

Chapter 4 Economic and Tourism Development

4.0 Introduction

Ireland is currently in the midst of a global recession and remains in an economically challenged position with limited growth including cutbacks in public spending and limited private sector investment. This situation will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the rate of economic development and the pace at which many of the objectives of the Plan can be realised.

In this context, this Chapter looks at the employment structure in Lismore and economic development in terms of industry and enterprise, tourism, retail and office type development. Lismore's economic future requires the timely and adequate provision of land for employment needs including sites at suitable locations for industrial and enterprise uses. In addition, it requires a partnership approach to optimise opportunities for the Town, particularly in relation to harnessing the tourism and enterprise potential.

The Council aims to:

- Ensure the provision of adequate lands to expand the employment sector in Lismore;
- Strengthen the competitiveness of the local economy through balanced landuse planning;
- Encourage the expansion of the Town Centre to allow for a mixed and extended range of retail outlets and services; and
- Harness the tourism potential of the Town.

4.1 Employment Structure

The economy of Lismore is based mainly on commerce, services and tourism. Over the period of the last Lismore Local Area Plan, Lismore witnessed limited investment in the industrial/enterprise sectors. In addition, the local community has been working with the Council and Fáilte Ireland to improve the tourism potential of the Town. There is a need to build on this progress in a sustainable manner.

The objective of the Council is to ensure that Lismore can function meaningfully as a main Town and tourist centre in West Waterford. This includes offering a mix of employment opportunities relating to enterprise, local services, and tourism sectors.

An analysis of the labour force in Lismore under Census 2011 is a useful indicator of where the residents of Lismore are employed. Of the 578 workers enumerated in Lismore, 208 or 35% of the working population work outside Lismore. The daytime working population (i.e. resident and non-resident) of Lismore was 387 with professional services being the largest source of employment.

4.2 Existing Industrial Development

At present there is one industrial/business park within the Town. The level of industrial activity is limited in terms of the expanding population of Lismore. A considerable portion of land was zoned on the N72 for industrial uses under the previous Plan. The purpose of this is to ensure that potential investors can be offered a range of employment sites in Lismore, whilst ensuring that the Town is planned in a sustainable way. Waterford County Council will continue with this policy.

4.3 Future Development Strategy

The Council is committed to harnessing the strengths of Lismore including improvement of the tourism base, sustaining indigenous enterprise and enabling the Town to create a diversified employment base.

The Council recognises the importance of industrial and commercial development in terms of employment creation and the economic and social development of Lismore. While the Local Area Plan cannot directly influence future industrial and commercial development, it can adopt a plan led approach by:



- Ensuring that sufficient and appropriate land is zoned and available for industrial and commercial development;
- Providing or facilitating the provision of infrastructure such as roads, drainage, water etc;
- Facilitating start-up/enterprise type development at the Old Workhouse and/or other suitable sites within the Town;
- Promoting Lismore as a viable location to work and live; and
- Supporting the development of the tourism product of the Town.

Policy ETD 1

To promote Lismore as a base for small to medium enterprise through the zoning of appropriate industrial lands.

Policy ETD 2

To support the economic development initiatives of relevant agencies such as the IDA and Enterprise Ireland, subject to the requirements of the Habitats, Water Framework and EIA Directives.

4.4 Enterprise/Office Development

Lismore Town Centre accommodates the majority of the office based development within the Town. The Council will actively promote the development of additional office and service uses in Town Centre locations and in appropriate industrial and commercial areas.

Policy ETD 3

To promote appropriately scaled office type development in suitably zoned locations.

Policy ETD 4

To promote the reuse of vacant buildings and vacant upper floors of existing retail premises for office development where suitable.

Policy ETD 5

To facilitate and promote the provision of a telecommunications network infrastructure to address the socio-economic needs of the population and the various employment sectors.

Policy ETD 6

To facilitate the development of start-up/ incubator style work units at appropriate locations.

4.5 Retail Development

Lismore Town Centre possesses an historic charm, character and sense of place which needs to be protected and sensitively developed in order to harness economic potential. Retail activity is primarily centered on Main Street and West Street where there is a high vacancy rate at present. A survey undertaken by Waterford County Council in February 2012 indicated that 10 of the 22 units within the primary retail area were vacant.



Main Street

These vacant shop units could have a negative impact on the quality and attraction of the Town Centre. Given that the Town Centre is the functional heart of any settlement, the challenge is to facilitate and encourage the growth of Lismore's retailing function while also protecting its existing retailing function. It is considered that retail development should be generally confined to the existing Town Centre so as to ensure its continued consolidation and keep the main shopping streets vibrant.

It is considered that owing to its tourism potential, Lismore has the potential to attract boutique and niche type retailers to the Town Centre. Improved linkages and signage are required to encourage pedestrian footfall from the main tourist attractions to the Town Centre. Through its zoning objectives, the Planning Authority will only allow appropriate uses within the Town Centre. Furthermore retail development at out of Town Centre locations will only be permitted where it is deemed not to detract from the vitality and vibrancy of the Town Centre.

4.5.1 County Retail Strategy

The County Retail Strategy is due for review. It is anticipated that this review will commence imminently with a Joint Retail Strategy being prepared for Waterford City and County. A Joint Retail Strategy's primary purpose is to support the statutory plan making process and ensure that adequate provision is made for new retail development in the most appropriate locations and to ensure that excessive provision of retail space is avoided.

Policy ETD 7

To promote and encourage enhancement and expansion of the retail floorspace and Town Centre functions of Lismore and to develop its competitiveness through a plan led approach consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012.

Policy ETD 8

Promote the reuse and regeneration of derelict land and vacant buildings in Lismore for retail development where appropriate.

Policy ETD 9

To facilitate and promote new retail and commercial development on land zoned Town Centre for a range and type consistent with the function of the Town Centre. All proposals for retail development shall be subject to the sequential test.

Policy ETD 10

To facilitate and encourage the enhancement of the retail and tourism offer in Lismore, to sustain and develop its importance as a main town and tourist centre in West Waterford.

Policy ETD 11

To consolidate the traditional Town Centre and to strengthen linkages between the retail areas of the town and the main tourist attractions.

Policy ETD 12

The Council shall have regard to the County Retail Strategy (or any revision of same), the Retail Planning Guidelines and accompanying Retail Design Manual (2012) when guiding retail development in Lismore.

4.6 Tourism

The intrinsic beauty of Lismore and the surrounding area has long been acknowledged. Located on the southern banks of the Blackwater River the picturesque and fertile valley is bounded to the north by the Knockmealdown Mountains and to the south by the upland area of Ballysaggartbeg hill. The Town of Lismore is steeped in a tradition of religious and cultural history, dating back to early Christianity associated with St Carthage. It is the accumulation of these factors that makes Lismore an attractive tourist and cultural destination.



Lismore Castle Grounds

Lismore is a Heritage Town and has been a gold medal winner of the Tidy Towns competition over the last number of years. This is a major achievement for the local people and organisations involved. Civic works, painting; landscaping and litter patrols were just some of the activities carried out.

4.6.1 Activities

Lismore offers a wide variety of activities for year round visitors including fishing, amenity walks, festivals, and tours of the Castle gardens. Indeed the Castle creates the greatest impact on the Town in terms of physical dominance and in attracting tourists, and there is considerable potential to further develop this local asset. The Lismore Music Festival and Lismore Castle Arts (which provides a contemporary world class art space) are two initiatives run in conjunction with the Castle which have been very successful.

There are a number of tourist amenities within a short distance of Lismore such as:

- The Round Hill;
- Ballysaggart Towers;
- Dromana Gate;
- Mount Mellary Monastery and Grotto; and
- The Knockmealdown Mountains and the Vee walking routes.

4.6.2 Tourist Accommodation

The tourism accommodation in Lismore Town has improved somewhat in recent years. The choice and variety of tourist accommodation is a vital component to the development of the tourism function of the Town and the area in generally. The Lismore Arms Hotel has been redeveloped with an extension to facilitate additional bed spaces, a conference room and a night club.

It is considered that there is scope for the provision of an additional high quality hotel with swimming pool, gym and spa facilities. The physical setting of Lismore would provide the perfect backdrop for spa retreat type holidays and weekend breaks.

4.6.3 Promotion and Marketing

Promotion and marketing are core components to the future development of Lismore as a high quality tourist and activity location. A new branding logo has been developed for the Town which will be used in all promotional activity associated with Lismore. Co-operation between the various interest groups in the West Waterford Region is vital in the development of a comprehensive tourism package based on the many opportunities the area presents. Golfing, fishing and equestrian pursuits are all activity sports that could be marketed in the context of Lismore and historical and cultural themed tourism could be based around the castle and the Town's ecclesiastical history.



It is considered that in order to capitalise further on tourism potential in Lismore the following areas should be explored as part of enhancing the tourism product in the Town:

- Promotion of Lismore as a centre for walking and cycling tours in West Waterford and incorporating the Pilgrim Path - St Declan's Way;
- Development of water based activities on the River Blackwater;

- Promotion of heritage tourism, walking trails and cultural/arts tourism building upon the international profile of Lismore Castle Arts;
- To build upon the Robert Boyle Science School and develop Lismore as a nationally recognised centre for primary school science education;
- Improved promotion and marketing of Lismore Music Festival, Immrama, Festival of Travel Writing, Robert Boyle Summer School, and the Lismore Community Festival;
- Create a café culture supporting specialised food and locally made crafts/cottage industries; and
- Improve linkages with key tourist sites and attractions in the area, cross marketing with Dungarvan and Waterford City, familiarisation trips from the City to the County and vice versa open to all.

Objective ETD 1

To continue to work with relevant tourist and community bodies to promote and support the extension and diversification of the range of tourist facilities and attractions in Lismore, while protecting the surrounding natural environment of Lismore.

Objective ETD 2

To encourage the establishment of a five star hotel with an associated leisure facility and conference centre within the Town to provide up market accommodation and to serve the needs of year round visitors.

Objective ETD 3

To encourage a mixture of tourist related uses with a specific focus on year round activities.