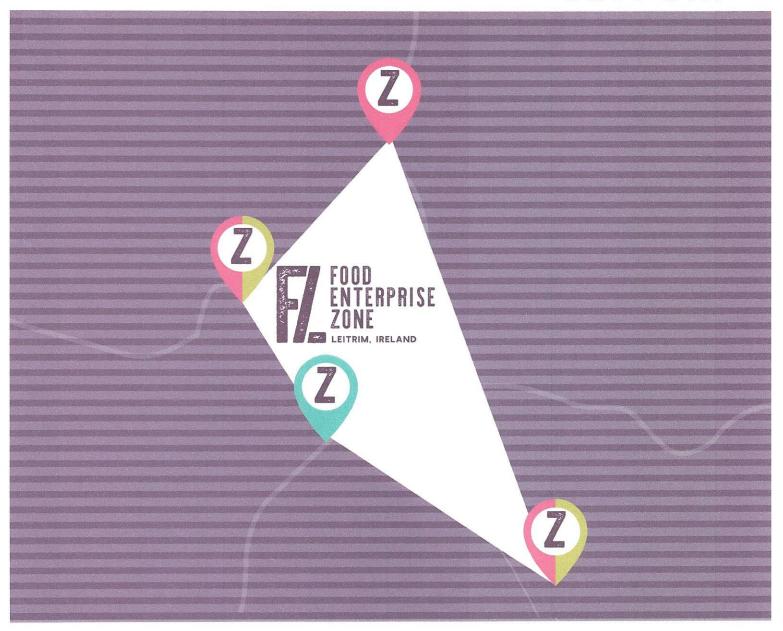


# LETTERS OF SUPPORT



- 1: Bord Bia
- 2: Leitrim County Council
- 3: Local Enterprise Office Leitrim
- 4: Leitrim Development Company
- 5: Local Enterprise Office Galway
- 6: Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project
- 7: Western Development Commission

Infrastructure and support hotspot to cluster and grow food companies.



Cathaoirleach/Chairman Michael Carey Príomhfheidhmeannach/ Chief Executive Tara McCarthy Cúirt Chlann Liam Sráid an Mhóta Íochtarach Baile Átha Cliath DO2 A344 Éire

Clanwilliam Court Lower Mount Street Dublin D02 A344 Ireland

Teil/Tel +353 1 668 5155

Rphost/Email eolas@bordbia.ie info@bordbia.ie

Láithreán Gréasáin/Web www.bordbia.ie

16 August 2017

To whom it may concern (in Enterprise Ireland),

Bord Bia has been briefed on the proposed regional stimulus project for Leitrim, the Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone CLG, and as part of their application to Enterprise Ireland under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, we would like to confirm our support for the initiative.

Bord Bia considers this initiative to be an excellent strategic fit with our own corporate mission to drive through market insight and, in partnership with industry, the commercial success of a world class Irish food, drink and horticulture industry. The importance of developing strong regional supports is very evident and this project will contribute to the growth and prosperity of current and future food and drink manufacturers in the Leitrim area.

We look forward to continued progress and success with this project and to supporting the next phase of its development.

Yours Sincerely

Eileen Bentley
Senior Manager

Senior Manager, Food & Beverages

**Bord Bia** 



# Comhairle Contae Liatroma Leitrim County Council

Áras an Chontae Cora Droma Rúisc Contae Liatroma N41 PF67 Áras an Chontae Carrick on Shannon Co. Leitrim N41 PF67

© 071 96 20005 | © 071 96 21982 © www.leitrimcoco.ie customerservices@leitrimcoco.ie Follow us on

14th August 2017

To: Enterprise Ireland

Leitrim County Council is delighted to support the development of Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone. As Ireland's first food enterprise zone, the project is a new visionary concept and innovative approach in Ireland to create an infrastructure and support hotpsot which will cluster food -companies. It will act as a premium location magnet for new food start-ups and relocating food businesses. The Zone creates a rural cluster of food companies across multiple buildings and sites in a specific area – in this case Leitrim. It is a step chance project of national significance – we see the Zone business model as ideal for replication in other areas (as has been the case with The Food Hub business model). It will enhance our regional and national food reach and deliver a wholly creative partnership with public bodies, industry and all the key stakeholders.

The project is wholly unique and of regional and national significance in that it advocates for and reflects the successful UK formula to develop Food Enterprise Zones, (there is no such offering in Ireland). It builds on the leadership position of The Food Hub, Drumshanbo which is recognised as a national and European exemplar in food enterprise infrastructure and job creation.

## Is this project needed and additional?

Absolutely. Leitrim County Council launched the Leitrim Food Strategy in March 2017 which involved an extensive consultation exercise with the 60+ food businesses in the county. It revealed that 1 in 3 Leitrim food businesses have plans to expand. They are curtailed by lack of space. Leitrim Food Strategy highlights that there is the full-time equivalent of 534 people employed in the food sector. This does not include those employed in primary agriculture. Leitrim is somewhat unique in that, there has been no one large employer in the county since the closure of Bo Peep jam factory in Drumshanbo with the loss of 100 jobs in the 1990s. Rather, employment is diversified across smaller food businesses. The job loss has been rectified as thanks to the The Strategy forecasts the creation of 250 new jobs in the food sector and the establishment of 20 new food producer businesses. That can only happen if infrastructure is in place. Given the current level of queries and solid commitments collectively, we are extremely confident that 100 new jobs can be created as a direct result of REDF investment.

Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone will also appeal to new and relocating food companies. The Food Hub business model has proven that HPSU businesses will relocate to an area with attractive food infrastructure facilities (e.g. Chef in a Box and The Shed Distillery both chose Drumshanbo as their base, creating over 25 jobs between them and growing). As a Local Authority, we are committed to assisting the establishment of the Food Zone in Drumshanbo, which will provide additional space to accommodate a Dublin based sauce producer, a premium ice cream producer from a peripheral area of the North West, am established coffee company relocating from The Netherlands (owned by a Drumshanbo native).

# **Unique Partnership**

Leitrim County Council commends the formation of Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone CLG. It brings together the food sector expertise of Drumshanbo Community Council, owners of the Food Hub, the community and finanical backing of Drumshanbo Credit Union with industry expertise.

As an organisation, Leitrim County Council is committed to contributing to the economic success of our region and are convinced that this project can make a real and lasting difference. Our commitment is tangible and if successful in the REDF application, we will invest €25,000 to realise the project.

We wish Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone CLG every success with this exciting opportunity and look forward to working in close partnership with them.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Gilhooly

Dep/Chief Executive



Local Enterprise Office – Leitrim Áras an Chontae Carrick on Shannon Co. Leitrim T: 071-9650420 W: www.localenterprise.ie/leitrim

14.8.17

For the Attention of : Enterprise Ireland

Local Enterprise Office Leitrim welcomes the opportunity to partner with and support the development of Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone at strategic and operational levels. As verified through their recent feasibility study, this project will make a vital regional impact through its positioning to drive job creation, enterprise, creativity and innovation in the wider North-West Region.

This project very much aligns with our work in the Local Enterprise Office and what we are working to achieve at Local Enterprise Office Leitrim. The food sector is identified as an important component in the North East North West Regional Action Plan for Jobs 2015- 2017 which spotlights the strong agri-food sector in the Region. It recognises the vibrant food clusters, the depth of capabilities in established food companies, the region's natural resources and the opportunities presented by addressing changing consumer demands. The Food Hub, Drumshanbo is recognised as the leading food cluster in the region and the proposed project builds new strategic impetus with an innovative formula adopted from best practice in the UK which has excellent relevance to the Irish food sector.

We intend to play a very active role in the development of the Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone. The creation of 100 new jobs will build a new level of regional capital and infrastructural resource while facilitating progressive innovative and creative partnerships. We welcome the fact that it gets a return from underutilised assets – vacant sites, empty buildings that can be transformed to return real value. 1 in 3 Leitrim food companies is growing which relocating businesses have proven that Leitrim is a magnet for food entrepreneurship. Inward investment is a key theme in the Zone business plan and we have the ingredients to deliver on same. Our local food sector has never been so strong, we have a dedicated Leitrim Food Strategic 2017 – 2021 which has 54 actions, many of which will benefit from and be tied into the Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone.

We are delighted that this project is coming to fruition, our region needs this collective approach and it is a truly innovative approach. It has our total commitment and support.

Joe Lowe

Yours sincerely

Head of Enterprise



Church Street, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim, N41 RF24 Tel: (071) 9641770 Fax: (071) 9641741 Web: www.ldco.ie E-mail: info@ldco.ie

Sráid an Teampaill, Droim Seanbhó, Co. Liatroma, N41 RF24 Fón: (071) 9641770 Facs: (071) 9641741 An Gréasán: www.ldco.ie R-phost: info@ldco.ie

Sub Offices: Credit Union Building, Mohill, Co. Leitrim. Tel: (071) 9631715 Fax: (071) 9631895 Áras an Chomhair Chreidmheasa, Maothail, Co. Liatroma. Fón: (071) 9631715 Facs. (071) 9631895 💮 An Líre Nua, Cluainín Uí Ruairc, Co. Liatroma. Fón: Facs: (071) 9856016

New Line, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim. Tel/Fax: (071) 9856016

17th August 2017

Enterprise Ireland East Point Business Park The Plaza Dublin 3 D03 E5R

To Whom it may concern

Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone proposal for the Regional Enterprise Development Zone.

I am writing in support of the Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone project proposed for the town of Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim.

Drumshanbo has a very strong history as a food producing and processing town. In recent years the town and particular the community has innovated with the establishment of the Food Hub. This is now a very well established food production unit with over 70 people employed by some well-known and developing food and drinks brands.

These things have led to a concentration of resources, people, capacity, and training in the food production, processing and associated sector and services. There is now also regular demand for food production space in and around Drumshanbo due to this.

Leitrim Development Company has been active as a part of the development in the food sector and infrastructure in Drumshanbo. As a funder and Local action group for LEADER we provided some grant aid for a number of developments at the food hub including site enhancements, artic turning area, the development of the second community kitchen and also other supports and funding to some of the businesses which are operating in the Food Hub. For 10 years we have also run training in one of the units at the food Hub in different aspects of food production, cooking, hospitality which have led to employment for significant numbers of people. We were also closely associated with the Harvest Feast food festival which ran in the town for a number of years. We are now also supporting a group of people to develop their fruit and vegetable production skills in a 12 month certified training programme in Drumshanbo. Through the enterprise and community supports from our Social inclusion and community activation programme (SICAP) there are many small businesses, community and social enterprises and individuals who we fund, support and assist who are interested in and wishing to develop businesses and careers in the food sector in Leitrim. We also collaborate and work closely with many statutory agencies other organisations to develop the sector in Leitrim and particularly in Drumshanbo. We work particularly closely in Drumshanbo with the Drumshanbo Community Council (The Food Hub), Leitrim Organic Farmers Co-op and the National Organic Training Skillnet (NOTS) which are always supporting innovation in the organic food production and processing sectors.

Currently we are working with a number of businesses and community enterprises in and around the town who are developing food businesses and seeking funding from LEADER and other sources.

It is fair to say that there are very significant assets including infrastructure, buildings expertise experience and entrepreneurs in the town which can and should be brought together to add significant value to the already developing excellent food sector in the town.

We believe that this proposal from the Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone CLG is a very innovative proposal by a group of people who all have a strong record of success and who bring together many of the strands referred to above and who can really impact and expand the employment prospects and the economic benefits for the area from the food sector. This project will also bring a very much increased and expanded focus to Drumshanbo which is now a leading hub for food and drinks businesses. Drumshanbo is a small rule town and it is very focused on building its economy on the food sector. The town is also at the point of linking the food and tourism sectors with the development of tourism and visitor experiences at the Food Hub and at the Shed distillery.

The Enterprise Ireland Regional Enterprise Development Zone funding now has a real opportunity to support this community, its businesses and the many agencies and organisation who are collaborating and focused on such development to move to the next and much needed level.

We will continue to work with the Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone CLG and others to make this a success and looking forward to working with you in Enterprise Ireland on these ongoing and significant developments. We cannot stress enough how important the support and funding from state agencies such as Enterprise Ireland for the developments to date in Drumshanbo has been and we hope that you will commit to the future in this proposed project.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries or require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Enin Smith

Brian Smyth

Acting CEO



Mellows Campus Athenry Co. Galway Ireland

Date 18-08-2017

To: Enterprise Ireland

On behalf of Bia Innovator Campus and its founding partners Teagasc, Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board, SCCUL, Galway County Council and Local Enterprise Office, I am very pleased to provide this letter of support for the development of Ireland's first Food Enterprise Zone in Ireland in County Leitrim. Drumshanbo has trailblazed its way to the forefront of Food Enterprise Development in Ireland, first with the establishment of The Food Hub, Ireland's first Food Incubator in 2006 by the Drumshanbo Community Council and now with this very impressive Food Enterprise Zone proposal, again a first for Ireland.

Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone CLG and their strategic partners have been a tremendous source of advice and support to us in Galway as we embark on our own ambitious and complementary project to FEZ Leitrim, the development of the Bia Innovator Campus, Mellows Campus in Athenry. Working together with them on both our projects in tandem, we have developed a very synergetic relationship and we look forward to working closely with the new entity as they create a rural cluster of food companies across multiple buildings and sites in Leitrim. We see great potential for the approach and will follow with interest as they provide a continuum of food enterprise size options to companies with emphasis on growth and scaling.

Given their success and hard toil in realising a food enterprise centre from the ground up to employing 70+ people in Drumshanbo, we are confident that this new venture will also be a great success and that together both our projects can have enormous economic impact in terms of delivering innovative supports, job creation and strengthening the food enterprise infrastructure in West of Ireland.

To this end, Bia Innovator Campus will open up access to our campus, in particular our Bia Eolas, our learning and information centre to FEZ Leitrim food companies who require our support. We will also work with Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone CLG on an open and collaborative communication culture which will see us sharing enquiries and tenant signposting. Together with the Food Enterprise Zone Leitrim and other key emerging incubators in the region (An Chisitin, Roscommon) we will cooperate to provide seamless supports for producers to grow their businesses and create jobs throughout the West and North West.

Kind Regards,

breela Sox

Director Bia Innovator Campus

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil Gaillimh

Aras an Chontae, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim. Tel: 071 9620005



14th August 2017.

For the attention of Enterprise Ireland:

The Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project welcomes the opportunity to support the development of Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone, as shown through the Feasibility Study this project will make a significant impact across the region through its positioning to drive job creation, enterprise, creativity and innovation in the wider North-West Region.

This project aligns with the work of the USEFE in relation to food to date. The food sector is identified as an important component in the North East North West Regional Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017 which spotlights the strong agri-food sector in the Region. Food is a key sector of focus for USEFE. The Food Hub, Drumshanbo is recognised as the leading food cluster in the region and the proposed project builds new strategic impetus with an innovative formula adopted from best practice in the UK which has excellent relevance to the Irish food sector.

We intend to take a pro active role in the development of the Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone.

1 in 3 Leitrim food companies is growing, in addition numerous food businesses have relocated to Leitrim which proves that Leitrim is a magnet for food entrepreneurship. Inward investment is a key theme in the Zone business plan and we have the ingredients to deliver on same. The food sector in the region has never been so strong, and USEFE will continue to support this sector.

We are delighted that this project is coming to fruition, the region needs this collaborative approach it has our ongoing commitment and support.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Gilhooly Director of Service, Leitrim County Council, On behalf of USEFE.













### LETTER OF SUPPORT for Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone & BIA Incubator Campus, Athenry

15th August 2017

I the undersigned, Ian Brannigan, CEO(a) at the Western Development Commission, am delighted to support in principle any initiative that grows the economy of the West of Ireland Region. Furthermore, the WDC believe that the provision of appropriate, market led infrastructure in the region is an essential pre-requisite to engendering successful new and existing businesses fit for today's market place. We see the Food Enterprise Zone Leitrim & BIA Innovator Campus Galway as boosting the growth of food SMEs is a key part of entrepreneurship and towards the EU region of Gastronomy and beyond. Where successful, new food businesses & food entrepreneurs will start and scale their food business in a stimulating environment encompassing production, benefit from an efficient transfer of innovations, education, networking of peers and stakeholders and seeking opportunities for growth, distribution, export, and scale — all within the Western region.

Food incubators have the unique potential to spur productive, inclusive & sustainable economic development, which builds on the 2016 EU study conducted by Momentum. We now have an opportunity to work towards a regional, collaborative approach for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the food sector across our Western region which can contribute nationally and compete internationally. Across the West of Ireland, specialty and artisan food products are gaining market share. Both the FEZ & the BIA Incubator Campus forecasts the creation of new jobs in the food sector and new food producer businesses across our region and across our localities.

It is essential from the WDC perspective that both FEZ & BIA are supported to drive forward the offerings to promote efficiency in the market place. In this letter of support, the WDC asserts our support in principle for both the Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone proposal and the BIA Incubator Campus, Athenry. In supporting both projects, we see this as a regional step change for food enterprise and the western region food economy going forward. As our organization is dealing with investment funds and start-ups development, we would be particularly interested in the implementation of the project to support the development of businesses and start-ups in the region.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Brannigan -Acting CEO

Dillon House, Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon

Telephone: +353 94 98 61441 Facsimile: +353 94 98 61443 Email: info@wdc.ie Web: www.wdc.ie

#### **WDC Overview**

We believe that while cities and towns are important to the functioning of the Region, it should also be remembered that more than half a million people (535,953) are living in rural areas (in small settlements and open countryside) in the Western Region. In Ireland as a whole just over a third (37%) of the population live in rural areas (that is outside towns of 1,500) while in contrast, the Western Region shows the opposite pattern and 65% are living in rural areas. These rural areas provide key resources essential to our economy and society. They are the location of our natural resources and most of our environmental, biodiversity and landscape assets. They are places of residence and employment, as well as places of amenity, recreation, refuge and are fundamental to Irish tourism. Rural areas are already supporting national economic growth, climate action objectives, and local communities, albeit at a smaller scale than towns and cities. However, a greater focus on developing rural regions would increase the contribution to our economy and society. This is recognised in our national policy document 'Realising our Rural Potential - An Action Plan for Rural Development'. Rural communities can face particular challenges due to their age profile, the structure of their economies and a lack of access to quality infrastructure and new technologies. But all rural areas and rural communities are not the same. There are differences in remoteness and accessibility, as well as demography, natural resource assets, access to infrastructures and the influence of neighbouring urban centres. Many of our towns and villages have suffered from a lack of investment in the infrastructure which connects them locally. Such investment could improve their capacity to provide services. It could also maintain and attract enterprise and support their rural hinterlands1.

The Western Development Commission works along with regional & national stakeholders to develop the Western Region's knowledge intensive economy base. The WDC focus is to substantially accelerate a new pipeline of Start-ups and Scale-ups. The Western Region is committed to enhancing the talent, data, innovation & enterprise opportunities by focusing on adding value to the Knowledge Economy capacity and to the capability and the infrastructure in this region. Our track record is evidenced below.

Western Investment Fund (WIF) is the financial instrument of the WDC, was established by the Irish Government to be a unique source or risk funding to projects, businesses and communities in the Western Region in return for a financial and a socio-economic gain. The WIF Cumulative performance to date demonstrates our commitment to the regional entrepreneurial landscape and our regional economic growth.

In 2016, the WDC invested over €2million in SMEs, micro and social enterprises which offer highly skilled employment in sectors ranging from medical devices to software development to high tech manufacturing to creative industries as well as much needed services for local communities. The WDC investment in 2016 levered over €20 million in additional investment into the region. For every one euro invested by the WDC, another €9 was leveraged for enterprises in the region. Through its successful investment portfolio, the WDC has demonstrated the effectiveness in delivering significant socio-economic benefits by supporting enterprise and jobs in a sustainable manner. There are 2,200 people employed in portfolio companies/projects with at least as many again downstream jobs based on a multiplier effect of one.

Dillon House, Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon

Telephone: +353 94 98 61441 Facsimile: +353 94 98 61443 Email: info@wdc.ie Web: www.wdc.ie

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> http://www.wdc.ie/wp-content/uploads/WDC-June-2017-Regional-Growth-rural-areas-towns-and-cities.pdf

Regional Development: The WDC along with Sligo chamber has operated an innovative annual entrepreneur support clinic - The Exchange - which has linked 72 regional businesses with established regional business leaders and led to new exporting businesses. The Exchange is a residential "business development accelerator" offering a mutually beneficial blend of one-to-one sessions with seasoned entrepreneurs, as well as networking and short learning sessions, participants in this unique business development mechanism draw benefit from its intensified, needs-driven format. While the support offered through the Exchange is often referred to as akin to mentoring, its benefits are more wide-ranging, due to the bespoke nature of the advice on offer – which centres on identifying and developing individual business growth opportunities. the Exchange set out to "show the path to success" by connecting twentyfour SMEs with real growth aspirations to entrepreneurs with the know-how to light the way undoubtedly, this ambition has been achieved, and there is further scope for development of its offering. The potential of The Exchange becoming a blueprint which could be rolled out in other regions was suggested by participants and mentors alike. A primary remit of the Western Development Commission is Regional Promotion. Since the launch of the Lookwest Platform in 2004, LookWest.ie has become an information source for anyone interested in moving to the West. LookWest.ie is an innovative, userfriendly web initiative that forms part of the WDC's strategic aim to promote the benefits of living, working and doing business in the Western Region. It brings together various stakeholders and interests to present a positive, informative resource for the West of Ireland at home and abroad. The website works as a central resource for living, working and doing business in the West. The LookWest.ie Skills Register collects detailed information on the skills, education, and qualifications of those interested in moving West. It enables the WDC to build and maintain a profile of the labour force available for enterprise and economic development.

In this letter of support, the WDC asserts our support for both FEZ & BIA Campus Incubator proposal. We believe that the proposal provides an exciting work plan that can maximise the benefit within & outside of our region. The WDC will support the roll out in the Western Region of Ireland.