

Collaborating for a strong economic future for the Mid South West Region

How co-operation between the three councils which make up the Mid South West Region led to the development of a Regional Economic Strategy to supercharge the growth of the region's economy.



Pictured at the launch of the Mid South West Regional Economic Strategy are, from left: Nigel Manley, Balcas; Cormac Diamond, Bloc Blinds; Damian Heron, Heron Bros; Darragh Cullen, Edge Innovate; Roger Wilson, Chief Executive of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Diane Dodds MLA, Minister for the Economy; Alison McCullagh, Chief Executive of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council; Anthony Tohill, Chief Executive of Mid Ulster District Council; Adrian McCoy, Severfield; Brian Irwin, Irwin's Bakery; Cathal Mallaghan, Chair of the Mid South West Region Governance Steering Group; Liam McCaffrey, Mannok; Kevin Holland, Chief Executive of Invest NI; Ethna McNamee, Regional Manager Invest NI; Councillor Robert Irvine, Vice Chair of the Mid South West Region Governance Steering Group.

A new strategy designed to supercharge the growth of the economy of the Mid South West (MSW) will create the right conditions for companies located in the region to flourish in the coming years. The Regional Economic Strategy is focused on boosting productivity across the three council areas of

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council - which make up the Mid South West Region and will require businesses to play their part in helping to realise its ambitious goals. The strategy, which was developed following extensive

research and analysis of the region's economy and was informed by engagement with the region's major employers, identifies challenges and opportunities and sets out four pillars to guide investment and growth the collective economy. The pillars are: future proofing the skills base, enabling infrastructure,

boosting innovation and digital capacity and building a high performing tourism economy. By focusing on those areas, the overriding goals of increasing productivity, driving business growth, fully realising sectoral strengths and opportunities, creating more and better-paid jobs and ensuring the ongoing internationalisation of MSW

can be achieved, Councillor Robert Irvine, Chair of the Mid South West Region Governance Steering Group, said. "Our ambitions for the Mid South West economy are far reaching, but we are confident that with the support of all stakeholders in the region they are wholly achievable. The analysis of the region's economy was honest both in terms of identifying its strengths but also the areas where support and investment in a range of strategic interventions can have the most impact. "Through the Regional Economic Strategy, we will

strive to create the conditions that the private sector needs to grow their businesses, employ more skilled staff and become internationally competitive. We are unashamedly ambitious as are our businesses and so by working together we can raise productivity and create a better future for everyone." The strategy will enable the Mid South West Region to leverage financial investment from a range of sources - such as the Growth Deal funding announced by the UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive, the PEACE PLUS Programme, the UK Government's Shared Prosperity

Fund, Innovate UK and other central government funding. Following the recent launch of the strategy by First Minister Arlene Foster MLA and deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA at a socially-distanced event held at EDGE Innovate near Dungannon, Minister Dodds MLA, who also attended the launch said its overriding aims are more relevant than ever as the region recovers and rebuilds, adding that the support of the business community has been and will continue to be crucial. "This strategy provides an excellent framework to support the identification of

Growth Deal projects and the councils are to be congratulated for coming together and working constructively" for the betterment of the region. She said sustained industry engagement will be key to its successful delivery. The strategy sets out several areas where growth is being impeded and how those impediments can be removed. Boosting productivity, connectivity and infrastructure, skills and making more of the region's tourism offering are the focus of the strategy, which is structured around four intervention pillars.



1 'Future Proofing' the Skills Base

Future proofing the skills base is becoming ever more important. It's a top priority emerging from MSW's engagements with business and the strategy aims to ensure that the requisite skills are available in scale and profile to underpin the region's ambitions and those of its businesses.



2 Enabling Infrastructure

Investment in infrastructure is critical. To boost productivity MSW needs to have the strategic road infrastructure that enables businesses to access all areas including ports and distribution points, as well as better broadband and mobile coverage, access to industrial land for development and improved investment in electricity supply.



3 Boosting Innovation and Digital Capacity

We aim to support businesses to be more productive by helping enhance their capabilities in crucial enabling technologies such as data analytics, robotics, automation, Industry 4.0, machine learning, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, advanced materials and production techniques, and to exploit the growth opportunities these technologies hold for our region.



4 Building a High-Performing Tourism Economy

Finally, the strategy is focused on building a high performing tourism economy which capitalises on the region's tourism assets including the Fermanagh Lakes, the Sperrins, Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark, MSW's literary heritage as well as the cultural significance of Ireland's oldest city Armagh to name a few.

The future

MSW has engaged extensively with businesses and key sectors, with politicians locally, regionally and nationally, with central government, with education and the wider stakeholder community, and this engagement, particularly with businesses will continue.

"We will continue to welcome the input and guidance of our industry/business base," Councillor Irvine said. "Their ongoing engagement with this initiative is critical as we move to the next stage of development." "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to supercharge the Mid South West economy

and cement the Region's position as Northern Ireland's engine room."

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For further information visit www.midsouthwestregion.org or email info@midsouthwestregion.org