

PRESS RELEASE

DONEGAL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD ANNUAL STRATEGY DAY 2010

Donegal County Development Board held its annual Strategic Planning Day on Wednesday 5th May 2010, in the Ramada Hotel, Letterkenny. Over 76 representatives from across the local government, state agencies, local development, community sector and private sector were in attendance at the event. Representatives also attended from cross border bodies and interests. The event provided an opportunity for discussion and debate with a wide array of speakers and presentations highlighting the current challenges facing the economy of County Donegal.

Opening the event, Cllr. Dessie Larkin, chairman of Donegal CDB highlighted the continued work of the CDB in response to the challenges facing the county and thanked all participants for their contribution to the work of the Board over the last number of years. Donegal CDB has identified six key goals which are being actively pursued:

- To develop Donegal as a lead region for the Green Economy
- To promote enterprise and skills development in the region
- To develop a Donegal Brand across all sectors
- To ensure best access to services for the community of Donegal
- To fully develop the County's Cultural Resources
- To develop the region's Tourism and Natural Resources

Speaking at the event, Mr. Larry O Connell, National Economic and Social Council spoke of Ireland "*At Another Turning Point*" and commented that "*Irish people are ready for much greater innovation, more widespread learning and richer accountability*". He noted that the economy should strive for "*full deployment of information and communications technology, biotechnology, nano and green/clean technology*".

Mr. Finbarr Bradley, Former professor at DCU, NUI Maynooth and UCD commented that "*Ireland's sustainable competitive advantage lies in its*

Distinctiveness, difference and uniqueness: A Special Place!". He noted that the development of a Donegal Brand highlighting the creative potential of Donegal is key to the future success of the county.

Mr. Michael McLoone, County Manager, chairing the session commented that the CDB members and stakeholders need to consider the issues raised in the presentations and noted the importance of cross agency support and working together. The importance of continuing to highlight key policy issues nationally was also noted.

Chairman of Donegal CDB, Cllr. Dessie Larkin noted the significant progress made by the CDB in progressing collaborative initiatives across a range of areas - tourism, cultural resources, renewables, social inclusion etc.

Ms. Terre Duffy, Public Art Manager, Donegal County Council, commented that *"The best way for Donegal to gain a sustainable competitive advantage in the competitive tourism market is through an understanding and appreciation of the qualities that set us apart to alternative locations"*. She noted the need to develop County Champions and Ambassadors to promote the county as a county in which to live, work and invest.

Mr. Tom O Dwyer, Teagasc and convenor of the CDB working group on maximising the land resources of County Donegal highlighted that the *"Irish agri-food sector can contribute to Ireland's Smart Economy, through*

- *Primary food production*
- *High value-added product development such as functional foods*
- *Energy and other bio-products including forestry*
- *Environmental goods and services."*

Mr. Gerry Richards, Donegal County Council advised that the review of the Donegal County Development Plan will commence in July 2010. Within the context of the review, *"the potential to maximise the county's natural resources, particularly in relation to the renewables sector will be considered, including*

- *Offshore wind energy*
- *Micro Wind Energy*
- *Grid Connection Issues*
- *Realising community benefits"*

Mr. Micheal O hEanaigh, Donegal County Council, closing the event noted that the CDB is advancing initiatives which are providing a much needed boost to the local economy and also through greater collaboration and cross-border co-operation providing additional investment to the local region.

For further information on the work of the CDB please visit www.donegalcdb.ie

[photographs of CDB strategy day 2010)