

**Meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on
Communications, Climate Action and Environment
to discuss Just Transition**

13th November 2019

DBEI Opening Statement

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, with the enterprise agencies (Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland) and the four LEOs in Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath under its remit, are deeply engaged in the enterprise development agenda in the Midlands. The importance of this enterprise development work has been brought into sharp focus in the context of the particular vulnerability (and also the opportunities) presented by the transition from ‘brown to green’ in this region.

The Midlands was hit relatively hard by the recession, which affected all regions, but like the rest of the country has made a very strong recovery. The unemployment rate in the Midlands currently stands at 6.6 percent (compared to the State average of 5.4 percent) – [seasonally unadjusted regional figures for end Q2 2019]. This is a vast improvement on the position at the beginning of 2015 when unemployment stood at 14.9 percent (almost 4.5 percent higher than the State average at the time). Since Q1 2015 just under 19,500 jobs were created in the Midlands region.

The Midlands has a strong food and non-food manufacturing base which continues to transition from more traditional activities to those driven by technology and digitalisation across sectors such as medical technologies, advanced engineering and an emerging internationally traded services sector. The region has significant tourism assets that can be developed in a more integrated way in the context of the brand experience ‘Ireland’s Ancient East’ and ‘Hidden Heartlands’. The region benefits from a strong Institute of Technology in Athlone and has unparalleled national interconnectivity – within one hour from Galway and Dublin.

The IDA supports 42 client companies in the Midlands, employing 5,720 people [2018]. The region was the highest performing region from a job creation perspective across the IDA regional portfolio in 2018, with FDI employment growing by 13 percent or 701 net new jobs added. Recent IDA announcements for the Midlands include Greenfield Global (75 jobs in Portlaoise); Leetha/Red Seal Cups (100 jobs in Longford); Avery Denison (200 jobs in Longford); Nueda Technologies (200 jobs in Westmeath); and Skout Secure Intelligence (30 jobs in Portlaoise).

Over 12,300 people are employed in 247 Enterprise Ireland supported companies in the Midlands, which is up by 4 percent in 2018; including announcements from Revive Active (11 jobs in Westmeath) and Glanbia (78 jobs in Portlaoise). LEO supported micro-enterprises added 271 net new jobs across the Midlands during 2018.

Despite this positive performance, the Midlands now faces a new challenge, which will require renewed efforts to grow alternative sources of employment. The enterprise agencies, LEOs and other development bodies are fully engaged in this agenda, and are focused on leveraging the key strengths and potential areas of opportunity for enterprise growth and job creation in the Midlands. The Department also has close engagement with the Department of the Taoiseach in relation to Just Transition and the Midlands.

Strong cross governmental coordination at the regional level, in partnership with the enterprise sector, to focus on proactive medium to longer term measures, as well as the short-term responses that may be necessary, is critical at this juncture.

The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan, launched earlier this year by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys, and the collaborative mechanism in place to drive its implementation, has a key role to play in this regard. The Midlands Plan, which covers Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath, is one of nine 'bottom-up' enterprise focused regional plans that complement national level policies and programmes including Enterprise 2025 and Future Jobs Ireland, through focused collaborative regional action.

The Midlands Plan sets out seven Strategic Objectives agreed by stakeholders as priority areas of focus and enterprise growth to 2020, spanning areas such as: transition to a low carbon economy; big data opportunities; advanced manufacturing; place-making and marketing; tourism; food; and skills development.

The Regional Enterprise Plan for the Midlands is strongly aligned with and supportive of the work of the Regional Transition Team. Specifically under Strategic Objective 1 in the Plan, it aims to 'ensure that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy'. The Midlands Plan had already adopted Climate Action and Just Transition as a focus ahead of the Climate Action Plan which has since requested all Regional Steering Committees to adopt Just Transition as a standing agenda item.

The Department worked closely with the agencies (IDA, EI and the LEOs) in the preparation of the REPs and their core regional activities are also set out in the Plans. Reflecting the critical need for a collaborative approach, the Midlands Plan is overseen by a Regional Steering Committee made up of representatives from the public and private sector (the enterprise agencies, the local authorities, AIT, the Education and Training Boards, Fáilte

Ireland, the Midlands Regional Skills Forum, enterprise champions etc.) and is chaired by Dr Anne Cusack, Managing Director of Critical Healthcare, a leading indigenous business in the region.

All of the Regional Enterprise Plans are working to the 2020 target set under the previous Regional Action Plan for Jobs, to deliver a 10 to 15 percent uplift in employment in each region by 2020, and to reduce the unemployment rate of each region to within one percentage point of the State average.

The Midlands Steering Committee has put in place working groups to drive the individual actions in the Plan. Two written progress reports will be submitted to the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation at the end of 2019 (mid-term) and end of 2020 (final report) respectively. The Minister has met the private sector Chairs of the Regional Steering Committees in September this year, including the Midlands chair, to review progress on implementation.

The delivery of actions under the Regional Enterprise Plans is supported by the Regional Enterprise Development Fund administered by Enterprise Ireland. This competitive Fund supports significant collaborative and innovative regional initiatives to help drive enterprise growth and job creation in the regions. Over two calls to date, a total of almost €60 million has been allocated to support 42 projects, with all regions benefiting. A third call under the Fund, amounting to an additional €45m closed on 25 September last and an announcement of successful projects is expected by year end.

The Midlands region has been allocated €3.4 million under the first two calls, across four projects: Irish Manufacturing Research (Mullingar); Offaly Innovation and Design Centre (ILOFAR, Birr); Mountmellick Development Association (Beale Enterprise Centre, Laois); and a joint Leitrim/Cavan/Longford Enterprise Hub project.

Each region, including the Midlands, stands to benefit from at least €2 million under Call 3 of the REDF as long as projects have received a minimum threshold score under Enterprise Ireland's competitive evaluation process.

The Midlands has also benefited from significant funding under the Project 2040 Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds, totalling in excess of €13.7m which is critically important from a place-making perspective.

The transition to a low carbon economy means that a new economic model is necessary, focused on low carbon growth, resource efficiency and sustainable development. That presents a significant transformational challenge for enterprise, and is the focus of a dedicated chapter in the Government's Climate Action Plan whose purpose is to support enterprises and individuals to make the changes in behaviour necessary to achieve our green-house gas emissions targets.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation has a number of specific actions to undertake, focussing on issues such as decarbonising processes in the cement and food and drinks sectors and improving the support available to firms looking to introduce lower carbon technologies. DBEI has a dedicated team which is managing the achievement of the actions assigned to us, while ensuring the interests of enterprise are considered throughout the policy making and implementation processes.

The transition to a low carbon economy is a central pillar in Future Jobs Ireland 2019 agenda and similarly in the forthcoming Future Jobs Ireland 2020; the development of which is being led by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation with the Department of the Taoiseach).

A key issue is availability of people and enterprises with the right skills for emerging jobs. This will not only play a critical role in initiating the transition, but also in enabling a just transition. Without a suitably trained workforce, including through upskilling and retraining, the transition will be challenging.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation is committed to working with its partners across Government, and stakeholders, nationally and regionally, to deliver on the potential for enterprise development in the Midlands and to deliver a just transition in the face of the current challenge, in particular through opening up opportunities for the impacted workers.

Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

11 November, 2019

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Discussion on Just Transition, Wednesday 13th November, 2019

DBEI Background Briefing (to accompany DBEI Opening Statement)

Regional Enterprise Plans

- The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 is one of nine regional enterprise plans launched earlier this year by Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys. The Plans have been developed by regional stakeholders from the ‘bottom-up’ and build on the successful Regional Action Plan for Jobs initiative which ran from 2015-2017/8. The new Regional Enterprise Plans complement national level enterprise policies and programmes e.g. Future Jobs Ireland and are ‘live’ agendas which allow new initiatives to be considered in addition to the strategic focus they currently contain.
- The principle behind the Regional Enterprise Plans is collaboration between regional stakeholders on initiatives that can help to realise the region’s enterprise development potential, adding value to (as opposed to re-stating) the core activities being undertaken by the enterprise development agencies in the region.
- The stakeholders who are represented on a Regional Steering Committee to develop and drive implementation of the Plans include: the Local Authorities, the LEOs, the enterprise agencies (IDA and Enterprise Ireland, education and training providers/Regional Skills Forum, tourism bodies, private sector ‘enterprise champions’, and others. The Regional Steering Committee for the Midlands is chaired by Dr. Anne Cusack, MD of Critical Healthcare, Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath, a leading indigenous company in the Midlands.
- The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan sets out seven Strategic Objectives for enterprise growth that span areas such as: addressing the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy; exploiting big data opportunities; building on strengths in advanced manufacturing; place-making and regional marketing; tourism; food; and skills development.
- The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) to 2020 is closely aligned with and supports the work of the Midlands Transition Team (MTT) established in response to the ‘Brown to Green’ strategy and proposed job losses announced by Bord na Móna in October 2018.
- As well as supporting the broader activities of the MTT, the actions to be pursued include: the designation and development of Portlaoise as a ‘Low Carbon Town’, the development and implementation of county climate adaptation strategies, completion of a feasibility study on developing an Energy Park in the Midlands; and actions to develop aquaculture and herb production on Bord na Móna cutaway bogs.
- Under the Climate Action Plan, the REP Regional Steering Committees are charged with considering ‘Just Transition’ within their region as an additional standing agenda item.

Regional Enterprise Development Fund

- Under DBEI's competitive Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) administered by Enterprise Ireland, the Midlands has secured total funding of over €3.4 million under the two completed Calls to date (out of €60 million nationally) across four collaborative projects:
 - Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR) facility based in Mullingar Co. Westmeath;
 - an education and enterprise support facility to leverage Big Data related to the ILOFAR telescope at Birr, Co. Offaly;
 - an enterprise incubation centre at the Mountmellick Development Association in Co. Laois; and
 - a digital (enterprise) hub in Longford - part of a €1.28 million joint project to develop Digital (Enterprise) Hubs in Longford, Leitrim and Cavan.
- Collaborative projects from the Midlands region will have an opportunity to compete for further DBEI/REDF funding under the €45 million Call 3 closed on September 25th. Successful projects under the Third Call are expected to be announced by the end of 2019.
- The Midlands stands to benefit from at least a further €2 million under REDF Call 3 provided that project(s) up to this value from the region have achieved a minimum score of 60 percent.

The Enterprise Agencies

Enterprise Ireland activity in the Midlands:

- In 2018, 12,349 people were employed across 247 Enterprise Ireland supported companies in the Midlands region, up 4 percent during 2018.
- Enterprise Ireland, in partnership with the Institutes of Technology, has established a nationwide network of 15 Technology Gateways which deliver technology solutions for Irish industry close to their market needs and are open to all sizes of companies. Athlone IT hosts two of these Gateways – APT and COMAND. A number of technology research centres such as SUNAT are also based in the region.
- Enterprise Ireland has funded the establishment of a national network of business innovation centres and specialist bio-incubation facilities across the Higher Education Sector. The Midlands Innovation & Research Centre (MIRC) is located in Athlone Institute of Technology.
- EI supports and collaborates with Athlone IT through Innovation supports such as the Commercialisation Fund, Innovation Partnerships and Innovation Vouchers.
- Enterprise Ireland (Regional Director) is involved in the Regional Transition Team and is working closely with the Local Authorities of Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath, Kildare and Roscommon; the Chair & Secretariat of the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020; regional and local representatives from IDA Ireland, LEOs, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, ETB's, AIT, CARO, Chambers of Commerce, Regional Skills Forum and Bord na Móna.

- Enterprise Ireland was actively involved in the planning of the '**Jobs, Skills & Education Fair**' an opportunity for Bord na Móna workers accepting voluntary redundancy to discover job opportunities in the manufacturing, construction and engineering sectors. The event took place on Friday 17th May in Mount Lucas Training Centre, Derrycricket, Daingean, Co. Offaly.
- Enterprise Ireland has sought and received a job specification from Bord Na Móna management on the type of employees that have entered the voluntary redundancy scheme. This information has been targeted at Enterprise Ireland client companies that may have a suitable role for former Bord Na Móna employees in the Midlands. Enterprise Ireland is also planning to give advice, on the Competitive Start Fund, New Frontiers, and several other start-up initiatives available for former workers who are considering setting up their own business in the area.
- Enterprise Ireland has co-funded, with local enterprise development groups, 157 Community Enterprise Centres across the country including 14 in the Midlands. These centres provide space in a supportive environment for budding entrepreneurs and serve to help the development of entrepreneurship locally.

Powering the Regions - Enterprise Ireland Regional Plan

- Powering the Regions is Enterprise Ireland's response to recent Government Regional Initiatives including the Future Jobs Ireland framework, the Regional Assemblies, Regional Enterprise Plans and Project Ireland 2040. It provides an overarching national plan underpinned by nine regional specific plans, including the Midlands Regional plan, to grow and sustain jobs, and to expand the reach of the Enterprise Ireland client base in every county and region in Ireland.
- The plan proposes six new national initiatives which aims to futureproof the regions through enhanced productivity and resilience, drive new entrepreneurship, develop urban centres of growth, support the expansion of scaling companies into the regions and attract foreign direct investment in the food sector.
- Bespoke initiatives for each region are also set out that align with and complement the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020. These are in summary:
 - 1) Building on Regional Strengths -
 - Build upon the region's **STEM** capabilities (science, technology, engineering and maths). Leverage the data science opportunities of **Birr Castle's ILOFAR Project**, grow existing data analytics companies and develop start-ups.
 - Focus on new opportunities in the **Low-Carbon Renewables** sector by supporting the Midlands Transition Team, driving startups and upskilling to retain talent in the regions.
 - Drive the Mid-East/Midlands as a **centre of excellence for advanced manufacturing** leveraging Irish Manufacturing Research, manufacturing companies and the region's third level institutes.

- Working with regional stakeholders, develop an **Innovation District in the Midlands** to enhance capability and drive economic growth. The Innovation District will house a co-working Hub and RDI capability for the **lifesciences** sector.
- 2) Implementing Enterprise Irelands National Initiative at Regional Level -
- Leverage Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and other partners to develop a robust pipeline of start-ups.
 - Foster engagement between AIT, SMEs and innovative start-ups.
 - Deliver Enterprise Ireland's world-class market intelligence service locally via Enterprise Ireland's offices in Athlone.
 - Support 600 co-working and incubator spaces in the Midlands #Worksmartchallenge.
 - Support the development of Portlaoise's Togher Industrial Estate for food foreign direct Investment (FDI)

IDA Ireland activity in the Midlands:

- IDA Ireland is committed to playing its part in the economic development of Irelands regions. Winning investments is a challenge and will require a continued collaborative effort by all national and regional stakeholders.
- IDA Midland's regional manager Ken Whitelaw is the IDA point of contact for the Midlands Regional Transition Team and participates in and contributes to all the stakeholder working groups and meetings organised by the transition team. IDA is also represented on the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the Midlands.
- Regional locations must continuously demonstrate the capability to deliver on a number of exacting criteria which generally inform the location decisions of multinationals. An assessment of investments delivered for Regions since 2015, would confirm the strategic importance of key criteria in actually influencing the investment decision;
 - Critical mass in population
 - The ability to attract and develop appropriate skills
 - The presence of Third Level Institutes
 - The existence of clusters of companies in specific industry sector
 - Regional Infrastructure
 - Regional Place Making Strategies
 - Availability of high spec standard Manufacturing & Commercial Office Properties
- Over the course of 2019, IDA Ireland's has been developing the agency's new five-year strategy, which is expected to be launched in early 2020. This strategy will take account of the changing nature of work and the impact of technology on specific sectors. Profound changes are occurring in the world of work and this is already reflected in the jobs being created by the IDA Ireland client base. IDA sees an increasing complexity in the roles being created, technology skills becoming ubiquitous across roles, increasing demand for business

professionals and a fall in the number of low-skilled jobs including back office support and basic manufacturing. This transition is likely to impact the nature and type of roles across the Regions of Ireland.

- There is a total of 5,720 people employed across 42 IDA client companies in the Midlands.
- The Midlands experienced the highest level of percentage growth of any region in net new foreign direct investment (FDI) jobs in 2018, with an increase of 13 percent in employment by IDA client companies and 701 net new jobs added.
- As part of its €150m Regional Property Programme (RPP) the IDA are directly investing in a building programme to help ensure property solutions are in place for overseas companies considering investing or expanding in Ireland, thereby encouraging more FDI in the regions. Budget 2019 also saw the Agency allocated an additional €10m for the RPP bringing its yearly capital budget for property to €47m.
- The Midlands has benefitted from the RPP. In 2015, the IDA constructed an Advanced Technology Unit (ATU) in Athlone and secured Aerie Pharmaceuticals as a tenant. Under the current first phase of the RPP, the construction of an Advanced Office Building (AOB) in Athlone is expected to begin late this year or in 2020. In the second phase of the RPP, construction will begin on an additional AOB for Athlone in 2020. Once the first and second phases of the RPP are completed there will be a total of three buildings constructed in the Midlands (County Westmeath) and these will stimulate further investment and job creation for the whole region.
- Further IDA property solutions in the Midlands include Business & Technology parks located across the region in Portlaoise, Athlone, Ardmore (Mullingar) and Tullamore. Other IDA land available in the region and suitable for greenfield investment include Clonmore (Mullingar) and Aghafad (Longford).

IDA Activity in Westmeath

- There are 21 IDA client companies in County Westmeath employing 3,466 people, representing an increase of 16 percent over last year with 493 net new jobs added.
- Since 2012, Westmeath has also witnessed a 44 percent increase in employment in overseas companies. The County has maintained a strong reputation as a successful home to firms from the Technology and Medical Devices sectors. Companies like LM Ericsson, MedTronic and Teleflex Medical are all located in Westmeath and continue to perform well.
- The IDA also regularly engages with key stakeholders on the ground in County Westmeath including local authorities, the education sector and both overseas and indigenous companies with a view to generating new employment opportunities.
- July 2018, Neueda Technologies, a privately-owned IT Training, development and consulting services company headquartered in Belfast, announced plans to establish a Software Engineering Hub in Athlone, Co. Westmeath, employing 200 staff over four years. The company will undertake software development services for global telecommunications and financial services clients at their new offices on the Dublin Road, Athlone.

IDA Activity in Longford

- There are six IDA client companies based in County Longford which employ 900 people.
- County Longford has seen a 20 percent increase in IDA client-supported job creation in 2018, with 155 net new jobs added.
- The County has maintained a strong reputation as a successful home to firms from the Medical Devices sector hosting companies such as Avery Dennison and Abbott Ireland.
- August 2019 witnessed the opening of Center Parcs, Longford Forest. This was in line with the target set after Taoiseach Leo Varadkar turned the sod in September 2017. In October 2018, Minister Humphreys attended one of the recruiting days and over 700 people have been recruited so far to work at the resort. Center Parcs expects to eventually employ up to 1,000 people in permanent jobs. The resort estimates that, when operational in 2019, the new holiday village will add approximately €32 million to Irish GDP per annum and €1bn over the next 20 years.
- Leetha Industries/Red Seal Cups, May 2018. Leetha Industries, manufacturers of packaging material for the medical, foodservice and disposable packaging sectors announced plans to establish a manufacturing and supply operation called Red Seal Cups Limited in Longford. The Company purchased the former Cameron site facility and will create over 100 jobs over the next 3 years.
- Avery Dennison, May 2018. Avery Dennison announced plans to expand its medical product manufacturing operations in Longford which will create 200 jobs. The firm's newly expanded facility will enable the company to serve its customers more efficiently with an enhanced array of products and services and collaborate more effectively with medical original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) in the development of product innovations.

IDA Activity in County Laois

- County Laois is marketed as part of the IDA's Midlands Region. There are currently four IDA client companies operating in Co. Laois employing a total of 122 people. County Laois has also seen a 31% increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) employment since 2012.
- IDA Ireland continues to highlight the benefits of expanding or locating in all counties of Ireland to its client base. The Agency hosts site visits for its clients which represent an important tool through which investors can be encouraged to invest in regional areas. County Laois has had year on year increases in site visits since 2011 with 10 site visits hosted in 2018.
- The IDA owns marketable land in its Business and Technology Park in Portlaoise which is being actively marketed to its clients through its network of offices in Ireland and overseas. The IDA regularly engages with key stakeholders on the ground in Laois, including with local authorities, public bodies, the education sector and companies from both its own client base but also from the indigenous sector in order to generate more investment and jobs for the County.
- April 2019, Greenfield Global Inc., Canada's largest producer of alcohol and fuel ethanol, and one of the largest alcohols and solvents companies in North America, announced plans to establish a new EU manufacturing headquarters in Portlaoise, Ireland. The project is

expected to create 75 high-quality jobs over the next five years. The new roles will be in a range of operations; production, quality and sales functions.

- July 2018, SkOUT Secure Intelligence, a leading provider of cyber-security technology and solutions to businesses, organisations and SMEs announced that it is creating 30 high-value jobs with the opening of its new EMEA headquarters in Portlaoise. In its initial phase, SkOUT will create 30 high-value jobs at its EMEA HQ as it expands its client base throughout Europe. Staff functions at the new location in Portlaoise will be divided between management, sales and business development, engineering and technical support.

IDA Activity in County Offaly

- There are currently 11 IDA client companies operating in Co. Offaly employing a total of 1,232 people. Offaly has seen a 5.5% increase in employment by IDA client companies with 65 net new jobs added in 2018.
- The IDA owns marketable land in its Business and Technology Park in Tullamore which is being actively marketed to its clients through its network of offices in Ireland and overseas.
- IDA is actively marketing Offaly, and the Midlands region in general, as an ideal 'Second Site' location for companies that have a primary office in a coastal city. The region is particularly suited to manufacturing and Global Business Service sectors.
- There have been no recent FDI/IDA announcements for County Offaly.

Local Enterprise Offices in the Midlands

- The Midlands Region is served by its Local Enterprise Offices in Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath, which are co-located with the Local Authorities. In 2018, the LEOs operating the Midland Region supported an additional 271 jobs. The total number of companies supported by the LEOs in the Midland Region was 802, employing 4,065 people in total.
- The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the 'first-stop-shop' for providing advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports to those wishing to start or grow their own businesses. In the first instance, the LEOs provide a 'signposting' service in relation to all relevant State supports. The LEOs can also offer advice and guidance in areas such as Local Authority rates, Public Procurement and other regulations affecting business.
- The LEOs can offer grant aid to microenterprises in manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors which have the potential to develop into strong export entities, in addition to 'soft' supports in the form of training, a mentor to work with the business proposer, or targeted programmes such as Lean for Micro (to help boost business productivity and competitiveness).
- DBEI is working with the LEO Centre of Excellence (within Enterprise Ireland) to focus on the Midlands region to continue to drive job creation and growth through targeted financial supports and management development.
- The Local Enterprise Offices are part of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee and also the combined Regional Transition Team (RTT) and have and continue to be actively engaged, contributing to the recently held Jobs, Skills & Education Fair held in

National Construction Training Centre located at Mount Lucas County Offaly. The Midlands LEO Engenuity Engineering Cluster¹ was also represented at that event together with the LEOs from Offaly and Roscommon.

- LEO Longford are also involved in the planning of a “Food Hub” for the region.
- Under the €2.5 million LEO Competitive Fund, four Midlands projects were recently successful in attracting funding of €0.765 million. This funding will support the Midlands LEOs in pursuing projects in alignment with the framework of the Future Jobs Ireland initiative and the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan in terms of the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy. The projects include: a Midlands Artisan Food and Drinks Producers project; a ‘Going Green’ project for small businesses in the region; an Engenuity Engineering project to develop an engineering cluster in the region; and a ‘First Time Exporters’ project to assist micro enterprises in the Midlands expand into international markets for the first time.

Future Jobs Ireland

- On 10 March 2019, the Government launched Future Jobs Ireland 2019, the first in a series of annual reports as part of a multi-annual framework to ensure our enterprises and workers are resilient and prepared for future challenges and opportunities. This is a whole of Government approach, which will form a key part of Ireland’s economic agenda over the medium term.
- Future Jobs Ireland focuses on five key Pillars, namely: embracing Innovation and technological change; improving SME productivity; enhancing skills and developing and attracting talent; increasing participation in the labour force; and transitioning to a low carbon economy. Each Pillar sets high level targets for 2025. Overall, Future Jobs Ireland 2019 includes 26 meaningful and impactful ambitions supported by 127 deliverables for completion in 2019.
- Central to Future Jobs Ireland is a re-orientation of policy from the numbers of gross jobs created in the economy, to the creation of more productive and sustainable jobs. It focuses on the challenges ahead in terms of ensuring we have skilled people working in quality jobs in sustainable sectors. Future Jobs Ireland will ensure our enterprises and workers are well positioned to adapt to the technological and other transformational changes our economy and society will face in the years ahead.

¹ The Engenuity Engineering Cluster (Network) is an initiative forming part of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs–Midlands, funded under the LEO Competitive Fund and delivered by the Westmeath, Offaly, Longford and Laois Local Enterprise Offices in association with other enterprise and innovation stakeholders.

Future Jobs Ireland 2019 - Pillar 5: Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy

- Future Jobs Ireland will target an increase in the share of total energy use from renewable resources to 20% by 2025. It will also aim for an equivalent CO2 reduction of 15% by 2025 and the completion of some 250,000 residential retrofits.

Ambitions:

- Become a leader in adopting and developing standards in the low carbon economy
- Realise the opportunities for economic activity and job creation
- Leverage Ireland's natural resources, enterprise strengths and innovative capacity to be a global leader in the circular and bio economy

Key Deliverables:

- Review the regional dimension of the economic and employment implications of the transition to a low carbon economy
- Position Ireland as a centre in research, development and innovation, for smart grids, buildings and renewable technologies
- Deliver a national deep retrofit programme for existing housing stock.
- Promote electric vehicles and achieve over 10,000 electric vehicles on the road by the end of the year
- Identify barriers to the development of the bio-economy
- Identify opportunities for certification, standards and labels, e.g. for bio-based products
- Develop and implement green procurement policy

How does Future Jobs Ireland support a low carbon agenda?

- The transition to a low carbon economy is a central component in Future Jobs Ireland, a cross-Government economic framework to prepare Ireland for the challenges and opportunities ahead in terms of the transition to a digital and low carbon economy.
- We know the move to a low-carbon economy will radically change important sectors of the economy, but it will also present new opportunities to those firms on the cutting edge of this transition. We recognise that we need to support our enterprises and workers navigate the transition to a digital and low carbon economy. Through Future Jobs Ireland, we envisage the creation of a Transition Teams model to help prepare enterprises in declining sectors and workers in vulnerable job roles to take steps to secure their future.
- At the same time, in order to exploit the economic and job creation opportunities presented by the transition, Future Jobs Ireland will ensure we have the right skills and the right regulatory, funding and policy environment in place to do so. Future Jobs Ireland also aims to maximise the potential of the circular and bioeconomy to promote rural economic development and growth and to drive sustainable economic development as we transition to a low carbon economy.
- Some of ways that Future Jobs Ireland will deliver on the ambitions for transitioning to a low carbon economy include:
 - Review the regional dimension of the economic and employment implications of the transition to a low carbon economy
 - Position Ireland as a centre in research, development and innovation, for smart grids, buildings and renewable technologies

- Deliver a national deep retrofit programme for existing housing stock.
 - Promote electric vehicles and achieve over 10,000 electric vehicles on the road by the end of the year
 - Identify barriers to the development of the bioeconomy
 - Identify opportunities for certification, standards and labels, e.g. for bio-based products
 - Develop and implement green procurement policy
- To meet Ireland’s climate goals, a step change in decarbonising the economy is required over the next decade. Future Jobs Ireland will target the completion of some 250,000 residential retrofits. We will target an increase in the share of total energy use from renewable resources to 20 percent by 2025. We will also set ambitious targets, including for CO2 reductions, in the Climate Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown, which will seek to make Ireland a leader in responding to climate disruption.
 - Government and enterprise have important roles to play to encourage, develop and adopt innovative technologies, products and services that increase efficiencies, reduce waste and deliver sustainable development as economies across the world transition to low carbon, bio and circular economies. To achieve this goal, Future Jobs Ireland will complement the Climate Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown.

Green Business Opportunities

- The bioeconomy and circular economy are seen as both a means to support the modernisation and strengthening of Ireland’s industrial base based on the creation of new value chains and greener, more cost-effective industrial processes, and to create a more sustainable economy based on circular production and consumption practices. The bioeconomy and circular economy present a range of potential opportunities for firms, ranging from micro-enterprises to SMEs to large firms. These potential opportunities span the economy, from food, forestry and marine, to biomaterials and biochemicals, to bioenergy and biofuels. State-owned and semi-state companies as well as social enterprises are also engaging with the opportunities presented.

How will Future Jobs Ireland be developed for 2020?

- Throughout the course of 2019, Government Departments have been working collaboratively with stakeholders to develop further commitments for inclusion in Future Jobs Ireland 2020. Officials from this Department, alongside officials from the Department of the Taoiseach, will seek inputs from across Government Departments and agencies, business representative groups, social partners, academia, industry and other interested parties.

Future Jobs Ireland Summit, 7 November 2019

- Some two hundred attendees from enterprises, representative bodies, academia, public sector and civil society attended the Future Jobs Ireland Summit on 7th November in Tangent, TCD’s Ideas Workspace.
- Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys opened the Summit with the Taoiseach also in attendance to address attendees. The morning also featured a key note address by Ms Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director of the Centre for the New Economy and Society of the World Economic Forum. Ms Zahidi spoke on the topic of the

future of work and skills: Global megatrends and implications for Ireland followed by Q&A session with attendees.

- The purpose of the Summit was for attendees to exchange ideas and provide input to the development of Future Jobs Ireland 2020. The Summit offered stakeholders the opportunity to engage with each other and directly with Ministers in Breakout Sessions and the subsequent Panel Discussion. This year the Breakout Sessions focused on three themes namely Transitioning, Clustering and New Modes of Working which were chaired by Minister Humphreys, Minister Creed, Minister Ring, Minister Doherty, Minister McHugh, Minister Mitchell O'Connor, and Minister Breen.
- The Summit was live streamed for transparency and to encourage wider engagement. Summit briefings along with videos of the presentations and panel discussions will be made available on the Department's website: <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Business-Sectoral-Initiatives/Future-Jobs/Future-Jobs-Ireland-Summit/>

DBEI and Climate Action Plan

- The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, along with its agencies, had extensive engagement with colleagues in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and with colleagues across the agencies, on the drafting of the Climate Action Plan and the actions proposed for enterprise therein.
- The Climate Action Plan is aligned to the ambitions under the 'Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy' Pillar of Future Jobs Ireland, Pillar 5. We know that the move to a low-carbon economy will radically change important sectors of the economy, but it will also present new opportunities to those firms on the cutting edge of this transition. We recognise that we need to support our enterprises and workers as we navigate the transition to a digital and low carbon economy.
- The Department and its agencies have lead and key stakeholder responsibility for a number of actions in the Plan, ranging from engagement with the food and cement industry sectors to support increased abatement, to undertaking a review of the current offerings by the Enterprise Agencies, with a view to promoting environmental supports to a larger cohort of client companies.
- The Climate Action Plan identifies opportunities for the Enterprise sectors to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by 10%-15% by 2030. The Plan identifies that the largest reductions in GHG emissions can be realised in the Cement and Food & Beverage industry.
- Enterprises will also contribute to the ambitious targets for buildings (20-25% reduction by 2030) and transport (45-50% reduction by 2030) by actions such as improvements to building energy performance and replacement of fleets with electric vehicles, over time.

The Department, and its agencies, have commenced work with other key stakeholders to ensure the delivery of actions in the plan. Moreover, as Future Jobs Ireland is developed over time, it will aim to complement the relevant objectives in the Climate Action Plan.

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