and economic development of the Western Region. This involves bringing a regional perspective to analysing published data, as well as conducting primary qualitative and quantitative research. The highlights of the policy team's work during 2022 are featured below.



Sustainable Mobility Index for rural towns

Mobility plays an essential role in economic prosperity and quality of life in small towns. In 2022 the WDC worked to develop a Sustainable Mobility Index across rural towns in the Western Region to gauge the sustainability of their mobility systems and their readiness for the low carbon transition and for future transport and mobility opportunities.

The Sustainable Mobility Index will allow for easy comparison between places, and across different objectives (such as access to services or economic opportunities) and over time will allow improvement to be measured. The Index will show which towns are in the best position for the low carbon transition, can highlight towns which are performing especially well, or show which towns need targeted improvements. This work aligns with six of the National Development Plans Strategic Outcomes, while the focus on more sustainable mobility in Our Rural Future and of course in Climate Action policy have been significant drivers of this project.

The index will provide a baseline of sustainable rural mobility in 2022 and will allow monitoring of improvements in sustainable mobility options in rural areas as the index is repeated in future years.

Remote Working

The Western Development Commission and the Whitaker Institute at the University of Galway continued their collaboration in 2022. In April 2022 our third National Remote Working Survey launched, building on two previous annual national surveys undertaken by the team.

The 2022 study provides insights on how remote working has changed employees work and employment experiences.

In May we published the third national remote work survey in the series, the survey gathered responses from more than 8,400 employees and showed 95% believe working remotely makes life easier.

The WDC has continued its participation on the Interdepartmental Group on Remote Work led by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment informing various policy initiatives aimed at supporting Remote Work.

In September the Policy team published a Policy Briefing examining Working from Home Pre and Post Pandemic – Regional Patterns and Outlook. This highlighted different regional patterns in remote working and the importance of the sectoral and occupational profile in influencing working from home rates.

Regional Economic Analysis

To help assess economic activity in the Western Region and Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) closer to real-time, the Policy Analysis team have developed Timely Economic Indicators (TEI) for the Western Region. The TEI report and accompanying [WDC Insights Blog commentary](#) is published on a quarterly basis and tracks regional development trends across the labour market, consumption and housing and construction. During 2022, TEI reports were released in January, May, August, and December.



Policy Submissions

The Policy Analysis Team makes submissions and produce other outputs relating to policy insights and recommendations across a wide range of areas relevant to the promotion of economic and social development in the region. In 2022, a number of submissions were made to public consultations including;

[WDC Submission to the Transport Infrastructure Ireland Consultation on National Roads 2040](#)



[WDC Response to the Transport Infrastructure Ireland Consultation on National Roads 2040](#)



[WDC Response to the Consultation on The Digital Connectivity Strategy for Ireland 2022](#)



[WDC Response to the All Island Strategic Rail Review](#)



[WDC submission to the CRU Consultation on the Draft EirGrid Transmission Development Plan 2021-2030 CRU202222](#)



[WDC submission to the Department of Transport consultation on the Electrical Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy](#)



[Submission to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications Offshore Wind – Phase Two Consultation](#)



[WDC Hydrogen Strategy Submission 2022](#)



Policy Briefings

Regional Insights: Preliminary Census 2022

In December 2022, the policy analysis team released a new report and concise policy briefing which analysed the preliminary estimates from Census 2022. The report outlines the policy implications of some key trends since the previous Census (2016) including region-wide population growth, housing stock growth and vacancy rates.

Regional, National and EU projects

The WDC leads regional, national and EU projects that explore and assess new ways of working and collaborating and provides the platform for forward thinking and regional resilience. Highlights from these projects during 2022 are featured below.

CivTech Alliance Global Scale-Up Programme

We partnered with the CivTech Alliance Global Scale-Up Programme in May 2022. The exciting and highly innovative programme draws together leading GovTech innovation programmes to deliver a global platform for fast-growth companies to access policymakers, procurers and investors across regional ecosystems. The WDC represents Ireland alongside Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Spain and others. The WDC held a successful Safari Event as part of GSUP 2.0 in October 2022, featuring speakers from the IDA, Galway City Innovation District, Connected Hubs and Industry.

This is an unprecedented access programme for scale-ups in the WDC region and across Ireland. The Civtech Alliance has 12 innovation teams across nine countries waiting to help those applying to access the in-country innovation ecosystems.

The programme is aimed at fast growth scale-ups with mature products, which can be scaled at pace given the right access to key government stakeholders. For companies from Ireland who join, it is an opportunity to be in front of some of the leading innovation teams from government's around the world.



connectedhubs

Connected Hubs

Connected Hubs is now a partnership with our parent department at DRCD and a national initiative. Our team provides a vehicle for individual hubs to come together under a shared identity to maximise the impact of the hub sector on a range of national policies. On our digital platform, we have onboarded 300 hubs with a target of 400 in 2025. Our platform provides a 24/7/365 day a week service which requires a corresponding customer service response level from our team. During 2022 there was a 500% increase in the number of registered users on the platform with over 11,000 registered by the end of December 2022. The platform provides a suite of functionality to help hub managers manage and market their facility, but the team delivers a suite of other supports to the hub managers and hub user community.

Our fortnightly online Hub Community Meetings will span three years in 2023 and have attracted over 2400 attendees since they began in 2021. These sessions provide hub managers with the opportunity to get meaningful insights into key topics affecting their sector and an opportunity to collaborate and share best practice insights.

Underpinning the Connected Hubs platform is a suite of datasets relating to the National Hub Network which is updated daily. Connected Hubs is the custodian of the first and only national registrar of hubs for the country, and we provide a data release to DRCD on a weekly basis. The datasets are being shared with other key stakeholders and research entities such as CSO, NTA, and UCD.

Marketing and Promotion of the hub network is an ongoing activity that helps hubs reach audiences they would have difficulty doing individually without the Connected Hubs project. A number of campaigns and workshops were delivered to hub managers during 2022 most notably the launch of the national Campaign in February, designed to drive mainstream awareness of the hub network. The Connected Hubs initiative featured at the OECD Rural Development conference in September and at the National Ploughing Championships.

Cisco Partnership

In July 2022, Cisco and WDC announced a partnership to advance the digitalisation of the west of Ireland. The WDC has worked with Cisco to identify scalable connectivity projects of national significance that can be piloted in the West of Ireland. This partnership led to Cisco Foundation Ireland co-funding the Clare Island Home Health Living lab. Cisco is also working closely with the University of Galway and Connected Hubs to improve the connectivity of the hubs network. Several other projects are being scoped out.



Northern Ireland Study Tour

In February we hosted a study tour with key stakeholders involved in rural development from Northern Ireland. The focus of the trip was to provide a greater understanding around the policy underpinning Ireland's approach to rural development and specifically the implementation of the Connected Hubs initiative. The collaboration has proved very beneficial, and a Shared Island feasibility study focusing on Connected Hubs being adopted across Northern Ireland is underway, with input from the Connected Hubs team and led by DRCD.

Zoom Collaboration

In March 2022 we announced a new partnership with Zoom to support collaboration and innovation across rural and regional Ireland through remote working hubs.

Zoom cited Ireland's Connected Hubs network as a leading international example of how remote working should be promoted to drive regional economic and social development. The Zoom partnership with Connected Hubs will provide users of hubs with discounted access to its suite of tools and services, optimising their ability to connect and collaborate in co-working spaces.

The Zoom Global Chief Information Officer, Harry Moseley has recognised the Connected Hubs programme as a novel approach in bringing the ambitions and objectives of the Irish Government's Remote Working Strategy to life.

Dublin Tech Summit

In May 2022 we announced a partnership with Dublin Tech Summit under the ConnectedHubs.ie brand. DTS 2022 took place at the RDS, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4 from 15th-16th June. With over 8,000 attendees, 200 speakers, and 65 partners representing 50 countries, the event, which has taken place virtually over the past two years due to COVID, was a big success. It brought together the brightest tech innovators, influencers, and entrepreneurs globally, highlighting the capabilities and creativity which form part of a wider tech ecosystem.

Connected Hubs Voucher Scheme

The Connected Hubs team facilitated the rollout of the National Connected Hubs Voucher Scheme announced by Minister Heather Humphreys TD in June 2022. The aim of the scheme was to provide free access to hot desks in participating hubs across the country to help attract new users into the facilities for the first time.

The scheme was run over two phases. Phase one ran from June until August 31st with the second phase starting in September and running until January 2023. Both phases allowed three free vouchers to be credited to the accounts of all registered ConnectedHubs.ie users, with each voucher redeemable for a day's hot desk working in participating hubs. Over 7,800 vouchers were distributed through the scheme, and this helped grow the number of registered users on the connectedhubs.ie platform to over 11,000. The hubs then redeemed the costs of the vouchers from DRCD at the end of the scheme.



Connected Hubs Data Sharing

In September the Connected Hubs dataset was the foundation for an award-winning online tool aimed at optimising the location and use of remote working hubs. The interactive map — myRWH — uses artificial intelligence to help end users find the most appropriate hubs based on their desired parameters, thereby availing of a working environment closer to home, and potentially reducing traffic pressure and vehicle emissions. CSO have also used the Connected Hubs dataset in 2022, to map the distance of residential dwellings from hubs. The published result showed 82% of dwellings being located less than 10km from their nearest hub.

Digital First Day

Ireland's first ever Digital First Day took place on November 16th, 2022. The goal was to put the power of digital to work in communities across the country, by creating a national conversation about the benefits of digital growth to small businesses, organisations and communities in towns and villages across Ireland.

Connected Hubs supported the Digital First Day by enabling 53 hubs to host events, seminars, meetups and workshops around how their locality can use the power of digital tools, platforms and frameworks to collaboratively attract investment, remote workers, home buyers, shoppers and visitors to their locality, with their local Connected Hub as their rallying point. 53 events were held in 22 counties with over 1250+ attendees.



National Hubs Summit

Connected Hubs hosted the first in-person National Hubs Summit with Minister Heather Humphreys on November 24th. The one-day conference brought together 250 delegates including businesses, hub managers and policy makers, less than 18 months after the launch of the Connected Hubs platform. The agenda included keynote addresses by Minister Heather Humphreys, Minister Damien English and Devon Laney, CEO of 360 Degrees North who flew in from Tulsa in the US. There was a number of panel discussions and facilitated focus groups designed to provide feedback for the development of the National Hub Strategy.



Creative Economy

Our work in the creative sector involves identifying, collaborating, and championing the creative economy in the West of Ireland. In 2022 the WDC took major steps to build on its increasing legacy in championing the regions creative economy.

Voices of culture digital audience report (Re)-Engaging Digital Audiences in The Cultural Sectors

In 2022 we saw the realisation of our work on informing the EU Commission on critical ways forward for digital audiences. We were chosen as one of 35 European members to advise on this important creative and cultural future scoping. This year saw the realisation of this pan European analysis, in the form of the 'Brainstorming Report '(Re)-Engaging Digital Audiences – Improving Audience Data', [View The Report Here](#)

Sustainable Enterprise – Creative Economy Report

In 2022 the WDC commissioned a report to look at mapping the region's creative capabilities in the realm of virtual reality and associated technology (establishing a Createch region). Looking forward, we seek to build on the region's strength in the creative economy. Through critical alliances with partners such as ATU, University of Galway and the local authorities, as well as critically the creative community itself, the WDC hope to enlarge and deepen the creative West for current and future generations.

EU Projects – Capacity building for the Region and its Stakeholders

The WDC entered its second decade of supporting the West of Irelands regional development using EU expertise and funding. For a dynamic region on the edge of Europe it is a critical strength to have developed such a transnational capability to grow our economy and inform our society.

Internally the WDC implemented nine projects with a total value of €6.96m during the year. Working with key regional stakeholders such as the regional enterprise plans, we significantly increased our ability to identify opportunities and access funds for growth in the coming years.

Key Success in 2022

- 9 EU projects undertaken in 2022 with a total value of €6.96 million
- 5 new projects approved with a total value of €6.115 million
- 132 businesses engaged, 40 SMEs directly supported (via funding instruments or equivalent)
- 20 publications
- 13 new products developed, for example BizMentors international free mentoring platform



EU Funded projects

BIZmentors International

An EU funded project, co-financed by the Interreg NPA Programme. The WDC is lead partner in this project and is working in partnership with organisations in Ireland, Iceland, Finland and Northern Ireland. The project aims to develop an online mentoring platform to assist SMEs in remote areas based in partner regions to access business support through free online mentoring. The project's website is live on <https://bizmentors.eu/>

The output of the project was the establishment of a BizMentors International online mentoring model and platform to support entrepreneurs and business in remote and sparsely populated areas. With a total budget of €1.3m, the project was extended until March 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The project is now fully complete and the prototype online mentoring platform (codeveloped with the project partners), has been tested across four regions involving 44 SMEs. Such is the success of the pilot phase that a preparatory call project (HUBMENT), has been approved to design and propose a scaling project in food innovation, marine economy, the creative economy.

SPOT-LiT

Funded by INTERREG Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme (NPA) (Budget: €1.9m). Spot-lit.eu aims to grow the literary tourism sector in the Northern Periphery and Arctic region, by enhancing capacity in the literary tourism sector and supporting small and medium-sized organisations and businesses to grow and collaborate and better engage audiences together. The Western Development Commission leads the Communications & SME Business Support work packages. [View Spot-lit Video here.](#)

The heart of the Spot-Lit project is its engagement and support of small businesses in the Literary Tourism Sector. The WDC with partners developed a comprehensive [SME /Business Development Programme and business support toolkit](#). Within this Literary Tourism Industry Support Programme 4 models for Literary Tourism were also developed and trialed including: – WildeThings Model – Young People’s LT Model – The Wild Atlantic Way Literary Performance Model and Digital Innovations for growth model. In 2022 at its conclusion this literary project redefined the concept of literary tourism in the region and delivered 28 support products, engaged over 60 SMEs, and supported 14 jobs directly here.

This project closed in June 2022, and such was its success the NPA programme body approved funding for the partners to apply for further literary tourism development projects (pending).

Blue Circular Economy (BCE)

BCE is an NPA-funded project which aims to help such SMEs attain greater market reach and does so by carrying out research into new business models, the enhancement and application of circular design principles in the manufacture of new gear, and the development of reliable and authentic eco-labelling to help SMEs differentiate and promote their new, sustainable products in the market.

BCE aims to use a clustering model to foster the creation of three circular economy clusters based on the sustainable design, recovery, recycling, repair, and re-use of plastic fishing nets, ropes, and components (FNRCs), within the NPA region. It does so by seeking to identify, engage, and connect SMEs in Norway, Ireland, and across the wider NPA region to facilitate knowledge exchange and potential business links via networking events, webinars, innovation workshops, and conferences. These events also feature involvement from a wider group of stakeholders including local authorities, sectoral agencies, higher education institutions, and the general public.

Whilst this project closed in 2022, it provided the region with an early stage advantage in developing a circular economy value chain in marine plastic upcycling. This together with the growing realisation of societies need to address the issue of plastic in our waterways has proven a strong impetus for the WDC to continue to develop solutions in this area. The NPA approved the project team funding to design the next stage marine plastic upcycling project, this was submitted and successfully approved for €1.5 million euros in December 2022 [circNets]

Projects Secured in 2022

Circnets

In December 2022 the WDC received confirmation of the approval of a €1.5 million project to work on the upcycling of marine plastics. Blue Circular Nets (CIRCNETS) is a Northern Periphery and Arctic 2021 - 2027 programme funded (NPA) project, which will support the setting up of a collection system for EOL fishing gear in the NPA region.

The overall aim of the project is to draft recommendations for setting up collection and treatment system for EOL fishing gear in the NPA region. Local circumstances and legislative requirements will be taken into account in drafting of this blueprint .

This project is of vital importance to a region with a large coastline that is both used and visited. The project partnership includes Finland, Norway, Iceland, National University of Ireland Galway and several industry bodies.

SPECTRA

In December 2022 we launched a new project called SPECTRA. This project, coordinated by Western Development Commission, is the result of a successful funding application to the European Commission under the “Horizon Europe European Interconnected Ecosystem” funding call.

SPECTRA stands for ‘Stimulating Performance of Ecosystems in Creative Territories and Regional Actors’. The consortium comprises partners in Ireland (Northern and Western), Bulgaria (North-Central-BG), Denmark (Hovedstaden) and Germany (Berlin). Another West of Ireland partner is CREW, (including associate partners Atlantic Technological University and Galway Cultural DAC). The project aims to create a more responsive, resilient ecosystem capable of growing and developing coordinated responses to many challenges creative industries face. It will focus on collaboration resulting in enhanced, interconnected, diverse, gender-responsive, competitive, and sustainable ecosystems.

European Digital Innovation Hub

WDC are partnering with regional stakeholders to build a new European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) called Data2Sustain. Data2Sustain is a consortium led by the Atlantic Technological University, Sligo, which will deliver a comprehensive digital services programme to increase the capacity and speed of digital transformation, with a focus on data-driven innovation in the circular economy, operations and sustainability areas.

EDIHs will play a central role in the Digital Europe Programme, and the national digital strategy, to stimulate the broad uptake of Artificial Intelligence (AI), High Performance Computing (HPC) and Cybersecurity and as well as advanced Digital Skills and other digital technologies by industry in particular SMEs and midcap companies and public sector organisations in Ireland and Europe.

The EDIHs will be “one stop shops” that help companies (notably SMEs) and the public service become more competitive in their business/production processes, products, or services by providing access to research infrastructure, technical expertise, and experimentation, so that companies can “test before invest”. As well as research facilities and extensive expertise, EDIHs will also provide innovation services, such as financing advice, and the training and skills development necessary for a successful digital transformation.

Furthermore, members of this new EDIH can access any of the other 200 innovation hubs across Europe. This means, for example, that a company in Connemara can avail of research in Denmark that might assist its business with technology such as Blockchain or Robotics., The project is set to receive funding of €5.4 million, announced in June 2022. The Data2Sustain consortium comprises Atlantic Technological University, Western Development Commission, WestBIC, ERNACT, Údarás na Gaeltachta, University of Galway, NWRA and Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Mayo representing regional LEOs. WDC will lead the work package on communication, dissemination and outreach.

Region of Innovation

Building on a new report, *Creating an Atlantic Innovation Ecosystem*, we established the Region of Innovation Project. The report laid the foundations for an Atlantic Innovation Region (AIRe) where industry, academia, government and the public can work together in an internationally recognised living lab. This approach will enable the region to exploit the opportunities presented by our global leadership in MedTech and Sensors, our creativity, and unlimited renewable energy resources. This project will focus on areas such as connected health, where the region is already establishing a leadership position. However, it will also support emerging areas such as renewable energy, creative enterprise, sensor-enabled mobility and social innovation, where the ingredients for success exist, but more support is required.

The ambition of the Region of Innovation is to build a World Class Place-based Innovation Ecosystem. This project aims to establish the West of Ireland as a living lab and a testbed for innovation to create a sustainable pipeline of investment opportunities along the Atlantic coast. The region of innovation takes a project-based approach to build on existing interactions, expand networks and create a community based on innovation.

The project, which is set to last an initial five years, is part of the WDC's long term strategy for the region. One key project already up and running is the Clare Island Home Health living lab. In early 2023, three new staff members will join the WDC to drive this ambition.



Investment in the Region

Western Investment Fund (WIF)

The Western Investment Fund provides equity finance and loans to business, communities, social enterprises, strategic initiatives and the creative industry in the Western Region in Ireland.

The Fund invests and lends on a commercial basis and looks for both a financial return and a social-economic dividend for the region. It is an evergreen fund and all proceeds from investments are reinvested in new ventures.

The Fund invests across multiple sectors and at all stages of the business lifecycle, from start-up to scale-up. Over two decades our team has developed a number of different funds that are designed to meet the different needs of the businesses and communities we serve.

The Fund is currently valued at €88m and has been self-financing since 2010. Over the past twelve months the fund has disbursed over €9.3m across 39 projects including €6.2m invested in SME's, €430k to Creative Industries and €3.1m across community and social enterprises and strategic initiatives. The fund had investment commitments of 8m at the end of 2022.

Western Investment Fund 2022 Overview

€9.3M

disbursed across 39
projects

€6.2M

in 16 SMEs

€3.1M

in 29 community/
social enterprise/
strategic projects

€430k

in 9 WRAP
Projects

Portfolio companies including Ovagen, Venari Medical, Loci Orthopaedics, Versono Medical, Feeltect and Amara Therapeutics were successful in securing funding awards from the European Innovation Council Accelerator and the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund. Another portfolio company, Byowave won the All-Ireland Seedcorn Award.

Business Investment

Our Business Investment Fund provides equity investment and loan finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in our region.

Investment Example – 3D Issue

In August WDC invested €375k in Donegal based Company 3D Issue. The company is using the funding to add 24 new jobs by year-end 2023 and expand in existing and new markets, which will help to grow revenues from €1M to €6M over the next three years.

Established by Paul McNulty in 2007, 3D Issue is a technology company specialising in content experience tools for the development of digital publications. Last year, it launched Experios, a multi-level ‘drag and drop’ content-building platform. Experios creates white-labelled templates for responsive, high-end publications – such as magazines, brochures, reports and handbooks – which reshape to fit the reader’s chosen device and require only one design for all devices. By adding their company’s style guide to the platform, designers can instantly transform Experios into a design studio that enables writers and marketers to add content quickly and seamlessly themselves using company-branded templates. This allows businesses to easily ramp up their – or their clients’ – content experiences without having to invest in additional design services each time. As a result, users can cut design costs, as well as the man-hours required for those services, by as much as 98%.

Community Investment

Our Community loan fund supports social enterprises and community groups in the Western Region to improve the socio-economic lives of their communities. In 2022 we disbursed loans of €3.1m in 29 community/social enterprise projects.

Community Investment Example – Inishturk Community Club CLG

Inishturk Community Club CLG is a non-profit, community enterprise made up of the only shop, bar & restaurant, library & computer suite, activity/ GAA pitch and development office on the island. Its mission is to address Community needs by providing services, training, social events & activities and creating employment opportunities for the benefit of the community.

Inishturk was undeveloped in terms of tourism compared to the surrounding Islands, Clare Island and Inishbofin. There was only two B&B's on the Island for visitors and two self-catering buildings. There is no hotel, hostel or official camping site. An increase in tourist accommodation would free up the two self-catering buildings already existing with new staff, long term lets, new families and returning Islanders to live in.

The WIF provided a loan of €135,000 to Inishturk Community Club to develop 2 Eco cottages. Eco cottages are not only a fast answer to an urgent issue, they are also uncommon on an Island for short term lets. This gives Inishturk a unique visitor experience one can only get on the island, whilst at the same time keeping the traditional design of an island cottage. The project was approved for €100,000 under the Town and Village Scheme and received a contribution from Mayo County Council of €20,000 towards the project.



Creative Industries Investment

Our Creative Industries Investment Micro-Loan Fund provides funding for sole traders, partnerships, businesses, co-operatives, and groups operating in the creative industries sector.

The Wrap Fund

The Western Region Audio-visual Producer's Fund (WRAP Fund) was set up to help build the region's audio-visual sector. It is a joint initiative between the Galway Film Centre and WDC in association with local authorities in Clare, Donegal, Galway City, Galway County, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo and Údarás na Gaeltachta.

The WRAP Fund is designed to provide strategic investment that encourages regional production activity across the film, television drama, animation and gaming sectors, to support local talent, create sustainable employment, build the audio-visual infrastructure and contribute to the culture and language of the Western Region.

The WRAP Fund invested €430k in 9 projects which commenced production in 2022 with a combined total regional expenditure of €21 million.

In August 2022, the WRAP fund partnered with A24, BBC Films and Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland to support the psychological drama *God's Creatures*. Filmed on location in Donegal, it stars Emily Watson and Paul Mescal and unites Directors Saela Davis and Anna Rose Holmer after their award-winning drama *The Fits*. *God's Creatures* is set in a rain-swept Irish fishing village where a woman's lies to protect her son have a devastating impact on the community, her family, and herself.

In 2022, the Wrap Fund also invested in *Smother*, filmed in West Clare, *My Sailor My Love* shot in Achill, Co. Mayo and Studio Meala animation company based in Boyle, Co. Roscommon.

Socio-economic Analysis of the WIF

In August 2022, we launched the report on socio-economic impact of the Western Investment Fund carried out for the WDC by Indecon, Ireland's leading independent economic research and consultancy organisation. The report demonstrates the very significant and positive impact that the Western Investment Fund has had on the Western Region over the past two decades, in terms of creating jobs and economic prosperity.

Indecon says the Fund has provided “an impressive contribution to economic activity in the Western Region and has made a significant contribution to the national economy”. The contribution of companies supported by the WIF to Ireland's economy since 2001 is estimated by Indecon to be almost €3.3 billion. In terms of employment, the research found that at least 5,300 jobs are supported by fund-supported companies or enterprises when economy-wide impacts are considered. Through the payment of taxes, companies have contributed more than €276 million to the State.

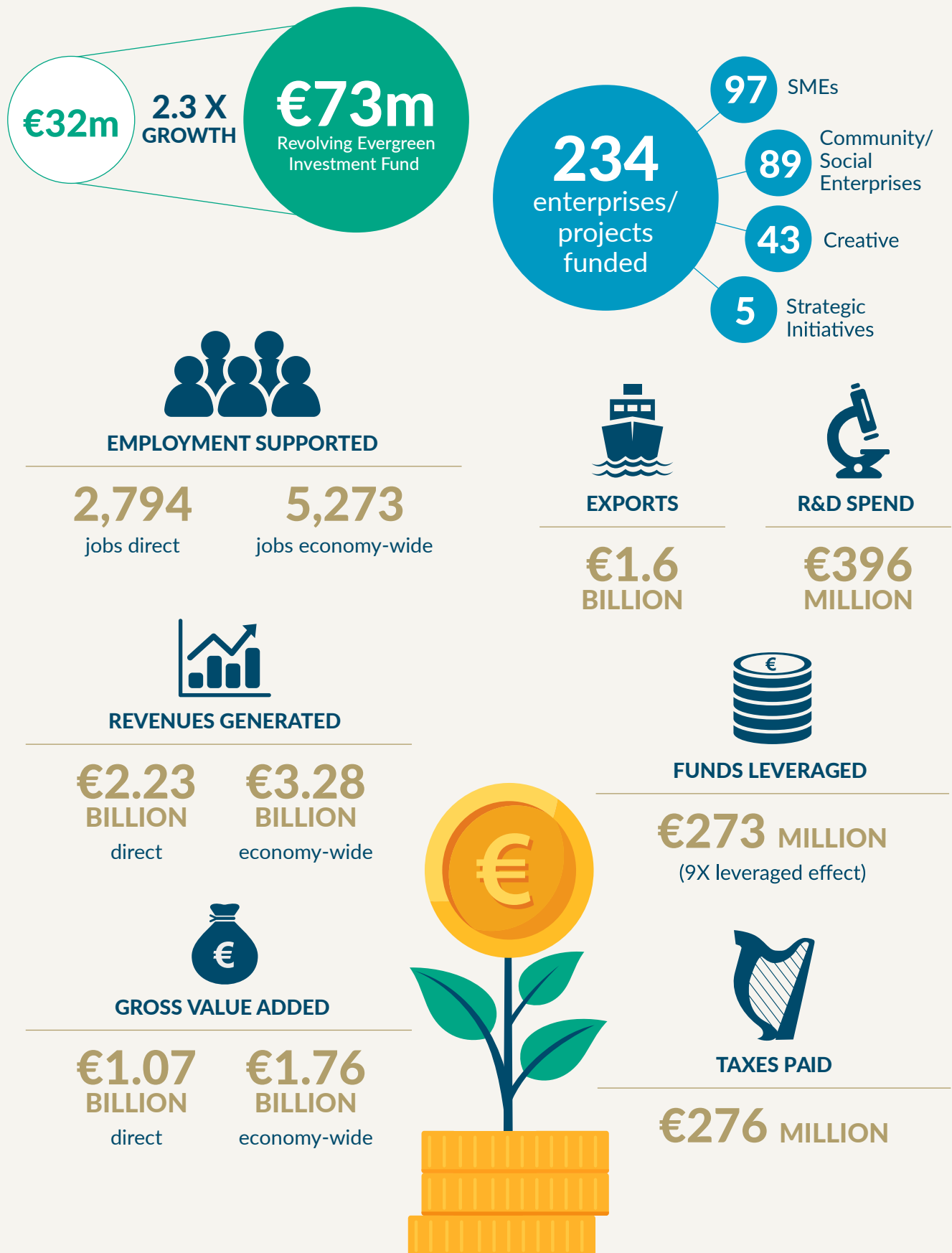
The analysis also found that companies supported by the investment fund have achieved major global success in their markets with companies clocking up an estimated €1.6 billion in exports and collectively spending €396 million on Research & Development (R&D) in the region.

On a wider socio-economic impact Indecon also surveyed companies and projects supported by the WIF and the results showed that 100% of respondents believed that the WIF has a positive impact on regional development.

[Read Report Western Development Commission's Investment Fund returns two and half times growth rate for taxpayers](#)

WDC Investment Fund

20 years of Socio-Economic Impact, 2001–2020





100% of respondents believed that WIF has a positive impact on regional development



95%

of respondents stated that there would be a significant or very significant funding gap in the absence of the WIF



100%

of respondents view the WIF as playing a significant role in fostering an enterprise ecosystem and equity/social finance culture



85%

of enterprises stated that the WIF contributed to smart specialisation



70%

of employees in supported SMEs are graduates vs national average of 55%



20%

above national rates for gender diversity of senior leadership teams



100%

of respondents stated WIF has enhanced quality of life of citizens



PorterShed Case Study

The WDC Investment Fund supports strategic initiatives across the Western Region.

An example of a strategic investment made under the Western Investment Fund is The Portershed in Galway.

In 2022 the WDC provided €1m in loan finance to Galway City Innovation District (GCID) from the Western Investment Fund to relocate and expand its original co-working space, the Portershed, to two new adjacent city centre locations, PorterShed a hAon at Bowling Green and PorterShed a Do on Market Street.

The GCID was established on a not-for-project basis to provide workspace for the tech sector. It sought to capitalise on the global trend and preference for tech companies to locate in areas close to the city centre. Its purpose was to attract creators, innovators and entrepreneurs who wish to work in close proximity to others in a supportive and connected environment as well as young technology companies with strong growth potential scaling companies and as a soft-landing zone for multinationals.

In March 2022, PorterShed a hAon at Bowling Green opened and it features state-of-the-art meeting rooms, privacy booths, and room for collaboration. It currently houses some 45 member companies, hosts hot-deskers on a regular basis, and is open for all manner of events, from tech-focused meet-ups to community events like art exhibitions.



In late October 2022, PorterShed a Do on Market Street opened. A space where start-ups, scale-ups, and multinational corporations can be based, some of its high-end facilities include meeting rooms, privacy booths, meditation rooms, and more.

According to a KPMG report carried out in 2021, GCID has significantly contributed to the national economic output, created hundreds of jobs, and millions of euro in inward investment through its co-working and innovation space, the PorterShed. One of the key figures from the report is that a total of some 835 jobs have been supported through a combination of PorterShed employees, member companies, and indirect jobs created in the value chain as a result of PorterShed and member spending.

The Portershed is viewed as one of the best-in-class hubs, not only in the Western Region, but nationally and internationally. It has been leading the way in incubating start-ups, supporting SME's and developing a new approach to how working environments can function.

Emerging Sectors

Growth of Onshore to Offshore Wind – Atlantic Region Wind Energy & Supply-Chain Feasibility Study

The WDC collaborated with regional stakeholders on a new report identifying an unprecedented opportunity for the Atlantic Region in the growth of onshore to offshore wind. The study was launched in August 2022 and commissioned by the Mid-West, North-West and West Regional Enterprise Offices.

The report found that by 2037, upwards of 5,000 jobs could be supported directly by the offshore wind sector, generating upwards of €400 million in Gross Value Add annually for the Atlantic region. The impact on indirect employment will be equally transformative. The figures projected in the report are based on wind farm delivery. The indirect economic, environmental, and societal benefits from harnessing our vast Atlantic renewable energy resource could be many times greater, including keeping and attracting jobs outside the energy sector by being a low-carbon location. The report also points towards many positive downstream economic, environmental, and societal impacts that would likely follow the establishment of a supply chain.

The report identified engineering, applied sciences, logistics, digital, and supply chain management as essential when assessing the skills needed for the industry to grow. Other occupations and skills required to support the industry include science and humanities; construction and technical; legal and professional services; transport; electrical maintenance, and infrastructure.

Regional Enterprise Plan

The Regional Enterprise Plans are a Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment initiative. Regional Enterprise Plans are developed by regional stakeholders and focus on undertaking collaborative initiatives that can help deliver enterprise growth in each of the nine region's across Ireland. They are an important part of the Programme for Government commitment to achieving more balanced regional enterprise development. The WDC hosts the programme manager for the West REP and in 2022 provided maternity cover for the Northwest programme manager. This brought increased regional cohesion and allowed the Regional Enterprises plans to work on a number of cross-regional initiatives. Plans for the West and Northwest were launched in early 2022. The plans consist of high-level strategic objectives and specific actions. Each objective has a dedicated working group to deliver on the actions.

2022 Highlights of the Northwest Regional Enterprise Plan include:

- The development of a Northwest Enterprise Data Repository (funded by DETE),
- Sligo Gas Network (Enterprise Ireland REISS Funding)
- Completion of the Cyber Skills Report by the NW Regional Skills Forum & Cyber Ireland Northwest Chapter
- Inishowen Sustainable Energy Community Project (Enterprise Ireland REISS)
- Nine shared island projects addressing enterprise opportunities in med tech, tourism, reg tech, innovation plaza, decarbonisation, food hub and VR facilities in the education sector.

2022 selected highlights from the West Regional Enterprise Plan include:

- Scoping of a Regional Life Sciences Hub (funded by Enterprise Ireland REISS Funding), led by University of Galway and Western Development Commission
- Inclusion of West of Ireland in the Circular Regions and Cities EU Initiative and a mirror region for Responsible Research & Innovation Cherries Project
- Inclusion of WDC as associate partner in the newly appointed EIT KIC for Creative and Cultural Sector Industries, ICE
- Establishment of GH2 Galway Hydrogen Valley, with support for feasibility work from Enterprise Ireland REISS Funding
- Securing of an award from the University of Galway Strategic Fund to support capacity building for Circular Economy in the region.

Collaborative initiatives with the Northwest, West and MidWest REPs included the Atlantic TIDE Design industry initiative (Creative Ireland) and the Growth of Onshore to Offshore Wind – Atlantic Region Wind Energy & Supply-Chain Feasibility funded by Enterprise Ireland and Local Authorities in the Midwest, Northwest and West regions, and the WDC, as well as ImTech virtual reality training for renewable wind energy sector, a project funded by SOLAS Innovation fund and led by MSLETB.

Social Enterprise

In April 2022, Minister Heather Humphreys announced €50,000 in funding to the Western Development Commission under the Department of Rural & Community Development's (DRCD) Awareness Raising Initiative for Social Enterprise Scheme (ARISE). This funding was used to help raise awareness of social enterprise activity across the region and host networking/educational events.

We planned three events at central locations to attract those from neighbouring counties to join. The first event occurred in The Building Block Sligo on November 8th, with PorterShed's CEO Mary Rodgers and Programme Manager Rosemary Gallagher as hosts; the second was held in Galway's Portershed on November 29th; the series will finish in The Base in Donegal in January 2023. The events helped to raise awareness of social enterprises while also offering those working in the sector an opportunity to activate their networks and receive training. This project also funded the development of case studies that demonstrate the incredible impact of social enterprise on communities.

As part of this project, we also launched a new interactive map for social enterprises operating in the western region. Initial research identified and mapped 288 social enterprises within the region, but this is growing.

The Western Development Commission plans to launch a social enterprise strategy in Q1 2023 that sets out actions to accelerate the growth of social enterprise across the region and our plans to create a Social Innovation Region.

Improving WDC IT Systems

We continue to work to improve all our IT systems and policies. The WDC has implemented a Procure-to-Pay system, increasing internal transparency and supporting electronic document exchange to save time and money. The system provides real-time purchasing data, which improves cash flow management through better data-driven decision-making. IT systems are expected to go live in 2023, and staff are currently working to support the implementation and identify improvements to the system.

Financial Statements

Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a tolerable level rather than to eliminate it. The system can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely manner.

The system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, has been in place in the WDC for the year ended December 31st 2022 and up to the date of approval of the financial statements.

Capacity to Handle Risk

The WDC has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) made up of three Commission members and two external members, with financial and audit expertise, one of whom is the Chair. The ARC met five times in 2022.

The WDC has also established an internal audit function, which is adequately resourced and conducts a programme of work agreed with the ARC.

The ARC has developed a risk management policy which sets out the risk appetite, the risk management processes in place and details the roles and responsibilities of staff concerning risk. The

Commission of the WDC, at its June 2022 meeting, reviewed and adopted the policy. The Policy has been issued to all staff that are expected to work within the WDC risk management policies, to alert management on emerging risks and control weaknesses, and assume responsibility for risk and controls within their own area of work. In 2022, the WDC will have undertaken considerable work in the area of risk, modernising the risk register and implementing a robust process for managing and monitoring the risk process.

Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Formal procedures have been established for monitoring control processes and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to management and the Commission, where relevant, in a timely manner. The WDC can confirm that the following ongoing monitoring systems are in place: –

- Key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies.
- Reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned.
- There are regular reviews, by senior management, of periodic and annual performance and financial reports, which indicate performance against budgets/forecasts.

Procurement

The Commission confirms that the WDC has developed and implemented Procurement Policies, Procedures and a Procurement Plan that mandates compliance to meet requirements under the National Public Procurement Policy Framework. The WDC endeavors to ensure full compliance with the procurement procedures including a contract database with a monitoring system in place to flag non-compliant procurement.

The WDC has sought an external review of the procurement process and spend patterns to align the process with national public procurement guidelines and to streamline the purchasing activity by establishing procurement frameworks. Furthermore, procurement training is made available to all staff.

Review of Effectiveness

The Commission confirms that the WDC has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The WDC's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, the ARC, which oversees their work, and the senior management within the WDC responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework.

The WDC can confirm that the Commission conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2022.

Internal Control Issues

As of 2022, no weaknesses were identified in internal control that need to be disclosed in financial statements, with the exception of the procurement issues discussed above.

Periodic Critical Review

In line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) which requires that parent Departments carry out a Periodic Critical Review of their agencies every 5 years, the WDC commenced this process during 2021.

The review focuses on the ongoing business case for the WDC, its performance, efficiency and effectiveness and its governance arrangements, results of the review are still being compiled.

Gender Balance in the Board membership

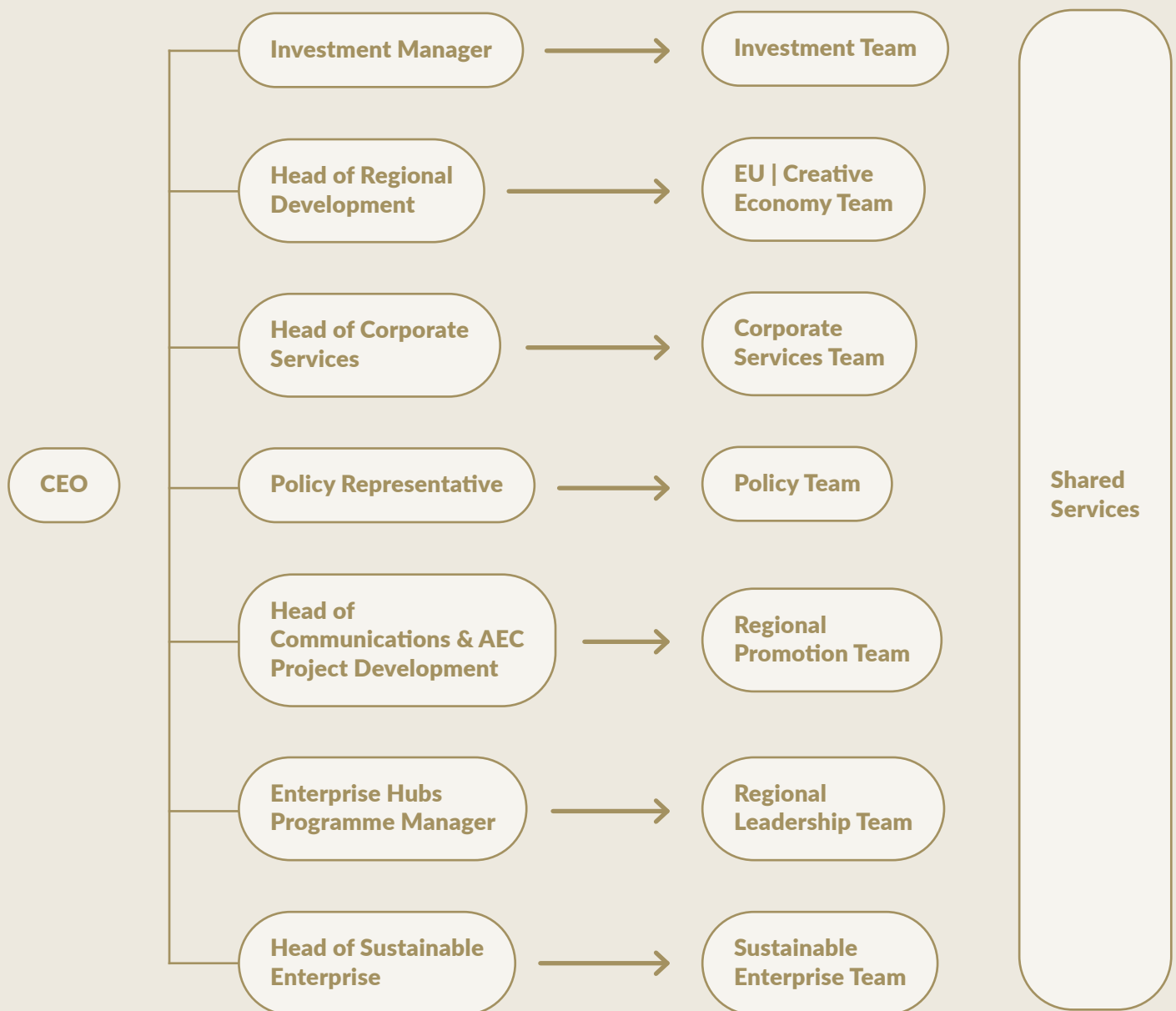
As of December 31st, 2022, the Board had 6 (50%) female and 6 (50%) male members, with no positions vacant. The Board therefore meets the Government target of minimum 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards.

The following measures are planned to maintain and support gender balance on this Board:

- Review of the Human Rights, Equality and Dignity at Work Policy
- Continuing skills development and developing mentorship initiatives

Key Enablers to Deliver Our Strategy: Corporate Services

Organisational Structure



Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2022

Western Development Commission Information

Chairperson: Mr. Gerry Finn

Members: Ms. Sandra Divilly Nolan Mr. John Kelleher
Ms. Mary Mc Kenna Professor Mary Corcoran
Mr. Peter Hynes Mr Henry McGarvey
Ms. Audrey Crummy Mr. Christy Loftus
Ms. Aisling Meehan Mr. Edmund Jennings
Ms. Mary Coyne

Bankers: Bank of Ireland Ballaghaderreen Co. Roscommon, F45 EA34
Ulster Bank 33 Eyre Square Galway, H91 HY96
Allied Irish Bank Tuam Road Galway, H91 PR83
KBC Bank Sandwith Street Dublin 2, D02 X489

Solicitors: Byrne Wallace Solicitors 88 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2, D02 DK18
LK Shields Solicitors Dockgate, Dock Road, Galway, H91 DFP3
Flynn O'Driscoll LLP No.1 Grant's Row, Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2, D02 HX96

Auditors: Office of The Comptroller and Auditor General
34 Mayor Street Upper
North Wall
Dublin 1
D01 PF72

Governance Statement and Commission Member's Report 2022

Governance

The Board (hereto referred to as the Commission members) of the Western Development Commission (WDC) was established under the Western Development Commission Act, 1998 as set out in Section 9 of this Act. The functions of the Commission are set out in Section 8 of the Act. Commission members are accountable to the Minister for Rural and Community Development and are responsible for ensuring good governance and performs this task by setting strategic objectives and targets and making strategic decisions on all key business issues. The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the WDC is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the senior management team. The CEO and the senior management team must follow the broad strategic direction set by Commission members and must ensure that all Commission members have a clear understanding of the key activities and decisions relating to the agency, and of any significant risks likely to arise. The CEO acts as a direct liaison between the Commission members and management of the WDC.

Commission Members' Responsibilities

The Commission members are collectively responsible for overseeing the Western Development Commission and ensuring its sustainability. Decisions are made after appropriate information has been made available to the Commission members and with due consideration of the risks identified through the risk management process. There is a reserved schedule of matters for its consideration, including:

- declaration of interests
- CEO report
- reports from committees
- financial reports/management reports
- governance matters
- performance reports and
- reserved matters

Section 22(1) of the Western Development Commission Act 1998 requires Commission members to keep in such form and in respect of such accounting periods as may be approved of by the Minister, with the consent of the Minister for Finance, all proper and usual accounts of moneys received or expended by it.

In preparing these financial statements, the Commission members are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently
- Ensure that any judgements and estimates are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable accounting standard have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Ensure that the financial statements present a true and fair value view of the WDC's financial performance and financial position at the year-end
- Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that it will continue in operation

The Commission members are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, its financial position and enables it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 22(1) of the Western Development Commission Act 1998. The maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the WDC's website is the responsibility of the Commission members.

The Commission members are responsible for approving the annual report and budget. An evaluation of the performance of the WDC by reference to the annual report and budget is carried out on a monthly and quarterly basis at the Commission meetings.

The Commission members are also responsible for safeguarding its assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Commission members consider that the financial statements of the WDC give a true and fair view of the financial performance and the financial position of the WDC on 31 December 2022.

Commission Structure

The Commission consists of a Chairperson and such number of ordinary members not exceeding 11 as the Minister may determine. The Chairperson and the ordinary members of the Commission are appointed by the Minister with the consent of the Minister for Finance and hold office for a period of 3 years from the date of appointment.

The Commission members are satisfied that its members are free from any business or other relationships that could materially affect, or could appear to affect, the exercise of their independent judgment.

All Commission members disclose any interest and absent themselves from discussions and decisions where they are conflicted or have a direct or indirect interest as required by the Code of Practice.

There were 9 meetings of the Commission members in 2022.

The table below details the appointment period for the current members:

Ref	Board Member	Role	Date of Appointment	Current terms end
1	Gerry Finn	Chairperson	August 2017	November 2023
2	Sandra Divilly Nolan	Ordinary Member	November 2020	November 2023
3	Mary McKenna	Ordinary Member	November 2020	November 2023
4	Peter Hynes	Ordinary Member	November 2020	November 2023
5	Audrey Crummey	Ordinary Member	November 2020	November 2023
6	Aisling Meehan	Ordinary Member	November 2020	November 2023
7	Mary Coyne	Ordinary Member	November 2020	November 2023
8	Professor Mary Corcoran	Ordinary Member	August 2017*	November 2023
9	Christy Loftus	Ordinary Member	August 2017*	November 2023
10	John Kelleher	Ordinary Member	August 2017*	November 2023
11	Henry McGarvey	Ordinary Member	August 2017*	November 2023
12	Edmund Jennings	Ordinary Member	August 2018**	August 2024

* reappointed as Commission Member in November 2020

** reappointed as Commission Member in August 2021

Review of Effectiveness

In accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016), all Commission members were required to complete a Self-Assessment Questionnaire in January 2023 for the year ended 31 December 2022. The results were presented to the Commission members at its meeting on 14th February 2023.

An external Board evaluation commenced in 2021 and was completed in March 2022 with a report submitted to the Chair of the Commission. An action plan was formulated in 2022 to address a number of the recommendations in the report and this work continues in 2023.

The Commission members have established three committees, as follows:

1. Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprises 3 Commission members and 2 external members including the Chairperson. The role of the ARC is to support the Commission members in relation to their responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and associated assurance. The ARC is independent from the financial management of the WDC. In particular the ARC ensures that the internal control systems including audit activities are monitored actively and independently. The ARC reports to the Commission members after each meeting and it also provides a report annually to the Commission members summarising the conclusions from its work carried out during the year.

There were 5 meetings of the ARC in 2022. The members of the ARC are:

Kevin Moore (Chairperson & External)
Paul McGonigle (External Member)
Professor Mary Corcoran (Commission member)
Audrey Crummy (Commission member)
Mary Coyne (Commission member)

2. Fund Advisory Panel (FAP)

The Fund Advisory Panel (FAP) comprises of 7 members, 3 commission members (including the Commission Chairperson) and 4 external experts.

The role of the FAP is to evaluate applications to the Western Investment Fund (WIF) and to recommend commercial profit-driven investment decisions to the Commission members. The FAP helps to promote the WIF by assisting in the generation of quality deal flow and it also supports the effective working of the WIF.

There were 7 meetings of the FAP in 2022. The members of the FAP are:

Gerry Finn (Chairperson & Commission member)
John Allen (External)
Joann Hosey (External)
Mary McKenna (Commission member)
Edmund Jennings (Commission member)
Felim McNeela (External)
Mary Carty (External)

Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses

A schedule of attendance at the Commission and Committee Meetings for 2022 is set below, including the fees and expenses received by each member.

Commission Members	Board Meeting	ARC	FAP	2022 Fees	2022 Expenses
	9	5	7		
Board					
Gerry Finn (Chair)	8 of 9	-	7 of 7	€8,978	€891
Henry McGarvey	7 of 9	-	-	-	€682
Professor Mary Corcoran	9 of 9	5 of 5	-	-	€1,591
John Kelleher	5 of 9	-	-	-	€453
Christy Loftus	5 of 9	-	-	€5,985	€631
Edmund Jennings	8 of 9	-	6 of 7	€5,985	€698
Mary McKenna	6 of 9	-	6 of 7	€5,985	-
Sandra Divilly Nolan	9 of 9	-	-	€998	€1,034
Mary Coyne	9 of 9	5 of 5	-	€5,985	€1,630
Audrey Crummy	6 of 9	3 of 5	-	€5,985	-
Aisling Meehan	8 of 9	-	-	€5,985	€473
Peter Hynes	7 of 9	-	-	€5,985	€888
External Members					
Kevin Moore	-	5 of 5	-	€1,750	€393
Paul McGonigle*	-	4 of 5	-	€1,000	-
John Allen	-	-	5 of 7	€1,250	-
Joan Hussey	-	-	7 of 7	-	-
Felim McNeela	-	-	6 of 7	-	-
Mary Carty**	-	-	6 of 7	€1,500	-
Total				€57,371	€9,364

Key Personnel Changes

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr. Tomás Ó Síocháin resigned from his position with effect from 6 December 2022. Mr. Allan Mulrooney was appointed as acting CEO with effect from 6 December 2022.

Disclosures required by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016)

The Commission members are responsible for ensuring that the WDC has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies ("the Code"), as published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in August 2016. The following disclosures are required by the Code:

Employee Short-Term Benefits Breakdown

Employees' short-term benefits in excess of €60,000 are categorised in the following bands:

Salary Band (€) 2022	Staff Number	Salary Band (€) 2021	Staff Number
60,000 – 69,999	6	60,000 – 69,999	3
70,000 – 79,999	3	70,000 – 79,999	3
80,000 – 89,999	1	80,000 – 89,999	-
90,000 – 99,999	2	90,000 – 99,999	3
100,000 – 109,999	0	100,000 – 109,999	-

Note: For the purposes of this disclosure, short-term employee benefits in relation to services rendered during the reporting period include salary and other payments made on behalf of the employee, but exclude employer's PRSI.

Consultancy Costs

Consultancy costs include the cost of external advice to management and exclude outsourced 'business-as-usual' functions.

	2022 €	2021 €
Legal Advice	23,403	15,344
Financial/Actuarial Advice	4,059	2,460
Public Relations/Marketing	59,511	55,855
Human Resource	1,999	21,592
Total Consultancy Costs	88,972	95,251

Legal Costs and Settlement

As per the table below, there were no legal costs in the reporting period in relation to legal costs, settlements, conciliation and arbitration proceedings relating to contracts with third parties. This does not include expenditure incurred in relation to legal advice received by the WDC, which is disclosed in Consultancy Costs above.

	2022	2021
Legal Fees — Legal Proceedings	-	-
Conciliation and Arbitration payments	-	-
Settlement	-	-
Total Consultancy Costs and Settlements	-	-

Travel and Subsistence Expenditure

Travel and Subsistence expenditure is categorised as follows:

	2022 €	2021 €
Domestic:		
• Commission members	9,364	2,217
• Employees	78,862	18,810
International		
• Commission members	-	-
• Employees	19,450	2,127
Total Travel and Subsistence Costs	107,676	23,154

Hospitality Expenditure

The Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves includes the following hospitality expenditure:

	2022 €	2021 €
Staff Hospitality	870	796
Client Hospitality	1,959	1,674
Total Hospitality Costs	2,829	2,470

Administrative and Legal Requirements:

As part of the Commission members' continuing oversight of the control environment in the WDC, they receive assurances from the senior management team in relation to the legal and regulatory environment as it applies to public bodies including the following:

Freedom of Information Acts, 2014

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2014 provides that every person has, subject to certain exemptions specified in the Act, the right to:

- Access official records held by Government Departments and all public bodies that conform to the provisions of Section 6 of the Act.
- Have personal information held on them corrected or updated where such information is incomplete, incorrect or misleading.
- Be given reasons for decisions taken by public bodies that affect them.

WDC complies with this Act. There were four FOI requests in 2022 and all requests were dealt with within the statutory timeframe.

Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004

The WDC is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and adopts a positive approach to equality and diversity in the organisation. The WDC is committed to ensuring that no staff member or applicant for employment with WDC, receives less favourable treatment than any other on grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, membership of the traveller community or on any other grounds not relevant to good employment practice. This applies to recruitment, working conditions and career development opportunities.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005

The WDC continues to take appropriate measures to protect the safety, health and welfare of all employees and visitors within its offices to meet the provisions of this Act.

There were no reportable accidents in 2022.

Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995 and Standards in Public Office Act, 2001

In accordance with the above Acts, all WDC Commission members have furnished statements of interest in compliance with the provisions of the Acts.

Data Protection Acts 1988-2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), 2018

The WDC is committed to ensuring the security, confidentiality and protection of the personal information that it processes, and to provide a compliant and consistent approach to data protection.

There were no requests for information under the Data Protection Acts and Regulation in 2022.

Protected Disclosures Act, 2014 and Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022

The WDC has a Protected Disclosure Policy in place which clearly outlines the procedures in place for the making of protected disclosures in accordance with the Protected Disclosure Act 2014. The Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022 came into effect on 1 January 2023 and the WDC will ensure it is compliant with the updated requirements.

There were no protected disclosures made to the WDC in 2022.

Official Languages Act, 2003 and Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021

The WDC comes under the remit of the Official Languages Act 2003, which was signed into law on 14th July 2003, to provide a statutory framework for the delivery of services through the Irish language. In accordance with Section 10 of the Act, the Annual Report and Financial Statements are published in Irish and English. The WDC is committed to working towards the implementation of the new provisions introduced by the 2021 Official Languages Amendment Act.

Prompt Payment of Accounts

Payment of invoices by the WDC is governed by the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997, as amended by the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations 2012. The regulations, which apply equally to the public and private sectors, provide an automatic entitlement to interest and compensation if payment for commercial transactions is late (after 30 days from the date of receipt). It is the policy of the WDC to ensure that all invoices are paid promptly and every effort, consistent with proper financial procedures, is being made to ensure that all suppliers are paid within this timeframe.

Prompt Payment to Suppliers

The WDC is committed to meeting its obligations under the 15-day Prompt Payment Rule, which came into effect on 1st July 2011. This provision ensures that payments to suppliers in respect of all valid invoices received will be made within 15 calendar days. The WDC reports quarterly on the implementation of the 15-day Prompt Payment Rule.

The Prompt Payment results for 2022 can be viewed on the following link: <https://westerndevelopment.ie/about/prompt-payments/>

Travel and Subsistence

All payments for travel and subsistence to the WDC's Commission members, committee members, CEO and staff have been made in line with the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circulars governing travel and subsistence.

The WDC Travel and Subsistence policy and procedures are up to date and reflect the current rates and all staff are aware of their responsibilities under the policy. The WDC is conscious of the need to achieve economy and efficiency in relation to expenditure on travel and the policy requirements are being complied with.

Government Pay Guidelines

- The WDC adheres to Government guidelines and to the Department of Rural and Community Development's arrangements in relation to the remuneration of the Chief Executive Officer and employees.
- Payment of Commission members and Chairperson fees and expenses are adhered to in relation to arrangements set out by the Government guidelines and the parent department.
- Details of the above remuneration and fees/expenses are outlined in the Annual Report and Financial Statements.
- The WDC has continued its commitment to the current "Building Momentum" Public Service Agreement 2021-2023.

Public Spending Code

The WDC are consistent in their approach to the requirements of the Public Spending Code. The key drivers that underpin the approach are detailed in the Procurement Plan:

- To contribute to the delivery of the planned efficiency savings targeted in the coming Financial Years.
- To support the National Procurement Policy Unit initiatives.
- To ensure value for money is being achieved.
- To enable the strategic objectives of the WDC to be met.
- To exercise control and stewardship in the use of public funds.

Code of Conduct

All Commission members have complied with and signed the Code of Conduct.

Customer Care

The WDC is committed to providing its clients with a professional, efficient and courteous service in accordance with the WDC Customer Charter and the Principles of Quality Customer Services. A copy of the WDC's Customer Statement is available on www.westerndevelopment.ie

No customer complaints were reported or recorded in 2022.

Off-Balance Sheet Transactions

There have been no off-balance sheet transactions between the balance sheet date and the date on which the financial statements were approved.

Tax Compliance

I can confirm that the WDC has complied in full with the appropriate tax laws and with its tax obligations in 2022. There has been no issue reported.

Statement of Compliance:

The WDC has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies (2016) and has put procedures in place to ensure compliance with the Code. The WDC was in full compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies for 2022.

On behalf of the Commission members:



Gerry Finn
Chairperson
24.10.2023

Comptroller and Auditor General



Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas Western Development Commission

Opinion on the financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of the Western Development Commission for the year ended 31 December 2022 as required under the provisions of section 22 of the Western Development Commission Act 1998. The financial statements comprise

- the statement of income and expenditure and retained reserves
- the statement of comprehensive income
- the statement of financial position
- the statement of cash flows, and
- the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Western Development Commission at 31 December 2022 and of its income and expenditure for 2022 in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 – *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland*.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Western Development Commission and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

**Report on information other than the financial statements,
and on other matters**

The Western Development Commission has presented certain other information together with the financial statements. This comprises the annual report, the governance statement and Commission members' report, and the statement on internal control. My responsibilities to report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

I have nothing to report in that regard.



Mark Brady

For and on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General
2 November 2023

Responsibilities of Commission members

As detailed in the governance statement and Commission members' report, the Commission members are responsible for

- the preparation of annual financial statements in the form prescribed under section 22 of the Western Development Commission Act 1998
- ensuring that the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with FRS102
- ensuring the regularity of transactions
- assessing whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate, and
- such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under section 22 of the Western Development Commission Act 1998 to audit the financial statements of the Western Development Commission and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- I evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures.
- I conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on Western Development Commission's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause Western Development Commission to cease to continue as a going concern.
- I evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

I report by exception if, in my opinion,

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records.

Information other than the financial statements

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information presented with those statements, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, I am required under the ISAs to read the other information presented and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

Reporting on other matters

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. I report if I identify material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I report I identify any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them.

Statement on Internal Control 2022

Scope of Responsibility

On behalf of the Western Development Commission (WDC), I acknowledge the Commission's responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated. This responsibility takes account of the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a tolerable level rather than to eliminate it. The system can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely manner.

The system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, has been in place in the WDC for the year ended 31st December 2022 and up to the date of approval of the financial statements.

Capacity to Handle Risk

The WDC has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising three Commission members and two external members, with financial and audit expertise, one of whom is the Chair. The ARC met five times during 2022.

The WDC has also established an internal audit function, which is adequately resourced with independent, external expertise and conducts a programme of work agreed with the ARC.

The ARC has developed a risk management policy which sets out the risk appetite, the risk management processes in place and details the roles and responsibilities of staff concerning risk.

Risk and Control Framework

The WDC has a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks.

A Risk Register is in place which identifies the key risks facing the WDC and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The risk register is a standing order on both the Commission, ARC and Management agenda and is reviewed at each meeting. The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level.

The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibility for the operation of controls assigned to specific staff. The WDC can confirm that a controlled environment containing the following elements is in place:

- Procedures for all key business processes have been documented.
- Financial responsibilities have been assigned at the management level with corresponding accountability.
- There is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management.
- There are systems aimed at enduring the security of the information and communication technology systems.
- There are systems in place to safeguard the assets.
- Control procedures over funding to outside agencies ensure adequate control over approval of funds and monitoring and review of grantees to ensure funds have been applied for the purpose intended.

Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Formal procedures have been established for monitoring control processes and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to management and the Commission, where relevant, in a timely manner. The WDC can confirm that the following ongoing monitoring systems are in place:

- Key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies
- Reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned.
- There are regular reviews, by senior management, of periodic and annual performance and financial reports, which indicate performance against budgets/forecasts.

Procurement

I can confirm that the WDC has procedures in place to ensure compliance with current procurement rules and guidelines and that during 2022 the WDC complied with those procedures.

Review of Effectiveness

The Commission confirms that the WDC has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The WDC's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, the ARC, which oversees their work, and the senior management within the WDC responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework.

I confirm that the Commission conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2022 on 28th March 2023.

Internal Control Issues

As of 2022, no weaknesses were identified in internal control that require disclosure in the financial statements.

Signed on behalf of the Commission



Gerry Finn
Chairperson
24.10.2023

Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves for the year ended 31 December 2022

Income	Note	2022 € Western Development Commission	2022 € Western Investment Fund	2022 € EU Grants Funding	2022 € Total	2021 € Total
Oireachtas Grants	2	2,345,634	-	-	2,345,634	2,149,849
EU Grants	3	-	-	875,321	875,321	281,975
Other income	4	1,441,403	-	85	1,441,488	960,044
Transfer to EU Grants Funding		-	-	-		-
Investment income	5	-	194,883	-	194,883	130,191
Net Deferred Funding for Retirement Benefits	15c	651,000	-	-	651,000	542,000
Total Income		4,438,037	194,883	875,406	5,508,326	4,064,059
Expenditure						
Operating Costs	6a/b	(4,468,578)		(940,225)	(5,408,803)	(3,920,656)
Operating surplus/(Deficit) for the year		(30,541)	194,883	(64,819)	99,523	143,403
Increase/(Decrease) in value of financial assets	7	-	14,342,739	-	14,342,739	271,681
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year before appropriations		(30,541)	14,537,622	(64,819)	14,442,262	415,084
Transfer from (to) capital account	13	1,180	-	-	1,180	(83)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year after appropriations		(29,361)	14,537,622	(64,819)	14,443,442	415,001
Reserves at 1 January		770,391	73,129,469	211,947	74,111,807	73,696,806
Reserves at 31 December		741,030	87,667,091	147,128	88,555,249	74,111,807

The Statement of Cash Flows and the notes 1 to 21 form part of these financial statements.



Gerry Finn, Chairperson
24.10.2023



Allan Mulrooney, CEO
24.10.2023

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 31 December 2022

	2022 €	2021 €
Surplus for the year	14,443,442	415,001
Actuarial loss/(gain) on Retirement Benefits liabilities	(2,491,000)	1,253,000
Adjustment to deferred Retirement Benefits funding	2,491,000	(1,253,000)
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	14,443,442	415,001

The Statement of Cash Flows and the notes 1 to 21 form part of these financial statements.



Gerry Finn, Chairperson
24.10.2023



Allan Mulrooney, CEO
24.10.2023

Statement of Financial Position

Position as at 31 December 2022

	Notes	2022 €	2021 €
Tangible Assets			
Fixed Assets	9	37,059	38,239
Financial Assets	10	87,667,091	73,129,469
		87,704,150	73,167,708
Current Assets			
Cash and Cash Equivalents		1,721,443	2,299,730
Receivables	11	344,994	339,791
		2,066,437	2,639,521
Current Liabilities			
Payables	12	(1,178,279)	1,657,183)
Net Current Assets		888,158	982,338
Net Assets before Retirement Benefits Obligations		88,592,308	74,150,046
Deferred Retirement Benefits Funding		7,880,000	9,720,000
Retirement Benefits Obligations	15 b	(7,880,000)	(9,720,000)
Total Net Assets		88,592,308	74,150,046
Representing			
Western Investment Fund	10	87,667,091	73,129,469
EU Grants/NPP	19	147,128	211,947
Retained Revenue Reserves		741,030	770,391
Capital Account	13	37,059	38,239
		88,592,308	74,150,046

The Statement of Cash Flows and the notes 1 to 21 form part of these financial statements



Gerry Finn, Chairperson
24.10.2023



Allan Mulrooney, CEO
24.10.2023

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 December 2022

	2022 € Western Development Commission	2022 € Western Investment Fund	2022 € EU Grants Funding	2022 € Total	2021 € Total
Cash flows from Operating Activities					
Excess Income over Expenditure	(30,541)	14,537,622	(64,819)	14,442,262	415,001
Depreciation of Fixed Assets	26,781	-	-	26,781	24,471
Transfer to Capital Account	1,180	-	-	1,180	83
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Assets	319	-	-	319	2,904
Bank Interest	-	(65,243)	-	(65,243)	6,964
Dividends	-	-	-	-	-
(Increase)/Decrease in Receivables	(14,176)	-	8,973	(5,203)	74,743
Increase/(Decrease) in Payables	(718,172)	-	239,265	(478,907)	232,989
(Increase)/Decrease in Value of Financial Assets	-	(14,342,739)	-	(14,342,739)	(271,681)
Cash (Inflow)/Outflow from Operating Activities	(734,609)	129,640	183,419	(421,550)	485,474
Cash flows from Investing Activities					
Payments to acquire Fixed Assets	(27,097)	-	-	(27,097)	(27,458)
Payments to acquire Equity	-	(6,349,768)	-	(6,349,768)	(7,105,835)
Payments to acquire Debt Instruments	-	(2,928,784)	-	(2,928,784)	(2,882,630)
Receipts from Debt Instruments	-	1,755,631	-	1,755,631	1,590,399
Receipts from Equity	-	18,012,197	-	18,012,197	546,401
Net Cash flows from Investing Activities	(27,097)	10,489,276	-	10,462,179	(7,879,123)
Cash flows from Financing Activities					
Bank Interest received	-	65,243	-	65,243	(6,964)
Dividends received	-	-	-	-	-
Net Cash Inflow from Financing Activities	-	65,243	-	65,243	(6,964)
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	(761,706)	10,684,159	183,419	10,105,872	(7,400,613)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at 1 January	1,707,282	34,215,157	592,448	36,514,887	43,915,500
Cash and Cash Equivalents at 31 December	945,576	44,899,316	775,867	46,620,759	36,514,887

1. Accounting Policies

The basis of accounting and significant accounting policies adopted by the Western Development Commission are set out below. They have all been applied consistently throughout the year and for the preceding year.

a) General information

The Western Development Commission was set up under the Western Development Commission Act 1998, with a head office at Dillon House, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon.

The Western Development Commission's primary objective, as set out in part 8 of the Western Development Commission Act, is to promote and to procure the promotion of, and assist in, fostering and encouraging economic and social development in the Western Region.

The Western Development Commission is a public entity.

b) Statement of Compliance and Basis of Preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include certain items at fair value, in compliance with Financial Reporting Standard 102 (FRS 102) issued by the financial Reporting Council and in the form approved by the Minister for Rural and Community Development with the concurrence of the Minister for Finance under the Western Development Commission Act 1998.

The presentation currency of the financial statements of the Western Development Commission is Euro. The functional currency of the Western Development Commission is considered to be Euro as it is the primary economic environment in which the agency operates.

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the Western Development Commission's financial statements.

c) Going Concern

As the Western Development Commission provides a public service that is funded by monies provided by the Exchequer, via its parent department (Department of Rural and Community Development), it is appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

The Commission have prepared cash flow projections for the next twelve months which recognise the level of diversification in the Commission's business activities and indicates that the WDC will continue to meet its liabilities as they fall due over the next twelve months.

Therefore, based on the above, WDC continues to adopt a going concern basis in preparing its Financial Statements.

d) Income

Income is generally accounted for on an accruals basis with the exception of the following:

Oireachtas grants

Oireachtas grants are recognised on a cash receipts basis.

Investment Income

Investment income is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves account on a cash receipts basis.

Interest on loans is calculated on a reducing balance basis and is recognised as it is received over the duration of the agreement.

Dividend Income

Dividend income from ordinary shares is recognised on an accruals basis when the dividend is declared. Dividend income from preference shares is set out in legal agreements, and paid when the companies have sufficient distributable reserves. Dividend Income is recognised when the right to receive the payment is established, it is probable that income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Monitoring Fees and Outlay

Monitoring Fees are accounted for on a cash receipts basis in the Western Investment Fund.

Outlay relating to the operation of the Western Investment Fund is charged to the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves of the Commission.

Recognition of Gains and Losses on Investments and Loans

Realised gains and/or losses from a change in the value of investments either due to sale or write-off are recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves when incurred.

Unrealised gains, due to the revaluation of an investment, are recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves in instances where the fair value of the investment can be reliably estimated.

Unrealised losses, resulting from changes in the valuation of investments and loans, are recognised where the Western Development Commission is of the opinion that the value of an investment has fallen below the carrying value and a provision is created and charged to the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves.

Financial Assets, other than those measured at fair value, are assessed for indicators of impairment at each year end. If there is objective evidence of impairment, an impairment provision is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves.

Where the Commission's assessment of the value of investments is nil, due to insolvency or otherwise, those investments are written off.

In the case of the sale of equity investments, any amounts held in escrow are not recognised in the Statement of Financial Position but are only recognised when received.

e) Fixed Assets

Fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation, adjusted for any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided at rates estimated to write off the cost of each asset on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives, as follows:

- (i) Fixtures and Fittings 15% per annum
- (ii) Computer Equipment 33% per annum

f) Financial Assets

Public Benefit Entity Concessionary Loans

In accordance with Section 34 of FRS 102, the Western Development Commission grants public benefit entity concessionary loans i.e. loans which are granted for the purpose of furthering the objectives of the WDC, which are not repayable on demand and are granted at below the prevailing market rate of interest. Loans are initially recognised in the Statement of Financial Position at the amount paid. Subsequently, the carrying amount in the financial statements shall be adjusted to reflect any accrued interest payable or receivable. Repayable loans are reviewed annually for indications of impairment and any impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves.

Unquoted Investments

All Investments are in unquoted companies. Where it can be reliably measured, such investments are stated at fair value. Fair value is defined as the amount for which an asset could be exchanged between knowledgeable and willing parties in an arm's length transaction. In instances where fair value cannot be reliably measured, the investment is valued at cost, unless there is evidence of impairment in which case the investment is valued at cost less impairment.

The WDC does not recognise the value of the equity investments, as it does not exercise control over the entities.

Cash Balances available for Investment

In addition to equity investments, loans and fee income, the Western Investment Fund also comprises of cash balances to fund future investments.

Derecognition of financial assets

Financial assets are de-recognised only when the contractual rights to the cash flows from the asset expire or are settled, or when WDC transfers to another party substantially all of the risks and rewards of ownership of the financial asset, or if some significant risks and rewards of ownership are retained but control of the asset has transferred to another party that is able to sell the asset in its entirety to an unrelated third party.

Loans are de-recognised, when the right to receive cash flows from the loans has expired, usually when all amounts outstanding have been repaid by the entity. WDC does not transfer loans to third parties for recovery.

g) Receivables

Receivables are recognised at fair value, less a provision for doubtful debts. The provision for doubtful debts is a specific provision and is established when there is objective evidence that the Western Development Commission will not be able to collect all amounts owed to it. All movements in the provision for doubtful debts are recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Revenue Reserves.

h) EU Funding Programmes

The WDC participates in a number of approved regional development projects from EU funding programmes, including the Interreg EU Programme, the EU Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme (NPA).

In general, partners located in EU Member States may apply a grant rate of up to 65% and partners located in the Non-EU partner countries may apply a grant rate of up to 50-65%, depending on the country. In exceptional circumstances, the Monitoring Committee may approve a higher grant rate. The WDC participate in the programme by making a contribution of approx. 35-40% of the costs associated with each project by using an in-kind contribution of WDC core staff wages, salaries and absorption of the office costs associated over the lifecycle of the projects. The WDC has participated in these projects as both a lead partner and a project partner. As lead partner, claims are made by the WDC on behalf of the wider project partnership to the secretariat of the EU Funded Programme. Prior to any claim being made expenses are certified by a national first-level controller for compliance and once this body has issued a certificate of expenditure then the claim is consolidated and processed by the secretariat. Claims are scheduled on a six-monthly basis. However, the processing lead time has been observed to be twelve to twenty four months.

As part of this process the Western Development Commission is subject to periodic auditing by the EU.

Income is recognised on an accruals basis. Income due in respect of expenditure incurred, but where the related claim has not been submitted, is included as income.

i) Employee Benefits

Short-term Benefits

Short term benefits such as holiday pay are recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves and benefits that are accrued at year-end are included in the payables figure in the Statement of Financial Position.

Retirement Benefits

The Western Development Commission previously established its own defined benefit pension scheme, funded annually on a pay-as-you-go basis from monies provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development and from contributions deducted from staff and members' salaries. The Western Development Commission also operates the Single Public Services Pension Scheme ("Single Scheme"), which is a defined benefit scheme for pensionable public servants appointed on or after 1 January 2013. Single Scheme members' contributions are paid over to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

Pension costs reflect pension benefits earned by employees, and are shown net of staff pension contributions which are remitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development. An amount corresponding to the pension charge is recognised as income to the extent that it is recoverable, and offset by grants received in the year to discharge pension payments.

Actuarial gains or losses arising on scheme liabilities are reflected in the Statement of Comprehensive Income, and a corresponding adjustment is recognised in the amount recoverable from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The financial statements reflect, at fair value, the assets and liabilities arising from the Western Development Commission's pension obligations and any related funding, and recognises the costs of providing pension benefits in the accounting periods in which they are earned by employees. Retirement benefit scheme liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method.

j) Critical Accounting Judgements and Estimates

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for income and expenditure during the year. However, the nature of estimation means that actual outcomes may differ from these estimates. The following judgements have had the most significant effect on amounts recognised in the financial statements:

Financial Assets valuation

The value of financial assets that are not traded in active markets is determined by using valuation techniques. The Western Development Commission exercises judgement in selecting a variety of methods and makes assumptions that are mainly based on observable data and conditions existing at each reporting date.

Impairment of Equity Investments

Investments not measured at fair value are measured at cost less impairment at the reporting date. Indicators of impairment are based on a review process using the latest audited or management accounts of the investee companies or other relevant business information. If there is evidence of impairment, an impairment provision is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Revenue Reserves in the year. Where there is evidence that the previous impairment provision is no longer applicable, those provisions are reversed.

Impairment of loans

The Western Development Commission carries out a full and thorough review of its entire loan portfolio at each reporting date to determine if there is objective evidence that any of its loans are impaired. Loans are assessed on an individual basis. A specific provision is made on loans where there is significant doubt as to the collectability of the amount outstanding. In addition, if, during the year, there is objective evidence that any individual loan is impaired, a specific loss will be recognised.

Retirement Benefit Obligation

The assumptions underlying the actuarial valuations for which the amounts recognised in the financial statements are determined (including discount rates, rates of increase in future compensation levels, mortality rates and healthcare cost trend rates) are updated annually based on current economic conditions, and for any relevant changes to the terms and conditions of the pension and post-retirement plans.

The assumptions can be affected by:

- (i) the discount rate, changes in the rate of return on high-quality corporate bonds
- (ii) future compensation levels, future labour market conditions

Notes to the Financial Statements

Notes to the Financial Statements	Notes	2022 €	2021 €
2. Oireachtas Grants			
Department of Rural and Community Development		2,345,634	2,149,849
3. EU Income			
EU Grant Income		875,321	281,975
EU Other Income		85	2,621
		875,406	284,596
<p>The WDC participates in a number of projects from EU funding programmes including the Interreg EU Programme and the EU Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme (NPA).</p> <p>In general, partners located in EU Member States may apply a grant rate of up to 65% and partners located in the non-EU partner countries may apply a grant rate of up to 50-65%, depending on the country.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances, the Monitoring Committee may approve a higher grant rate. The WDC participate in the programme by making a contribution of approx. 35- 40% of the costs associated with each project by using an in-kind contribution of WDC core staff wages, salaries and absorption of the office costs associated over the lifecycle of projects.</p>			
4. Other Income			
Other Income		235,025	45,210
DigiWest Hubs		146,246	256,132
AEC Hubs		1,034,485	611,081
Smart-Green Project		25,647	45,000
		1,441,403	957,423
5. Investment Income			
Dividends received on equity investments			-
Interest received on loans		204,829	131,818
Net Bank Interest received on WIF Cash at Bank		65,243	(6,964)
Monitoring Fees		24,650	34,078
Outlay		(99,839)	(28,741)
		194,883	130,191
6 a. Operating Costs The Western Development Commission			
Salaries (including employers' PRSI)		1,843,775	1,482,271
Travel and Subsistence – Staff		79,914	10,992
Retirement Benefit Costs	15a	591,419	494,088
Training & Development		26,016	18,139
Public Relations		50,548	55,855
Professional Fees		127,792	140,456
Professional Fees – Western Investment Fund		11,658	71,000
Staff Recruitment		39,210	19,563

Notes to the Financial Statements

Notes to the Financial Statements	Notes	2022 €	2021 €
Commission Members			
Travel and Subsistence		8,971	2,217
Fees		51,871	51,681
Meetings & Seminars		4,577	4,217
Commission Sub-committees / Advisory Panels			
Travel and Subsistence		393	-
Fees		5,500	-
Printing & Design		18,462	24,789
Office Expenses		40,914	55,021
Light and Heat		7,562	5,276
Repairs and Maintenance		10,602	5,837
Insurance		19,931	19,413
Audit Fee		17,800	16,200
Accountancy and Internal Audit		15,375	27,429
Advertising, Marketing & Subscriptions		38,675	40,215
Telecommunications		34,026	27,767
Depreciation	9	26,781	24,471
Loss on Disposal of fixed assets		319	2,904
Sponsorship and Projects		49,840	53,264
Sundry		1,832	(723)
Partner Payments		-	-
Web & IT Systems		89,674	61,350
Digi West Hubs		146,246	256,132
AEC Hubs		979,735	611,081
Smart Green Initiative		25,648	45,000
Creative Ireland expenditure		61,800	
ARISE expenditure		41,712	
		4,468,578	3,625,905
Direct Wages & Salaries for staff contracted to work fully on EU Projects are shown under expenditure for EU Grants/Projects. The Western Development Commission's contribution to associated costs for EU projects of €63,769 (2021: €92,568) are charged to the costs above.			

Notes to the Financial Statements

Notes to the Financial Statements		2022 €	2021 €
6 b. Operating Costs – EU Grants/Projects			
Salaries (including employers' PRSI)		100,049	142,338
Travel and Subsistence – Staff		16,954	4,620
Professional Fees		79,580	64,219
Meetings and Conferences		1,410	-
Public Relations		8,963	-
Printing & Design		1,101	910
Office Expenses		10,891	-
Web & IT systems		8,212	
Sundry		892	3,685
Regional Approaches to Stimulating Local Enterprise		712,173	78,979
		940,225	294,751
Direct Wages & Salaries for staff working fully on EU projects are charged to the financial statements under EU Project Expenditure.			
The Western Development Commissions' contribution to associated costs over the project lifecycle are absorbed in the operating costs of the Western Development Commission. Claims are scheduled on a six-monthly basis. However, some claim dates may fall outside of the calendar year and claim processing and lead times by the EU Funding Programme is observed to be twelve to twenty four months.			
6 c. Key Management personnel			
Key management personnel in the Western Development Commission consist of the CEO and members of the Commission.			
Total compensation paid to key management personnel, including Commission members' fees and expenses and total CEO remuneration, amounted to €179,610 (2021: €153,454).			
6 d. Staff Costs			
Salaries Western Development Commission (including employers' PRSI)		1,562,616	1,482,271
Salaries Western Development Commission - Hubs (including employers' PRSI)		281,159	30,298
Salaries Western Investment Fund (including employers' PRSI)		99,839	28,741
Salaries EU Grants Funding (including employers' PRSI)		100,049	142,338
		2,043,662	1,683,648

The total staff employed (Full Time Equivalents (FTE)) as at 31 December 2022 was 26.9 (2021: 27). The calculation of FTE is based on the number of permanent / contracted staff engaged at the year end.

Employee's short-term benefits in excess of €60,000 are categorised in the following bands:

Salary Band (€) 2022	Staff Number	Salary Band (€) 2021	Staff Number
60,000 – 69,999	6	60,000 – 69,999	3
70,000 – 79,999	3	70,000 – 79,999	3
80,000 – 89,999	1	80,000 – 89,999	-
90,000 – 99,999	2	90,000 – 99,999	3
100,000 – 109,999	-	100,000 – 109,999	-

For the purpose of the above disclosure, short-term employee benefits in relation to services rendered during the reporting period include salary and other payments made on behalf of the employee but exclude employer's PRSI.

Notes to the Financial Statements

	2022 Salaries €	2022 Travel & Subsistence €	2021 Salaries €	2021 Travel & Subsistence €
6 e. CEO Salary				
Mr Tomás Ó Síocháin (resigned effective 6 December 2022)	99,818	7,154	98,408	1,146
Mr. Allan Mulrooney (acting CEO - appointed 6 December 2022)	5,859	44		
	105,677	7,198	98,408	1,146

The CEO's salary scale was set at the level of Principal Officer in the Civil Service in 2022. The Western Development Commission does not operate a performance related award scheme. No bonus payments were made to the CEO. The CEO's pension entitlement does not extend beyond the standard public sector pension arrangements.

6 f. Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC)

In 2022, €44,188 was deducted from staff by way of pension levy (2021: €37,354) and was paid over to the Department of Rural and Community Development. ASC replaced the pension-related deduction (PRD) which ceased at the end of 2018. While PRD was based on taxable remuneration, ASC is based on pensionable remuneration only. Whereas PRD was a temporary emergency measure, ASC is a permanent contribution in respect of pensionable remuneration.

7. Movement in value of financial assets	2022 €	2021 €
Increase in Equity Investments impairment provision	(1,447,604)	(221,423)
Decrease in Loan book impairment provision	30,462	301,386
Loan write offs	(30,418)	(299,320)
Realised Gain on Equity Investments	15,790,299	491,038
Increase in Value of Financial Assets	14,342,739	271,681
Investment Income (Note 5)	194,883	130,191
Increase in Value of Financial Assets	14,537,622	401,872

Included in the movement in the value of Financial Assets above is a Realised Gain of €15,790,299 (2021: gain €491,038) which was realised in the year from disposals of Equity Investments.

8. Premises

The Western Development Commission is based in Dillon House, a building owned by Roscommon County Council and managed by the Office of Public Works. The building is provided rent-free and no provision is included in the accounts for rent in respect of this premises.

9. Tangible Assets	2022 €	2021 €
Fixed Assets		
Cost at 1 January	219,896	202,130
Additions	27,097	27,458
Disposals	(62,149)	(9,692)
Balance at 31 December	184,844	219,896
Accumulated Depreciation	181,657	163,974
Charge	26,781	24,471
Disposals	(60,653)	(6,788)
Balance at 31 December	147,785	181,657
Net Book Value at 31 December	37,059	38,239

Fixed Assets is comprised of Fixtures and Fittings with an NBV of €12,295 (2021: €16,655) and Computer Equipment with a NBV of €24,764 (2021: €21,584).

Notes to the Financial Statements

10 Financial Assets	Notes	2022 €	2021 €
Equity Investments measured at Fair Value	10a	11,480,000	13,661,823
Equity Investments measured at Cost less Impairment	10a	23,731,122	18,869,033
Loans	10b	7,556,653	6,383,456
Cash balance available for Administration	10c	262,814	338,003
Cash balance available for Reinvestment	10d	44,636,502	33,877,154
Total Financial Assets		87,667,091	73,129,469

10 a. Equity Investments		2022 €	2021 €
Fair Value Carrying Amount			
Opening Fair Value of Equity Investments		13,661,823	13,661,823
Fair Value Reversal on Disposal		(17,972,122)	16,702
Movement in Fair Value		15,790,299	16,702
Closing Fair Value at 31 December		11,480,000	13,661,823
Cost Less Impairment Carrying Amount			
Opening Cost		21,479,840	14,429,368
Additions		6,349,768	7,105,835
Disposals		(40,075)	(55,363)
Closing Cost at 31 December		27,789,533	21,479,840
Provision for Impairment			18,869,033
Opening provision at 1 January		(2,610,807)	(2,389,384)
(Increase) in Impairment provision		(2,463,680)	(248,786)
Decrease in Impairment provision		1,016,076	27,363
Closing provision at 31 December		(4,058,411)	(2,610,807)
Net Cost less Impairment At 31 December		23,731,122	18,869,033
Value of Equity Investments At 31 December		35,211,122	32,530,856

The Western Investment Fund received a payment of €17,967,682 in April 2022 for the sale of its shareholding in Connemara Biomedical Holdings Teoranta as part of a 100% share purchase acquisition of the company by Integer Holdings Corporation.

Funds in the amount of €3,380,471 (2021: €16,793), re disposal of investments were held by third parties in escrow on WDC's behalf at the reporting date. The release of the funds is dependent on whether specified future events occur or conditions are met. In accordance with WDC's accounting policy, these funds will be recognised when the WDC receives the funds.

Notes to the Financial Statements

10 b. Loans	2022 €	2021 €
Cost		
Opening Value at 1 January	7,213,202	6,220,291
Additions	2,928,784	2,882,630
Loan Repayments	(1,755,631)	(1,590,399)
Loans write off	(30,418)	(299,320)
Cost at 31 December	8,355,937	7,213,202
Provision for Impairment		
Opening Balance at 1 January	(829,746)	(1,131,132)
Movement in Impairment provision	30,462	301,386
Closing provision at 31 December	(799,284)	(829,746)
Value of loans at 31 December	7,556,653	6,383,456
Receivable within 12 months	675,601	1,964,620
Receivable after 12 months	6,881,052	4,418,836
10 c. Cash balance available for Administration		
Opening Balance at 1 January	338,003	332,666
Monitoring Fees	24,650	34,078
Outlays	(99,839)	(28,741)
Balance 31 December	262,814	338,003
<p>Equity investments are made on a pari passu basis with private sector investors. Monitoring fees arise where a fee is charged by private sector investors as part of the terms and conditions of the investment. To obtain pari passu terms and conditions, the Western Development Commission also charges a monitoring fee.</p> <p>The balance of €262,814 as at 31 December 2022 (€338,003 at 31st December 2021) is available for use by the Western Investment Fund; it is ringfenced from balances that may be used for reinvestment opportunities and reflects the cumulative monitoring fees collected less certain outlay incurred by the Western Investment Fund to 31 December 2022.</p>		
10 d. Cash balance available for reinvestment		
Opening Cash balance at 1 January	33,877,154	41,603,965
Equity disposals/Loan repayments in the period	19,767,828	2,136,800
Dividends received on Equity Investments	-	-
Interest received on Loans	204,829	131,818
Net Bank Interest received on WIF cash at bank	65,243	(6,964)
Equity Amounts reinvested in period	(6,349,768)	(7,105,835)
Loan Amounts reinvested in period	(2,928,784)	(2,882,630)
Closing Cash balance at 31 December	44,636,502	33,877,154

Notes to the Financial Statements

11. Receivables	2022 €	2021 €
Debtors	5,550	14,938
Prepayments	73,685	34,505
EU Grants/NPP Grants Receivable	265,759	290,348
	344,994	339,791

12. Payables		
Creditors & Accruals	503,746	333,194
Deferred Income	674,533	1,323,989
	1,178,279	1,657,183

Deferred Income relates to advance payments received in relation to separately funded projects financed by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

13. Capital Account	2022 €	2022 €	2021 €	2021 €
Balance at 1 January		38,239		38,156
Transfer to Income and Expenditure Account:				
– Funds allocated to acquire Fixed Assets	27,097		27,458	
– Amount released on disposal	1,496		(2,904)	
– Amount amortised in line with asset depreciation	(26,781)		(24,471)	
		(1,180)		83
		37,059		38,239

14. Future Commitments – WIF	2022 Equities €	2022 Loans €	2021 Equities €	2021 Loans €
Opening Commitments	9,079,855	5,437,648	8,510,690	5,201,948
Approvals	4,522,637	1,593,198	7,675,000	3,118,330
De-commitments	(2,724,520)	(675,488)	-	-
Disbursals	(6,349,976)	(2,928,784)	(7,105,835)	(2,882,630)
Closing Commitments	4,527,996	3,426,574	9,079,855	5,437,648

Notes to the Financial Statements

15 Retirement Benefit Costs

a) Analysis of total Retirement benefits costs charged to the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves	2022 €	2021 €
Gross service cost	550,000	497,000
Net interest expense/(income)	123,000	67,000
Employee contributions	(81,581)	(69,912)
	591,419	494,088

b) Movement in Net Retirement Benefit Obligations during the financial year

Net retirement benefit obligation at 1 January	9,720,000	7,925,000
Gross service cost	550,000	497,000
Interest cost	123,000	67,000
Actuarial loss/(gain)	(2,491,000)	1,253,000
Benefits paid	(22,000)	(22,000)
Net retirement benefit obligation at 31 December	7,880,000	9,720,000

c) Deferred funding for retirement benefits

The Commission recognises these amounts as an asset corresponding to the unfunded deferred liability for retirement benefits on the basis of the set of assumptions described above and a number of past events. These events include the statutory basis for the establishment of the retirement benefit scheme, and the policy and practice currently in place in relation to funding public service pensions including contributions by employees and the annual estimates process.

The Commission has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet such sums in accordance with current practice. The net deferred funding for retirement benefits recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue

Reserves was as follows:

	2022 €	2021 €
Funding recoverable in respect of current year Retirement Benefit Costs	673,000	564,000
State Grant applied to pay Retirement Benefits	(22,000)	(22,000)
	651,000	542,000

The deferred funding asset for retirement benefits at 31 December 2022 amounts to €7.88M (2021: €9.72M).

d) History of Defined Benefit Obligations	2022 €	2021 €	2020 €	2019 €	2018 €
Defined benefit obligations	7,880,000	9,720,000	7,925,000	6,950,000	5,170,000
Experience (loss)/gains on defined benefit scheme liabilities	2,491,000	(1,253,000)	(528,000)	(1,431,000)	294,000
Percentage of plan liabilities	-31.6%	12.9%	6.7%	20.6%	-5.7%

Notes to the Financial Statements

e) General description of the scheme

The Western Development Commission operates an unfunded defined benefit superannuation scheme for staff. Superannuation entitlements arising under the Scheme are paid out of current income and are charged to the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves, net of employee superannuation contributions, in the year in which they become payable.

The Scheme is a defined benefit final salary pension arrangement with benefits and contributions defined by reference to current "model" public sector scheme regulations. The Scheme provides a pension (eightieths per year of service), a gratuity or lump sum (three eightieths per year of service) and spouse's and children's pensions. Normal Retirement Age is a member's 65th birthday, and pre 2004 members have an entitlement to retire without actuarial reduction from age 60. Pensions in payment (and deferment) increase on a discretionary basis in line with general salary inflation.

With effect from 1 January 2013, new entrants become members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme. This provides career- average revalued earnings related benefits revalued in line with increases in the Consumer Price Index. The Scheme's minimum retirement age will be linked to the State Pension age.

The results set out below are based on an actuarial valuation of the liabilities in respect of the serving, retired and deferred staff of the Commission as at 31 December 2022.

This valuation was carried out by a qualified independent actuary for the purposes of the accounting standard, Financial Reporting Standard No. 102 – Retirement Benefits (FRS 102).

The main financial assumptions used were:

	2022	2021
Rate of increase in salaries	4.00%	3.50%
Rate of increase in Retirement Benefits in payment	3.50%	3.00%
Discount rate	3.50%	1.20%
Inflation rate	2.50%	2.00%

Average future Life Expectancy	2022	2021
Male aged 65	21.9 years	21.8 years
Female aged 65	24.3 years	24.2 years

16. Taxation

Section 227 and Section 610 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, provide an exemption from income tax and capital gains tax on the income and/or gains of non-commercial state bodies.

17. Related Party Disclosures

The Commission adopted procedures in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies in relation to the disclosures of interest by Commission members. No interests were disclosed by Commission members in 2022.

18. Events after the Reporting Date

There are no events between the reporting date and the date of the approval of these financial statements that require adjustment to the financial statements.

19. EU Grants/NPP

Surplus funds held under EU Grants/NPP are utilized for working capital on EU projects. Claims are scheduled on a six-monthly basis. However, the processing lead time may be up to twenty four months.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Reserves at 1 January 2022	211,947
Deficit for the current year	(64,819)
Reserves at 31 December 2022	147,128

20. Going Concern

The Commission considers that as the entity provides a public service that is funded by monies provided by the Exchequer, via its parent department (Department of Rural and Community Development), it is appropriate to prepare these financial statements on a going concern basis.

21. Approval of the Financial Statements

The Commission approved these Financial Statements for issue on 24 October 2023.



**WESTERN
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Supporting communities to grow,
investing in businesses to scale and
planning for the future of the Western Region.

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