

**ACTION
PLAN
FOR
JOBS**
2015-2017

**NORTH EAST
NORTH WEST**

**Second Progress Report
July-December 2016**

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Foreword by An Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise and Innovation



I am delighted to see the publication of this second Progress Report for the North East/North West Action Plan for Jobs. Since it was launched in November 2015, the objective of this Plan has been to provide a platform for the Border region to work together, building on the unique strengths of the counties to support businesses to start up, grow and generate exports. I believe that we, as a small country, can achieve much more by working together, across county and provincial boundaries, combining resources and expertise, than we could acting alone.

The Regional Action Plan initiative as a whole remains a central pillar of the Government's ambition to create 200,000 new jobs by 2020, 135,000 of which are outside of Dublin. Employment figures from 2016 show that real progress is being made on this vision: an additional 66,100 jobs were created over 2016, 70% of which are outside Dublin.

There has been a substantial improvement in the North East / North West region since the commencement of the National Action Plan for Jobs in 2012, with an additional 23,000 in employment in Q4 2016 compared to Q1 2012. The unemployment rate in the region has fallen from 10.2% in Q1 2015 to 8.0% at present, compared to the national rate of 6.7%. Furthermore, there are now almost 6,800 more people in work in the region since the launch of the Regional Action Plan initiative.

The North West region has a particularly strong Life Science cluster with companies such as Abbot Ireland, AbbVie and GSK being well established in the region, while the North East is home to a number of big players in the International Business Services and IT such as PayPal, Vesta and Kellton Tech Solutions. The North East also has a vibrant cluster of home-grown companies including Glanbia, Rye Valley Foods and Combilift.

The commendable work undertaken this year by the North East/North West Regional Skills Forum, bringing business together with education providers, will further benefit the region's competitiveness by improving its pipeline of skilled workers.

I am looking forward, in the coming months, to meeting the committees for the North East and the North West: in reviewing this progress report, it is clear to see the hard work being undertaken by all the individuals and organisations who are dedicated to making this plan a success. I would particularly like to thank the Chairman of the North East Committee, Mr Richard Hanlon of Vesta Payment Solutions and Chairman of the North West Committee, Mr Conor Murphy of Abbott Laboratories, for their commitment to this project. We could not achieve the results to date without the cooperation and input of the private sector, and thanks are due to our Enterprise Champions for that.

My colleagues and I across Government are keenly aware that while our economy is growing strongly and unemployment is at the lowest level since 2008, we cannot be complacent. Our goal is that we must continue to ensure that all areas of the country are supported to achieve economic growth in line with their potential.

I also want to acknowledge that while 2016 was a successful year in many respects, it was one in which new challenges arose, in particular as a result of the UK referendum to leave the EU. I can assure you that my colleagues across Government and I will work hard to protect our economy from any adverse effects of Brexit. Building resilience among potentially affected companies will be crucial, and I will ensure that Enterprise Ireland, IDA, InterTradeIreland and the LEOs are working with these clients, helping them to focus strategically on competitiveness, research and innovation, and people.

The Regional Action Plan for Jobs initiative will continue to support and drive job creation across the regions by encouraging the enterprise development agencies, Local Authorities, higher education institutions, as well as the private sector and communities, to come forward with innovative ideas to boost job creation in their area.

Following the success of 2016's Enterprise Ireland Regional Competitive Funding Calls, additional funding of up to €60m is being rolled out by Enterprise Ireland over the next 4 years to support the best regional enterprise projects, and to see each region building on the strengths they have in areas such as food, medical devices, software, aviation, engineering, and others. I believe that this is the right approach – directing these resources towards projects led by local people, for the benefit of their own communities and local economies.

In advocating this approach of collaborative working, I want to assure you that I will work closely with my Cabinet colleagues to ensure that we are aligned in our approach to important issues, and that we work together on initiatives that benefit us all. 2016 was a year in which we re-focused on the holistic development of our regions, with projects such as the Action Plan for Rural Development, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Action Plan for Housing, and the National Broadband Plan, working to ensure that every region has the capacity and capability to support sustainable job opportunities. I will endeavour now to ensure that this approach continues.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frances". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Frances Fitzgerald, T.D.
Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise and Innovation

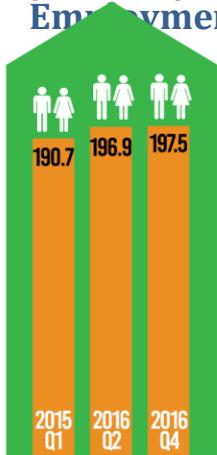


ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS: NORTH EAST/NORTH WEST

Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

2nd Progress Report, June – December 2016

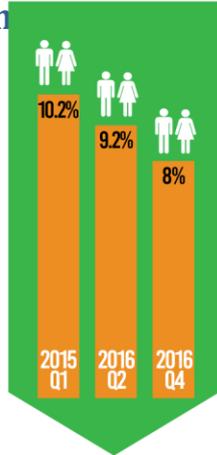
Numbers Employed (Thousands) Employment Size



Persons aged 15 years and over in **Employment** (Thousand)

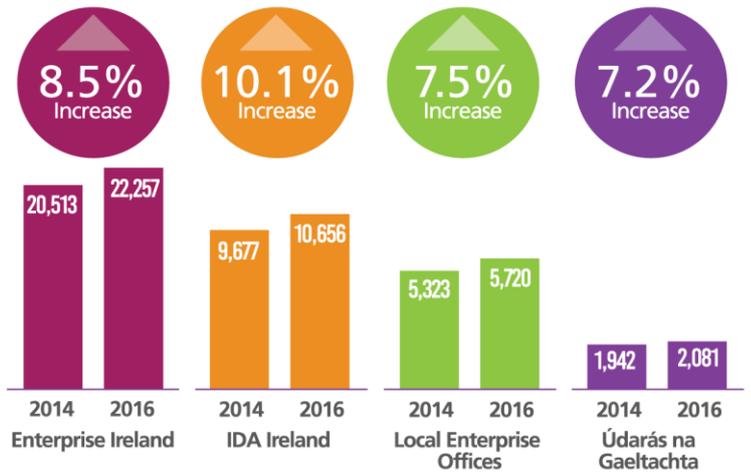
Source: CSO QNHS (QNQ22)

Unemployment Rate



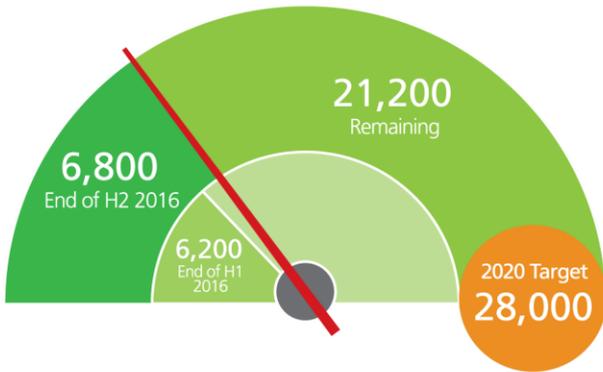
ILO **Unemployment Rate** (15 - 74 years) (%)

Jobs in Agency Supported Businesses



Sources: DJEI Annual Employment Survey, Local Enterprise Office Annual Employment Survey, and Údarás na Gaeltachta

North East/North West Regional Jobs Target Q1 2015 – Q4 2019 Progress from Q1 2015 to Q4 2016



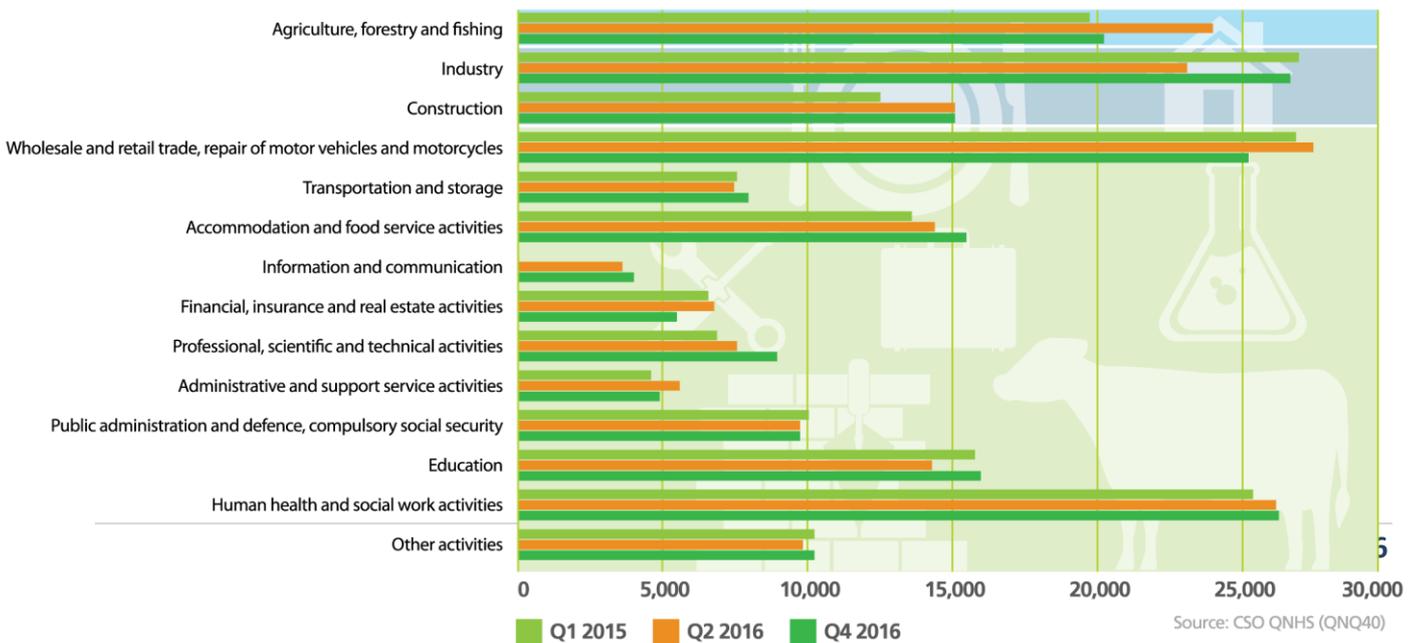
Source: CSO QNHS (QNQ22)

Tourism in the North East/North West region



Source: Fáilte Ireland
2016 figures unavailable at time of publication

Employment by Sector



Source: CSO QNHS (QNQ40)

Key Highlights in H2 2016



The **Invest4Success Expo** organised by the Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon local authorities brought businesses from across the Upper Shannon Erne region to tell their story and **spread the message that the area is a top destination for investment.** (Action 11)



InterTradeIreland's Seedcorn Competition was a **huge success with over 300 applications** announced at an event at The Waterfront hall in Belfast on November. It is the biggest business competition in Ireland for new start and early-stage companies. (Action 20)



A **total of €2.271m was allocated to the NE/NW region** under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme (Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Sligo and Monaghan each received €380,000 and Cavan received €371,000). This help make the towns and villages **more attractive and more sustainable places in which to live and work.** (Action 88)



Following on the success of the **Wild Atlantic Way**, Fáilte Ireland has continued progressing a number of other tourism projects, including **orientation signage in Counties Louth and Meath** for Ireland's Ancient East and linking up with influential tour operators to showcase the region. (Actions 96-99)



INTERREG **funding of €14.86m** from the Special EU Programmes Body was approved in December to create 46.5km of new greenways through three distinct routes connecting Donegal to Derry and Strabane, with a further €3.46m allocated to a Greenway from Newry to Omeath (Action 114)



Under the 2016 REDZ scheme, almost €1.75million has been secured for projects in counties on the **North East/North West Region** ; €2.78m under the Clár Scheme and €0.859 under the Rural Recreation Scheme.



The **Shannon Erne Blueway** was launched in June 2016 and runs from Leitrim Village to Belturbet and includes 70km of water trail and over 17km of linear and looped walking and cycling routes. (Action 113)



€16.6m has been offered under the EU's INTERREG VA Programme to **develop the Research & Innovation capacity of over 1,400 SMEs** on a cross-border basis, through the 'Co-Innovate' project. Delivery will commence in June 2017. (Action 34).



A new **Precision Engineering and Manufacturing Technology Gateway** was opened in Sligo IT in September 2016, which aims to give companies in the region and nationally an opportunity to develop their business through **collaborative R&D.**

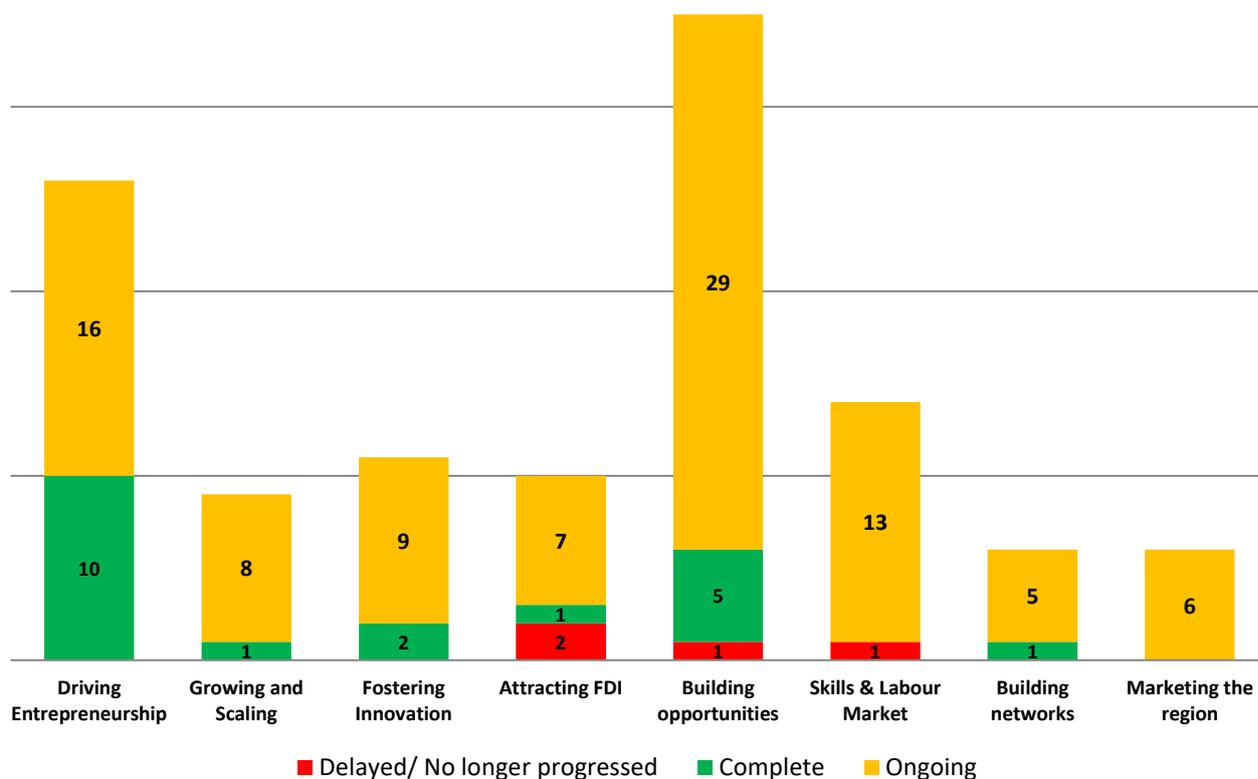


In September 2016, InterTradeIreland announced that it was **investing over €18m** in more than **300 cross border technology transfer projects** over the next five years, creating additional local economic benefits. (Action 73).



The Institutes of Technology **delivered three new programmes in Clinical Medical Science**, in collaboration with the University of Ulster. Also, the Annual Engineering Expo and Science Festival was successfully staged at Sligo IT in November 2016. (Action 117).

Scorecard: Actions to End 2016



Actions Due by December 2016

By the end of 2016, 117 of the North East/North West Regions Action Plan’s 153 actions were due to be initiated or completed by the Departments and Agencies. Some 113 of these are on track to be delivered, or have been completed. Only 1 action is delayed while 3 are no longer being progressed (see below). This represents an overall implementation rate (i.e. actions already complete or on track for completion) of 96.5%.

A new action, Action 153, was added in the second half of 2016, a testament to the dynamic nature of the Plan.

Measures not delivered as planned by December 2016

The actions below have not yet been, or will not be, delivered as planned for the following reasons:

- **Actions 61 and 62** in relation to Connect Ireland. These actions will not take place as the contract between IDA Ireland and Connect Ireland has concluded.
- **Action 63:** ‘Teagasc will work with other responsible bodies and regional stakeholders to develop food innovation programmes and explore how Teagasc Ballyhaise College can

contribute to the creation of a hub for agri-food technology and business process'. This action will not take place as Teagasc has decided to carry out its food research in two Teagasc centres at Moorepark and Ashtown.

- **Action 126:** 'Schools, HEIs and companies to collaborate on regional competition for entrepreneurs. This action is delayed to resources and a further update will be provided for the third progress report.

Executive Summary

This is the Second Progress Report from the Implementation Committee established by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to oversee and monitor implementation of the measures contained in the North East North East / North West Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017. The report outlines progress made on measures due for completion in the second half of 2016, as well as progress made on measures that are ongoing during the 2015-2017 period of the Action Plan.

The plan is being monitored and driven by the Implementation Committees, comprising representatives from the Enterprise Sector, as well as the Local Authorities, Enterprise Agencies, Higher Educations Institutes and other public bodies in the region.

At its second meeting held on 12 September 2016, the Implementation Committee decided that, for practical administrative purposes, the Committee should be divided into two separate formations - North East and North West. However, a single Progress Report covering the entire region would continue to be published.

The North East Implementation Committee is chaired by Mr Richard Hanlon, Senior Vice President of Vesta Payment Solutions Limited. The North West Implementation Committee is chaired by Mr Conor Murphy, Site Director for Abbott Ireland Diagnostics Division.

There has been a substantial improvement in the North East / North West region since the commencement of the National Action Plan for Jobs in 2012, with an additional 23,000 in employment in Q4 2016 compared to Q1 2012. Moreover, there are now almost 6,800 more people in work in the region since the launch of the Regional Action Plan initiative in Q1 2015,

While still above the State average of 6.7%, the unemployment rate in the region has fallen from a peak of 17.8% in Q3 2012 to the current rate of 8%.

Noteworthy Developments

Enterprise agency-supported jobs

Numbers employed in the NE/NW region in firms supported by the enterprise agencies increased since the beginning of 2015 as follows:

IDA	+10.1%
Enterprise Ireland	+8.5%
LEOs	+7.5%
Údarás	+7.2%

Invest4Success Expo

Local Authorities from Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon in conjunction with Bord Na Mona and the ESB joined together to host an expo and seminar in Croke Park on 3rd November. This unique approach brought together successful businesses from across the Upper Shannon Erne region to tell their story and spread the message that the area is a top destination for investment. A key element of the day was the opportunity for growing businesses in the region to showcase the high quality jobs they have on offer.

ITI Seedcorn Competition

DkIT Regional Development Centre incubation client Gecko Governance won the Best New Start award in the InterTradeIreland Seedcorn Investor Readiness Competition. This overall country-wide award includes a cash prize of €50,000. Dundalk-based Gecko Governance makes regulation technology for the global finance industry that allows fund managers to monitor and manage their regulation and compliance requirements. The company said it will use the prize money to accelerate their expansion plans – specifically in rolling out their London office.

Regional renewable energy analysis

A regional renewable energy analysis on the use of biomass as a local contribution to the national renewable heat target was completed by the Western Development Commission. The actions initiated as a result include:

- a) FREED. Regional involvement, via the WDC, in a €2M funded EU initiative that will develop a new service by which SME's and communities in the region can access innovation in energy technologies;
- b) GREBE. Regional participation in an EU initiative to support the successful development of SMEs and start-ups in this sector through the analysis of advanced renewable energy options;
- c) REDIRECT. Regional access to a funded EU initiative to develop high value bio products from biomass waste;
- d) DISTRICT HEATING. The promotion of regional engagement in medium sized biomass District Heating projects, in association with local stakeholders (e.g. Aurivo and the County Councils).

Co-Innovate project

€16.6m has been offered under the EU’s INTERREG VA Programme to develop the Research & Innovation capacity of over 1,400 SMEs on a cross-border basis, through the ‘Co-Innovate’ project. The funding offer is the first to be announced under the European Union’s INTERREG VA Programme. Upon completion, the project will increase the proportion of SMEs and micro-businesses involved in cross-border collaboration within the Border Region, Northern Ireland and Western Scotland from 22% to 33%. Partners include InterTradeIreland, the six Border County LEOs, Scottish Enterprise, Highland & Islands Enterprise and Enterprise NI. Delivery will commence in June 2017.

Greenway developments

INTERREG funding of €14.86m for the North West Greenways Network between Donegal and Derry was approved in November 2016. The proposed Newry to Omeath Greenway in County Louth has secured funding of €3.46m under the EU’s INTERREG VA Programme to allow this project to be completed.

Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ)

Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) are functional areas that reflect the spatial patterns of local economic activities and development processes. The 2016 REDZ scheme provides funding for projects of differing scale and ambition that share the mutual objective of supporting economic development in rural areas, with a particular focus on maximising the synergies between towns and their hinterlands and encouraging collaboration between Local Authorities on larger projects.

The funding covers:

- Flagship projects – 1 in each Regional Assembly Region
- 9 Medium scale projects – 3 in each Regional Assembly region to a max grant of €200,000 per project.
- Small REDZ projects –to a maximum grant of €100,000

In November, 41 projects were approved nationwide in the amount of €5.3M, with almost €1.75 million in funding awarded to projects in the NE/NW Region.

Projects funded across the region are detailed below:

Bailieborough	Cavan	€100,000	Redevelopment of Bailieborough Courthouse and Bridewell as an Economic and Tourism Hub
Ballyshannon The Gables	Donegal	€48,000	Up grading of facilities in town to enhance area for tourism.
Dunree Fort	Donegal	€50,000	Coffee Shop & Pier Facilities
Tubbercurry Enterprise Centre	Sligo	€100,000	Support to Enterprise Centre and town development
Clones	Monaghan	€100,000	Greenway, car Park, Industrial sites at Clones

			enterprise Park, Signage
Carrickmacross	Monaghan	€150,000	Develop Enterprise Sites and develop Market House for Multipurpose use
Ballinmore	Leitrim	€100,000	Assist towards the development of an Angling Centre
Carrick on Shannon	Leitrim	€200,000	Develop a Taste Leitrim Food Tourism & Enterprise Zone
Glenties	Donegal	€200,000	Completion of Community Enterprise Centre in Glenties
Ox Mountain	Sligo	€200,000	Ox Mountains Mountain Biking Centre & Wild Nephin Wilderness
IWAK	Sligo	€400,000	Discovery centre at Ireland West Airport and Regional branding
Cavan Town	Cavan	€100,000	Creation of a Digital Hub

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

In November, the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, announced that 172 towns and villages across the country will benefit from €10 million in funding under the 2016 Town and Village Renewal Scheme. The funding is being used for a wide variety of projects, identified by Local Authorities in conjunction with local community groups and businesses, including improving playgrounds and footpaths, tourism amenities, public art pieces and a wide range of works to improve the streetscape and public realm of towns and villages nationwide, to help make them more attractive and more sustainable places in which to live and work. A total of €2.271m was allocated to the NE/NW region under the Scheme (Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Sligo and Monaghan each received €380,000 and Cavan received €371,000).

Clár

CLÁR is a targeted investment programme that provides funding for small infrastructural projects in rural areas that have experienced significant depopulation. The programme provides funding under three measures:

- Safety package for Schools/Community Facilities
- Outdoor Play Facilities Enhancement Scheme/support for the development of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA).
- Local Access Roads

On December 1st, Michael Ring TD, Minister of State for Regional Economic Development, announced the allocation of €2.78m allocated to the NE/NW Region for the provision of recreational infrastructure (c. €498,000 – Cavan; €879,000 – Donegal, €275,000 - Leitrim; €174,000 – Louth; €356,000 – Monaghan; €598,000 - Sligo).

Rural Recreation Scheme

Minister Michael Ring announced allocations under the Rural Recreation Scheme in September with €0.859m allocated to the NE/NW Region for the provision of recreational infrastructure (€45,000 – Cavan; €99,000 – Donegal, €507,000 - Leitrim; €116,000 – Monaghan; €92,000 - Sligo).

Update on Actions to be reported on from July – December 2016

Driving Entrepreneurship

Action 1: Enterprise Ireland

Increase the number of entrepreneurs and start-ups in the North East / North West through initiatives such as:

- Enterprise Start workshops;
- New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme in Dundalk Institute of Technology, IT Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology;
- Start your own Business Programmes; and
- Enterprise related training.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

New Frontiers is Enterprise Ireland's national entrepreneur development programme for innovative, early-stage start-ups. It is a three-phased programme, based in 14 campus incubation centres across the country and is delivered in the North East by Dundalk IoT, and in the North West by IoT Sligo and Letterkenny IoT.

Three **Phase 1** programmes were completed in the North East in 2016 with 42 participants completing the 6 week programme.

In the North West, 45 participated in Phase 1.

In **Phase 2**, participants receive intensive training and development, as well as a hot desk in the Institutions' incubation facilities. Participants selected onto Phase 2 receive a stipend of €15,000 from Enterprise Ireland subject to satisfactory progress against their business development targets.

12 participants completed Phase 2 the North East in 2016. They were drawn from the Food, IT, Consumer and Industrial products sectors.

12 participants from the North West also completed Phase 2

The Virtual Incubation Programme, funded through the EI CEC collaborative programme was launched with collaboration between Millmount Development Centre, Drogheda and Creative

Spark Enterprise Centre, Dundalk. 4 participants, from the med tech, digital graphic design and consumer products sectors make up the first cohort of this 6 month engagement.

Action 2: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland will implement the findings from the review of the New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme in order to evolve the programme to maximise positive impact on entrepreneurship in the region 2016.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

New Frontiers is Enterprise Ireland's national entrepreneur development programme for innovative, early-stage startups. Based in 14 campus incubation centres across the country, it is designed to support entrepreneurs capable of building a sustainable new business, trading internationally, creating employment and generating revenue in their own locality. Across the 3 IoTs in the Border Region, a total of 24 entrepreneurs participated on Phase 2 of this programme.

Action 3: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland will agree and implement a Service Level Agreement with all Business Innovation Centres (BIC) to ensure their interaction with start-ups in the region is deepened and the value maximised.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the BIC's was completed in October 2016. The SLA provides a framework for agreement of service levels and performance management in respect of the funding administered by EI (on behalf of DJEI) to the BIC's located in Ireland. Any funds transferred to the BIC's from EI are to be focused on activities that are related to the priorities and objectives of EI's start-up strategy.

Action 4: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta will implement measures to support early stage business with a particular focus on regional competitive advantage in specific sectors, including cultural tourism, audio-visual and digital technology, marine resources, niche manufacturing, food beverages and creative language-based services.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Údarás na Gaeltachta continues to support economic development in the Gaeltacht areas and awarded feasibility funding and grant aid to 10 projects throughout 2016.

A total of 2,081 people were employed in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in County Donegal at the end of 2016, an increase of 139 since end 2014. Údarás client companies throughout Ireland have exceeded a significant economic milestone of over €900m in total sales and have contributed over €420m in direct expenditure to the Irish economy for two consecutive years.

Action 5: Local Enterprise Offices – North East

Each of the 3 Local Enterprise Offices in the North East will aim to increase employment in its baseline through increased start-ups and the scaling of existing clients. Local Enterprise Development Plans will be developed, setting out clear targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in their region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

In **Cavan** in 2016, the total grant assistance available was €330k. Of the 217 participants in the Start Your Own Business Programmes (SYOB), 77 were women. Some 164 students participated in the 2016/2017 Student Enterprise Awards Programme. Some 14 Trading Online Vouchers (TOV) were approved and 7 Microfinance Ireland (MFI) applications were processed.

In **Monaghan**, the LEO organised 29 training and networking workshops, at which there were 676 attendees (286 male, 390 female). It facilitated mentoring for 71 clients (48 male, 23 female). In addition, it arranged 9 events for female entrepreneurs, attracting 304 participants. Its Student Enterprise Awards programme involved 320 students. Some 20 TOVs were awarded and 3 applications made to MFI.

In **Louth**, €315k was paid out in grant aid in 2016, and a further €200k spent on other enterprise support initiatives. Some 149 people participated in SYOB programmes, of which 64% were female. Over 1,115 participated in other training programmes, of which 56% were female. Over 120 businesses received mentoring support. All 18 schools in the county participated in the Student Enterprise programme, involving 1,050 students. 30 TOVs were approved and 9 applications to MFI supported.

Action 6: Local Enterprise Offices – North West

Each of the 3 Local Enterprise Offices in the North West will aim to increase employment in its baseline through increased start-ups and the scaling of existing clients. Local Enterprise Development Plans will be developed, setting out clear targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in their region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

LEO Donegal grant-aided 19 projects during 2016 and had over 1,200 participants on training and management development programmes. It also submitted 9 Microfinance Ireland (MFI) applications and approved 30 Trading Online Vouchers (TOVs).

In **Leitrim**, during 2016, 61 people participated in SYOB training and a further 90 availed of mentoring. Another 11 clients participated in the Performance, Profitability and Growth Management Development Programme. The Student Enterprise Programme for 2016/2017 has commenced with all seven schools in the county participating. Nine TOVs were approved in 2016 and four applications were submitted to MFI.

LEO Sligo has met or exceeded its targets in relation to SYOB training, student entrepreneurship, TOVs and grant-aid disbursement.

Action 7: Local Enterprise Offices

The Local Enterprise Offices will maximise collaboration with the Community Enterprise Centres to assist start-ups and existing businesses to grow and develop.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

LEO Cavan continues to proactively engage with Community Enterprise Centres (CECs) in the county, to support existing tenants and identify new opportunities for collaboration. A two day workshop with LEO Monaghan and Plato EBR in July involved thirteen participants. PLATO EBR is an 18-month leadership and business development programme targeted at SMEs and based on the principle of peer-group learning.

Leitrim LEO engages with CECs on an ongoing basis.

Louth LEO continues to liaise with the CECs in the county, supporting and augmenting services available to start-ups and existing businesses. Louth LEO sits on the Board of Directors of all 4 CECs in the county (Creative Spark, Dundalk; The Mill, Drogheda; Ardee Development CLG and Oriel Hub, Dundalk). Many of LEO Louth's business training activities are delivered at CEC venues. An October 2016 'Introduction to Tendering' workshop, in partnership with Drogheda Enterprise Centre at The Mill, had 12 participants.

LEO Sligo continues to collaborate with Community Enterprise Centres - it has a seat on the Board of the Sligo Enterprise Fund Centre and is involved in a steering group concerned with the development of the Tubbercurry Centre.

Action 8: Local Authorities

The local authorities in the North East/ North West, as in other areas, will each develop and publish a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), setting out, for a six-year period, objectives and actions to support economic development and local and community development in their administrative regions. Following adoption of the plans Local Authorities will carry out a scoping exercise to identify opportunities for collaboration on a regional level where similar actions have been identified across a number of plans.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

The LCEPs have been developed and published in each of the 6 counties in the region. The focus now is on implementation - and on the identification of opportunities to work collectively, on a regional basis, on similar objectives and actions.

Action 9: Local Community Development Committees (LCDC)

The eight Local Development Companies in the region will provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment and deliver a range of programmes to support entrepreneurship and social enterprise. The Local Development Companies will work with the LEOs, with a view to progressing clients to the LEO services.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A National Protocol on the operation of LEADER funding via Local Development Companies and the LEOs was still awaiting final approval at end 2016. However, there exists a close working

arrangement at local level between the Local Community Development Committees and the other economic development bodies in each county - including the LEOs.

Action 10: Local Community Development Committees (LCDC)

Local Development Strategies for the delivery of the LEADER programme over the period 2015-2020 will be developed.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

This action is complete in all 6 counties and the LEADER programme is being rolled out across the region. The LEADER programme is a European Union initiative to support rural development projects initiated at the local level in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs.

Action 11: Local Authorities

Local Economic and Community plans to include sub-committee with all public agencies responsible for start-ups to meet quarterly to develop a process for

- i. Sharing and communicating information on funding supports to start ups from different agencies
- ii. Coordinating on start-up awards to positively promote entrepreneurship in the region
- iii. Identifying ambassadors for business in each county
- iv. Communicating to businesses the opportunities that exist from European funding available to the region with a view to maximising the drawdown of European funding.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

This action is complete in **Louth, Monaghan** and **Sligo**.

Leitrim County Council liaises frequently with development agencies on many initiatives - such as the Invest4Success Expo in Croke Park in November 2016.

In **Cavan**, there is ongoing communication and sharing of information on business supports

In **Donegal**, the first meeting of the Economic Development committee took place in December. Sub-committees are scheduled to meet in Q1 2017.

Action 12: Louth Economic Forum

Louth Economic Forum will pilot an initiative to evaluate the coherence of the various start-up supports at County level, to create a road map for users and to consider ways through which they can be promoted to ensure a joined-up, comprehensive, yet easily accessible, information and guidance service to potential entrepreneurs.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

A suite of 'Essential Guides for Small Business' was published by LEO Louth, in consultation with the Louth Economic Forum. These guides provide a map of the supports available in the county to entrepreneurs who wish to start a business.

<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Louth/Start-or-Grow-your-Business/Business-Advice-Planning/>

Action 13: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland will evaluate proposals under the national €5m million Community Enterprise Initiative. Enterprise Ireland will support and monitor successful applicants under the €5 million Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme launched in 2015.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

This was completed in June 2016 and a €60m Regional Enterprise Development Fund will be rolled out in 2017.

Action 14: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland will evaluate proposals under the National €5 million Competitive LEO fund.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

This was completed in June 2016 and a €60m Regional Enterprise Development Fund is being rolled out in 2017.

A total of 4 projects involving LEOs from the region were approved for funding in 2016:

- LEO Donegal, LEO Sligo, LEO Leitrim, LEO Cavan, LEO Monaghan, LEO Louth secured funding for the ACCELINVEST initiative, which aims to create a clear pathway for export focused, investment-ready regional companies to progress from the LEO Network to Enterprise Ireland.

- LEO Sligo, LEO Donegal secured funding for a programme aimed at two particular cohorts of businesses, i.e. existing LEO clients and artisan producers trading in farmers' markets and other similar early stage niches.

The main objectives of the programme will be to increase the business potential and expertise of promoters, to foster innovation and know-how, increase turnover and sales and to equip participants to trade in new markets.

- LEO Leitrim, LEO Cavan (with LEO Longford, LEO Roscommon) secured funding for the Graduate Internship for Entrepreneurship Programme. Through this programme, graduates will be connected with full-time, paid internship centred on a two way skills transfer – graduates will transfer new skills and approaches, employers will transfer entrepreneurial learning and experience of running/managing a business.
- LEO Leitrim, LEO Cavan (with LEO Longford, LEO Roscommon) secured funding for an Initiative, which will provide the opportunity for shared learning, dynamic trade development and knowledge transfer in the creative sector which will result in job creation and greater sustainability of the often challenged creative sector with a specific emphasis on the craft sector.

Action 15: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta will develop annual enterprise development plans for the Gaeltacht area in the region, setting out targets to support entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The enterprise development plan for 2016 was developed and published. Please see <http://www.udaras.ie/en/faoin-udaras/foilseachain>.

Action 16: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta will target an increase in new jobs of between 15 and 25% in the North West as well as continuing to support 1,942 jobs

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Údarás na Gaeltachta invested in excess of €3.5m in the North West in 2016. Jobs in Údarás-supported companies increase by 7.2% since between 2014 and 2016.

At the end of 2016, a total of 2,081 people were employed in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in County Donegal.

Action 17: Local Community Development Committees (LCDC)

Promote the Enterprise Awards Scheme for people who return to work, on the back to work enterprise allowance scheme (BTWEAS) to provide support to new businesses

Status: Complete

Narrative:

All relevant enterprise support agencies, including the LEOs, actively promote participation and engagement in the BTWEAS at local level.

Action 19: LEOs

Identify baseline of existing business networks and support and grow networks for start-ups and local businesses.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

All LEOs in the border region maintain a proactive engagement with business networks, to share information and help develop best practice. They jointly hosted a National Women's Enterprise Day in October 2016.

LEO Cavan supports female business women's networks through the Cavan Business Women's Club initiative.

LEO Sligo continues to support its Women in Business Network

The Plato Programme for the East Border Region services businesses in Monaghan, Louth, Cavan and Meath and is actively supported by Louth, Monaghan and Cavan LEOs

LEO Louth also supports Network Ireland's Louth branch, which provides a support network for female entrepreneurs in the county

LEO Donegal supports the Donegal Women in Business Network, Donegal Designer Makers and a number of emerging creative clusters. LEO Donegal also facilitates the Creative Coast Network and the Food Coast Network.

Action 20: InterTrade Ireland

InterTrade Ireland will run its annual Seedcorn Competition on a regional basis, to give companies the opportunity to improve their investor readiness and greatly increase their chances of raising equity. Local companies will have the opportunity to compete on a regional basis for a prize of €20,000. The regional winner can go on to compete for overall prizes of €50,000 and €100,000.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

DkIT Regional Development Centre incubation client Gecko Governance won the Best New Start award in the InterTradeIreland Seedcorn Investor Readiness Competition. This overall country-wide award includes a cash prize of €50,000.

Dundalk-based Gecko Governance makes regulation technology for the global finance industry that allows fund managers to monitor and manage their regulation and compliance requirements. The company said it will use the prize money to accelerate their expansion plans – specifically in rolling out their London office.

This year's competition generated a lot of interest and attracted over 300 applications from new start and early stage companies from across the island from sectors such as Pharma, ICT, Energy, Software/Apps, Biometrics and even waste management.

Action 21: Enterprise Ireland

Increase awareness and take up of national public and private sector supports to provide access to finance to start ups and existing businesses.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

This action is actively supported by all LEOs and the EI offices in the region

LEO Cavan jointly hosted (with DSP) an Employers Networking event in September 2016, providing an opportunity for businesses to network on a one-to-one basis with Microfinance Ireland, Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, LEOs, EI and other state agencies

LEO Louth provides updates by publishing relevant information on its website and communicated with its subscriber base through its social media platforms. It also circulates relevant information to members of the Louth Economic Forum and its Indigenous Working Group.

Action 22: InterTrade Ireland

InterTrade Ireland will host 4 workshops under their “Funding for Growth” initiative in the North East/ North West to promote all traditional and non-traditional sources of finance to local businesses, as well as providing an opportunity to meet with a corporate finance expert.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A 'Funding for Growth' workshop was presented in Sligo in October. This was the 9th such workshop organised by InterTradeIreland (ITI) across Ireland in 2016.

Action 23: InterTrade Ireland

InterTradeIreland will deliver a series of equity awareness events at regional level including the unique equity advisory clinics where companies can meet with an equity expert, business planning workshops and venture capital case studies.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Equity advisory clinics were held in Sligo in March and in Letterkenny in October 2016. They aimed at helping companies seeking equity investment. This service is provided free of charge with pre-screening undertaken in advance to ensure companies using the service meet the minimum criteria. These are in addition to regular clinics arranged by ITI in Dublin and Belfast, on a monthly basis.

Action 24: Local Authorities

Undertake a review of incubation space and property solutions within the region, from pre start-up incubation facilities, through to scaling up to full manufacturing capacity. Identify gaps/shortages and develop a programme of investment requirements.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The **Cavan** database of available commercial properties continues to be monitored and updated.

Sligo has significant vacant industrial space. However, shortages do exist in terms of the quality of workspace (to meet certain requirements) and the development of additional industrial space is under review

In **Louth**, a report on available commercial properties for start-up businesses was completed in 2016.

In **Donegal**, a review of available community space has been carried out and draft plans for co-working spaces prepared.

Action 25: Local Authorities

Identify strategic sites in the region that have low occupancy or are vacant or derelict with a view to making them accessible for start-ups and SMEs (e.g. creative sector, living labs, hot desks) through incentive schemes to encourage occupancy.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The **Cavan** County Council Town Teams Initiative is progressing, with each team actively working on potential projects, with a view to identifying funding streams to support development. In addition, a Feasibility Study has been commissioned towards the development of a Digital Hub.

The identification of vacant sites is underway in both **Louth** and **Sligo**.

Action 26: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta will upgrade the broadband infrastructure to its business parks by investing in fibre optic.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Preparatory work is underway to examine the most effective means of delivering these critical infrastructural services to the identified Business Parks. Discussions are ongoing with the relevant Government Departments. A decision on the final implementation plan is due to be agreed by end of Q1 2017.

Action 27: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta will develop additional enterprise / innovation units in Aislann, Páirc Ghnó Ghaoth Dobhair to provide accommodation for start-ups.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

Further capital investment of €300,000 was made in the facility and a manager for the Innovation Centre will start in Q1 2017

Supporting Business To Grow And Scale

Action 28: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland will run a “Get ready to Export” in the North East/ North West in 2016

Status: Complete

Narrative:

Thirteen companies participated in the workshop presented in Dundalk in September 2016. The purpose of this event was to help companies thinking about exporting for the first time – now or in the future – to understand the steps that are required to drive their export potential.

Action 29: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland will run an “Export Workshop” in the North East/ North West in 2016.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

There was insufficient interest in this workshop and the event was postponed. The option to reschedule is under review.

Action 30: InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland will promote its Acumen and Elevate programmes in the North East/ North West.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

InterTradelreland continues to interact very closely with all the LEOs in the region, promoting their Trade Programmes.

The Acumen Programme helps companies source the right expertise and people to target new markets effectively and increase cross-border sales. The Elevate Programme provides funding for specialist consultancy support to micro businesses looking to identify cross-border markets and customers to win new business.

Action 31: InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland will host a “Going North” workshop to support local business and create awareness of opportunities that exist.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

InterTradelreland are currently having discussions with several LEOs with a view to hosting the workshop in early 2017.

Action 32: InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland will set a target of at least 14 Acumen approvals to investigate and pursue export opportunities in Northern Ireland.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Between Jan 2015 and Nov 2016, 23 companies in the region were approved for Acumen support to investigate and pursue export opportunities in Northern Ireland.

Action 33: InterTradelreland

Through its Trade Accelerator Voucher scheme, InterTradelreland will help companies to identify and break down barriers to trade leading to new export opportunities in Northern Ireland.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

InterTradelreland continue to interact very closely with all the LEOs in the region to promote all of their Trade Programmes, including the Trade Accelerator Voucher Scheme

Action 34: Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

Through the INTERREG VA Programme SEUPB will support cross-border business investment in Research & Innovation with an ERDF allocation of €15.9m. The key outputs will focus on SMEs with 1,408 receiving a range of support including: collaboration with research institutions; innovation advice; collaborative research projects.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

€16.6m has been offered under the EU's INTERREG VA Programme to develop the Research & Innovation capacity of over 1,400 SMEs on a cross-border basis, through the 'Co-Innovate' project. The funding offer is the first to be announced under the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme. Upon completion, the project will increase the proportion of SMEs and micro-businesses involved in cross-border collaboration within the Border Region, Northern Ireland and Western Scotland from 22% to 33%. Partners include InterTradelreland, the six Border County LEOs, Scottish Enterprise, Highland & Islands Enterprise and Enterprise NI. Delivery will commence in June 2017.

Action 35: Intertradelreland

InterTradelreland will deliver 4 public tendering workshops for SMEs in the North East/ North West over the period 2015-2016 and will provide relevant training for local small businesses in the region. InterTradelreland will also promote public tendering opportunities to SMEs in the region including cross border public sector opportunities, consortia building for larger contracts and below threshold contracts.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

6 workshops have been delivered to the end of 2016, many of which were organised in collaboration with LEOs, Local Authorities and Chambers of Commerce. This activity will continue through the year 2017.

Action 36: Enterprise Ireland

Build on the global sourcing and collaboration initiative and increase activity in this area to enhance the regional offering and increase collaboration with existing clients, and provide opportunities for Irish Companies to engage with IDA companies

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A Global Sourcing event was held in Sligo in 2016, attended by over 70 companies, both small and large. It incorporated 100 one-to-one meetings among the attendees.

Fostering Innovation

Action 37: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland, through the Technology Transfer Offices, will promote outreach activities to industry.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI), through its management of Enterprise Ireland's Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative (TTSI), supports the outreach activities to industry undertaken by the network of Technology Transfer Offices around the country. Working with the Technology Transfer Office network, KTI works with business, investors, Universities, Institutes of Technology, State research organisations, research funders and Government agencies to maximise the availability of State-funded technology, ideas and expertise to business. KTI also heavily promotes the use of such research capabilities through its central knowledge transfer and technology transfer functions. See the KTI Website – www.knowledgetransferireland.com - which hosts model agreements, practical guides and information on expertise within the public research system, supporting the efficient transfer of economically valuable research outputs to enterprise.

Action 38: Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT)

The Technology Gateway National Network will continue to carry out industry research. Within this, the WiSAR Technology Gateway based in Letterkenny IT will hold an industry open day each year 2016/2017.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The WiSAR Technology Gateway held an information day at the Killybegs Campus in 2016, the subject of which was "The Internet of Things - bringing Innovation to Every Business". It attracted 40 attendees. WiSAR also established a nationwide Applied IoT cluster with 4 other Technology Gateways to support research and innovation in all sectors within the region, but with a particular interest in Enterprise Ireland clients. Through 2016, the WiSAR Technology Gateway completed 25 industry projects for SMEs and start-ups and commenced a further 10 projects. Currently, the WiSAR Lab has 8 full-time and 2 part-time staff.

Action 40: Institutes of Technology (IoTs)

The ETBs and IoTs in the region will continue to build on their engagement with industry and seek to increase industry collaboration within the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The NE Regional Skills Forum manager, located at the Regional Development Centre (RDC) at DkIT, is working with relevant stakeholders and leveraging industry linkages. IoTs, ETBs and EI have steering committee positions on the Skills Forum, along with industry representatives and other stakeholders. Within DkIT, during 2016, the RDC supported entrepreneurs through EI's New Frontiers programme and the EI funded CEC VIP programme, in collaboration with Creative Spark. DkIT was also engaged in a number of Innovation Vouchers and Fusion projects with industry. It also engaged in a number of workshops promoting applied research opportunities across the North East. In November, DkIT engaged in roundtable workshops with companies from Louth, Meath, Cavan and Monaghan to support its three-year strategic planning process.

The NW RSF manager is involved in a number of initiatives that promotes education/training providers collaborating with external employers in areas such as work based learning, student placements, projects and events.

The Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) is actively engaged with employers and employer representatives to enable and support course development and to meet emerging skills needs in both Training and Education, for industry/employers in the region.

Action 41: InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland will promote the Fusion Programme to SMEs in the region and will set a target of at least 18 Fusion approvals in 2015/16.

Status: Complete

Since Jan 2015, 22 companies from the region have been approved for support through the Fusion programme. FUSION is an all-island graduate programme linking academia and industry, predominantly focusing on science, engineering and technology roles. It incorporates a paid placement, lasting 12 to 18 months, with a Postgraduate Diploma in Business and Management.

Graduates are placed in SME companies to create and develop technologically innovative and commercially viable products and services and gain project management experience. They are supported by both the company and an academic mentor from a university or college with specialist expertise in the subject area required.

Action 42: InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland will provide access to its Challenge Programme to SMEs in the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The Challenge Programme remains open to all eligible companies in the region, as promoted through ITIs engagement with the LEOs. 30 companies attended information sessions in Monaghan. Nine of these engaged further with the Programme, by attending follow-up workshops.

Action 43: IDA Ireland

IDA will continue to roll out its Research, Development & Innovation Program to incentivise client companies in the region to develop new processes and products.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

IDA Ireland continues to encourage investment in R&D projects and centres of excellence, to link with research centres and colleges and to offer grant assistance for R&D.

IDA continues to support and provide its Research, Development & Innovation Programme to incentivise client companies to develop new processes and products.

Action 44: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás will continue to roll out its Research, Development & Innovation Program to incentivise client companies in the Gaeltacht region to develop new processes and products

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Údarás na Galetachta has approved 5 Feasibility Studies and one R&D project. It also supported a number of innovation partnerships with IoTs.

Action 45:

Support the Connaught Ulster Alliance (IT Sligo LyIT, & GMIT) in the process to become a Technological University

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The Connaught Ulster Alliance achieved approval from the Minister for Stage 1 submission of the 4 Stage Technological University re-designation process. Funding of €750K was approved by the HEA in 2016.

Action 46: The Mill

Explore the potential to establish a Business & Innovation Centre (BIC) in the North East along the lines of WestBIC

Status: Complete

Narrative:

The Mill and DkIT met with representatives of the BICs in Ireland and also discussed this proposed action with other stakeholders in the region. West BIC currently has geographical coverage for North East. However, logistically this has not been realised and the Regional Development Centre has been the primary resource for BIC type enterprise support activities in the North East. The Regional Development Centre operates as the de-facto enterprise, innovation and HPSU support organisation for the NE region. Given the financial responsibility associated with the recent opening of the expansion to the Mill, it was decided not to progress this initiative at present. The Mill may consider becoming an Associate BIC in the future.

Action 47: Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

Through the INTERREG VA Programme, SEUPB will increase business industry-relevant Research and Innovation capacity across the Region within two sectors; 'Health & Life Sciences' and 'Renewable Energy', with an ERDF allocation of €45m

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Seven projects have been approved to date.

- BREATH, led by the Dundalk Institute of Technology;
- Renewable Engine, led by South West College;
- Eastern Corridor Medical Engineering Centre (ECME), led by Ulster University;

- Storage Platform for the Integration of Renewable Energy (SPIRE 2), led by Ulster University;
 - Centre for Personalised Medicine – Clinical Decision Making and Patient Safety (CPM), led by Ulster University;
 - NWCAM, led by Catalyst Inc. and
 - The Bryden Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Bio-Energy Research, led by Queens University Belfast
-

Action 48: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta will promote innovation through educational seminars and its financial supports for new and existing client companies to develop their enterprises within its innovation hubs in Áislann Ghaoth Dobhair agus Fiontarlann Chill Chartha.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

One seminar was held in 2016 attracting 40 participants.

Attracting and Embedding Foreign Direct Investment

Action 49: IDA Ireland

IDA will target a minimum of 61 new investments for the North East/ North West over the period 2015 – 2019; an increase of 30 to 40% on the strategy for 2010 – 2014.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

IDA Ireland continues to target at least 61 additional investment projects in the North East / North West region over the period 2015-2019. This target number includes R&D investments.

There are 33 multinational companies based in the North East, employing 4,914 across the Region. The highest concentration of companies are located in Louth (21 companies) followed by Cavan (7 companies) and Monaghan (5 companies). The main clusters that have emerged in the North East are in international business services, mainly Financial Services and consumer goods and manufacturing.

The North West is home to 38 multinational companies, employing 5,742 people. The majority of companies are located in Sligo (23 companies) followed by Donegal (12 companies) and Leitrim (4 companies). The main FDI activity clusters that have emerged in the North West are in the Life Sciences and Engineering Sectors particularly in the manufacture of Medical Devices and Automotive Components. Financial Services Sector is a large employer in Letterkenny and Pharma is a growing Sector in Sligo.

Action 50: IDA Ireland

IDA will continue to collaborate with their existing clients under the Transformation program, encouraging them to invest in new activities, innovation and to win new mandates

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Transformation investments are aimed at existing clients in the region, to ensure the sustainability of the operation and to further embed the companies in the region.

IDA Ireland continues to support existing clients throughout the North East / North West Region. IDA Ireland works with client companies to review operations and to support investments that will ultimately make their operations more sustainable.

Action 51: IDA Ireland

Plan, develop and construct new Advanced Building Solution in Sligo

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The Government, through the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation and IDA has a five-year strategy “Winning: Foreign Direct Investment: 2015-2019” which is aimed at accelerating the jobs recovery in every part of the country. The plan includes €150 million for an IDA property investment programme to attract foreign direct investment into different parts of Ireland over a five year period.

This investment focuses on the building of Advance Building Solutions (ATBs), infrastructure investment in a number of Utility Intensive Strategic site solutions and the upgrade of Business and Technology Parks within IDA's national portfolio.

The Sligo building is scheduled for completion in Q1 2017.

Action 54: IDA Ireland

Progress plans for accessing the IDA owned Oakfield lands in Sligo to enable new business park to be planned and developed

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

IDA has designed, with the agreement of the Local Authority, the access roadway into the IDA lands and has appointed consulting engineers to prepare the land masterplan for same. The CPO for the distribution road has been raised and is ongoing. IDA continues to influence the wider stakeholders to ensure the project is expedited.

Action 55: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Growing on the successful strategy of providing property solutions, Údarás will continue a building and refurbishment programme to help support the attraction/expansion of Indigenous Investment and FDI in the North East/ North West.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Údarás na Gaeltachta continues to support this aspect of economic development, building on its previous investment of over €1.5m in 2016.

Action 56: IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland will proactively update its online marketing “Invest in” series for the North East/ North West 2015-2016.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative: The “Invest in” series for the North East/ North West is updated periodically, as required, to reflect relevant changes, recent news and investments. IDA Ireland utilises the "Invest In" web-based marketing properties to assist in promoting business locations within the region to prospective investors.

Action 57: IDA Ireland

IDA will develop a value proposition for the North East/ North West aimed at securing potential “second site” investments from companies with large scale existing operations in Dublin.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

IDA has developed a focused value proposition to encourage FDI companies seeking to expand in Ireland to consider locations in the North East/North West.

Action 58: IDA Ireland

Develop further the synergies and scope for collaboration between High Value Manufacturing enterprises across the region to develop a marketing proposition around existing clusters in Life Sciences, Engineering.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

DkIT and Sligo IT are among the partners in an INTERREG Atlantic Area project proposal (submitted in Dec 2016) that progressed to Stage 2 evaluation in the Advanced Manufacturing sector.

Action 61: Connect Ireland

Develop a Regional Connect Ireland Plan that is integrated with the local authorities' enterprise development and job-creation activities and formalise the name of a nominated officer from each county in the region for the roll-out of the Plan.

Status: No longer being progressed

Narrative:

The contract between IDA and Connect Ireland has concluded.

Action 62: Connect Ireland

Announce and run a Connectivation competition, inviting third level students to share their ideas for the future development of the Succeed in Ireland initiative.

Status: No longer being progressed

Narrative:

The contract between IDA and Connect Ireland has concluded.

Building opportunities

Agrifood

Action 63: Teagasc

Teagasc will work with other responsible bodies and regional stakeholders to develop food innovation programmes and explore how Teagasc Ballyhaise College can contribute to the creation of a hub for agri-food technology and business process.

Status: No longer being progressed

Narrative:

Due to demand on existing local resources, all food research is carried out in two Teagasc centres at Moorepark and Ashtown.

Action 65: LEOs

Build on the success of established food festivals such as the Taste of Cavan to Showcase regional food producers, from artisan to large companies, through various food festivals in the region

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A Food Strategy for County Cavan and the development of a Taste Cavan brand is underway. Both LEO Cavan and Cavan County Council continue to work with local food producers to promote and showcase their produce. Funding has been recently secured to further advance the Sligo Food Trail. In addition, Sligo LEO, working in partnership with Donegal LEO, successfully secured €25,000 to further progress the micro-food business in both Counties under the Competitive Funding Initiative for LEOs, operated through the Centre of Excellence.

This programme is being rolled in Q1 2017. Leitrim LEO is currently developing a 5-year Food Strategy for the County. Leitrim has also recently been awarded €200,000 towards the development of a Taste Leitrim Food Tourism and Enterprise Zone

Both Monaghan County Council and Monaghan LEO support the Taste of Monaghan project.

Louth LEO and Louth County Council (in conjunction with Meath LEO and Meath County Council) have launched a Food Development Strategy for Louth and Meath (under the 'Boyne Valley' brand). This outlines a series of action to be undertaken in 2017, which are now at the planning stage.

Donegal LEO has been delivering on the Food Coast Strategy for the past four years and completed a review of the strategy in 2016. This review will see a greater focus on driving the food coast network, the food cost band and certified membership and the marketing of Donegal as a food destination and location for food businesses. The LEO Donegal will continue to facilitate the Food Coast actions such as support for new food businesses, networking within the sector, support for food festivals such as Donegal Food Festival with over 20,000 visitors and best-practice visits.

Action 68: Bord Bia

Bord Bia to work with Retailers to assist food and drink companies in the North East/ North West to increase shelf space for local produce.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Three companies from the Border region participated in Food Academy Start in the second half of 2016 (run in conjunction with SuperValu). The Food Academy Advanced programme will continue in 2017. There were two companies from the Border region in the Taste Buds programme, which was presented in conjunction with Tesco.

Action 69: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland will target food companies in the North East/ North West to scale and innovate in line with National Policy.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

EI will encourage food clients to attend the planned 'Enterprise Excellence - Lean in Ireland' event in June 2017. It will also promote the Foodworks Programme and recruit food producers for the June 2017 phase of the programme.

Action 70: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide support for 3 high potential food and drinks companies in the region to expand their operations.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Údarás na Gaeltachta Investments were approved in 2016 for two high potential food and drink projects to establish their operations in the region.

Action 71: Teagasc

Teagasc to continue to support and increase the level of farm diversification in the Region through their Option programme and their pilot Opt-In web portal

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

This is ongoing. Teagasc is organising meetings in both Cavan and Monaghan in March 2017 to review the new RDP and explore the possibilities for farm diversification.

Action 72: Enterprise Ireland

Promote Innovation Vouchers specifically targeting small food companies

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

EI promotes the Innovation Vouchers scheme when engaging with all clients. Food companies are also recruited through the Foodworks Programme, and the objective for 2017 is to show and increase on the 15% uptake by food companies achieved in 2016.

Action 73: InterTradeIreland

InterTradeIreland will use its Fusion initiative (connecting HEIs in the region/nationally with innovative SMEs) to further develop innovation in agri-technology firms.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

InterTradeIreland has actively targeted agri-food SMEs in the region during H2 2016. Investment in the FUSION Programme has potential of £300m in outputs and creation of future jobs for graduates

In September 2016, InterTradeIreland announced that it was investing over €18m in more than 300 cross border technology transfer projects over the next five years, creating additional local economic benefits.

The investment will be channelled into the business agency's hugely successful innovation technology transfer programme, FUSION. This programme enables SMEs to employ science, engineering and technology graduates for a 12-18 month period to create and develop technologically innovative and commercially viable projects and services. The graduate benefits by gaining significant management experience and a fully funded Postgraduate Diploma in Business and Management. The company is also partnered with a third level institution to gain access to the specialist expertise they need, facilitating a three way cross-border partnership.

Action 74: BIM

BIM and LYIT to further evolve the Killybegs regional Seafood Development Hub set up in 2011.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Since 2011, BIM and LYIT have continued to develop a regional seafood hub for the Northwest. To date, eight graduates have participated in various schemes with BIM in Killybegs - including five student placements on BIM's Seafood Graduate Programme at its Seafood Development Centre in Cork. The product development facilities at LYIT's campus facilitate SME lead innovation projects. To leverage further support for the development of seafood and the region's broader maritime resources, a Centre on LYIT's Killybegs campus is being proposed.

Creative Industries

Action 75: LEOs

Map creative industries including Digital Content within the region and examine the potential for development of the sector within the Region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Creative and Craft Industries have been identified through the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project (USEFE). A Network Facilitator is currently being recruited to assist in the development of a sectoral network. Cavan County Council is a partner in this project. Progress continues to be made in Donegal through the Creative Coast Donegal website and an LYIT student project

Leitrim LEO, in association with the LEOs in Roscommon, Cavan and Longford have received LEO Competitive Funds funding towards the Creative Connections Programme. Its aim is to develop a regional craft brand in the USEFE region

In Louth, the Creative Industries landscape and sectoral database is being updated, in conjunction with Creative Spark and the Indigenous Group of the Louth Economic Forum.

Under the Strategic Action plan for Creative Entrepreneurship in Donegal (now the Creative Coast) the LEO Donegal supported four sub-county creative networks in 2016 and delivered two unique programmes for the sector – one an investment programme with support from the Centre of Excellence in Shannon and the other in conjunction with the Craft and Design Council of Ireland.

Action 76: Western Development Commission

Develop micro loans & entrepreneur vouchers for development of creative industries via small loans for start-ups, micro business.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

The WDC Micro-Loan Fund is accessible to micro-enterprises in the Creative Industries sector and provides loan finance ranging from €5,000 to €25,000. Details are available on www.wdc.ie. Some companies that have benefited from the fund include Bandit Films, StudioNorthWest TV, Nadura Design and Full Circle Digital Media Ltd. The loans are generally applied to the funding of new employees and also to product development (e.g. the film Black Ice and the TV documentary on Ardnacrusha).

Action 77: Local Authorities

Explore the potential to develop crafts hubs for the region similar to Drumshambo food hub. Enable the creative sector by bringing individuals together in "creative hubs" to promote design skills, help tourism, attract creative people into the region & improve quality of life.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Cavan County Council continues to work with Cavan Arts & Cultural Centre Ltd to develop a Cultural Quarter within Cavan Town. Funding applications have been submitted to develop and support the formation of a multi-disciplinary arts and creative space, which will provide a creative hub for the creative sector in the county

In Sligo, his action continues to be under review. Donegal is currently looking at two possible locations

In Louth, the Creative Spark facility provides a hub and support services for the creative sector.

Energy / Renewables

Action 79: Letterkenny IT

Explore potential to develop a Renewable Energy Innovation Centre at Killybegs to maximise the potential of existing natural resources (wind farms, wave power, off shore wind, biomass) which are abundant in the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

In June 2016 LYIT – School of Tourism in conjunction with Donegal County Council and a stakeholder group representing Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Údarás Na Gaeltachta, the Northern Ireland Science Park, the Marine Institute, Donegal Local Enterprise Office (LEO) and the Irish Fish Producers Organisation, submitted an Expression of Interest to Enterprise Ireland in response to its call for the development of a National Marine Incubator Centre on the Killybegs Campus. The application to EI for support for a Marine Technology and Seafood Centre is under consideration.

Action 80: SEAI

Identify opportunities in Green Energy and on a cross border basis to encourage a low carbon environment, including: - Further development of cross border and international partnerships to support the development of sustainable technologies; - Provision of R & D support; - Provision of access to specialised equipment & facilities (on a cross border basis); - Provision of workshops, training and mentor support

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Cavan County Council and the LEO Cavan continue to build upon cross border partnerships with South West College in the area of sustainable technology training and potential EU funding opportunities.

Action 81: WDC

Western Development Commission to develop a micro loan fund for renewable energy

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The WDC is currently assessing demand for such a fund within the renewables sector.

Action 82: Local Authorities

Each local authority will adopt the principles of the guidelines for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (LARES) when reviewing their County Development Plans and collectively examine the potential for Regional Renewable Energy strategies.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Cavan County Council is committed to undertaking a Renewable Energy Strategy over the lifetime of the Cavan County Development Plan. Initial work on the Plan will commence in 2017

The Sligo County Development Plan is currently at draft stage

The 2015-2021 Louth Development Plan includes these principles and guidelines.

Action 83: Western Development Commission (WDC)

Complete a regional renewable energy analysis on the use of biomass as a local contribution to the national renewable heat target and develop a range of actions to support the development of renewable energy in the region.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

The energy analysis action is complete. The actions initiated as a result include:

- e) FREED. Regional involvement, via the WDC, in a €2M funded EU initiative that will develop a new service by which SME's and communities in the region can access innovation in energy technologies;
- f) GREBE. Regional participation in an EU initiative to support the successful development of SMEs and start-ups in this sector through the analysis of advanced renewable energy options. Included are expert business mentoring, transnational models of successful growth strategies, policy analysis and information on funding mechanisms;
- g) REDIRECT. Regional access to a funded EU initiative to develop high value bio products from biomass waste;

- h) DISTRICT HEATING. The promotion of regional engagement in medium sized biomass District Heating projects, in association with local stakeholders (e.g. Aurivo and the County Councils).

Action 84: SEAI

Promote and assist the delivery of cost savings through energy efficiency programmes and training for businesses and public sector organisations in the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

SEAI is assisting local and regional businesses and Public Sector Organisations to make energy efficiency savings. The Public Sector Report for 2015, which was supported by SEAI, has been published by DCCA. The SEAI energy efficiency programmes for business are also continuing to make major savings in all areas and the Minister for DCCA has provided additional budget for 2017 to advance these programme further.

SEAI has also successfully developed a new training programme for SME Energy Managers, in conjunction with LMETB and Louth County Council.

Action 85: Local Authorities

Work with SEAI to develop and promote Sustainable Energy Communities model in the region and identify willing early adopter communities to act as exemplars .

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A national Sustainable Energy Community network is now up and running, with over 60 members from all regions. The Network had its national meeting in Longford in November 2016 with over 70 attendees. This event was attended by Minister Denis Naughten and the CEO of SEAI, Jim Gannon.

Cavan Innovation & Technology Centre Ltd with IoT Sligo, Cavan County Council and LEO Cavan are currently engaging to promote the Sustainable Energy Communities Network and investigate the feasibility of a Cavan Energy Mile Project

Louth County Council actively promotes SEAI sustainable energy models in Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee.

Action 86: Eirgrid

Ensure that the electricity transmission grid in the North East/ North West is strengthened to enable maximum investment by industries that rely on large energy consumption.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative: EirGrid will continue to ensure that the region has a secure and reliable supply of electricity in order to maximise its potential for investment.

Action 87: Eirgrid

Develop the North-South Electricity Interconnector as a key piece of energy infrastructure which will enable job creation and economic development in the North East/ North West.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative: The North-South Interconnector, a key piece of electricity infrastructure for future regional and national economic development, is currently in planning and has been approved by An Bórd Pleanála. This project will see the addition of a new 400kV overhead line connecting the electricity grids of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The progress of the project is dependent on the outcome of a public inquiry in Northern Ireland, specifically relating to the section of the interconnector in that jurisdiction. This inquiry is scheduled for February 2017.

Action 88: Local Authorities

Local authorities and Retail Groups to develop collaborations to support the regeneration and development of their towns through town centre strategic development plans. Develop measures in conjunction with property owners and investors to address derelict properties. Provide support and assistance to pop up shops and markets in principal towns of the region enabling artisan food producers, artists and craft makers to showcase and sell their products.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A Town Incentive Scheme is in place in Leitrim, with a number of Town Teams in place. The Purple Flag was renewed for Carrick on Shannon. There were eight successful applicants in Town and Village Scheme.

Cavan County Council has established Town Teams, with representation by local retailers on all teams. The teams are currently working on a number of projects targeted at regenerating their town centres, from a retail perspective. One such project is the launch of a Christmas Market in

the Centre of Cavan town which will provide an opportunity for local artisan food producers to showcase their products and also generate increased footfall for the surrounding retailers.

In Sligo, there exists active collaboration between the County Council, the LEO and Sligo BID.

In Monaghan, a Town Centre manager has been appointed for the town.

In Louth, Shop Front Grant Schemes are in place in Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee.

Action 89: Local Authorities

The Local Authorities will develop Business Incentive Schemes (e.g. Rates Incentive Scheme, Development Levies Scheme) to support retail and attract business into town centres.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

In Leitrim, the first round of evaluations took place in Dec 2016.

Financial constraints in Sligo have limited the development of Business Incentive Schemes.

This action is complete in Louth.

Action 90: Local Authorities

Collaborate to examine ways to revive and reinvigorate retailing at County and Regional level.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The 2016 Christmas Festival in Carrick on Shannon included activities from both counties of Leitrim and Roscommon. The entertaining Christmas Village supported retailers by drawing shoppers into the town centre.

Cavan County Council continues to work closely with Chambers of Commerce to support all 'shop local' retail campaigns at county level and engage with Retail Excellence Ireland to discuss future regional initiatives. Cavan County Council is currently preparing a County Retail Strategy to be finalised in Spring 2017.

Retail Excellence Training and Shop Front Grants are available in Louth (Drogheda, Dundalk, and Ardee).

Manufacturing / engineering and tool making

Action 91: IT Sligo

Pursue the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Toolmaking & Design as a training centre.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A combined Medical Devices Cluster of companies was approved for funding by EI. In addition, EI funding was also approved for a Manufacturing Gateway in IT Sligo. The Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) is working with Solas to enable and support the development and enhancement of toolmaking training facilities, thus enabling development of training programmes to meet growing demand.

Action 92: Local Authorities

Explore the potential for adding value to forestry raw materials for job creation Expand the potential for training local harvesters & manufacturers of wood related products.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The Leitrim Renewable Energy Group meets quarterly to progress this action. A pilot project is operational in Mohill with the outputs monitored by the Group. This action will be considered in 2017 as part of the Louth County Council Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Action Plan.

Action 93: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland will target manufacturing companies in the North East/ North West to scale, innovate and develop international markets.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

EI continues to introduce clients to its Client Engagement Model initiative and is promoting two 'Enterprise Excellence - Lean in Ireland' events, to be held in the border region in June 2017.

Action 94: Ibec

In the context of the Ibec Manufacturing survey, host a series of regional seminars in association with AIB including one in the North West.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

A National Manufacturing conference, in conjunction with AIB, was held in Dublin in June 2016 with inputs from regional Ibec members, including the North East and North West region.

Tourism

Action 96: Fáilte Ireland

Provide a suite of business supports to high potential tourism groups and businesses in the region to build capability and capacity in the tourism sector.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Fáilte Ireland constantly monitors and engages with the tourism industry on training requirements in line with market trends. It also offers support which develops the capability of the industry to increase sales and bed-nights. This is achieved through partnership with local authorities and other relevant agencies.

Action 97: Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to market the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Lakelands Region as a tourism destination and Fáilte Ireland to identify any gaps in the Tourism Sector in the Region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

All county councils work with Fáilte Ireland to leverage and build upon the WAW and Ancient East brands. A Tourism Strategy for each county is currently being developed for launch in H2 2017.

Action 98: Fáilte Ireland

Promote the Wild Atlantic Way as a destination of choice for adventure sports and outdoor recreational activities.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland are working with industry partners, overseas buyers, on-line travel agencies and media & publicity to increase the awareness of the Wild Atlantic Way, both domestically and in the key overseas markets of Great Britain, France, Germany and the US.

Action 101: Cavan County Council

Support further development and promotion of Cavan Burren Geopark as a key cross border and North East/ North West tourist attraction

Status: Ongoing

Status:

Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark is a partner in the INTERREG VB Northern Periphery and Artic Programme (2014-2020) - titled Drifting Apart. This Programme supports the development of a strong network of Northern Periphery Global Geoparks and the enhancement of the tourism product and service offering in the region.

Action 103: Waterways Ireland

Support the reopening and development of the Ulster Canal and enhance the visitor attraction potential of Castle Saunderson to compliment redevelopment of the canal.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Planned works for a new bridge and channel construction on the river Finn are now out to tender, with work expected to start in Q2 2017. This part of the project is along a cross-border channel on the Cavan/ Fermanagh border, close to Castle Saunderson. Cavan is represented on the national Ulster Canal Forum, which was set up by Minister Humphries in conjunction with her Northern Ireland counterpart. A feasibility study is currently underway for the further development of Castle Saunderson and surrounding outhouses, including the provision of a jetty and playground facility on-site.

Action 105: Donegal County Council

Develop tourism related maritime projects such as sailing/ yachting / cruise ships in the north west (Killybegs) of the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Donegal County Council and Donegal Tourism continue to promote Killybegs and Greencastle as a cruise destination to international operators. In addition, the Malinwaters and Wildsea Europe projects continue to promote the maritime offerings of the coast.

Action 106: Louth County Council

Develop tourism related maritime projects such as sailing/ cruise ships/ festivals in the Drogheda / North East region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Louth County Council has approved a pontoon for the port of Drogheda. The new pontoon will accommodate up to ten vessels at a time. The proposed pontoon will be constructed in the first half of 2017.

Action 107: Sligo County Council

Sligo Co Co to develop proposals for the following projects and submit application to Fáilte Ireland for consideration under its Capital Funding programme:

- Investigate the potential of a Surfing Centre of Excellence to be located at the proposed Maritime Centre, Strandhill;
- Establish a Spanish Armada Interpretive Centre;
- Build on the Region's cultural heritage through the development of a visitor centre dedicated to WB Yeats;
- Explore potential to establish a Mountain biking centre on Ox mountains (circa 3500 acres of Coillte land available).

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Significant progress has been made on the proposed Mountain Biking Centre, with funding recently allocated for initial preparatory works.

Action 108: Local Authorities

Identify and develop greenway / blueway networks in the Region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A proposed Cavan & Leitrim Railway Greenway, in partnership with Leitrim County Council, is progressing. An overall strategy for greenway development will be progressed in 2017. Interreg funding of 14.86M for the North West Greenways network between Donegal and Derry was approved in November 2016.

This action is being progressed in Louth.

Action 109: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide a capacity building programme in tourism related enterprises.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Údarás na Gaeltachta is continuing to roll out programmes. Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, T.D., officially opened Ionad Cultúrtha an Phiarsaigh on 10 November 2016. This is a high-quality tourist centre which was undertaken as part of the 1916 Centenary Programme. The Centre and its newly developed facilities will complement Pearse's Cottage as a national monument and will be an attractive destination for visitors to the Ros Muc area and to the Connemara Gaeltacht long into the future. The project had a €4.9m budget, which included €1m capital investment by An tÚdarás.

Action 110: Fáilte Ireland

Promote and raise awareness of Fáilte Ireland's new international accreditation for alternative accommodation ('Welcome Standard') among providers of, or those interested in developing, non-mainstream accommodation options in the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The Welcome Standard has been communicated to trade, stakeholders and industry partners and details are available on www.failteireland.ie. Fáilte Ireland continues to increase awareness of this new accreditation.

Cross-Border Initiatives

Action 111: Local Authorities

Explore potential to develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with all counties or groups of counties as appropriate on both sides of the Border as per Newry/Mourne/Louth initiative, under such themes as:

- (i) Renewable Energy and Green Technology;
- (ii) Tourism and Recreation;
- (iii) Sustainable Economic Growth, Job Creation;
- (iv) (iv) Emergency Planning 2016-2017

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A Strategic Model for Regional Development and Growth has been agreed between Donegal Co. Council and Derry City and Strabane Councils.

Action 112: Local Authorities

Develop cross border Activity Tourism

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The planned Greenway project from Manorhamilton to Enniskillen is under review, having failed to secure Interreg Funding. In Donegal, this action is being progressed through the North West Strategic Growth Plan. Complete in Louth.

Action 113: Waterways Ireland

Launch the Shannon-Erne Waterway Blueway as a recreational trail concept to include walking, heritage & food.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

This Blueway was launched in June 2016 and runs from Leitrim Village to Belturbet and includes 70km of water trail and over 17km of linear and looped walking and cycling routes.

Waterways Ireland has, using the wonderful waterway assets, also developed and built a paddling trail from Drumshanbo through Battlebridge and Leitrim Village to Carrick on Shannon.

Action 114: Local Authorities

Advance East-west greenway corridor from Larne to Sligo and north to Derry/Letterkenny, via Ulster Canal, Sligo-Enniskillen Railway in line with strategic routes developed by Dept of Agriculture and Regional Development NI

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

INTERREG funding of €14.86m for the North West Greenways Network between Donegal and Derry was approved in Nov 2016. The proposed Newry to Omeath Greenway in County Louth has secured funding to allow this project to be completed.

Skills enhancement and labour market activation

Action 117: Institutes of technology

HEIs to collaborate with Industry to raise awareness of career opportunities, to 3rd Level students and explore potential for cross border collaboration.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Three new programmes in Clinical Medical Science were delivered, in collaboration with the University of Ulster. Also, the Annual Engineering Expo and Science Festival were successfully staged at Sligo IT in November 2016. In addition, Ibec members are in regular contact with the HEI sector to progress and advance this action. In November 2016, the DkIT hosted its Industry and Careers Fair on-campus, involving over 60 companies from the region.

Action 118: Department of Social Protection

Improve communication between public bodies & employers in relation to recruitment services to support the link between employers and people who are job seeking to see posts filled more quickly.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The Department of Social Protection continues to collaborate, respond innovatively, match employers' needs, recruit to vacancies and provide employment support to employer representatives, business leaders and public agencies. The DSP Employer Engagement process encompasses direct employer liaison, encouraging corporate social responsibility and supporting economic growth with business, education and enterprise partners. Jobs & Advice Fairs in Donegal (Buncrana) and Louth (Drogheda) attracted 50 employers from both sides of the border. There were 500 jobs on offer to the 2,900 jobseekers who attended these events. A Jobs Advice Fair in Donegal Town attracted 2,000 visitors to meet the 60 exhibitors, who were representing a broad range of employment sectors in the county. Further information/networking events were staged in both counties, in conjunction with Eures, Chambers of Commerce and Departments from both jurisdictions, North and South. In Cavan and Monaghan, speed networking events were held to familiarise local businesses with the services available from a wide range of public service organisations. DSP also supported Skillnet workshops which focussed on dispute resolution and effective organisational management.

Action 119: Institutes of technology

Develop professional precision engineering toolmaking training programmes in collaboration with employers and I.T.s

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Louth Meath Education & Training Board (LMETB) is working with local companies to develop and enhance Education & Training programmes in the area, to meet the needs of the developing economy.

Action 121: Ibec

Continue to host HR forums through Ibec's regional offices for Ibec members.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Ibec continues to hold quarterly HR Forum meetings with members in the region.

Action 122: Department of Education and Science

Develop and roll out new range of national apprenticeship programmes.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

In 2015, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), in collaboration with SOLAS, formally extended its suite of professional award-type descriptors to NFQ levels 5 and 6, and adopted standards for 5 high volume trades. QQI validated new curricula for these trades and they have been implemented from April 2016. Accelerated arrangements for reviewing the remaining trades have been agreed between QQI and SOLAS and 18 further programmes will be submitted for validation shortly. The Apprenticeship Council continues to work closely with industry and education providers to develop apprenticeship proposals into sustainable national apprenticeship programmes. Recent months have seen the launch of a new Insurance Practitioner Apprenticeship and the Industrial Electrical Engineer Apprenticeship getting underway. Further new apprenticeships are due to launch in the coming months in various sectors including medical devices, polymer processing and financial services.

Action 123: LEOs

The Local Enterprise Offices will collaborate with Skillnets and other relevant training bodies to ensure a streamlined approach to training offerings in the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

All LEOs are, as part of the NE Regional Skills Forum, ensuring a coordinated approach to training offerings in the region. LEO Louth promotes Skillnets training and has met with the LMETB, DSP and DkIT to ensure a streamlined approach. LEO Cavan, as part of the NE Regional Skills Forum, continues to support the dissemination of training information and the sharing of inter-agency referrals. It also promotes Skillnets training in the region. LEO Leitrim continues to work with DSP, ETB and Skillnets. It hosted a Regional Skills Forum to coincide with the launch of the USEFE Graduate Placement Programme - at which other training agencies were present, including DSP, IT Sligo and St. Angela's College.

Action 124: Teagasc

Provide skills training and upskilling initiatives for farmers in accounting services and health & safety.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Teagasc provides regular Health & Safety courses in both Cavan and Monaghan. Teagasc does not, however, offer training in accounting services and refers its clients to existing finance training programmes, made available through other agencies.

Action 125: Institutes of Technology

Continue to develop “entrepreneurship in education” learning outcomes in courses at 3rd Level institutions in the Region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The findings and recommendations from the HEInnovate report are being considered in the development of the new System Performance Framework for Higher Education and the new Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement. As part of the development of the Action Plan for Education 2017, Minister Bruton TD held a regional engagement forum on entrepreneurship in Dundalk Institute of Technology in December 2016. The Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement is being drafted and will build on the learnings from the Forum on Entrepreneurship in Schools.

DkIT has completed the action of embedding entrepreneurship learning outcomes in all its programmes across its four Schools. DkIT has been identified as a leading exemplar in embedding entrepreneurship in higher education by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A case study released by the OECD in May 2016 and showcased at the HEInnovate Dissemination Event, describes the strong culture of enterprise and innovation that permeates DkIT and examines the Institute’s strategic approach to developing entrepreneurial behaviour in its students and staff.

In general, each HEI is incorporating this theme as part of its strategic planning and programmatic reviews.

Action 126: Schools, HEIs

Schools, HEIs and companies to collaborate on regional competition for entrepreneurs.

Status: Delayed

Narrative:

Activity against this action has not yet been initiated due to resource constraints. A further update will be provided in the next progress report.

Action 127: Intertrade Ireland

Exploit proximity to Border by developing greater cooperation with NI & Scotland e.g. matching suppliers & talent.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

See Action 34 for best practice example.

Action 129: Department of Social Protection

The Dept. of Social Protection will collaborate with stakeholders such as Enterprise Ireland and IDA in promoting the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst client companies.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

During 2016, working protocols were established between DSP and IDA, EI and the ETBs (East and West). These protocols prompt regular meetings between the parties to jointly inform of upcoming events, progress on initiatives and new programmes. The IDA arranged introductory meetings for DSP with both established and potential FDI clients. EI continues to promote DSP supports and events to its client base. DSP recruitment events throughout the year also provided a large numbers of service providers with the opportunity of meeting and advising jobseekers and jobchangers. LMETB is working in partnership with DSP and local companies to develop tailor-made training and education programmes which meet the particular needs of both employers and potential employees. Successful programmes to date include those for Vesta and Horseware Ireland.

Action 130: Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Develop cross border higher education Networks (Letterkenny/Derry and Dundalk /Belfast) to facilitate movement of talent, to capitalise on broader job creation opportunities and to support access to third level education and training to enhance enterprise and economic development throughout the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Letterkenny IT along with its partner institutions, Donegal ETB, Ulster University and North West Regional College has made a request to the newly formed North West Strategic Growth Partnerships for funding to support the establishment of a North West, cross-border, Further and Higher Education cluster.

This cluster will initially support the development of programme mapping and student pathways on a cross-border basis within the proposed cluster. This will allow prospective students to find a pathway for their education - from apprenticeship to PhD.

Action 131: Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland will promote the newly launched Graduate Placement Programme through their North East/ North West regional offices.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The new "Gradhub - Graduate Business Growth Initiative" offers support to EI SME client companies to hire up to two graduates per year. NE/NW regional offices continue to promote this programme to the EI client base.

Action 132: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta will develop and host 6 educational seminars (2 per annum) for business people along with networking events in the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Údarás na Gaeltachta held one seminar in 2016, with more planned in 2017.

Action 133: Department of Social Protection

Provide one to one support to long term unemployed clients before they approach employment or training.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

DSP Activation Officers provide a direct and responsive intervention for all newly unemployed clients to assist them in reducing reliance on Government support and make the transition to job, education or training initiatives. Local Employment Services and the JobPath Programme target long-term unemployed clients and provide mediation and career guidance support. Job Clubs (which are funded by DSP) provide practical training and advice to unemployed people of all ages. The First Steps Programme is dedicated to the under-25s and helps them access mentored work-placement opportunities. Specific projects with Diageo (Dundalk) and Errigal Contracts (Monaghan) helped with training and job placement. O'Fiach College in Dundalk now offers a General Learning Level 4 educational programme for early school leavers. LMETB continues to provide engagement opportunities in a number of locations for people to sample course offerings. These include Steps to Learning, Return to Study and Mapping your Future. Courses are open to learners, regardless of prior educational attainment.

Building business networks

Action 134: EI and IDA

EI and IDA will work together to develop and implement an information/networking event across the region for EI and IDA clients.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

EI and IDA Ireland are currently considering ideas for such event and a further update will be provided in the third progress report.

Action 135: Chambers

Develop/ strengthen the existing Chambers to provide a cohesive approach to business support and development across the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Chambers Ireland call regional meetings once every four months. In the North East, Dundalk, Drogheda, Kells and Cavan are active participants. Dundalk, Newry and Warrenpoint Chambers

meet more regularly. Personal relationships are strong and agenda items focus on cross-border trade and infrastructure.

Action 136: Ibec

Continue to operate Ibec sector specific regional networks.

Status: Ibec's networks continue to connect members with one another and with key business issues.

Narrative:

Ibec's Regional Executive Committee and Networks continue to connect members with one another on key business issues.

Action 138: Ibec

Continue to host HR fora through Ibec's regional offices for Ibec members.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Ibec continues to hold quarterly HR Forum meetings with members in the region.

Action 139: Local Authorities

Establish and maintain a database of enterprise networks across the North East/ North West.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

An information session on Sligo Networks was held in the LEO Sligo offices. LEO Donegal manages a databases of creative, craft, female and engineering enterprises in addition to community enterprise centres and general business sectors in the county. This enterprise network database is overseen in Louth by the Louth Economic Forum.

Action 142: Dundalk Institute of Technology

Organise a Regional Student Enterprise Network to support Student Entrepreneurship.

Status: Complete

Narrative:

DkIT utilised social media platforms, LinkedIn networking platform (453 followers) and Facebook (1248 likes) for a student enterprise regional network. However due to resource constraints (the loss of DkIT's student enterprise intern programme), the ongoing management of those social media networks has not been continued into 2017.

Action 144: Local Authorities

Improve first stop shop linking businesses with communities etc.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

A first-stop-shop service is being piloted in Manorhamilton Library in Leitrim. Cavan County Council ensures optimum representation and engagement by local businesses on the LCDC, to ensure linkages between business and community are fostered. Additional funding has been received for 2017 to promote the LEOs and their role in this regard. This action is complete in Louth.

Marketing the region as an attractive place to work and live

Action 145: Local Authorities

Develop a Marketing Strategy / Integrated Awareness Campaign (internal & external) to promote the whole of the North East/North West as a great place to live, work & play. (Look West Model) identifying the unique selling points of the region.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Leitrim and Cavan County Councils continue to promote their counties as a tourist destination. They are both partners in the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy (USEFE) initiative - which held an 'Invest for Success' expo and conference in Croke Park in Nov 2016. This event showcased the region as a place to invest, start a business and in which to live and work. A new investment video and brochure for the Donegal/Derry region has been produced and is now in circulation. The County Louth "Open for Business" initiative responds to and addresses this action.

Action 146: Local Authorities

Develop an events plan for the North East/ North West showcasing what the Region has to offer (Food, drink, entertainment, business, tourism).

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Under the USEFE, Leitrim Co Council continues to work with other USEFE counties and Waterways Ireland to showcase, through the Blueway, the region's food and business tourism attractions. As part of the food strategy currently being developed for County Cavan, a series of related events under the Taste Cavan brand are being proposed. These will showcase the county's food and drink offering as part of the overall promotion of the region. Monaghan will develop a strategy for the development of the food sector through 2017. This action is complete for Dundalk and North Louth.

Action 147: Northern and Western Regional Assembly

Working with the Regional Airports, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly will undertake work across a range of areas to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of these airports funded by the EU's SPARA2020 (Smart Peripheral and Remote Airports Project).

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

This project is 18 months into a 3 year project period. ALG consultants carried out audits of the Non-Aeronautical Services in Ireland West Airport Knock and Donegal Airport in 2016 and published reports listing a number of recommendations for pilot projects in the two regional airports. Ireland West Airport Knock has decided to implement pilot projects based upon a review of the Way Finding and Passenger Experience. Procurement of the projects has commenced and it is hoped to commence the pilot projects in early 2017. Donegal airport will implement 3 pilot projects – Car Park Review, New Entrance Signage and a Passenger Survey. These will commence in the first quarter of 2017.

Action 148: Northern and Western Regional Assembly

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to explore possibilities for EU funding for relevant projects in the region. The Assembly also acts as the national contact point for three EU Interreg Programmes for the 2014-2020 period i.e. Northern Periphery and Arctic (€56 m), Atlantic Area (€140m) and Interreg Europe (€359 m – jointly with the Southern Assembly).

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Irish Partner Organisations are currently benefitting from EU Funding supports from all three Interreg programmes, which are currently rolling out public calls for proposals. During 2017 and beyond, Irish interest in these Programmes is expected to increase.

Action 149: Northern and Western Regional Assembly

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to manage the ERDF Gateway Fund which can provide potential investment in the economic, social and cultural infrastructure of the Gateway Towns of Letterkenny, Dundalk and Sligo.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

Under the Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme, the total awarded in the North West and North East region was €6m - out of a total award of €14 M awarded to the Border/Midlands/Western region. The allocation in the North West/North West region is as follows:

1. Sligo - €2m for two projects. This is for enhancements to O'Connell Street to provide limited vehicular access with pedestrian priority, new widened pavements, new street furniture and landscaping, reduced traffic flow, and shared space for cyclists. The money will also be spent on the provision of a new community centre in Cranmore to regenerate an identified disadvantaged urban area.
2. Letterkenny - €2m is being awarded to 3 projects. Upgrading the Joe Bonner Link Road will increase connectivity between areas of high activity in the town, thereby boosting opportunities for employment in the town. Constructing a new Social Enterprise building will create a communal space to house key community and voluntary groupings. Under the sustainable transport grants, the upgrading of town linkages will give opportunity for safe walking and pedestrian infrastructure, and lessen car usage.
3. Dundalk - €2m for Clanbrassil Street and St Nicholas Quarter rejuvenation. The funding is granted in support of a rejuvenation scheme to re-invigorate this area and create a new identity for this key gateway into the town. Works include street improvements, better public spaces, a new café culture, incorporated public art, a new street signage strategy and a facade improvement scheme for historic buildings.

Action 150: Northern and Western Regional Assembly

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to lead the implementation of the €320 million Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 in collaboration with relevant public bodies.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The BMW Regional Operational Programme (2014 - 2020) is a six year program with an extensive set of objectives and actions. A two-year review of the programme is underway – the programme funds state agencies like Enterprise Ireland, co-financing the local enterprise office network in the region. The Northern and Western Regional Assembly has been very active in the regional economic development space in 2016.

Action 151: Leitrim County Council

Leitrim County Council and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly will develop a three year strategic project to develop and market a cluster of slow tourism adventure SMEs in Leitrim and potentially the wider region funded under the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

The Slow Adventure in the Northern Territories (SAINT) project in Leitrim conducted an assessment programme and signed up 12 SMEs during this period. These SMEs were considered to be a suitable candidates for this Slow Adventure Tourism product. A case study trip was then conducted with our partner area in Derry. This enabled both groups to explore best practice and to build relationships with counterparts taking part in the this project from the Derry area. Research and development of suitable guidelines for best practice for Slow Adventure Tourism also took place during this period.

Action 152: Local Authorities

Secure resources through LEADER/REDZ/ Village and Town Renewal Schemes to invest in towns and villages in the region to enhance their attractiveness as leisure and retail destinations.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

In **Leitrim**, €300k has been secured in REDZ funded with an additional €380k secured under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. Town and Village Funding of €371k and €200k in REDZ funding was secured for **Cavan** in 2016. In **Sligo**, a total of €700k in REDZ funding was secured for a number of projects in the County, including a joint initiative dedicated to the enhancement of Ireland West International Airport, and €380,000 was secured under the Town and Village

Renewal Scheme Three projects secured funding under REDZ in **Donegal** in 2016, providing total funding of almost €700k, while €380,000 was allocated under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. Similarly in **Monaghan**, €250k in REDZ funding was approved for Clones and Carrickmacross with a further €380k secured under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. €100,000 in REDZ funding and €380,000 under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme has been secured for County **Louth**.

Action 153: Donegal LEO

Develop a multi-faceted centre for the research and development, business start-up and the commercialisation of IP in the areas of medical device design and manufacturing, digital health and e-health.

Status: Ongoing

Narrative:

This project is being led by Donegal County Enterprise Fund, in conjunction with LEO Donegal. International strategic partners have been identified, a business plan is being developed and a potential site identified.